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## BREVIA.

**La Langue parlée par N. S. Jésus-Christ sur la Terre.**<sup>1</sup>  
 —The Syrian Archbishop of Damascus, in communion with the see of Rome, has published in the *Revue illustrée de la Terre Sainte et de l'Orient catholique*, a very lucid, fact-full, and cogent discussion of the question indicated in the above title. As the most reverend author states, and as I was assured myself at Damascus, that once learned city is now more destitute than ever of the varied critical apparatus necessary for the researches of the scholar. This essay is therefore not to be compared with the article, from a bibliographical point of view especially, so exhaustive of Dr. Neubauer,<sup>2</sup> who so thoroughly disproves the theory of Mark Pattison, that a good librarian cannot also be erudite. This is what the archbishop claims to have shown: that the Jews of Palestine, in the time of Jesus Christ, wrote in "Chaldee" and rarely in Hebrew; that the proper names of persons and places used by them were often "Chaldee"; that the words pronounced by our Lord, according to the New Testament, and those addressed to Him, prove that the language then prevalent in Palestine was "Chaldee"; that the name of Greeks was often given then to other nations, to distinguish them from the Jews, who consequently were not Greeks by language; that there were at Jerusalem, and in other cities of Palestine, Jews distinguished from others by their use of Greek (which they had learned in foreign countries); that for the Jews of Palestine the Bible had to be translated into "Chaldee," and not into Greek; that the use of "Chaldee," at least in literature, continued among the Christians of Palestine down to the thirteenth century, and even later, and among the Jews even to our own time; lastly, that Greek only became predominant at Jerusalem at the beginning of the second century. The most interesting part of the essay begins at section 7, which treats of the vicissitudes of the Syro-Palestinian dialect. The student would do well to read first the column relative to the subject in Nöldeke's article, "Semitic Languages," in *Encyclopædia Britannica*; he will then have a framework into which he can set the facts put together by Archbishop David. The chain of facts is indeed

<sup>1</sup> Paris, aux bureaux de l'œuvre des écoles d'Orient, 1889.

<sup>2</sup> *Studia Biblica*, vol. i., pp. 39-74.

complete. Even after the Jewish Aramaic ceased to be spoken, through the invasion of the Arabs and their tongue, the Melchite Church (comp. Tozer, *The Church and the Eastern Empire*, p. 74) continued to use Syro-Palestinian as its sacred tongue, and since the end of the last century manuscript records of this dialect have been gradually collected. Even now, at no great distance from Damascus, there are three villages, the chief of which is called Ma'lûla, in which the language of Jesus Christ, or a dialect differing little from it, is spoken.

In sections 8 and 9 the archbishop examines the difficulties connected with the Septuagint version. Perhaps he exaggerates the degree of hostility to Greek among the Jews of Palestine in the time of the Ptolemies, but it was an easy task to refute the argument which the opposite side had set up. In fact, altogether one may value this essay more for its facts than for its argument—lucid as this may be,—and most of all perhaps as a specimen of the critical insight of the learned Syrian. The author does not absolutely reject the opinion that our Lord and the apostles read the Scriptures in Hebrew, but thinks it much more probable that they used an Aramaic version. In a footnote he justifies the former view by Jerome's notice, in his thirty-sixth letter to Pope Damasus, that he employed for his own Latin translation the Hebrew Bible used in the synagogue of Bethlehem.

Not the least interesting passage in the essay is an expression of patriotic opinion which "a learned Oratorian of London," Father Philpin de Rivière, criticises in a letter to the same review in which the archbishop's paper was printed. "Always," says the archbishop, "it will remain a most memorable and surprising fact, that Hebrew was so lightly esteemed in the early Christian Church; that the original Bible, written in that tongue, was only admitted at a much later time; and that no part of the New Testament was written, or at least preserved, in Hebrew; that no one thought of giving to Jewish converts the New Testament translated into Hebrew; that, while the unconverted Jews employed the Hebrew tongue in their writings, nothing was written, or at least preserved, in the Christian Church in the language in which God had spoken to the patriarch and the prophets. First Greek, then Latin and Syriac, in which the first monuments of the church were written, have not allowed Hebrew to say even a word." This, he says, accounts for the fact that the New Testament, as well as

the "Deutero-canonical" books of the Old Testament, and all the Apocryphal books having relation to the Holy Scripture, have come down to us only in Greek. But, he adds, we must not infer from this that the whole of the New Testament was written in Greek; and not only the first gospel, but the "Epistle of St. Paul to the Hebrews," was written in Hebrew or (rather) in Syro-Palestinian.

In the appendix, Archbishop David makes modest and graceful recognition of Dr. Neubauer's valuable work, and expresses a difference of opinion on some points of detail. Like that "learned academician" (is there any subtle irony?) however, he accedes to the new view of M. Halévy, that St. Paul's Aramaic phrase in 1 Corinthians xvi. 22 should be read "*Marana tha*," i.e. "Our Lord, come." He also touches on the further question, "Did our Lord *ever* speak Greek?" After examining the passages of the gospels relative to non-Jewish persons who came into contact with our Lord, his answer is the negative. Similarly for the first disciples; but he makes an exception for the great discourse of Stephen in Acts vii., inasmuch as the assembly which he addressed seems to have consisted exclusively of Hellenists (Acts vi. 9). Is there any Semitic scholar of eminence, or any one well versed in later Jewish history and literature, who holds a different opinion on this whole controversy from Archbishop David and Dr. Neubauer? Here and there an argument may be forced, but the general position is, from a philological and historical point of view, unassailable.

T. K. CHEYNE.

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