THE PUNCTUATION OF ST. JOHN i 3, 4, IN THE PESHITTO.

No one is more conscious than the editor that the Oxford *Tetraeuangelium Syriacum* is susceptible of improvement. For my own part, and expressing too what I am sure would have been the feeling of my colleague, P. E. Pusey, I heartily welcome criticisms which may tend to bring our work a little nearer to perfection. To Mr. Burkitt I tender my sincere thanks for his elaborate tabulation of readings of St. John i 3, 4; and if I do not forthwith apologize to all Syriac scholars for the reading which we have adopted, it is because a criticism of Mr. Burkitt's criticism only confirms my adherence to the punctuation given in the edition.

Mr. Burkitt attempts to settle the question from the Syriac words alone, without regard to systems of punctuation. His statement that ܗܘ is *masculine* is hard to reconcile with the usage of Syriac. In this particular passage, however, it is convenient in construing to connect ܗܘ with the following ܕ, which being prefixed to a masculine verb, the ܗܘ becomes of that gender, though in a different connexion it might be feminine. But having made this criticism, I hasten to add that I fully allow that Mr. Burkitt's construing yields the most simple rendering of the passage, on his principle of translating without regard to systems of punctuation, and that the introduction of a stop after ܗܘܐ results in a *scriptio ardua.*

It was not however my intention, nor the intention of my deceased colleague, to seek the *procliviorem scriptionem*, but to record in all cases the verdict of the MSS, and where there is a discrepancy, to follow the majority. Here I will confess that, in the present case, it would have been better to have inserted a fuller statement in the notes: I assumed too readily that the reader would accept a decision which the evidence before the editor seemed to necessitate.

Mr. Burkitt has examined and tabulated a portion of the evidence. I proceed to supplement his statements.

1. To the MSS which punctuate after ܗܘܐ must be added cod. 11, the Crawford Tetraeuangelium, a carefully and beautifully written MS, inferior to none of our sixth-century codices.

2. The same punctuation is found in the Florentine (cod. 26) and the Berlin (cod. 41) Tetraeuangelia. The latter is one of the oldest MSS in our apparatus, and seems to carry the evidence back to the fifth century.

3. Mr. Burkitt cites codices 14 and 17 as being 'assigned by Wright to the fifth century.' Of the former Wright says in his catalogue, 'the character is a large, regular Esṭrangĕlā of the fifth or sixth century'; of the latter, 'this manuscript is written in an elegant Edessene hand of the fifth or sixth century.' Wright does not assign them without hesitation to the earlier period.

4. In the reading of cod. 12 I can give Mr. Burkitt a point. He thinks it would 'be difficult to get Syriac evidence for the stop after ܗܘܬ later than the seventh century.' 12 (twelfth century) has ܡܕܡ ܕܗܘܐ ܒܗ. ܚܝ̈ܐ ܗܘܐ. From the collation of cod. 40 sent to me from Rome, I inferred (as I have stated in my note *in loc.*) that 40 read as 12. I have now heard from Professor Guidi, who has kindly examined the MS again, that there is no trace of punctuation, but only the stop after the final ܗܘܐ.

I waive for the present the questions raised about the evidence of codices 4, 10, 20, 21, as I have not yet had an opportunity of making a fresh examination of these MSS; indeed I am ready to accept, not only *argumenti causa*, but as demonstrably true, the report of an observer so accurate as Mr. Burkitt; and we arrive at the following results:—

For Mr. Burkitt's punctuation we have codd. 14*, 17* (fifth or sixth century), 10 and a MS at Sinai (sixth century), 8, 20 (sixth or seventh century), 12 (twelfth century).

For my punctuation we have codd. 41 (fifth or sixth century), 1, 11, 26 (sixth century), 23 (sixth or seventh century), 7 (seventh century).

Thus there appears a conflict of evidence, as I fully admit; but it is too much to say that 'the earliest witnesses tell another tale' than that told by our reading. Besides these MSS, the evidence of the Massora, both Jacobite and Nestorian, is on our side. Mr. Burkitt, as I know, has a very high opinion of the value of the Massoretic codex *Add.* 12,138. The grammatical difficulties, which appeal to outsiders, were not thought insuperable by the native writers and scribes, whose lead we have followed. It was no part of our purpose to choose an easy reading, under the influence of *a priori* considerations. I cannot therefore share Mr. Burkitt's regret at the punctuation of St. John i 3, 4 adopted in the Oxford *Tetraeuangelium*.

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