

BRIEF DOCUMENTARY HISTORY

— of the

TRANSLATION OF THE SCRIPTURES

Into the Arabic Language by

Rev. ELI SMITH, D.D., and Rev. C. V. A. VAN DYCK, D.D.

Printed for the Syria Mission, April, 1900.

American Presbyterian Mission Press,
Beirut, Syria.

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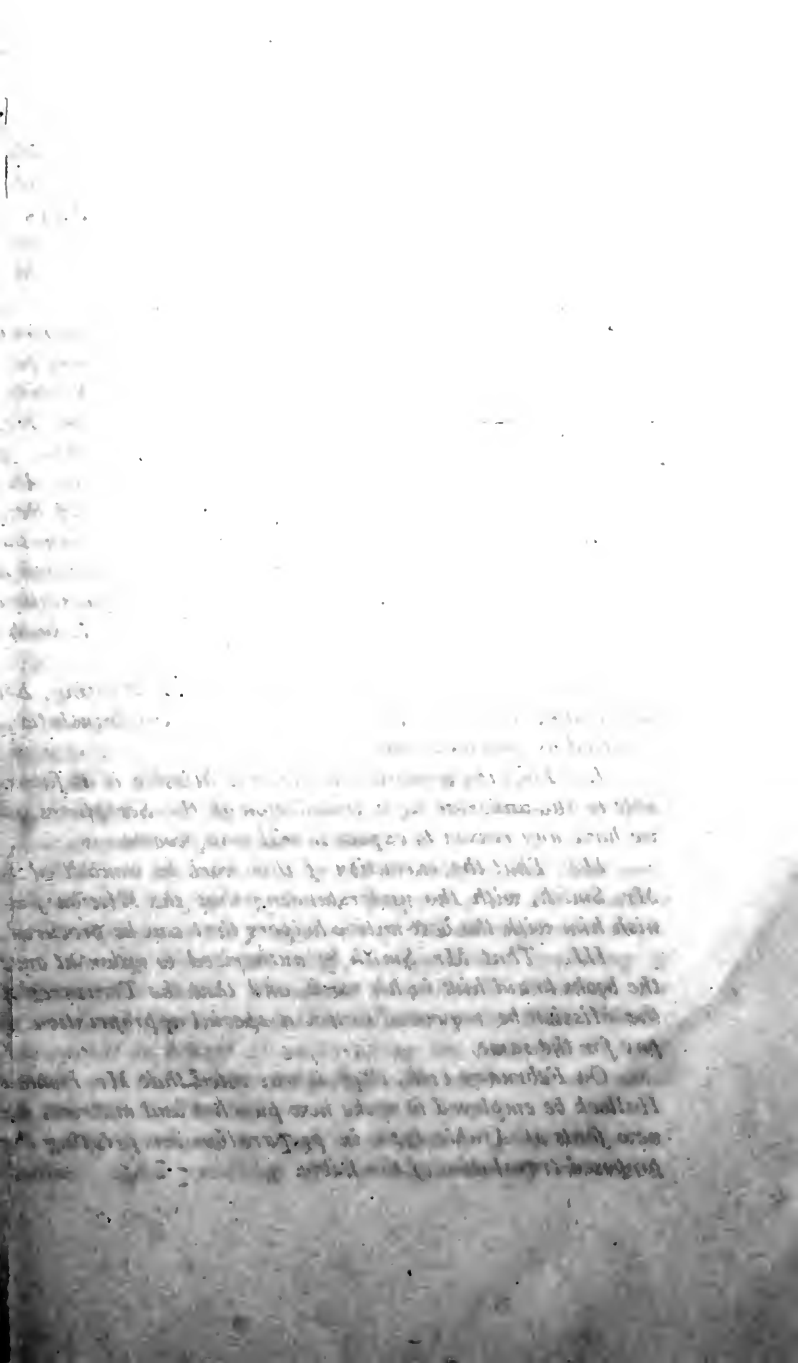
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PREFACE.

HISTORY OF THE TRANSLATION OF THE SCRIPTURES INTO THE ARABIC LANGUAGE.

On the 6th of March, 1844, a meeting of the American Mission in Syria was held in Beirut. The following persons were present:—Rev. Eli Smith, Rev. G. B. Whiting, Henry A. De Forest, M.D., Rev. Mr. Keyes, and Mr. G. C. Hurter, of Beirut, Rev. W. M. Thomson, of 'Abeih, Rev. S. H. Calhoun, of Smyrna, and Rev. Dr. Rufus Anderson, Secretary of the A. B. C. F. M., and Rev. Dr. Joel Hawes, of Hartford, Connecticut. During the meeting, on March 9th, Rev. Eli Smith was appointed a committee to report on the desirableness of a new translation of the Scriptures into Arabic. (See Document I. in the series).

On the 20th of January, 1847, Messrs. Whiting, Eli Smith and Van Dyck, the committee on new translation, reported as follows: voted—

I. That the general state of this Mission is as favorable to the undertaking a translation of the Scriptures, as we have any reason to expect it will soon become.

II. That the execution of this work be committed to Mr. Smith, with the understanding that the Mission furnish him with the best native helpers that can be procured.

III. That Mr. Smith be authorized to order at once the books to aid him in his work, and that the Treasurer of the Mission be requested to ask a special appropriation to pay for the same.

On February 11th, 1848, it was voted that Mr. Homan Hallock be employed to make new punches and matrices for new fonts of Arabic type, in preparation for printing the proposed translation of the Bible.

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Also—That Mr. Smith be authorized to purchase a Hebrew lexicon and grammar, and a Greek lexicon of the New Testament, to be used in translating the Scriptures.

April 4th, 1849, Mr. Smith reported progress in the work of translating the Scriptures, and laid before the Mission the first ten Chapters of Genesis for examination, and a committee, consisting of Messrs. Whiting, Thomson, Van Dyck, Hurter, De Forest and Ford were appointed a committee to examine what has been done, and report to this meeting. This committee reported April 7th, as follows :

I. That they have carefully examined the whole of the 1st Chapter in Genesis, and several passages in some of the succeeding chapters, comparing it with the common Arabic translation, the Hebrew and the Greek, and that they find it faithful to the original, and a decided improvement on the version we now circulate, in style and language, while at the same time it presents no unnecessary deviations from it.

II. They recommend that the work be prosecuted to its completion upon the same general principles which appear to have guided the translator hitherto.

III. That Mr. Smith be authorized to provide copies of the work as it proceeds for each of the Stations, in portions convenient for examination.

IV. That we commend the translator, and those associated with him, to the fervent prayers of all the members of the Mission in the prosecution of this all-important work.

During that year, 1847, a committee, consisting of Messrs. Eli Smith, Thomson, Van Dyck, Whiting, De Forest and Hurter prepared and sent to the United States an appeal in behalf of undertaking the translation of the Bible into the Arabic language—the work to be entrusted to Dr. Eli Smith.

The document is long, and now of great historical value. After speaking of the comparatively evanescent

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character of translations of the Bible into the language of tribes evidently 'hastening to extinction,' the appeal rises to high and almost prophetic eloquence in speaking of the future of the Arabic Bible.

"The Arab translator is interpreting the lively oracles for the forty millions of an undying race whose successive and ever augmenting generations shall fail only with the final termination of all earthly things. Can we exaggerate on such a theme? Is it easy to overestimate the importance of that mighty power that shall send the healing leaves of salvation down the Tigris, the Euphrates, the Nile and the Niger; that shall open living fountains in the plains of Syria, the deserts of Arabia and the sands of Africa; that shall gild with the light of life the craggy summits of goodly Lebanon and sacred Sinai and giant Atlas? We think not. These and kindred thoughts are not the fitful scintillations of imagination, the baseless dreams of a wild enthusiasm. To give the Word of God to forty millions of perishing sinners, to write their commentaries, their concordances, their theology, their sermons, their tracts, their school books and their religious journals: in short, to give them a Christian literature, or that germinating commencement of one, which can perpetuate its life and expand it into full grown maturity, are great gigantic verities taking fast hold on the salvation of myriads, which no man can number, of the present and all future generations."

Printed by order of the Syria Mission,

H. H. JESSUP,

Stated Clerk.

May 3rd, 1900.

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*Report of Rev. ELI SMITH, D.D., in March 16th, 1844,
on the existing Arabic Versions of the Scriptures.*

THE Arabic version of the Scriptures which we circulate is reprinted from the edition of the Romish propaganda, which appeared in 1571. That edition was corrected from an ancient translation, the origin of which I do not know; but the revision was made under the direction of Sarkis er-Rur, a Maronite bishop of Damascus, who received orders to that effect from the propaganda during the Pontificate of Urban 8th. The revision was commenced in 1525. Reference was professedly had to the Hebrew and Greek originals, as well as to the Latin Vulgate, but it is in fact a very servile imitation of the latter.

The historical parts of the Old and New Testaments are intelligible, and as correct as the Vulgate. But in the Epistles, though isolated texts generally convey nearly the sentiment of the original, the meaning is often not clear, and the argument of continuous passages is not unfrequently lost. In fact, the more abstruse and doctrinal parts of Paul's Epistles lose in it almost all their force. Of the prophetic and poetical portions of the Old Testament much is either without force, in bad taste, or absolutely unintelligible. The whole version is not in a classical style. The structure of the sentences is awkward, the choice of words is not select, and the rules of grammar are often transgressed. We have been ashamed to put the sacred books of our religion, in such a dress, into the hands of a respectable Muhammedan or Druze, and felt it our duty to accompany them with an

apology; and some of us never think of reading a chapter in public without previously revising it. We have a growing conviction that we cannot expect a strong thirst for the Scriptures to be created in the public mind, nor that much effect will be produced by them, until we present them in a purer form.

Another version of the New Testament was published by the London Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge in 1727, of which a few copies are found among us. It was corrected from the text of the Paris and London polyglots by Solomon Negri, and conformed with great strictness to the Greek original. But in this very strictness the corrector erred, for there is always a stiffness about it, and not unfrequently the idiom is quite foreign. The words used also are, many of them, not selected from that part of the Arabic vocabulary which is now in common use in these parts. On the whole, it is not an acceptable version. We may add that it seems to have formed the basis of the Gospels and Epistles published at Shuwair, especially of the latter. In these, the defects of style above alluded to have been corrected; but the corrections have been made, apparently, merely according to taste, and without any regard to the original.

There is also an edition of the New Testament published by Erpenius in 1616. It is the same, or nearly so, with the Karshuny, formerly used in the Maronite Churches, and which was translated from the old Peshito Syriac. The Karshuny, however, was not long ago revised by Bishop Germanus, and his revised version is the one now authorised by the Maronite Church. Both this, and the edition of Erpenius, were lately examined in searching for a translation to be made the basis of a Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, and it was found that neither

were faithful enough to the original to answer the purpose.

The character of all the existing versions to which we have access indeed, is such, that we have no doubt that a new translation is exceedingly desirable. Our only difficulties relate to the practicability of making a good one, and of getting it into circulation. In reference to the first point, the difficulty does not arise from the want of men competent to execute the work, for these we think we have; but from the fact that our own number, and that of the native helpers, is so small, that none can be spared from more direct missionary labour. This difficulty, we hope, the providence of God will in due time remedy. In reference to the circulation of a new translation, we have no doubt that its appearance would raise a great clamor against us from our enemies, which might go far towards assisting it at the outset. But not all the Christians, even, are by any means our enemies. Our wide personal acquaintance has secured some friends who have confidence in us, and would receive it at the beginning. This number is constantly increasing, and should God pour out His Spirit, which we ought to have faith to expect, the increase would be rapid. Moreover, the Druzes and Muhammedans would have no more prejudices against a new translation than an old one; and for these, especially the Druzes, it is highly desirable that there should be a version of the Scriptures which shall not be absolutely offensive by reason of its imperfections. Indeed, if our labors are to be extended much among the Druzes, a new translation cannot be dispensed with.

On the whole, could we spare the man for the work, we should not hesitate to commence at once, confidently hoping that before it were completed there would be abundant openings for its circulation.

We may add that we see no prospect that our wishes will be met in this respect, unless we undertake the work ourselves. An attempt was made two or three years ago, at Malta, but the specimens which were sent to this country showed clearly that the result would not be at all satisfactory.

Dr. SMITH'S *Report on the Translation of the Scriptures*,
April, 1854.

IN laying before the Mission a proof of the first eight pages of Genesis, the translator wishes to make a brief report of his labors upon the Pentateuch, including a description of the edition of it, now beginning to be printed.

Helps.—It is proper to mention first the books with which the translation apparatus is furnished, so far as they are connected with this part of the Bible.

(1) Beginning with Hebrew grammars, I have Gesenius' *Lehrgebände* (1817); his smaller grammar, edited by Rödiger (1851), a gift from the editor; Ewald's *Lehrbuch* (1844); and Nordheimer's *Grammar*. To the last three I have had indices made to facilitate reference to all the passages of Scripture which are explained in the syntactical portions, and they thus become very useful commentaries. The first is provided with an index by its author.

(2) Of lexicons, I have Gesenius' *Hebrew Thesaurus*, now completed by Rödiger, who kindly sent me the last part as soon as it left the press; and also Robinson's *Gesenius*, a gift from the translator. I have likewise Fürst's *Concordance*, which contains a lexicon by the author, himself a Jew, and possessing, in addition to a knowledge of modern criticism, an acquaintance with the post-biblical Hebrew. His school dictionary, which is not without its value, is also in the translation library; also Noldin's *Concordance of the Hebrew Particles*.

(3) Of commentaries, I have Rosenmuller on the Pentateuch, and Tuch, Delitzsch and Knobel, on Genesis. The latter is a part of the *Exegetical Handbuch*, and the same author is at work upon the other books of Moses.

I have also the *Glossa Ordinaria*, a voluminous digest from the fathers, and Pool's *Synopsis*, with other more common commentaries in English.

(4) Of non-Arabic versions, of critical value, I have the London Polyglot, a gift from Mrs. Fisher Howe, of Brooklyn, N.Y. ; with Buxtorf's *Chaldee*, and Castel's *Syriac Lexicon*, and Schlensner's *Greek Lexicon of the Septuagint*, besides the lexicons which compose the seventh volume of the Polyglot. I have also Tischendorf's *Septuagint*, containing the readings of four ancient MSS., and for a general Greek lexicon, Liddell and Scott. Among modern versions I make constant reference to that of Dr. Wette's.

Of Arabic versions, I possess, besides that of Saadias Gaon in the Polyglot, the Ebreo-Mauritanian version, edited by Erpenius, and three copies of the version of Abu Saïd, the Samaritan ; two of these copies, which I have had made from MSS., some 500 years old, and the other, edited by Kuenen, with the readings and notes of three MSS. The last covers only Genesis, Exodus and Leviticus, but is to be continued. I have also a distinct version in MSS., apparently made from the Peshito, and written nearly 500 years ago. The above are ancient. Of more modern versions, I have the Romish edition, reprinted by the British and Foreign Bible Society, which we now circulate, and which is conformed to the Vulgate, with frequent accommodations to the Peshito. I have also the lessons read in the Greek and Greek Catholic Churches, printed at Shuwair, and translated from the Septuagint, but following after other readings than those of the Polyglot ; and the Karshuny lessons read in the Maronite Churches, printed at Kashaiya, and translated from the Peshito. This version of the Maronites, if reference be had both to conformity with the Hebrew and acceptableness of style to modern readers, is the best of all ; but it contains, as well as

the lessons of the Greeks, only a small portion of the Old Testament.

Of other helps, I may mention Winer's *Realwörterbuch* (last edition), Dr. Wette's *Introduction to the Old Testament*, and Havernick's *Introduction to the Pentateuch*; also Sherif-ed-Din et-Tifâsy on precious stones, and the Arabic *Materia Medica*, called *Ma-la-yisa*: both useful in explaining terms connected with natural history and kindred subjects.

The Hebrew text used is that of Michaeli's, whose notes, and especially references, are often valuable; and I have also Dr. Rossi's various readings, and Bahrdt's remains of the *Hexapla* of Origen.

This catalogue would not be complete without mentioning the more important helps to a full understanding and proper use of the Arabic language. Among the more valuable grammars, I may mention the commentary of Ashmûny on the *Alefiyeh* of Ibn Malik, the commentary of Demânîny on the *Teshîl* of the same author, and *Milla Jâmy* on Ibn el-Hajeb. Also Mughny el-Labib of Ibn-Hashîm, invaluable for its definitions of the particles. On rhetoric, the *Mukhteser* and *Mutowwel* of Teftazâny. Of dictionaries, I have two copies of Feiruzabady, one of them in the hands of Mr. Bistany, and one of Javhari, in the hands of Sheikh Nasîf, as well as the dictionary Feiyûmy, and the Constantinople edition of Feiruzabady, with definitions in Turkish. Of European works, the dictionary of Freitag, and the Arabic-Turco-Persian dictionary of Meninski (borrowed from the Sidon Station). I have also the *Tarîfât* of Jorjâmy, and the *Kulliyât* of Abu-el-Buka, which latter, when furnished with a proper index, will help to many definitions of great value.

The whole of this valuable apparatus is, of course, not consulted upon every passage. Many works are only occasionally referred to, and others but rarely. Yet

they have all been found of use, and each in its place comes up for consultation. The very extent of the apparatus, however, consumes time, and accounts, in part, for the slow progress of the work, especially at the beginning; for the translator had, at the outset, to learn his profession. His armor he had yet but very imperfectly proved. Experience has now, however, given him more facility in its use, and his progress has gradually become more expeditious.

Helpers.—A translation is first made from the original by Mr. Bistany, who learned Syriac at Ain Warka, and has studied Hebrew and Greek since his connection with the Mission. He also studied theology at the Maronite College. The advantages of this proceeding are:—First, giving to the work a native coloring which a foreigner could not so easily accomplish. Second, bringing into it the terms and phrases in common and good use to express the ideas of the original, and especially those current in Christian theology and literature. Third, helping to give uniformity to the work as a whole. For the different parts of the Arabic Bible most in use have been taken from translations made by different hands, and there is a great want of uniformity in the phraseology used. Our aim is to bring about uniformity. Mr. Bistany helps to this by taking the portions of the translation worked over as fast as they come from my hands, and bringing into use as he goes on, in his own work, the phraseology that has been agreed upon. Fourth, saving much of my time, which would otherwise be spent in the manual labor of copying.

When the work comes from his hands it is thoroughly worked over with the aid of the critical apparatus detailed above, in doing which—though Mr. Bistany is not unfrequently very happy in the expressions he uses—the other versions are as freely consulted in reference to phraseology as his, and no authority, in respect to bibli-

cal criticism, is given to his or any Arabic version of modern date. And were the phraseology taken by him from other versions, together with what is subsequently changed and deducted, it is difficult to say how much would be left. Yet no doubt there does remain, in the end, a decided coloring given by the first hand through which the work passes.

Finally, I sit down over the work with Sheikh Nasif, and receive his criticisms upon it, as an Arabic composition, in reference to grammar, lexicography and taste, after which he copies the work anew. His criticisms undergo a thorough discussion, often consuming much time, and special caution is constantly observed lest he sacrifice any important shade of the inspired idea to the niceties of Arabic grammar or taste, which, after all, are not essential. Yet it is my aim to let no phrase finally pass which does not receive his approbation. Master as he is of Arabic grammar, and richly as his mind is stored with Arabic words, it was soon found that in the terms of natural history and certain other sciences, as well as in the technicalities of different trades and professions, and in other like matters, his knowledge was indistinct and often very defective. And to search out, and rightly select words of this kind, has cost me much time. Unfortunately, also, for the last year, his mind has been under a cloud, and his health delicate, giving me much anxiety lest he may fail entirely. Yet my sessions with him are often invaluable, and I never cease to feel that his aid is essential to the best success of the work.

Principles.—Faithful conformity to the sacred original, of course, lies at the foundation of the whole. Uniformity in the translation of similar words and phrases is also aimed at with much care. Then clear and impressive intelligibility is labored after, avoiding, as far as may be, all words beyond the circle understood by the

more intelligent class of the community. At the same time, it is a rule not to depart from the laws of ancient grammar, nor to admit words not sanctioned by classical usage without urgent necessity. Rather than do this, we here and there adopt a word, now gone out of use, especially where the connection gives an intimation of its meaning, trusting to the future enlightenment of the nation to bring back the language again nearer to its classical richness and purity. In a word, we aim to keep within the range of that portion of the classical Arabic which is still intelligible, or may be expected to become so. In this way we are able to avoid, in a great degree, giving the work the savor of a local dialect, which would be impossible were we to descend to the vulgar language of conversation. We also bear in mind that the work is designed for a race, only a small portion of which are Christians; and consequently are on our guard in reference to the many words which are current among Christians, in a meaning not sanctioned by Mohammedan usage, lest by using them we convey a wrong idea to a Mohammedan mind. At the same time, it is our constant aim not to depart, without sufficient cause, from the phraseology consecrated by long usage in the current translations, and especially in the more familiar passages, so that the Christian ear shall be offended as little as possible by a perception of change and novelty. To accomplish all these delicate points is a very difficult task; and it is only by attempting it in the country where the language is spoken, and with the assistance of valuable helpers, that I have any hope of succeeding.

Edition of the Pentateuch.—In the edition of the Pentateuch, of which a proof of the first form is now laid upon the table, the new translation is thoroughly revised in the use of the helps that have been received and the experience that has been gained since it was first made. Regard is had also to the suggestions that have been

called forth by the trial edition of Genesis, though unfortunately these have been few, especially from the brethren of the Mission, only two or three having sent in their criticisms. The translation will probably be found now to differ less from the words of the existing translations than in that edition. Proofs of each form will be sent to every station, and also to Damascus and Jerusalem before it is struck off, and it is earnestly desired that the brethren may be able to read them and send in their suggestions.

The book is printed in our largest neskhy type, and the pages are of the size of those in the revised royal octavo edition of the English Bible without references, published by our Bible Society. The number of pages will be about 400. It is divided into paragraphs according to the sense, and the sense is not allowed to be interrupted by the division for chapters where those fall in the wrong place in the ordinary editions of the Bible; though the current numbering of the chapters is preserved in such a way as to facilitate reference, and is conformed, as well as the numbering of the verses, to the English version. The figures for the verses are placed both in the text and in the margin. Where words not found in the original are added to complete the sense they are printed in smaller type, except prefixes and suffixes, where to do this would be impracticable.

Besides the text, the work has all the additions found in our common reference Bibles. At the top of each page its contents are briefly indicated. Each chapter, or rather each section which takes the place of the ordinary division of chapters, is preceded by a note of its contents translated from the revised edition of the English Bible. In a single side margin is the common chronology and the references, the latter taken from the common English Reference Bible, with the omission of such as are inappropriate in Arabic, and the addition of a

few new ones as authorised by the Bible Society. The latter are chiefly such as tend to illustrate the translation as such ; though in a few cases others of a more general nature are admitted in careful conformity, however, with the spirit of the English references. The references are indicated by small letters in the text. In the inferior margin are notes which are indicated by figures ; these are regarded as part of the translation, and it is my wish that they should always be printed with it, even in editions without the references. They are analogous to the notes in the English Reference Bible. Some of them are parallel renderings where a word is susceptible of a meaning different from the one given in the text. Some are translations of proper names where anything in the text renders their meaning important ; or in a few cases definitions of Arabic words not now in use where the admission of such has been found desirable. Also the literal meaning of the Hebrew is given where a more free rendering has been thought advisable in the text. Sometimes passages are simply referred to when they are considered specially important to a right understanding of the translation, corresponding to the references in the English Bible, which are preceded by the word *see* or *compare*, though they are less numerous. There will be also an explanation of the Hebrew weights and measures, and terms of that kind. Important various readings of MSS. will be very sparingly mentioned, and it is intended to give the readings of the Septuagint in all cases where the New Testament writers have followed it instead of the Hebrew.

To carry such an edition through the press requires much time, and were I to take the entire charge of it my progress in the translation of the New Testament would be almost entirely arrested. To avoid this, an arrangement has been made with Mr. Bistany by which he becomes responsible for the correct printing of the book.

He is to attach the references to the proper words in the translation by looking them all out in their places, to verify them by looking them out again when in type, to read at least four proofs, and to see that the division and numbering of the chapters and verses correspond to the same in the English version. I expect, myself, to look carefully at the whole; but the contract makes him responsible, and my expectation is that I shall realize in this way great relief.

There has been much necessary delay, first in procuring new types from home, and then in casting them here. It is now three months since the first portions of the translation were given to the printer, and nearly all that time has been consumed in preparing the types for the references and notes. Matrices for four letters are still to be received from the United States; but we have notice that they have been shipped, and are expecting them in a few days. As soon as they come the proof now upon the table will be forwarded to the stations for examination in conformity with the vote of the Mission.

All which is respectfully submitted.

ELI SMITH.

Beirut, March 30th, 1854.

Dr. C. V. A. VAN DYCK'S *Report on the Translation,*
April 29th, 1863.

Dr. SMITH returned from the United States in January, 1847. In 1848 he began the work of translating the Scriptures, assisted by Mr. Bistany, who was disconnected from the 'Abeih Seminary for that purpose. Little but preparatory work was done in 1848, till near its close.

A contract was made between Dr. Smith and Mr. Bistany, by which the latter made the first translation from Hebrew, comparing it in the Syriac. A clear copy of each book, as soon as it was finished, with lines wide apart, and with different readings in red ink under such words or passages as admitted of more than one meaning, was put by Mr. Bistany into Dr. Smith's hands.

One condition of the contract between them was that Mr. Bistany should not go faster than Dr. Smith by more than two books, and a second was that in case of the death of either party, the contract became null and void. The Mission was not bound thereby.

Mr. Bistany's version went into Dr. Smith's hands. He went carefully over it with the original, and made such changes as he thought best. The work was then put into the hands of Nasîf el-Yazijy (corrector of the Press), who copied it with Dr. Smith's corrections, and made such of his own as he thought the grammar rhetoric of the language required; but being acquainted with no language besides the Arabic, and often prone to sacrifice the meaning to a grammatical or rhetorical nicety, the work was not to be trusted until it had another revision. This Dr. Smith gave when about to put the work to press. He also left many passages

marked with an interrogative point, showing that he was not satisfied with them, and meant to revise them. After the Pentateuch had been translated, Dr. Smith turned to the New Testament and completed its translation, but did not give his final revision to any part of it. When the New Testament was nearly done in this way he commenced printing the Pentateuch, and reached the end of Exodus 39th. This was all that was *printed* when his lamented death took place. While this was going on he translated, in the way above-mentioned, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah and Nahum: also Isaiah to the end of the 52nd Chapter. In none of these, not even in the Pentateuch, did he give the work his final revision, and therefore upon his deathbed said that he would be responsible only for that which was actually printed, viz.: Genesis, and Exodus to the end of the 39th Chapter.

In the fall, October, of 1858, Dr. Van Dyck commenced revising and editing the New Testament, as left by Dr. Smith. A careful revision of the whole was necessary for two reasons: First, Dr. Smith had refused to be responsible for it as left by him; Second, Dr. Smith had not followed the so called "Textus receptus." His text was Hahn's recension of the Greek, but he adopted various readings from Alford and from Tregelles, as far as the work of the latter was published. The Mission preferred, for reasons not necessary to be stated here, to stick to the "Textus receptus," but to insert various readings in the margin. An edition of the New Testament, with references and marginal readings, was thus commenced in the latter part of 1858. As soon as each form was in type, some thirty proof sheets were struck off and forwarded to native, Mohammedan, Christian and foreign scholars in Beirut, Damascus, Aleppo, Jerusalem, Egypt, and sometimes to Germany, with the request that they might be returned to Beirut with such

criticisms or suggestions as might be thought proper. Many minds, native and foreign, were thus brought to bear upon the work. After coming back to Beirut these were carefully reviewed, and such as seemed in place were adopted into the translation. In this way the New Testament was completed in the spring of 1860, and the first completed copy was laid upon the table at the general meeting of the Mission in March 28th of that year. During the progress of this work the translator was assisted by Sheikh Yusuf el-Asîr, a learned Mohammedan, and graduate of the college connected with the great mosque of El-Azhar, in Cairo. After a few months relaxation, Dr. Van Dyck commenced the Old Testament, where left by Dr. Smith, viz., Leviticus I. He had the advantage of Dr. Smith's labors, as above-mentioned, up to the end of Deuteronomy. The same method of distributing proofs is continued, as was done with the New Testament. It is important to notice that by these means many minds are brought to bear upon the work, and it will be, when completed, the continued work of many, and not the result of one man's labor only. At date, April 29th, the work has reached the 93rd Psalm.

A pocket edition of the New Testament was commenced in 1859, and completed very soon after the completion of the translation, in March, 1860, as above mentioned. This was soon exhausted, and a second edition issued.

A fully voweled edition of the New Testament was commenced in the fall of 1860, and was completed in July, 1862. In making the translation of the Old Testament, the translator had before him besides Van der Hooght's and Michaeli's Hebrew Text, De Rossi's and Davidson's various readings, the Greek Septuagint, the Chaldee Targum, The Peshito, Syriac, Vulgate, all the Arabic versions of parts of Scriptures, or whole, that he

and his predecessor have been able to procure, the principal modern versions into European languages, the principal German and English commentaries and monographs.

Arabic versions of Scriptures, or parts ; see Roediger *De origine et indole Arabicae Librorum, V. Testament Historicorum inter pretationes.* Halle, 1829 (rare).

De Wette ; *Einleitung in das alte Testament*, page 101 : edition Berlin, 1845. Also *De Wette Einleitung, neue Testament*, pages 25 and 26.

Horne's Introduction, part 1, chapter 3, § 3, ¶ 3.

Hug's Introduction to New Testament, page 247. Andover, 1836.

There is in the MSS. library an Arabic version of the Pentateuch made from the Coptic and Greek, as stated in the preface thereof : which means mostly from the Coptic.

We have also, besides the versions mentioned in the above works, Abu Saïd's Arabic version of the Samaritan Pentateuch, published at Leyden in 1851, and numerous versions of parts of Scriptures made at different times, some from Greek, some from Syriac.

I saw with Roediger, in Halle, a copy of Saadiah's Psalms. Saadiah's version of Job is in the Bodleian Library, as stated by De Wette ; but I learned from Dr. Roediger that it would not be of much, if any, help in making a version from the Hebrew. He also discouraged me from the expense of making a copy of Saadiah's Psalms, and from what little I saw of it I think he was right. The Jewish translations all aim at being so very literal, word for word, as to leave many passages unintelligible in a translation, which are at least somewhat intelligible in the original. Witness Schaffler's edition of the Bible in Hebrew-Spanish, and Hebrew in parallel columns.

We have also a copy of the oldest printed edition of the Four Gospels, noticed by De Wette's *Einleitung, New Testament*, pages 25 and 26 : Rome, 1591. It was

translated from the Greek. It is illustrated with pictures much of the same character as those found in the Old Dutch Bibles. The Karshuny versions of different parts of Scriptures used by the Maronites are, some from the Greek, but mostly from the Syriac.

Dr. DENNIS' *Letter to Dr. VAN DYCK, Feb. 21st, 1885.*

Beirut, Feb. 21st, 1885.

DEAR Dr. VAN DYCK,

I have had the manuscripts of the Arabic translation put into proper condition for preservation, and it seems to me very desirable that someone should prepare a full and careful sketch of this great work, giving all the facts which will be of interest and value in connection with it. In Syria, at the present time, when the work is fresh, we can hardly realize the importance and value which will be attached to such a monograph by biblical students who will use the translation here and in distant localities during future generations, and to whom the translation will be a matter of history. It seems to me also important as a resource in the future defense and advocacy of the translation, in case it should be attacked, and some ambitious or inimical parties should wish to supplant it. One other translation has already been made by the Jesuits, and we may have at some future time to meet a serious proposal on the part of others to do the same thing, which could be, in part, prevented by statements showing the thorough work done in the present translation. It seems also unscholarly and neglectful that a work of such great literary and religious moment should be put forth by our Mission with no historical statement in the shape of a prolegomenon to the version. It need not necessarily be for immediate publication, but no doubt it will be either itself eventually printed, or will furnish the facts for whatever may be given to the world on this subject.

I hope you will give us a notice of previous Arabic versions and their excellencies or imperfections that we may intelligently appreciate the necessity for the new one, and see its value in contrast. I would like my-

self to know the helps which were depended upon in the preparation, and the apparatus which was at hand. (Dr. Smith has given this information, as regards the Penta-teuch, in a report which I send you). It is interesting to know from that report when and why Septuagint readings are given in the margin, and the estimate he places upon the marginal readings generally. The fact that there was full liberty to insert marginal readings, and that it was left to the judgment of the translators, gives special interest to them. I notice that the Jesuit Bible has generally taken our marginal readings, and inserted them in the text. Among other things which occur to me as of interest would be the respective shares which fell to you and Dr. Smith in the work; to whom were the proofs sent, and whose suggestions and comments were of special value; what stipulations between the translators and the Bible Societies; who had a hand in the voveling; dates of the beginning and completion of both the translation and printing; any details as to the method and process of the work; special comments upon the MSS. of each book as preserved in the present set, such as who is the author of the original translation, and who made the changes and substitutions as they appear in the MSS.

I am sure our Mission and the whole race of biblical students and critics in future time will be greatly obliged to you if you will give us all you have to say on this most deeply interesting subject. I send you the old Mission records for the time covered by the translation, and some copies of the Missionary Herald, and Dr. Anderson's book on Oriental Missions.

I have looked up some of the data in the Mission records, and it will save your time perhaps to indicate them.

The first reference I can find is the vote to "consider the subject," January 18th, 1847. The report of that

committee (January 20th, 1847), in which the work was committed to Dr. Smith. The vote of February 11th, 1848, that Dr. Smith correspond with the Bible Society, in which the work is still spoken of as "contemplated." In the meeting of April 4th, 1849, Dr. Smith reported progress, and laid before the Mission the first ten chapters of Genesis. The report on this was given April 7th, 1849. March 27th, 1852, a committee was appointed to report, and their report was given March 30th. July 13th, 1852, a special meeting to pass a resolution about the employment of Mr. Bistany. April 1st, 1856, a correspondence about "various readings" is spoken of between Mr. Robson and Dr. Smith, but the correspondence is not given. April 4th, 1857.—After Dr. Smith's death came a committee to report on the state of the translation, and the report (an important one), followed April 7th, 1857, and the same date you were appointed. From that date your own records will probably give everything. I trust you will not find any special difficulty in the matter.

Yours most truly,

JAMES S. DENNIS.

Dr. VAN DYCK'S *History of the Arabic Translation of the Scriptures, March 7th, 1885.*

AN account of the Arabic version of the Scriptures made under the auspices of the Syria Mission and the American Bible Society.

At the general meeting of the Mission held in Beirut, February, 1848, under date of February 11th we find the following vote : —

“Resolved that at the end of the present term of the Seminary (’Abeih), Butrus ul-Bistany be transferred to the Beirut Station with a view to his being employed in the translation of the Scriptures, under the direction of Dr. Smith.”

Note.—Mr. Bistany had been associated with Dr. Van Dyck in the Seminary of ’Abeih from the time of its opening.

Under same date, February 11th, 1848, we have the following resolution :—

“Resolved that Dr. Smith be authorized to correspond with the secretaries of the American Bible Society in relation to the contemplated new translation of the Scriptures into Arabic.”

Under date of April 4th, 1849, we find the following :—

“Dr. Smith reported progress in the work of translating the Scriptures, and laid before the Mission the first ten chapters of Genesis for examination, and Messrs. Whiting, Thomson, Van Dyck, Hurter, De Forest and Ford were appointed a committee to examine what had been done, and report to this meeting.” This committee reported April 7th. (See Mission record).

It is plain from the above that Dr. Smith began to

work on the translation in 1848. Mr. Bistany was associated with him in the work from the first. For several years Sheikh Nasif el-Yazijy had been employed by Dr. Smith to review and rewrite all books issued from the Mission Press. Dr. Smith had great confidence in Sheikh Nasif's taste as an Arabic scholar, and kept him on to review and rewrite the translation. First, Mr. Bistany made a translation into Arabic from the Hebrew or Greek, with the aid of the Syriac. Then Sheikh Nasif rewrote what had been translated. Then Dr. Smith reviewed Sheikh Nasif's MSS. by himself, and made his own corrections and emendations. Then he and Sheikh Nasif went over the work in company. As Sheikh Nasif knew no language but Arabic, there was no chance of a foreign idiom escaping, unless from the carelessness of the corrector, and Dr. Smith was careful not to let the meaning be sacrificed for a question of Arabic grammar or rhetoric; and thus the work went on from year to year.

Under date of 1850, April 9th, we have the following:—

“Dr. Smith submitted a copy of the new translation of the book of Genesis, with some remarks and explanations. Voted that 100 copies of the new translation of Genesis be printed at the expense of the Mission.”

As each form was struck off, a copy was sent to each member of the Mission, and to Arabic scholars outside the Mission, especially to the missionaries of other societies. We have no record of the names of those to whom Dr. Smith sent copies outside the Mission. As the Mission had full confidence in Dr. Smith, it would seem as if little was done by its members in the way of criticism, for the next year, 1851, Dr. Smith called the attention of the Mission to this fact, and under date of 1851, March 29th, we read:—

“Voted that all the members of the Mission be invited to give special attention to the new translation of the Scriptures, and tender Dr. Smith all the assistance in their power to carry it forward to its completion.”

1852, March 27th, Dr. Smith laid on the table the translation of the Pentateuch up to the 5th Chapter of Deuteronomy, which was referred to a committee, viz., Messrs. Thomson, Whiting, Robinson (Rev. Edward Robinson, D.D.), Calhoun, Marsh and Ford, “with instructions to report during the present meeting.” Committee reported on March 30th, approving, and the translator was directed to finish the Pentateuch and then take up the New Testament. A request was made of the Bible Society for funds to print 3,000 copies of the Pentateuch. This was not done till long afterwards, in the course of printing the whole Old Testament, after Dr. Smith’s death.

1854, March 3rd, Dr. Smith laid on the table so much of the translation of the Scriptures as had been completed during the year, from Luke 1st to 1st Corinthians, Chapter v., and read a report upon the translation and present edition of the Pentateuch; which report was referred to a committee, who were instructed to prepare a minute in answer to that part of Dr. Anderson’s letter referring to the subject; which committee reported April 1st, approving, and directing the translator to continue his work, which was considered a sufficient reply to Dr. Anderson’s letter.

1855, January 22nd, Dr. Smith reported that he hoped to finish the translation of the New Testament in a few weeks, and it was

“Resolved that application be made to the American Bible Society for authority to print at their expense 5,000 copies, large 12mo size, in our second font of type, without references.” This was never done. The first edition issued was second font reference, after Dr. Smith’s death.

1855, April 3rd, Dr. Smith reported that the New Testament had been completed since the last annual meeting, and that the Prophecies of Jonah, Joel and Amos had also been completed, and that the printing of the Pentateuch had reached the end of the 6th Chapter of Exodus.

1856, April 1st, Dr. Smith stated that in the translation of the Old Testament Scriptures after finishing Nahum he had taken up Isaiah, and reached the 53rd Chapter, and that in printing, the Pentateuch had advanced to the end of Exodus, and the New Testament to the 16th Chapter of Matthew.

April 2nd, the committee on Dr. Smith's health reported, recommending him to give up all work and make a change of climate, etc., in hope of recovery. He never resumed work. That summer he went to Europe, and came near dying there; came back in the fall with well-developed cancer of the pylorus, and died Sunday morning, 11th of January, 1857. For a year he had not been able to do any work, *i. e.*, from the early part of 1856. He began in 1848: thus nine years were devoted to this work, or rather eight years of actual labor. By his death his contract with Mr. Bistany became null, and neither Mr. Bistany nor Sheikh Nasif had any further hand in the work for reasons to be stated further on.

At the next annual meeting after Dr. Smith's death, *i. e.*, April 3rd, 1857, Messrs. Ford, Eddy and Wilson were appointed a committee to examine and report on the state of the translation of the Scriptures as left by Dr. Smith; which committee reported on the 4th of April, recommending further examination, and Messrs. Calhoun and Van Dyck were added to the committee. (See record under date).

April 7th, committee again reported, that Genesis and Exodus had been printed with the exception of the last of Exodus, which is in type but not edited, nor

have the proofs been submitted for criticism. That the following books have been translated and nearly prepared for the press, viz., the Books of the New Testament, the Books of Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, and the Prophecies of Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum and Isaiah, as far as the end of the 52nd Chapter.

That the Historical Books from Joshua to Esther inclusive, and the Books of Jeremiah and Lamentations have been put into Arabic by Mr. Bistany, the assistant translator, but not revised by Dr. Smith.

That the remaining Books of the Bible are yet untouched, viz., Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Ezekiel, Daniel, Habakkuk, Zechariah, Zephaniah, Haggai and Malachi.

That in the translation of the New Testament the Greek text followed has been that of Hahn, but in the first thirteen Chapters of Matthew there are some variations from that text, according to the text of Tregelles and others.

That in regard to the translation of the New Testament, after a careful examination of various parts thereof, the committee are unanimously of the opinion that it has been made with great care and fidelity, and that it could with comparatively little labor be prepared for the Press, and they accordingly recommend to the Mission to prosecute and complete its publication as soon as practicable.

The report was accepted, and it was voted that the recommendation of the committee be adopted, and that Dr. Van Dyck be designated to carry on the work, etc. (See record of date).

Dr. Van Dyck was then living in Sidon. He attempted at first to carry on the work of translating and printing at that distance from the Press, but found it impracticable, and so removed to Beirut in the fall of 1857, and went on with the work as directed.

Here one or two things should be stated that are not in the records of the Mission, nor is it proper that they should be. Dr. Smith did not give the work his *final* review until it was on the point of being sent to the compositor, and he left questions open for his final decision until then. It was for this reason that he replied as he did to Mr. Wilson a day or two before his death. Mr. Wilson asked him whether he had anything to say about the translation. He replied, "I will be responsible only for what has been printed. If the work should be carried on I hope that what I have done will be found of some value."

Dr. Smith was in advance of most of the Mission in regard to textual criticism. He knew that the so called "Textus receptus" and Hahn's text were *not* the best and most authentic reading, and he was anxious that the *true* reading should be given as far as it *could* be. He therefore made use of Tischendorf, Tregelles and Alford in the New Testament text, and he used his own judgment, in which all the Mission had the utmost confidence, so that the matter was left entirely in his hands.

For these reasons it became necessary for his successor to review every verse, both to see that it was built upon the "Textus receptus," as required by the rules of the American Bible Society, and to give the final and decisive criticisms which were to fix the translation, and to insert the various readings in the margin, which the Bible Society gave permission to do; viz., the variations of the Syriac version and those of older Arabic versions in use among the Christian sects of the east.

Accordingly Dr. Van Dyck took up the work as if anew from the beginning of the New Testament. The basis left by Dr. Smith was found *invaluable*, and but for it the work would have been protracted very much beyond what it really was. The form adopted for printing the New Testament was that known as the 2nd font

Reference New Testament. Thirty proofs were struck off of each form as soon as set up in type, and these proofs were distributed to all missionaries in the Arabic-speaking field and to native scholars, and to Arabic scholars in Germany, viz., Prof. Fleischer, of Leipsic, Prof. Rödiger, of Halle, afterwards of Berlin, Prof. Flügel, of Dresden, and Dr. Behrnaner, Librarian of the Imperial Library, Vienna. Some letters and proofs from some of these gentlemen and others have survived till the present time (March 5th, 1885), and have been placed in the standard copy of the Old Testament deposited in the Library of the Mission.

The work of the translation on the New Testament was finished March 9th, 1860, and a complete copy laid upon the table at the annual meeting, March 28th, and the *same* copy which was laid upon the table *then*, and which the translator had used as the work proceeded, is now deposited in the Mission Library.

The proofs distributed were returned to the translator with the criticisms of those to whom they had been sent, all of which were carefully examined and decided upon; and this part of the work was by far more difficult and perplexing than making the translation at first.

In regard to the style of Arabic adopted, it was the same as had been adopted by Dr. Smith after long and frequent consultations with the Mission and with native scholars. Some would have the style "Koranic," *i. e.*, Islamic, adopting idioms and expressions peculiar to Mohammedans. *All native Christian scholars decidedly objected to this.* It was agreed to adopt a simple but *pure* Arabic, free from foreign idioms, but never to sacrifice the sense to a grammatical quirk or a rhetorical quibble or a fanciful tinkling of words. As a matter of fact, it will be seen that in the historical and didactic parts the style is pure and simple, but in the poetical parts the style necessarily takes on the higher standard of the

original, *e. g.*, Job and Psalms, and parts of Prophets.

In 1858 the pocket and voweled editions of the New Testament were authorized. The pocket edition, 16mo., was finished in April, 1860, but the Voweled New Testament not till July, 1862. The voveling was done by Dr. Van Dyck, and then submitted to Sheikh Yusuf el-Asîr el-Azhari and to Prof. Yusuf Arbîli, Arabic teacher in the Greek Patriarch School in Damascus, and to other scholars. And this brings to mind the reason for dropping Sheikh Nasîf el-Yazîjy from the work, a brief notice of which is here proper.

As before stated, Mr. Bistany made the first translation for Dr. Smith, which Sheikh Nasîf copied and Dr. Smith reviewed with him, after which it was again copied on the opposite page of the sheet, which was left blank for this purpose at the first copying. In doing this work he was not faithful. Dr. Smith had the most implicit confidence in him. The fact that he cared little whether the work was accurate in grammar or not became evident to some others, and the translator appointed to succeed Dr. Smith substituted, in the place of Sheikh Nasîf, a Moslem, a graduate of the Azhar College, of Cairo, named Sheikh Yusuf el-Asîr. After the Voweled New Testament was printed, Sheikh Nasîf put forth certain criticisms upon some of the expressions and the voveling. In each case where there was anything to object to it proved to have been slipped over by Sheikh Nasîf himself in his reviews with Dr. Smith, and was printed just as it stood in his handwriting, so that he was finding fault with his own work. (See these strictures answered by Sheikh Yusuf, a copy of which is now placed in the Voweled New Testament deposited in the Library with these documents).

In April, 1860, the Mission directed Dr. Van Dyck (see Mission record, date April 7th, 1860), to carry on the translation of the Old Testament, commencing with

Leviticus, as it had been printed thus far during Dr. Smith's life, as before stated. The last Chapter of Exodus was edited by Dr. Van Dyck immediately after Dr. Smith's death, and printed, so that the whole of Genesis and Exodus might be before the Mission. Before doing much at the Old Testament Dr. Van Dyck visited Vienna and Leipsig and Dresden and Halle, with the hope of getting a copy of Rabbi Saadik Gaion's Arabic version of some parts of the Old Testament. He found the thing sought, but by the advice of German scholars who were acquainted with them, he found it not worth the while to undertake the labor and expense of procuring copies.

In those parts of the Old Testament in which Dr. Smith had left a basis, Dr. Van Dyck made use of it just as he had done in the New Testament. In those parts not touched, he translated anew directly from the Hebrew and Chaldee, with the help of the best commentaries and lexicons and grammars then existing, all of which are still found in the Mission Library, as well as the Syriac and old Arabic versions of parts of the Old Testament, some from the Samaritan, some from the Septuagint. The Syriac version was that of Walton's Polyglot.

In 1864 an edition of the Voweled Psalms in parallelisms was issued, 16mo. The entire Voweled Old Testament was not completed till after Dr. Van Dyck's return from the United States, and the printing and electrotyping thereof was finished in 1868 or 1869. At the annual meeting, February, 1863, the translator reported the work as having reached the 40th Psalm, inclusive. At the annual meeting, March 30th, 1864, the subject of electrotyping the Arabic Scriptures was taken up, and Messrs. Thomson, Calhoun and Ford were appointed a committee to prepare a minute on the subject, which committee reported, recommending making

plates of ten different editions. (See Mission record, March 30th, 1864).

At the special meeting in 'Abeih, August 23rd, 1864, the translator announced the completion of the translation on the previous day, August 22nd. (See Mission record, August 23rd, 1864).

In 1865 the translator, in accordance with arrangements made with the American Bible Society, proceeded to New York and superintended the making of a set of electrotype plates of the entire Arabic Bible, in large type, 8vo., and of the Voweled New Testament.

Two years later he returned to Beirut with Mr. Samuel Hallock, as electrotyper, and superintended electrotyping the Voweled Old Testament, 8vo., and editions of the entire Bible, and of the New Testament in 2nd and 3rd fonts.

The American Bible Society furnished the British and Foreign Bible Society with a set of plates of the Bible and New Testament, made in New York, and also of the Voweled Old Testament, made in Beirut.

In making the plates in New York, the only change of importance made in the translation as it stands in the large Reference Bible is in Ecclesiastes iii. 11.

The last type was set March 10th, 1865, and the last sheet printed March 29th, 1865.

C. V. A. VAN DYCK.

Beirut, March 7th, 1885.

Dr. VAN DYCK'S *Letter to Dr. S. JESSUP, Sept. 8th, 1888, called out by a Letter of Dr. BRUCE, of Persia, asking the views of the Syria Mission on the subject.*

Beirut, Sept. 8th, 1888.

MY DEAR DR. JESSUP,

You will perhaps remember that Dr. Smith on his death-bed said that he would be responsible "only for what was printed" of the Arabic Bible, *i. e.*, up to the end of Exodus, except the last chapter, and it was at that point I took up the Old Testament. The question of the translation or transliteration of יהוה had been discussed and decided between Dr. Smith and the Mission, and all those to whom proofs of the translation were sent, some thirty persons in all parts of the world, while he was still in the early part of Exodus, and while he was still vigorous in mind and body. It was decided to translate, and not to transliterate. The question was long and prayerfully and earnestly discussed by many thoughtful, wise and scholarly men. It was decided that the word رَبّ conveyed at least a meaning to the Arab reader, and that יהוה or יהו or יהוה (there are a score of views of how it should be written) conveyed no meaning to the Arab reader: that the word رَبّ conveyed the meaning of the highest possible existing Being—the Supreme. There were other considerations, but the above is sufficient to decide the question once for all. Those who translate into other languages must do as their wisdom dictates, but there should, at this date, be no overhauling of this name in our Arabic version by those who have no knowledge of the circumstances and reasons which decided Dr. Smith in translating and not transliterating. Think of all the ramifications into which the matter would run,

and for what? for what is to me only a Jewish superstition about what they call the "incommunicable name." The word رَبّ in Arabic conveys the idea that is wanted to be conveyed, and رَبّ is Arabic and is understood, and in religious matters used only for the Supreme Being, and that wherever the language is spoken. Should some one of a new generation, in his ignorance of what has passed, re-open this subject, and should the Mission or Bible Society ask me about it if still in the land of the living, I should have much more to say about it; and I desire to put on record this much of my knowledge of the history of the matter. You are at liberty to make such use of this note as you think best.

Very truly and fraternally yours,

C. V. A. VAN DYCK.

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Brief documentary history of the

Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library



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