THE PRINTED EDITIONS OF THE SONG OF SONGS IN THE PESHİT TA VERSION

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Regret at the state of the printed editions of the Peshîta Old Testament has been expressed by a number of scholars, though the text of some books has been regarded as more satisfactory than that of others. The scholars who made the most valuable contributions to the study of the subject at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth were W. E. BARNES ¹) and G. DIETTRICH ²), since their comments were based on a comparison of the printed texts with Syriac manuscripts. More recently, I have myself been able to discuss the editions of the Wisdom of Solomon ³) in the light of the manuscript tradition, and B. ALBREKTSON has further advanced our knowledge by his work on the text of Lamentations ⁴).

An article that deserves to be mentioned in an examination of the different editions is one by Joshua BLOCH entitled “The printed texts of the Peshîta Old Testament”, ⁵) which is valuable chiefly because it contains abundant references to the relevant literature and collects the opinions of various scholars. Indeed, it reproduces the conclusions of others so exactly that quotation marks might properly have been used in it more freely ⁶). Another summary of the results of the

²) Ein Apparatus criticus zur Pešitto zum Propheten Jesaia (Beihefte zur Z.A.W. viii) (Giissenc, 1905).
⁵) American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures xxxvii (1920-21), pp. 136-44.
⁶) For example, the beginning of the second paragraph on p. 143 repeats verbatim, or with very small changes, what had been said by BARNES in Expos. Times ix, p. 562. The way in which such reproduction of what other scholars have
work of different scholars on the printed editions is given by L. HAE-FELI 1).

The purpose of the present paper is to examine the printed editions of the Song of Songs in their relation to one another and in the light of a study of the available Syriac manuscripts. It is unnecessary here to recapitulate in detail the general conclusions reached by others, though the results of their studies will be mentioned where relevant. This is not the first time that the editions of Canticles have been discussed, for they were considered in an article on “Die Bedeutung der Peschitto für die Textkritik des Hohenliedes” by S. EURINGER 2) published at the beginning of the twentieth century. EURINGER compared the editions with one another and made some valuable comments on them. He was able to make a very limited use of the manuscript tradition, since he had access to A. M. CERIANI’S reproduction 3) of a seventh century manuscript (B 21 Inf.) in the Ambrosian Library in Milan; in addition, he had both studied the collations in the sixth volume of the London Polyglot of the seventeenth century manuscripts Bodl. Or. 141 (Usserianus) and Poc. 391 and seen the manuscripts themselves at the Bodleian Library in Oxford. However, he recognized that the two Oxford manuscripts are of little value, and so the only authority apart from Bar Hebraeus that he could take seriously was the Ambrosian codex. Another article

written, without quotation marks and without due acknowledgement, can mislead is well illustrated by the fact that B. J. ROBERTS, *The Old Testament Text and Versions* (Cardiff, 1951), p. 216, quotes some words from p. 141 of BLOCH’S article as BLOCH’S opinion of the Mosul edition; in fact, the words are virtually a translation of what EURINGER says on p. 122 of the article referred to below. For another example of the way in which BLOCH tends to adhere closely to the wording of his sources, see my remarks in the *Journal of Semitic Studies* vii (1962), p. 204.

1) *Die Peschitta des Alten Testamentes (Alttestamentliche Abhandlungen xi. 1)* (Münster, 1927), pp. 61 ff.

2) O. BARDENHEWER (ed.), *Biblische Studien*, vol. vi (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1901), Erstes und zweites Heft: “Vom Münchener Gelehrten-Kongresse. Biblische Vorträge”, pp. 115-28. No attempt to examine the manuscript tradition was made by J. M. SALKIND, *Die Peschitta zu Schir-Haschirim textkritisch und in ihrem Verhältnisse zu MT. und LXX untersucht* (Leiden, 1905), who used only the London Polyglot and Lee’s edition, and even treated a misprint first found in the Paris Polyglot in 188 as if it testified to a Hebrew reading different from that of the Massoretic Text. I have not had access to the article by E. FUCHS in *Magasin für jüdische Geschichte und Literatur* ii (1875), to which Drs. W. BAARS has kindly drawn my attention.

3) *Translatio Syra Pesitito Veteris Testamenti ex Codice Ambrosiano Sec. Fere VI photolithographice edita* (Milan, 1876-83).