

THE AUTHORSHIP OF THE APOCALYPSE
OF THE *TESTAMENT OF OUR LORD* RECONSIDERED

David G.K. TAYLOR
The Oriental Institute, Oxford University

It is a great pleasure to offer this short paper to Françoise Briquel Chatonnet as a token of long friendship and great professional respect. In addition to her own wide-ranging scholarly publications, Françoise has spent a career bringing together specialists in multiple fields, and encouraging them to work together, whether in CNRS research teams, or in major international research projects. The consequent publications and research outputs have benefitted us all. In the same spirit, this paper will underline the importance of Syriacists engaging with the research of specialists in other fields¹.

Lexicographers and bibliographers alike are used to tracking down and eliminating 'phantom' words and books which never truly existed, but which have entered their reference works through earlier scribal, typographic, or academic error. They are also used to the fact that although apparently banished, many of these same 'phantoms' will subsequently reappear in references which rely upon outdated publications. The same phenomenon can be observed in patristic scholarship, and in the modern age this is made far easier by our numerous subject specialisations and by the overwhelming quantity of published literature relating to them. To take just one example, those of us who work primarily on Syriac literature are only too familiar with reading articles by Greek patristic specialists whose understanding of the Syriac churches and their theology seems to depend entirely upon outdated secondary literature. That on occasion the reverse is also true will, I hope, become clear from this paper, in which I will attempt to

1. This article is a developed version of a short communication delivered at the XVI. International Conference on Patristic Studies, Oxford, in August 2011.

exorcise a phantom interpretation of the *Testament of Our Lord* (the *Testamentum Domini nostri*) that is still flourishing in Syriac scholarship, and thence more widely in Late Antique and early-Islamic studies. I am referring to the assertion made in 1994 by Han Drijvers that the apocalypse embedded within the *Testament of Our Lord* was not an original part of the *Testament*, but was composed in AD 687 as a response to Islam by the famous Syrian Orthodox scholar Jacob of Edessa (ca. 630-708)². I will argue that this argument is incompatible with the evidence of long-since published manuscript research and the secondary literature on early Church orders and liturgy. I claim no originality for any of the evidence that is cited, my only contribution is to bring it to bear on one specific issue.

The *Testament of Our Lord* (CPG 1743) is a composite work which claims to give the teaching of the risen Christ to his disciples³. It begins with a post-resurrection appearance of Christ to his disciples during which they ask for and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Peter and John then ask Christ to provide them with more information about the signs of the end time, and this introduces the apocalypse that follows. Most of the apocalypse contains generic descriptions of the sinfulness of the peoples of the final age, from whom only a few pure ones will be chosen, and of the corruption of rulers, notable among whom will be a king of foreign race who will arise in the West. There are also references to the disturbance of the natural order:

“But on the earth there shall be signs; the birth of dragons from humans, and in like manner (the birth) also of wild beasts; and girls newly wedded to men shall give birth to babes who speak perfect words, and announce the last times, and urge that they be put to death. And their appearance shall be like that of those advanced in years; those who are born shall be white-headed. But women shall also give birth to babes with four feet: some shall give birth to spirits only, and some shall give birth to infants with unclean spirits”⁴.

The tribulations of the countries of the East are then described, with references given to Syria, Babylon, Cappadocia, Lycia, Lycaonia, Armenia, Pontus, Bithynia, Pisidia, Phoenicia, and Judaea. This is followed by a splendid, if short, description of the ‘Son of Perdition’ (ܒܪܐ ܕܥܒܕܢܐ, *brā d’abdānā*), or Antichrist:

2. DRIJVERS 1994. On Jacob see DRIJVERS 1987; TEULE 2009; SALVESEN 2011.

3. See JANIN 1965; COQUIN 1974; MÜHLSTEIGER 2006, p. 257-260. See below for discussion of the origins of the *Testament of Our Lord*, its manuscripts and critical editions.

4. *Testament of Our Lord* I.7 (Syriac RAḤMANI, p. 8; trans. COOPER & MACLEAN 1902, p. 53).

manuscripts of the twelfth and fifteenth centuries¹⁰. So, the Greek fragment published by Corcoran and Salway and the citations by Severus provide a *terminus ante quem* for the date of composition of the *Testament*, but there is still significant variation in the literature (most of which predates the discovery of the Greek fragment) concerning this dating. Enthused by his discovery, Ignatios Raḥmani argued for composition in the late second century¹¹ – a position now universally rejected – and all others claim either a mid- to late-fourth century date¹², or a fifth (or early-sixth) century date¹³.

Most major studies of the *Testament of Our Lord* are based upon a Syriac version which was published in part by Paul de Lagarde in 1856¹⁴, and in full by Raḥmani in 1899¹⁵. This Syriac version appears to have circulated

10. Barberini Graecus 329, twelfth century; Sinaiticus Graecus 531, fifteenth century; see GAIN 1992. Liturgical prayers deriving from the Greek text of the *Testament* are also found in Georgian manuscripts, some as early as the tenth century: see CHRONZ & BRAKMANN 2009.
11. RAḤMANI 1899, p. xli-xlvi (see *Testament of Our Lord* in the Bibliography).
12. So NAU 1901, p. 238-239; COOPER & MACLEAN 1902, p. 25-42 (see *Testament of Our Lord* in the Bibliography); WHITE 2002, p. 160-161.
13. So HARNACK 1899, p. 886; BAUMSTARK 1900a, p. 40; FUNK 1901, p. 85; KOHLBACHER 2000, p. 75; KAUFHOLD 2005, p. 155.
14. LAGARDE 1856a, p. 2-19; the short Syriac excerpt was edited from Paris, BnF syr. 62 (ninth century), which contains a collection of Syrian Orthodox canonical and synodical texts. In an accompanying volume of Greek texts, Lagarde published his own Greek retroversion from the Syriac: LAGARDE 1856b, XII, p. 80-89. See below for the discussion of the Syrian Orthodox *Synodicon*.
15. RAḤMANI 1899 (see *Testament of Our Lord* in the Bibliography). Raḥmani's main source was a manuscript from the library of the Syrian Catholic metropolitan of Mosul (siglum M), dated AG 1963 (AD 1652, but said in the colophon to correspond to AD 1654). This manuscript, a biblical pandect that includes the *Clementine Octateuch* (on which see below), was seen by Arthur Vööbus in the Syrian Catholic monastery of Mar Behnam in Mosul, where it had the numbering Mar Behnam 1/1; see VÖÖBUS 1970, p. 12-14, and VÖÖBUS 1973, p. 107. It is now numbered as Ms. 387 (previously Ms. 473), though SONY 2005 numbered it as Ms. 404. It can be accessed via HMML as MBM 00387, with the *Octateuch* starting on fol. 336v. Raḥmani also used Lagarde's edition of BnF syr. 62 (ninth century), which was previously known as Sangermanensis 38 (hence its siglum S), but this has only fragmentary citations of the *Testament*, and so only runs to I.14.6 (ed. RAḤMANI 1899, p. 16), with some later excerpts from chapters I.31, 33, 34, 36, 37, 46, II.1, 2, 8, 10, 13, 15, 20, 21. Raḥmani's final Syriac witness was Borgia sir. 148 of AG 1887, AD 1576 (siglum B). For an English translation of this edition see COOPER & MACLEAN 1902; (SPERRY-WHITE 1991 contains translations of selected passages of liturgical interest, a successor to QUASTEN 1936); for a German translation see FUNK 1901; for a French translation see NAU 1913, p. 18-

in the pre-modern era only in Syriac Orthodox or Miaphysite circles¹⁶, where it constituted the first and second books of the so-called *Clementine Octateuch* (CPG 1733)¹⁷. The *Clementine Octateuch* was included (although this is usually now forgotten), at some point prior to the twelfth century, in the canon of the Syrian Orthodox New Testament – as recorded by Bar Hebraeus in his thirteenth-century *Nomocanon*¹⁸ – and so was included in Syriac biblical pandect manuscripts, such as the twelfth-century ‘Buchanan Bible’ in Cambridge¹⁹, Diyarbakır Meryem Ana 1/1 of AD 1496²⁰, and the Mosul manuscript of AD 1652 used by Raḥmani for his edition²¹. There is as yet no published edition of the *Octateuch*²², although a full translation was published by Nau²³. An abbreviated and redacted

77. For a full list of known Syriac manuscript witnesses to the *Testament of Our Lord* see KOHLBACHER 2000, p. 115-126.

16. Anton Baumstark suggested (BAUMSTARK 1900a, p. 5) that BnF syr. 62 is a collection of miaphysite canonical texts edited by a Chalcedonian or Maronite, because it contains the Acts of Chalcedon. But many Syrian Orthodox synodical collections include the Acts of Chalcedon, and BnF syr. 62 is one of these. See SCHULTHESS 1908, p. ix, 121-144 (where BnF syr. 62 = E); VÖÖBUS 1970a, CSCO 317, p. 456-458; SELB 1989, p. 108-110.
17. The *Octateuch* (CPG 1733) is composed of the following sources: Books 1-2, *The Testament of Our Lord* (CPG 1743); Book 3, *The Apostolic Order* (CPG 1739); Books 4-7, the eighth book of *The Apostolic Constitutions* (CPG 1730); Book 8, *The Apostolic Canons* (CPG 1740). See NAU 1913; BARDY 1965; MÜHLSTEIGER 2006, p. 257-260; KAUFHOLD 2007; KAUFHOLD 2012, p. 242-243. For a full list of known Syriac manuscript witnesses see KOHLBACHER 2000, p. 115-126, which supersedes VÖÖBUS 1973.
18. See Bar Hebraeus, *Nomocanon*: ed. BEDJAN 1898, p. 103-104; ed. ÇIÇEK 1986, p. 62; trans. VARGHESE 2014, p. 127.
19. Cambridge University Library Ms. Oo.1.1.2 (also known as 12a1), of the twelfth century; see WRIGHT & COOK 1901, p. 1037-1044. The manuscript is now online on the library website, and the *Octateuch* begins on fol. 310v (image 668), with a fine image of Clement. It preserves the beginning of the apocalypse, but several folios are then lost before the text resumes with canons relating to widows.
20. See VÖÖBUS 1970 p. 11-12; VÖÖBUS 1973, p. 107. It has been digitised by HMML with the project number DIYR 00002.
21. See n. 15 above.
22. Book 3 was published by ARENDZEN 1902 from the Mosul and Cambridge manuscripts. A new critical edition of the entire text, with German translation, is being prepared by a team led by Hubert Kaufhold under the aegis of the Forschungsstelle christlicher Orient at the Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt.
23. NAU 1907-1913, reissued as NAU 1913, and NAU & CIPROTTI 1967. Nau produced his translation from Borgia sir. 118 (AD 1868, copied from an exemplar of AG 1963, presumably Mar Behnam Ms. 387, which was used by Raḥmani) and Borgia sir. 148 (AG 1887, AD 1576). NAU 1913, p. 6-7, describes Borgia sir. 118, which he had not seen

687²⁸), and he also composed several other series of canons²⁹. This translation activity in 687 fell in the middle of the second Arab civil war, 683-692, when Jacob would still have been bishop of Edessa, a post to which he was appointed in around 684 and which he held for only 4 years, when he resigned in protest at the failure of the church to enforce ecclesiastical canons, famously burning a copy of these (which he had himself recently compiled?) outside the gates of the patriarchate³⁰.

Although scholars have mostly engaged with the Syriac version of the *Testament of Our Lord*, full versions also survive in Arabic and Ethiopic. There appear to be three distinct Arabic versions³¹, two translated from lost Coptic versions (one Arabic manuscript³² refers in its colophon to the Coptic manuscript of AD 926 on which its translation was based), and one directly from Greek. As for the Ethiopic version, the current consensus is that it was also translated directly from Greek, rather than from Arabic or Coptic³³. This version also had a profound influence on the Ethiopic version of the *Epistula Apostolorum* (CANT 22), which therefore has a closely related apocalyptic section³⁴.

In addition to versions of the full text of the *Testament of Our Lord*, there are three key witnesses to its apocalyptic introduction. The first is an independent Syriac translation of two long sections of the apocalypse

28. See BAUMSTARK 1922, p. 252; LAGARDE 1856a, p. 62-98.

29. See VÖÖBUS 1970a, p. 202-216, 273-298; TEULE 2008.

30. Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle*, XI.15 (Syriac vol. IV, p. 445-446; French vol. II, p. 472).

31. See BAUMSTARK 1900a, 1900b, 1901; DIB 1905; COQUIN 1974; ; TROUPEAU 2007. (DIB 1906 investigates two similarly named but unrelated Arabic texts.) Apart from some liturgical passages the Arabic versions remain unpublished.

32. Borgia arab. 22, fol. 27r; see COQUIN 1974, p. 169.

33. See *Testament of Our Lord (Ethiopic)*, ed. BEYLOT 1984, who employed nine manuscripts ranging in date from the fifteenth to the twentieth centuries. According to Beylot (in agreement with COQUIN 1974), the Ethiopic text was translated from the same Greek recension that was the exemplar for Raḥmani's Syriac version. As a result, in some places in Beylot's edition the Ethiopic text has been conformed to the readings of the Syriac: see COWLEY 1986. Cowley was doubtful that the edition was sufficiently precise to allow the question of the relationship of the Ethiopic to a Greek original to be settled.

34. For the Ethiopic text see *Epistula Apostolorum* in the bibliography. Guerrier's edition has the confusing title 'Le Testament en Galilée de Notre Seigneur Jésus-Christ' which has misled various scholars. I believe that it was on the apocalypse in this text that he wrote his thesis, GUERRIER 1903. For an annotated translation see *Epistula Apostolorum*, trans. PÉRÈS 1994. See also PÉRÈS 1997 (arguing that the *Epistula Apostolorum* originated in Osrhoene), and PÉRÈS 2011 (which examines the portrayal of Christ and Antichrist). For a synopsis of the apocalyptic sections of Guerrier's text and Raḥmani's Syriac text, see KOHLBACHER 2000, p. 132-137.

which is preserved as a citation ('From the book of Clement, on the End' ³⁵) at the end of a ninth-century Syrian Orthodox prose homily on the coming of the Antichrist written by Moshe bar Kepha (ca. 833-903) ³⁶. This is not a revision of the Syriac text published by Raḥmani, but an unrelated translation from Greek ³⁷. Its title suggests that it was translated from a Greek text that already had the *Testament* included in an *Octateuch* attributed to Clement, and this compilation presumably predates Jacob of Edessa, since it is hard to imagine that any later Greek editor would have imitated a Syriac (and Syrian Orthodox) *Octateuch* model. It is far from clear whether this Syriac text is a fragment of a now lost translation of the whole of the *Testament*, or was simply translated from a Greek source that had already made selections from the *Testament* ³⁸, or was taken from a pre-existing Syriac translation of such a selection, as for example from a florilegium.

The second witness is a short Latin extract from the apocalypse (containing only the signs of the Antichrist, and the signs of the end in heaven and earth), which is preserved on one folio of a manuscript of AD 719 now in Trier ³⁹. The Latin scribe did not provide the source of his citation.

The third witness, often overlooked, is a Greek description of the Antichrist that is clearly very closely related to that found in the *Testament*

35. ܩܘܪܒܢܐ ܕܡܠܟܘܬܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ

36. The text was simultaneously published by ARENDZEN 1901, and NAU 1901. Arendzen edited the text from Cambridge University Library Add. 2918 (fol. 248r-251v), of AD 1218 (AG 1529). Nau edited it from BnF syr. 206 (fol. 124v-126v), AD 1553-1555 (AG 1864-1866), and 207 (fol. 240r ff.), fifteenth century.

37. NAU 1901, p. 234-235, said of the two Syriac versions: 'Non seulement un grand nombre de mots différent (ce qui caractérise deux traductions), mais on trouve encore des mots ajoutés ou omis, des phrases ajoutées ou omises, des nominatifs ou accusatifs au lieu de génitifs, des mots abstraits en place de mots concrets, des singuliers au lieu de pluriels, des verbes passifs ou réfléchis au lieu de verbes actifs, le style direct au lieu du style indirect, sans parler des contre sens à la charge de l'une ou de l'autre version.'

38. In which case the words 'after a little' (ܥܘܕ ܕܥܘܕ) which introduce the second citation would simply be a translation of the corresponding Greek indication that some intervening text has been omitted. This does indicate that the original (pre-selection) source contained either the whole of the apocalypse, or the whole of the *Testament*.

39. Trier, Stadtbibliothek, Hs. 36, fol. 113. (Trier was formerly known in English as Trèves.) The majority of the manuscript (fol. 1-112) contains a text of *Quodvultdeus, De promissionibus et praedictionibus Dei* (CPL 413), previously attributed to Prosper of Aquitaine. For the edition of the fragment see JAMES 1893, p. 151-157.

of *Our Lord* ⁴⁰. It is found at the end of a thirteenth-century biblical manuscript, Paris, BnF grec 4, where it follows various apocalyptic texts, including a citation of the *Apocalypse of Ps-Methodius* concerning the attack of the Ishmaelites (i.e. the Muslims) against the Romans, a passage on the Antichrist attributed to John Chrysostom, and some lines of a commentary on the *Apocalypse* of St John. The description is introduced by the words: ‘It is reported in the apocrypha that the prophet Elijah said concerning the Antichrist in what manner he would appear at that time’ ⁴¹. It does not seem to correspond, however, to any passage in any of the surviving apocryphal texts attributed to Elijah ⁴². This may be evidence (along with the Latin extract) that the apocalyptic section of the *Testament of Our Lord* once circulated as an independent text, before being incorporated into the Greek text of the *Testament* by its editor. Or the mention of Elijah as the source of the description may simply reflect confusion in its scribal transmission.

In 1900 Anton Baumstark was the first scholar to attempt to create a stemma of the transmission of the *Testament of Our Lord*, using this mass of versional evidence ⁴³. This excellent and careful study was superseded in 1974 by René-Georges Coquin, who produced what continues to be the standard account of the textual tradition of the *Testament*, even though some details need to be updated or modified ⁴⁴. His stemma is as follows:

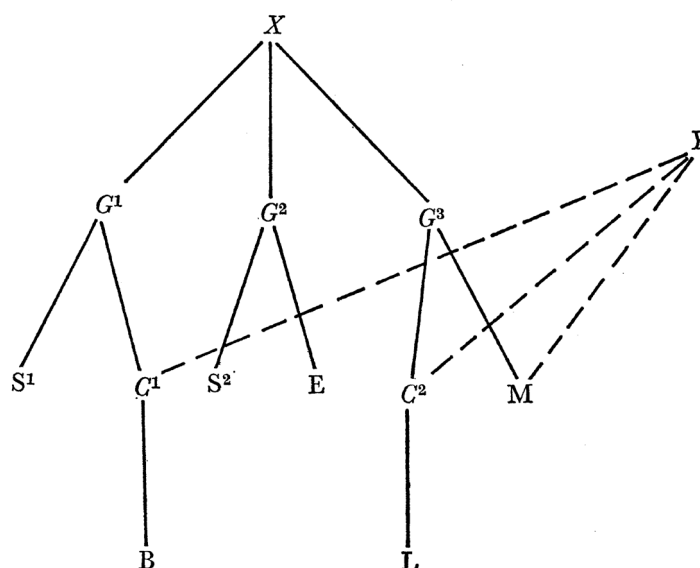
40. See NAU 1917, p. 453-462, who provides the Greek text and a French translation of the apocalyptic folios of BnF grec 4. See the appendix below.

41. Ἐμφέρεται ἐν ἀποκρύφοις ὅτι Ἡλίας ὁ προφήτης εἶπε περὶ τοῦ Ἀντιχρίστου· οἷος μέλλη τότε φαίνεσθαι.

42. For a listing of surviving apocryphal texts related to Elijah, see HAELEWYCK 1998, (CAVT 167-176), p. 120-124. For a convenient collection of translations of portraits of the Antichrist, including all versions of that found in the *Testament*, see ROSENSTIEHL 1967.

43. BAUMSTARK 1900a.

44. COQUIN 1974.



X	Original Greek text of the <i>Testament</i> (lost)
G ¹ , G ² , G ³	Greek archetypes (lost)
Y	Coptic text (lost), the source of interpolations in M, B, L
S ¹ , S ²	Syriac versions (preserved; S ¹ Nau/Arendzen, S ² Rahmani)
C ¹ , C ²	Coptic versions (lost)
E	Ethiopic version (preserved)
M, B, L	Arabic versions (preserved)

Twenty years after Coquin’s article, in 1994, Han Drijvers published an article entitled ‘The Testament of Our Lord: Jacob of Edessa’s response to Islam’⁴⁵, which has subsequently exercised a great influence on scholars of Syriac Christianity, Late Antique history, and early responses to Islam, although it is almost always left out of the bibliographies of liturgists and scholars of canon law. In this article Drijvers focussed on the apocalyptic passages at the start of the *Testament*, and argued that this section formed no part of the earlier *Testament of Our Lord*, and so was not merely translated into Syriac by Jacob, but was actually composed by him. He concluded:

“Jacob of Edessa’s apocalypse, the *Testamentum domini nostri Jesu Christi*, the introduction to an authoritative ecclesiastical lawbook

45. DRIJVERS 1994.

which Jacob composed and even partly translated, was his answer to the threat of Islam, to the laxity and apostasy of his co-religionists and clergy, and not least was a severe attack on his patriarch, who had adapted himself to the demands of the times. Jacob found a model for his actions and writings in St. Cyprian of Carthage, who more than four hundred years earlier had found himself in a similar situation”⁴⁶.

Drijvers knew and cited many of the major studies discussed above that had been published before his own article, including the textual studies of Coquin and Baumstark⁴⁷, but he does not seem to have grasped the significance of their dry philological work, or perhaps simply thought that it was misguided. Since he does not directly engage with it, it is impossible to be certain. Drijvers’ arguments in support of his claims are as follows.

1. Severus of Antioch, who is usually cited as the earliest recorded witness to the existence of the *Clementine Octateuch* and the *Testament*, is in fact a witness to neither. Drijvers notes⁴⁸ that Severus in Letter IX.3 to Thecla provides a precise quotation of the *Testament* II.10⁴⁹, but argues that his reference to ‘the injunctions of the Apostles, which they named the *Testament of the Lord*’ is an incorrect statement, and so despite the fact that it is found in all witnesses, he claims that the phrase ‘which they named the *Testament of the Lord*’ is a later addition to the text, made either (he implies) by Jacob, who he notes retranslated various of Severus’ works⁵⁰, or by someone ‘in circles under Jacob’s influence’⁵¹. It is inconvenient evidence, and so he removes it. Thus the first Syriac author to actually refer to the *Clementine Octateuch* is Jacob himself, in a letter addressed to John the Stylite⁵². The argument is rather elliptical, but the implication appears to be: Severus knew neither the *Clementine Octateuch* (which would have included the *Testament*), nor the *Testament* itself, and therefore he did not know its apocalypse. Jacob was the first person who spoke of it, therefore it did not exist before him, and so it was Jacob who wrote it.

2. Drijvers then turns to consider Jacob’s historical context, the

46. DRIJVERS 1994, p. 114.

47. He does not mention JAMES 1893, or NAU 1917, with their publication of Latin and Greek parallels to the description of the Antichrist.

48. DRIJVERS 1994, p. 106.

49. See above for references.

50. See BAUMSTARK 1922, p. 251.

51. DRIJVERS 1994, p. 107.

52. See above for references.

letters, *ad Demetrianum* (CPL 46), refers (ch. 4) to children at the end time being born with white hair, a theme also mentioned in the *Testament I.7*. Drijvers states⁵⁸ that Jacob is known to have translated *ad Demetrianum* into Syriac, along with the Acts of Carthage, and so the clear implication is that Jacob copied this detail into his own apocalypse. The possibility that babies born as old people, overturning the natural order, might be a *topos* of apocalyptic literature, whether generally or at certain periods, is not explored. A more immediate problem is that there is no Syriac translation of *ad Demetrianum*, nor a Greek translation, nor any evidence that Jacob read it. Two letters of Cyprian were translated by Jacob from Greek following the Acts, that to Quintus (CPL 50, ep. 70) and that to Fidus (CPL 50, ep. 64), which circulated with the Greek text of the Acts, and so were also translated into Armenian⁵⁹. No other letters by Cyprian were known to Greek and Syriac readers, and so this whole argument seems to be based on a misunderstanding of Baumstark's comments.

4. As circumstantial evidence Drijvers mentions⁶⁰ that at the same time as Jacob was writing his apocalypse, the East Syrian writer Yoḥannan bar Penkaye wrote his *ktābā d-reš mellē*, in which the last book XV is also an apocalypse⁶¹. Jacob may or may not have been interested in the genre of apocalyptic (and my own impression is that he had little or no interest in it), but living at the same time as an author of an apocalypse has no bearing on whether or not he wrote one himself. Reading the two texts also reveals profound differences in style and form. Yoḥannan mentions by name the principal historical actors of his day, and the precise nature and consequences of their actions. The apocalyptic section of the *Testament* by contrast follows biblical and pseudepigraphical models, and places the entire description of the future events in the mouth of Christ. It is truly hard to imagine Jacob composing such a text which, if his supposed authorship were discovered, would have called into question the authority of the canons which follow, also spoken by Christ.

In summary, the arguments provided by Drijvers to argue that Jacob of

58. DRIJVERS 1994, p. 109-110. Drijvers cites BAUMSTARK 1900a, p. 24, as his source for this information, and states, n. 28, that they are found in BnF syr. 62.

59. See DEKKERS 1953, p. 197-199. Clear identification of these letters and their Greek originals was provided in the description of BnF syr. 62 by ZOTENBERG 1874, p. 24 (§14), and they were edited in LAGARDE 1856a, p. 88-98. The letter to Fidus is sometimes numbered as ep. 59 (or ep. 58).

60. DRIJVERS 1994, p. 114.

61. Syriac text and French translation of book XV in MINGANA 1908; English translation in BROCK 1987.

Edessa wrote the apocalyptic section of the *Testament of Our Lord* simply do not stand up to close scrutiny. He has no substantive evidence of any kind, but appears driven by a desire to identify another example of a Christian response to the rise of Islam and the Arab civil war, and this overrides all other data.

More importantly, he has not taken into account the manuscript and versional evidence for the *Testament of Our Lord*, despite having read several key studies. As detailed above, since Drijvers wrote his article in 1994 the evidence for the existence of a Greek text of the *Testament* has continued to accumulate, but the key evidence was already available at that time. Although no early Greek text or fragment of the apocalypse has yet been discovered, the Ethiopic and Arabic versions of the *Testament* all include the apocalypse, as Baumstark and Coquin demonstrated, and whether or not their arguments that some of these were translated from Greek directly, and others from a lost Coptic translation of the Greek, ultimately prove to be correct, it is incontestable that they were not translated from the Syriac version published by Rahmani. The existence of a second Syriac text of the apocalypse, clearly translated from Greek, but with some significant textual differences that appear more original than those found in the Syriac text published by Rahmani, also needs explaining. If Jacob composed the apocalypse, in the form published by Rahmani, then not only would it have had to be translated into Greek and then back into Syriac in the period between 687 and the ninth century when Moshe bar Kepha transcribed it after his homily, but its text would also have had to be improved in the process. This is implausible.

The Latin text of the apocalypse from Trier dates to AD 719 (only 32 years after Jacob's translation in 687), and has some apparent shared readings with the Ethiopic text⁶², suggesting that they both go back to a common source, which cannot be the Syriac, but is most plausibly a Greek text. Again, the short Greek description of the Antichrist found in a thirteenth-century manuscript clearly comes from the same original source as that found in the apocalypse of the *Testament*, and yet it is not attributed to Clement, or to Christ, but to Elijah, which raises the possibility, already discussed by Baumstark in 1900⁶³, that the apocalypse may have had an independent existence before being incorporated by a Greek redactor into the work that became the *Testament*. In other words, the apocalypse found in the *Testament of Our Lord* not only predates Jacob of Edessa, it may also predate the *Testament* itself.

62. See, for example, the reading noted below in the passage describing the Antichrist.

63. BAUMSTARK 1900a, p. 37.

Drijvers argues, in effect, that Jacob took advantage of a Church Order attributed to Christ as a convenient and authoritative vehicle for his own freshly composed apocalypse. But it seems far more likely that the reverse is true, and that the apocalypse simply came as part and parcel of the legal text which was Jacob's real interest. Here was a collection of canons dealing with key issues of the Church's sacramental life which were apparently issued to the Church by Christ himself. It is no accident that the compiler of the *Clementine Octateuch* (whether an anonymous Greek redactor or Jacob) placed this text containing Christ's own commands as the first two books of the *Octateuch*, before the canons of his apostles.

There is a tendency in some modern scholarship to argue that the fictive settings of apocryphal literature – that is, their attribution to Christ or his apostles – was not taken seriously by their ancient readers, who recognised this as a common literary device. But it is clear from the correspondence of the late eighth-century Syrian Orthodox patriarch Kyriakos (d. 817) that the attribution to Christ was accepted: 'I do not believe that anyone of those who think rightly could ever doubt that the *Testament* is genuine, that it is of our Lord'⁶⁴. There is no reason to doubt that Jacob too believed that this text went back to Christ, and hence his anger that these dominical canons were ignored by his own Church. Jacob of Edessa did not compose the apocalypse in the *Testament of Our Lord* in order to express his anger at his Church, he accepted and translated it from his Greek source because he hoped that its conjoined canons would aid his Church in its time of crisis.

It is never a happy exercise to write a paper which negatively criticises the ideas of another scholar, especially when that scholar is one who has had such a profound influence over your own thinking and scholarship in so many other areas. But it is time for the claims made concerning Jacob of Edessa's authorship of the apocalypse of the *Testament of Our Lord* to be refuted, and for this phantom interpretation to be exorcised from our study of early Christian-Muslim encounters, hopefully for good.

64. See OEZ 2012, vol. 2, p. 370-375 (= fol. 172i-173i); TAYLOR 2010, p. 53-55.

Appendix: Descriptions of the Antichrist in the *Testament of Our Lord*, and some related texts.

Greek: (Paris, BnF grec 4; thirteenth cent.; ed. NAU 1917 ⁶⁵)

ἡ κεφαλὴ αὐτοῦ φλόξ πυρὸς· ὁ ὀφθαλμὸς αὐτοῦ ὁ δεξιὸς κέκραται αἵματος. Ὁ δὲ εὐώνυμος χαροπὸς ἔχων δύο κόρας, τὰ δὲ βλέφ[αρα] αὐτοῦ λευκά, τὸ δὲ χεῖλος αὐτοῦ τὸ κάτω μέγα· ὁ δεξιὸς αὐτοῦ μηρὸς λευκός ⁶⁶, καὶ οἱ πόδες αὐτοῦ πλατεῖς, τέθλασται δὲ ὁ μέγας δάκτυλος τοῦ ποδὸς αὐτοῦ.

His head is a flame of fire. His right eye is mixed with blood, but the left one is amber, having two pupils. His eyelids are white. His lower lip is large. His right thigh is white (read: is thin?), and his feet are wide, and the big toe of his foot is broken.

Latin: (Trier, Stadtbibliothek, Hs. 36; AD 719; ed. JAMES 1893)

Caput eius sicut flamma ignis, oculi eius fellini: sed dexter sanguine mixtus erit, sinister autem gaudens ⁶⁷ et duos pupulos habens: supercilia uero alba, labium inferiorem maiorem, dextrum femur eius macrum, tibie tenues, pedes lati, fractus erit maior digitus eius: Iste est fallax dilectionis ⁶⁸.

His head is like a flame of fire. His eyes are gall-coloured, but his right eye will be mixed with blood, whereas the left one is joyful (read: is grey-green?), and has two pupils. The eyebrows, indeed, are white. The lower lip is large. His right thigh is thin, the calves are slender, the feet are wide, his big toe will be broken. This is the false one of delight (read: 'sickle of desolation'?).

Syriac 1 ⁶⁹: (ed. ARENDZEN 1901, NAU 1901)

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His head is like a flame of fire. And his right eye is mixed with blood, and that left one has two pupils. And the eyelashes ⁷⁰ of his eyes are white. And his lower lip is larger than its

65. NAU 1917, p. 458, standardises the orthography of the manuscript in the following places: κεφαλὴ (καιφαλή); εὐώνυμος (εὐονυμὸς); χαροπὸς (χαροπιὸς); τέθλασται (τέθλαστε). All English translations in the Appendix are my own.

66. NAU 1917, p. 458, emends λευκός, 'white', to λεπτός, 'thin', on the basis of the versions.

67. JAMES 1893, p. 153, emends to *glaucus*, 'grey-green', or 'grey-blue'. The reading *gaudens* is supported by the Ethiopic (see below).

68. JAMES 1893, p. 153, emends to *falx desolationis*, 'sickle of desolation'.

69. 'Syriac 1' does not imply that this predates 'Syriac 2'; I am following the sigla of COQUIN 1974.

70. Syriac can also use this word to indicate 'eyelids'.

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