"What English Translation of the Apostolic Scriptures Should I Use?"
Assessing the Claims

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Introduction

Within the Messianic movement of our times, the search to reclaim the Jewishness of Yeshua and His Apostles has rightly led to an investigation of the text of the Apostolic Scriptures (New Testament), and particularly whether they were originally written in Greek or in a semitic language such as Hebrew, Aramaic, or a dialect of Aramaic known as Syriac. The popular mistrust of anything "Greek" among messianics has led some to suggest that we should receive the Syriac translation of the Apostolic Scriptures (known generally as the Peshitta) as closer to the original autographs than what is witnessed in the extant Greek manuscripts. Fantastic claims abound. For instance, Andrew Roth, who made his own translation of the Peshitta, boasts: "The hidden New Testament Bible that has been lost to the Western Church for over 1800 years is now rediscovered."[1]

But is this really the case? Do the extant manuscripts of the Syriac Peshitta honestly give a more ancient and more accurate witness to the Apostolic Scriptures? Should we receive an English translation of the Syriac Peshitta as more trustworthy than the English translations based upon the Greek manuscripts?

What is the Syriac Peshitta New Testament?

The Syriac language of the Peshitta is an Aramaic dialect developed in Edessa (modern Urfa in eastern Turkey) during the 2nd–3rd Centuries CE by the Christians of Syro–Mesopotamia.[2] The word "Peshitta" (ܦܫܝܛܬܐ) means "simple, plain, common" being parallel in meaning to the Latin *vulgata*, used to designate Jerome's Latin translation of the Bible as the "common translation," or a translation into the vernacular. Thus, "Peshitta" designates the translation of the Apostolic Scriptures into the common language of the Syrian Christian Church, and is sometimes called the "Syriac Vulgate."

Scholars have distinguished five different Syriac versions of all or part of the Apostolic Scriptures. These are the Old Syriac, the Peshitta (or common version), the Philoxenian, the Harclean, and the Palestinian Syriac version.

1. <u>Old Syriac Version</u> – This designation refers to the four Gospels preserved in two manuscripts, both of which have large gaps. These two manuscripts are: (a) a parchment manuscript housed in the British Museum, edited by William Cureton in 1858, usually designated as Syr^c; (b) a palimpsest (text written over an earlier text that was scrapped or erased), discovered in the monastery of St. Catharine on Mt. Sinai in 1982, and usually designated as Syr^s. The Syr^c was copied in the 5th Century CE, and Syr^s in the 4th Century CE, though both have a form of the text which dates from the close of the 2nd or beginning of the 3rd Century.[3] Some scholars suggest that the text of these manuscripts was influenced by Tatian's Gospel Harmony (prepared about 170 CE), but this is debated. In general, these manuscripts are representative of the Western text type.

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[1]   Andrew Roth, *Aramaic English New Testament*, retrieved from http://www.aent.org/.
[2]   Kathleen E. McVey, "Edessa" in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 6 vols. (Doubleday, 1999), 2.284–87; Theodor Nöldeke, *Compendious Syriac Grammar* (Williams & Nogate, 104; Reprint: Wipf & Stock, 2003), pp. xxxiff.
[3]   Bruce Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament* (Oxford, 1964), p. 69.

The Old Syriac version of Acts and the Pauline Epistles has not survived in manuscript form, and it is known only through citations of the Eastern Church Fathers (such as Ephraem's commentary from Armenian sources).

2. <u>The Peshitta Version (Syriac Vulgate)</u> – Usually designated as Syr[p], this version was prepared in the 5th Century CE,[4] most likely to create a standardized text from the divergent (and competing) translations of the Old Syriac. The Peshitta version contains only 22 books, excluding 2Peter, 2John, 3John, Jude, and Revelation. It was originally thought that Rabbula, Bishop of Edessa (411–31 CE) was responsible for the Peshitta, but because it was accepted as the standard version of the Scriptures by both the Eastern and Western branches of the Syrian Church, it apparently attained some degree of status prior to the split of the Syrian Church in 431 CE.

   Of the more than 350 manuscripts of the Peshitta Version of the Apostolic Scriptures, several date from the 5th and 6th Centuries, and show a remarkable fidelity to each other with few significant variants. The Gospels of the Peshitta are closer to the Byzantine text type than is the book of Acts, which has striking agreements with the Western text family.

3. <u>The Philoxenian and/or Harclean Version(s)</u> – These are usually designated as Syr[ph] and Syr[h] respectively. The history of the two versions is uncertain. It has been held that the Philoxenian was produced in 508 CE for Philoxenus, Bishop of Mabbug and that it was re-issued in 616 by Thomas of Harkel (Heraclea), Bishop of Mubbug, who only added marginal notes. Others, however, hold that Thomas thoroughly revised the Philoxenian version, adding marginal notes as well. While sufficient data is wanting in order to settle the debate, it is clear that by the 6th Century, and for the first time, the Syriac-speaking Churches had 2Peter, 2John, 3John, Jude, and Revelation in their own Syriac tongue.

4. <u>The Palestinian Syriac Version</u> – This translation into "Christian Palestinian Syrica (i.e., Aramaic)"[5] is primarily known from a lectionary of the Gospels, found in three manuscripts dating from the 11th and 12th Centuries. Other fragments and scraps give witness to Acts and several of the Pauline Epistles. The date of this version (usually designated as Syr[pal]) is much disputed but most scholars place it in the 5th Century CE. It appears to be based on a Greek text of the Caesarean type, and is "quite independent of the other Syriac versions."[6]

Summary – While a few of the extant manuscripts of the Syriac Apostolic Scriptures may contain a textual tradition that emanates from the late 2nd or early 3rd Centuries, the earliest manuscript evidence (Paris Syriac 296.1 housed in the Bibliotheque Nationale, a scrap containing Luke 6:49–21:37) dates from 460–464 CE. The vast majority of the manuscripts, however, derive from the 6th Century and later. The idea, then, that of all the manuscripts available to us, the Syriac Bible is the "oldest" and "closest to the originals," is simply not true. Moreover, it is well established among Syriac scholars that the Peshitta (in all of its various versions) is a translation from the Greek (or in some cases, the Latin Vulgate) and not from a supposed "Hebrew or Aramaic original" of the Apostolic Scriptures. The idea that an English translation of the Syriac Peshitta New Testament will give the reader the opportunity to find the "original text" of the Apostolic Scriptures is simply not based upon the facts and is an example of the kind of misinformation that unfortunately characterizes certain segments of the Messianic movement.

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[4]   Ibid.
[5]   Metzger's designation, Ibid., p. 71.
[6]   Ibid.

Some of those who hold that the Syriac Peshitta is the oldest and most trustworthy text of the Apostolic Scriptures have been advertising that the Khaboris Codex (also spelled Khabouris and alternately known as the Yonan Codex) is itself the oldest Peshitta manuscript. For example, in the Introduction to the *Aramaic English New Testament*, Roth gives these claims:

> Keyed and annotated with Tiberian-Masoretic vowel pointing system to restore the sound of Y'shua's Eastern Aramaic dialect for the Modern Hebrew reader. (p. i)

> The Aramaic in this publication is coming from "as close to original" authographs as there is current public access to at the time of printing. (p. vii)

> While the age of the Khabouris Codex remains the subject of much debate, there can be no doubt that it ably represents a text group that has much older members. So, while some manuscripts may vary with minor spelling, synonym and syntax variants, this is inevitable over such a long span of time. However, the overall reliability of this text group is thoroughly amazing as it is superior to either Hebrew Tanakh or the Greek New Testament. (p. xii)

However, when Bruce Metzger made his own personal examination of the codex, comparing it with Hatch's *Album of Dated Syriac Manuscripts*,[7] he came to conclusion that it dated to "about the 7th Century at the earliest, and perhaps slightly later."[8] Metzger also gave his impressions of the content of the Khaboris Codex:

> I examined the manuscript with care, comparing various passages with a copy of the Bible Society's printed Syriac New Testament that I had brought with me. In the passages that I collated, the text was identical with that of the standard Peshitta Syriac version.[9]

Thus, by all accounts, the Khaboris Codex is a 7th Century (or later) witness to the basic text of the Peshitta, and not a witness to an early Aramaic *vorlage* of the Apostolic Scriptures. It is, by no means, the oldest Syriac manuscript of the Apostolic Scriptures, and though perhaps giving important insight into the medieval Syriac Church, it surely does not offer us a superior witness of the ancient text of the Apostolic Scriptures.

The Khaboris Codex gained public notoriety in 1955 when Norman Yonan, a businessman from Iran who owned the manuscript, proposed to sell it to the Library of Congress for 1.5 million dollars. An elaborate tour through the Bible Belt of the South was planned in order to solicit contributions to raise three million dollars, half of which would be used to purchase the Codex from Yonan, and the other half to make facsimile copies of the Codex available to institutions of higher learning, as well as to stimulate study of Syriac and "to promote other projects relevant to the dissemination of the faith and knowledge of Christianity."[10] However, when the Library of Congress sought expert advice regarding the authenticity of the manuscript, a major battle ensued. Eventually the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) became involved since experts in the Syriac language and Bible had openly disputed the fantastic claims being made about the Codex, primarily, that it was the oldest extant Aramaic witness to the New Testament, and that it therefore contained the very language spoken by Yeshua![11] The SBL drafted a public statement disavowing such claims which concluded with this statement:

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[7]   William H. P. Hatch, *Album of Dated Syriac Manuscripts* (American Academy of the Arts and Sciences, 1946).
[8]   Bruce Metzger, *Reminescences of an Octogenarian* (Hendrickson, 1997), pp. 106–07.
[9]   Ibid., p. 106.
[10]   Ibid. p. 105.
[11]   So reported in the Washington *Evening Star*, March 25, 1955.

> According to members of our Society who have examined the manuscript, the Yonan Codex is a copy of the Syriac Peshitta, a version which was made from the Greek New Testament at about the beginning of the fifth century and which contains twenty-two of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament. Edessene Syriac, the language of this version, differs considerably from the Palestine Aramaic used by Jesus more than four centuries earlier. About three hundred manuscripts of the Peshitta version are known to exist in the libraries of this country and Europe. Several of these are older than the Yonan Codex, which some of our members who are expert in Syriac palaeography date to the seventh or eighth century. According to certain members of the Society who have frequently arranged for the purchase of biblical manuscripts, a fair estimate of the value of a manuscript like the Yonan Codex is about $5,000.[12]

As Metzger writes, "Now the fat was in the fire."[13] It may have been one thing to adjust the dating of the Codex to the 7th or 8th Century, but it was altogether a different matter when the $1,500,00 price tag was down-sized to $5,000. The Aramaic Bible Foundation, who had partnered with Yonan to raise the money, immediately threatened a lawsuit agains the SBL if they did not retract their statement. Ultimately, no law suit was filed, and the grandiose tour of the Codex was cut short. How much money was collected on the tour was never disclosed.

In the 1960s, Yonan donated the Codex to Mercer University in Macon, Georgia, but two years later re-claimed it over legal disputes relating to copying the manuscript for study and publication. Where the manuscript resided after 1962 is not known, but it did surface again around 1975. It was in the possession of the Emotional Maturity Instruction Center located in Decatur, Georgia.

> The center had transliterated the Syriac text of the Beatitudes in Christ's Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:3–12) and was making a copy of this available for four dollars with the assurance that, by concentrating each day on these sentences in Aramaic, one's personality would become adjusted and more mature.[14]

Eventually, the Codex was purchased for $25,000 by Robert Van Kampen, founder of The Scriptorium: Center for Christian Antiquities in Michigan. One would have hoped that the unwarranted, fantastic claims surrounding the Yonan Codex would have finally been put to rest, but unfortunately, such is not the case. Kind and well meaning Messianics, who nonetheless are unaware of the historical facts by which a manuscript like this is identified and dated, continue to proclaim the Yonan Codex to be the oldest extant manuscript witness to the Apostolic Scriptures even though clear and conclusive evidence is to the contrary.

What Language did Yeshua & His Disciples Speak?

A great deal of discussion and debate has ensued through the years over what language Yeshua and His disciples spoke. Until recent times, however, these discussion bypassed a crucial element, namely, the issue of how languages actually "work" in a multilingual society such as in land of Israel during the 1st Century. In our times, a branch of linguistics called sociolinguistics has demonstrated that in multilingual societies language usage and even dialect may differ between upper and lower classes. When applied to the Jewish culture of the 1st Century Israel, it is clear that even dialectic differences were regionally differentiated. For instance, the speech patterns of those residing in Galilee could be distinguished from those who lived in Judea. It is therefore illegitimate to apply linguistic data deriving from one region to another. Even more crucial is the recognition of "diglossia" within the 1st Century Jewish society. Diglossia is the linguistic phenomenon which differentiates between a "high" form of

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[12] Bruce Metzger, *Reminescences of an Octogenarian* (Hendrickson, 1997), pp. 111.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid., p. 115.

the dominant language and a "low" form. The "high" form of the language is that which derives from *literature* within the society which is regarded as sacred and therefore remains impervious to changes that occur in the same language as *spoken*. I regularly witnessed an example of this when my father (ז״ל) would pray in public. While his normal speech was common American English, he would inevitably pray using the pronouns "Thee," "Thou," "Thy" (when addressing God) and would often employ Elizabethan forms of the verb "to be," i.e., "hast," "didst," "wast," etc. It was clear that, having been raised on the KJV, he considered this form of English to have a higher sanctity and therefore to be more appropriate for prayer.[15] He used the *low* form of the dominant language for common speech, but switched to what he considered the *high* form in prayer.

The application of this sociolinguistic principle is obvious in our quest for determining what language Yeshua and His disciples spoke. We simply cannot know what language or dialect of language they spoke by what we find in *written* sources. The authors of the written text of the Apostolic Scriptures would have used a *high* form of the language when writing, even if they were recounting the spoken conversations of Yeshua and His disciples. And this would be the same for the later versions (including the Syriac) as they are represented in the manuscript evidence. Even if one were to presume that Yeshua's primary language was Aramaic (an assumption that is dubious in and of itself), it is inaccurate to think that the *written* Aramaic texts reproduce the exact form of the *spoken* language. Wise affirms this conclusion:

> Thus in ancient Palestine, Jesus' Aramaic sayings, if they were such, might well come down in writing in an H[igh] form of the language rather than the actual L[ow] form in which they were spoken.[16]

From a textual perspective, the primary argument used by those who contend that the Gospels were originally written in Aramaic is based upon (1) the presence of Aramaic words in the Gospels and (2) the presence of Aramaic phrases which the Gospels record as spoken by Yeshua. As to the presence of Aramaic words in Yeshua's recorded speech, the vast majority are single nouns, for example, "Passover" (Mk 14:14) and "Sabbath" (Matt 3:4), which hardly give clear evidence of the actual language He was speaking, for such nouns have a clear religious connection and may therefore have been commonly used even by those who did not speak Aramaic.

More important are the times when an Aramaic verb and even a phrase in Aramaic is attributed to Yeshua. We find three such instances in the Gospels: Mark 5:41; 7:34; 15:34/Matt 27:46.

1. Mark 5:41

In this event, a synagogue official had approached Yeshua, asking Him to come to his house to heal his daughter who was sick. Yeshua, attending to the woman with a flow of blood who had secretly touched His *tzitzit* in the hope of being healed, is detained, and before He could make His way to the home of the synagogue official, messengers arrive bearing the sad news that the girl had died. Regardless, Yeshua goes to the home with three of his disciples (Peter, James, and John) and then brings her back to life.

> Taking the child by the hand, He said to her, "*Talitha kum*!" (which translated means, "Little girl, I say to you, get up!"). [καὶ κρατήσας τῆς χειρὸς τοῦ παιδίου λέγει αὐτῇ· ταλιθα κουμ, ὅ ἐστιν μεθερμηνευόμενον· τὸ κοράσιον, σοὶ λέγω, ἔγειρε.]

"*Talitha kum*" is clearly Aramaic, ܛܠܺܝܬ݂ܳܐ ܩܽܘܡܝ, טליתא קום. The first word is the feminine form of *talyā* (= "lamb" or "youth"). The Greek manuscripts, however, are divided as to the gender of the imperative. In ℵ B C L *f*¹ 28 33 892 1241 1424 2427 and the majority of Coptic mss, it is masculine κουμ, while A D Θ 0126 *f*¹³ q vg sy^p.h. have the feminine form κουμ[ϵ]ι. What would have given rise to this variant in the Greek manuscripts? If we start with the premise that the masculine form is original, then it is possible that the dialect being spoken by Yeshua was one in which certain feminine forms had been replace by its masculine counterpart.[17] But if this were the case, then the Aramaic Yeshua was speaking was not the standard "Literary Aramaic" nor that of Targum Neofiti, because "neither of these dialects regularly suppletes the feminine imperative, especially the singular (although similar suppletion does sometimes occur in both)."[18] On the other hand, to suggest that the masculine imperative is simply an error seems farfetched.

But even though *talitha* is Aramaic, this does not prove that Yeshua spoke Aramaic, any more than when an English speaker uses the word *chutzpah* it means his primary language is Yiddish. Loan words are common in all languages including ancient Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek.

2. *Mark 7:34*

In this text, Yeshua heals the deaf and mute man. He puts His fingers in the man's ears, touches his tongue, and commands: "Ephphatha," "be opened" (καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ· εφφαθα). This word, transliterated by the Greek as *ephphatha*, is said to be an Aramaic form, and thus used as proof that Yeshua was speaking Aramaic. If Aramaic, it would be the Ethpe'el imperative of פְּתַח (*patach*), "to open," and in the reflexive stem in Syriac covering both reflexive and passive senses, thus "open up" or "be opened." The Peshitta has אתפתח, ܐܶܬ݂ܦ݁ܰܬ݂ܰܚ, *'etphatach*. The double φ in εφφαθα (also spelled εφφεθα in some mss.) might be explained as a contracted form.[19] But once again, an Aramaic word on the lips of Yeshua does not prove that Aramaic was His primary language. It could be that in this case He was using Aramaic simply because it was (in the estimation of many scholars) the dominant language within the Jewish society and thus the most universally understood. But it should be noted that some scholars argue that *ephphatha* is actually Hebrew, not Aramaic.[20] At any rate, the important point to be made relative to our current study is simply that this verse offers no substantial evidence that Aramaic was Yeshua's mother-tongue or primary language.

3. *Mark 15:34 | Matt 27:46*

These parallel texts contain Yeshua's words from the cross in which He quotes Ps 22:1 – "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" People who think Aramaic was Yeshua's primary language use this text as added proof for their position since some of the Greek manuscripts record these words of His in a form that is clearly Aramaic. But the number of variants in the manuscripts on this text must be taken into account. As Wise notes:

> The problem with the words from the cross is textual. Within the textual tradition of the Greek NT, the phrase as reported runs the gamut from pure Aramaic to pure Hebrew, and the traditions of each Gospel have influenced those of the other. Thus it is impossible to be certain whether on these occasions Jesus spoke Hebrew or Aramaic.[21]

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[17] M. Wise, "Languages of Palestine," Op. cit., p. 442.
[18] Ibid.
[19] So C. F. D. Moule, *The Gospel of St. Mark* (Cambridge, 1972), p. 252. Note also εφφαθα in *BDAG*.
[20] See Isaac Rabinowtiz, "Ephphatha (Mark 7:34): Certainly Hebrew, not Aramaic," *JSS* 16(1971), 151–56. But also note Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *A Wandering Aramean* (Scholars Press, 1979), pp. 7f.
[21] M. Wise, "Languages of Palestine," Op. cit., p. 442. See also the comments of Bruce Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on*

It should be noted that beyond these three texts to which regular reference is made by those who seek to prove the primacy of Aramaic as the language in regard to original language of the Gospels, there are also indications that Yeshua also had facility in the Greek language of His day. In Matt 8:5ff, Yeshua engages in conversation with a centurion who was seeking His help in regard to a servant of his household who was ill. While it is possible that the centurion was conversant in Aramaic, it is by no means likely. It is altogether more likely that Yeshua spoke with him in Greek. Likewise, when Yeshua stood before Pilate (Matt 27:11ff), the governor asks Him questions and Yeshua responds. While there may have been a translator employed to facilitate the exchange, the text gives no indication that such was the case. It seems, therefore, that Yeshua both understood the question directed to Him in Greek and was able to respond in Greek.

From this brief survey, then, what conclusions can be drawn regarding the common language utilized by Yeshua and His disciples? We may affirm at least two things which the preponderance of evidence supports: (1) The primary language spoken by Yeshua and His disciples belonged to the family of Semitic languages, and was therefore either Hebrew or Aramaic, since the evidence makes it clear that these were the languages that dominated the Jewish people in the land of Israel during the 1st Century. That Aramaic appears to have been the more common of the two may tip the scales in favor of Aramaic as the language spoken by Yeshua and His disciples, but this cannot be conclusively proven by the historical data available to us. (2) Regardless of what language was the primary language of Yeshua and His disciples, this has no direct bearing on the language in which the Gospels were originally composed. For the writing of the Gospels undoubtedly had the widest possible audience in mind, even if the original recipients of the writings were Jewish. Moreover, the fact that Greek was the *lingua franca* of the Roman Empire and was very commonly used even within the Jewish society would surely offer a substantial reason why the Apostles would have chosen it as the language for their writings.

An Appraisal of Several English Translations of the "New Testament"

A number of Bible translations have appeared in our times which their translators and/or publishers have marketed as supplying a more accurate and/or "Hebraic" reading of the Apostolic Scriptures. What follows are short reviews, concentrating primarily upon the "New Testament" section of several of these translations. Due to the limitations of this essay, my investigation of the translations themselves will be confined to one Gospel (Matthew) and samplings from the Pauline epistles (particularly Romans and Galatians).

1. *The Hebraic-Roots Version Scriptures* (Institute for Scripture Research, 2004, 2005)

The Hebraic-Roots Version Scriptures (2004, 2005) is the work of James Trimm (http://www.nazarene.net). Originally published by Trimm himself, it now is published by the Institute for Scripture Research.[22] The HRV contains both the Tanach and the Apostolic Scriptures. In the Introduction, Trimm notes:

> The Tanak (Old Testament) portion of the HRV is a revision of the JPS 1917 version which is in the public domain. There are many key revisions, however, that make the HRV Tanak quite distinct from the JPS 1917 text.[23]

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the New Testament (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994), on Mk 15:34 and Matt 27:46.

[22] This change of publishers may have been the result of a law suit filed against Trimm by The Way International, who claimed that Trimm used their translation without permission, and thus engaged in copyright infringement and false advertising. As far as I know, the case was never settled.

[23] James Scott Trimm, *The Hebraic-Roots Version Scriptures* (Institute for Scripture Research, 2004–2005), p. vii.

However, Trimm gives no further information about his method for making such "key revisions." He does disclose that the New Testament of the HRV is based upon the Peshitta except for the book of Matthew, which is Trimm's own translation of the Du Tillet Matthew.[24]

One of the primary critiques of this translation is Trimm's decision to use the Du Tillet as the base text for his translation of Matthew in the HRV. The DuTillet is a translation of Matthew into Hebrew which Jean Du Tillet, the bishop of Saint-Brieuc, obtained while traveling in Rome. In the 1555 publication of the Du Tillet Matthew (printed in Paris by Martin the Younger), Jean Mercier provided a back-translation in Latin and dedicated the work to Cardinal Charles de Lorraine. The auspicious title under which it was published was:

בשורת מתי יד היום הזה כמוסה עם היהודים ונחביה במערותם ואתה באחרונה מתוך חדריהם ומחושך מוזאת לאור שנת
הנ״ך הרה ויולדת בן לפ״ק מגאולתנו פה בפאריס האם בצרפת

> The Gospel of Matthew until this day hidden with the Jews and concealed in caves and now brought out by the latter from within the chambers and darkness to light again. "Behold [as it is written] she has conceived and borne a son" (Is 7:14) to visit, redeeming us here in Paris, the capital of France.

> *Evangelium Hebraicum Mattaei, recens e Judaeorum pnetralibus erutm, cum interpretatione Latina, ad vulgatam, quoad fiere potuit, accommodata*

> Hebrew Gospel of Matthew, newly brought forth from the hiding place of the Jews, with Latin interpretation, accommodated to the common language so far as could be done.

Following the sixty-nine page text of Matthew in unpointed text are found eleven pages containing twenty-three questions entitled "Jewish objections to the Gospel." From this it is clear that the purpose for this translation of the Gospel of Matthew into Hebrew was to offer study material for the Jewish community in order to construct a polemic with the hopes of answering the claims of the Christian Gospel which was gaining strength as the Protestant Reformation took hold of Europe.

While it is beyond the scope of the present essay to examine the Du Tillet linguistically, it is agreed upon by the majority of scholars who have examined the text that it is a translation and does not represent a Hebrew *vorlage*. Lapide notes the fact that the latinisms found in the Du Tillet point strongly to the Vulgate being the source from which the Matthew translation was made. Other aspects of style and usage point strongly toward the conclusion that the translator was not himself a native Hebrew speaker. One example is Matt 16:17, where the Du Tillet has the phrase "My Father who is in heaven" as אבי שהוא בשמים, where, in Late Biblical Hebrew or even Mishnaic Hebrew one would expect אבי שבשמים. We also see the influence of "rabbinisms" in the text, which would indicate that whoever did the translating had some knowledge of the rabbinic literature.[25] Howard's conclusion as to the Du Tillet Matthew is generally representative of the scholarly viewpoint:

> The text of du Tillet is not an original Hebrew of Matthew. It is either a translation of the Greek or an extensive revision of an earlier Hebrew Matthew designed to bring it into harmony with the Greek. This conclusion is supported by general observation and impression, by the Greek order of words which du Tillet's text often follows, and by the fact that the Hebrew preserves a number of Greek words in transliteration.[26]

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[24] Ibid. The DuTillet Matthew is a 14th Century translation of Matthew's Gospel which Bishop Jean du Tillet, bishop of Saint-Brieuc, obtained in 1553.

[25] See Pinchas E. Lapide, *Hebrew in the Church* (Eerdmans, 1984), pp. 58–64 for a detailed description of latinisms and other aspects of the Du Tillet Matthew.

[26] George Howard, "The Textual Nature of an Old Hebrew Version of Matthew," *JBL* 105/1(1986), p. 53. In a final footnote appended to the article (p. 63), Howard notes that after further study of the Du Tillet, he believes it was a revision of an

In light of the clear textual indicators that the Du Tillet Matthew is either a translation or a revision of an earlier manuscript tradition to bring it closer to the Greek and/or Vulgate, it surely should not have been used by Trimm or any other translator as the primary for the Gospel of Matthew. This alone should warn the careful student away from using the HRV as one's primary English Bible.

2. *Aramaic English New Testament*, 3rd Edition (Netzari Press, 2011)

The *Aramaic English New Testament* (AENT) is the work of Andrew Gabriel Roth and is his own translation of the Syriac Peshitta. Roth is referenced as "a Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic scholar" on various websites,[27] and on his own website claims that "The *Aramaic English New Testament* (AENT) translated by Andrew Gabriel Roth, is the most definitive Aramaic to English translation that has come forth in nearly 2,000 years.[28]

The AENT is a hardbound book of 1,093 pages, nicely printed with gold foil stamping on the front cover and spine. The internal pages appear to be printed on 50 lb. offset, making the book 1.75 inches thick. It's bulk therefore, is comparable to a Bible containing both the Tanach and Apostolic Scriptures. Of the 1,093 pages, 24 pages comprise introductory material, and 361 pages Appendixes, which contain the writings of Roth on various subjects (84 essays in all), listing of the 613 *mitzvot*, and a schedule for Sabbath and festival readings. Thus, the NT translation takes up only two-thirds of the book. The remaining third is Roth's own teachings, and one is right to question whether Roth's intention, not only in the articles he appends, but also in the very translation itself, is to market his own brand of theology.

Roth is clear that he has chosen the Peshitta as the text he translates, and particularly the Yonan (Khabourus) Codex. Thus, his conclusion that the Peshitta represents the most authentic text of the Apostolic Scriptures forms the basis for his assertion that his translation is the closest to the original. But even if it were true (which it is not) that the Peshitta represents the "most authentic text of the Apostolic Scriptures," a further question would remain: is Roth's translation of the Peshitta trustworthy? The following examples will show that it ought not to be trusted.

*Assessing the Translation: Samplings from Paul's Epistle*s

    a. Incorrect English grammar
        1) "For this cause, Elohim gave them up <u>to the fill your lusts of their hearts</u>, to dishonor their bodies with them." (Rom 1:24) *If this is simply a typographical error, one would have thought it would be corrected by the 3rd Edition of this translation.*
        2) "And <u>what thinks you, O man</u>, who judges those who practice these things…?" (Rom 2:3) *This appears to be a misunderstanding of the old English "thinkest," found in the KJV.*
        3) "For we know, that all the creatures <u>are groaning and labors</u> in pain to this day." (Rom 8:22) *The plural subject "creatures" requires "are groaning and <u>labor</u> in pain to this day."*
    b. Dubious translations
        1) "Paul, a servant of Y'shua the Mashiyach, called <u>and sent</u> and separated to the Good News of Elohim." (Rom 1:1) *The Peshitta has* ܩܪܝܐ, *which is a noun, not a verb. This is the common*

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    earlier Hebrew Matthew, that represented by the Shem Tov, and not a direct translation from the Greek. However, Howard does see at least one purpose for the revision of the Du Tillet was to bring it into line with the Greek manuscript tradition of Matthew.

  For instance, http://www.therefinersfire.org
  http://aramaicnttruth.org/

noun for "Apostle," thus "...called and an Apostle…"

Likewise, 1:5, "By whom we have received grace and <u>a mission</u> among all the Gentiles…." *The Peshitta has* ܫܠܝܚܘܬܐ *which is a noun in the feminine gender. As in the Greek, so in the Peshitta, the feminine noun may stand for the office or a recognized position, thus "apostleship" – "By whom we have received grace and apostleship among all the Gentiles…." Interestingly, in 1Tim 3:1, Roth correctly translates the feminine* ܩܫܝܫܘܬܐ *as "eldership," i.e., the office of elder.*

2) "For I am not ashamed of the Good News; for it is the power of Elohim <u>to life</u>, to all who believe in it; whether first they are of the Jews, or whether they are of the <u>Arameans</u>." (Rom 1:16) *The Syriac does not have a verb corresponding to Hebrew* יְשׁוּעָה, *"salvation," but most often uses the verb* ܚܝܐ, *"to live," "be preserved alive" (Hebrew* חָיָה*). Note the comment of Jennings regarding the Syriac usage of* ܚܝܐ: "This verb in Pe'al is the N.T. equivalent of Gk. σωθῆναι; in Aph. of σώζειν physically and spiritually. Thus (spiritual) 'life' and 'salvation' in Syriac usage are identified."[29] *Roth seems to shy away from using "salvation" in his translation even when the context clearly requires it. The Syriac* ܐܪܡܝܐ *can mean "Aramean" but, like the Greek that uses* ῎Ελλην, *"Greek" in the Apostolic Scriptures to mean "Gentile" when contrasted with* ᾿Ιουδαῖος, *"Jew," so the Syriac uses* ܐܪܡܝܐ *to mean "Gentile." Roth's inconsistency in this may be seen by the fact that in Rom 10:12, he translates* ܐܪܡܝܐ *as "Gentiles." His footnote (n. 14) on Rom 2:10 shows his misunderstanding of this term:* "Arameans, as opposed to "Gentiles" who have no ancestral ties to Israel. Rav Shaul is extremely clear throughout this epistle to make a proper distinction between these two…."

3) "<u>Your death</u> reigned from Adam until Moshe, even over those who had not sinned after the likeness of the transgression of the command by Adam who was the type of him that was to come." (Rom 5:14). *The 2nd person possessive "Your" attached to the noun "death" is found in no manuscript of the Peshitta, including the Yonan Codex. Rather, the determined* ܡܘܬܐ *simply denotes the abstract noun "death." Thus, "Death reigned from Adam until Moshe…" would be the correct translation.*

4) "Paul, a Shaliach not from men and not appointed by men, but by Y'shua the Mashiyach and Elohim, the Father who raised him from the <u>house of the dead.</u>" (Gal 1:1) *In the Syriac* ܒܝܬ ܡܝܬܐ, *the word* ܒܝܬ *should be read as a contracted form of* ܒܝܢܬ, *"between, among," "a space."[30] Note Matt 13:7,* "Others fell among the thorns (ܒܝܬ ܟܘܒܐ)…." *Thus, Gal 1:1 should be translated "...who raised Him from among the dead." Roth's mistranslation undermines the need for his lengthy, midrashic footnote on the meaning of "house" in this text.*

5) "And after three years I went to Urishlim to see Peter and stayed there for fifteen days." (Gal 1:18, cp. 2:7–9, 11, 15) *Throughout the AENT, Roth consistently translates* ܟܐܦܐ *as "Keefa" and* ܦܛܪܘܣ *as "Petros." In Galatians, however, where* ܟܐܦܐ *is found six times, Roth translates each one as "Peter."*

6) "You must therefore know that those who trust in faith are the children of Awraham." (Gal 3:7) *Exactly how Roth derived this translation one cannot be sure. The Peshitta has:* ܝܕܥܘ ܗܟܝܠ ܕܐܝܠܝܢ ܕܡܢ ܗܝܡܢܘܬܐ ܐܢܘܢ ܗܢܘܢ ܐܢܘܢ ܒܢܝܐ ܕܐܒܪܗܡ, "Know, therefore, that whoever is of faith (lit., out from faith = ἐκ πίστεως[31]) they are themselves the sons of Abraham." *Roth's mistranslation makes it appear as*

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[29] William Jennings, *Lexicon to the Syriac New Testament* (Oxford, 1926), p. 74.

[30] Ibid., p. 35; ܒܝܬ ܡܝܬܐ is listed in R. Payne Smith, *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary* (Eisenbrauns, 1998), p. 44 as "the grave, Sheol."

[31] The Peshitta uses the preposition ܡܢ, "from" followed by ܗܝܡܢܘܬܐ, "faith" to express the Greek ἐκ πίστεως in the following Pauline texts: Rom 4:16; 9:30; Gal 2:16; 3:24; 5:5.

though Paul intends his readers to "trust in faith."

These samplings are from only a few chapters of Paul's epistles. It is alarming that in so few chapters of Roth's translation these many translation errors are found. This alone should give one pause about using this translation, for if so many problems can be shown to exist in only a few chapters, one has every reason to believe that many more would arise if one where to assess the remainder of Roth's work.

Given these findings, the conclusion is this: if you want to read an English translation of the Peshitta, use one of the standard translations available: Lamsa,[32] Etheridge, or Murdock,[33] and save the $60 you would waste buying the *AENT*.

3. *The Complete Jewish Bible* (JNTP, 1998)

Perhaps the best known translation of the Bible which has been targeted to the Messianic movement is David Stern's *The Complete Jewish Bible*. Like the *Hebrew Roots Version Scriptures*, Stern utilizes the 1955 *JPS* translation for the Tanach, and provides his own "translation" of the Apostolic Scriptures. He has also produced *The Jewish New Testament Commentary* (JNTP, 1992) as a companion volume to the earlier published *The Jewish New Testament* (JNTP, 1989).

The most obvious of Stern's revisions to the 1955 *JPS* translation is the updating of the Elizabethan style English and transliterating Hebrew names rather than using their common English equivalents. For instance, in the following "Jacob" is "Ya'akov" but notice that "Egypt" is not "Mitzraim":

> *JPS* – Now Jacob saw that there was corn in Egypt, and Jacob said unto his sons: "Why do ye look one upon another?" And he said: "Behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt. Get you down thither, and buy for us from thence; that we may live and not die." (Gen 42:1–2)

> *CJB* – Now Ya'akov saw that there was grain in Egypt; so Ya'akov said to his sons, "Why are you staring at each other? Look," he said, "I've heard that there's grain in Egypt. Go down there and buy some for us from there, so that we can stay alive and not die!" (Gen 42:1–2)

But Stern also makes interesting choices in his translation of the Tanach, and sometimes infuses the English with his perspective by adding bracketed words. For example, note Micah 5:1–2.

> *JPS* – But thou, Beth-lehem Ephrathah, which art little to be among the thousands of Judah, out of thee shall one come forth unto Me that is to be ruler in Israel; Whose goings forth are from of old, from ancient days. Therefore will He give them up, until the time that she who travaileth hath brought forth; then the residue of his brethren shall return with the children of Israel.

> *CJB* – But you, Beit-lechem near Efrat, so small among the clans of Y'hudah, out of you will come forth to me the future ruler of Isra'el, whose origins are far in the past, back in ancient times. Therefore he will give up [Isra'el] only until she who is in labor gives birth. Then the rest of his kinsmen will return to the people of Isra'el.

Here, the *JPS* translates לָכֵן יִתְּנֵם literally as "Therefore will He give them up" while Stern brackets "Isra'el" to

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[32] George M. Lamsa, *Holy Bible from the Ancient Eastern Text* (Holman, 1933). Lamsa's translation has been reprinted repeatedly by a number of different publishers, and is available online (http://www.lamsabible.com).

[33] Both translations are available online, for instance, http://qbible.com/aramaic-new-testament.

define the 3rd masc. plural suffix on יִתְּנֵם rather than leaving the determination to the reader. This kind of interpretive translating is fairly common in the Tanach section of the *CJB*.

Interpretive translating is even more pronounced in the Apostolic Scriptures of the *CJB*. For instance, he incorporates Yiddish words and phrases in his translation, which he believes makes the translation more "Jewish" in flavor. But this is true only for a minority of the Jewish people—those who grew up around Yiddish speakers.

> Don't carry a money-belt or a pack, and don't stop to *shmoose* with people on the road. (Lk 10:4)

> but because this widow is such a *nudnik*, I will see to it that she gets justice — otherwise, she'll keep coming and pestering me till she wears me out! (Lk 18:5)

> But refuse godless *bubbe-meises* [grandmother's fables], and exercise yourself in godliness. (1Tim 4:7)

We also find Stern utilizing rabbinic terms, such as *sh'khinah*, from שָׁכַן, "to dwell," used in rabbinic verbiage to denote the visible glory of God but never found in the Tanach itself.

> when an angel of ADONAI appeared to them, and the *Sh'khinah* of ADONAI shone around them. They were terrified; (Lk 2:9)[34]

> This Son is the radiance of the *Sh'khinah*, the very expression of God's essence, upholding all that exists by his powerful word; and after he had, through himself, made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of *Hag'dulah Bam'romim*. (Heb 1:3)

Hag'dulah Bam'romim means "the Greatness in the heights," a circumlocution for the Name. But one finds no consistent schema used by Stern as to when such terms are applied. His use of such terms seems arbitrary.

> True, these *'am-ha'aretz* do, but they know nothing about the Torah, they are under a curse!" (John 7:49)

'Am-ha'aretz, "people of the land/soil" is a rabbinic term used to denote uneducated people, and particularly those who most likely have not been schooled in the finer points of *halachah*. In this text, Stern interprets ὁ ὄχλος, "the crowd," as consisting of *'am ha'aretz,* but that is not a translation but a commentary or paraphrase.

In fact, as one reads the *CJB*, and especially the Apostolic Scriptures, one comes to the conclusion that at times it is far more like a paraphrase than a translation. One might expect, for instance, that a translation made for Messianic Jews would translate the Greek νόμος, "law" differently in various contexts, seeking to determine when the word clearly refers to the Torah or when it represents the concept of "principle," such as in "natural law" or laws of the physical universe. Most often, Stern translates *nomos* as *Torah*, but sometimes as "law" (e.g., Jn 18:31; Acts 18:15). In Galatians, Stern's "translation" of *nomos* is clearly a paraphrase, giving what might be considered a "commentary" rather than a translation or even a paraphrase. In fourteen of the occurrences of *nomos* in Galatians,[35] Stern uses the following translations for that single Greek word:

> (1) legalistic observance of Torah commands; (2) traditional legalistic misinterpretation; (3) legalism; (4) the system which results from perverting the Torah into legalism; and (5) a culture in which legalistic perversion of the Torah was the norm.

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[34] Cp. cp. John 1:14; 12:41; Acts 7:55; Rom 9:4; Titus 2:13; Heb 1:3; 9:5; 1 Pet 4:13–14; 2 Pet 1:17; Jude 1:24; Rev 7:15; 13:6; 15:8; 21:3, 11, 23.

[35] 2:16, 19, 21; 3:2, 5, 10–12, 23; 4:4–5, 21; 5:4, 18.

This, in my opinion, casts great suspicion upon whether Stern has taken such liberties with the text elsewhere. A closer reading of the *CJB* would indicate that he has, indeed, regularly put his own interpretive slant on the text which then governs his translation, especially in the Apostolic Scriptures.

While the *CJB* may be helpful as a reference source, and might even be interesting to read in order to see different perspectives on the biblical text, it should not be used as one's primary Bible for reading and study. In the overall scope of things, Stern has taken liberties with the biblical text which are contrary to the very goal of a good translation, namely, to present to the reader in the target language, as close as possible, the plain sense of the author contained in the language of the text itself.

4. *The Messianic Writings* (Elijah Pub., 2011)

One of the most recent translations of the Apostolic Scriptures to be offered to the Messianic movement is *The Messianic Writings*, translated and annotated by Daniel Gruber. In the Introduction, Gruber gives this brief statement: "This translation is an attempt to give a faithful rendering of these first century Jewish-Greek writings in their own context." Gruber makes it clear what base texts he used for his translation:

> Starting from the public domain American Standard Version [1901], a fairly literal translation, I worked through both major compilations of the Greek text, the Textus Receptus and the UBS. I considered the evidence and reasonings for the differences between the two. In all choices, my desire was to be faithful to the Jewish-Greek expression of Hebrew Biblical concepts.

He also notes that he was helped in his translation work by several other translations:

> I have greatly profited from: 1) other translations, especially Robert Young's *A Literal Translation*, André Chouraqui's *La Bible*, and David Stern's *Jewish New Testament* and *Commentary*;

For my brief and cursory look at TMW, I utilized the Kindle version, though I have had opportunity to look at the print version. The print version that I saw was had a paperback binding and was approximately one inch thick. It was nicely printed. The cost of the print version is $34[36] and the Kindle version (from Amazon.com) as well as the iTunes version (for iOS) is $9.99.

The TMW begins with an Introduction and ends with Additional Notes, which comprise twenty articles on various subjects written by Gruber. There are footnotes throughout the pages of the biblical text itself, sometimes giving translation information but often containing commentary or theological insights from the translator's own perspective as well. Throughout the translation, Gruber marks the 2nd person plural "you" or "your" with a + sign. As has become common in many of the newer "Messianic" translations, the order of the books in the TMW follows what Gruber says is "the order that appears in the Greek manuscripts, an order which was essentially followed in the Peshitta Aramaic."[37] Most readers, therefore, will need to use the Table of Contents to understand the order in which the books are arranged.[38]

As to the translation itself, we once again are confronted with the work of single translator, which inevitably

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[36] Available at http://www.elijahnet.net.
[37] The order of the books is not consistent from one manuscript family to another. See Kurt and Barbara Aland, *The Text of the New Testament* (Eerdmans, 1989), p. 79.
[38] The idea that they may be arranged in "chronological order" really offers nothing to the reader, since one wonders if "chronological" means the time-frame of the events narrated or the supposed time when the books were written. The dates on the books of the Apostolic Scriptures are much debated and cannot be determined absolutely.

means that there exists a higher possibility for Gruber's own theological perspective to find its way into the translation. While it is true that all translations are hindered by the possibility of theological bias on the part of the translators, such bias has the best possibility of being reigned in when a group of translators work together. A single translator has far less accountability in this regard.

A few samplings from TMW will illustrate this:

> The Word existed in the beginning, and the Word was with God, and God was the Word. (Jn 1:1)

Gruber's translation of this opening phrase of John's Gospel is one possibility, but one wonders why the word order of the Greek is not retained. Since it appears that John mimics the word order of Gen 1:1, why not translate "In the beginning was the Word…," which follows the Greek word order exactly.[39] The same question arises with his translation of the final phrase. Granted, the word order is as he has it, with θεὸς first in the clause, but in this case, θεὸς is clearly the predicate nominative and not the subject, for ὁ λόγος, "the Word" is already found twice with the article, as it is also found in the final clause. And in the previous two instances, ὁ λόγος is clearly the subject. Thus, ὁ λόγος is also the subject in the final clause. Why then is θεὸς put first in the clause? For emphasis, which is a common technique in Koine Greek. How one might note this in an English translation is not certain, but "God was the Word" does not, in English, have an equivalent meaning to "the Word was God." The point of John in the prologue seems to be an emphasis upon the divine, eternal, nature of Yeshua as the Creator.

Along these same lines, the TMW rendering of John 1:18 is curious:

> No one has ever seen God. The only begotten Son, who is in the innermost being of the Father, he has made Him known. (Jn 1:18)

Here, Gruber has chosen to accept the textual tradition of the later manuscripts against the clear witness of the earlier manuscripts, which has μονογενὴς θεὸς ("begotten God") where the later manuscripts have μονογενὴς υἱός ("begotten Son"). While "begotten God" seems impossible (indeed, it is the more difficult reading), *monogenēs* does have the sense of "unique" or "only one," and thus the *NET Bible* has captured the meaning: "The only one, Himself God…." Interestingly, the *CJB*, stated by Gruber to have aided him in his translation, incorporates both readings:

> *CJB* – No one has ever seen God; but the only and unique Son, who is identical with God and is at the Father's side — he has made him known. (Jn 1:18)

Looking at Paul's Epistle to the Romans, we question why certain terms are chosen. For instance,

> Paulos, a servant of Yeshua the Messiah, called to be an ambassador, set apart for the good news of God, which He promised before through His prophets in the holy Scriptures — concerning His Son, who was born physically from the seed of David, designated and powerfully demonstrated to be the Son of God by the Spirit of holiness, through the resurrection from the dead, Yeshua the Messiah, our Lord. We received grace through him and appointment as an ambassador for obedience of faith among all the Gentiles, for his name's sake. (Rom 1:1–5

Throughout the footnotes and Additional Notes, Gruber refers to Paul as "Sha'ul," but when Paul's name ap-

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[39] John's opening words, Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, mimics the Lxx of Gen 1:1, Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς, with each having the same syntactic order: preposition + noun + verb + article + noun.

pears in the biblical text itself, he transliterates the Greek as Paulos. Why the Greek transliteration rather than just using the common English "Paul"? One is not sure. Then, translating ἀπόστολος as "ambassador" is curious. In the most general of senses, *apostolos* could mean "ambassador," that is, a "messenger with extraordinary status,"[40] but normally the English word "ambassador" denotes someone who represents a nation, not an individual. Indeed, by the time the epistles were being written, the word "apostle" had taken on a technical sense among the followers of Yeshua, being understood particularly to refer to the Twelve and their close associates who were commissioned by Yeshua Himself to take the Gospel of the Kingdom to the nations (Matt 28:19–20). The fact that this meaning had become attached to the word "apostle" in the believing community is why Paul himself had to clarify his use of the title by explaining that though he was grouped with the Apostles, he was nonetheless "untimely born," i.e., chosen to be an Apostle after Yeshua had ascended to the Father.

> After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also. For I am the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. (1Cor 15:6–9)

Gruber's use of "ambassador" thus misses the point: in the Apostolic Scriptures, the word "Apostle" has a technical sense which the word "ambassador" misses. In fact, Gruber never uses the word "apostle" in his translation of the Apostolic Scriptures. One has to wonder what prompted the choice of "ambassador" for *apostolos*.

The same kind of question arises with the manner in which Gruber translates the Greek word νόμος, *nomos*, "Law, commandment." Throughout the Gospels we are regularly met with "Torah" as the chosen translation, but in the Pauline epistles, *nomos* is translated by "Law." There seems to be no clear purpose for the change. The same is true for the translation of τό πνεῦμα, τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον, and [τὸ] πνεῦμα [τοῦ] θεοῦ "the Spirit," "the Holy Spirit," and "Spirit of God." Τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον (and similar combinations) are translated by *Ruakh Kodesh*, but all others are translated in the common English: "the Spirit," "the Spirit of God," etc. Once again, the reasoning behind this variation is not disclosed in the Introduction or notes.

One last sampling, this time from Hebrews:

> By saying "a new covenant," He has made the first old. Now what is becoming old and grows aged is close to disappearing. (Heb 13:8)

In the Kindle version which I am using, there is no indication that the word "covenant" in this verse is added by the translator (put in italics, etc.) Perhaps such is indicated in the print version. If not, it should be, because the word covenant does not appear in this verse, and its inclusion in the translation easily gives rise to a false understanding that what is "becoming old, grows aged, and is close to disappearing" is a covenant replaced by the "new covenant."

All in all, TMW is interesting to read, and the footnotes and added "Additional Notes" offer some good insights and interesting thoughts. But like all of the translations surveyed in this short essay, I would not recommend using TMW as one's primary Bible for the Apostolic Scriptures. Using it along with other translations in order to make comparisons may, at times, be helpful.

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[40] So *BDAG,* "ἀπόστολος."

Conclusion

It has not been my purpose in this short essay fully to engage the "Aramaic Primacy" debate, which claims that the Apostolic Scriptures were originally written in Hebrew or Aramaic and then translated into Greek.[41] But in evaluating the two translations above which utilize the Peshitta as their base text, I would simply make the following points which, it seems to me, are self-evident:

1. The Syriac Peshitta, while certainly a worthy source to consult in matters of textual criticism, is by no means a witness to otherwise unknown and unattested readings pre-dating the much more substantial witness of the extant Greek manuscripts. In fact, the extant Syriac Peshitta manuscripts, when taken as a whole, represent a biblical text that is clearly later than the extant Greek manuscripts. In fact, none of the earliest Peshitta manuscripts available to us contain the entire Apostolic Scriptures, so even those who claim to have produced an English translation of the Aramaic New Testament must rely upon Peshitta manuscripts from the later centuries when they translate 2Peter, 2John, 3John, Jude, and Revelation. The earliest manuscripts of the Peshitta only contain the Gospels, and even these are not complete.

2. Further, if one is interested in an English translation of the Syriac Peshitta, using Lamsa's older translation would do just fine.[42] Though (like nearly all English Bible translations) it uses common Christian terminology ("Jesus," "Christ," "church," etc.), Lamsa's translation is readily available and far more affordable. In fact, it is available for free download at: http://www.lamsabible.com/. So save yourself some hard-earned *shekelim* and don't fall prey to the fantastic claims that the latest translation of the Aramaic Peshitta will uncover biblical secrets hidden for the last 1800 years. Read a good English version (like the NASB, ESV, NET), compare it with other translations, and you'll be miles ahead in your study of the Scriptures.

As to the other translations surveyed (*CJB, TMW*), I would simply urge people to consider that translations made by a single individual, or even the corroboration of two or three individuals, should be held with some amount of suspicion and not used as one's primary Bible, i.e., the Bible that one normally reads. The breadth of knowledge needed to create a worthy translation is seldom (if ever) the possession of an individual. To think that one person could produce a Bible translation that is superior to all others (as is advertised) is, it seems to me, ill-advised. That these single-translator Bibles are advertised as uncovering what nearly two millennia of biblical scholars have missed is at best an overstatement and at worst, arrogant.

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[41] For an engaging investigation into this issue, see James Edwards, *The Hebrew Gospel & the Development of the Synoptic Tradition* (Eerdmans, 2009).

[42] See footnote 11 above.