HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION TO THE TEXTUAL CRITICISM OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

V. THE LANGUAGES OF THE EARLY CHURCH: (B) SYRIAC AND THE FIRST SYRIAC GOSPELS.

HOW predominantly Greek was Christianity, during the first century of its history, we learnt in the earlier pages of the last chapter. The Aramaic of Palestine, we there saw, if it was the most serious rival of Greek, yet made singularly little show even in the most primitive Christian literature: outside Palestine it had apparently no history, and was not even the direct ancestor of the great Syriac-speaking church, which was developed, almost as entirely as Latin Christianity, out of Greek, and derived its New Testament, just as did Latin Christendom, by translation from the Greek original.[1]

But the case can be put more strongly still. Although the proclamation of the Gospel may have reached the Syriac-speaking peoples of Mesopotamia and the Latin-speaking peoples of the West early in the second century, it is hardly before the beginning of the third that we come upon definite traces of versions even of the Gospels in the vernacular languages. It would seem that something of the reluctance which the Jewish Church had experienced in the face of any interference with the prerogative of its Hebrew Scriptures, made itself felt within the Christian Church in regard to its Greek Bible. Greek seems

[1] There is, on the other hand, every reason to think that the Old Testament of the Peshitta is not only the original Old Testament of the Syriac Church but is actually earlier than the Syriac Church itself. The former conclusion is indicated by the agreement of all Old Testament citations in Syriac writings, however early their date, with the Peshitta; the latter by the Hebrew and even Jewish colouring of the Peshitta of the Old Testament. Apart from some traces in the Prophets of what may be later Christian revision from the Greek, the Peshitta is a translation not of the LXX but of the Hebrew, and of the Hebrew as understood and interpreted by Jews. See Burkitt *Early Eastern Christianity* (1904) pp. 70–73.

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in fact to have remained the organ of worship, and therefore of the public and official reading of the Scriptures, even in communities where the majority of the members must have carried on their daily mutual intercourse in other tongues. Greek was the ancestral language of the Christian propaganda, the language in which Rome in the West and Edessa in the East had received the faith from Syria or Asia Minor: and the conservatism with which men naturally cherish their religious inheritance would defer as long as possible the change which ultimately was seen to be inevitable, when the liturgy came to be offered, and the sacred books to be read, no longer in Greek but in the vernacular Latin or Syriac. And if we want any further specific explanation of what is after all a very natural feature in the Christian life of the second century, we may find another and probably not less potent cause for the continued adherence of the outlying churches to the Greek language, in the consideration that Greek alone provided the means of common intercourse between all the families of the Christian Society. At no period perhaps of Christian history has sustained interchange of counsel and experience been more strongly felt as a theoretical need, and more fully worked out as a practical policy, than in the second half of the second century. When Polycarp of Smyrna visited Anicetus of Rome, to confer with him about the Easter difficulty which divided the Roman and the Asian churches; when Hegesippus the Palestinian made it his business to 'mix with numerous bishops' and communities —among them are specially named those of Rome and Corinth— and found the same scriptural teaching 'in every episcopal succession and in every city'; when Abercius of Hieropolis in Phrygia travelled as far as Rome in the West and as far as Nisibis in the East, and was everywhere accompanied by the same faith, the same sacraments, and the same scriptures; when Melito of Sardis 'went up to the East and reached the scene where our religion was wrought and taught'[1]: it was through a common use, on the part of both hosts and guests, of the mother tongue of Christendom, that such conferences could be held or their results recorded. Similarly if a Christian writer

[1] Polycarp in Iren. *Ep. ad Vict. Rom.* ap. Eus. *H. E.* v 24: Hegesippus and Melito in Eus. *H. E.* iv 22 and 26: for Abercius see Lightfoot's *Ignatius* i 476–485.

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of the same period, wherever his own home or whatever his native language, wished to address himself to the theological public at large, it was only through a Greek medium that he could reach them: the educated Christian understood Greek everywhere, and Irenaeus and Hippolytus composed their treatises for his benefit. Even the creator of Latin Christian literature, Tertullian himself, was practised Greek scholar enough to write on occasion in that language: the *de Baptismo* and *de Spectaculis* were published in Greek as well as in Latin, the lost books *de Ecstasi* in Greek only. On the other hand the uneducated Christian was probably as a rule unable to read at all, and his needs for a generation or two may well have been satisfied by an oral interpretation into the vernacular, such as the Jewish Church of Palestine had provided for its Aramaic-speaking population in the time of Christ.

With this conception of the facts it entirely agrees that the first Syriac Gospel should have been not official and perhaps not even orthodox: Tatian's *Diatessaron* or 'Harmony of the Four' was, as we shall see (p. 199), earlier than any version of the separate Gospels.

But if the rendering of the New Testament into even the primary non-Greek languages of the ancient world, Latin and Syriac, was effected so reluctantly and so late, it seems at first sight to follow that the value of Greek evidence for the text of the New Testament is proportionately enhanced in value and the evidence of the versions proportionately depreciated.

And in fact the most eminent editors of the Greek Testament, from the beginning of the sixteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth, have practically built their text on Greek evidence alone. At first indeed it could hardly have been otherwise: what the scholars of the Renaissance recovered for Western Europe was naturally the Greek New Testament as found in Greek MSS and kept in living use by the Greek Church. No editor before Bishop Fell (1675) mentioned the versions on his title-page: no scholar before Richard Simon (1690) devoted to them a separate and special enquiry.[1] Bentley (1720), among

[1] Fell '*Accesserunt . . . variantes lectiones ex plus* 100 *MSS codicibus et antiquis versionibus collectae*': Simon *Histoire critique des versions du Nouveau Testament*. For fuller details I may refer to my article 'New Testament, Text of,' in Murray's *Concise Bible Dictionary* pp. 589 ff.

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older critics, was the one to set most store on the evidence of a version: for he claimed that it was possible to restore the original text by a comparison of the Greek of Origen and the Latin of St Jerome, and that between these two the agreement would be found to be so close that 'there will scarce be two hundred places' where they would differ, and where therefore the true reading could be in doubt. Bentley's plan of a parallel Greek and Latin text—the Latin being still that of St Jerome's Vulgate—was carried into effect by Lachmann (1842–1850), though Lachmann no longer claimed that the result was the original text of the apostles, but only the earliest ascertainable text, that of the fourth century. Since Lachmann, however, editors have been dazzled by the glamour of the discovery of the two great Greek MSS, and have been in consequence too much occupied in debating the relative merits of the earlier and later Greek evidence to pay much real attention to the versions. ℵ was first known, B was first accurately known, in the sixties of the last century. Tischendorf[1] was specially concerned to maintain the superior merits of ℵ, his own discovery: Hort (1881) was the prophet of codex B.[2] Of von Soden's great undertaking only volume I (Prolegomena pp. 1–1648) has yet appeared: but the fundamental principles on which in effect he sets aside the earliest versions are already sketched.[3]

Of the first of these three great critics not much need here be said. Tischendorf's text is, in my own opinion, right in many places where the text of Hort is wrong: but it is right, as it were, rather because a sort of divining instinct, the result of his long acquaintance with his material, led him to the truth, than because he had really, at least in the sense that Hort and von Soden have done, argued out his principles.

Hort was the last and perhaps the ablest of a long line of editors of the Greek Testament, commencing in the eighteenth century, who very tentatively at first, but quite ruthlessly in the

[1] *Novum Testamentum Graece ad antiquissimos testes denuo recensuit, apparatum criticum omni studio perfectum apposuit, commentationem isagogicam praetexuit* Constantinus Tischendorf: editio octava critica maior, 1864–1872 (prolegomena by Gregory 1884–1894).

[2] *The New Testament in the original Greek: the text revised* by B. F. Westcott and F. J. A. Hort (vol. i text, vol. ii [by Hort] introduction and appendix), 1881.

[3] See below p. 186.

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end, threw over the later in favour of the earlier Greek MSS: and that issue will never have to be tried again. In Hort's hands this preference for the earlier MSS was pushed to its most extreme form, and came to mean an almost exclusive reliance on the two earliest of all, B and ℵ. Where internal evidence was clear, the results were almost uniformly favourable (so he argued) to ℵB, and, if these differed from one another, to B: the presumption drawn from these clearer cases might then be legitimately extended to those perhaps more numerous instances where internal evidence, taken alone, spoke with an uncertain sound. Once more it is not likely that posterity will disown either the method on which Hort worked or up to a certain point his conclusions: B, as it is the oldest, so it is also the most valuable of our Greek MSS. But while we follow Hort so far, we cannot help feeling that his attack and defence is primarily concerned—so strong was still the *praeiudicium* in favour of the Received Text—with the issue as between B and the *Receptus*, and not with the further issue as between B and the so-called 'Western' authorities, Greek, Latin, and Syriac. This is the real problem before the textual critics of our generation: thirty years ago it was hardly yet mature. Even the material was not so full then as it is to-day: the Sinai Syriac Gospels, for instance, were still unknown.[1] Nevertheless, we owe to the insight of Hort some most important preliminary steps, which have cleared the ground in relation to the 'Western' text and made further advance possible. In the classification of documents he identified, by means of the evidence of St Cyprian, the first stratum of the Old Latin version in the 'African' MSS *k* and *e*. In the construction of the text he went beyond any previous editor by following, in certain striking cases, the sole authority of 'Western' witnesses. It is true that these cases are limited to the last three chapters of St Luke, that in all of them the 'Western' text gives a shorter reading than the rest, and that the omitted words, though their genuineness is given up, are still retained within

[1] Prof. Burkitt has pointed out (*Encyclopaedia Biblica* iv 4990 n. 3) that Hort's most decisive instance of the excellence of 'subsingular' readings of B, the various references to the cock-crowing in St Mark's account of Peter's denials (xiv 30, 68, 72: *Introduction* § 323), now turns out to be exactly reproduced in the Sinai Syriac.

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double brackets in Westcott and Hort's printed text.[1] It is true also that one Greek MS, the codex Bezae, is found among the authorities which omit; and perhaps Hort would not have deferred even in these instances to Western authority, if the Latin MSS had not found some Greek support, for we have already seen that he would rather postulate a primitive corruption than admit that the true text of Apoc. iii 1, 7 had been preserved in a Latin father alone.[2] To Hort in fact D ranks as a primary witness; the Old Latin and the Old Syriac do not, but are called in only to bear testimony to one or other of two variants in the Greek. But D, however valuable in company with other witnesses, has far too large a personal equation to be a safe guide by itself: and if Hort regarded D as the most representative (because the chief Greek) Western witness, it is perhaps hardly wonderful that he concluded 'bold licence of treatment' 'paraphrase' and 'readiness to adopt extraneous matter' to be the characteristics of the Western text. Yet the reader may be reminded that in the last preceding article of this series we had occasion to discuss five *variae lectiones* in the Gospels where the Western witnesses gave what was apparently the truest but in any case the shortest reading.[3]

Those who view, as we have been trying to do, the problem of the New Testament text from a historical and chronological standpoint, cannot fail to be conscious of the gap between the end of the second century—behind which date we have admitted that the evidence of the versions does not carry us—and the beginning of the fourth, the earliest date assigned to the MS on which Hort's text is based: and of course Hort himself admits, and it was even then undeniable, that 'the most widely spread text of Ante-Nicene times' was the Western. The discovery, since Hort wrote, of a papyrus leaf containing most of the first

[1] These 'Western Non-Interpolations'—to adopt the rather cumbrous phrase by which Hort means to indicate that all other texts are interpolated and that the Western alone is free from interpolation—are the following: Luc. xxii 19*b* 20; xxiv 3*b*; 6*a*; 12; 36*b*; 40; 51*b*; 52*b*: the authorities which omit are D and the five Old Latin MSS *a b e ff l* (besides *i* in the only one of the eight passages where it is extant), supported sometimes by the Old Syriac and once (xxiv 51*b*) by the first hand of ℵ.

[2] *J. T. S.* x (April 1909) pp. 373, 374.

[3] Luc. xii 14, xvii 29, xix 38: Marc. xi 9, 10: Jo. xii 13. Only in Luc. xii 14 did D give the short reading.

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chapter of St Matthew in a text closely agreeing, even in spelling of proper names, with the text of B,[1] may be fairly held to carry back the whole B text of the Gospels into the third century. But against this must be set the defection of the two earliest witnesses—the only version, in fact, and the only father, earlier than Origen—whose support he claimed. The version of Lower or Northern Egypt, called Memphitic or Coptic or Bohairic in the nomenclature of different scholars, is the version that 'can be pronounced' most 'extensively non-Western' (§ 177): and the greater part of it 'cannot well be later than the second century' (§ 120). Recent research, however, tends to bring this version down to the time of Cyril of Alexandria (with whose text it rather closely agrees), if not indeed later still.[2] Again, Clement of Alexandria is the only writer earlier than Origen to whom Hort can appeal to shew that 'many non-Western readings . . . were in existence by the end of the second century' (§ 160). But the careful examination of Clement's Biblical text by Mr Barnard, together with the illuminating summary of results prefixed to it by Prof. Burkitt, has taught us that Clement's 'many non-Western readings' are a vanishing quantity, and that his real affinities are rather with the Old Latin and the Old Syriac.[3]

It is tolerably clear then that if the exclusive credit of the Greek MSS is to be saved, and the older versions and fathers are to be still refused rank as primary witnesses to the text, some further explanation of obvious *prima facie* difficulties must be given: and this is exactly what Freiherr von Soden[4] has attempted to do. Von Soden rules out the unsupported testimony of the Old Latin and Old Syriac as remorselessly as Hort himself: he approaches his subject from the side of the Greek MSS more

[1] Grenfell and Hunt *Oxyrhynchus Papyri* i [1898] p. 4.

[2] See especially the article by the Italian scholar, Prof. Guidi, in the Göttingen *Nachrichten der K. Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften*, 1889.

[3] *The Biblical Text of Clement of Alexandria in the Four Gospels and the Acts*, by P. M. Barnard, with Introduction by F. C. Burkitt: Cambridge 'Texts and Studies' v 5, 1899.

[4] *Die Schriften des Neuen Testaments in ihrer ältesten erreichbaren Textgestalt, hergestellt auf Grund ihrer Textgeschichte* von Dr Theol. Hermann Freiherr von Soden. Berlin: I i (1902), ii (1906), iii (1907). In describing von Soden's position I have derived much assistance from Mr Valentine-Richards's brief but clear sketch, *Cambridge Biblical Essays* (1909) pp. 535–539.

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exclusively than even Hort, or Tischendorf, or any other of the nineteenth-century editors: but he sees that the inconvenient evidence of the versions has to be explained somehow, and, unsatisfactory as his explanation is, it at least recognizes the existence of the difficulty.

In von Soden's terminology the 'Western' text disappears entirely. Following out the scanty indications contained in St Jerome, he first looks for the recensions carried out by Hesychius at Alexandria and by Lucian at Antioch. The latter he finds in the 'Syrian revision' of Hort; and as this became ultimately the Received Text, he labels it K for Κοινή. So far he agrees with previous editors: and though from this point he separates himself from Hort's notation, it is possible that he will find some support for his further view that our specially Egyptian witnesses, from the end of the third century onwards, B and ℵ included, represent the otherwise unknown recension of Hesychius (H for Ἡσύχιος). But Jerome also speaks of the 'codices Adamantii', MSS preserving the New Testament text of Origen, as those which he himself elected to follow; and it can scarcely be doubted that it was in the library of Caesarea, where the traditions of Origen were maintained by Pamphilus and Eusebius, that he saw and used the *codices* in question. A third form of text therefore emerges in Palestine (I for Ἱεροσόλυμα); and though we have no such direct evidence for it in our extant Greek MSS as we have for the other two, we have a number of clues to its character in the repeated agreements of the Old Latin and Old Syriac, the bilingual codex Bezae, and the two Greek families headed respectively by the cursives 1 and 13 (the Ferrar Group). So far this text would appear to be our old friend the 'Western' text under another name: but as it is an essential part of the theory that the I-text owes its existence to the labours of Origen and his followers, and is therefore posterior to the Old Latin and probably to the Old Syriac, it follows that readings to which only these versions testify can have had no place in it.

I and H and K are therefore three independent editions of the text, all made by about the year 300 A.D.: I-H-K, on the other hand, is the fundamental text, which, by comparison of these three editions, can be restored as the original basis of all

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of them; and this common basis cannot of course be later than the third century and may well be earlier.

But the evidence of the most ancient versions is not always in agreement with this resultant I-H-K text: and it might be natural therefore to suppose that by comparison of I-H-K with the Old Latin and Old Syriac we could mount to a still higher stage in an I-H-K-L-S text. Only that would mean the admission of non-Greek evidence, and this von Soden is as determined as Hort to exclude from final consideration. His escape from the dilemma is ingenious: but on this side at least of the Channel he has found few to follow him, and the evidence of history, broadly considered, appears to be fatal to his theory. Tatian is the name by which he conjures away all opposing forces: the influence of the Diatessaron, according to him, accounts for practically every reading in the Gospels where versions or fathers older than Origen venture to differ from the I-H-K text. But the Diatessaron is known to us in history through its connexion with the Syriac Church: and it is of the origin and early progress of Syriac Christianity that we have in this chapter to speak.

The conquests of Alexander had reached eastwards as far as the Indus, and a veneer of Hellenism was thereby spread over the whole of Western and West-Central Asia. But beyond the Euphrates Greek influences were not given time to penetrate very deep below the surface: as early as the middle of the third century B.C. the conterminous kingdoms of the Seleucidae—whose dominions had included Mesopotamia, Assyria, and Persia—and of the Bactrians—who represented Greek civilization in Afghanistan, Turkestan, and the Punjab—began to be pushed apart from one another by the successful revolt of the Parthians. Before the Christian era, the Parthian empire had acquired the whole ground from the Euphrates to the Hindu Kush, and had confronted on equal terms the advancing empire of the Romans. Mesopotamia (the country, that is, between the Euphrates on the west and the Tigris on the east), and the mountainous kingdom of Armenia to the north of it, formed during several centuries the debateable ground between the two empires, and belonged to the sphere of influence now of the one, now of the other. In the

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second century A. D. the Romans gradually obtained a definite footing beyond the Euphrates, where that river makes an immense half-circle as it first approaches, and then recedes from, Antioch and the Mediterranean. Within this arc were situated Carrhae, the scene of Crassus's defeat by the Parthians in 53 B. C., Edessa, the capital of the first Christian State, and Nisibis, the great frontier fortress which marked the limit of the eastern travels of Abercius of Hieropolis.[1] The substitution of Persian for Parthian rule in A. D. 226 seemed for some time to make little difference in the situation; and indeed the results of the conquests of Diocletian and Galerius at the end of the third century represent the high-water mark of Roman advance. But in the fourth century the Persian State gradually re-asserted its power, and began to press the Roman boundaries steadily backwards till in 363 Mesopotamia was divided between the two empires, Nisibis becoming Persian while Edessa remained Roman.

The dominating movement of early Christianity had been towards the West: Antioch, Ephesus, Rome, these were the successive head-quarters of the Apostles and centres of evangelization. St Paul would not have admitted a racial or geographical any more than a social limit to the preaching of Christianity: slaves equally with freemen, barbarian and Scythian as well as Jew and Greek, were to share of right in the good news of the Gospel.[2] But in his own practice the ideal which he set himself to translate into fact was rather the proclamation of the Gospel message from one end of the Roman dominions to the other, from Jerusalem to Spain: and the direction which the Apostle of the Gentiles thus gave to the first Christian missions anticipated, if it did not rather itself go far to fix, the course of Christian history. Yet Jewries of no less importance lay on other sides of Palestine. Alexandria did indeed enter, though at a relatively late moment, into the main current of Church life. But beyond the eastern limits of the empire, Josephus tells us that across the Euphrates there had been since the Captivity and were still in his own day 'countless myriads' of Jews, 'exceeding all reckoning'.[3] Of especial importance would be the settlements in the great towns of Babylon on the lower Euphrates, and

[1] See above p. 181.

[2] Col. iii 11.

[3] Josephus *Antiquitates* XI v 2.

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Seleucia-Ctesiphon on the lower Tigris. That some of the Apostles of the Circumcision should have turned their steps thitherwards was almost inevitable: and tradition connects the names of Thomas, Thaddaeus, and Simon the Cananaean, with India, Parthia, or Mesopotamia. The Greek legends indeed of the preaching of Simon among the Parthians and at Babylon are too vague or too late to secure credit: but the Syriac *Acts of Judas Thomas*, which place the labours and martyrdom of the apostle in India, and the Syriac *Teaching of Addai* which connects the same Judas Thomas, as well as Thaddaeus, with the church of Edessa, are both of them documents of the third century. For St Thomas in Parthia there is also Greek authority in Eusebius (*H. E.* iii 1), and it is probable that the authority is not merely that of the historian, but that the quotation from Origen extends back over the whole enumeration of the missionary spheres of the chief apostles.[1]

It will be noted that the further east we go, the weaker the testimony. For India we have only the Acts of Thomas: and though these have at least one point of contact with real history in the name of king Gundaphorus, they are highly coloured by Encratite Gnosticism. But Syriac Gnosticism of the school, for instance, of Bardesanes of Edessa was in close touch with oriental influences, and it is possible that the Indian setting of the story was borrowed wholesale from a Buddhist model.[2] For Parthia the evidence is somewhat stronger: yet, whatever degree of truth may underlie the 'tradition' cited by Origen (or Eusebius), it is certain that we cannot point to any known evidence of the continuous existence of a Christian Church under the Parthians: and indeed, a century of Persian domination elapses before the first traces emerge of Christian organization or Christian literature. At the council of Nicaea, one bishop, 'John of Persia', was present from those regions: the *Homilies* of Aphraates, 'the

[1] Θωμᾶς μέν, ὡς ἡ παράδοσις περιέχει, τὴν Παρθίαν εἴληχεν [then follows information about Andrew, John, Peter, and Paul]. ταῦτα Ὠριγένει κατὰ λέξιν ἐν τρίτῳ τόμῳ τῶν εἰς ΤΗΝ ΓΕΝΕCΙΝ ἐΞΗΓΗΤΙΚΩΝ εἴρηται. The Latin of Rufinus inserts 'Matthaeus Aethiopiam, Bartholomaeus Indiam citeriorem'. [Add for St Thomas in Parthia the *Clementine Recognitions* ix 29, and Cotelier's note *ad loc.*]

[2] So von Gutschmid *Die Königsnamen in den apocryphen Apostelgeschichten*, Rheinisches Museum für Philologie, N. F. xix 161; followed by Lipsius 'Acts of Apostles (Apocryphal)' in the *Dictionary of Christian Biography* i 23.

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Persian sage', are dated A.D. 337–345: and the great persecution under Sapor belongs to the years immediately following.

It is rather to a tiny kingdom situate between Roman and Parthian territory, and under Roman rather than Parthian protection, that we must look for the first origin and developement of a native Syrian Church: Edessa is, in fact, far nearer to Antioch than to either Babylon on the south-east or Jerusalem on the south-west. The *Teaching of Addai* recounts how the Abgar of that day—the title was borne by most of the successive kinglets of Edessa—wrote to Jesus 'the Good Saviour' at Jerusalem to beg Him to come and exercise His powers of healing on himself. Our Lord in answer promised that after His Ascension one of the disciples should be sent: and in due course Judas Thomas charged Addai [i.e. Thaddaeus] the Apostle, one of the Seventy, with the mission. By the cures and preaching of Thaddaeus the king and his subjects were converted to the faith. The story was translated in part for the *Church History* of Eusebius: but of the story as first current the extant Syriac appears to be an expanded form, just as also the Spanish lady-pilgrim Eucheria when she visited Edessa at a later date received there a copy of the Acts on a more circumstantial scale than what she had been familiar with at home.[1]

The conversion of the Edessene State is of course antedated in the tradition, perhaps by as much as a century and a half: but soon after A.D. 200, at any rate, the Abgar was Christian, and the commencements of evangelization must therefore go some way back into the preceding century. A basis of fact is all the more likely to underlie the statement of the *Teaching* that Palut, third bishop of Edessa, sought for consecration at the hands of Serapion of Antioch, because it is irreconcileable as it stands with the legend of apostolic foundation: if the bishop consecrated about A.D. 200 was only the third, the first cannot be brought into direct relation with the apostles. Serapion in turn, we are told, had been ordained by Zephyrinus of Rome, while the

[1] Eus. *H. E.* i 13 *ad fin.* ἐκ τῆς Σύρων μεταβληθέντα φωνῆς: *S. Silviae Peregrinatio* in Geyer's Itinera Hierosolymitana (Vienna *Corpus S. E. L.* xxxix p. 64) 'et licet in patria exemplaria ipsarum haberem, tamen gratius mihi visum est ut et ibi eas de ipso acciperem, ne quid forsitan minus ad nos in patria pervenisset: nam vere amplius est quod hic accepi'. But the date of this pilgrimage is probably not so early as has been supposed.

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consecrator of Zephyrinus was the apostle Peter. The Christian Abgar visited Rome, and was given a brilliant reception by the emperor Septimius Severus, about 206 (ten years later Edessene independence, such as it was, came to an end, when the kingdom was finally incorporated in the Roman empire), and in the references to Zephyrinus and St Peter we may perhaps see a conscious Romanization of the traditions of the local church. Historical in the strict sense they certainly are not: for even if we interpret the second of the two statements to mean no more than the descent by succession of Zephyrinus from St Peter,[1] the first of them is disproved by the single consideration that Serapion was bishop of Antioch some ten years earlier than Zephyrinus became bishop of Rome. Nevertheless, all goes to suggest that the connexions of Edessa, ecclesiastical as well as secular, were during the third century with the Roman empire rather than with the East: and there is nothing to suggest that the contrary was the case at any earlier period of its history. It may even be conjectured that the campaign of Marcus Aurelius, which in the year 164 brought Edessa finally under Roman suzerainty, opened at the same time 'a great door and effectual' to the Christian mission from the West. At Nisibis, some way further east than Edessa and not far from the Tigris, Abercius found, it is true, an orthodox Catholic community: but Nisibis too was in northern Mesopotamia, and received a Roman garrison at the beginning of Severus's reign, A.D. 194, if not earlier. Of Christianity in the Parthian dominions proper, at Babylon or Seleucia, we hear at this period nothing.

To the church of Edessa then we shall naturally look as the centre from which the first New Testament in the Syriac vernacular would be likely to have spread. And here again the *Teaching of Addai* records for us, in words partly quoted at an earlier point,[2] the Edessene traditions of the origin of the Syriac

[1] So Burkitt *Early Eastern Christianity* (1904) p. 26: R. Duval, however, *Anciennes Littératures chrétiennes: La Littérature syriaque* (1899) p. 115, interprets literally. It is interesting to note that the *Teaching of Addai* already knows the chronology of St Peter's episcopate: 'Peter had been designated by our Lord, and was bishop of Rome during twenty-five years in the time of the Caesar who reigned thirteen years.' Clearly Claudius (A.D. 41–54) is meant: it is also clear, I think, that the *Teaching* used a chronicle which synchronized popes and emperors.

[2] *J. T. S.* x (April 1909) 355.

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Bible: 'the Law and the Prophets, and the Gospel in which ye read daily before the people, and the letters of Paul which Simon Cephas sent from the city of Rome, and the Acts of the Twelve Apostles which John, the son of Zebedee, sent from Ephesus: of these writings should ye read in the churches of Christ, and with them ye should read nought else.' What exactly is meant by the word 'Gospel' in the singular, another passage from the same *Teaching* makes clear: 'and much people gathered together daily, and came to the Divine Service, and to the Old Testament, and to the New of the Diatessaron.'

A generation ago it would have been necessary to enter here into a long examination of the probable meaning of the word 'Diatessaron', and of the objects and method of Tatian its author, such as for instance Lightfoot carried out in the last of his famous papers upon the book called *Supernatural Religion*.[1] Even now no fragments of it, other than quotations, have been recovered either in Greek or in Syriac: but two translations of the Diatessaron itself, and one of a commentary on it, have come to light in Latin, Arabic and Armenian respectively, and between them we get a good general idea of its contents and arrangement. An Armenian version of the commentary upon the Diatessaron by the first of the great Syriac fathers, Ephraim of Edessa († A.D. 373), was published in 1836, and forty years later was republished in a Latin translation from the Armenian. When this at last attracted the notice of scholars, it was realized that we had all along had in our hands an ancient Latin rendering in the Gospel Harmony of the codex Fuldensis,[2] written for Victor, bishop of Capua, in A.D. 546: the preface tells us that Victor had come across a Harmony of the Gospels, which, after examining the accounts of early harmonies, he decided must be Tatian's, and his adaptation of this Harmony to the Vulgate text takes the place of the separate Gospels in the MS. And lastly an Arabic version, made no doubt from the Syriac and preserved in two fourteenth-century MSS, was

[1] *Contemporary Review*, May 1877: chapter ix (pp. 272–287) of the collected edition.

[2] The codex Fuldensis has been at Fulda probably ever since the time of St Boniface. I agree with Dom Chapman, *Early History of the Vulgate Gospels* p. 157, in thinking it likely that Boniface received the book from Northumbria, and that Benedict Biscop or Ceolfrid had brought it to England from Italy.

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published at Rome in 1888. By the convergence of these three lines of evidence we can see that the Diatessaron was a Harmony in which the Four Gospels were woven, not unskilfully, into one continuous story, and we can for the most part restore in detail the order of its material. But that is not the same thing as restoring the text: the Arabic version is assimilated to the Peshitta, the Latin to the Vulgate, while Ephraim is not only liable, in his Armenian dress, to contamination from the Armenian Bible, but often passes over the text of several successive verses. To some extent we can fill up the gap from patristic citations: for although not a single word of it can be recovered from Greek authors, the Christian Syriac writers of the third and fourth centuries bear out for the most part the indications of the *Teaching of Addai*, and continue to quote the Gospel mainly through the medium of the Diatessaron. If this is true of Aphraates, it is truer still of Ephraim, who not only expounded the text of the Diatessaron in the Gospel commentary, but habitually quoted from it in his other works. In fact there is perhaps no Syriac writing earlier than A. D. 400, with the single exception of the Acts of Judas Thomas, which does not shew acquaintance with the Diatessaron; and it is certain that it must have been, down to that date, the popular if not also the official Gospel of the Syriac-speaking Church.[1]

When, where, and why, did Tatian compose this Harmony, and what was the secret of its success in Syriac circles and its failure at the same time elsewhere? For answer to this and all questions about Tatian we turn first to the *Church History* of Eusebius.[2]

The theological history of Tatian Eusebius describes out of St Irenaeus's great work *Against Heresies*: Tatian was a pupil of Justin Martyr's, and as long as his master lived did not give vent to unorthodox views; but after Justin's martyrdom [A.D. 163], when he succeeded to the teaching chair, he advertised his independence by seceding from the Church and setting up a school

[1] See Burkitt *S. Ephraim's Quotations from the Gospel*, 'Texts and Studies' vii 2 (Cambridge, 1901), and *Evangelion da-Mepharreshe* (Cambridge, 1904) ii 101–160, 180–186. [I take this opportunity of putting on record the special obligations under which I stand, in many paragraphs of this chapter, to Professor Burkitt's writings: though I have done my best to reinterpret his material for myself.]

[2] Eus. *H. E.* iv 28, 29; v 13.

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of his own on the lines of a modified Gnosticism. From Valentinus he borrowed the Aeons; from Marcion the rejection of marriage and meats, whence he acquired the name of 'Encratite': while his own special contribution to heretical thought, was the tenet that Adam the first man, ὁ πρωτόπλαστος, was outside the pale of salvation. To Irenaeus's sketch of Tatian's theology Eusebius adds an account of his literary output. His work on the New Testament is very unfavourably depicted. 'He put together a sort of hotch-potch of the Gospels, which he named Τὸ Διὰ τεσσάρων: and this is still current in some quarters. Of the Pauline Epistles it is said that he published (save the mark!) a revised and improved edition. A better known and indeed quite creditable effort was his apologetic work addressed *To the Greeks*, in which he proved the superior antiquity of Moses and the Prophets to all the favourite heroes of the Greeks.' And to these at a later point Eusebius adds (on the authority of Rhodon, himself a pupil of Tatian's at Rome) another book of *Problems*, in which he professed to shew the uncertainty and obscurity of the Divine Scriptures.

The language of Irenaeus—Ἰουστίνου ἀκροατὴς γεγονώς, and ἐφ' ὅσον συνῆν ἐκείνῳ—seems to indicate that Justin presided over a sort of School[1] of Christian philosophy in Rome (something like the Catechetical School of Alexandria, though no doubt less relatively important), and that Tatian was first his pupil and then perhaps his colleague. The language of Rhodon—μαθητευθεὶς ἐπὶ Ῥώμης, ὡς αὐτὸς ἱστορεῖ, Ταταινῷ—suggests that Tatian succeeded Justin in his teaching chair, and that Rhodon attended his lectures. When then Tatian, about A.D. 165–170 (for the words of Irenaeus do not allow of much interval between Justin's martyrdom and Tatian's secession), had developed his Gnostic leanings, his School naturally ceased to be recognized by the Catholics, and one would rather gather that Rhodon succeeded him as the philosopher, so to say, of the Roman Church. But the lecture-

[1] I suspect that the enigmatic answer given by Justin at his trial to the question of the prefect Rusticus refers not, as has been generally assumed, to his meeting-place for worship but to his σχολή or lecture-room: Ῥουστικὸς ἔπαρχος εἶπεν· Εἰπέ, ποῦ συνέρχεσθε, ἢ εἰς ποῖον τόπον ἀθροίζεις τοὺς μαθητάς σου; Ἰουστῖνος εἶπεν· Ἐγὼ ἐπάνω μέχρι τινὸς Μαρτίνου τοῦ Τιμοθίνου βαλανείου . . . καὶ εἴ τις ἐβούλετο ἀφικνεῖσθαι παρ' ἐμοὶ ἐκοινώνουν αὐτῷ τῶν τῆς ἀληθείας λόγων, *Acta Martyrum Selecta*, ed. O. von Gebhardt, 1902, p. 19.

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room was presumably private and not Church property: and again the language of Irenaeus—*ἴδιον χαρακτῆρα διδασκαλείου συνεστήσατο*—implies a further period during which Tatian remained on in Rome, and continued to expound his doctrines from a professorial chair. There St Irenaeus leaves him: and history has no more to tell. But it does not seem likely that Tatian can have left Rome much before A.D. 175.

If, or when, he did leave Rome, where did he go? We have no direct evidence: but we do happen to know from whence he came to Rome. He was born, he tells us in the extant *Address to Greeks*,[1] in the land of Assyria—he is consequently identified by most scholars with the 'Assyrian' whom Clement of Alexandria names among his teachers[2]—and it would therefore be natural that when, in later life, his position in Rome became untenable, his thoughts and his steps should turn towards his early home. There, among a simpler and ruder people, the Christian mission was still in its infancy, and the theological differences which parted him from the Catholics of the greater churches may have been but half understood. The tide which, twenty or thirty years before, had risen high enough to threaten the very strongholds of apostolic Christianity, was on the ebb: where Justin had been outclassed by Valentinus and Marcion, already Irenaeus and Clement were beginning, what Tertullian and Origen completed, the recovery for the Church of her lost ground. Within the empire Gnosticism was played out, and the sign of its defeat was the organization of its adherents into separate sects: but it had come from the East, and it was just in places like Edessa that the retreating movement still held its ground within the Christian community. The one name that is historical in the early annals of Edessene Christianity, outside the episcopal list, is that of Bardesanes (A.D. 154–222), and of Bardesanes half our authorities tell us that he was a Catholic before he was a Gnostic, and the other half that he was a Gnostic first and a Catholic afterwards: the truth being, as I suppose, that he occupied the same anomalous position as the great Gnostics at Rome a generation or two earlier, or many of the Arians a century and a half later—a position which the fourth-century narrators of Edessene traditions, when Gnosticism in all its forms was a *res iudicata* of the past, were

[1] *Ad Graecos* 42. [2] *Strom.* i 11.

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naturally unable to realize. If Bardesanes could maintain himself among Syriac-speaking Christians at the beginning of the third century, Tatian could have done the same thing twenty-five years earlier: and if the newly-founded Church of Mesopotamia had as yet no vernacular version of the Gospels, it would the more readily welcome a rendering of the Gospel Harmony which the returning philosopher brought back with him to his native country. Whether or no Tatian uses 'Assyria' in the sense of Trajan's short-lived province of that name beyond the Tigris, he was doubtless familiar with the Syriac language from his youth.

That this Syriac Diatessaron was a translation, and not the original, is not really doubtful. It is true that the evidence of Theodoret may be, and perhaps should be, interpreted of the Syriac Diatessaron rather than the Greek: in the eight hundred parishes of his diocese he had found, he says,[1] two hundred copies of the Diatessaron, all of which he replaced by copies of the separate Gospels. He does not say whether they were Greek or Syriac, and Cyrrhus, his see-town, is about equidistant from Antioch in one direction and from the Euphrates in the other: it is, however, natural to connect this extensive use of the Diatessaron just west of the river with what we know of its popularity just east of the river at Edessa, and to conclude that the villagers round Cyrrhus spoke Syriac rather than Greek. On the other hand Eusebius, though he had apparently never seen the Diatessaron,[2] assumes without hesitation that it was a Greek work: and it can hardly have been in any other language that Victor of Capua made acquaintance with it. There is no trace of its existence in Latin: and Victor was an accomplished Greek scholar, whose Scholia on Genesis include material from (pseudo-)Polycarp, Origen, Basil, Diodore of Tarsus, Severian of Gabala, and certain Ῥήματα Γερόντων.[3] Doubtless it is strange to find even a Greek Diatessaron in Italy in the sixth century: and, partly on this account, I am somewhat tempted to identify

[1] *Haer. Fab.* i 20.

[2] It is interesting to note that the Syriac translator of the *Church History* inserts here the vernacular name by which the Diatessaron was known in contrast with the Separate Gospels, 'now this is the Gospel of the Mixed, *Evangelion da-Mehallete*': Burkitt *op. cit.* ii 175.

[3] Pitra *Spicilegium Solesmense* i 265–277: compare Chapman's *Vulgate Gospels* p. 80.

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Victor, the bishop and scholiast of Capua, with Victor the shadowy presbyter of Antioch, to whom we owe the Greek catena on St Mark.

The external evidence of Eusebius and Victor for a Greek origin agrees with internal evidence of the Diatessaron itself which points to a Roman origin. Prof. Burkitt catalogues a number of instances where the underlying Greek text of the Diatessaron differs from our other Syriac evidence and agrees with the evidence of the Old Latin[1]: in other words it is 'Western' in the geographical sense as well as in the wider sense in which the term is used by Hort and his school. But if drawn up at Rome, it remains so far an open question whether it was by Tatian the Catholic or Tatian the heretic: and the answer to the question is not without some bearing on the extent of the influence it is likely to have exerted within the Church.

Theodoret had no doubt that the Diatessaron revealed on enquiry indications of a heretical purpose: Tatian, he alleges, removed from his Harmony the genealogies, with all other passages which shew Christ as born according to the flesh from the seed of David. But Theodoret wanted to make the worst of a work which he had set himself systematically to replace. Victor of Capua, on the other hand, looked upon the work as of great value for the understanding of the Gospels, and conjectured that it might have been written under Justin's influence: even if that was not so and Tatian was a heresiarch already when he composed it, the words are still the words of Christ, 'verba Domini mei cognoscens libenter amplector'.

Modern scholars are as divided upon this subject as Theodoret and Victor. Hort will tell us (on Matt. xxvii 49) that 'there is no evidence that this obscure work [the Diatessaron] was known out of Syria, where Tatian founded his sect; and the evil repute attached to his name renders the adoption of a startling reading from such a source highly improbable'. It was the independence of the great Greek uncials, which have inserted Jo. xix 34 into the Passion according to St Matthew, that Hort was here concerned to maintain against the suggestion of corruption from the Diatessaron: but it is more generally by the opponents of the 'Western' text that Tatian is summoned as the *deus ex machina*,

[1] Burkitt *op. cit.* ii 191–201.

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and in their conception the influence of the Diatessaron is as greatly exaggerated as in Hort's it is minimized. By Dr Rendel Harris Tatian is held responsible for all the 'Western' element in the Syriac versions, while Tatian himself and all other Western-minded texts, the Sahidic version of Southern Egypt included, are derived from the Latin column of a primitive bilingual (graeco-latin) codex.[1] In von Soden's scheme, as we have seen, Tatian is made to play an even larger part, and the Diatessaron becomes the one all-sufficing explanation for serious transpositions of the Gospel text. All idiosyncrasies of the Old Latin and the Old Syriac, all errors of the copies used by Irenaeus and Clement, are due to the same pernicious influence of the work of Tatian.

The problems here raised involve obviously a comparison of the text of the Diatessaron with other forms of the Gospel in Syriac and Latin, for which we have not as yet completed the necessary collection of material. Our next chapter will be devoted to the Old Latin version: for the remainder of the present chapter we address ourselves to the subject of the earliest Syriac version of the separate Gospels.

Much has been written on the question whether the Syriac Diatessaron is earlier or later than the Syriac Gospels. But the answer has really been given by the accumulation of evidence for the extensive and almost exclusive use of the Diatessaron by Syriac writers between A.D. 200 and 400. It is quite inconceivable that if the Four Gospels had once rooted themselves in popular knowledge and affection, they could ever have been superseded by a Harmony: even an oral interpretation of the Greek Gospels into Syriac, if it had had time to become familiar, could hardly have been so completely ousted: the Diatessaron must therefore have been the first form in which the Edessene church possessed a Gospel in the vernacular at all. Hence it seems that we can scarcely date the introduction of the Diatessaron at Edessa later than about A.D. 180. For more than two centuries it maintained its sway: it was probably not till the fifth century that the Peshitta version was officially substituted for it. But long before that an attempt had been made to acclimatize in the Syriac tongue the 'Separate' Gospels in place

[1] *A Study of Codex Bezae* ('Texts and Studies' II i, 1891) p. 177.

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of the 'Mixed': and unsuccessful as the attempt was, the recovery of the manuscripts which represent it has provided us with some of our earliest testimony to the text of the Four Gospels.

Among the splendid collection of ancient Syriac MSS which the British Museum acquired in the middle of last century, from the monastery of St Mary in the Nitrian desert south-west of Alexandria, was a fragmentary MS of an unknown version of the Gospels, which from its first editor, Canon Cureton,[1] has received the name Curetonian. The MS, which dates from about the beginning of the fifth century, arranges the Gospels in the unusual order Matthew, Mark, John, Luke: and as it has further experienced the unusual fate that the beginning and end have suffered less loss than the central portion, it results that the first three-fourths of St Matthew and the last three-fourths of St Luke are for the most part extant, while there is little left of St John, and of St Mark nothing but the last four verses of the Longer Conclusion.[2] The total of the eighty-six leaves amounts to about half the whole Gospels.

To the more extreme conservative school it had become almost an article of faith that the Syriac Vulgate or Peshitta was as old as the second century; and therefore any other version of the Gospels in Syriac must naturally be posterior to it. On the other hand critics like Griesbach and Hug a hundred years ago had already concluded on internal evidence that the Peshitta New Testament, exactly like the Latin Vulgate, was a revision, by the help of Greek MSS, of an earlier version in the vernacular. Cureton's MS in the main fulfilled the required conditions as a representative of this lost original, and Westcott and Hort labelled it without hesitation Old Syriac, 'syr-vt', though they admitted that 'many readings suggest that, like the Latin version, it degenerated by transcription and perhaps also by

[1] *Remains of a very antient Recension of the Four Gospels in Syriac hitherto unknown in Europe: discovered edited and translated* by William Cureton, D.D., F.R.S. London, 1858. To the British Museum leaves have to be added three leaves at Berlin (in MS Orient. Quart. 528), edited by Roediger in the Proceedings of the Berlin Academy of Sciences for July, 1872.

[2] In detail, Matt. i 1–viii 22, x 32–xxiii 25: Marc. xvi 17–20: Jo. i 1–42, iii 5–viii 19, and fragments of xiv: Luc. ii 48–iii 16, vii 33–xxiv 44.

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irregular revision . . . a single MS cannot be expected to tell us more of the Old Syriac generally than we should learn from any one average Old Latin MS respecting Old Latin texts generally' (§ 118).

By far the most valuable accession of material to the New Testament critic, since Westcott and Hort published their edition in 1881, is the discovery—at the same monastery of St Catharine on Mount Sinai which a generation earlier disclosed the Codex Sinaiticus of the Greek Bible, ℵ—of a second, less fragmentary and less degenerate, representative of the Old Syriac Gospels. This Sinai Syriac is a palimpsest, and therefore not always legible with certainty: but out of 159 pages which the Gospels originally covered only seventeen are missing, so that when all allowances are made the text is a far completer one than Cureton's. The later writing is dated A. D. 778: the original scribe may have written at the end of the fourth century. The order of the Gospels is the normal order, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John. The *editio princeps* of the new discovery appeared in 1894, under the joint care of Rendel Harris, Burkitt, and the late Prof. Bensly: Mrs Lewis, to whom is due the credit of first calling attention to the MS, on a third visit transcribed or verified what had been imperfectly deciphered, and published the result in *Some pages of the Four Gospels retranscribed from the Sinaitic palimpsest*, 1896: but both these and Cureton's edition of the other MS are for practical purposes superseded by Prof. Burkitt's *Evangelion da-Mepharreshe*, 1904, in which for the first time the two MSS are combined, though it was unfortunate that the plan of the work demanded that the place of honour in the text should be given to the inferior MS.

Although the two MSS S and C differ on many important points—each shews marks of assimilation to the Diatessaron not shared by the other, and C has also in its ancestry some strain of an alien Greek text—they embody what is fundamentally the same recension: and this recension bears all the marks of freedom and idiomatic vernacular rendering which everywhere (and nowhere more clearly than in Syriac) distinguish earlier translations from later. And the same impression of antiquity is given by their underlying Greek text: the witnesses with whom they are most often found in company

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are early witnesses, and the readings, whether they are right or wrong, are early readings. Nor is external evidence on the same side quite wanting: in spite of the all but universal predominance of the Diatessaron, one document which cannot be dated later than the end of the third century, the Acts of Judas Thomas, does use, not the Diatessaron, not the Peshitta, but the Gospel text of S and C.[1] It is probable too that occasional quotations even in Aphraates and Ephraim shew what may be called a scholar's acquaintance with the same version.

Comparison of the Diatessaron and the Old Syriac Gospels—as we are now entitled to call the text of S and C—is not a very easy matter, since of the Old Syriac our knowledge is knowledge of its text and not of its history, while conversely we know a good deal about the history and use of the Diatessaron but comparatively little about its text. Still some preliminary results emerge clearly enough. In the first place the Diatessaron and the Old Syriac are not independent of one another: there are too many points of contact between them, in what is known of their Syriac text, to be accidental. But then next, as we have seen that the Harmony must be the older and the Separate Gospels the more recent form, it follows that the Old Syriac was a fresh translation from the Separate Gospels of the Greek, influenced, not in its Greek readings but in its Syriac renderings, by the familiar language of the Diatessaron.

Now a third-century Syriac translator to whom Greek MSS were accessible can hardly be placed elsewhere than at Edessa. Can we point to any episode in the history of the Edessene Church which would fit in with the introduction of the new version?

It will be remembered that two names only are historically known to us in the earlier days of the Edessene community, Tatian and Bardesanes, both of them, at least in Greek or Latin estimation, reasonably suspected of heterodox leanings. It will be remembered further that the *Teaching of Addai* sends bishop Palut of Edessa a little later to obtain consecration within Roman territory from Serapion of Antioch. Add to this that St Ephraim complained (so we learn from Jacob of Edessa, a distinguished scholar of the seventh century) that the orthodox

[1] Burkitt *op. cit.* ii 101–106.

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of Edessa were called in his day Palutians, disciples of bishop Palut,[1] thereby implying both that there were other Christians who were not Palutians, and that Palut was credited by them with the introduction of at least a different *nuance* of Christianity from that of the original Edessene Church. By combination of these *data* a good case seems to be made out for supposing that the consecration of Palut synchronized with a movement at Edessa in the direction of assimilation to the theology of the great churches of the empire and of a corresponding reaction against the influence of Bardesanes and Tatian. Probably this Catholic movement would not be unconnected with the visit of the Christian Abgar at the beginning of the third century to Rome, where he may well have entered into relations with pope Zephyrinus; and nothing would be more natural than that the pope should have recommended him to regularize his relations with the organized Catholic Church of the empire by obtaining consecration for the new bishop of Edessa at Antioch, the metropolis of the East.

So far the reconstruction of the picture has followed the lines of actual historical record. An element of conjecture comes in when it is suggested that it may have been part of the mission entrusted to Palut at Antioch, to supersede the Gospel of the Diatessaron by the Four Gospels of the Church.

Of Serapion, bishop of Antioch from about A. D. 190 to 210 and consecrator of Palut, almost the only fact which history has recorded is his suppression of another uncanonical Gospel, the Gospel of Peter, which he had found in use at the church of Rhosus. What more natural on the one hand, than that he should make a similar attempt to supersede the irregular scriptures in use at Edessa by the provision of a Greek MS of the Four Gospels for translation into Syriac? and what more natural on the other hand, than that the Christians of Edessa, however willing they were to accept the nearer ties which henceforward bound them to the churches of the empire, should stand out for the retention of the Gospel in the only form in which they had hitherto known it? All experience tells us how difficult it is to introduce a 'Revised Version': and if the non-success of the Old Syriac, in face of the Diatessaron, were the only objection

[1] Burkitt *Early Eastern Christianity* p. 28.

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to the theory that connects its introduction with the name of Palut, it would hardly by itself be a serious one.

But there is another set of phenomena in the Old Syriac Gospels which appears to point not so much to Antioch as to Palestine. Not only are the Greek forms of Jewish proper names restored to their exact Semitic spelling—this might be due to minute knowledge of the Syriac Old Testament, which was not translated from the Greek but direct from the Hebrew—but the Greek forms of the place-names of Palestine are reconstructed on their correct Aramaic basis: while on the other hand in at least two cases, 'Bethabara' for 'Bethany' beyond Jordan in Jo. i 28, and 'Girgashites' for 'Gerasenes' in Marc. v 1, the Old Syriac agrees with Origen in readings which are the direct reflexion, through pious researches or local patriotisms, of the growing cult for the Holy Places of Palestine.[1] If it had only been a matter of the correct rendering of Greek transliterations into the underlying Aramaic, we might have been content to attribute the work to some capable scholar at Edessa: or if it had only been a case of agreement with Origen in novel identifications of sacred sites, it might have been a reasonable conjecture that the Old Syriac version was posterior to, and dependent on, Origen. But the combination of the two features for which we have to account seems to square with no other hypothesis than that the translator was personally familiar with Palestine, its language, its place-names, its local traditions.[2]

It cannot be proved that all this is untrue of Palut; but neither can it be shewn that it is true of him: and perhaps the most prudent conclusion is that the Old Syriac version of the Gospels came to Edessa from some part of Syria, whether northern or southern, not earlier than the early years of the third century A. D., while, if we drop Burkitt's identification of the translator with bishop Palut, any date in the first half of the century would sufficiently suit the known conditions of the problem.

The first stages, then, of the history of the Syriac New Testament are represented for us by a Gospel Harmony, constructed

[1] I reserve details on this subject for the chapter on Origen.

[2] See an article of Prof. Burkitt's 'Gergesa—a Reply', in the American *Journal of Biblical Literature* for 1908 (XXXVII ii pp. 128–133).

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out of a Roman Greek MS of the Gospels in the third quarter of the second century, and by a subsequent edition of the separate Gospels, translated from a Syrian (Antiochene or Palestinian) text of the first half, perhaps even the first decade, of the third century. Of the Acts and Pauline Epistles, which together with the 'Gospel' made up the Canon of the *Teaching of Addai*, we have before the Peshitta no continuous text: but Aphraates' rather numerous quotations from St Paul, and Ephraim's commentary on the Pauline Epistles (though, like his Gospel commentary, it is extant only in Armenian), justify the certain conclusion that the Syriac Church in the fourth century read St Paul, as it read the Gospels, in a text which is related to the Peshitta as the original to the revision. But in Syriac, just as in Latin, it is the Gospels only which have survived from the earliest translations.

In appending to this, as to previous chapters, some discussion of readings, I have selected two as illustrating opposite poles of value: one where the true text (or what I take to be such) of the Gospel has been, in part at least, preserved in no other authority than the Old Syriac: the other, where our two MSS of the Old Syriac give different readings and both of them wrong ones.

1. Matt. i 16 (24, 25).

Nothing in the newly-discovered MS excited as much interest, at the time of its publication, as its unique reading in Matt. i 16 'Joseph . . . begat Jesus'. There were not wanting on the one side orthodox writers who pointed to it as a convincing illustration of the perils which lay in wait for those who strayed from the safe path of the traditional text, nor on the other critics who hailed the new text as a conclusive proof that primitive Christianity knew nothing of the Virgin Birth. As a matter of fact doctrinal considerations may be safely put aside. Prof. Burkitt has shewn that not only the narrative of the Nativity, Matt. i 18–25, but also the genealogy that precedes it are alike the composition of the Evangelist himself: and since the Virgin Birth is obviously of the essence of the narrative, it follows that the language of the genealogy—and therefore the phrase 'Joseph . . . begat Jesus', if it is genuine—must be interpreted in accordance with it. In other words, the descent of Christ from David through Joseph would be meant to establish a legal, rather than a natural, descent and heirship.[1]

[1] Every word of Prof. Burkitt's exhaustive note, pp. 258–260, on the 'historical and dogmatic considerations' I could, with the exception of the second paragraph on p. 258, make my own.

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Prof. Burkitt does not himself believe that the text of S in these words is the text of the Evangelist: but my own view is that an essential part of the true reading of the verse is preserved in S alone of all extant witnesses, and it will therefore be necessary to state the terms of the problem in some detail.

The text of Westcott and Hort in Matt. i 16, i 24 *b*, 25, is as follows:—*Ἰακὼβ δὲ ἐγέννησεν τὸν Ἰωσὴφ τὸν ἄνδρα Μαρίας, ἐξ ἧς ἐγεννήθη Ἰησοῦς ὁ λεγόμενος Χριστός . . . καὶ παρέλαβεν τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ· καὶ οὐκ ἐγίνωσκεν αὐτὴν ἕως* [*οὗ*] *ἔτεκεν υἱόν· καὶ ἐκάλεσεν τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦν.*

Now in the first place, while it is quite certain that the Evangelist (I myself would add, his contemporaries as well) accepted absolutely the Virgin Birth, it is not at all unlikely that the simpler phraseology of the primitive age might seem to the more sensitive orthodoxy of later generations inadequate, at one point or another, to exclude misunderstanding. Indeed it is only necessary to enumerate the various readings in these verses, in order to make it quite clear that we have a *vera causa* in the meticulous desire of scribes to fence round the original narrative with explanations.

Thus in verse 24 S *k*—our best Old Syriac and best Old Latin MS—read simply 'and he took his wife and she bare a son'. The preceding verses place the meaning of the Evangelist beyond doubt: but the Curetonian Syriac MS hesitated at 'wife' and substituted 'Mary', while ℵ B and the Diatessaron, followed by the mass of MSS, Greek and Latin, disliked the near juxtaposition of *παρέλαβεν* and *ἔτεκεν*, and inserted between them the gloss *οὐκ ἐγίνωσκεν αὐτὴν ἕως οὗ*.

Only we must not assume that this desire to dot the i's and cross the t's of orthodoxy was more prevalent in one quarter than another—in Rome and Alexandria more than in Carthage and Edessa. The same motives were operative everywhere: but they come to the surface at different points. The very authorities which left unmodified the *παρέλαβεν . . . καὶ ἔτεκεν* of verse 24, stumbled in verse 16 over the phrase *τὸν ἄνδρα Μαρίας*, for which the Old Syriac and Old Latin (in all its branches) with the Ferrar group, substitute something like *ᾧ μνηστευθεῖσα ἦν παρθένος Μαριάμ*.

Nor is this quite all. Offence was further taken in some quarters at the apparent implications of the epithet in the phrase *ὁ λεγόμενος Χριστός*. 'He that is called Messiah' might be a natural phrase in the mouth of Pilate (Matt. xxvii 17, 22) or of the Samaritan woman (Jo. iv 25)—just as to the man born blind He is 'He that is named Jesus' (Jo. ix 11)—but was barely tolerable to those for whom He 'was' Messiah: once the process of text-modification was at work, it became an easy matter to drop the suspect word, and the best Old

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Latin MSS, *k* and *d* (D is defective), with the Curetonian Syriac, represent a text from which λεγόμενος was omitted.

Now having by this time acquired a very strong and clear presumption that the dominating factor of the variations experienced and likely to be experienced in this passage is the desire to guard Christian teaching against all conceivable ambiguity of statement, let us approach the remaining problem of the text of verse 16 *b*, and see whether a similar difficulty may not again be solved by a similar explanation. The *data* are as follows:—

(*a*) Ἰακὼβ δὲ ἐγέννησεν τὸν Ἰωσὴφ τὸν ἄνδρα Μαρίας, ἐξ ἧς ἐγεννήθη Ἰησοῦς	ℵ B, the mass of Greek MSS, the Peshitta, Tertullian
(*b*) Ἰακὼβ ἐγέννησεν τὸν Ἰωσήφ, ᾧ Iacob genuit Iosef cui μνηστευθεῖσα παρθένος Μαριὰμ desponsata uirgo Maria ἐγέννησεν Ἰησοῦν genuit Iesum.	The Ferrar group. *a k* (*d*)
(*c*) Jacob begat Joseph, him to whom Iacob genuit Ioseph, cui was betrothed Mary the Virgin, desponsata erat uirgo Maria she who bare Jesus. Maria autem genuit Iesum.	Curetonian Syriac. *b* (*c*)
(*d*) Jacob begat Joseph, Joseph to whom was betrothed Mary the Virgin begat Jesus.	Sinai Syriac.

Here it will be noticed that the last three variations all combine against the first in giving an active verb in the second limb of the sentence, ἐγέννησεν Ἰησοῦν: and this agrees so much better than the passive construction, ἐγεννήθη Ἰησοῦς, with the whole form of the genealogy that it is difficult not to believe in its superior originality. But if that is so, and if we accept τὸν ἄνδρα Μαρίας, as we have seen good reason for doing, we are really reduced to two alternatives only:—

(1) Ἰακὼβ ἐγέννησεν τὸν Ἰωσὴφ τὸν ἄνδρα Μαρίας·
Μαρία δὲ [*or* ἥτις] ἐγέννησεν Ἰησοῦν τὸν λεγόμενον Χριστόν,
and (2) Ἰακὼβ ἐγέννησεν τὸν Ἰωσὴφ τὸν ἄνδρα Μαρίας·
Ἰωσὴφ δὲ ἐγέννησεν Ἰησοῦν τὸν λεγόμενον Χριστόν.

The most conclusive test that we can apply in a case like this, where

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the variations are complicated, is that the readings rejected should be satisfactorily explained as alterations or corruptions of the reading accepted as original. But if (1) was original, there was really no sufficient reason for the endless vagaries of the scribes. If on the other hand (2) was original, it is surely easy to see how general the desire would soon be—as soon at any rate as the Gospel began to be copied by those to whom the Jewish law of descent was unfamiliar—to make a change at one point or another of the text. The first stumbling-block lay (as we have seen) in the words *τὸν ἄνδρα*: and a very early change, so early as to underlie both the earliest Syriac and the earliest Latin version, substituted for the marital term the more exact mention of betrothal and virginity. But obviously the most difficult statement of all, if literally interpreted, was the *Ἰωσὴφ ἐγέννησεν*: and the Sinai Syriac stands alone among extant witnesses in retaining it. Possibly the translator of the Old Syriac version, a Semite himself, was less ignorant of Jewish ideas of heirship than contemporary Greeks or Latins: anyhow in all other authorities the offending phrase is modified. *Ἰωσήφ* as the nominative to *ἐγέννησεν* disappears, and the construction is mended in one of two ways. Those who had already written 'to whom was betrothed Mary the Virgin' had only to make 'betrothed' a participle, and *Μαρία* became without further difficulty the nominative to *ἐγέννησεν*: the rest, who had accepted *τὸν ἄνδρα Μαρίας*, might no doubt have proceeded with *ἧτις ἐγέννησεν*, but when change was being made at all it probably seemed more natural to avoid using the same mood of *γεννάω* for father and mother, and so we arrive at the ordinary reading (ℵ B Tert., &c.) *ἐξ ἧς ἐγεννήθη Ἰησοῦς ὁ λεγόμενος Χριστός*.

If this reconstruction of the text and its history is correct, no one of our witnesses has preserved the original unaltered: the first part of the verse is correctly reproduced in ℵ B and the Greek MSS, the second part in the Sinai Syriac, while in the Old Latin both parts have undergone modification. Conversely, in verse 24 the Sinai Syriac and the African Latin (S *k*) are right against all the rest.

2. Luc. xiv 5 *τίνος ὑμῶν υἱὸς ἢ βοῦς εἰς φρέαρ πεσεῖται, καὶ οὐκ εὐθέως ἀνασπάσει αὐτὸν ἐν ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ σαββάτου;*

υἱὸς ἢ βοῦς is the reading of A B, most Greek MSS, the African and Italian families of the Old Latin (*e f q*), the Sahidic, and St Cyril.

ὄνος ἢ βοῦς is the reading of ℵ L 1 33, &c., the European Old Latin and the Vulgate, the Memphitic.

πρόβατον ἢ βοῦς is the reading of D, and can be dismissed at once as an assimilation to Matt. xii 11 *τίς ἔσται ἐξ ὑμῶν ἄνθρωπος ὃς ἕξει πρόβατον ἕν, καὶ ἐὰν ἐμπέσῃ τοῦτο τοῖς σάββασιν εἰς βόθυνον, οὐχὶ κρατήσει*

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αὐτὸ καὶ ἐγερεῖ; But as it is fairly clear that υἱός was more likely to be altered than ὄνος in this connexion, the reading which lies behind D is presumably not ὄνος but υἱός, and the evidence of D really goes with the group first enumerated.

As between υἱός and ὄνος the weight of external evidence inclines to the side of υἱός, even without the addition of D: the combination of B and the African Latin is not easily overborne. But the interest of the variation is that 'transcriptional' and 'intrinsic' probabilities—to use Hort's convenient terms—speak when cross-questioned with so certain a voice, and prove to demonstration at least the priority of the reading υἱός to the reading ὄνος.

The argument from 'transcriptional' probability is very simple. If ὄνος was original, we cannot conceive any reason why scribes should have altered it into υἱός. If on the other hand υἱός was original, a reader might well be startled by the oddness of the collocation 'son or ox', and just as the scribe of D (or of its archetype) borrowed πρόβατον from St Matthew, so other scribes would borrow ὄνος from still nearer parallels, such as Luc. xiii 15 ἕκαστος ὑμῶν τῷ σαββάτῳ οὐ λύει τὸν βοῦν αὐτοῦ ἢ τὸν ὄνον ἀπὸ τῆς φάτνης καὶ ἀπάγων ποτίζει; or Exod. xxi 33 ἐὰν δέ τις ἀνοίξῃ λάκκον ἢ λατομήσῃ, καὶ μὴ καλύψῃ αὐτόν, καὶ ἐμπέσῃ ἐκεῖ μόσχος ἢ ὄνος κτλ.

Again, as between the two alternatives, 'intrinsic' probability will also teach us that ὄνος ἢ βοῦς is not likely in itself to have been the author's phrase. For the order 'ass or ox' is impossible: St Luke must have written βοῦς ἢ ὄνος, in accordance with universal habit, with his own custom (xiii 15), and with a catena of passages in the Old Testament.[1]

But to prove that St Luke did not write ὄνος ἢ βοῦς is not quite the same thing, of course, as proving that he did write υἱὸς ἢ βοῦς: and it may be asked whether, if the phrase υἱὸς ἢ βοῦς is so strange that scribes would naturally alter it, is not that almost the same thing as saying that St Luke would not naturally have written it? And it is quite true that we have to face here a standing difficulty of the textual critic: 'transcriptional' and 'intrinsic' probability have a way of pointing, at first sight, in opposite directions. Yet we are on safer ground in saying what are the likely vagaries of scribes than in saying what are the possible vagaries of authors. The scribe's business is

[1] Among some twenty enumerations of ὄνοι with other animals in O. T., there is only one instance of asses coming first, Is. xxx 6 ἐπ' ὄναν καὶ καμήλων. Μόσχοι are placed after ὄνοι once only (1 Chron. xii 40 ἐπὶ τῶν καμήλων καὶ τῶν ὄνων καὶ τῶν ἡμιόνων καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν μόσχων), βόες never: βόες ... ὄνοι Gen. xxxii 5, xxxiv 28, xlvii 17; Num. xxxi 30, 34; Tobit x 10 (ℵ text: B omits); Is. xxxii 20. In the passage where 'ox and ass' is most familiar to ourselves, in the Tenth Commandment, the LXX of Exod. xx 17 has βοῦς ... ὑποζύγιον.

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a humbler and more mechanical one than the author's, and, while authors have each their own individuality to be reckoned with, scribes are much more of a homogeneous class and the same foibles reappear with considerable regularity. In other words, we have more right to be sure that scribes would be tempted to alter *υἱὸς ἢ βοῦς*, than we have to be sure that St Luke would not have written it.[1]

The reading 'son or ox' is prior then on internal evidence to the reading 'ass or ox', and it is better supported on external evidence. But of our two Syriac MSS, the Curetonian has 'son or ox or ass', the Sinaitic 'ox or ass'. Clearly the Curetonian is a conflation: either 'ass' has been added after an original 'son or ox', or 'son' has been prefixed to an original 'ox or ass'. In the absence of any knowledge of the reading of the Diatessaron, it is natural to suppose that the alternative which has the support of the Sinaitic MS represents the Old Syriac version. If that is so, we have to do with a case where that version is two degrees removed from the earliest text: *υἱὸς ἢ βοῦς* becomes *ὄνος ἢ βοῦς*, and *ὄνος ἢ βοῦς*—perhaps in the process of translation—is turned round into the more natural order of 'ox or ass'.

C. H. TURNER.

[1] If the abbreviation of *υἱός* into *ῡς* was early enough in use, and if the Jews had been in the habit of keeping the domestic pig, another conjecture might be hazarded as to what the Evangelist really wrote.

[NOTE.—In support of what has been said above—cf. pp. 180, 181, 202—of the Greek relations of the Edessene church, it is worth noting that Eusebius, *H. E.* iv 30, tells us that Bardesanes, 'a man of very great ability and a most accomplished Syriac writer', published Dialogues in his own language, 'which his numerous friends translated from Syriac into Greek'.]

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