

States, and the daring imagination may readily conceive that here a new Damascus will arise, more beautiful than that of old.

With the occupation of the Colorado Desert, and of the great peninsula which adjoins it, a powerful impulse will be given to agriculture, mining, and commerce in a vast region now little peopled. One of the inevitable consequences will be the rise of San Diego to the proportions of a large city—probably the largest in the southern part of the coast.

LAND OF THE COMMON PEOPLE.

THE future of California will be very different from its past. It has been the land of large things—of large estates, of large enterprises, of large fortunes. Under another form of government it would have developed a feudal system, with a landed aristocracy resting on a basis of servile labor. These were its plain tendencies years ago, when somebody coined the epigram, «California is the rich man's paradise and the poor man's hell.» But later developments have shown that whatever of paradise the Golden State can offer to the rich it will share, upon terms of marvelous

equality, with the middle classes of American life. Over and above all other countries, it is destined to be the land of the common people. This is true because, owing to its peculiar climatic conditions, it requires less land to sustain a family in generous comfort. For the same reason cheaper clothing and shelter, as well as less fuel, suffice, while it is possible to realize more perfectly the ideal of producing what is consumed. Moreover, it is a natural field for the application of associative industry and the growth of the highest social conditions. Indeed, the country has distinctly failed as a land of big things, and achieved its best successes in the opposite direction. Its true and final greatness will consist of the aggregate of small things—of small estates, of small enterprises, of small fortunes. Progress toward this end is already well begun. It must go on until the last great estate is dismembered and the last alien serf is returned to the Orient. Upon the ruins of the old system a better civilization will arise. It will be the glory of the common people, to whose labor and genius it will owe its existence. Its outreaching and beneficent influence will be felt throughout the world.

William E. Smythe.

WHAT LANGUAGE DID CHRIST SPEAK?

INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

It is by no accident that Mrs. Agnes Smith Lewis, the author of the following article, has won the credit of having made one of the greatest biblical discoveries of the century. She had been a student of the Syriac language, and could talk Arabic and Greek. It was with the plan of getting access to the treasures of the monastery of St. Katherine that she went to Mount Sinai, where Tischendorf had found the magnificent Sinaitic manuscript of the Greek Bible, and where Professor Palmer had failed to complete his attempted catalogue of the library. Her ability to talk with the Greek monks in their own language, and her wonderful tact and generalship, secured their good will; and she was not slow in discovering, under a late and worthless monkish biography, the faded letters of an ancient Syriac text of the four gospels. The leaves were stuck together, but she separated them by the steam of a tea-kettle, and took four hundred photographs, which she brought to England, where they proved to be a peculiar and very old version of the gospels of extraordinary interest. She has since visited the monastery again, with her sister, Mrs. Gibson, who made a catalogue of the six hundred Arabic manuscripts, while she catalogued the two hundred Syriac manuscripts, and made other important discoveries. A volume published by her last year contains a translation of the famous manuscript which bears her name.

William Hayes Ward.

THIS subject has awakened considerable interest of late years, owing partly to the discoveries of ancient biblical manuscripts which have recently been made, and partly to a growing desire on the part of Christians to realize how truly the Son of God became man,

subject by virtue of his manhood to the same conditions of life, and to most of the same limitations, as ourselves. For, however many miracles he wrought, these were all for the benefit of others; and not once in the canonical gospels do we find it recorded that he used his divine creative energy to lessen the burden which his true manhood imposed upon him. It is not to be denied that we can appreciate the meaning of our Lord's gracious words as they reach us through an English translation; but that a translation often fails to give the exact force of the original is felt by every earnest student of Greek as soon as he begins to read the New Testament. Few of my readers are likely to fall into the mistake attributed to a Scotch minister of the last century, who introduced an apt quotation from the Psalms by, «As King David said in his own beautiful Saxon»; or to that other worthy who exclaimed in the heat of a theological argument, «Do ye mean to say that Paul spoke Greek?» Yet the question as to what was the mother-tongue of Jesus is not yet altogether settled, some holding that it must have been Greek, because three out of the four gospels are supposed to have been written in that language; and others that it was a Semitic tongue, probably Aramaic or Syriac, which was at that time the vernacular of Palestine.

We shall try to place before our readers some considerations which have induced the most learned biblical critics of our day to adopt the latter hypothesis. But we must preface it with a short account of the Syriac language, taken partly from the introduction to the first edition of my translation of the Syriac gospels from the palimpsest manuscript which I had the happiness of discovering in the Convent of St. Katherine on Mount Sinai in 1892, and partly from the works of the many writers who have lately discussed the subject in Great Britain, in France, and in Germany. Syriac, or more properly Christian Aramaic, was the first language into which the New Testament was translated; and as the Greek text itself was written by men who habitually thought in Syriac, the early versions in this tongue have a closer affinity with the original text than those of any other can possibly have, not excepting the Old Latin. Aramaic was once popularly supposed to be a corrupt form of Hebrew, but that is a mistake. It is a language quite as regularly formed, and with a grammar quite as distinct, as either Hebrew or Arabic. Almost our first record of its use is from the lips of Laban. In Gen. xxxi. 47 we read that when Laban and Jacob

set up a heap of stones as a witness of the covenant between them, Jacob called it, in good Hebrew, Galeed, and Laban, in equally good Aramaic, Jegar-sahadutha. From this some have concluded that Aramaic was the vernacular of Mesopotamia, the cradle of Abraham's family, and that it was brought into Palestine by the captives who returned from Babylon. Others say that, while it has an undoubted affinity with the Semitic of Babylonian cuneiform inscriptions, it was the language of the kingdom of Syria, which flourished in the territory stretching between the Euphrates and the Lebanon from about B. C. 1600 to B. C. 600, and that it was through this channel that it made its way into Palestine.

It is not easy to ascertain when Hebrew ceased to be the language of the common people; but that it had so ceased in the period immediately before our Lord's advent there can be little doubt. The Talmud, which was written about that time, shows clearly that the rabbis were accustomed to speak to the common people in Aramaic. Many of the legal documents necessary to civil life, such as contracts of sale, receipts, marriage certificates, bills of divorcement, were drawn up in that language.¹ Even some of the prayers of the synagogue, such as were intended to be understood by women and children, were translated into this, the vulgar tongue.

Our difficulty of proving this is increased by the ambiguous sense in which the word «Hebrew» is used in the New Testament. Strictly speaking, it ought to be applied to that language only in which the Pentateuch was written; but it was used carelessly also for Aramaic, as being the language spoken by the Hebrews in contradistinction to the cosmopolitan tongue of the Greeks. The «great silence» which followed the very beginning of St. Paul's address to the people, as recorded in Acts xxi. 40, was assuredly not produced by the sound of classical Hebrew, but by the familiar accents to which the miscellaneous crowd were accustomed in everyday life. We do not mean to say that the language of the Torah and of the prophets was quite unknown to them all; they heard it solemnly read every Sabbath day in their synagogues, and they used it in the blessings which they invoked over their meals. But it is, to say the least, more than doubtful if they could have followed the extempore arguments addressed to them by St. Paul had he spoken to them in the sacred classical tongue.

¹ Arnold Meyer, «Jesu Muttersprache,» p. 39; Dalman, p. 12.

It is also clear from this narrative that the mob of Jerusalem would not have understood a discourse in Greek.

It is believed by students of the works of Philo and of Josephus, both of whom were contemporaries of our Lord, that by the phrases τῆ πατρίῳ γλώσσῃ and ἐβραϊζῶν these writers meant Aramaic.¹ Josephus wrote his «Jewish War» first of all in his native dialect, and he confesses to the labor and delay (ὄκνος καὶ μέλλησις) which he had when translating it into Greek.² If a highly educated man, as he was, experienced this difficulty, how very unlikely is it that the fishermen of Bethsaida and the peasants of Galilee would have followed the Sermon on the Mount if addressed to them in Greek! God does not multiply miracles needlessly, and we may be certain that there were no pre-Pentecostal facilities granted to the crowds which hung upon our Lord's lips, nor even to his immediate disciples. But before going further we must explain that the early Aramaic Christians adopted the name of Syrians bestowed on them by the Greeks because they, the Aramaia, did not wish to be confounded with the Armaia (the heathen). The country of Aram was henceforth known as Syria, and its language as the Syriac.

We are on surer ground when we come to the indications in the text of the gospels which point to these narratives having been produced in a Syriac rather than in a Greek or a Hebrew atmosphere.

We have, first of all, the various Aramaic phrases actually embodied in the Greek text as having been uttered by our Lord, such as «Ephphatha» («Be opened»), «Talitha, cumi» («Maiden, arise»), where the word *cumi* might be Hebrew or Syriac or Arabic, but where *talitha* is purely Syriac. And the last despairing cry of our Lord on the cross, «Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?» is not translated in the Sinaitic palimpsest, for the good reason that it is a natural part of the Syriac text.

Take next the names of persons and places in the New Testament. The Syriac word for «son» is *bar*, and so we have Bartholomew, Barabbas, Bar-Jesus, Bar-Jona, Barnabas, Bar-Timæus. Had Hebrew been the spoken tongue, these names would have run Ben-tholomew, Ben-Jesus, etc. We have also «Cepha» (a stone, feminine gender), «Boanerges», *i. e.*, *Beni-rogaz* (sons of thunder), «Sapphira» (the beautiful), «Thoma» (the twin), «Martha» (the mistress), «Tabitha» (the gazelle), «Bethsaida» (house of fishing), «Nazareth»

(watch), «Gethsemane» (an oil-press), «Golgotha» (place of a skull), «Aceldama» (the field of blood). It may as well be explained that the final syllable of most of these names, *a*, is a distinctively Syriac termination. The words «mammon» (Matt. vi. 24) and «raca» (Matt. v. 22) and «abba» are Syriac also.

Nor are other indications wanting that our Lord spoke in Syriac. Semitic peoples delight in puns and in assonances or jingles of words. We need not go far to prove this. The Koran derives much of its supposed sanctity from this cause alone. Babylonian royal decrees and Arabic legal documents are all enlivened by it; and in the Syriac version of our Lord's discourses it seems as if one word had sometimes suggested another. We give the following instances: John viii. 34—«He who committeth sin is the slave of sin.» Here the word for «commit» and the word for «slave» are both regular forms of the trilateral verb *'bad*. There is a similar play on the same word in Luke vii. 8: «I say to my slave, Do this, and he doeth it.»

Matthew xxvii. 6: *dmaya ennōn da dmā* (the price of blood).

In Matthew x. 12, 13 we have: «And when ye come into an house, give peace to it [that is, salute it]. And if the house be worthy, your peace shall rest upon it; and if not, your peace shall return unto you.» In the Greek text ἀσπάζασθε (salute) has no verbal relation to εἰρήνη (peace). We therefore conclude that our Lord gave this direction in a Semitic tongue, and used either the Hebrew *shalōm* or the Syriac *shalma*.

In Matthew xi. 17 Dr. Jahn has pointed out an assonance between the words *raqadtun* (danced) and *arqadtun* (lamented), while Dr. Nestle observes another in the *anichkun* (I will give you rest) of verse 28 and the *danich ana* (for I am meek) of verse 29.

The alliteration, *memoth tamōth*, of Mark vii. 10 can be reproduced in an English idiom, «die the death,» though it is absent from the Greek.

In John xii. 32, «And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me,» the word «lifted up» has the secondary sense of «be crucified.»

In John xx. 10 there is in the Greek text an expression, ἀπῆλθον . . . πρὸς ἑαυτοὺς, which is not classical, and may perhaps be a translation of the Syriac *ezal lahūn*; and in John xx. 19 the curious grammar of τῆ μιᾷ τῶν σαββάτων is at once explained by the Syriac *had beshaba*. These last two examples may have sprung from the evangelist's thoughts being habitually in Syriac.

¹ Meyer, «Jesu Muttersprache,» p. 40.

² «Bell. Jud.,» proem 1.

St. Paul may have been thinking in Aramaic when he wrote to the Romans (xiii. 8): «Owe no man any thing, but to love one another.» Here the word *háb* (owe) is not the same as *habb* (love), but the sound is very similar. And in the Palestinian Syriac the words addressed by the risen Saviour to Mary Magdalene are so rhythmical that we feel as if they must be the very accents that fell from his lips: «Attatha, ma at bakia, leman at ba'ia?» («Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou?») Perhaps the most interesting indications that our Lord's discourses were delivered in Syriac are, however, those passages where the Syriac text helps to clear up some apparent ambiguity in the Greek one. I give some instances from Dr. Arnold Meyer's very instructive work, «*Jesu Muttersprache.*» Let us hope that they may be only the first specimens from a field of research where the diligence of Syriac students will in the future be more amply rewarded.

The seeming discrepancy between the word *δόξητε* (think) of Matthew iii. 9 and *ἀρξήσθε* (begin) of Luke iii. 8 disappears when we find that the Syriac word for «ye begin» is *tishrun*, and that for «ye think» might be *tesharrun*.

In Matthew xxiv. 51, says Dr. Meyer, *διχοτομήσει* (cut in pieces) is hardly a suitable punishment; certainly a Jewish householder would scarcely have treated his servants in such a fashion. And how could the servant afterward howl and gnash his teeth? But in the Sinaitic palimpsest, and in the Palestinian Syriac version, we find the verb *f'lag* used, which means both «to cut in pieces» or «to divide (*i. e.*, appoint) a portion.» If we elide the words *αὐτόν καί* in the Greek—words which have perhaps been supplied by some too zealous editor—we get the simple and natural meaning, not that the servant was cut to pieces, but simply that his portion was appointed with the hypocrites, whoever these may signify. Take another of our Lord's hard sayings, Matthew viii. 22: «But Jesus said unto him, Follow me, and let the dead bury their dead.» Four of the Syriac versions, to wit, the Sinai palimpsest, the Peshito, the Palestinian Syriac, and the Philoxenian, have, «Let the buriers [*i. e.*, grave-diggers] bury their dead.» Dr. Meyer suggests that our Lord's meaning may have been, «Care not thou about the mortal part of thy father—a grave-digger will be found for *that*; but preach thou the kingdom of God; it is coming soon, and it suffers no delay.»

A suggestion about this very difficult passage is worth noting, by whom made we can-

not tell. It is that the phrase «bury my father» simply meant that the young man wished, like other Jews, to live at home until his father died, and that there was no question about the latter's impending dissolution; that, in fact, he was using a common Jewish idiom.

We might give a few more instances in which textual critics think that the Syriac sheds light upon the Greek texts: but some of these questions are still under discussion, so we have limited ourselves to those only which appear to admit of the least doubt, and of which those who know neither Greek nor Syriac can understand the reasonable character.

The great Reformation of the sixteenth century was accompanied by a burning zeal to study the text of Scripture in the light of the languages in which its various books were written. Nay, we may even say that this zeal was a proximate cause of the intellectual and religious upheaval. Even strong partizans of the Church of Rome were fired with it, without being in the least aware where others would naturally be led. The nineteenth century has witnessed another period of enthusiasm for textual criticism, and many distinguished scholars in America and in Europe have spent years of labor in the comparison of ancient manuscripts, so as to discover if any corruptions have crept into the received text, and to know what the evangelists and the apostles really wrote. The spade of the archæologist may be expected to throw more light upon the Old Testament, while in regard to the New fresh materials for research are continually being brought to light. Not the least of these are the manuscripts of the various versions produced in the Syriac Church, the Curetonian, the Sinaitic palimpsest, the Peshito, the Palestinian, the Philoxenian, and the still undiscovered Syriac text of Tatian's «*Diatessaron*,» or harmony of the four gospels, composed between A. D. 160 and A. D. 170. Apart from the interesting variations which some of these versions show, they have the supreme value of being perfectly independent witnesses to the genuineness and accuracy of the oldest Greek manuscripts, with which they are in constant and substantial agreement.

One objection which has been urged against the probability of our Lord's discourses having been delivered in Syriac is this. We have the authority of tradition and the evidence of Papias (A. D. 110) as reported by Eusebius,¹ for believing that St. Matthew's gospel was originally written in Aramaic, but that the

¹ Eus., «*H. E.*,» iii., chap. 39, p. 16.

gospels of Mark, of Luke, and of John were written in Greek; and there is always some loss of force or of delicacy of expression in the very best translation. To this we reply that no shorthand writer took down the teachings of Jesus; they were written in the form we now have them, entirely from memory, years after his ascension. It is probable that the Sermon on the Mount, for instance, as recorded by St. Matthew, contains the gist of many separate discourses delivered at different times and to different audiences. Had the teachings of three years been preserved in their totality, the world itself would not have contained the books that would have been written.

Other objections have been urged upon my consideration by a Jewish friend. He says: «While we find that Hillel (B. C. 75-A. D. 5), who came from Babylon, spoke sometimes in Aramaic, his colleague Shammai spoke always in Hebrew. In (Jerushalmi Sotah,) 24b, we have reported a prophecy of Samuel Hakaton, which he predicted before his death (about 110 A. D.). It runs: (Simeon and Ishmael are destined for the sword, the people for a prey, and there will be many distresses.) He said it in the Aramaic language, and they knew not what he said. If we allow that Aramaic was the language of the people, then the whole of what we call the New Hebrew must have been an invention of the rabbis, a mere artificial language, which I can hardly believe.»

Of these arguments, the story about Samuel Hakaton seems to me the most forcible. It can, however, be explained away when we recollect that there were at least two dialects of Aramaic, the eastern and the western. Few writers in modern times, whether Jewish or Christian, who have examined the subject, have come to any other conclusion but that Aramaic was the language of Palestine dur-

ing the first century of the Christian dispensation, and it would take many tales to outweigh the fact of those few of our Lord's sayings which are reported in that language. These objections, however, will serve to show the difficulties with which the subject is still beset.

Some of our readers there may be who find it difficult to understand why, since God has revealed to us his will in a book, or rather in a library of inspired books, as the Bible truly is, he has not at the same time given us an infallible text. How much labor would have been saved had we possessed the autographs of four evangelists! To this we answer that, had one such autograph existed, some branch of the Christian church, possibly every branch, ourselves included, would have made an idol of the writer's parchment, while neglecting its teaching altogether. We can only seek to comprehend the ways of Providence in one sphere by observing them in another. Man is the heir of all things; yet he is sent into the world to depend for food, clothing, and all the comforts and adornments of life, on his wits. How greatly is he thereby differentiated from the brutes! How immeasurably is the educated man, and especially the scientific investigator, raised above the savage simply as the result of his own efforts! Is it not possible that he who gave the Word of Life designs to quicken our interest in it by arousing afresh in each successive generation of Christians the desire to approach nearer to its sources, to remove the undergrowth of legend and tradition which has sometimes obstructed its free course, and that we are saved from the danger of finding it trite by the feeling that we possess a divine treasure which, though a gift, is not entirely independent of our own exertions for the measure in which it shall minister to our edification?

Agnes Smith Lewis.

