

ARAMAIC BIBLE COMPANION

Why go to the trouble of writing a Commentary?

A one-man bible commentary now available free on the Web is a long treasured concept to which by the Lord's grace I have been able to give legs. But what could warrant the intense study, indefatigable labour and daily physical ennui of 15 or more years of word processing? My answer is -the inestimable value to everyman of the prophetic word of God!

(1) What original text did you use? The answer is in two parts. For the Old Testament I used the Bible Society's "Torah" presented to me as a ministry student in 1966. The Hebrew is largely from MS Or 2626-8. The Trinitarian Bible Society's Elzevir Textus Receptus which is traceable to Robert Stephens who first introduced biblical verses and further to Erasmus from whose work Luther, who learned his Greek from Melanchthon and translated the bible into German.

(2) What mentors did you rely upon? The commentary is not culled. It represents reflections on the plain meaning of the original languages of scripture. I gathered in my garden "Commentary Box" some of the best linguistic aids to biblical language I could afford. Over the years I have thumbed through the Greater Liddell and Scott (which I inherited from a Dublin friend Thomas J Dixon of Southport in 1990. My first Liddle and Scott was the gift of my father's friend Mr. Jim Harpur when at 14-15 (1956-7) I began to teach myself Greek. I have used five editions of the International Bible Society's Greek N.T. the first of which was presented to me in 1966-7 by Professor Ted Russell of The Assembly's College-to whom I also owe a debt for introducing me to Dr. David Gooding's group of young Greek scholars. I have made use of a long series of Cruden's concordances together with a grand old presentation edition of the Chesham School's "Young's analytical" which was used in China by a lady scholar by the name of Miss. Francis McCarthy. More recently I have used the Aramaic NT work of Janet Mageira, the work of Agnes Lewis & Margaret Gibson, which I studied at the private Gladstone Museum -with reference to the ancient commentaries of St Ephrem and the modern Aramaic work of Dr. George Lamsa. The debates of Younan and Baucher with the scholarship of Guillems have also been reference points. The Jesse Payne Margoliouth (nee Smith) lexicon, William Jennings Syraic lexicon and Stevenson's Grammar of Palestinian Jewish Aramaic have been ever near sine-qua-nons. All these instruments God graciously supplied to me -the Greek in tender years-the Hebrew in young manhood and the Aramaic during retirement years. I should mention that my son

Mark bought me Mageira's translation and lexicon (which facilitated my early learning and writing of Estrangelo Aramaic and that I acquired the exhaustive Sokoloff lexicon which traces Aramaic from Babylon to Assyria to Iraq and Syria and the Levant as the language of 4 civilisations.

(3) Where did you get the time? During a period of semi-retirement from 2000-2002 in Chislehurst in the congenial circumstances of Cedarmore Court I began a comparatively modest project of putting together under the title of "Well and Altar" a series of New Testament chapters relying mainly in those days on inter-testamental quotations to elucidate exposition. To this early interest I added my study of Greek word meanings and launched out on the larger project of attempting a commentary on the entire N.T. There then interposed 4 good years of preaching and ministry as Pastor of Welling Baptist Church. Following retirement to Leicester where my wife and I were provided with a pleasant home by Sir John Parker (My brother in law) I resumed work. After five solid years of industry working at the rate of 8-10 hours daily 7 days a week through great mercy in matters of health and by support, care and consideration of my delightful wife Mina I reaped the reward of having to hand a complete Old Testament translation and commentary. I give glory and thanks to our faithful Lord for at the inception of this whole project I made a trust with the Lord for strength to sustain me until I could see it through.

(4) Why did you decide to put your work out in CD form? Remember I was a fellow of some 58 years of age when I began to look down this corridor of time. By 2008 I had set down a project period stretching to 2015 By 2020 I was a man of 77 and by grace had a complete NT commentary based on the Master's Voice to offer on the web,. You may ask significantly why I have not approached publishers? The answer is that for me in advanced years the volume of work and new developments of work volume on 66 bible books with associated niche topics and digital learning was altogether quite enough. Proof reading of such a mass of text alone must have consumed a regular working year. Besides all this my intention has always been twofold-to hone the commentaries and initially to produce up to 70 ancillary desk-top published studies and numerous CD's and eventually (now realizable in the 2020's) to launch the work (of 20 years) free on the common domain through the internet. I express my gratitude to Colin Barnard of Cybercey for his vital and valued help in that connection

(5) *What is special about the Westgate Commentary? In a word it is a commentary that takes large account of what the prophets wrote and spoke. Moses was a prophet. Samuel led a school of prophecy. David reaches prophetic heights in his psalmody. Isaiah and the major and minor prophets brought insights in the good of which we live daily. The writings conclude the O.T. prophetic testimony and chronicle whole tracts of prophetic history in the books by that name. The gospels and Acts herald the fulfilment of the Kingdom of God. Paul constantly trains his converts to look toward the return of Christ. Christians work assiduously as evangelists for very love of His appearing. Even in Romans 10-11 Paul stresses the ultimate ingathering of Israel and the Millennial blessing of the Gentiles. Peter in his pastorals is apocalyptic and gives us an entire parade of Common Era history in 2 Peter 3. Of course the N.T. ends with the book of Revelation – “The Apocalypse”. It was a theologian no less profound than Karl Barth who arraigned moderns for their view that the “eschatology” is “just a harmless little chapter at the conclusion of Christian Dogmatics.” The Spirit of Prophecy is both author and interpreter of the scriptures – of this the apostles Peter and John were emphatic. We dare not read scripture as a mere history book or teach it supremely as literary genre as is the increasing academic practice. This book lives and is the basis of our nurture, a means of grace and its teaching and principles are fundamental to our spiritual development and Christ who is coming again is both our Saviour, Sovereign and Judge.*

How is this commentary presented? The ABC (Aramaic Bible Companion) Bible Commentary segment of my work as an individual effort is styled not very different from the esoteric and still widely used commentary of Matthew Henry in that the original text and commentary are inter-related. Text is either in “Bold” or “plain” script and commentary is italicised. Scattered throughout there are numerous references to the original languages. Because the whole volume of work is not allied to other commentators and quite slender reference is made to other authors it was of no value to render the work unnecessarily complex and time-consuming by developing a plethora of footnotes. This is not to disguise the fact that occasional attributed references are used from memory and the author is quick to deny any pretence of scholarly status and joyously adopts the “Scrubbler” nom-de-plume. Like Wesley I am essentially a man of “One Book” and wedded for life to the text of scripture itself. As to interpretation I would not be highly regarded by Origen who “wished to have the literal and obvious sense of the words of scripture disregarded, and an arcane sense, lying concealed in the envelope of the words, to be

sought for". The Reformers tilted toward the plain literal sense and I have maintained that corrective. I have had to part company with very great scholars who are averse to the fact that the nation of Israel still figures in the end-time and future purposes of God alongside the Church. My motto is "courage and clarity" and I maintain against all odds that biblical prophecy renders a far different conclusion.

(6) What distinctives can we hope to find in the Westgate Commentaries? The answer could be lengthy but I summarise:

- (1) Awareness throughout of the Spirit of Prophecy*
- (2) In the law (Pentateuch) the Jewish Haftarah of over 365 readings forms the basis for a very different treatment of the Law of Moses. It is expounded for the devotional use of the Christian using the Torah "pointer" concept to direct the reader to the Christ who gave & fulfilled the law. The five books fall under 54 topical divisions –each theme illuminated 7 times–yielding outstanding topical teaching & a year's profitable meditation.*
- (3) Treatment of the Psalms is quite different. The 56 "Mizmor" psalms forms the kernel of this devotional storehouse and is a splendid source of doctrine and devotion*
- (4) The writings of Solomon bring to light his discernment and purpose to seed the Hebrew tongue with memorable expressions and story-lines much Shakespeare did for the English tongue. You will get a new feel for the wise king turned preacher whose intent was to facilitate a depth of spirituality using the Hebrew tongue*
- (5) The gospel writers are seen as story tellers of the Greatest Story Ever whose lasting value is in the prominence they give to Jesus Christ and each has their special contribution to make. Matthew builds up a picture from an aggregate of dramatic "Beholds!" Mark testifies to the instant profound change that our Lord brought about in lives and in Israel. Luke records 72 episodes of events stranger than fiction and John gives us the life of Christ serialised in 7 parts with up to 200 cumulative instances that give evidence of Christ's deity or humanity.*
- (6) In the Acts a further 40 and more historical events are recorded in which the Spirit of God continues to oversee the expansion of the Church into all the world*
- (7) The distinctives in the Pauline writings are traceable epistle by epistle. Two good example of this are the "Harmony Knots" of*

Ephesians or the “8 Excursi” teaching points in 1 Corinthians that highlight Paul’s teaching on “Women” and “resurrection”

- (8) The book of Hebrews the author holds was written by Barnabas and much thought has been given to the author’s concept of perfection as it relates for instance to those who die in the Lord. A more scholarly exegesis of 70 theological terms that are peculiar to the writer has been produced under the title “The Sculptured Language” of Hebrews*
- (9) The ABC treatment up-grades James as a teaching epistle and the whole concept of “philadelphia” or Christian brotherhood has been better profiled*
- (10) The Petrine epistles have been treated (1 Peter) under the concept of “the keys” and (2 Peter) under the theme of the Rapture*
- (11) Jude is presented as ever on the basis of contextual interpretation as teaching home truths minted by Jesus and delivered under the carpenter’s “memoranda” of which there are 9 in all in the book*
- (12) The Apocalypse sits well with my motto of “clarity and courage”. The book has an internal Meta Tauta device exactly like that of the Gospel of John which renders is a true revealing or unveiling and not as many would have it an obfuscating of truth and sheer confusion of symbols. Account has been taken of the 620 and more O.T. references that come into play to bring precision and definition to the final book of Holy Scripture.*

(7) Why have you divided the bible into 10 parts?

Because though the O.T. has 3 natural divisions the “Former prophets” (including much history of Israel) deserve to be treated separately and the Psalms have a similar claim. Thus the O.T. is set out as:-

- (1) Moses and the law*
- (2) Samuel and the former prophets*
- (3) David and the Psalms*
- (4) Job and the Writings and*
- (5) Isaiah and the (latter) prophets*

The N.T. again is generally presented under the Gospels, Acts, Pauline and Other Epistles and the Apocalypse. I have refined that somewhat to present it as follows:-

- (6) Matthew and the teachers*
- (7) Peter and the Pastors*
- (8) Luke and the histories*
- (9) Paul and the Gentiles*
- (10) John and Christian thought*

I have pleasure in commending the ABC store of files for download from the Aramaic Bible Companion.UK Website and pray that it may please God to enable you to derive profit and advance your understanding of the revealed will of God from studying the whole counsel of God through the medium of ABC.

Westgate August 2012

& Albion Court 2020

Bob Coffey L'shuvkha Marya

To the glory of the Lord

Aramaic Bible Companion

Footnote

The Bible Commentary is now available on the internet and all files may be downloaded free of charge. It is but one section i.e. Bible Classics" of seven pages on offer for your interest. The other pages are "The soul of time"(Christianity & Time topics), "Vision essentials"(prophecy)and "Devotion and discipline"(a number of substantial files deriving from my increased awareness through scripture study of the need and encouragement therein given to walk with God). Pages 5,6 & 7 feature the "Theology Library"(representing a minimal venture I have had to make on account of the application to history of Biblical Theology into the field of general theology), "Serendipity Suite" –a motley of files from children's gospel stories to highly academic papers and a little autobiography and finally page seven to the "Bitesize New Testament" which represents through the Greek and Aramaic NT Wordbooks well nigh five years of work. The latter I have had to make available now not in as brief or well homed state as I would like because the years are flying and I am heavenbound. All glory to the Lord Jesus Christ who brought me alive from my mother's womb and gave me a helpmeet so very pleasant and truly godly and sons who excel in all that is best in mind and heart, in faith and its practice, in learning and its dissemination. For all this I am among the happiest of men and give thanks to Him who sought me and bought me with His own precious blood.

Bob Coffey L'shuvkha Marya

To the glory of the Lord

Aramaic Bible Companion