

A First Century Peshitta Manuscript, Dated and Signed!

William Cureton (1808 – 17 June 1864) was an English [Orientalist](#), born in [Westbury, Shropshire](#). After being [educated](#) at the [Adams' Grammar School](#) in [Newport, Shropshire](#) and at [Christ Church, Oxford](#), he took orders in 1832, became chaplain of Christ Church, sublibrarian of the [Bodleian](#), and, in 1837, assistant keeper of manuscripts in the [British Museum](#). Cureton became best known for his discovery of an old Syriac (Aramaic) manuscript of the four Gospels named after him- the Curetonian manuscript. In 1845, he wrote the following:

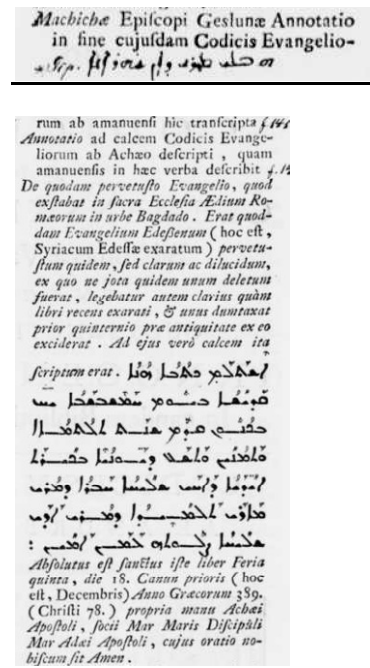
Translations were certainly made from the Greek into Syriac at a very early period. There seems to be no good ground for questioning the tradition universally received among all those churches which make use of it, that the Peshito version of the Scriptures was made in Apostolic times*. And it appears a very reasonable

* In a Syriac MS. in the Vatican there is a note, relative to a copy of one of the Gospels formerly belonging to a church at Bagdad, said to have been written at Edessa by Achaëus, a friend of one of the disciples of Adæus, the Apostle of Edessa, who also is said to have been the author of the Peshito version. See J. S. Assemani Bibliotheca Orientalis, Vol. ii. p. 486.

These comments piqued my curiosity, especially the second one in the footnote. I did a little research and found the source he named by J. S. Assemani- Bibliotheca Orientalis, Vol. II, p. 486. There are online editions of the books available, however the text is written mostly in Latin and has some Syriac Aramaic as well. Syriac is no problem for me to read and translate; Latin is another matter, so I found a good Latin translation web site and managed, I think, to translate the Latin text involved.

The following is a digital photo of the text, with my translation:

Assemani Bibliotheca Orientalis Vol. II, p. 486



Here is the translation of the Latin which precedes and introduces the Syriac annotation:

Machichæ Bishop of Geslunæ note in the end of a certain Gospel book by an amanuensis copied note at the end of Gospel(s) of recorded writings which the amanuensis in these words copied from a certain very ancient Gospel which would come out from the Holy Roman Church Household. In the city of Baghdad was a certain Gospel of Edessa (this is the Syriac Edessa indeed), but it is in fact clear and distinct, from which place not even an iota (I)-indeed a single thing deleted was destroyed, but clearly which as one recent book was very

anciently noted moreso than earlier predecessors quinternios (five books) which proceed before antiquity; therefore the same had been cut out up unto the same truth. Certainly it passes the goal line. Thus it is written *–(Please excuse the translation errors, all you Latin experts):*

My translation of the Syriac subscription: **“This holy book was finished Thursday, December 18th, in the year 389 of the Greeks (AD 78), in the handwriting of the hand of Akhay, fellow Apostle of Mari (Mar) Maray, the Disciple of Mari (Mar) Addai the Apostle. His prayer be with us. Amen.”**

Giuseppe Simone Assemani, whose work is referenced above *Yusuf ibn Siman as-Simani*, English: Joseph Simon Assemani, [Latin: Ioseph Simonius Assemanus](#), 1687–1768, was a [Lebanese Maronite orientalist](#).

Giuseppe Simone Assemani was born on 27 August 1687 in [Hasroun, Mount Lebanon](#).^[1] When very young he was sent to the [Maronite College](#) in [Rome](#), and was transferred thence to the [Vatican library](#). He was [ordained priest](#) on 21 September 1710.^[2] In 1717 he was sent to Egypt and Syria to search for valuable manuscripts, and returned with about 150 very choice ones. In 1735 [Pope Clement XII](#) sent him again to the East where he presided over the [1736 Maronite Synod of Mount-Lebanon](#), which laid the foundations for the modern [Maronite Church](#). He returned with a still more valuable collection. He later played a significant role in mediating several crises in the Maronite Church hierarchy by virtue of his influence in Rome and his knowledge of the Maronite Church.

On his return he was made, in 1739, First Librarian of the [Vatican library](#). As reward of his activity he was consecrated [titular archbishop](#) of [Tyre](#) on 7 December 1766.^[1] by Prince Henry Cardinal Stuart, Duke of York. He died in Rome on 13 January 1768.

When appointed librarian of the Vatican library he instantly began to carry into execution most extensive plans for editing and publishing the most valuable manuscript treasures of the Vatican. His main work is:

- *Bibliotheca Orientalis Clementino-Vaticana in qua manuscriptos codices Syriacos, Arabicos, Persicos, Turcicos, Hebraicos, Samaritanos, Armenicos, Aethiopicos, Graecos, Aegyptiacos, Ibericos, et Malabaricos, jussu et munificentia Clementis XI Pontificis Maximi ex Oriente conquisitos, comparatos, et Bibliothecae Vaticanae addictos Recensuit, digessit, et genuina scripta a spuriiis secrevit, addita singulorum auctorum vita, Joseph Simonius Assemanus, Syrus Maronita* (Rome, 1719–1728), 9 vols folio

*The Bible of the Maronite church is- **The Peshitta**.*

His description of the Gospels manuscript referenced above is doubtless a Peshitta manuscript, whose original exemplar was dated AD 78. The Maronite Church would have used nothing but a Peshitta manuscript for its church liturgy, readings and homilies in the 18th century and prior.

There is a lot of controversy about which New Testament manuscripts are the closest to the original manuscripts, but there is no known manuscript with an actual date on it which assures it was actually written in the first century, except this one of the Gospels which is noticed, cited and translated by Giuseppe Assemani in 1728.

The specificity of the citation is compelling, inspiring the trust of the reader that the scribe who wrote it was testifying to the day, month and year of the writing of the manuscript –(AD 78 in a traditional 1st century date method using 311 BC as a starting point).He also named the copyist as “Akhay, fellow Apostle Mar Maray, the disciple of Addai, who was the Apostle”(of Jesus)!

But I am not surprised. I have seen many other evidences that the Peshitta was not only written in the 1st century, but that it is the original God written New Testament. They will be forthcoming. For now, I can say that the very best evidence I know is the Peshitta itself. If you read it and compare it to other New Testaments, either the Aramaic text itself, or a good translation of it, you will see and hear the divinity of its words, if you read it with your heart and mind in The Spirit by whom it was written. I will go even a step further and say, if you read the Peshitta in The Spirit by whom it was written, you will hear, not only the words, but the very voice of God.