

THE SAHIDIC VERSION OF JACOB OF SERUGH'S *MĒMRĀ* ON THE ASCENSION: NEW FRAGMENTS¹

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SAHIDISCHEN ALTEN TESTAMENTES*

ABSTRACT

This article presents two newly identified Sahidic fragments of Jacob of Serugh's mēmṛā on the Ascension, originating from a tenth-century White Monastery codex. These fragments expand the previously known Coptic witness to the homily, first reported in 2015, and provide additional evidence for the early reception of Syriac literature in Egypt, challenging the assumption that Coptic translations depended exclusively on Greek sources. After surveying the transmission of the homily on the Ascension in Syriac, Coptic, Arabic, Ethiopic, and Armenian, the study offers an edition of the new fragments and compares them with Bedjan's Syriac text

¹ I am grateful to David Taylor (University of Oxford) and to the anonymous reviewer of this article for their helpful comments and suggestions. Any remaining shortcomings or errors are, of course, my own.

and other versions. The analysis shows significant textual divergences and translation techniques.

In 2015, I announced the first attestation of a work by Jacob of Serugh (ca. 451–521 CE) in Coptic: a Sahidic version of his *mēmṛā* on the Ascension of Christ, preserved in two tenth-century codices from the White Monastery in Upper Egypt.² This discovery not only provides the earliest evidence for Jacob's reception in Egypt, but it also challenges the long-held assumption that Coptic literature translated texts exclusively from Greek, showing that it could also incorporate Syriac works. In this article, I would like to draw attention to two newly identified fragments which belonged to one of the codices I described in 2015. These fragments preserve additional verses of the Sahidic version of Jacob's *mēmṛā* on the Ascension, offering a fuller picture of its reception in Coptic. I will begin by presenting the transmission of the *mēmṛā* on the Ascension by Jacob of Serugh in various languages and then I will introduce the new Sahidic fragments of the text.

THE MĒMRĀ ON THE ASCENSION AND ITS VERSIONS

In addition to the original Syriac text, versions of the *mēmṛā* on the Ascension has survived in Coptic, Arabic, Ethiopic (Gə'əz), and Armenian, making it the only text of Jacob attested in the five languages of the anti-Chalcedonian churches. The Syriac

2 Alin Suciu, "The Sahidic Version of Jacob of Serugh's *Memṛā* on the Ascension of Christ," *Le Muséon* 128 (2015): 49–83. A revised and improved version of this article I published in Romanian, see "Versiunea coptă a memrei lui Iacov de Sarug despre Înălțarea lui Hristos," in Alin Suciu, *Monahul și scribul. Creștinismul egiptean între idealul monahal și cultura scrisă* (Studii și documente de istorie a religiilor, 6; Bucharest: Spandugino, 2022) 81–111.

text is abundantly represented in the manuscript tradition.³ Nevertheless, the only available edition, prepared by Paul Bedjan, is based on just two codices: Paris, BnF Syriac 196 (14th century CE), and London, British Library Add. 12165 (1015 CE).⁴ A new edition based on a larger number of manuscripts, which would better reflect the textual diversity in Syriac, remains a

3 A comprehensive inventory of the Syriac manuscripts containing Jacob of Serugh's homily on the Ascension can be found in Arthur Vööbus, *Handschriftliche Überlieferung der Mēmrē-Dichtung des Ja'qōb von Serūg*, vol. 2: *Sammlungen – Der Bestand* (Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, 345. Subsidia, 40; Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1973) 16–17, 34–35, 48–49, 52, 53, 68–69, 70–71, 78–79, 86–87, 90–91, 96–97, 102–103, 108–109, 118–119, 128–129, 138–139, 154–155, 160–161, 176–177, 182–183, 196–197; and Idem, *Handschriftliche Überlieferung der Mēmrē-Dichtung des Ja'qōb von Serūg*, vol. 4: *Die Zerstreuten Mēmrē – Der Bestand* (Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, 422. Subsidia, 61; Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1980) 14–15, 30–31, 60–61, 80–81, 84–85. Vööbus identified over twenty-five witnesses to this homily, though additional manuscripts of Jacob's works have come to light since the publication of his survey, so that the total number is certainly higher. Of particular importance are three comparatively early manuscripts from Dayr al-Suryan catalogued by Sebastian P. Brock and Lucas Van Rompay, *Catalogue of the Syriac Manuscripts and Fragments in the Library of Deir al-Surian, Wadi al-Natrun (Egypt)* (Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta, 227; Leuven: Peeters, 2014) 240, 280, 304.

4 Paul Bedjan, *S. Martyrii, qui et Sahdona quæ supersunt Omnia* (Paris/Leipzig: Otto Harrassowitz, 1902) 808–832. The Syriac text edited by Bedjan was reprinted and translated into English by Thomas Kollampampil, *Jacob of Sarug's Homily on the Ascension of Our Lord* (Texts from Christian Late Antiquity, 24. *The Metrical Homilies of Mar Jacob of Sarug*, 21; Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2010). For a description of the Paris manuscript used by Bedjan, see Hermann Zotenberg, *Manuscrits orientaux: Catalogues des manuscrits syriaques et sabéens (mandaites) de la Bibliothèque Nationale* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1874) 140–144 (= no. 196); for the London manuscript, see William Wright, *Catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts in the British Museum*, vol. 2 (London: British Library, 1871) 840–851 (= no. 824), and Joseph-Marie Sauget, “Pour une interprétation de la structure de l'homélaire syriaque ms. British Library Add. 12165,” *Ecclesia Orans* 3 (1986): 121–146.

desideratum for any proper comparison with its surviving versions in other languages.

According to a recent survey, the Arabic version of the *mēm̄rā* on the Ascension is attested in at least seventeen manuscripts, none of which is older than the 17th century CE.⁵ Significantly, only a single version of the Arabic text has been identified, and this appears to be preserved exclusively in Egyptian manuscripts of Jacob's works.⁶ The Arabic text is accessible in a Coptic devotional book printed in Cairo at the beginning of the 20th century, although the source on which it relies is not specified.⁷ The monks of the Monastery of Saint Macarius in Wādī Naṭrūn also prepared a handwritten Arabic transcription of the homily. This transcription is of some interest, as it is partially based on two Arabic manuscripts of Jacob's homilies held in the monastery's library.⁸ Nevertheless, it must be used with caution, for it appears to combine the text of the original manuscripts with a modern Arabic translation prepared from the Syriac edition published by Bedjan, without indicating when such contaminations occur.

An Ethiopic (Gə'əz) translation has survived in at least two codices: a manuscript from Lake Tana (Dāgā 'Eṣṭifānos 66 =

5 Aaron Michael Butts, "The Christian Arabic Transmission of Jacob of Serugh (d. 521): The Sammlungen," *Journal of the Canadian Society for Syriac Studies* 16 (2016): 39–59, at 43–44 (counts ten manuscripts); Khalil Alwan, *Les œuvres de Jacques de Saroug dans la tradition arabe: Inventaire des manuscrits arabes* (Series Syro-Arabica, 10; Cordoba/Beirut: CNERU/CEDRAC, 2019) 389–390 (counts seventeen manuscripts).

6 See Alwan, *Les œuvres de Jacques de Saroug*, 389.

7 Mikhā'īl Atanāsiyūs, كتاب ميامر أي مواعظ السروجي [*The Book of Homilies, that is, Sermons of (Jacob) of Sarugh*] (Cairo: The Egyptian Printing Press of al-Fajjālah, 1905) 635–645 (with Arabic numerals).

8 These are manuscripts nos. 333 and 334 of the Monastery of St. Macarius, copied in 1870 and 1773 CE respectively. Their description can be found in Ugo Zanetti, *Les manuscrits de Dair Abū Maqâr: Inventaire* (Cahiers d'Orientalisme, 11, Geneva: Patrick Cramer, 1986) 47–48.

Ṭānāsee 177, ff. 29r–43v; 15th century CE) and another from 'Urā Qirqos (Ethio-SPaRe ms. UM-046, ff. 14v–25v; 14th century CE).⁹ It is likely that this version was made from Arabic, since no Ethiopic translations directly from Syriac are known. Indeed, beginning with the Solomonic dynasty, which ascended the Ethiopian throne in 1270 CE, numerous Syriac texts were translated into Ethiopic exclusively through intermediary Arabic versions.¹⁰ Yet, the Gə'əz text of the homily on the Ascension often differs significantly both from the Arabic recension and from the Syriac original. For instance, the Ethiopic version opens with a slightly different *incipit*:

Ethiopic	ትንሥኡ፡ ወቁሙ፡ አጉባኤ፡ ነገሥት፡ ለሰብሐተ፡ ፍቅር፡	Rise and stand, O assembly of kings, for the praise of the Beloved.
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⁹ The existence of the Ethiopian version was kindly brought to my attention by Ted Erho (Universität Hamburg/Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München), to whom I am grateful. For a description of the Lake Tana codex, see Veronica Six, *Äthiopische Handschriften von Ṭānāsee*, vol. 3 (Verzeichnis der orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland, 20/3; Stuttgart: F. Steiner, 1999) 234–235.

¹⁰ Aaron M. Butts, “Syriac Contacts with Ethiopic Christianity,” in Sebastian P. Brock et al. (eds.), *The Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2011) 148–153, at 149–153; Idem, “From Syriac to Arabic to Ethiopic: Loci of Change in Transmission,” in Rosa Bianca Finazzi, Francesca Forte, Claudia Milani, and Marco Moriggi (eds.), *Circulation of Texts and the Overcoming of Linguistic and Cultural Barriers in Eastern Traditions* (Orientalia Ambrosiana, 7; Milan: Biblioteca Ambrosiana/Centro Ambrosiano, 2020) 21–57.

Syriac	ܡܠܝܠܐ ܕܠܗܝܬܐ ܕܡܠܝܠܐ ܕܡܠܝܠܐ	Awake, my harp, for the praise of the Only- Begotten.
Arabic	إستيقظ يا كيتاري على تمجيد الوحيد	Awake, O my harp, for the glorification of the Only-Begotten.

A careful analysis is required to determine whether the Ethiopic text represents a free adaptation of the Arabic model or, rather, was produced on the basis of a still unidentified Arabic recension.

An Armenian translation of the *mēmṛā* on the Ascension is also known.¹¹ The earliest manuscript transmitting this version is Paris, BnF Arménien 116, a massive paper codex containing various homilies for the feasts of the liturgical year, copied in 1307 CE.¹² The Armenian translation was made directly from Syriac. In this version, lines 131–154 and 161–168 of Jacob’s homily are missing. The first omission can probably be explained as the result of an *aberratio oculi* on the part of the

¹¹ The Armenian text was published from an otherwise unknown manuscript in Գիրք և ճան հոգեշահ [*Books and Sermons of Spiritual Interest*] (Constantinople: Sargis Dpři, 1722) 345–370.

¹² BnF Arménien 116, ff. 319r–322v. For a description, see Raymond H. Kévorkian and Armèn Ter-Stépanian, *Manuscripts arméniens de la Bibliothèque nationale de France: Catalogue* (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France/Fondation Calouste Gulbenkian, 1998) 401. A survey of the Armenian manuscripts of this *mēmṛā* can be found in Andy Hilken, “The Armenian Reception of the Homilies of Jacob of Serugh: New Findings,” in Dan Batovici and Mădălina Țoca (eds.), *Caught in Translation: Studies on Versions of Late Antique Christian Literature* (Texts and Studies in Eastern Christianity, 17; Leiden/Boston, MA: Brill, 2020) 64–84, at 21–23; Andy Hilken, “The Manuscripts of the Armenian Homilies of Jacob of Serugh: Preliminary Observations and Checklist,” *Manuscripta* 64 (2020): 1–71, at 23.

Armenian translator, since in the Syriac original lines 130 and 154 both end with the same words (a case of *homeoteleuton*): ܐܡܪܐ ܕܥܝܪܐܢܐ (‘‘for his resurrection’’).¹³

The translation of the text into Armenian is difficult to date with precision. As noted above, the earliest Armenian manuscript containing the *mēmṛā* on the Ascension, BnF Arménien 116, was transcribed in 1307 CE, but the translation itself must be older. It is possible that this version was produced during the period of the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia (12th–13th centuries). As Edward G. Mathews Jr. has shown, following the destruction of the Bagratid principalities by the Seljuk Turks in 1064 CE and the establishment of the Kingdom of Cilicia, there ensued a flourishing of Armenian culture which marked the Golden Age of patristic translations from Syriac into Armenian.¹⁴

The attestation of the *mēmṛā* on the Ascension in Syriac, Coptic, Arabic, Ethiopic, and Armenian demonstrates not only the wide circulation of this homily but also the intricate transmission networks connecting the anti-Chalcedonian churches. Comparative study of these versions can provide insight into the processes of translation, adaptation, and reception in different cultural contexts.

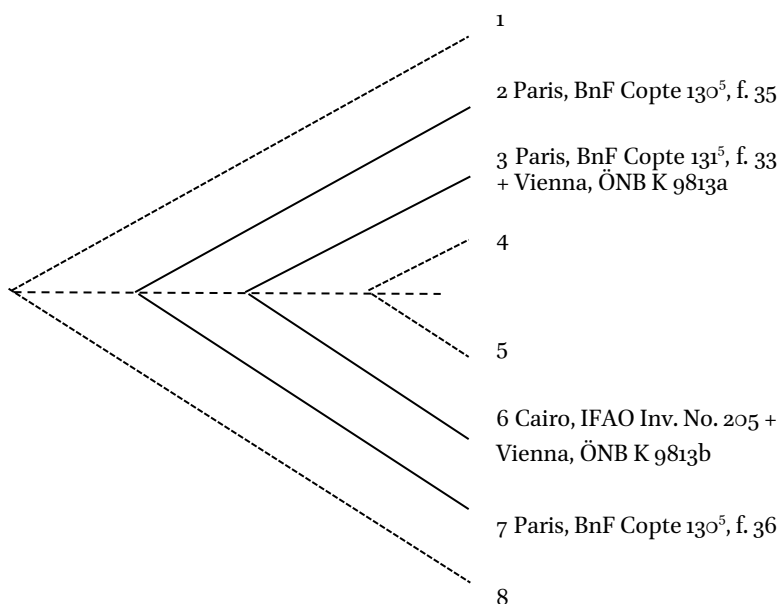
THE NEW FRAGMENTS

The two new Coptic fragments are housed in the Papyrussammlung of the Austrian National Library in Vienna under the inventory number K 9813a–b. Paleographical and codicological comparison shows that they can be assigned to Codex A (= MONB.OX), from which four leaves have survived. The first (K 9813a) attaches to the fragment Paris, BnF Copte

¹³ Bedjan, *S. Martyrii*, 814, 816.

¹⁴ Edward G. Mathews Jr., ‘‘Syriac into Armenian: The Translations and Their Translators,’’ *Journal of the Canadian Society for Syriac Studies* 10 (2010): 20–44.

131⁵, f. 33, completing its upper inner part. The second fragment (K 9813b) joins directly with Cairo, IFAO Inv. No. 205, restoring the missing part of this leaf. All known fragments of Codex A belong to the same quire, which can be conveniently represented as follows:



The two new fragments substantially restore portions of the missing text from my previous edition. Thus, the surviving fragments of the Sahidic version of Jacob's *mēmṛā* on the Ascension now preserve the following verses:

Paris, BnF Copte 130⁵, f. 35 = *On the Ascension*, verses 35–67;

Paris, BnF Copte 131⁵, f. 33 + Vienna, ÖNB K 9813a = *On the Ascension*, verses 68–100;

Cairo, IFAO Inv. No. 205 + Vienna, ÖNB K 9813b = *On the Ascension*, verses 170–207a;

Paris, BnF Copte 130⁵, f. 36 = *On the Ascension*, verses 207b–246.

Below I provide an edition of the newly identified Sahidic fragments, accompanied by commentaries on the most significant differences between the Syriac and Coptic texts. However, since the Syriac original has not yet been critically edited based on a sufficient number of manuscripts, the comparison must remain somewhat provisional. For the Syriac text, I relied on Bedjan's edition; for occasional references to the Arabic version, I have quoted my unpublished edition, which is based on eight manuscripts. The Sahidic text is presented in a semi-diplomatic transcription according to the Leiden system for editing papyrological texts: letters lost in lacunae are supplied in square brackets, while doubtful readings are marked by a dot placed beneath the letter.

Vienna, K 9813a^r + Paris, BnF Copte 131⁵, f. 33^r (Column A) =
Bedjan 811,18–812,2

⁶⁸ (ΔΥΩ ΝΘΕ ΝΝΙΓΑΡΠΟC)

ῥΠΩΡῶ ΕΒΟΛ

ΜΠΕΦΟΥΧΔΙ ΕΧΝ

ΟΥΟΝ ΝΙΜ ΕΤΩΩ

ΝΕ· ⁶⁹ΔΦΕΙ ΕΠΕCΗΤ

5 ΝΘΕ ΝΟΥΜΟΥΝΖΩ[ΟΥ]

ΔΦΤΡΕΝΕΤΜΟΥ[Τ]

†ΟΥΩ ΕΖΡΑΙ ΝΘΕ

ΝΖΕΝΝΟΥΝΕ· ⁷⁰ΔΥ[Ω]

ΔΦΕΙΝΕ ΕΖΡΑ[Ι ΜΜΟΥ]

of what seems an odd image and mistakenly read ܦܪܝܬܐ (“fruit,” pl. ܦܪܝܬܐ) instead. Finally, while the Syriac specifies that Christ brought healing “to those who are sick” (*la-mmaḥḥayā*), the Sahidic broadens the scope by adding “over everyone who is sick” (ⲉϭⲏⲛ ⲟϥⲟⲛ ⲛⲓⲙ ⲉⲧⲱⲱⲛⲉ), which may be the result of an explanatory translation or of a different textual tradition in the Syriac *Vorlage*.

69 While the Coptic translation from the Syriac ܦܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ is technically accurate, the translator chose to render ܡܝܬܐ according to its primary meaning, “root” (ⲛⲟϥⲛⲉ in Coptic), rather than the broader “plant.” Thus, the Coptic preserves the botanical metaphor, although at the expense of its accuracy. Moreover, a nuance is introduced in the verbal aspect: in Coptic the verb is causative, “and he caused the dead to sprout like roots,” whereas in Syriac it is not, “and the dead stirred like plants.”

70 The Syriac text printed by Bedjan reads ܠܡܠܚܥܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ, “And they went up to the earth with great trembling from their graves.” However, the edition notes that manuscript P differs at this point, having ܡܝܬܐ, “to meet him,” instead of ܠܡܠܚܥܐ, “to the earth.” The Coptic translator appears to have used a manuscript with this variant, as demonstrated by the rendering “in front of him” or “before him” (ⲙⲓⲛⲉⲩⲱⲛⲉ [sic!] ⲉⲃⲟⲗ). The Arabic version similarly aligns with this reading, واصلوا من قبورهم للقاء برعب عظيم, “And they went up from their graves to meet him with great terror.” The Syriac term ܡܝܬܐ (“movement, motion, terror”) is here rendered both in Coptic and Arabic as “fear” (ⲉⲃⲟⲗ/رعب), conveying the dread of the dead before the frightful Judge.

71 The Syriac reads here ܕܡܝܬܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ, “He walked and came upon the path of the serpent, which was bitter.” The primary difference between the Syriac and Sahidic lies in the description of the serpent’s path. While in the Syriac this is bitter, *marrirā*, the Sahidic characterizes it as

“filled with wounds” (ⲙⲉⲗ ⲛⲥⲏⲱⲉ). This variation may represent an internal development within the Coptic transmission of the text, possibly influenced by the graphic and phonetic proximity between “wound, stroke, sore” (ⲥⲏⲱⲉ) and “bitterness” (ⲥⲏⲱⲉ).

72 The Syriac reads ܡܠܚܡܐ ܕܠܚܡܐ ܡܠܚܡܐ ܕܠܚܡܐ, “And he poured out and filled it with sweet honey in his footsteps.” The Coptic provides an interpretative translation; as Jesus walks along the path of the serpent, he clears away the poison (ⲙⲁⲧⲟⲩ) that fills it, replacing it with sweet honey.

Vienna, K 9813a^v + Paris, BnF Copte 131⁵, f. 33^v (Column B) =
Bedjan 813,3–7

⁹³ ⲁⲓⲱ ⲁⲓⲱⲱⲡ ⲉⲣ[ⲟ]ⲓ

ⲛⲧⲉⲥⲱ ⲛⲗⲟⲛⲭⲏ

ⲉⲙⲓ ⲡⲉⲓⲥⲡⲓⲣ ⲉⲓⲧⲙ

ⲡⲙⲁⲧⲟⲓ· ⁹⁴ ⲁⲓⲧⲣⲉⲩ

5 ⲟⲩⲉ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲉⲧⲙⲉⲓ

ⲟⲩⲉ ⲛⲉⲓ ⲡⲧⲙⲛⲟⲩ

ⲁⲉ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲙⲡⲓⲉ

ⲛⲟⲥ ⲛⲁⲁⲁⲙ·

⁹⁵ [ⲁⲓ]ⲱ ⲉⲓⲧⲙ ⲛⲓⲓⲧ

10 ⲁⲓⲡⲱⲉ ⲛⲛⲉⲥⲉⲓ

ⲛⲧⲁⲡⲓⲗⲏ· ⲉⲓⲭⲛ

ⲉⲩⲉⲁ ⲧⲙⲙⲁⲩ·

⁹⁶ ⲁⲓⲱ ⲁⲥⲙⲟⲩⲉ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ

ⲛⲭⲣⲉⲟⲥ· ⲁⲓⲱ ⲁⲥ

15 ⲁⲓⲥⲉ ⲉⲉⲣⲁⲓ ⲛⲧⲉⲥ

ⲁⲡⲉ ⲉⲧⲕⲟⲗⲁ

ⲉⲡⲉⲥⲏⲧ· ⁹⁷ ⲁⲓⲱ ⲉⲙ

ΠΕΦΜΟΥ· ΑΦΒΩΚ
 ΕΠΜΑ ΕΤΣΑΠΕΧΗΤ
 20 ΝΝΕΤΜΟΥΥΤ·
 ΠΕΝΤΑΦΩΜΚ
 ΝΑΔΔΗ·

⁹³ And he received the wound of the lance on his side from the soldier.

⁹⁴ In order not to throw out the race of Adam, he made them go away, not to strike.

⁹⁵ And with the nails he tore apart the menacing writs beneath which stood Eve, our mother.

⁹⁶ And she paid the debt and lifted her head that was bowed.

⁹⁷ And through his death, he descended to the nether realm of the dead, the one that had swallowed Adam.

93 In Syriac, this verse reads ܐܬܝܢ ܡܡܚܕܝܢ ܠܝܬܐ ܡܡܠܚܐ ܡܠܚܐ ܠܝܬܐ, “He received on his side the blade of the lance of that guard.” The Coptic version generally provides a faithful rendering of this verse, but it replaces the Syriac phrase “the blade of the lance” (ܡܡܚܕܝܢ ܠܝܬܐ) with “the wound of the lance” (ܬܥܩܐ ܢܠܕܝܚܝܢ). This difference likely results from a misreading of the Syriac word ܠܝܬܐ (*ḥarbā*), “blade,” as ܠܝܬܐ (*ḥabrā*), “wound.” However, given how close these words are phonetically and visually in Syriac, it is possible that the mistake has already occurred in the Syriac manuscript tradition, which the Coptic translator then followed.

94 This verse says in Syriac, ܐܬܝܢ ܠܝܬܐ ܡܠܚܐ ܡܠܚܐ ܡܠܚܐ ܠܝܬܐ, “And he released him (i.e. the guard) to take it (i.e. the lance) far away, so that it would not drive away those of the house of Adam.” Jacob here draws a typological parallel between the soldier’s lance that pierced Christ on the cross

(John 19:34) and the flaming blade of the Cherub guarding Paradise (Genesis 3:24): whereas the latter barred the way to Eden, the former opens it. From the time of Aphrahat and Ephrem, both weapons were described in Syriac literature with the same term, *rūmhā* (“lance”), although the word does not occur in any known Syriac version of the New Testament.¹⁵

However, the Coptic translator does not seem to have grasped the typological imagery. At this point, the Sahidic translation becomes aberrant, and the text is likely corrupt. The main difficulty lies in the nominalized infinitive $\pi\tau\iota\nu\omicron\upsilon\chi\epsilon$ $\epsilon\beta\omicron\lambda$, which functions as a postponed subject introduced by the particle $\kappa\epsilon\iota$. Not only does this construction lack a parallel in the Syriac, but it also unnecessarily complicates the syntax of the phrase. No straightforward solution suggests itself that would restore the sense or yield a coherent rendering. One possible emendation though is to read $\alpha\upsilon\tau\tau\epsilon\phi\omicron\upsilon\epsilon$ $\epsilon\beta\omicron\lambda$ $\epsilon\tau\iota\chi\iota\omicron\upsilon\epsilon$ { $\kappa\epsilon\iota$ } $<\epsilon>\tau\iota\nu\omicron\upsilon\chi\epsilon$ $\epsilon\beta\omicron\lambda$ $\iota\pi\gamma\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$ $\kappa\alpha\lambda\alpha\mu$, “He drew him away ($\alpha\upsilon\tau\tau\epsilon\phi\omicron\upsilon\epsilon$ - rather than $\alpha\upsilon\tau\tau\epsilon\upsilon\epsilon$ -, i.e. the soldier), so as not to strike (and) expel the race of Adam.”

95 The Syriac text gives, “With his nails he tore apart the bond of Eve, our mother” ($\text{ܕܠܗܝܡܢܐ ܕܥܝܪܐ ܕܡܝܪܝܐ ܕܥܝܪܐ ܕܡܝܪܝܐ}$). Jacob here refers to the legal record of indebtedness binding Eve, which Christ symbolically cancelled, by using the term *eštārā* (“official document, contract, bond”). This clearly alludes to Colossians 2:14, where the same word occurs in the Peshitta. While the Sahidic version of Colossians uses the Greek-Coptic term $\chi\epsilon\iota\rho\omicron\tau\rho\alpha\phi\omicron\varsigma$, the Coptic translator of Jacob’s homily chose instead $\kappa\epsilon\varsigma\chi\alpha\iota$ $\iota\tau\alpha\pi\iota\lambda\eta$ (“menacing documents, hostile decrees”), which probably is a technical borrowing from Greek juridic language ($\acute{\alpha}\pi\epsilon\iota\lambda\eta\tau\iota\kappa\acute{\alpha}$ $\gamma\rho\acute{\alpha}\mu\mu\alpha\tau\alpha$) that sharpens the emphasis on the condemning character of the

¹⁵ Robert Murray, “The Lance which Re-opened Paradise: A Mysterious Reading in the Early Syriac Fathers,” *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 39 (1973): 224–234.

legal bond between Eve and Satan, symbolized by the serpent.¹⁶ Such “threatening letters” are also attested in the documentary record on papyri from Egypt: for example, SB XXVI 16358 (644 CE) and P.Apoll. 38 (second half of the 7th century) refer to official correspondence sent by Arab authorities, characterized by severe threats against Christian subordinates. These administrative exchanges are explicitly named ἀπειλητικά γράμματα.

96 The Syriac has ܐܠ ܚܝܬ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܬܐ ܕܥܝܬܐ ܕܥܝܬܐ, “And he paid her debt and lifted up her head, which had been bowed down by it.” While in the Syriac it is Christ who pays Eve’s debt and lifts her head, the Sahidic renders the verse as Eve herself performs both actions.

Vienna, K 9813b^r + Cairo, IFAO Inv. No. 205^r (Column A) = Bedjan 816,18–817,2

([πμα])

¹⁷⁰ ԵՏՃՕՇԷ ¹⁷² ՁԳԷԻ

ԵՅՕԼՁԳԾՈՔ՝

ՃԵԿԱՇ ԵԳԷՃՕՕԿ

ՆՏՄՆՏՐՆՄԱՕ

5 ՆՏԾԵԼԼԷՇՏ

ՆՏԱԳՃԻՏ՝

¹⁷³ ՁԳՃԻ ՆՕԿՄՆՏՂՆԿԷ

ՆՇՈԾ ԵՏՂՆՂԵՆ

ՂԻՇԷ՝ ¹⁷⁴ ՁԿՈ ՁԳՄՆ

¹⁶ On the “threatening letters,” see Lajos Berkes, “Introduction: A Papyrological Perspective on Christians and Muslims in Early Islamic Egypt,” in Idem (ed.), *Christians and Muslims in Early Islamic Egypt* (American Studies in Papyrology, 56; Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2022) 1–9, at 5.

- 10 ΛΟΓΙΣΜΟΣ ΝΗΜΑΣ·
 ΕΤΡΕΦΧΟΟΥ ΘΑΡΟΣ
 ΝΟΥΝΟΣ ΗΜΗΤ
 ΡΗΜΑΟ· ΕΒΟΛ
 ΖΝ ΤΑΓΛΗ ΗΠΙ
 15 ΙΩΤ· ¹⁷⁵ΑΥΩ ΑΥ
 ΔΙΧΜΑΛΟΤΕΥΕ
 ΝΟΥΔΙΧΜΑΛΟCΙΑ·
 ΑΥΩ ΑΥCΩΚ
 ΜΜΟΣ ΔΦΝΤC
 20 ΕΒΟΛ ΖΝ ΝΕCΚΑΝ
 ΔΔΛΟΝ·

¹⁷⁰ [...] [the] exalted [place].

¹⁷² He set off and went in order to send the riches to the bride whom he had taken.

¹⁷³ He took a weak poverty that is in sufferings,

¹⁷⁴ and he settled a plan with her that he would send her great riches from his Father's court.

¹⁷⁵ And he took captive a captivity, led it, and brought it out from the stumbling blocks.

Based on the only preserved word from verse 170, which immediately precedes verse 172, one can infer that verse 171 was omitted in the Sahidic version of Jacob's homily.

172 The Coptic generally provides a faithful translation of the Syriac ܐܘܪܐ ܕܠܝܕܐ ܕܝܚܝܐ ܕܝܚܝܐ ܕܝܚܝܐ, "And he set off to go in order to send riches to the bride whom he brought." The relative clause ܐܘܪܐ is rendered into Sahidic as ܢܬܐܩܬܝܬܥ, which can be understood either as the bride "whom he brought (there)" or "whom he took."

173 The Syriac reads ܠܗܝܠܝܬܐ ܠܒܝܠܝܬܐ ܠܡܡܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ, “He lifted up the poor, barren, and smitten one (fem.).” The Sahidic, however, interprets the verse in a more figurative sense, “He took a weak poverty that is in sufferings.” Moreover, while ܕܡܠܐ in Syriac can mean “to lift up” or “to take,” depending on the context, the Coptic translator rendered it as αϥϭⲓ, which is more restricted, “he took.”

174 This verse appears in Syriac as ܠܕܢ ܚܠܐ ܝܬܡܐ ܕܡܬܐ ܕܡܡܐ ܕܡܡܐ ܕܡܡܐ, “And he established a contract for her, that he would send her the treasures of his Father.” The Coptic captures the sense of the verse naturally, although it allows some idiomatic phrasing, like αϥϭⲓ ⲗⲟⲓϥϭⲟϥ ⲛⲓⲙⲁϥ “he settled a plan with her,” for ܡܬܐ ܕܡܡܐ. Finally, the court (ܐܘܠܝܬܐ) of the Father, mentioned in the Sahidic, is absent in the edition of the text prepared by Bedjan.

Vienna, K 9813b^v + Cairo, IFAO Inv. No. 205^v (Column B) = Bedjan 818,3–9

¹⁹⁷ ܕܥ ܬܡܡܐ ⲛⲓⲙⲁ

ܬⲛ ⲛⲛⲉϩⲟⲟϥ ܬܡܡܐ

ܡܐ ⲡܠܡܐ ܐܠ

ⲛⲛⲓⲛⲉϩ ܬܡܡܐ

5 ¹⁹⁸ ܕܥܐܐ ⲛⲛⲉϩⲟⲟϥ

ܕܥܐ αϥϭⲓ ⲉϩⲣⲁ

ϩⲁⲣⲟⲟϥ ¹⁹⁹ ܕܥܐ ⲉϩ

ⲛⲓⲙⲁϥ ⲟⲛ ܕܥܐ

ⲡⲣⲁⲛ ⲛⲛⲉϩⲟⲟϥ

10 ⲛⲓⲙⲁϥ ²⁰⁰ ܕܥܐ

ⲡⲉⲡⲛⲁ ⲉⲧⲟϩⲁⲁ

ϥⲛⲁⲧⲛⲟⲟϥ ⲛⲁϥ

ΔΕΚΑΣ ἡΝΕΥΩΩ
 ΠΕ ΝΟΡΦΑΝΟΣ· ²⁰¹ΤΕΩ
 15 ἸΡΗΝΗ ΓΑΡ ΝΗΜΑΥ·
 ΑΥΩ ΠΡΑΝ ΜΠΡΙΩΤ
 ΡΟΕΙΣ ΕΡΟΟΥ· ²⁰²ΑΥΩ
 ΠΠΑΡΑΚΛΥΤΟΣ
 ΦΕΙΝΕ ἸΤΜΗΤΡΗ
 20 ΜΑΟ ΦΑΡΟΥ·
²⁰³ΠΩΤ ΜΕΝ ΡΟΕΙΣ
 ΕΡΟΟΥ ΖΗ ΠΕΦΡΑΝ
 ΔΕ ΟΥΝΟΣ ΠΕ ΠΩΡΑΝ·

¹⁹⁷ “I am with you for all the days, to the completion of all the ages,”

¹⁹⁸ so that they will not grieve. And he ascended from them,

¹⁹⁹ Yet he remained with them, and the name of his Father is with them.

²⁰⁰ He will send them the Holy Spirit, so that they shall not be left as orphans.

²⁰¹ For his peace is with them, and the name of his Father protects them.

²⁰² And the Paraclete carries riches to them.

²⁰³ Indeed, the Father guards them by his name, for great is his name.

¹⁹⁷ The Syriac text edited by Bedjan preserves only the beginning of Christ’s promise to the disciples from Matthew 28:20, ܐܝܢ ܥܝܬܝܚܝܬܝܢ, “I am with you.” However, the Sahidic version is longer at this point, ܬܘܡܢ ܢܝܡܬܢ ܢܢܝܪܘܘܟ

But (δέ) it is by the Word that the name of the Father accompanies his disciples.

This construction structures the narrative contrastively, thus emphasizing that the name of the Father is mediated through the Son.