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THE ARAMAIC LANGUAGE AND THE STUDY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT*

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LITTLE did I realize twenty-five years ago, when I proposed an Aramaic topic for my doctoral dissertation to Prof. William F. Albright at the Johns Hopkins University,¹ that I would one day be addressing the Society of Biblical Literature as its president on a subject that would be related to such a topic and that has held my interest during the succeeding years. The last quarter of a century has seen the discovery or the publication of important corpora of Aramaic texts which have made an impact on the study of the OT as well as on that of the Semitic background of the NT. 1954 was also the year when Matthew Black's book, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts*, appeared in an important second edition. Though I eventually wrote critically of its third edition,² it was a book that initially influenced my thinking and spurred my interest greatly. In 1953, *The Brooklyn Museum Aramaic Papyri* had been published by E. G. Kraeling,³ and the Arsames correspondence followed in 1954 in a publication by G. R. Driver.⁴ Both of these collections became part of the material on which my dissertation, a study of the syntax of Imperial Aramaic, was eventually based. The year 1956 turned out to be a record year, for during it an important Aramaic text from Qumran Cave 1, the *Genesis Apocryphon*, was published,⁵ an Old Aramaic inscription from northern Syria, Sefire III, was made known to the scholarly world,⁶ and an

*The Presidential Address delivered 15 November 1979, at the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, held at the New York Statler Hotel, New York, NY.

¹*The Syntax of Imperial Aramaic Based on Documents Found in Egypt* (Baltimore: Presented to the Johns Hopkins University, 1956), unpublished; a part of it was used in an article, "The Syntax of *kl, kl'*; 'All' in Aramaic Texts from Egypt and in Biblical Aramaic," *Bib* 38 (1957) 170-84; reprinted, *A Wandering Aramean: Collected Aramaic Essays* (SBLMS 25; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1979) 205-17.

²Oxford: Clarendon, 1954; the first edition had appeared in 1946. My review of the third edition (1967) appeared in *CBQ* 30 (1968) 417-28.

³*The Brooklyn Museum Aramaic Papyri: New Documents of the Fifth Century B.C. from the Jewish Colony at Elephantine* (New Haven: Yale University, 1953; reprinted, New York: Arno, 1969).

⁴*Aramaic Documents of the Fifth Century B.C.* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1954); abridged and revised edition (without plates), 1957.

⁵N. Avigad and Y. Yadin, *A Genesis Apocryphon: A Scroll from the Wilderness of Judaea* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press and Heikhal ha-Sefer, 1956). See my commentary, *The Genesis Apocryphon of Qumran Cave 1* (2d ed.; *BibOr* 18A; Rome: Biblical Institute, 1971).

⁶A. Dupont-Sommer (with J. Starcky), "Une inscription araméenne inédite de Sfiré," *Bulletin du Musée de Beyrouth* 13 (1956) 23-41 (+ pls. I-VI).

announcement was made that a complete copy of a Palestinian targum of the Pentateuch, Neofiti I, had been discovered in the Vatican Library.⁷ Two further inscriptions from Sefire (I and II, as they are known today) were published in 1958.⁸ As various texts from different caves of Qumran, Murabba'at, and Hever were gradually published, either in the *editiones principes* or in preliminary form, more and more fragmentary documents were added to the list of new Aramaic acquisitions.⁹ Among these texts two stand out in particular, and their secrets have not yet been fully probed: the targum of Job from Qumran Cave 11¹⁰ and the Enoch material from Qumran Cave 4.¹¹ Meanwhile, the Aramaic letters of Padua were published in 1960 and those from Hermopolis West in the Egyptian delta were finally released in 1966.¹² In 1970 the long-awaited Aramaic ritual texts of Persepolis appeared,¹³ and in 1973 the world of OT studies was startled to learn of the discovery of an Old Aramaic text from Deir 'Alla in Transjordan mentioning

⁷See A. Díez Macho, "Una copia de todo el targum jerosolimitano en la Vaticana," *Est Bib* 15 (1956) 446-47; "Una copia completa del targum palestinese al Pentateuco en la Biblioteca Vaticana (Neofiti 1)," *Sefarad* 17 (1957) 119-21 (+ pl. 1). For the complete publication of this targum, see A. Díez Macho, *Neophyti I, Targum palestinese, Ms de la Biblioteca Vaticana: Tomo I, Génesis: Edición príncipe, introducción general y versión castellana* (Madrid/Barcelona: Consejo superior de investigaciones científicas, 1968); *Tomo II, Éxodo* (1970); *Tomo III, Levítico* (1971); *Tomo IV, Números* (1974); *Tomo V, Deuteronomio* (1978). See also the facsimile publication, *The Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch: Codex Vatican [sic] Neofiti I* (Jerusalem: Makor, 1970).

⁸A. Dupont-Sommer (with J. Starcky), "Les inscriptions araméennes de Sfiré (stèles I et II)," *MPAIBL* 15 (1960) [but the offprint bears the date of 1958]] 1-155 (+ pls. I-XXIX). Sf I was known earlier as the Sujin stele and had been published by S. Ronzevalle, "Fragments d'inscriptions araméennes des environs d'Alep," *MUSJ* 15 (1930-31) 237-60. See my commentary, *The Aramaic Inscriptions of Sefire* (BibOr 19; Rome: Biblical Institute, 1967).

⁹For a list of Palestinian Aramaic texts from the mid-ninth century on and of the Qumran Aramaic texts, see my article, "The Contribution of Qumran Aramaic to the Study of the New Testament," *NTS* 20 (1973-74) 382-407, esp. pp. 402-6; reprinted in *Wandering Aramean*, 99-102. To this list one will have to add the following: 4QEnoch (J. T. Milik, *The Books of Enoch* [see n. 11 below]); 4QtgLev and 4QtgJob, published by Milik in *Qumrân Grotte 4, II* (DJD 6; Oxford: Clarendon, 1977) 86-90. Most of the texts of Palestinian provenience in the Middle and Late phases of Aramaic have been collected in J. A. Fitzmyer and D. J. Harrington, *A Manual of Palestinian Aramaic Texts* (BibOr 34; Rome: Biblical Institute, 1978).

¹⁰See J. P. M. van der Ploeg and A. S. van der Woude (with B. Jongeling), *Le targum de Job de la grotte xi de Qumrân* (Koninklijke nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen; Leiden: Brill, 1971). See my article, "Some Observations on the Targum of Job from Qumran Cave 11," *CBQ* 36 (1974) 503-24; reprinted in *Wandering Aramean*, 161-82.

¹¹See J. T. Milik (with M. Black), *The Books of Enoch: Aramaic Fragments of Qumrân Cave 4* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1976).

¹²See E. Bresciani, "Papiri aramaici egiziani di epoca persiana presso il Museo Civico di Padova," *RSO* 35 (1960) 11-24; E. Bresciani and M. Kamil, "Le lettere aramaiche di Hermopoli," *Atti della accademia nazionale dei Lincei: Memorie, classe di scienze morali, storiche e filologiche*, ser. 8, vol. 12, fasc. 5 (Roma: Accademia nazionale dei Lincei, 1966) 357-428 (+ pls. I-X).

¹³See R. A. Bowman, *Aramaic Ritual Texts from Persepolis* (OIP 91; Chicago: University of Chicago, 1970).

the biblical Balaam, *Bil^cam bar be^cōr*.¹⁴ Preliminary notice had also been given by F. M. Cross about the Aramaic Samaria Papyri from Wadi ed-Daliyeh, discovered in 1962.¹⁵ And reports have been issued from time to time about the discovery in recent years of several hundred Aramaic papyri and ostraca at Saqqarah in Egypt, all as yet unpublished.¹⁶

This rapid overview of the main Aramaic texts brought to light or published in the past twenty-five years reveals that our knowledge of ancient Aramaic has grown considerably in the last quarter of a century. Nor is it yet at an end because, as of the time of the writing of this address, we have just learned through an oral communication from some members of the American Schools of Oriental Research about the discovery this past summer in northern Syria (Tell Fakhariyeh) of a life-size statue of a king named Hadadezer with an Old Aramaic inscription of some twenty lines on its rear skirt, accompanied by an apparently parallel Neo-Assyrian text on its front skirt.¹⁷ This could turn out to be the oldest known Aramaic inscription.

The Aramaic material, which has come to light in the past twenty-five years, does not all belong to the same period of the language. Part of it comes from the phase of *Old Aramaic* (roughly 925–700 B.C.); part of it belongs to the phase of *Official or Imperial Aramaic* (700–200 B.C.); part of it to the phase of *Middle Aramaic* (200 B.C.—A.D. 200); and part to the phase of *Late Aramaic* (after A.D. 200 up to medieval times).¹⁸

In the remainder of this address my intention is to survey rapidly the contributions that have been made by the study of the new Aramaic material from these phases to various biblical questions. Though I am mostly interested in the impact of the material on the Semitic background of the NT, I shall from time to time comment on the significance of various new Aramaic texts for OT study too, to the extent that I can. OT scholars among my readers may consider that I have passed over some items; if I do, I plead your indulgence. I intend to comment on the Aramaic material in each of the four periods just mentioned.

I. *Old Aramaic* (925–700 B.C.)

In its earliest manifestation the Aramaic language has preserved for us a number of significant items which bear upon the study of both the OT and the

¹⁴See J. Hoftijzer and G. van der Kooij, *Aramaic Texts from Deir el-Alla* (Leiden: Brill, 1976). See my review, *CBQ* 40 (1978) 93–95.

¹⁵See F. M. Cross, "Papyri of the Fourth Century B.C. from Daliyeh: A Preliminary Report on Their Discovery and Significance," *New Directions in Biblical Archaeology* (ed. D. N. Freedman and J. C. Greenfield; Garden City: Doubleday, 1969) 41–62; "The Discovery of the Samaria Papyri," *BA* 26 (1963) 110–21; R. W. Klein, "Samaria Papyri," *IDBSup*, 772.

¹⁶See J. Leclant, "Fouilles et travaux en Egypte et au Sudan," *Or* 35 (1966) 136; 36 (1967) 187–88; 37 (1968) 102–4; 38 (1969) 253–54; 39 (1970) 331; 40 (1971) 230; 41 (1972) 254–55; 42 (1973) 399–403.

¹⁷I am indebted to P. J. King and M. Coogan for information about this discovery.

¹⁸For an explanation of these periods, see "The Phases of the Aramaic Language," *Wandering Aramean*, 57–84.

NT. In particular, the Sefire inscriptions give us part of a remarkable eighth-century (suzerainty or vassal?) treaty, which has no little importance for the modern debate about the antiquity and influence of such treaties of the ancient Fertile Crescent on OT covenant theology.¹⁹ Specifically, the treaty curses in them, the invocations of the deities, and the rites accompanying the conclusion of the pact (Sf I A 21–42) are pertinent. The same treaties attest the names of ²*Ēl* and ⁶*Elyān* as a pair of Northwest Semitic deities (Sf I A 11)²⁰ which have no little pertinence for the double OT title, ²*Ēl* ⁶*elyōn*, in Gen 14:18–22; Ps 78:35. Again, the same treaties reveal the use of the title *nēgīd* in parallelism with *pēqīd*, “officer or military commander” and “official” (Sf III 10), as in Jer 20:1 or as applied to Saul (1 Sam 9:16) or David (1 Sam 13:14).²¹ The Sefire treaties also bear on NT study in that they preserve the earliest attestation of *br* ²*nš*, lit., “son of man,” used indeed not in the later titular sense, but in the generic sense, “human being” (Sf III 16).²² The occurrence of this phrase in an eighth-century non-poetic text from northern Syria is joined by a series of further instances in extrabiblical texts of the Middle Phase of Aramaic,²³ which reveal that the phrase was neither “rare in Aramaic”²⁴ nor of Galilean coinage, as has been recently claimed by G. Vermes.²⁵

Another important text from the phase of Old Aramaic is the inscription written ca. 700 B.C. in black and red ink on the plaster wall of a room of an eighth-century building at Tell Deir ⁶Alla. Aside from the interesting forms of Old Aramaic that it preserves, it provides extrabiblical background for the oracles of Balaam in Num 22:5–24:25, and for other OT passages in which he is mentioned.²⁶ Unfortunately, the inscription is preserved only in a very fragmentary condition; not one line of it is intact, and one cannot be certain about the width of any of the lines—many of them are “poly-interpretable,” to use a term of the editor. In Josh 13:22 Balaam is called *haqqōsēm*, “the diviner,” but in this inscription his title is *ḥāzēh* ²*ilāhīn*, “seer of (the) gods” (1:1). However, the text clearly tells of what has been revealed to Balaam in a vision of the night (*wy²tw* ²*lwh* ²*lhn* *blylh*, “and [the] gods came to him at night”). Balaam’s night-visions are otherwise known from Num 22:9–12, 20.

¹⁹See D. J. McCarthy, *Treaty and Covenant: A Study in Form in the Ancient Oriental Documents and in the Old Testament* (AnBib 21a; Rome: Biblical Institute, 1978).

²⁰Cf. *Aramaic Inscriptions*, 37–38.

²¹*Ibid.*, 112–13. See further F. M. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1973) 220.

²²Aramaic Inscriptions, 115. Cf. E. Sjöberg, “בן אדם und בר אנש im Hebräischen und Aramäischen,” *AcOr* 21 (1950–53) 57–65, 91–107; F. Vattioni, “La prima menzione aramaica di ‘figlio dell’uomo,’” *Biblos-Press* 6/1 (1965) 6–7; *Wandering Aramean*, 147–49.

²³See 1QapGen 21:13 (= Gen 13:16); 11QtgJob 26:3 (= Hebr. Job 35:8); 9:9 (= Hebr. Job 25:6). Cf. Dan 7:13.

²⁴See P. Benoit, “The Divinity of Christ in the Synoptic Gospels,” *Son and Savior: The Divinity of Jesus Christ in the Scriptures* (ed. A. Gelin; Baltimore: Helicon, 1965) 81; *Exégèse et théologie* (Paris: Cerf, 1961) 1. 134.

²⁵“The ‘Son of Man’ Debate,” *JSNT* 1 (1978) 19–32, esp. p. 24; cf. “Another View of the ‘Son of Man’ Debate,” *JSNT* 4 (1979) 58–68, esp. pp. 60–61.

²⁶See Num 31:8, 16; Deut 23:5–6; Josh 13:22; 24:9–10; Neh 13:2; Mic 6:5.

In this inscription his oracle seems to contain many curses, some of them not unrelated to the treaty-curses of Sefire. Gods are also named: *šgr w^cštr* (1:16), deities known from Ugaritic texts,²⁷ as well as ^ʿ*El* and (possibly) *šadday* (but in a plural form, *šdyn!*). Though Balaam appears in various late NT writings, in which Christians are warned against apostasy and idolatry for the sake of gain (Jude 11; Rev 2:14; 2 Pet 2:15), none of this later fascination with the seer of old finds illustration in this fragmentary text.

II. *Official or Imperial Aramaic (700–200 B.C.)*

The Aramaic documents of the Jewish military colony of fifth century B.C. Elephantine have been known since the early part of this century²⁸ and have given us a good picture of the Official Aramaic which was in use at that time from southern Egypt across the Fertile Crescent even to the Indus Valley. It was used during five centuries, until the international means of communication switched to Greek, only after the conquest of Alexander. Numerous other small texts and inscriptions had come to light over the years from many places in that vast geographic expanse, which attest the widespread use of this same Aramaic. In the last twenty-five years this form of Aramaic has been further instanced not only in the Elephantine texts of the Brooklyn Museum, the Arsames correspondence, the Padua papyri, and Hermopolis letters, as already mentioned,²⁹ but in numerous other small inscriptions, sometimes bilingual or trilingual.³⁰ Some of the older, well-known Elephantine texts have been clarified as a result of the discovery of new examples of known literary forms.

Since the early publication of the Elephantine texts it has been clear that the Jewish (and Aramean?) colonists on the island of Elephantine were reverencing the God Yahu (*Yhw*). Personal proper names with the theophoric element *Yhw*- were well attested in these texts; contributions of money were collected for Yahu (*AP* 22), and older scholars debated whether that money was destined for Jerusalem or not. A closer reading of the older documents began to suggest that there was a temple of Yahu on the island of Elephantine too. The publication of the Brooklyn Museum papyri clinched the matter, for several of the documents revealed the location of the temple in relation to other houses mentioned in the texts.³¹ One in particular speaks clearly of "Yahu, the god, dwelling in the fortress Yeb" (*Yhw ʿlh ʿ škn yb brt ʿ* [*Brook-*

²⁷See M. Dahood, "Hebrew-Ugaritic Lexicography X," *Bib* 53 (1972) 386–403, esp. p. 403. Cf. *Ugaritica V* (1968) 584, text 609 rev:9.

²⁸See A. H. Sayce and A. E. Cowley, *Aramaic Papyri Discovered at Assuan* (London: Moring, 1906); E. Sachau, *Aramäische Papyrus und Ostraka aus einer jüdischen Militär-Kolonie zu Elephantine* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1911); N. Aimé-Giron, *Textes araméens d'Égypte* (Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1931); "Adversaria semitica," *BIFAO* 38 (1939) 1–63.

²⁹See nn. 3, 4, 12 above.

³⁰See *KAI* §258–76; J. Teixidor, "The Aramaic Text in the Trilingual Stele from Xanthus," *JNES* 37 (1978) 181–85.

³¹E. G. Kraeling, *Brooklyn Museum Aramaic Papyri*, 72–82.

lyn *Museum Aramaic Papyri*, 12:2]). Moreover, the first letter of the Padua Papyri begins with “[Greetings to the Temp]le of Yahu on Yeb” ([šlm by]t Yhw byb, I:1).³² All of this has brought new evidence to OT scholars who were wrestling with the historic question of the dwelling-place of Yahweh, God of Israel.

Similarly, one of the Hermopolis papyri reveals the cult of the “Queen of Heaven” even in Egypt. One of the letters begins with a greeting sent “to the Temple of Bethel and to the Temple of the Queen of Heaven” (šlm byt bt^l wbyt mlkt šmyn [HermW 4:1]).³³ This is the same figure who is mentioned in Jer 7:18; 44:17 and who is usually identified with the Babylonian/Assyrian goddess Ishtar.

Other items of interest to OT scholars could be mentioned from this period of Official Aramaic, but there is one item which has gone practically unnoticed and has to be noted because of its pertinence to NT study. In the usual discussions about the change of Simon’s name to *Kēphas* or *Petros* it is usually said that Aramaic *kēphā*³ is never found as a proper name in pre-New Testament times. Years ago, T. Zahn implied that the word was so used but did not document it.³⁴ O. Cullmann, who remarked on Zahn’s lack of documentation, stressed that *kēphā*³ “is not, as one might suppose, attested as a proper name in Aram.”³⁵ This lack of attestation of the proper name has been used to deny that there is an underlying Aramaic pun reflected in the play on Greek *petros* and *petra* of Matt 16:18.³⁶ But a text has been known since 1953, which does clearly attest the proper name *kp*³. It is found in an Elephantine text (*Brooklyn Museum Aramaic Papyri*, 8:10) dated to the eighth year of Darius the King (= Darius II, 424–402 B.C.), hence to 416 B.C. The name is found in a list of witnesses to a document in which a certain Zakkur gives or transfers a slave, named Yedaniah, to a certain Uriah. After the details of the transfer are given on nine lines of the text, three lines of witnesses are appended, the first of which reads:

10 šdy³ bgw ᶜtrmlky br qlqln; snkšr br šbty; šhd, ᶜqb br kp³,

Witnesses hereto (are): ᶜAtarmalki, son of QLQLN; Sinkishir, son of Shabbetai; witness: ᶜAqab, son of Kepha³.³⁷

Elsewhere I have discussed in detail the reasons for regarding this name *kp*³ as Semitic, and not Egyptian, and also as a hypocoristicon, which has lost some

³²See E. Bresciani, “Papiri aramaici,” 12; *Wandering Aramean*, 219.

³³See E. Bresciani and M. Kamil, “Le lettere aramaiche,” 398.

³⁴*Das Evangelium des Matthäus* (Kommentar zum Neuen Testament, 1; Leipzig: Deichert, 1903) 538.

³⁵Πέτρος, Κηφᾶς,” *TDNT* 6 (1969) 100 n. 6. See also R. E. Brown, “Peter,” *IDBSup*, 654.

³⁶See O. Immisch, “Matthäus 16, 18: Laienbemerkungen zu der Untersuchung Dells, *ZNW* XV, 1914, 1ff.,” *ZNW* 17 (1916) 18–26; A. Dell, “Matthäus 16, 17–19,” *ZNW* 15 (1914) 1–49. Cf. P. Lampe, “Das Spiel mit dem Petrusnamen—Matt. xvi. 18,” *NTS* 25 (1978–79) 227–45: “Auch ἵκ/Ἰσῳ lässt sich bislang in vorchristlicher Zeit nicht als Eigenname auffinden” (p. 229).

³⁷See E. G. Kraeling, *Brooklyn Museum Aramaic Papyri*, 226–27. See my article, “Aramaic Kepha³ and Peter’s Name in the New Testament,” *Text and Interpretation: Studies in the New Testament Presented to Matthew Black* (ed. E. Best and R. M. Wilson; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1979) 121–32.

theophoric element. In itself, it would be no more enigmatic a name than Hebrew *Šūr*, “Rock,” borne by one of the sons of Jeiel and Maacah of Gibeon (1 Chr 8:30; 9:36) and by one of the kings or leaders of the Midianites (Num 25:15); this name is a shortened form of such names as *Šūri²ēl* (Num 3:35) or *Šūrišadday* (Num 1:6). The least, then, that one can say is that *Kēphā²* was not unknown as a proper name in pre-Christian Aramaic. That it was in use among Palestinian Jews about the time of Jesus is another matter. (The common noun *kēphā²* has recently been found in a number of Qumran texts, where it has the sense of “rock, mountain crag.”³⁸)

III. Middle Aramaic (200 B.C.–A.D. 200)

Though there has been a reluctance at times to distinguish the Aramaic of this phase from Official or Imperial Aramaic,³⁹ when one considers *all* the various manifestations of the language in the period roughly defined as 200 B.C.–A.D. 200, one has to reckon with the emergence of local dialects having differences not attested earlier. Official or Imperial Aramaic, as it is becoming better known, may eventually have to be subdivided. Indeed, some scholars have already suggested “Eastern” and “Western” forms of it,⁴⁰ using tags that are derived from the Late Phase of the language to suggest differences in the Official Phase that are not yet really as clear as they become several hundred years later. Perhaps different tags will be needed for the emerging subdivisions. In any case, the Official Phase has to be set off from the Middle Phase, when one considers the emergence at this time of such dialects as Palestinian Aramaic, Nabatean, Palmyrene, Hatran, and Early (pre-classical) Syriac.⁴¹ In these forms of Aramaic we have not only a difference of script, but

³⁸See 11QtgJob 32:1; 33:9; 4QEn^c 4 iii 19; 4QEn^c 4:3; 4QEn^a 1 ii 8.

³⁹E.g., P. Grelot, “Qumran: B. Culture et langues, II. Araméen,” *DBS* fasc. 51 (1978) 802–4; *RB* 74 (1967) 102; *RB* 79 (1972) 614–17, esp. p. 617; *RB* 83 (1976) 605–18, esp. p. 614. Cf. A. Paul, “Bulletin de littérature intertestamentaire,” *RSR* 60 (1972) 429–58, esp. p. 440; J. C. Greenfield, “Aramaic,” *IDBSup*, 39–44; A. Díez Macho, *El targum: Introducción a las traducciones aramaicas de la Biblia* (Barcelona: Consejo superior de investigaciones científicas, 1972) 41–42.

⁴⁰E. Y. Kutscher, “Aramaic,” *Current Trends in Linguistics 6: Linguistics in South West Asia and North Africa* (The Hague: Mouton, 1971) 347–412, esp. pp. 361–66. Cf. J. C. Greenfield, “Aramaic,” *IDBSup*, 40a.

⁴¹Nabatean inscriptions range from the beginning of the second century B.C. until at least the Bar Cocheba period. The first clear reference to the Nabateans emerges about 312 B.C., when they are known to have refused allegiance to Antigonos, the Macedonian successor to Alexander the Great. The dialect of Palmyra (ancient Tadmor in Syria) stretches from roughly 50 B.C. to A.D. 273 (the oldest inscription is dated 44 B.C.). Hatra was a fortified caravan-city in an oasis between the Tigris and the Euphrates Rivers, about 100 kms. NW of Asshur. Its heyday began in the late first century A.D., even though its origins date from the Hellenistic or Roman period. It was defeated by the Sassanid Shahpur I ca. 241 A.D. Its texts are difficult to date. The early pre-classical Syriac inscriptions from “pagan Edessa” and its environs come from the first two centuries A.D. (some even from the third). See H. J. W. Drijvers, *Old-Syriac Edesseean* [sic] *Inscriptions* (SSS 3; Leiden: Brill, 1972); J. B. Segal, Edessa, ‘*The Blessed City*’ (Oxford: Clarendon, 1970) passim; E. Jenni, “Die altsyrischen Inschriften, 1.-3. Jahrhundert nach Christus,” *TZ* 21 (1965) 371–85; F. Vattioni, “Appunti sulle iscrizioni siriane antiche,” *Augustinianum* 11 (1971) 435–46; 13 (1973) 131–40, 279–338.

of dialect as well. What is presently being called Palestinian Aramaic (i.e., texts from inscriptions in the environs of Jerusalem, from Wadi Qumran, Murabba^cat, and Ḥever) may be at this time the form most closely related to Official Aramaic; but it is not the only form of Aramaic attested in this phase. Hence my insistence on the distinction of the Middle Phase from that of Official or Imperial Aramaic.⁴²

At any rate, it is the Aramaic of the Middle Phase—or of phases earlier—that one should consider when one deals with the Aramaic substratum of the NT writings. Appeals have often been made in earlier treatments of this substratum to Aramaic of a later period (e.g., to Aramaic targums of later vintage, Aramaic rabbinical writings, and even classical Syriac). But in light of all the new material that has come to our attention from Palestinian Aramaic of 200 B.C. to A.D. 200 in the past 25 years,⁴³ one has to query the legitimacy of such appeals to Aramaic of the Late Phase.

From another point of view one has to sort out carefully the various aspects of the study of the Aramaic substratum of the NT, for such study has many methodological problems. The so-called Aramaic Question is, in fact, multifaceted, and I have tried to isolate eight of these facets or aspects, which I may be permitted to résumé briefly at this point: (1) Aramaic as a language spoken by Jesus and his contemporaries—or more broadly, as a language of first-century Palestine; the nature of this sort of Aramaic (its orthography, phonology, morphology, syntax; claims about its spoken and literary character, etc.). (2) The Aramaic names, words, and phrases preserved in the NT, in Josephus's writings, and even in early layers of the Mishnah (to the extent that they can be sorted out). (3) Aramaisms in NT Greek, i.e., lexical or syntactic Greek phenomena which reflect Aramaic interference and cannot adequately be explained by Greek evidence alone. (4) Real and alleged mistranslations of an Aramaic substratum; this may be only a refined form of the previous aspect. (5) Aramaic literary forms in prose and poetry: Do some of the early confessions, hymns, and kerygmatic fragments reflect some peculiarly Aramaic form? (6) Aramaic and variant readings in the NT Greek textual tradition—Is an Aramaic substratum really responsible for some of them, or do such variants reflect a later Syriacization of the tradition? (7) Jewish literary traditions and motifs found in the NT and in known Aramaic literature. (8) The influence of Aramaic epistolography on certain parts of the NT epistolary corpus.⁴⁴ It should be obvious from this catalogue that the Aramaic Question is not uncomplicated.

Some of the significant results of the study of recently published Palestinian Aramaic texts of this phase of the language which bear upon the

⁴²See further, "The Phases of the Aramaic Language," *Wandering Aramean*, 57–84, esp. pp. 70–72.

⁴³See n. 9 above.

⁴⁴For a fuller discussion of these aspects, see "Methodology in the Study of the Aramaic Substratum of Jesus' Sayings in the New Testament," *Jésus aux origines de la christologie* (ed. J. Dupont; BETL 40: Gembloux: Duculot, 1975) 73–102; slightly revised, in *Wandering Aramean*, 1–27.

interpretation of the NT may now be briefly recorded here.

(1) We have from Palestine itself a text which preserves the way in which second-century B.C. Jews would have said in Aramaic "our Lord": *mrn*² (= *mārānā*², not *māran* [as in Late Aramaic], 4QEn^b 1 iii 14). The text reads: [ʔ²*nth hw*²] *mrn*² *rb*² [hw]² *mr*² ^c*lm*², "[You are] our great Lord; (you) [ar]e the Lord of the world." This is addressed by Raphael and Michael to God. It puts to rest one part of the long-standing debate about how to divide the phrase, written as one word in the Greek MSS of the NT and preserved in that most Greek of the Pauline letters, 1 Cor 16:22: MAPANAΘA. It has now to be understood, in my opinion, as *mārānā thā*, "Our Lord, come," as many commentators have often suggested.⁴⁵

(2) Similarly, we now have from several Palestinian Aramaic texts examples of the title *mārē*², "Lord" (in the unemphatic state) or *māryā*², "the Lord" (in the emphatic state), used of God or the Almighty. Thus, the *Targum of Job* from Qumran Cave 11 preserves an example of the unemphatic *mārē*², used in parallelism with ²*ēlāhā*², "God." The Hebrew of Job 34:12 reads: ²*ap omnām*² ²*ēl lō*² *yaršā*^c *wēšadday lō*² *yē*^c *awwēt mišpāt*, "Of a truth, God will not act wickedly, and the Almighty will not pervert justice." The targum (11QtgJob 24:6-7) turns it into a question: *hk*^c *n šd*² ²*lh*² / *yšqr wmr*² [*y*^c *wt dyn*²], "Now will God really prove faithless, and [will] the Lord [pervert judgment]?"⁴⁶ Other examples of the unemphatic form *mārē*² can be found in the *Genesis Apocryphon* of Qumran Cave 1 (1QapGen 20:13, 15).⁴⁷ But the emphatic state of the title (*māryā*²) has also turned up in recently published Aramaic fragments of the Books of Enoch. 4QEn^b 1 iv 5 (= *I Enoch* 10:9) reads: [*wlgbry*² *l*² *mr m*]² *ry*² ²*z* [*l n*^c *l mmzry*²], "[And to Gabriel] the [L]ord [said], 'Go [now to the bastards. . .]'" This passage is also preserved in a Greek fragment, which has the abbreviated form *ho KC*.⁴⁸ This evidence is, of course, limited in quantity. It does at least give the lie to the claim often made that pre-Christian Palestinian Jews never referred to God in the absolute sense as "the Lord" or, to quote R. Bultmann, that "at the very outset the unmodified expression 'the Lord' is unthinkable in Jewish usage. 'Lord' used of God is always given some modifier."⁴⁹ Though we still do not have an example of the tetragrammaton itself being translated by *mārē*² or *māryā*², the Aramaic usage cited reveals that the custom was not as "unthinkable" as it might once have seemed. Thus this Aramaic evidence joins other data, both in Greek and in Hebrew, to show that at least some Palestinian Jews in pre-

⁴⁵See J. T. Milik, *The Books of Enoch*, 171. Cf. my article, "New Testament Kyrios and Maranatha and Their Aramaic Background," in the forthcoming *Festschrift for B. Reicke* (Leiden: Brill).

⁴⁶See J. P. M. van der Ploeg and A. S. van der Woude, *Le targum de Job*, 58; see further, *Wandering Aramean*, 87-90, 115-42.

⁴⁷N. Avigad and Y. Yadin, *A Genesis Apocryphon*, pl. 20; see *Wandering Aramean*, 109 n. 28.

⁴⁸See J. T. Milik, *The Books of Enoch*, 175-76; cf. M. Black (ed.), *Apocalypsis Henochi graece* (PVTG 3; Leiden: Brill, 1970) 25.

⁴⁹*Theology of the New Testament* (2 vols.; London: SCM, 1952) 51; *Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1948) 52: "nicht denkbar."

Christian times were beginning to refer to God as “(the) Lord.”⁵⁰ This custom, incipient though it may have been, presents a plausible Palestinian religious background for the title (*ho*) *kyrios* used of Jesus in the fundamental NT confession, “Jesus is Lord” (Rom 10:9; 1 Cor 12:3) and in the climax of the pre-Pauline early (Jewish-) Christian hymn in Phil 2:10–11. Consequently, it casts serious doubt on the view that the absolute use of (*ho*) *kyrios* for Jesus was not a primitive kerygmatic title, but the product of the evangelization of the Greco-Roman eastern Mediterranean world by Christian missionaries who were carrying the kerygma to that area and came into contact with the use of *kyrios* for gods and human rulers.

(3) If recently published Palestinian Aramaic texts have shed light on the NT title *kyrios*, the same can be said for another important title, *ho huios tou theou*, “Son of God.” Though NT commentators were more inclined to consider a Palestinian matrix for this title, because of the antecedents of the title in the OT, where it never occurs verbatim, save in the deuterocanonical Book of Wisdom (2:18), there have always been some who sought an extra-Palestinian origin of (*ho*) *huios tou theou* as a title for Jesus.⁵¹ The title, however, has been discovered in a Palestinian Aramaic text of striking character. Though the text has not yet been fully published, it has been widely circulated throughout the world. The pertinent part of it reads as follows:

] 7
 8 [ברך מלכא כלא שלם י'עבדון וכלא ישמשון
 9 [לה והוא בר אל ר] כא יתקרא ובשמה יתכנה
 1 ברה די אל יתאמר ובר עליון יקרונה כויקיא
 2 די חזותא כן מלכותה תהוה שני[ן] ימלכון על
 3 ארעא וכלא ידשוון עם לעם ידוש ומדינה למד[ינ]ה
 4 vacat עד יקום עם אל וכלא ינוח מן חרב

[But]⁷ shall be great upon the earth, ⁸[O King! All (people) shall make [peace], and all shall serve ⁹[him. He shall be called the son of] the [G]reat [God], and by his name shall he be named. (Col. 2) ¹He shall be hailed (as) the Son of God, and they shall call him the Son of the Most High. As comets (flash) ²to the sight, so shall be their kingdom. (For some) year[s] they shall rule upon ³the earth and shall trample everything (under foot); people shall trample upon people, city upon ci[t]y, ⁴(vacat) until there arises the people of God, and everyone rests from the sword.⁵²

Because of the fragmentary state of this text, it is uncertain who the subject of attribution is. I personally suggest the introduction of the word “son” in lines 6 and 9 of the first column. Milik, who is to publish the full text, thinks that it refers to Alexander Balas. But the apocalyptic character of the text, its use of ²*ēl rabbā*², “the Great God,” in col. 2, and its reference to the arising of

⁵⁰See *Wandering Aramean*, 121–23, 125–26.

⁵¹E.g., H. J. Schoeps, *Paul: The Theology of the Apostle in the Light of Jewish History* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961) 158: “the sole decisive heathen premise of Pauline thought” (German original, p. 163).

⁵²See *Wandering Aramean*, 90–94.

ʿam ʔēl, “the people of God,” all suggest that it refers to someone in Jewish circles in pre-Christian Palestine rather than to a Seleucid ruler. No matter how that question will finally be decided, the text clearly speaks of someone who is to be “hailed (as) the Son of God, and (whom) they shall call the Son of the Most High” (1:9–2:1). No one can miss the parallels in the passage to Luke 1:32, 35, even though the text sheds little light on the complicated problem of the sources of the Lucan infancy narrative. Moreover, the phrase *bērēh dī ʔēl*, “the Son of God,” preserves the use of *ʔēl* as a name for God in Aramaic, in contrast to the usual name *ʔēlāh(āʔ)*. It thus puts an end to the debate whether the words of Jesus on the cross in the Matthean form, *ēli ēli lema sabachthani* (27:46), were really all Aramaic or half Hebrew and half Aramaic, as has been at times maintained. Even though the Aramaic suffixal form *ʔēlī* has not yet turned up, the absolute *ʔēl*, “God,” turns up several times in this text. Finally, there is no indication that the person to whom the titles “Son of God” or “Son of the Most High” are given in this text is a messianic figure; we are still looking for extra-NT instances in which such titles have been applied to an anointed agent of Yahweh.

(4) Light has been shed by two Aramaic texts on the NT topic of the forgiveness of sins. In the well-known episode of the cure of the paralytic, scribes (and Pharisees) query, “Who can forgive sins but God alone?” (Mark 2:7; Luke 5:21 [Matt 9:3 omits the query]). A fragmentary Qumran text, however, reveals that some Palestinian Jews in pre-Christian times thought that a human being could forgive sins in God’s name and thus provides a background for the Gospel story of Jesus’ declaration, “Your sins are forgiven you.” The Qumran text is the well-known *Prayer of Nabonidus* from Cave 4. It recounts the sojourn of the Neo-Babylonian king Nabonidus in the oasis of Teima in the Arabian desert, his miraculous cure from an illness inflicted on him like that of Nebuchadnezzar, the persecutor of the Jews, in Daniel 4 (especially vv. 22–25), and the prayer that Nabonidus eventually uttered after his cure. The crucial lines read:

2 [*bšhnʔ bʔyšʔ*]
 3 *ktyš hwyt šnyn šbʿ wmn [ʔnšʔ] šwy ʔ[*nh wšlyt lʔlhʔ ʿlyʔ*]*
 4 *whʔʔy šbq lh gzr whwʔ [gbr] yhwdy m[n bny glwtʔ wʔmr ly]. . .*

“[With the evil ulcer]

was I smitten (for) seven years, and unlike [a human being] was I made;

[and I prayed to the Most High God];

and an exorcist remitted my sins for Him; he (was) a Jew fr[om (among)

the deportees, and he said to me], . . . (4QPrNab 1–3:2–4).⁵³

These lines of the text have not always been understood as I have translated them above. J. T. Milik, who first published the text, and who has

⁵³See J. T. Milik, “‘Prière de Nabonide’ et autres écrits d’un cycle de Daniel: Fragments araméens de Qumrân 4,” *RB* 63 (1956) 407–15, esp. pp. 407–11. Milik’s translation of these lines: “[D]’une inflammation mauvaise, j’étais atteint (pendant) sept ans et loin [des hommes] je fus relégué. [Mais, quand j’eus confessé mes péchés] et mes fautes, (Dieu) m’accorda un devin; c’était un [homme] Juif d’[entre les exilés de] Babylonie.”

been followed by almost all others who have commented on it,⁵⁴ tampered with line 4, reading *lh* as if it were *ly* in the sense of a dative of advantage (or *dativus ethicus*), “and an exorcist remitted my sins for me.”⁵⁵ But the word is clearly *lh*, and, in my opinion, it refers to God or the Most High, “and an exorcist remitted my sins for Him.” If this interpretation be acceptable, it provides extrabiblical Palestinian attestation of a belief that a human being could be the instrument of God’s forgiveness of sin; that forgiveness could be mediated through a human agent.⁵⁶ It would also provide a background for the saying of the risen Jesus in the Johannine resurrection narrative, when he appears to the disciples, greets them with his peace, breathes on them, and says, “Receive the Holy Spirit; if you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven” (20:22). Again, the text illustrates the linking of the pardon for sin with a cure from illness.

Another aspect of the forgiveness of sin can be found in the *Targum of Job* from Qumran Cave 11. In the last column of the targum, which preserves a peculiar form of the ending of the Book of Job, the forgiveness of sin appears again, with the same two words employed, *šbq* and *hṭ*², as in 4QPrNab 1-3:3-4. The Hebrew of the part of Job 42:9 that concerns us reads:

wayyišša² Ywhw ʔet-pēnē ʔIyyōb,
 “And the Lord accepted Job’s prayer” (*RSV*; lit., “lifted up the face of Job”).

But 11Q^tgJob 38:2-3 reads rather:

wšm^c ʔ[ʔ]h² bqlh dy ʔYwb wšbq / lhwn hṭ²yhwn bdylh,
 And God hearkened to Job’s voice and forgave them [i.e., Job’s three friends] their sins on account of him.⁵⁷

⁵⁴For a list of commentators on this text, see *Manual of Palestinian Aramaic Texts*, 192-93 (§2).

⁵⁵See, e.g., A. Dupont-Sommer, *The Essene Writings from Qumran* (Oxford; Blackwell, 1961; reprinted, Magnolia, MA: P. Smith, 1979) 322: “and an exorcist forgave my sins.”— “. . . the word LH, ‘to him, for him’, which follows the verb *shebaq*, may simply be an expletive, a usage well known in Aramaic and Hebrew (*dativus ethicus*): if so, there is no point in correcting LH to LY, as Milik proposes. If, however, it still seems preferable to make this correction, the sentence then reads ‘an exorcist forgave me my sins’ (cf. Luke iv. 20 ‘Thy sins are forgiven thee’). In both cases the meaning remains the same.” But does it? It all depends on the person to whom the suffix refers.

⁵⁶One could also recall here 11QMelchizedek, in which Melchizedek becomes a heavenly figure (depicted among the ʔēlōhim), and an agent not only of “release” (*dērōr*) on the Day of Atonement, but also of the expiation of the iniquities of the people of his inheritance (lines 8-10). See A. S. van der Woude, “Melchisedek als himmlische Erlösergestalt in den neugefundenen eschatologischen Midraschim aus Qumran Höhle XI,” *OTS* 14 (1965) 354-73. Cf. my article, “Further Light on Melchizedek from Qumran Cave 11,” *JBL* 86 (1967) 25-41; reprinted in slightly revised form, *Essays on the Semitic Background of the New Testament* (London: Chapman, 1971) 245-67.

⁵⁷See J. P. M. van der Ploeg and A. S. van der Woude, *Le targum de Job*, 86. For a comparison of this Aramaic translation with the later *Targum of Job*, see *Wandering Aramean*, 169-71. Full bibliography on this text can be found in *Manual of Palestinian Aramaic Texts*, 195-97.

In this text there is no question of Job being an instrument or intermediary of God's pardon of human sin, as in 4QPrNab, but rather of Job's prayer being accounted as a reason why God would forgive the sins of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. The pardon clearly comes from God himself, but it is contingent upon the conduct and character of Job. The Aramaic text here resembles in part that of the LXX, which reads *kai elysen tēn hamartian autois dia Iōb*, "and he (God) remitted the(ir) sin for them because of Job."⁵⁸

(5) Another item of some importance has turned up in the fragmentary *Targum of Leviticus* from Qumran Cave 4. In this instance the item may be of more interest to students of the OT than of the NT. It is a precious fragment, because it preserves a translation of Lev 16:12–15, 18–21, an account of the ritual of *Yôm Kippûr*, and because of the translation that it gives of v 14 in particular. The Hebrew of the latter reads:

wēhizzāh bēʿeṣbāʿō ʿal pēnē hakkappōret qēdmāh,
and he shall sprinkle (it [i.e., the blood]) with his finger on the eastern front of the *kappōret*.

The targum renders this thus:

[*wydh bʿšbʿth ʿl ksyʿ*]
[and he shall sprinkle (it) with his finger o]n the *ksyʿ*.⁵⁹

The later targums have all translated Hebr. *kappōret* with some cognate form, *kāpūrtāʿ* or the like.⁶⁰ The debate over the centuries about the basic meaning of the root *kpr* is well known. But one has only to compare the entry in KB⁶¹ with that in *HALAT*⁶² to see how the debate has shifted ground. Whereas the former mentioned that the *Grundbedeutung* for Hebr. *kpr* was "to cover," the latter gives rather "überstreichen, abwischen, sühnen." The reasons for this shift in emphasis need not detain us now, being due to evidence in cognate Semitic languages; but just about the time that this shift was taking place, the evidence of the *Targum of Leviticus* revealed that at least some pre-Christian Palestinian Jews had understood the *kappōret* of Lev 16:14 to mean "covering" (*kēsāyāʿ*). This meaning is found in the first instance of the translation of *kappōret* in the LXX: *hilastērion epithema*, "an expiating cover" (Exod 25:17).⁶³ As I have pointed out elsewhere, the significance of this discovery lies not so much in the light that it sheds on any NT passage, since "covering" is scarcely going to be the meaning of *hilastērion* that one will

⁵⁸The last phrase *dia Iōb* is ambiguous in the LXX Greek. It could possibly also mean "through Job," and then it would express an idea similar to that in 4QPrNab 1–3:4. It should more likely be understood as the targum has understood it.

⁵⁹See J. T. Milik, *Qumrân Grotte 4, II* (n. 9 above), 86–89. Cf. my article, "The Targum of Leviticus from Qumran Cave 4," *Maarav* 1 (1978–79) 5–23.

⁶⁰*Tg. Onqelos* and *Tg. Ps.-Jonathan* use *kāpūrtāʿ*, but *Tg. Neofiti 1* uses *kprth*.

⁶¹*Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti libros* (Leiden: Brill, 1958) 452b.

⁶²3d ed.; Lieferung II (Leiden: Brill, 1974) 470.

⁶³See A. E. Brooke and N. MacLean, *The Old Testament in Greek: Volume I. The Octateuch* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1917), 236.

prefer in Rom 3:25 (where “a means of expiation” is more suited), but on the historic theological debates about the redemption or the so-called atonement. It reveals that originally *kappōret* never had the sense of a “means of propitiation,” i.e., appeasement of an angry God, a meaning that is related to the Latin Vulgate’s *propitiatorium*⁶⁴ and sometimes used in the Western theological tradition of later centuries. In Rom 4:7 Paul may quote Ps 32:1, “Blessed are those . . . whose sins are covered,” and we are all aware of the theological debate about the sort of covering that may be involved there; but that psalm passage has scarcely anything to do with the sense of Hebr. *kappōret* or Aram. *kēsāyā*⁷.

IV. Late Aramaic (A.D. 200—700 [or later])

The Late Phase of the Aramaic language puts us well beyond the period of the composition of biblical books, even those of the NT. The discoveries of the last twenty-five years pertaining to this phase of the language have been texts of synagogue or funerary inscriptions,⁶⁵ Samaritan Aramaic,⁶⁶ and, even more importantly, targumic literature. These years have seen a real upsurge of interest in the targums of the OT, and this part of Jewish literature is now being given the attention that it deserves. It was, in part, the discovery of *Tg. Neofiti I* about 1956⁶⁷ which sparked much of the interest in the targums. But one cannot forget the publications of A. Sperber during this time (1959–1973); his critical edition of the *Tgs. Onqelos, Jonathan* (of the Prophets) and other targums (of some of the Writings) also contributed to this interest.⁶⁸ Likewise, during these years we have seen the publication of a better edition of *Tg. Ps.-Jonathan* (of the Pentateuch) by D. Rieder.⁶⁹ But this study of targumic literature, though important in and for itself and in its relation to the text of the OT, raises problems about the pertinence of it to the study of the NT.

It raises problems, because we have also had access during these years to real pre-Christian targums from the Qumran caves. We have already mentioned the *Targum of Job* of Qumran Cave 11, and the *Targum of Leviticus* of Cave 4.⁷⁰ There is also a small fragmentary text of a *Targum of*

⁶⁴“The Targum of Leviticus,” 17.

⁶⁵See *Manual of Palestinian Aramaic Texts*, Appendix, 251–303.

⁶⁶See, e.g., Z. Ben-Hayyim, *The Literary and Oral Tradition of Hebrew and Aramaic amongst the Samaritans* (3 vols.; Jerusalem: Bialik Institute and Academy of the Hebrew Language, 1957, 1961); cf. J. C. Greenfield, *Bib* 45 (1964) 261–68. Cf. J. Macdonald, *Memar Marqah: The Teaching of Marqah Edited and Translated* (2 vols.; BZAW 84; Berlin: Töpelmann, 1963); J. Ramon Diaz, “Arameo samaritano,” *EstBib* 18 (1959) 171–82.

⁶⁷See n. 7 above.

⁶⁸*The Bible in Aramaic Based on Old Manuscripts and Printed Texts* (4 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 1959, 1959, 1962, 1968[A], 1973[B]).

⁶⁹*Pseudo-Jonathan: Targum Jonathan ben Uziel on the Pentateuch: Copied from [sic] the London Ms. (British [sic] Museum add. 27031)* Jerusalem: Privately published, 1974). See further R. Le Déaut and J. Robert, *Targum des Chroniques* (AnBib 51; 2 vols.; Rome: Biblical Institute, 1971); E. Levine, *The Aramaic Version of Ruth* (AnBib 58; Rome: Biblical Institute, 1973).

⁷⁰See nn. 9 and 10 above.

Job from Cave 4,⁷¹ which may have been part of another copy of the same targum as that found in Cave 11; but since there is no overlap, it is impossible to establish that it is part of the same targum.⁷² What is striking about these pre-classical targums from Qumran is that they contain a very literal translation of the Hebrew text. This is true not only of the pentateuchal targum found in 4QtgLev, but also of the two targums of *Job* (11QtgJob and 4QtgJob). This immediately raises a question about the claim sometimes made that the earlier targums were more paraphrastic and that a version like *Tg. Onqelos*, which is closer to the MT than some of the so-called Palestinian targums, reflects a later cleaning up of the targumic process to bring it more into line with the MT.⁷³

There are, moreover, two aspects of targumic study that have often been invoked to interpret certain NT phenomena. It is well known that in the classic, non-Qumran targums *mêmrâ*⁷⁴, “the Word,” is found as a sort of buffer to preserve the transcendence of Yahweh and to tone down certain anthropomorphisms of the OT itself. For instance, the non-Qumran *Targum of Job* renders *Job* 42:9, which we referred to above, thus: *wnsyb mymr⁷⁵ dYhwh yt⁷⁶ py⁷⁷ ywb*, “and the Word of the Lord accepted *Job*’s intercession” (lit., “lifted up the face of *Job*”),⁷⁴ instead of “and the Lord accepted *Job*’s prayer” (*RSV*). This targumic use of *mêmrâ*⁷⁵ has often been invoked to explain a Jewish background of *ho logos* in the Johannine prologue.⁷⁵ But striking, indeed, is the absence of such a usage in the targumic material from pre-Christian Palestinian targums such as we find in the Qumran material. The noun *m⁷⁶mr* does occur twice in 11QtgJob. In one instance it is suffixal in form and is preserved in a very fragmentary text, difficult to interpret. 11QtgJob 28:9 reads:

[] 'l m⁷⁷mrh m[], “[] at his order M[],” lit., “at his word.”⁷⁶

It is part of the translation of *Job* 36:32, which in Hebrew reads:

al kappayim kissâh-⁷⁸ôr wayêšaw⁷⁹ alêhâ bêmagîa⁸⁰

He covers his hands with the lightning and commands it to strike the mark (*RSV*).

⁷¹It was published by J. T. Milik in *Qumrân Grotte 4, II*, 90 (dated to mid-first century A.D.).

⁷²It contains a fragmentary translation of *Job* 3:5-9; 4:16-5:4, whereas col. 1 of 11QtgJob begins at 17:14.

⁷³M. McNamara (“Targums,” *IDBSup*, 860) speaks of “the paraphrastic nature of these [Palestinian] Targs.” and of “their presumed early date.”

⁷⁴See *Wandering Aramean*, 170. Cf. P. de Lagarde, *Hagiographa chaldaice* (Osnabrück: Zeller, 1967) 118.

⁷⁵See M. McNamara, *Targum and Testament: Aramaic Paraphrase of the Hebrew Bible: A Light on the New Testament* (Shannon: Irish University Press; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972) 102-3; A. Díez Macho, “El Logos y el Espíritu Santo,” *Atlántida* 1 (1963) 389-90.

⁷⁶See J. P. M. van der Ploeg and A. S. van der Woude, *Le targum de Job*, 66.

The editors of the Qumran targum think that $^{\text{c}}l m^{\text{c}}mrh$ might correspond to $^{\text{c}}al kappayim$.⁷⁷ However, the Aramaic is obviously not a literal translation of the difficult Hebrew at this point, and $^{\text{c}}l m^{\text{c}}mrh$ might just as easily be an attempt to translate the verb in the second part $wy\text{šw}$. Moreover, the Qumran targum has preserved a notorious anthropomorphism in Job 40:9, "Or do you have an arm like God, or do you thunder with a voice like his?" (11QtgJob 34:4–5). So avoidance of anthropomorphism is not a concern of this Qumran targum. The other instance of $m^{\text{c}}mr$ in 11QtgJob is better preserved, but it is not used of Yahweh at all. God addresses Job and asks, "Is it at your word that the eagle mounts up, and the black eagle makes its nest on high?" (33:8–9, translating Hebr. 39:27).⁷⁸ The upshot is that neither of these uses of $m^{\text{c}}mr$ in 11QtgJob is an example of the buffer-usage so abundantly attested in the targumic literature of the Late Phase of Aramaic. True, this may seem like an argument from silence, which could be disproved by the discovery of a new Palestinian targum from pre-Christian times with the buffer-use of $m\text{ê}mr\bar{a}^{\text{c}}$. But is it not strange that this use, which is so abundant in the later targums, is so far absent from the targumic material from pre-Christian times? Hence, if one wants to continue to invoke this usage as the background of the Johannine *logos*, the burden of proof lies on his/her shoulders to show that this usage was prior to or contemporary with the NT. Until that is shown, one should not invoke such material.⁷⁹

The same has to be said about the targumic use of the phrase $bar n\bar{a}\text{š}(\bar{a}^{\text{c}})$.⁸⁰ Here the matter is more complicated and is compounded by the very form of the phrase that is so common in the targums of the Late Phase. I shall not repeat here all the arguments that I have set forth to undermine the contention of G. Vermes that "the evidence" of these targums is "applicable to the New Testament."⁸¹ The arguments are technical and unsuited to this forum, but they have been spelled out in a recent issue of the new *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* from the University of Sheffield in England.⁸² From the study of the various phases of Aramaic in which $bar^{\text{c}}\text{ē}n\bar{a}\text{š}(\bar{a}^{\text{c}})$ occurs (in this form it is found in Old and Middle Aramaic, and never in the apocoptated form $barn\bar{a}\text{š}[\bar{a}^{\text{c}}]$, characteristic of the Late Phase), it has only a generic meaning ("son of man," "human being") and an indefinite meaning ("someone, any one" [or, if negative, "no one"]). It is never found prior to the Late Phase in the paraphrastic usage, i.e., as a substitute for a personal pronoun (e.g., "I," "me"), even though a number of NT parallels in the Synoptic Gospels would seem to indicate its use in the time of Jesus.⁸³

⁷⁷Ibid.

⁷⁸Ibid., 76.

⁷⁹See further *Wandering Aramean*, 94–95.

⁸⁰See further "The New Testament Title 'Son of Man' Philologically Considered," *Wandering Aramean*, 143–60.

⁸¹See G. Vermes, "The 'Son of Man' Debate," *JSNT* 1 (1978) 19–32, esp. p. 20.

⁸²"Another View of the 'Son of Man' Debate," *JSNT* 4 (1979) 56–68.

⁸³Ibid., 58–59.

Moreover, in none of the phases of the Aramaic language has one been able to show that *bar ʿēnāš* was ever used in a titular sense, for some “apocalyptic” Son of Man. The evidence that we have at present from the abundance of Aramaic material that has come to light in the last twenty-five years supports the contention of R. Leivestad that the apocalyptic Son of Man must exit from the stage of NT study.⁸⁴

The last two points that I have made have been negative, but they too are part of the evidence that the Aramaic materials that I have been trying to survey brings to our attention. The bearing of these Aramaic materials on the study of the NT is diverse, and it is not easy to assess them. Some of them have meant the shattering of certain idols of the past, but that is always the price of progress in any discipline.

I am, finally, not unaware of a certain danger in all such study. There is always the temptation to read this material with a euphoria that borders on pan-Aramaism. But, as I have tried to emphasize elsewhere, the study of the Aramaic substratum of the NT must also keep an eye on the progress of the study of the Hellenistic background of the NT and must, above all, resist the tendency to think that simply because some idea or saying is shown to have a genuine Aramaic substratum, it can confidently be attributed to the historical Jesus.⁸⁵ Due respect has always to be paid to the source criticism of the NT Gospels and Acts, their form criticism, and their redaction and/or composition criticism.

⁸⁴“Exit the Apocalyptic Son of Man,” *NTS* 18 (1971-72) 243-67. The attempt of B. Lindars, (“Re-enter the Apocalyptic Son of Man,” *NTS* 22 [1975-76] 52-72) to bring back the figure, though it contains many good observations, is too much tied to Vermes’ interpretation of material and is too cavalier with the philological data.

⁸⁵See further *Wandering Aramean*, 4-5.