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EASTERN CHRISTIAN STUDIES 20

# SYRIAC ENCOUNTERS

Papers from the Sixth North American Syriac Symposium  
Duke University, 26-29 June 2011

Edited by  
Maria Doerfler, Emanuel Fiano  
and Kyle Smith



PEETERS

LEUVEN – PARIS – BRISTOL, CT

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SCHOLARSHIP ON THE MARGINS:  
BIBLICAL AND SECULAR LEARNING IN THE WORK OF  
JACOB OF EDESSA

Alison SALVESEN

Jacob of Edessa (c. 640–708 CE) is much revered in the Syrian Orthodox tradition. A noted polymath, his range covered exegesis to canon law, orthography to science. In the modern period this has tended to mean that his works are studied separately according to genre. In recent years, Jacob's version of the Old Testament has received a good deal of attention from scholars, but its actual purpose remains a puzzle. Previous work has suggested that it was designed to replace the Peshitta as an authorized version, or was intended as an improvement on the Syrohexapla, or was an aid to appreciating biblical commentaries translated from Greek.

This paper suggests an alternative solution. Taking an overview of Jacob's life and work, it argues that his Old Testament revision may have been designed primarily for educational purposes and to advocate the study of Greek Scripture as part of the monastic curriculum.

\*\*\*

Our chief biographical information on Jacob derives from the similar accounts preserved in the much later Syrian Orthodox writers Michael the Syrian (d. 1199) and Barhebraeus (1226–86).<sup>1</sup> In brief, Jacob's family was from the region of Antioch, and initially he was educated locally to read Scripture and ecclesiastical works. He then entered the monastery of Qenneshre<sup>2</sup> where he learnt Greek. Subsequently he went to Alexandria for further studies, and returning to Syria he entered a monastery in Edessa. His election to the see of Edessa received widespread support, but he quickly fell out with the clergy when he tried to enforce standards

<sup>1</sup> Michael the Syrian, ed. J.-B. Chabot, *Chronique de Michel le Syrien, patriarche jacobite d'Antioche (1166–1199)* (4 vols.; 1899–1910), vol. 4, 445–46 (Syr.); vol. 2, 471–472 (French trans.) (Brussels: Culture et Civilisation, 1963). The shorter version of Barhebraeus can be found in J.B. Abbeloos and T.J. Lamy, ed., *Gregorii Barhebraei Chronicon Ecclesiasticum*, vol. 1 (Louvain: Peeters, 1872), 289–94.

<sup>2</sup> Founded by John bar Aphthonia in c. 530 CE. John wrote in Greek himself, and his successors at the monastery also encouraged the study of Greek.

of conduct in accordance with canonical law. He resigned rather than compromise his principles. (In a dramatic gesture he is said to have burned the church canons at the entrance of the patriarch's monastery, before retiring in high dudgeon to the monastery in Kaishum and writing *memre* against laxity of observance and against his opponents in the hierarchy.)

Jacob later moved to Eusebona, where the monks wanted him to revive the study of Greek. He spent eleven years there. However, resentment towards "the Greeks" forced Jacob and his students to leave for Tell 'Adda. Jacob spent nine years in that monastery, which was the setting for his revision of the Old Testament. On the death of the more flexible bishop who had replaced him in Edessa, the Edessenes demanded Jacob's return. So Jacob resumed his episcopal responsibilities for four months before returning to Tell 'Adda to collect up his books and his students. However, in the course of these preparations, he fell ill and died at Tell 'Adda, where he was buried (1015 AG, = 708 CE). (When the monks realized that Jacob was dying, they hastily arranged for his library to be brought back before it was transported across the Euphrates and thus out of their possession!<sup>3</sup>).

Jack Tannous notes that Qenneshre produced a very large number of Syrian Orthodox patriarchs and bishops.<sup>4</sup> He argues that the mission of Qenneshre and other places was in fact to create a confessional syllabus, what he terms a "Miaphysite curriculum of study," and "a graduate school syllabus," for polemical purposes among others. This would necessitate the study of certain Greek writers in translation, most of whom would be Christian, but also Aristotle. Presumably top students like Jacob were actively encouraged to acquire excellent Greek so that they could critique earlier translations into Syriac and even produce their own versions or

<sup>3</sup> I am grateful to David Taylor for pointing out this additional biographical detail further on in Michael the Syrian's account: see M. Debié, "Livres et monastères en Syrie-Mésopotamie d'après les sources syriaques," in *Le Monachisme syriaque*, ed. F. Jullien, *Études syriaques* 7 (Paris: Geuthner, 2010), 123–68.

<sup>4</sup> In a seminar in Oxford, 2009. Tannous pointed out that in the one hundred and seventeen years between the consecration of Julian I as Patriarch of Antioch in 591 and the death of the Patriarch Julian II in 708, there were seven Syrian Orthodox Patriarchs of Antioch, five of whom were from the monastery of Qenneshre or who had been trained there in their youth. He also notes that Bar Hebraeus says that many Patriarchs learned Greek while at Qenneshre. Thus the monastery was responsible for training almost all of the major Syrian Orthodox bishop-scholars of the seventh and eighth centuries. Thomas of Harkel, Paul of Edessa, Severus Sebokht, Athanasius of Balad, Jacob of Edessa, and George, bishop of the Arabs all probably studied there. I am most grateful to Jack Tannous for sending me a copy of his presentation.

revisions. Yet even though Jacob's training may have been designed to prepare him for high office in the church, it is clear that he enjoyed greater success and recognition as a teacher and scholar than as a bishop. Perhaps he also found it more congenial to be part of a regulated monastic community than to preside over a large diocese where clergy could defy the bishop's authority. At any rate academic life was undoubtedly his forte from his days at Qenneshre onwards.

The range of Jacob's scholarship is remarkable for any age. He wrote scholia on the bible; he produced translations (and revisions of translations) of ecclesiastical and philosophical texts; he worked in historiography and drew up a chronicle; he wrote many learned letters (some in verse) on a variety of subjects, from biblical exegesis to canon law; he wrote on liturgical matters; he made important observations on correct grammar and orthography. The crowning achievement of his scholarship was his *Hexaemeron*, a work on the Six Days of Creation, a *tour de force* combination of biblical and scientific learning. He also compiled his own version of the Old Testament, the work that is the central concern of this essay.

Regarding this Old Testament version, the later biography transmitted by Michael the Syrian and Barhebraeus says that Jacob "revised the Old Testament." (The verb used is *سَيَّأَ*, also in colophons in manuscripts of his version.) If indeed the work once extended to the whole Old Testament canon, only parts have come down to us, in single copies that are only partially preserved. That these early copies survived at all is due to their long sojourn in former Syrian Orthodox monasteries in Egypt before their purchase by Western scholars, since they were in the cache of manuscripts brought there by Moses of Nisibis.<sup>5</sup> Thus all we have is the Pentateuch,<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> See S.P. Brock, "Without Mushé of Nisibis, where would we be? Some reflections on the transmission of Syriac literature," in *Symposium Syriacum, VIII: the University of Sydney, Department of Syriac Studies, 26 June – 1 July, 2000*, ed. H. Teule and R. Ebied = *JEastCS* 56 (2004), 15-24. Deir es-Suryan (in Wadi 'n Natrun): Moses was from Deir es-Suryan and went to Baghdad to appeal against the application of poll tax to monks. During his five-year stay in Baghdad (927–32 CE) he acquired over two hundred and fifty manuscripts, a large proportion of which were from the seventh century or earlier, and brought them back to his monastery. Eventually the monastery became solely Coptic Orthodox, and many of these Syriac manuscripts were bought by the Vatican Library in the eighteenth century and the British Museum in the early nineteenth.

<sup>6</sup> Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS Syr. 26 (see A.I. Sylvestre de Sacy, "Notice d'un Manuscrit syriaque, contenant les livres de Moïse," *Notices et extraits des manuscrits de la Bibliothèque Nationale*, tome IV (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1798–99), 648–68, and H. Zotenberg, *Manuscrits orientaux. Catalogues des manuscrits syriaques et sabéens (mandaites) de la Bibliothèque Nationale* (Paris: Jules Antoine Taschereau, 1874), 10 §26. Gen 1.9–10 was published in A. Hjeltn, *Études sur l'Hexaeméron de Jacques d'Edesse, notamment sur ses notions géographiques contenues dans le 3ième traité* (Helsingfors:

1-2 Kingdoms,<sup>7</sup> Isaiah,<sup>8</sup> Ezekiel,<sup>9</sup> Daniel and Susanna,<sup>10</sup> and a few verses of Wisdom in a late manuscript.<sup>11</sup> Either other parts did not survive, or the biographies' reference to 'the Old Testament' is just a vague generalization: perhaps Jacob worked only on what in his view were the more significant books of the canon.

Those manuscripts of Jacob's version where colophons are preserved give dates within a decade or so of his death. Thus they cannot be the autographs. The undated manuscripts are in similar hands to the dated ones, so are likely to have been copied around the same time. Apart from the much later Wisdom fragment, there is no sign that Jacob's version was copied subsequently, though of course this is an argument from silence. The texts have only been studied and published in part.<sup>12</sup>

Modern study of Jacob's version [henceforth JOT] benefits from excellent critical editions with which to compare his text. There is the Leiden Peshitta edition, the Göttingen editions of LXX books,<sup>13</sup> and for those

J.C. Frenczell, 1892); Gen 4:8-16; 5:21-6:1 by A.M. Ceriani, *Monumenta sacra et profana*, II/1 (Milan, 1863), x-xii; Gen 49:2-11 by J.D. Michaelis, *Orientalische und exegetische Bibliothek* 18 (1782), 180-83.

<sup>7</sup> British Museum Add. MS 14,429 (W. Wright, *Catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts in the British Museum acquired since the year 1838*. I [London: British Museum. Dept. of Oriental Printed Books and Manuscripts, 1870], 38-9). The JSam manuscript is very well preserved compared with those for JPent, JIsa and JEzek.

<sup>8</sup> British Museum Add. MS 14,441. See Wright, *Catalogue*, I, 39. Isa 28:1-21; 45:7-16; 46:2-49:25 was published in Ceriani, *Monumenta sacra et profana*, V/1 (Milan: Bibliotheca Ambrosiana, 1868), 8-12; 21-23; 25-38.

<sup>9</sup> Ezekiel 7:1-13 was published and analysed by C.M. Ugolini, "Il Ms. Vat. sir. 5 e la recensione del V.T. di Giacomo d'Edessa," *OC* 2 (1902): 409-20. Ugolini includes a plate of folio 75r of the manuscript of JDan, containing Ezek 27:5b-9a and a scholion. This discusses the identity of the "Byblians" mentioned in the main text. In it the writer speaks in the first person and identifies the "Gebal" of the biblical text as the place "now called Gabala" near (Syrian) Laodicea.

<sup>10</sup> Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS Syr. 27. See Zotenberg, *Manuscrits orientaux. Catalogues des manuscrits syriaques*, 11 §27, and C. Bugati, *Daniel secundum editionem LXX interpretum ex tetraplis desumptum* (Milan: Biblioteca ambrosiana, 1788), xi-xvi, 150-151, 157-158 (Gen 11.1-9; Gen 49:2-11; Dan. 1:1-6; Dan 9:24-27; Sus 1-6). The latter was reprinted in J.B. Eichhorn, "Von der syrischen Übersetzung des Alten Testaments, die Jacob von Edessa recensirt hat," *Allgemeine Bibliothek der biblischen Literatur* 2 (1789), 270-293.

<sup>11</sup> Wisdom 2:12-24 in MS Mardin, Syr. Orth. Bishopric, 2/47, of 1569 CE. Published by W. Baars, "Ein neugefundenes Bruchstück aus der syrischen Bibelrevision des Jacob von Edessa," *VT* 18 (1968): 548-54.

<sup>12</sup> For the most extensive analysis of JSam so far, see R.J. Saley, *The Samuel Manuscript of Jacob of Edessa. A Study in its Underlying Textual Traditions*, MPIL 9 (Leiden: Brill, 1998). The edition of JSam is in A. Salvesen, *I-II Samuel in the Syriac Version of Jacob of Edessa*, MPIL 10 (Leiden: Brill, 1999).

<sup>13</sup> *Septuaginta. Vetus Testamentum Graecum Auctoritate Academiae Scientiarum Göttingensis editum*, Göttingen, 1931- , 20 vol.

books not yet covered by the Göttingen project, the diplomatic text in the Larger Cambridge edition.<sup>14</sup> What survives of the Syrohexapla has also been published.<sup>15</sup> In addition much of Jacob's other work relevant to JOT has been published: his translation of the *Cathedral Homilies* and the *Hymns of Severus* in Jacob's revision,<sup>16</sup> a facsimile edition of the *Hexaemeron*,<sup>17</sup> some of Jacob's biblical scholia<sup>18</sup> and various letters.<sup>19</sup> This makes comparison possible between JOT and Jacob's biblical citations in his other works, and may help uncover the intention behind JOT.

For nowhere does Jacob ever mention why he undertook this work. In contrast to the Harklean and Philoxenian versions, there is no obvious doctrinal motivation behind JOT. Origen hints that his motive in trying to resolve discrepancies between different manuscripts of LXX was apologetic to a degree, in response to Jewish criticism of church texts.<sup>20</sup> But in the case of Jacob, all we know is that the colophons, the Wisdom fragment and Jacob's biography speak of "correction" or "revision" (ܥܝܕܐ), without clarifying what this involved.

Recent studies on several books of JOT have demonstrated that Jacob's working method is to take the Peshitta as a base and adjust it by means of additions, doublets, harmonizations, and replacements from at least one LXX text. This is not quite what we would term "correction," and

<sup>14</sup> A.E. Brooke, N. McLean, and H. St. John Thackeray, *The Old Testament in Greek according to the text of Codex Vaticanus, supplemented from other uncial manuscripts, with a critical apparatus containing the variants of the chief ancient authorities for the text of the Septuagint* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1906-).

<sup>15</sup> P.A. de Lagarde, *Bibliothecae Syriacae a Paulo de Lagarde collectae quae ad philologiam sacram pertinent* (Göttingen: Horstmann, 1892); Ceriani, *Monumenta Sacra et Profana* vii (Milan: Bibliotheca Ambrosiana, 1874), an edition of the ninth-century Codex Ambrosianus Syrohexaplaris, covering Prophets and Hagiographa; W. Baars, *New Syrohexaplaric Texts, edited, commented upon and compared with the Septuagint* (Leiden: Brill, 1968); M. Goshen-Gottstein, "Neue Syrohexaplafragmente," *Biblica* 37 (1956), 175-83, for fragments of Samuel in the Syrohexapla; A. Vööbus, *The Pentateuch in the Version of the Syro-hexapla. A facsimile Edition of a Midyat MS. discovered 1964*. CSCO 369; Subsidia 45 (Louvain, 1975) [covering Gen 32.9-Deut 32.25]; idem, *The Book of Isaiah in the version of the Syro-hexapla: a facsimile edition of MS. St. Mark 1 in Jerusalem with an introduction* (Louvain: Peeters, 1983).

<sup>16</sup> In various volumes of *PO*, mainly by Brière (*Homilies*) and Brooks (*Hymns*). For full details see the bibliographical Clavis by D. Kruisheer in *Jacob of Edessa and the Syriac Culture of his Day*, ed. R.B. ter Haar Romeny, MPIL 18 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 265-93, esp. 284-86.

<sup>17</sup> J.-B. Chabot, *Iacobi Edesseni Hexaemeron, seu in opus creationis libri septem*. CSCO 92/Syr. 44 (Paris: E Typographeo Reipublicae, 1928).

<sup>18</sup> G. Phillips, *Scholia on Passages of the Old Testament by Mar Jacob Bishop of Edessa* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1864).

<sup>19</sup> See Kruisheer, in *Jacob of Edessa and the Syriac Culture of his Day*, 282-84.

<sup>20</sup> *Ep.Afr.* §5, *Comm.Matt.* 15.4.

it is unclear what criteria Jacob was using to create his text. Wright's observation over a century ago still holds true, even under close examination of JOT: the result of Jacob's work is "a curious eclectic or patchwork text,"<sup>21</sup> and this is what makes it so hard to identify JOT's purpose.

In the case of the Hexaplaric revision of the LXX, Origen employed the contemporary Hebrew text as a matrix, adding material from later Jewish Greek versions where there seemed to be gaps, and marking with obeli the passages that appeared to be additions in the LXX. No doubt he believed that by doing so he would recover the original form that left the hand of the seventy-two translators as described in the *Letter of Aristeas*. Jacob would have been aware of Origen's work through the Syrohexapla, which had been translated from Origen's revised text in 616 CE, and probably also of the *Aristeas* legend. He would have known that a Hebrew text underlay, separately, both the LXX and Peshitta versions. However, unlike Origen, Jacob had little or no grasp of Hebrew,<sup>22</sup> or ready access to Hebrew texts or Jewish scholars. It is theoretically possible that he believed a combination of the LXX and Peshitta forms of individual books would achieve something that reflected the original Hebrew biblical text. However, there is no indication either externally or internally that he was guided by the notion of a Hebrew *Vorlage* in creating his own version.

There have been several intensive studies of texts of JOT in the last twenty years, including those of Saley, Salvesen, Romeny, Juckel, and Marsh. Yet no obvious guiding principles have emerged, whether text-critical or exegetical. Each scholar has suggested slightly different reasons for the creation of JOT.

Several people, including myself, have made comparisons with Jacob's Old Testament citations in his other works: the scholia, his letters, the translations and revised versions of Severus of Antioch's *Homilies* and *Hymns*, and Jacob's *Hexaemeron*. This is in the hope of uncovering clues about the purpose of JOT, especially whether one can detect a progression towards the final version as a definitive text. Thus Goshen Gottstein argued that the composite biblical texts in Jacob's scholia represent a

<sup>21</sup> W. Wright, *A Short History of Syriac Literature* (London: A. and C. Black, 1894), 17.

<sup>22</sup> See A. Salvesen "Did Jacob of Edessa know Hebrew?" in *Biblical Hebrew, Biblical Texts. Essays in Memory of Michael Weitzman*, ed. A. Rapoport-Albert and G. Greenberg (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 457–67, and "Was Jacob Trilingual? Jacob of Edessa's Knowledge of Hebrew Revisited," in *Studies on Jacob of Edessa*, ed. G.Y. Ibrahim and G.A. Kiraz (Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 2010), 107–18.

stage in the development of JOT.<sup>23</sup> Following him, Richard Saley at first thought that Jacob's combination of texts was evolving through his works until it reached a culmination in JOT, and he raised the possibility that Jacob wished to produce a new "authorized" version.<sup>24</sup> However, he later revised this view.<sup>25</sup> I have argued that Jacob's aim was clarification of the biblical text (Syriac and Greek together) and it was not intended to be an authorized version.<sup>26</sup> It may have represented a stylistic reaction against the Syrohexapla<sup>27</sup> and offered a text which was more compatible with certain Greek commentaries.<sup>28</sup> In a subsequent article, I concluded that Jacob did not copy his citations directly and verbatim from JOT even when the latter had been completed.<sup>29</sup> Konrad Jenner recently suggested an apologetic motive, that JOT version was intended to be used in discussions with Muslims and Jews.<sup>30</sup> Andreas Juckel returned to the hypothesis of an evolving text, arguing that Jacob's revision of the translation of Severus' *Hymns* (674/5 CE) reflect a preparatory stage of his definitive revision,<sup>31</sup> though this has been disputed by Bas Romeny.<sup>32</sup> A perceptive recent Master's thesis by Bradley Marsh on Jacob's version of Numbers examined this part of the Pentateuch manuscript in the light of all previous

<sup>23</sup> Goshen-Gottstein, 'Neue Syrohexaplafragmente,' 164 n. 3.

<sup>24</sup> R.J. Saley, *The Samuel Manuscript of Jacob of Edessa. A Study in its Underlying Textual Traditions*, MPIL 9 (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 122.

<sup>25</sup> Saley, "The Textual Vorlagen for Jacob of Edessa's Revision of the Books of Samuel," in *Jacob of Edessa and the Syriac Culture of His Day*, 113-25.

<sup>26</sup> Salvesen, *The Books of Samuel in the Syriac Version of Jacob of Edessa*, xv, xxv; eadem, "Jacob of Edessa's version of Exodus 1 and 28," *Hugoye* 8.1 (2005): 18.

<sup>27</sup> Salvesen, "Jacob of Edessa's Version of 1-2 Samuel. Its Method and Text-Critical Value," in *Jacob of Edessa and the Syriac Culture of His Day*, 131, 135.

<sup>28</sup> A. Salvesen, "The Genesis Texts of Jacob of Edessa. A Study in Variety," in *Text, Translation and Tradition. Studies on the Peshitta and Its Use in the Syriac Tradition Presented to Konrad D. Jenner on the Occasion of his Sixty-fifth Birthday*, ed. W. van Peursen and R.B. ter Haar Romeny, MPIL 14 (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 177-88, 187-88.

<sup>29</sup> "The Authorial Spirit? Biblical Citations in Jacob of Edessa's *Hexaemeron*," *ArSt* 6.2 (2008): 207-25, esp. 225.

<sup>30</sup> "The Canons of Jacob of Edessa in the Perspective of the Christian Identity of his Day," in *Jacob of Edessa (c. 640-708) and the Syriac Culture of His Day*, 101-11, esp. 110 n. 26.

<sup>31</sup> "Approximation of the 'Traditions' in Jacob of Edessa's revision of Isaiah," in *Malphono w-Rabo d'Malphone. Studies in Honour of Sebastian P. Brock*, ed. G.A. Kiraz, Gorgias Eastern Christian Studies 3 (Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 2008), 227-82, esp. 231, 234. See also Juckel, "Septuaginta and Peshitta. Jacob of Edessa quoting the Old Testament in Ms BL Add 17134," *Hugoye* 8.2 (2005).

<sup>32</sup> Romeny, "Jacob of Edessa's Quotations and Revision of Isaiah," in *Isaiah in Context: Studies in Honour of Arie van der Kooij on the Occasion of his Sixty-fifth Birthday*, ed. M.N. van der Meer, P. van Keulen, W. van Peursen, B. ter Haar Romeny (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 387-406, esp. 390.

research on JOT. He concluded that there were primarily exegetical reasons for the revision, with Jacob aiming at an inclusive version.<sup>33</sup>

One question that emerges frequently is whether Jacob's "mixed" biblical citations in his other works reflect dissatisfaction with the Peshitta. Discerning some kind of progression in the make-up of citations is complicated by the difficulty in establishing the date of each of his works. The version of the Old Testament and the *Hexaemeron* can be definitely dated, however: they belong to his last decade, the Tell 'Adda period. Bas Romeny suggests that JOT was a compromise between Peshitta and LXX, in the context of the sixth century revisers of the Peshitta New Testament such as Philoxenus, who had a high view of the Greek scriptural text. Yet Jacob was also influenced by Eusebius of Emesa, who revered the Peshitta because it had been translated from Hebrew, the language of Creation. This led Jacob to produce a compromise between the two approaches that avoided over-literalism. Though it aimed to be a new standard version, it did not catch on because the Syrian Orthodox preferred the Peshitta, and Greek became less influential following the collapse of Byzantine Greek rule in Syria.<sup>34</sup>

In the light of all these studies it is safe to say that it is impossible to see an obvious linear development in the style or method of Jacob's citations. Furthermore, the biggest problem with a theory of progression towards a definitive Peshitta/LXX combination in JOT is his *Hexaemeron* [henceforth JHex], the pinnacle of his achievement as a scholar. JHex was written at the very end of his life, the last section being finished by George of the Arabs after Jacob's death. Thus the *Hexaemeron* certainly post-dates the compilation of JOT. Yet the Old Testament citations in JHex are rarely identical with the corresponding passages in JOT. This suggests firstly that even at the end of his life Jacob was continuing to produce combined citations of the Peshitta and LXX according to need

<sup>33</sup> B. Marsh, "Jacob of Edessa's Revision of the Peshitta Book of Numbers: A Study in Textual Affinities" (Master of Studies thesis, Oxford: Oxford University, 2010): "If Jacob had intended to produce a new, authorized revision of P, why did he wait until the end of his life to produce it, and why is there no discernible development from Jacob's earlier revisions when compared to JPent? No evidence has surfaced which would indicate that Jacob continually worked towards a grand revision — one which would serve as a new standard text ... Jacob's version, as the above has shown, clearly was a guided tour of both P and G readings (even including significant SH materials). Jacob's motives may lie in wanting to provide clarity in a Syrian Orthodox context that was flooded with texts and revisions. Jacob was a bishop and even when deposed [sic], he was a teacher. His learning was highly respected even if his version was a 'failure'."

<sup>34</sup> Romeny, "Jacob of Edessa on Genesis: his quotations of the Peshitta and his revision of the text," in *Jacob of Edessa and the Syriac Culture of His Day*, 145-58, esp. 157-58.

and context. Secondly it implies that Jacob did not intend his Old Testament version to be a new standard version for general Syrian Orthodox use, still less a replacement for the Peshitta, since Jacob himself, its creator, did not use it as such.

Another conundrum is how Jacob saw his version in relation to the Syrohexapla, which was produced two decades before his birth. Evidently Jacob's use of the Peshitta as a base text shows that he reacted against the idea that the Syrohexapla could or should replace the Peshitta, despite the latter's inadequacies. Yet his own translation style for Greek works was a very literal one, little different from that of the Syrohexapla, to the extent that he re-worked earlier looser renderings such as Paul of Edessa's translation of Severus' *Cathedral Homilies*.<sup>35</sup> In contrast, JOT seems too inconsistent in its approach to offer a pro-Syriac alternative to the Syrohexapla: it shifts constantly and unpredictably between Peshitta and LXX from passage to passage, yet occasionally it even seems to employ locutions from the Syrohexapla.<sup>36</sup>

So if Jacob was not aiming at a definitive, new standard version of the Old Testament in Syriac, but was content to adapt various combinations of LXX and Peshitta according to context, what was the point of JOT at all, as a self-standing composition?

Maybe if any solution to the enigma is possible, it may be that we should step back from close scrutiny of Jacob's Old Testament version, and instead set Jacob's textual work in the context of his entire oeuvre, both ecclesiastical and secular.

Jacob's status as an intellectual and scholar may tend to obscure his activities as a teacher. Yet Michael the Syrian applies to him the epithet *ܩܕܝܫܐ ܕܥܠܡܐ*, and relays that in the monastery of Eusebona he taught the Psalms in Greek, the reading of Scripture [presumably in Greek], and the Greek language — the same subjects he himself had studied in Qenneshre as a young man. In addition some of his other works are strongly didactic in tone, for instance the treatises on correct grammar and orthography, and his letters answering queries on canon law and biblical interpretation sent to him by colleagues. These probably reflect his engagement in academic teaching as well as the readiness of his peers to consult his authority on various matters.

<sup>35</sup> L. Van Rompay, "Jacob of Edessa and the sixth century Syriac translation of Severus of Antioch's Cathedral Homilies," *Jacob of Edessa and the Syriac Culture of His Day*, 189–204.

<sup>36</sup> E.g. in Saul's rebuke of Jonathan, 1 Sam 20:30.

Thus it is worth considering whether Jacob's version of the Old Testament was compiled in the main for pedagogical reasons.<sup>37</sup> Rather than aiming at either a definitive, standard version on consistent text-critical or exegetical principles, or an aid to biblical citations in Syriac renderings of Greek works, perhaps Jacob was composing an aid to the teaching of Scripture in (simultaneously) its Syriac and Greek forms. The creation of a full running text of a Scriptural book would demonstrate that the Syriac and Greek traditions were harmonious and mutually reinforcing. To such an end, Jacob did not need to produce a definitive version using clear and consistent principles. JOT would also demonstrate the utility of the study of Greek by acting as a preliminary guide to understanding the LXX where it differed from the Peshitta.

Against this hypothesis it could be argued that the form in which the books of JOT have come down to us is hardly that of a set of lecture notes on different Peshitta and LXX readings. However, it is possible that Jacob originally drew up a version for his own personal use when teaching, which is now lost, while the manuscripts that we have today represent fair copies drawn up as a "textbook" version by trained scribes a decade after the death of the revered scholar-bishop.<sup>38</sup>

These copies of JOT are beautifully produced pieces of work, often with synopses and lectionary tables at the start and lectionary markings in the margins. We cannot tell whether the lectionary material originated with Jacob. According to an autoptic examination of the two manuscripts in the British Library, BM Add. 14,429 (JSam) and BM Add. 14,441 (JIsa), the surviving lectionary table in JSam is formally drawn up,<sup>39</sup> but the

<sup>37</sup> This line of thought was stimulated by Daniel King's paper "The Genesis and Growth of a Philosophical Lexicon in Syriac," at IOSOT in Helsinki, July 2010, in which he discussed the study of philosophical texts within a monastic educational setting. I am very grateful to Dr. King for sending me a copy of his paper.

<sup>38</sup> There is a fragment of Maimonides' draft in his own hand of his Guide of the Perplexed, found in the Cairo Geniza and preserved in Cambridge University Library (T-S 10Ka4.1). The script is only semi-legible and there are numerous cross-outs. There is also a fine manuscript of his Mishneh Torah, also found among the documents of the Cairo Geniza (Bodleian Library MS Hunt. 80) and authorized by Maimonides though he was not the scribe; it contains additions and corrections noted in the margins and between the lines. It is perhaps unwise to compare these examples from a very different milieu and period to the Syriac monastic setting, but there may be similarities in the process from author's draft to fair copy that took place in Jacob's works.

<sup>39</sup> The JSam lectionary table has some similarity to that of SyhExod in BM Add 12,134 and to JDan in Paris Bib. Nat. Syr. 27; both MSS are work of the same scribe La'zar as JSam. See J. Leroy, *Les manuscrits syriaques à peintures conservés dans les bibliothèques d'Europe et d'Orient. Contribution à l'étude de l'iconographie des Eglises de langue*

notations marking the start and end of the readings in both JSam and JIsa appear to have been added subsequent to the copying of the main text. Like the titles of the readings in the margins, they are in a small Serto script and red ink, and have been added supralinearly in the text.<sup>40</sup> As for the many marginal notes recording doublets, these are in a small, dark Estrangelo script in which the formation of certain letters differs from that of the main text.

In JIsa the various scholia usually appear in the top or bottom margins, in a small Estrangelo hand and carefully framed in red ink.<sup>41</sup> They could conceivably have been added after the writing of the main text since each folio maintains the same number of lines, and the scholia appear in the generous top or bottom margin.<sup>42</sup>

In contrast, the five scholia in the manuscript of JSam are not only in the same hand as the main text, but they have also been written within the area of the main text.<sup>43</sup> In three cases Jacob's text agrees with the scholion's interpretation. The first folio in the JSam manuscript has a partially legible superscription: 'In the year 1030 (= 719 CE) in the month of Nisan, La'zar and 'Adi started to write this book...' (The same two scribes also copied the JDan manuscript in the Bibliothèque Nationale, dated A.G. 1031 = 720 CE).<sup>44</sup> Similarly, in JExod, according to the microfilm

*syriaque*. Bibliothèque archéologique et historique 77 (Paris: Geuthner, 1964), II.pl. 14 and I.124.

<sup>40</sup> This contrasts with the procedure in the slightly earlier manuscript of Syrohexapla Exodus (also in the British Library, BM Add. 12.134). In this the title of each lection appears as part of the running text, full size and rubricated.

<sup>41</sup> Besides the brief one or two word alternative readings in the margins, in what remains of JIsa there are ten lengthier notes in frames. Some are scholia, others are longer alternative readings to that chosen for the main text (at f. 21v [explicitly LXX], f. 23v; f. 24r; f.33v; f. 46r; f. 54r; f. 61v [explicitly Peshitta]). The scholia cover geographical identifications; f. 11v to LXX 18:1 the location of Cush; f. 14v to LXX 21:13 on the location of Daidanim (the word appears both in the scholion and the separate marginal note in Greek letters); f. 17v to LXX 23:6,14 on the location of Carchedonia; f. 27v f. on formulae of prophetic calling.

<sup>42</sup> Again, this contrasts with the textual arrangement of BM Add. MS 12,134, Syrohexapla Exodus, where the scholia and long asterised additions from the Samaritan version are fully integrated into the text by the scribe. The scribe La'zar is likely to have also been involved in copying JSam and JDan since colophons give the scribes of these latter manuscripts as La'zar and 'Adi, a father-son team.

<sup>43</sup> See Salvesen, *I-II Samuel in the Syriac Version of Jacob of Edessa*, xii–xiv, and eadem, "Jacob of Edessa's Version of 1–2 Samuel," in *Jacob of Edessa and the Syriac Culture of his Day*, 132 n.14.

<sup>44</sup> Wright (*Catalogue*, I, 31) suggested that Saba of Resh'aina was the main copyist of JSam, on the ground of the similarity of the hand of PNum in BM Add. MS 14,428 (724 CE) and PEzek BM Add. 12,135 (726 CE). However, on inspection the hands of JSam, JIsa and SyhExod have the closest mutual resemblance, and also JDan, according

of Bib. Nat. 26, there is a lengthy scholion on the high priest's breastplate that occupies the first third of the page. Thus it cannot be a later addition, subsequent to the copying of the main text.

In the same manuscript in the books of Numbers and Deuteronomy, there is additional material from the Samaritan Pentateuch in its Greek form, usually with a note that this is found only in the version of the Samaritans. Such additions are found both in the main text and in the margins of JNum, and marked with obeli in the margins.<sup>45</sup> Similar notes from the Samaritan Pentateuch are found in Syrohexapla manuscripts, including the manuscript of SyhExodus that was apparently copied during Jacob's own lifetime by one of the same scribes (La'zar) responsible for copying the manuscripts of JSam and JDan over twenty years later.<sup>46</sup>

So one can only speculate as to the form that left the hands of Jacob, since there is some variation in presentation even between the three similar manuscripts of JIsa, JSam and JPent, all copied by the same scribes within a few years of each other and around a decade after Jacob's death.<sup>47</sup> What would his autograph versions have looked like: was there a rough draft, later written out by a scribe, and with or without lectionary details and fully annotation with marginal readings and scholia? How far were Jacob's loyal students at Tell 'Adda responsible for the final content and format of the manuscripts of JOT after the death of their revered teacher?

Returning to the possible *Sitz im Leben* of JOT, Jacob's posting prior to his stay at Tell 'Adda had been a summons to the monastery of Eusebona to teach Greek, a subject that had disappeared from the curriculum. Jacob stayed there for eleven years but then was forced out by

to the plate in W. Hatch, *An Album of Dated Syriac Manuscripts* (Boston: American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1946, repr. Piscataway: Gorgias Press 2002), XLVII, 98, and JEzek according to the plate in Ugolini's article.

<sup>45</sup> E.g. Bib.Nat. ms syr. 26 f. 284r, where the addition is in the main text marked with obeli in the right hand margins, and a note in the bottom margin attributing it to the Samaritan version. See Marsh, "Jacob of Edessa's Revision of the Peshitta Book of Numbers," 17–19, who notes that the Samaritan material undoubtedly comes from the Syrohexapla, but comments that the obeli could derive from a later scribe, not from Jacob himself. However, in contrast to the Syrohexapla, JOT never contains readings from Aquila, Symmachus and Theodotion.

<sup>46</sup> BM Add. MS 12,134, dated AG 1008 = 697 CE.

<sup>47</sup> The format of JPent is double columned, whereas JSam, JIsa and JDan are set out as a single column of text. The manuscripts of JSam, JIsa and JDan are very similar in terms of size, number of lines, and general layout.

“brethren who hated the Greeks.” In other words, sectarian animosity towards Chalcedonians manifested itself in a rather petty rejection of the Greek language and its advocates. Jacob moved to the monastery of Tell ‘Adda where he spent the next nine years.<sup>48</sup> His work on JOT may have been a riposte to those who questioned the utility of Greek, even in the more neutral area of Scripture in Greek. This would match his frustrated reaction to the hierarchy of Edessa, according to the biographies: when he resigned as bishop and moved to Kaishum, he is said to have composed two *memre* against his opponents.<sup>49</sup> Similarly, when he reached Tell ‘Adda after being forced out of Eusebona, he may have composed JOT as a reaction to the attitude of the monks there as well as a teaching aid for his loyal students in Tell ‘Adda. The very nature of JOT meant it was unnecessary to know Greek in order to benefit from the introduction of Greek elements in Syriac guise, yet its use of the Peshitta as a base affirmed the importance of this foundational aspect of Syriac Christian identity, for those who would have found the use of the Syrohexapla a radical break with tradition. For in JOT the Greek revisional additions amplify the sense of the Peshitta and clarify its obscurities. The main text is supplemented by alternative readings in the margins and scholia from Severus and others. There is also nothing that would offend monophysite sensibilities. Without being intended as a final critical work or standard text, Jacob’s version would have received sufficient careful thought to be presentable to sceptical students and budding scholars alike within Tell ‘Adda. JOT could draw students to the study of Greek Scripture in its own right, since it offered new but highly “orthodox” and unobjectionable possibilities for the study of Scripture.

The advantage of this hypothesis that JOT was a teaching tool that demonstrated the utility of Greek is that it explains the two fundamental problems inherent in JOT: firstly, the absence of a consistent working method, in terms of why one reading was chosen and not another; and secondly, the lack of an obvious trajectory in Jacob’s use of Old Testament citations in his other works, up to and including the *Hexameron*.

<sup>48</sup> See O. Schrier, “Chronological Problems Concerning the Lives of Severus bar Mashqa, Athanasius of Balad, Julianus Romaya, Yohannan Saba, George of the Arabs and Jacob of Edessa,” *OC* 55 (1991): 62-90, esp. 74 ff.

<sup>49</sup> See H. Teule, “Jacob of Edessa and Canon Law,” in *Jacob of Edessa and the Syriac Culture of his Day*, 83-100, esp. 83-84.

## CONCLUSION

Looking back over previous scholarship on Jacob's version, the issue was over whether Jacob was trying to produce a standard text that could be adopted by (probably not imposed upon) the Syrian Orthodox Church. However, the surveys carried out over the last few decades do not suggest that JOT was the culmination of a lifetime's textual work in terms of being a *definitive* combination of the Peshitta with LXX readings — a version that would supersede Jacob's earlier attempts in his composite biblical citations, and also replace both the Peshitta and the Syrohexapla. The fact that Jacob failed to cite his own version verbatim in his next and final major work, the *Hexaemeron*, suggests that whatever he intended JOT to be, it was not designed as an authorized version for wide use within church life.

Yet this odd version that apparently never caught on is revealing of Jacob and movements in his intellectual milieu. What seems to emerge from recent studies is that JOT is a *work of reconciliation* between the Peshitta and Greek traditions. It supports the Peshitta but supplements it with readings from the LXX, either in the main text or as alternatives in the margin. Thus it effectively recommends the study of Greek scripture by proving the usefulness of LXX in running texts of Scripture. Jacob demonstrates that the versions are complementary, not opposed; and that in spite of the existence of the Syrohexapla, the Peshitta's importance cannot be denied. The Greek additions, replacements and marginal glosses in Syriac translation gave Syriac readers a non-threatening introduction to the sense of the LXX. It may also have aided readers of the Greek commentaries rendered into Syriac (though I have not yet come across straight correspondences between JOT and extant Syriac commentaries from Greek). Jacob may have been using his version to persuade students of the validity of Greek in a non-threatening way, and the original format of the work could represent a textbook or teaching tool.

It could also be argued that Jacob's *Hexaemeron* had a similar aim in reconciling apparently opposed traditions. In this case, the harmonisation was of the biblical account of creation with secular science. Basil of Caesarea's *Hexaemeron* was targeted at a lay audience, originating as a series of sermons and completed by his brother, Gregory of Nyssa, though Basil did refer to pagan philosophy.<sup>50</sup> Another *Hexaemeron*, ascribed to Anastasius of Sinai in the seventh century, is very allegorical

<sup>50</sup> For the hexaemeral tradition in general, and Jacob's intellectual predecessors and influences, see F.E. Robbins, *The Hexaemeral Literature. A Study of the Greek and Latin*

and mystical, and also anti-scientific in its approach. In contrast, Jacob adds a very large amount of information taken from the world of non-Christian Greek authors, including the Aristotelian tradition, Ptolemy, Strabo, Theophrastus, sometimes from Greek or Syriac intermediary sources now lost to us. He places this in biblical framework of the six days of creation, along with his own observations and anecdotal material on geology, meteorology, geography, plus many citations from Scripture.<sup>51</sup>

Evidently Jacob did not see a conflict between the biblical account and Greek scientific knowledge, although he also offered criticism of certain lines of secular thought such as astrology. Similarly he saw no contradiction between the biblical texts of the Peshitta and the LXX. Thus he was able to combine traditions in both the *Hexaemeron* and his version of the Old Testament, as though they were mutually reinforcing and complementary works for training élite students within the Syrian Orthodox church.

It may be that Jacob's reputation as a difficult character averse to compromising his principles in matters of behaviour and belief has obscured his deep interest in harmonizing and reconciling at an intellectual level. Yet had he been able to compromise in the early 680s and continue with his episcopal duties, he may not have had the time to produce either his version of the Old Testament or his *Hexaemeron*. His experience of being rejected by Eusebona after a decade of fostering Greek studies there may have been the spur to writing both of these works.

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*Commentaries on Genesis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1912), and E. ten Napel, "Some Remarks on the Hexaemeral Literature in Syriac," *OCA* 229 (1987): 59-69.

<sup>51</sup> See M. Greatrex, "Memra One, Two and Four of the Hexaemeron of Jacob of Edessa: Introduction, Translation and Text," (PhD diss., Cardiff: University of Cardiff, 2000), esp. 9: "The emphasis in Jacob's text [in contrast to Basil's more guarded use of classical thought] is instruction; he was compiling a systematic exegesis which 'unlocks and enlightens' the mysteries of Scripture (Hex. 145r)." She notes that Jacob uses Gregory of Nyssa's more scientific "corrections" of Basil's account and was influenced by the thought of John Philoponus in his *de Opificio Mundi*. A crucial influence on Jacob would also have been his teacher at Qenneshre, Severus Sebokht, who summarised Ptolemy's treatises on astronomy.

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