

Syriac Manuscripts in the Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C.

by

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The Freer Gallery of Art of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington¹ houses a significant collection of Near Eastern manuscripts in addition to its famous Greek codices of the LXX (Θ , A , Aa) and of the New Testament (W, I). The holdings include Coptic, Armenian, Arabic, Persian, and Syriac manuscripts, about twenty of which are illuminated. To date no descriptive catalog of the entire collection has been published.

There are two Syriac items : a Peshitta New Testament² (37.41) and a previously unrecorded paper fragment (37.41A)³ which had been preserved between leaves of the codex.

I. The codex measures $10\text{-}1/8'' \times 7\text{-}5/8''$.⁴ The covers and part of the spine are missing. The Estrangela script is in black and red ink on eight paper leaves and 325 parchment leaves in thirty-three quires. The paper leaves are in the first quire and were inserted when the manuscript was restored. The text on these leaves is by a second hand. The lower third of the flyleaf is missing, and the remaining portion was apparently used as a copy book for the beginning of the Fourth Gospel. The other quires contain ten folios each, except for the third with one folio missing (Mt. 14.27-15.19), the thirty-second with 11 f., and the thirty-third with 14 f.

The contents are those proper to the Peshitta New Testament, i.e., the Second Epistle of Peter, the Second and Third Epistles of John, the Epistle

¹ 12th and Jefferson Streets, Washington, D.C., U.S.A., 20560. The director is Dr. Harold P. Stern. Mr. Martin Amt, Museum Specialist, is in charge of manuscripts.

² Cited by James T. Clemons in 'A Checklist of Syriac Manuscripts in the United States and Canada,' *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 32 (1966) 224-251, 478-522, esp. p. 508, and *An Index of Syriac Manuscripts containing the Epistles and the Apocalypse*, No. 33 of *Studies and Documents* (Salt Lake City : University of Utah Press, 1968), p. 28.

³ This fragment was first noticed while we were examining the codex with Professor James T. Clemons of Wesley Theological Seminary, for whose class we began this project.

⁴ We are indebted to the description of this manuscript prepared by Mr. John Ellerton Lodge, first director of the Freer Gallery, for the details of the size of the codex and for the translations of the final colophons. The translations of each of the Gospel colophons and of the colophon for the Tetraeuangelion are our own.

of Jude, and the Book of the Revelation are all missing, as well as certain passages in the Gospels, Acts, and Epistles.

The colophon of folio 331 *recto* is as follows :

'This book, which is full of life, was written in the Holy Church, a dwelling of forgiveness, a visiting place for strangers, a haven for the learned, a house of refuge for those who are oppressed, and a refuge of the learned Mar (Saint) Gavrona, established in the country of Beth-Bedey. May the power of the prayer of the blessed father and his spiritual sons rest upon the writer and upon the pen and upon all the people, Amen.

'This book was written by a sinful, wretched, despised, corrupt person, wallowing in the hatefulness of his soul, and the least of all men; his name is Gabriel, one of the sons of the Saint. May the Lord have mercy upon the humble writer and the pen, through the prayer of our father Mar Gavrona who is known of the house of Shamona which is situated and established on the side of the village. Let his memorial be a blessing and his prayers upon all, Amen.

'I beseech you, O my brethren, that you may pray for the humble and sinful writer, who is worse than those who pollute his village and who is persistent in the things which do not enrich his being, subject to vice which kills the body and the soul, miserable Gabriel of the blessed town, whose dwelling is on the side of the village. I beseech anyone who might come across this book, to copy it or to read it, to offer a helpful prayer to my humbleness, so that I may be pitied in the house of judgment, in the hour when the burning fire shall prevail and purify the lustful portion of the weak souls of all the sinners; and when the sanctified shall stretch out their hands to receive the rewards of their labors, then (also) the unclean hands of the writer will appear. Remember, O my Lord, these heroic deeds which my hands have recorded, and not the (evil) deeds which they (my hands) have done. May our Lord, through the grace of his mercy, preserve the readers and the listeners, Amen.

'This book of the New Testament was completed in the year one thousand five hundred and twenty-five of the Greeks [A.D. 1213-1214]. All the brethren and strangers here and in every place who please Christ are hereby remembered. And let us be benefitted through their prayers, so be it and Amen. The last lines are to the writer like a ship which reaches port.

'Blessed is God forever and his name is glorified forever and ever, may his mercy, compassion, his unchangeableness and his enduring love be upon us and upon all the people. He who was reconciled with us through the death of his Son, known as One Nature, Three Persons, Father and Son and Holy Spirit, let him be the protector of our people, and may his love and grace pour forth upon all the people, always and forever and ever, Amen, Amen, and Amen.'

The colophons on folio 331 *verso*, written in part in Jacobite script, are as follows :

(1) 'This book of the New Testament, full and complete, came into the possession of the monk Joseph, a pure and chaste deacon of a monastic order. His father, named Almoney, was a king's horseman [or appointee], of the city of Merda. The prayers of the saint be upon us, Amen.'

(2) 'This holy book came into the possession of the pure and faithful deacon Eshoda, son of Joseph, of the blessed city of Mardey. Our Lord protect it, Amen.'

'Written in the month of September in the year one thousand six hundred and twenty-two of the blessed Greeks [A.D. 1310-1311].'

Each has a colophon. The Gospel colophons differ from those in the BFBS edition,⁵ while colophons of all other books agree exactly with that edition. The Gospel colophons are as follows :

(1) 'The end of the Gospel of the blessed Matthew which was spoken in Hebrew in Palestine. Good is the Holy Gospel which he proclaimed.'

(2) 'The end of the Holy Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ of the blessed Mark which was spoken and proclaimed in Latin in Rome.'

(3) 'The end of the writing of the Holy Gospel which was proclaimed by Luke, spoken and proclaimed in Greek.'

(4) 'The end of the Gospel of the blessed John which was spoken and proclaimed in Greek in Ephesus.'

The colophon for the Fourth Gospel is followed immediately by the colophon for the Tetraeuangelion :

'The end of the book of the Holy Gospels of the four evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, concerning the mighty works of the Lord Jesus Christ.'

II. The recently discovered fragment measures 3-3/4" × 2-5/8" and is written on both sides in Jacobite script. A few words are in red ink, the rest in brown.⁶ The names of Peter (both *Petros* and *Simon Cepha*) appear several times in the limited space of the manuscript.

⁵ *The New Testament in Syriac*, R. Kilgore, editor (London : British and Foreign Bible Society, 1920).

⁶ The photographs were made by Mr. Pat Wadsworth of Washington, D.C.