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THE JOHANNINE PROLOGUE AS ARAMAIC VERSE

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In his *Aramaic Origin of the Fourth Gospel* (pp. 40f.) Burney gives us an Aramaic translation of John 11-18 in the form of "a hymn, written in eleven parallel couplets, with comments introduced here and there by the writer." The couplets, he adds (p. 43), "besides being parallel, appear also to be rhythmical, each line containing three stresses." Prof. Torrey¹ has pronounced this unconvincing. The question of the original literary form of the Prologue is therefore open for further investigation. (a) The chapter may, of course, have been originally composed in the form in which we now have it. The Greek text represents a type of composition—prose verging upon poetry, rhythmical but not metrical—which is sufficiently familiar to the student of Biblical literature. (b) If, on the other hand, our present text is a translation, the Aramaic original may have had the same literary form which we find in the Greek—poetry, in a sense, but not verse. (c) That the original composition was, as Burney maintains, written in regular metre with a given number of stresses in each line, as in Hebrew poetry, is nevertheless entirely possible. (d) There is even a fourth possibility: the Aramaic poem may have been composed in syllabic metre of the type familiar in Syriac poetry, the lines being measured by syllables rather than stresses. Any one of these four possibilities may be taken as a working hypothesis and scientifically

¹ The Aramaic Origin of the Gospel of John; *Harvard Theol. Review*, vol. XVI, No. 4, pp. 805-844; see especially p. 826.

tested. Either the first or the second is certainly true if neither the third nor the fourth proves tenable. The last will seem to most students the least probable; therefore in the order of testing the last shall be first.

At the outset we encounter an *a priori* objection to this hypothesis. It is commonly supposed that syllabic verse was developed in later times than those with which we are here concerned. A perfect example of it, however, has been found by Prof. Torrey in an Aramaic inscription of the 5th century B. C. When this discovery is published it will be seen that the syllabic metre of the Syriac poets was not a late development, but rather the continuance of an ancient Aramaic usage. To suppose that the Prologue to the Fourth Gospel may have been written in syllabic metre is not, therefore, mere idle fancy. As a matter of fact many of Burney's lines make perfect syllabic verse, although he seems to have had no such result in mind; it was this fact, indeed, that suggested the hypothesis.

If our passage, literally translated, falls naturally into syllabic metre, we can hardly doubt that this was its original form. Such a conclusive demonstration, however, is hardly to be expected. We cannot hope to recover the exact words of the original writer throughout. We do not even know with certainty and in detail what dialect was spoken by the early Palestinian Christians. Burney, following Dalman, uses the later Judæan dialect "as far as possible;"² there are good reasons, however, for believing that the Aramaic spoken in Judæa in the first century of our era was more like that which appears in the Aramaic portions of the OT. As Prof. Torrey argues, the Aramaic of the Nabataean and Palmyrene inscriptions of this period is more like that of Daniel and Ezra than that of the Targums; and changes in the language of the Jews, as in all their life and thought, would naturally be more rapid after the fall of Jerusalem than before it.³ In view of these considerations, any translation we may make can only approximately represent

² *Op. cit.*, p. 40.

³ I have simply summarized Prof. Torrey's arguments as I understand them. He has not fully expressed his views on this subject in print.

the original composition, and if our retranslation of a translation is not metrically perfect, this will not prove that the original composition was not metrical.

As a basis for testing our hypothesis Burney's translation is not entirely satisfactory. Aside from the question of dialect, many of the words and expressions which Burney has used are not, it seems to me, those which would most probably have produced our Greek text. Unfortunately we cannot always accept any one rendering as being clearly the most literal and natural version of Greek; it is often possible to translate with equal plausibility in two or more ways. For these reasons I shall consider each verse separately instead of offering another translation of the whole passage.

V. 1 a makes a line of seven syllables: **בְּקֹדֶם אִתִּי הָיָה מֵאִמְרָא**. This differs from Burney's rendering mainly in the insertion of **אִתִּי**. Prof. Montgomery⁴ calls attention to the repetition of the verb "to be" in these opening verses as indicating the use of **אִתִּי**. For the most part it seems more probable that the Greek verb represents the Aramaic pronoun, idiomatically used instead of the copula,⁵ or has been supplied where the copula was not expressed in the Aramaic. Here, however, **הָיָה** is not a mere copula but affirms the *existence* of the Word.

V. 1 b is a perfectly regular line of seven syllables in Burney's version: **וּמֵאִמְרָא הוּא לֹת אֱלֹהָא**. Except in orthography this is good Biblical as well as Judæan Aramaic.

V. 1 c as rendered by Burney has only six syllables: **וְאֱלֹהָא הוּא מֵאִמְרָא**. It may be rendered idiomatically in seven syllables: **וּמֵאִמְרָא הוּא אֱלֹהָא הוּא**.

V. 2 has seven syllables: **הוּא הָיָה בְּקֹדֶם לֹת אֱלֹהָא**.

V. 3 a also makes seven syllables: **כֹּל מִנְרַעִים בִּידָהּ הָיָה**. Here and in 7 b and 10 b Burney renders **ὅτι αὐτοῦ** by **בָּה**. In the verse now before us this is not impossible,⁶ and in 10 b it is rather attractive; but in 7 b, where Burney thinks there is a mistranslation, **בָּה** seems to me quite out of the question (*v. i.*

⁴ *The Origin of the Gospel According to St. John*, p. 19.

⁵ Montgomery, *op. cit.*, pp. 18f., on **ܥܘܢ ܥܘܢ** etc.; also Burney, p. 33, on v. 9.

⁶ Cf. the Curetonian Syriac; the Peshitta uses **ܒܗܝܐ**.

on 7 b and 10 b; also on $\epsilon\nu \alpha\upsilon\tau\hat{\omega}$ in 4 a). בד in this sense does not occur in Biblical Aramaic but is common in both Hebrew and Syriac and appears at least twice in the Targums (Num. 33 1; 2 Ch. 33 10). Instead of הוה Burney uses אתעבד for $\epsilon\gamma\acute{\epsilon}\nu\epsilon\tau\omicron$, not only here but in 3 b, 10 b, and 14 a also. This is used in Biblical Aramaic several times,⁷ but the Greek versions do not render it $\epsilon\gamma\acute{\epsilon}\nu\epsilon\tau\omicron$, which means "came into being" rather than "was made." Both Syriac versions⁸ here read לס . In 6 a, where אתעבד would be manifestly inappropriate, Burney uses הוה ; he also uses הוה for $\gamma\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\omicron\upsilon\epsilon\nu$ in 4 a.

V. 3 b has eight syllables in Burney's version: $\text{ובר מניה לא אתעבד כלום}$. Reading הוה in the place of אתעבד reduces the syllables to seven. One thing is clear: we cannot include $\delta \gamma\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\omicron\upsilon\epsilon\nu$ in this line and keep within metrical limits.

V. 4 a as translated by Burney has only five syllables: הוהוה ביה חיי . This rendering is based upon the theory that $\delta \gamma\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\omicron\upsilon\epsilon\nu$ is a mistranslation, the real meaning of the Aramaic being, "Because in him was light."⁹ In that case the verb was supplied by the Greek translator; otherwise there must have been another הוה at the end of the line (probably the pronoun rather than the verb—cp. the Curetonian Syriac).¹⁰ But if Burney is right, the sentence means, "Because in him *there was* light;" hence (if our version of 1 a is acceptable) we may read: $\text{די אחזי הוה ביה חיי}$. Or, interpreting the verse as it was often interpreted in the early church, we may read: $\text{די הוה בה איתי חיי}$, "that which came into existence in him was light." In this line בה represents $\epsilon\nu \alpha\upsilon\tau\hat{\omega}$. But if the Greek rendered בה by $\delta\iota \alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\upsilon$ in v. 3, why do we have $\epsilon\nu \alpha\upsilon\tau\hat{\omega}$ here? Only a desire to bring out two different meanings could explain the change, but why should the translator think that the meaning was different? That the original of $\delta\iota \alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\upsilon$ was בה in any of the verses where the phrase occurs seems less likely the more we consider it (v. i. on v. 7 c).

⁷ In the expression, "your houses shall be made a dunghill," Dn. 25; 32; Ezr. 6 11.

⁸ I. e. the Peschitta and the Curetonian. This passage is missing in the Sinaitic Syriac, and I have not had access to other Syriac versions.

⁹ Burney, p. 29.

¹⁰ Burney adds הוהוה as a parenthesis on p. 20 but omits it on p. 40.

V. 4 b in Burney's version, like 3 b, begins with an unaccented syllable and contains eight syllables: **חַדְיִן נִהְוֵרָא דְבְנֵי אַנְשָׁא**. Using the older form of the relative pronoun does not affect the metre here. Burney evidently assumes that the verb was supplied by the Greek translator, which is not at all unlikely (*v. s.* on 4 a). We may retain the verb, however, and translate in seven syllables: **חַדְיִן הוּ נִהְוֵר בְּנֵי אַנְשָׁא**.

V. 5 a falls naturally into seven syllables: **וְנִהְוֵרָא בְּקִבְלָא מְנַהָר**. The word used for "darkness" does not occur in Biblical Aramaic, but **חֲשׂוּכָא** (which would make the line too long) appears only once, and while Prof. Torrey¹¹ is surely right in rejecting Burney's theory of mistranslation in 5 b (*v. i.*), the word-play in **קִבְלָא** and **קָבַל** is attractive.

V. 5 b has only six syllables in Burney's translation, but by keeping more closely to the word-order of the Greek we get a perfect seven-syllable line: **וְקִבְלָא יִתְה לָא מְקַבֵּל**. Burney has been led astray by Ball's theory¹² that *κατέλαβεν* is a mistranslation. R. Harris¹³ thinks *κατέλαβεν* corresponds to the *ἀντισχύει* of Wis. Sol. 7 30 ("Night indeed follows on created Light, But no evil overpowers Wisdom"). Both of these views destroy the parallel between this line and 10 a, 11 b, and 12 a. As I see it, v. 5 is, so to speak, the topic-sentence of a paragraph, and the three verbs, *κατέλαβεν*, *παρέλαβον* and *ἔλαβον*, all represent the Aramaic **קָבַל** (*v. i.* on 11 b and 12 a).¹⁴ Whether the Greek would have used the aorist to translate the participle may be questioned, but if the participle was used in the preceding line (*φαίνει*) it would most naturally be followed by a participle here. It may be also that the translator was thinking of a definite event, the Incarnation, while the original poem referred to the continual or repeated coming of the Logos into the world and his repeated rejection by men (*cp. vv. 10 f.*).¹⁵

¹¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 329.

¹² Burney, pp. 29 f.

¹³ *The Origin of the Prologue to St. John's Gospel*, p. 31.

¹⁴ In 5b both Syriac versions read **קָבַל**, which is not used in this sense in Western Aramaic. In 10 b both use **קָבַל** for *ἔλαβον*.

¹⁵ Also *cp. especially* Wis. Sol. 7 30 f.; Sir. 24 7; Enoch 42 1 f.; and *cf.* R. Harris, *op. cit.*, pp. 32, 39; Rudolf Bultmann: *Der Religionsgeschichte-*

Vv. 6-8 have been regarded by many commentators as interpolated. Certainly v. 9 follows v. 6 very naturally, though it also follows v. 8 naturally. Burney renders 6-10 a as prose; his translation of 6 a, however, contains eight syllables, which become seven when we replace the determined form of the noun (impossible here) by the absolute: **הָיָה נֶבֶר מִשְׁדֵּר מִן אֱלֹהִים**.

If ever a prosaic gloss was imposed upon a bit of poetry, the next words look like one: "His name was John." Taken with 7 a, however, they make a line of eight syllables: **שְׁמֵהּ יִהְיֶה הוּא אֶתְּמָא לְסִדְהוּ הוּא**. This differs from Burney's prose only in the use of **הוּא** instead of **הָרִיץ** (Burney uses **הוּא** for *σῦδος* in v. 2). The line can hardly be reduced to seven syllables.

Burney's version of 7 b has only five syllables: **דִּי־סִדְהוּ עַל בְּהוּרָא**. By using the proleptic suffix with the preposition (as sometimes in Biblical Aramaic) we get seven syllables: **דִּי יִסְדֵּהּ עַלְהֵי בְהוּרָא**.

In 7 c Burney has six syllables: **דִּיהִמְנֵן בִּיה כְּלִי**. This, however, involves the use of **כְּלִי** for *δι' αὐτοῦ* (v. s. on 3 a and 4 a). Burney (p. 32) maintains that the original meant, "That all might believe in it" (the light). He refers "for the sense postulated" to 12 36, but the Greek there reads *εἰς αὐτόν*. Cp. also *τοῖς πιστεύουσιν εἰς τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ* in v. 12, in connection with which Burney (p. 34) cites the 37 passages in John and the 9 other passages in the NT where *πιστεύειν εἰς* appears. A year ago in my paper on the "Origin of the Term 'Gospel'"¹⁶ I pointed out that the unique *πιστεύειν ἐν* of Mk. 1 15 reflects the same Semitic use of the preposition **בְּ** with the verb **הִימֵן** (Heb. **הִאֲמִין**). I cannot believe that a translator who wrote *πιστεύειν εἰς* 37 times would here write *πιστεύσωσιν δι' αὐτοῦ* if he had the same Aramaic expression before him. If further proof be required that *πιστεύειν εἰς* does not stand for the same

liche Hintergrund des Prologs zum Johannes-Evangelium (EYKAPLETHFION, *Festschrift für Hermann Gunkel*, 2. Teil), pp. 4 ff. Whether we hold that the evangelist has used a pre-Christian source or not, it seems clear that vv. 1-13 refer to the pre-existent Logos, the Incarnation of Christ being first introduced by v. 14, though the present Greek text seems to have it in mind from v. 11 on.

¹⁶ JBL, vol. XLV, pp. 21 ff.; v. p. 26 for the point under discussion.

Aramaic as πιστεύειν διὰ, we may point to 17 20, τῶν πιστευόντων διὰ τοῦ λόγου αὐτῶν εἰς ἐμέ. Surely the supposed mistranslation in this instance is imaginary. Burney's כָּלִי also is impossible. We may read דִּי כָּל אַנְשׁ יְהִימֵן בִּידָה (seven syllables) or דִּי יְהִימֵן כְּלָא בִידָה, which would naturally be rendered by the Greek of the text.

Thus the metre in vv. 6 f., if not entirely satisfactory, does not differ sufficiently from what has gone before to warrant us in regarding these verses as interpolated. If they were a part of the poem from the first, we may remark in passing, it was neither pre-Christian nor the work of a non-Christian follower of John the Baptist,¹⁷ but distinctly a Christian composition. If vv. 6 f. are secondary, the interpolator has cleverly fitted his contribution into the metrical mould of the original poem.

Of v. 8 this cannot be said. As Burney renders 8 a it has only five syllables: לָא הוּא הוּא נְהוּרָא. In 8 b Burney has eight syllables: אֵילָהֵן דִּיסְהִיד עַל נְהוּרָא. Using the Biblical conjunction לְהֵן reduces the syllables to seven; דִּי for דְּ makes eight again. In no way can the line be combined with 8 a so as to make a satisfactory syllabic couplet. Burney (p. 32) explains the apparent lack of a verb upon which the *iva*-clause may depend by postulating that דְּ means here "one who" instead of "in order that," the meaning of the whole verse being, "That one was not the light, but one who was to bear witness of the light." This would be entirely plausible had not the same words been used in the preceding verse, where דְּ clearly introduces a purpose-clause. In view of this fact the customary interpretation of the verse as involving an ellipse seems more probable.¹⁸

V. 9 a, as rendered by Burney, has only five syllables הוּא וּמְבֹרָא לְכָל אַנְשׁ אַתָּא. V. 9 b has eight syllables: וּמְבֹרָא לְכָל אַנְשׁ אַתָּא בְּעֵלְמָא (for the participle as the original of the Greek present tense cp. v. 5 a and cf. Burney *in loc.*). Using דִּי instead of דְּ makes a total of fifteen syllables with alternating accents, but I see no way to make a satisfactory couplet of the verse.

Burney regards not only 6-9 but also 10 a as prose. Combining 10 a and 10 b, however, we have a line of eight syllables:

¹⁷ Cf. Bultmann, *op. cit.*

¹⁸ Cf. the parallels cited by Burney, p. 32 n.

הה בעלמא הה ועלמא בדה הה. Reading בה instead of בדה, with Burney, we should have a seven-syllable line with a rather attractive paradox: הה בעלמא הה ועלמא בה הה. We should then have to suppose that the Greek translator, unable to reproduce the double meaning of בה, chose the rendering $\delta\epsilon'$ $\alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ as giving the meaning intended by the poet. But this verse clearly echoes v. 3; therefore, if $\delta\epsilon'$ $\alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ does not represent בה in 3 a and 7 c (cp. 17 b), it probably does not here.

V. 10 c has only five syllables in Burney's version but by following the Greek word-order we obtain a line of seven syllables: ועלמא יתה לא דע. This corresponds exactly to 5 b in form as in meaning. In both cases I have used a participle for the Greek aorist. The perfect, which would not affect the metre in 5 a, would make this line too short. A translator using an unpointed text, however, and unmindful of the metre, might take דע for the perfect.

V. 11 a also, while rendered in four syllables by Burney, makes seven syllables without undue stretching: לוח אלן דילה אתא. Again I use a participle for the aorist, but again the unpointed text might be read either as participle or perfect. As in 5 b, the original poet probably referred to the work of the Logos under the Old Dispensation, while the Greek translator, having in mind the coming of Jesus, would naturally read דע and אתא as perfects.

V. 11 b, like 10 c, can be rendered as a seven-syllable line corresponding exactly to 5 b: חילה יתה לא מקבלן. Here the perfect is metrically impossible and there is no possibility of mistaking the participle for the perfect. If the participle is to be read, the aorist of the Greek can be explained only (as above) by the supposition that the Aramaic and Greek writers had different meanings in mind: in this instance the Greek text apparently refers to the rejection of Jesus by the Jews; the Aramaic constitutes in effect a denial of Sirach's claim that Wisdom of old found a dwelling in Israel. Incidentally, there seems to be no way to reproduce in Aramaic the difference between the neuter and the masculine of "his own," of which commentators on the Greek text have made so much.

V. 12, with variations from Burney's Aramaic like those found

necessary in the preceding verses, makes two regular couplets of seven-syllable lines:

תִּבְּ הוּוּ לְהֵן שׁוֹלֻמְנָא
 לְאַלְן דִּי מוֹדִימְנִין בְּשִׁמְהָ

 כְּלָהֵן דִּי מִקְבְּלִין יְתָה
 לְמַהּוּא בְּנוֹהֵי דִי אֱלֹהָא

The use of the relative particle after the proleptic suffix, however, is Syriac rather than Western Aramaic. Its omission leaves only six syllables in the third line.

Bultmann¹⁹ deletes 12 d as an addition by which the evangelist Christianized his source, the meaning of the original verse having been more like Wis. Sol. 7 27 f.; Sir. 1 6, 10, 15. But if our translation even approximately represents the original text, 12 d is needed to complete the second couplet.

V. 13, as literally translated by Burney, does not fit into the metrical scheme at all. The second and third lines will have seven syllables each if instead of the construct relationship we use the longer idiom so characteristic of Aramaic: **וְלֹא מִן צְבוֹתָא** **וְלֹא מִן צְבוֹתָא דִּי נְבִרָא**. The fourth line also will have seven syllables if we use an older form of the conjunction: **לְהֵן מִן אֱלֹהָא אֲתִילִיד**. Of course **אֲתִילִיד** is singular,²⁰ while *ἐγεννηθησαν* is plural. Burney (pp. 34 f.) explains the plural verb of the Greek text as due to the conjunction with which the following verse begins, the *ἰ* having been attached to the verb as a plural ending by dittography. He also contends that here (as in 4 a) the Greek translator has mistaken the meaning of **ἦ**. The verse thus becomes, not a description of believers, but an explanation of Christ's power to give those who receive him power to become sons of God, "Because he was born, not of blood, . . . but of God." In spite of the weighty authority of Prof. Torrey, who regards this interpretation as "quite certain,"²¹ I must confess that it does not appeal to me. The sequence of thought in the Greek does not necessarily imply, as Burney holds, that the spiritual birth of believers is an antecedent con-

¹⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 11.

²⁰ The **ܘܠܗܝܢ** of the Curetonian Syriac may be either singular or plural, since the plural ending is silent in Syriac and consequently dropped in writing not infrequently. Is the "natus est" of the Latin Ms. "o" due to the influence of a Syriac text in which this has happened?

²¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 328.

dition of the grace given them. The perfect plural of the verb is metrically impossible, but the Pe'il participle ילדין would be quite in place. As for the first member of the verse, even if we follow the Greek to the extent of using the plural of the word "blood,"²² we have only five syllables: די לא מן דמא; but the use of ילדין both here and at the end of the verse would fill out the line, and since such a repetition would be better in Aramaic than in Greek from the stylistic standpoint, the translator might use the verb only once.

V. 14 a b in Burney's version is a couplet with seven syllables in each line: ומסרא בסרא איתעביד ואשרי שכנתיה ביננא. Unfortunately neither of these lines is free from objection. Instead of בסרא we should read the absolute בִּסְרָא. Even more than in vv. 3 f. אתעביד is unsuitable as a rendering of ἐγένετο (the Word was not *made* flesh but *became* flesh). In the second line, whether or not we see here a reference to the Shekinah,²³ it is unlikely that the Greek would have used the simple verb ἐλάσσωσεν for the verb and noun of Burney's Aramaic. A straightforward, literal translation of the line would have only four syllables: ושכן בנא. Combining the two clauses we have nine syllables: ומסרא בסרא הזה ושכן בנא. The omission of the conjunction at the beginning (common in the Jewish Aramaic of the period) would leave eight syllables.

V. 14 c, with but a slight change in Burney's version, yields seven syllables: וחזינא יקרא דילה.

V. 14 d as given by Burney has eight syllables: יקרא כחזינא מן אבא. We may render it, however, in seven: יקרא כמה לחזי מן אב.

V. 14 e has only five syllables and has no second line to make a couplet with it: מלי חנא וקושמא.

V. 15 is omitted altogether by Burney, though on pp. 103 f. he gives part of it (in unmetrical form) as an example of mis-translation. Following Dr. Ball, he regards γέγονεν as represent-

²² In Hebrew דם is often used in the plural, but I can find no instance in Aramaic. On the other hand the plural is not at all common in Greek, though it appears occasionally.

²³ Prof. Torrey (*op. cit.*, p. 387) doubts the influence of the Targums in this verse and in the writer's Logos doctrine.

ing ܩܢ (a by-form of ܩܢܐ), which should have been read as the participle ܩܢܐ, meaning "is becoming" or "is about to become" (this is even more plausible if we write ܩܢܐ, which might be either perfect or participle). *Πρῶτός μου* is supposed to be ܩܕܡܝ, a misreading of ܩܕܡܝܐ, "first." This makes the verse read, "He who is coming after me, before me will become; Because He was first (of all)." As against this Prof. Torrey²⁴ "decidedly" favors the present reading. I have found it so difficult to make a satisfactory Aramaic translation of this verse (metre or no metre) that I find myself wondering whether it was not added in Greek after the translation of the poem. Has the change from *ἐμπροσθεν μου* to *πρῶτός μου* any significance except the desire for stylistic variety? If not, would a translator make such a change? It would be quite natural for a writer composing freely in Greek. The result of the Syriac translator's effort to reproduce *πρῶτός μου* is not idiomatic Aramaic.

V. 16, following Burney except in the form of the relative pronoun, makes two seven-syllable lines, though the division does not come just where we might expect it: ܕܝ ܡܢ ܡܠܝܗ ܟܘܠܢܐ ܕܝ ܡܢ ܡܠܝܗ ܟܘܠܢܐ. The verb ܕܝ ܡܢ ܡܠܝܗ does not occur in Biblical Aramaic. ܩܒܠܐ suits the meaning equally well if not better; its use makes the second line contain eight syllables, but perhaps ܕܝ ܡܢ ܡܠܝܗ represents ܕܝ ܡܢ ܡܠܝܗ (which hardly suits the meaning), in which case we have two seven-syllable lines: ܕܝ ܡܢ ܡܠܝܗ ܩܒܠܐ ܕܝ ܡܢ ܡܠܝܗ ܩܒܠܐ.

V. 17, as Burney gives it, has one line of eight syllables and one of seven: ܕܐܘܪܝܬܐ ܡܢ ܡܫܗ ܐܬܝܗܝܒ ܐܘܪܝܬܐ ܡܢ ܡܫܗ ܐܬܝܗܝܒ. As in one or two other places Burney assumes that the verb, unexpressed in the Aramaic, was supplied by the translator. He also assumes, *metri gratia*, that the name Jesus is a gloss. In the first line he apparently regards ܐܘܪܝܬܐ as masculine; it may be given a feminine verb without changing the metre by using the Pe'il form ܕܝܠܝܒܐ. If we use the older form of the relative at the beginning, include the name in the second line, and retain the verb at the end, we have nine syllables in the first line and ten in the second:

²⁴ *Op. cit.*, pp. 328 f.

די אוריתא מן משה דיבת
חנא וקושמא מן ישוע משיחא הוה

Probably ביד would be better than מן for *διὰ* here as in 3, 7, and 10, but this does not alter the number of syllables.

V. 18 falls naturally into two lines of nine syllables each: לאלהא לא חזא אנש מן עלמא יחד אלהא די בעב אבא הוא נלא. While departing in several particulars from Burney's version of this verse, I have retained his rendering of the much-debated expression *μονογενῆς θεός*, which he regards as a mistranslation (due to dittography of the initial *Α* of אלהא?). If we accept the reading *μονογενῆς υἱός* (which is surely preferable from every point of view except that of conscientious preference for the harsher reading as such), we have יחידא ברא, which does not change the number of syllables.

It appears, then, that the hypothesis of syllabic metre with seven syllables to the line works reasonably well in vv. 1-5, 6a, 7 b c, 10 c, 11, 12 (except 12 c), 13, and 16. The remaining lines, however, do not lend themselves to a theory of interpolation, and the form of syllabic metre is too artificial and rigid to allow the supposition that the writer has unconsciously slipped from verse into prose and from prose into verse. Consequently we cannot say that the theory of syllabic metre has been demonstrated for the composition as a whole. To say that it has proved untenable would be, to be sure, unwarranted by the facts. The failure of the demonstration may be due to the elusiveness of the subject and the incompetence of the investigator. When I discussed the question before the *Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis* last December, I felt that the hypothesis, though not clearly verified, was not at all improbable. I now feel that it is distinctly improbable, though still possible. I realize now, as I did not then, that in accentual metre, with three stresses to the line, most of the lines will have from six to eight syllables, so that seven-syllable lines may be expected to occur with more or less frequency. This fact was brought home to me by a letter from Prof. Torrey, whose kindness in reading my paper and making many valuable suggestions and corrections I hereby gratefully acknowledge.

The bearing of the evidence upon the hypothesis of accentual

metre may be briefly noted. Up to v. 13 there is no difficulty whatever; in vv. 13-15 the difficulties are not insurmountable; v. 13 falls into line readily enough; and while the lines are longer in vv. 17 and 18 they are not necessarily too long to be included in the scheme. Thus the whole passage is metrical; there is not a single clause which must be regarded as an interpolation or a lapse into prose. In short this hypothesis works much better than the other and now seems to me more probable. At the same time one must remember that accentual metre is not so difficult as syllabic metre; the fact that it is more easily produced in such a translation as this, therefore, is not of itself conclusive. That the passage was composed in Aramaic metre of one kind or the other seems to me indubitable.