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## The Evangelion Da-Mepharreshe.

BY F. C. BURKITT, M.A., LECTURER IN PALÆOGRAPHY, CAMBRIDGE.

IN criticizing my new book, *Evangelion da-Mepharreshe*, Mrs. Lewis has made certain statements about the readings of the Sinai palimpsest of the Gospels which I cannot allow to pass unchallenged, seeing that mere statements about such things are very easily believed by the non-expert public. I must begin by explaining that *Evangelion da-Mepharreshe* is the Syriac name for the Old Syriac version of the Gospels, and that my new book contains the Syriac texts of the two extant MSS. of that version, together with a literal English translation and a full introduction to the many difficult problems connected with the subject. In the course of my work I have had to go once more over the text of the Sinai palimpsest, which, as all the readers of THE EXPOSITORY TIMES know, is the better MS. of the Old Syriac version of the Gospels. In the course of doing this I have succeeded in correcting the hitherto published readings of the Sinai palimpsest in about 300 places, by means of the photographs generously given to the Cambridge University Library by Mrs. Lewis. Some 50 out of these 300 corrections occur in pages read originally by myself at Sinai; the rest were from pages read by the late Professor Bensly, by Dr. Rendel Harris, or edited by Mrs. Lewis in her book called *Some Pages of the Sinai Palimpsest*. I gather that Mrs. Lewis disputes my new readings in several places,—she enumerates fifteen,—and that she considers that in some 70 places more she has been able to read the MS. where I have stated that it is illegible. She says, in fact, 'the text of these passages has been for three years in my desk.'

When the reading of a difficult palimpsest is in dispute, it is not easy to conduct an argument except in the presence of the MS. itself. There is very little left for the contending parties to do, except to assert their own views. This, however, may be said at the outset, that the Sinai palimpsest,

wherever it is clearly legible, presents a text remarkable for its idiomatic and nervous Syriac. There are in it, of course, a few scribal errors, but they are very few. When, therefore, we are trying to make out a passage where the text is blurred and the reading more or less uncertain, we shall not be satisfied that our decipherment is correct, unless what we assert to be the reading of the MS. is itself idiomatic Syriac. It is more likely that the eye of the modern decipherer should fail than that the grammar of the ancient scribe should go wrong. For instance, Mrs. Lewis has 'happily no longer any doubt' that the Sinai palimpsest makes the shepherds say נתעלל in Lk 2<sup>15</sup>. I do not profess here to be able to read the photograph, but Mrs. Lewis' suggestion is not very probable. The word נתעלל does mean 'to make an entrance,' it is true. But it is only used of evil spirits taking possession of men. I cannot believe that the shepherds made use of terms which would be appropriate only in the mouth of Beelzebub.

To come to details. With regard to Mt 5<sup>20</sup> I can only repeat that I believe my reading to be correct, and that I divide the lines thus—

דאלא תאתר זדיקוחון | מן ס[פ]רא ופרישא  
 לא [תעלל] [ל]מ[לכותא] דש[מי]א

The last line is not really crowded: it contains 19 letters, and several lines in this part of the MS. contain 20 letters. Besides, I see the decisive letters דש in the photograph! Mrs. Lewis misses the point when she asks whether our Lord may not have spoken of 'the kingdom.' The full phrase 'kingdom of heaven' is read in Mt 5<sup>20</sup> by all known MSS, and is certainly the true reading in this passage.

I see the מ in מלכותא, but I cannot see whether ל was prefixed or not. Readers may be reminded that in Syriac writing initial ל takes no more horizontal space than י itself. When Mrs. Lewis states

that the writing is so regular that each single letter occupies the same amount of space as its neighbour, I can only suppose that she was thinking of some other MS. If readers of my book will look at the photograph of the Sinai palimpsest given in vol. ii. p. 28, they will see that in Lk 19<sup>44</sup> the word על takes up exactly as much room as the letters נשבקי in the preceding line.

Mrs. Lewis is mistaken when she asserts that the palimpsest reads בהון and not בה in Mk 4<sup>17</sup>. The long and almost horizontal stroke of the ע which follows בה occupies the place which would be occupied by the final ן, and so the word looks at first sight not unlike בהון. But בה עקרא is the reading of the MS., as may be ascertained by looking at the photograph in a good light.

About Mt 27<sup>43</sup> I do not understand Mrs. Lewis's words. The page in the MS. is here clear, but the photograph is blurred. Mrs. Lewis says 'the true reading will be found by substituting הַה for הוּ at the beginning of the sentence.' Is this a conjecture, or a statement that she has read the MS. so? If Mrs. Lewis wishes to assert that she has read הוּא חביל הוּא from the MS., I am willing to consider her statement. But if she gives it as an emendation, it is not satisfactory. There are two readings attested in Mt 27<sup>43</sup> by other authorities, viz. *πέποιθεν*, which is the reading of most Greek MSS. and later versions, and *εἰ πέποιθεν*, which is the reading of D 1-118-209 and the Old Latin, as well as the Coptic and Armenian versions. The suggestion which I made was הוּא [ד]חביל הוּא, an exact Syriac representation of *εἰ πέποιθεν*. I leave it to the judgment of those who know Syriac whether Mrs. Lewis was justified in speaking of this Syriac construction as 'cumbersome phraseology.' The passage is discussed fully in my Introduction, vol. ii. p. 76.

May I now say a few words upon the final colophon of the upper writing of the Sinai palimpsest, concerning which Mrs. Lewis and I have the misfortune to differ as to the decipherment of a certain word? The question is of some interest, as it concerns the place where the ancient MS. of the Old Syriac Gospels was turned into its present condition of a palimpsest.

When Mrs. Lewis published her edition of the 'Lives of Holy Women,'<sup>1</sup> which were written in 778 A.D. by a certain John the Stylite over the

<sup>1</sup> *Studia Sinaitica*, No. ix., 'Select Narratives of Holy Women,' by A. S. Lewis, 1900.

ancient text of the *Evangelion da-Mepharreshe*, she devoted a long Note to the final colophon, which gives the date of the MS. and the place of writing. She read the name 'city of Kaukab of Antioch,' and identified it with the Monastery of the Star, near Antioch, mentioned in some colophons in a MS. of the Palestinian Lectionary. Unfortunately she had passed over in her elaborate edition of the MS. the important colophon on fol. 165<sup>b</sup>, which tells us that the volume was written in the city of Ma'arrath Meşrên, a small place in lat. 36° N., about equidistant from Antioch and Aleppo. This colophon had been noted and copied out by Professor Bensly when he was at Sinai, and when I saw that Mrs. Lewis had left it out I called her attention at once to the fact. Mrs. Lewis recognized that this *fait nouveau* entirely altered the interpretation of the imperfectly deciphered final colophon. The name of Ma'arrath Meşrên was found to occur there also; in fact, there cannot be a question that the book was put into its present shape in a monastery at Ma'arrath Meşrên.

But how about Kaukab? That is the point where Mrs. Lewis and I still differ; and as Mrs. Lewis speaks of my 'erroneous emendation,' I must try and make my contention clear. The colophon, as we now read it, gives the scribe's name thus:—

∴ אַנָּא : בְּצִירָא : וְחַטִּיָּא : יוֹחַנָּן : אַסְמוּנִיָּא : דְּבֵית :  
מַרְי : קְנוֹן : קְדִישָׁא : דְּמַעְרָת : מְצָרִין : מְדִינַתָּא : 4321 :  
דְּאַנְטִיּוֹכִיָּא :

*I, the mean and sinful John, the Stylite of Beth Mari Qandn the Saint<sup>2</sup> of Ma'arrath Meşrên City, \* \* \* \* of Antioch.*

Each word, it will be seen, is divided by two points, and the four asterisks correspond to the four letters, or spaces for letters, which form the word in dispute.

Now any one who looks at this sentence must see that the missing word should be something which further defines the position of Ma'arrath Meşrên, some word like *district* or *province*. Mrs. Lewis and I agree as to the first two letters; No. 1 is כ, and No. 2 is ן. Moreover, the final letter is not א, so that the word, whatever it is, is not in what Syriac grammarians call the 'definite state.'

<sup>2</sup> *Sic.* I am now sure of this word, but I only succeeded in deciphering it while this article was passing through the press.

Practically this means that it must be a foreign word, a word taken over from Greek. Such a word is כּוּר *kôr*, an adaptation of *χώρα*, and in common use for 'district.' Thus in Lk 3<sup>1</sup> we read of the כּוּר דִּרְכוּנָה, *i.e.* 'the district of Trachonitis'; and similarly here I believe that the MS. reads כּוּר דִּיאַנְטִיּוֹכְיָא, *i.e.* 'district of Antioch,' a region in which, as a matter of fact, Ma'arrath Meṣrên is situated. Grammar and sense are both satisfied by this reading. Mrs. Lewis's *Kaukab* (כּוּכַב) satisfies neither grammar nor sense. It does not satisfy the requirements of Syriac grammar, for a native Syriac name like 'Star' would have to be in the 'definite state,' *i.e.* we must have had *Kaukëbbâ d-Antiochia*, not *Kaukab d-Antiochia*. It does not satisfy the sense; for we have had already mentioned in the colophon the name of the monastery (St. Conon's) and the town (Ma'arrath Meṣrên). The town of Ma'arrath Meṣrên was in the district of Antioch, but it never could have been described as 'Kaukab of Antioch,' whatever that may mean.

But, says Mrs. Lewis, the word is a word of four letters. Here is the point where we differ. I appeal with as much confidence as Mrs. Lewis to the verdict of Syriac scholars. If any one should take Mrs. Lewis's advice, and look at the photographs in the Cambridge University Library, I recommend him to study the one taken in 1895. This is somewhat faint, but clearer than the others. It shows the final letter to be an R. The word in dispute projects a little beyond the line to the left, and the dot which distinguishes the Syriac R from D will be found in its proper place above the final letter, in a line with the : at the end of the preceding line. The reason why the word projects is that between the כּוּ and the final ר is a fault or mark

in the vellum, which shows itself as a blur in the photograph. This faulty piece the scribe left blank. This occupies space No. 3 above. It is a little smaller than the others; indeed there is hardly room for a letter there at all. In any case I must repeat that I still believe that the MS. reads כּוּר דִּיאַנְטִיּוֹכְיָא, 'district of Antioch,' and that I claim to see these letters in the photograph.

I am not generally in the habit of replying to criticisms, and I do not think it necessary to follow Mrs. Lewis' remarks upon the rest of my book. But in the case of these readings of the Sinai palimpsest I felt it necessary to enter a protest, lest those who read the letter by her in THE EXPOSITORY TIMES should imagine the facts to be otherwise than they are.

P.S.—

דב ית :  
 מדינתה : כו ל :  
 כחכה : הנא :  
 דשמעין :



This reproduction, enlarged from the photograph taken by Mrs. Lewis in 1895, shows the disputed word in the colophon. I rather think that the scribe first wrote כּפּר by mistake, then washed out the large פּ, but only wrote a small וּ in its place. This would explain how a vacant space came to be left.

F. C. B.

## Recent Foreign Theology.

### The Parables.<sup>1</sup>

IN his *Menschensohn Jesu Selbstbezeichnung* (Mohr, 1901), Inspector Fiebig illustrated, in the case of one important matter, the service that might be rendered to New Testament exegesis by

<sup>1</sup> *Altjüdische Gleichnisse und die Gleichnisse Jesu*. Von Lic. theol. Paul Fiebig, Inspektor am Kgl. Predigerseminar zu Wittenberg. Pp. 167. Tübingen u. Leipzig: J. C. B. Mohr; London: Williams & Norgate, 1904.

accurate knowledge of the language, in its various dialects, of Jewish rabbinical documents. I have ventured elsewhere to express the opinion that this little book offers the most satisfactory solution that has yet been given of the problems connected with the phrase 'Son of man' in the Gospels. This result was due largely to the conscientious care—not to say *courage*—with which Fiebig addressed himself to the task of reading the Talmuds. In the volume before us the author