

NOTES ON TWO SYRIAC MSS.

JAMES A. MONTGOMERY
PHILADELPHIA DIVINITY SCHOOL

THE Custodian of the Prayer Book of the Episcopal Church has in his archives (at the office in the Church Missions House, Fourth Ave. and 22 d St., New York) two Syriac MSS. on vellum, which were presented by the late J. Pierpont Morgan, Esq., in 1898. The latter purchased them from the Rev. Varoo M. Neesan, a Persian seminarian who subsequently returned as a missionary in Anglican orders to his native country. The present Custodian, Prof. Lucien M. Robinson, has kindly put these volumes in my hands for examination. While they are not rarities, it is well to make public note of all such treasures. Indeed a desideratum of our American Orientalistic science is a catalogue of the Oriental MSS. scattered throughout the country in numerous public and private libraries, which may otherwise only accidentally be brought to the light of day. The MSS. are:

A. A PESHITTA NEW TESTAMENT

I find that this MS. is one apparently referred to by the late Prof. Isaac H. Hall in a communication he made to the American Oriental Society, published in its *Proceedings*, October 1888, p. lix seqq. His communication treats at considerable length of a very similar MS., so that the present note need only be an addendum to his discussion. His general description of his MS. can be used also for mine as to size, binding, make up of quires (or rather quinions- in the present MS. there are sometimes less than the ten folios, due to the cutting out of leaves in the composition of the text). Text and script are the same in both

volumes, which present the commonly received Syriac text of the New Testament in a well formed Estranghelo script. It contains 273 folios.

The New Testament books are arranged as in Hall's MS, i. e. the Four Gospels, Acts, the 3 Catholic Epistles (Epp. James, 1 Peter, 1 John), and the 14 Pauline Epistles, including Hebrews. As in the other MS. there is a double chapter division: (1) by books (so the four Gospels separately, 78 chapters in all), or by groups of books, Acts and the Catholic Epistles, 32 chapters, and the Paulines, 55, i. e. 165 in all: and (2) a consecutive numbering through the volume, which makes its appearance with the 19th chapter of Luke and disappears in chapter 37 of the Paulines. The identical phenomenon appears in the Hall MS. I cannot explain the failure of the enumeration at the beginning and end.

The titles and colophons of the several books in general agree with those in the other MS., with following chief variations. The colophon at the end of Ep. John unites Acts and the Catholic Epp. in one group. I Cor. is assigned to Ephesus as its provenance, and Eph. to Rome (so certifying to the uncertain reading in Hall's MS.), and Tychicus is its bearer. I Tim. is assigned to Laodicea.

The colophon of the volume is not as legible as in Hall's MS. It shows the volume to be a year younger than its fellow and hailing from the same monastery. It reads:

"It was finished in the month Ab on the fourth day of the second week of Summer, whose canticle is, 'Not of the life there',¹ in the year one thousand [five hundred] and eighteen of Alexander the son of Philip the Macedonian, i. e. in the empire of the blessed Arabs six hundred and three (A. D. 1207). And this book was written in the convent of the holy Lord [Michael], fellow of the angels, whose prayers and supplications are with the saints, — which is in the neighborhood of the city and heroic fortress (reading *gabbârâyâ*, against Hall's '*ebrâyâ*, Hebrew') Mosul, protected from all injuries by the prayer of the elect and pure.

¹ The same canticle is cited under the Second Sunday of Summer in the other MS.

"Wrote this book one who is miserable and sinful(?) and a stranger and a pauper and despicable and a sinner, who is contemptible above all the sons of Adam, who is not worthy that his name be read among men . . . whose name is Behnân, the priest, one of the [sons of] the convent aforesaid [*âhid*, correcting Hall's queried '*Ahid*' as proper name], whose prayers are all of it. Amen".

The next paragraphs, now mostly illegible, appear to contain a petition for indulgence from the readers, parallel to Hall's text, and for their prayers that

"the writer be aided in the day of judgment along with all men who are in the true faith of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. Blessed is God forever, and praised his name for all generations.

"I have written for the excellent and monastic and illuminated brother and worthy deacon and father, and son of the Admirable Love, Rabban Giurgis, who is protected from all injuries. The Lord grant that he be crowned. And may he read and understand and [profit?], and his mind and intelligence be opened and illuminated.

"With the prayers of the saints . . . and the pure. Amen. In love may he pray for my weakness. Blessed is the glory of the Lord from his place forever".

There is a spare page at the beginning and at the end of the MS. On the first is a for the most illegible rhyming composition, apparently on the Resurrection. On the last page is a note made by the man who bound (*d'bak*) the volume. He describes himself in the usual terms of depreciation, rasking and praying for everyone who chances on this book and sees the labor and toil lavished upon it by our fathers an age ago. And there came a demoniac man after the plunderers [i. e. the Moguls? — cf. the colophon in Hall, p. lxxviii], and he broke up and destroyed the work which was not his. And I pray of your love that you take it not ill . . . in me that my intelligence knew not and also his profession was not in books, but by the constraint of love and . . . the Christian brotherhood I have wrought". The following is mostly illegible.

Below this is a "Notice of Books." I can make out only part of the list, viz.: "Books of the New [i. e. Testament];

Commentary on Matthew; The Two Ways [ܡܫܘܒ — a text of the early document underlying Ep. Barnabas, ?]; The Story of Mary”.

There is a considerable number of marginal readings, most of which supply carets in the text. (In the following notes I refer to the folios which have been numbered in pencil.) Several of the notes give the names of accents appearing in the text, which is accented throughout. (These accents can be identified in Merx, *Historia artis grammaticae apud Syros*, p. 180). On f. 48a is read ܪܘܥܝܗ ܪܘܥܝܗ i. e. for ܪܘܥܝܗ ܪܘܥܝܗ; on ff. 21 Ob, 236a, 253a ܪܘܥܝܗ; on 231a an abbreviation which may stand for ܪܘܥܝܗ ܪܘܥܝܗ; and the letters ܠܝ, ff. 257a, 262b 265b, may stand for the accent ܠܝܐܢܝܐ.

An Arabic note twice calls the attention to a misbinding of leaves (ff. 190, 189; 198, 197. On f. 158b is the proper Arabic translation of ܠܘܥܘܕܐ Acts 18 3. Against Eph. 1 17, f. 234b, appears the pious phrase ܐܘܢ ܐܘܢ, “It is He”.

B. A BOOK OF THE GOSPEL LECTIIONS FOR THE YEAR WITH EXPOSITIONS

This is a a volume of 283 folios, containing the Gospel lections for the year, beginning with Advent. Under the title of the day is cited, by its opening words, the canticle for the day. The lections are given in short passages and are accompanied in parallel column by an Arabic translation. Following each passage is an extensive commentary in Arabic.

The author has divided his work into two parts, the first following the calendar from the Annunciation season (i. e. Advent) through Easter Week, the second concluding the Church year. At the end of the first part (f. 186a) appears his colophon, as follows:

“Finished is this Book of the Gospel on Monday, Second Tishri the 7th, the year 1587 of Alexander son of Philip (A. D. 1276), in the days of the faithful pastor who leads his spiritual flock, Mār Denḥā the Catholicus, and in the days of Mār Yōhannan of Hamadān and Kāšān and Yazd, the city which the Lord establishes. Wrote this book one full of a sinful life and wretched, Joseph surnamed Kāšar, son

of 'Aziz, son of Šmô'il, the Lord forgive his sins. Amen. Blessed is God forever and praised his name."

At the beginning of the second part he speaks of the book as "the Separate Readings of the Gospel" (*keryânê mēfarrēsô deuangelyôn*), which is probably the specific title. In the first four pages he gives an "introduction" to the several Gospels, taken from Mar Elia, who probably is the celebrated Elia bar Sinâyâ (b. 975), metropolitan of Nisibis, who is distinguished for his Arabic-Syriac philology (see Wright, *A Short History of Syriac Literature*, pp. 235 ff.). From whom the Arabic translations and commentary proceed we are not told — it may be from the same author.

On a spare page between the two parts (f. 187a) is a memorandum of a later possessor of the book: "This Gospel Book is the property of the weak one and stranger Sabr-Îsô' and it survived from our former fathers Mâr Denhâ the Catholicus and Mâr Sabr-Îsô' and Mâr Yalib-Alâhâ my uncle, who departed from this world and died in a good old age with his fathers on the Feast of the Confessors in the year (١٠٠٠) of the era of the Greeks. The Lord Jesus Christ refresh his soul in the wedding feast of his kingdom along with all honest and righteous men who satisfy his will. Amen and Amen forever." I do not understand the dating.

For the order and terminology of the Church year reference may be made to Neale, *History of the Holy Eastern Church*, Part 1, pp. 729 ff. The Arabic translation may be Mâr Elia's, but its affiliations may be worth studying.

C. A LOST THORAH MS.

In the note accompanying the above MSS. in which Mr. Morgan makes the gift he records a third MS. in his donation, namely a roll of the Torah in square Hebrew characters, 173 feet long, from the mountains of Kurdi-stan. Although this third MS. was duly noted in the report of the then Custodian to the General Convention of the Episcopal Church, as appears from its *Journal*, this Hebrew MS. has since entirely disappeared, its loss being antecedent to the incumbency of the present Custodian. This note is made in the hope that some trace may be found of what may be an interesting Hebrew manuscript.