



The Division between Western and Eastern Manuscripts in the Peshitta Psalter: An Insurmountable Obstacle for a Critical Edition?

Ignacio Carbajosa

'San Dámaso' School of Theology, Madrid

Abstract

At the end of the nineteenth century Alfred Rahlfs stated that the manuscripts of the Old Testament Peshitta were clearly divided into two families according to confessional criteria (following the schism between the Eastern and Western Syriac Churches). As a consequence, no critical edition could be done. One century later Piet B. Dirksen cast doubt on the classical theory saying that the schism had been of no consequence for the transmission of the text. But there was one exception: the book of Psalms, on which the old paradigm would continue to weigh. This article challenges the statement on the role of the Psalter.

Keywords

Syriac, Peshitta, Psalms, Manuscripts, Textual Criticism, Critical Edition

1. The History of an Unfounded Paradigm

In the history of the exegesis of the biblical text, work has frequently been built on certain presuppositions, which, though never sufficiently justified, have been backed by the authority of figures of the highest caliber and become unquestionable dogmas. Only time, and the appearance of new data, have made it possible to take down an edifice that was built on weak foundations.

This is the case of the theory of Alfred Rahlfs concerning the division of the manuscripts of the Syriac version of the Old Testament called the Peshitta.¹ In his opinion, the manuscripts that have come down to us (all

¹ A. Rahlfs, 'Beiträge zur Textkritik der Peshitta', *ZAW* 9 (1889), pp. 161–210.

of them later than the fifth century AD) are clearly divided into two families according to confessional criteria. Indeed, according to the German author, the schism that divided the Syriac church into two parts, ‘Nestorian’ and ‘Jacobite’, which coincided with a marked geographic separation, affected the textual transmission of the Peshitta, which after that time developed along two independent paths. The ‘official’ division came about in the Synod of Beth Lapat, in AD 484, when the Eastern Syriac Church accepted Nestorian doctrine as its own and separated from Constantinople and Rome. The Nestorian Church, in the East, remained under the Persian Empire, while the Jacobite Church, in the West, remained under the Byzantine Empire.

Some data seemed to support the theory of Rahlfs. In the first place, the controversy between the two Churches made it plausible to posit separate lines of textual transmission for the Peshitta, subordinated to different interests. In the second place, the very physical appearance of the manuscripts that have survived the passage of time clearly showed their Eastern or Western origin. In fact, the development of a type of Estrangela script characteristic of the Nestorians helped to clearly distinguish the two traditions. Other data could also be added in the case of the Psalter. In this book, the titles that head each of the Psalms make it possible to distinguish the Eastern tradition from the Western one. In most of the manuscripts these titles deviate from their Hebrew *Vorlage*. In some no title at all appears, while in others descriptive glosses of a historical character or even dogmatic-ethical content are introduced; the latter have a plainly Christian origin. In particular, the manuscripts of the Eastern family are clearly distinguished from those of the Western family because they contain long titles that are clearly indebted to the exegesis of Theodore of Mopsuestia, an Antiochean author of the fourth century who had great influence on the Eastern Syriac Church.²

It would have been logical to expect Rahlfs to support the theory that these initial data seemed to suggest with a textual study. However, he did not. Even so, the historical evidence was sufficient for this theory to become established among scholars of the Peshitta.

² For a study of these titles, cf. J.-M. Vosté, ‘Sur les titres des Psaumes dans la Pešitta surtout d’après la recension orientale’, *Bib* 25 (1944), pp. 210–235; W. Bloemendaal, *The Headings of the Psalms in the East Syrian Church* (Leiden: Brill, 1960); H.F. van Rooy, ‘The Psalms in Early Syriac Tradition’, in P.W. Flint and P.D. Miller (eds.), *The Book of Psalms. Composition and Reception* (VTSup 99; Leiden: Brill, 2005), pp. 537–550 (542–546).

2. Toward a New Paradigm

Almost a century later, Piet B. Dirksen, basing his work on the textual studies of some authors (among them his own studies on the textual tradition of the Peshitta of Judges), laid the foundation to definitively break out of the paradigm introduced by Rahlfs.³ Dirksen casts doubt on the classical theory by asking two questions. First, is the paradigm of the development of the textual tradition supported by the textual data? Second, is this textual development as probable as it initially seems on the basis of the historical evidence? In both cases the answer is negative.

With regard to the first question, after reviewing eight textual studies on different books of the Peshitta, Dirksen concludes that ‘Rahlfs’s hypothesis of a different western and an eastern text finds no support in manuscript evidence and must be given up’.⁴ As for the second question, Dirksen casts doubt on the presumed historical plausibility of the classical paradigm by calling both of its two basic presuppositions into question. In the first place, there are no data that make it possible to uphold the hypothesis that before the schism there existed a common standardized text that was the starting point for the subsequent development of each tradition.⁵ In the second place, there is no evidence that supports the idea that, starting from the common text, the two traditions developed characteristic texts that later split (and blurred) in secondary traditions, such as are found today in groups of manuscripts.⁶ Dirksen’s general conclusion is that the schism between the Eastern and Western Churches ‘has been of no consequence for the transmission of the text of the O.T. Peshitta’.⁷ Instead of the division of manuscripts into Eastern and Western, Dirksen, based on the studies of Marinus D. Koster,⁸ proposes recognizing a more real division: that between ancient manuscripts (prior to

³ P.B. Dirksen, ‘East and West, Old and Young, in the Text Tradition of the Old Testament Peshitta’, *VT* 35 (1985), pp. 468–484.

⁴ Dirksen, ‘East and West’, p. 476.

⁵ ‘There is no reason to assume that these developments began only some time after the East-West schism. On the contrary, it seems safe to assume that already at the time of the schism the Peshitta text existed in a very varied form’ (Dirksen, ‘East and West’, p. 477).

⁶ ‘We know nothing about any attempt, ecclesiastical or otherwise, to standardize the text of the Syriac Bible. This would have been difficult to achieve in any case, in view of the geographical spread of copying centres’ (Dirksen, ‘East and West’, p. 478).

⁷ Dirksen, ‘East and West’, p. 478.

⁸ M.D. Koster, *The Peshitta of Exodus: The Development of its Text in the Course of Fifteen Centuries* (Assen–Amsterdam: Van Gorcum, 1977).

the ninth century AD) and younger manuscripts (later than the ninth century). The more ancient manuscripts are taken to be witnesses to the most ancient form (that we can attain) of the text, while the form that is found in the more recent manuscripts is taken to be secondary, having developed from the more ancient manuscripts.

3. The Book of Psalms: An Exception?

Dirksen's study, which has the virtue of banishing an unfounded paradigm from Peshitta studies, contains an exception, though. Indeed, Dirksen states that there is one book that escapes his conclusions, or to put it another way, a book in which Rahlfs' paradigm is still at work. This is the book of Psalms.

To arrive at this conclusion, Dirksen starts with the edition of the Peshitta Psalter prepared by William E. Barnes⁹ in 1904, which includes a critical apparatus based on the collation of 21 manuscripts,¹⁰ as well as a short study of these manuscripts and their variants. In support of his conclusions, Dirksen presents the later collation of manuscripts prepared by Donald M. Walter for the edition of the Peshitta Psalter¹¹ that was published by the Peshitta Institute of Leiden in 1980, as part of the broader project of publishing all the books of the Syriac version of the Old Testament.

Barnes, based on his own collation of manuscripts, supports their division into Eastern and Western, as Rahlfs proposed.¹² However, based on this same collation, he rejects the idea supported by Rahlfs that it would be necessary to rule out mutual influence between the two traditions due to the hostility that existed between the two confessions. The data say otherwise: 'we cannot say

⁹ W.E. Barnes (ed.), *The Peshitta Psalter According to the West Syrian Text, Edited with an Apparatus Criticus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1904).

¹⁰ Almost all of which are housed in the British Museum. Only four of the manuscripts utilized were not found in London: 7a1 (Milan), 9a1 (Florence), 12a1, and 1711 (Cambridge). In his edition of the Psalter, Barnes was unable to make use of the important testimony of manuscript 8a1 (Paris), or of other valuable testimony, such as that of 811, 1011, and 1111.

¹¹ D.M. Walter, A. Vogel, and R.Y. Ebied, *The Old Testament in Syriac according to the Peshitta Version*, II.3 *The Book of Psalms* (Leiden: Brill, 1980). The collation of the Jacobite manuscripts for this edition was the work of Adalbert Vogel, a great scholar of the Peshitta Psalter, who died before seeing the fruits of this last undertaking.

¹² 'The serious question of criticism is raised by the existence of two groups of MSS, to which the names respectively of *Nestorian* and *Early Jacobite* may be justly applied. The boundary is indeed ill-defined, but the existence of the groups cannot be denied' (Barnes, *The Peshitta Psalter*, p. xxvi).

that we have an unmixed Western text to compare with an unmixed Eastern.¹³ Barnes gives as an example of mutual influence that which the Eastern tradition exercises on two Western manuscripts, 6t1 and 9t3,¹⁴ or the Jacobite revision that Nestorian manuscript 13t3 appears to undergo.¹⁵ Other examples could be added to these, such as the Eastern corrections that are found in 8a1, or the influence of ‘Nestorian’ readings on Western manuscripts 10t1 and 12t7.

Barnes’ general conclusion is that ‘a considerable amount of mixture of text has occurred’.¹⁶ And it is precisely this difficulty in drawing the dividing line between the two groups of manuscripts which constitutes, in Barnes’ opinion, the main obstacle to attaining the text that precedes the schism.¹⁷ This is so much so that the English scholar gave up the task he had already begun of publishing a text earlier than the division of the manuscripts into Western and Eastern; instead, he contented himself with presenting the most ancient Western text, reserving the Eastern readings for the critical apparatus.¹⁸ Specifically, the text that Barnes printed is the *Codex Ambrosianus* (7a1), which in some cases he corrects with the testimony of other ancient Western manuscripts.

As can be observed, the weight of Rahlfs’ paradigm makes itself felt in the case of the Psalter, albeit aggravated by the mixture of text that the mutual influence of the Western and Eastern traditions brought with it. Its most immediate consequence is skepticism about the possibility of attaining a text prior to the schism.

At this point an inevitable question must be asked. Is Barnes’ ‘textual skepticism’ still present today? The question is not at all trivial. If the hypothetical exception of the Psalter should turn out to be actual, the consequences should not be hidden: the Leiden Peshitta edition, based on the *Codex Ambrosianus* (7a1), would represent, in the case of the book of Psalms, only a particular textual tradition, the Western one. Moreover, it would be pointless to take comfort from the fact that it has a critical apparatus with testimonies from all traditions; the type of textual division that Barnes describes would make the work of reconstructing a text prior to the schism of the Syriac Church impossible.

¹³ Barnes, *The Peshitta Psalter*, p. xxxvi.

¹⁴ Barnes, *The Peshitta Psalter*, pp. xxxvi–xxxvii.

¹⁵ Barnes, *The Peshitta Psalter*, p. xliii.

¹⁶ Barnes, *The Peshitta Psalter*, p. xxxvii.

¹⁷ Cf. Barnes, *The Peshitta Psalter*, p. xlii.

¹⁸ Barnes, *The Peshitta Psalter*, p. xlv.

Dirksen's study, as has been seen, does not correct this skepticism. In 1985, his article, based on book-by-book textual studies, managed to throw off the burden with which Rahlfs' paradigm had saddled research on the Peshitta by introducing a new paradigm: the true division is between ancient manuscripts and younger manuscripts, and not so much between Western and Eastern ones. This new starting point made possible a creative use of the critical apparatus of the Leiden edition, or to put it another way, it opened the way for the preparation of critical editions of each book. But there was one exception: the book of Psalms, on which the old paradigm would continue to weigh. Therefore it would not be possible, in the case of the Psalter, to meet the challenge of producing a critical edition (not a diplomatic one, like the current edition) on the basis of the material now available.

Dirksen himself, therefore, supports the conclusions of Barnes and presents the Psalter as the only exception to his new paradigm. Thus he states that, 'in contradistinction to other books, the Psalter does show to some extent a distinction between an eastern and a western text'.¹⁹ It is curious that Dirksen seems to be somewhat more radical than Barnes when presenting the marked division of manuscripts. While Barnes considers that this division exists but that is difficult to identify its outlines due to the mutual influence that there has been between the two traditions, Dirksen insists that, in spite of the mixture, there are clear cases in which the manuscripts are split according to the confessional traditions.

Indeed, Barnes presents 84 cases of 'Nestorian' readings in a list that he describes as 'tentative', since in a good number of cases these readings are not attested solely in Eastern manuscripts, but find support in one or more Western manuscripts. Dirksen emphasizes, however, that in this list there are 14 cases in which the 'Nestorian' reading clearly splits the manuscripts: on one side are the Eastern manuscripts and on the other the Western ones. The more ample material collated by Walter for the Leiden edition of the Psalter seems, in Dirksen's opinion, to support these results. Indeed, the Eastern manuscripts that are incorporated as new material which Barnes did not have available²⁰ line up as a united group in the 14 cases in question. However, Dirksen recognizes, in some cases the new Western material supports the Eastern readings. Even so, Dirksen again concludes that 'in the Psalter we can distinguish between an eastern and a western type of text, be it to a limited extent'. This last note

¹⁹) Dirksen, 'East and West', p. 472.

²⁰) 12t3–4, 13t4, 16t2–3.6, 17t2–3 y 18<13dt. Barnes already had available Eastern manuscripts 12t1, 13t1–3 and 17t1.

effectively recognizes the weight of the evidence emphasized by Barnes: the mutual influence between the two traditions makes it difficult to draw the dividing line.

The reason why this division can be sustained in the case of the Psalter and not in that of other books must be attributed, according to Dirksen, to the liturgical use of the Psalms:

The liturgical use of a biblical text must have been a stabilizing factor as far as the text is concerned, and may easily have been the cause of the fact that certain readings became firmly established in a confessional community with a common liturgy.²¹

4. The Data that Support the Hypothetical Exception

It is now time to stop and analyze the data that seem to support the hypothetical exception of the Psalter. The basic material is the 84 cases of ‘Nestorian’ readings that Barnes presents. As has already been seen, Dirksen reduces them to 14, evaluating only the Eastern readings that do not find partial support in Western manuscripts. An initial observation would already seem to be in order: 14 readings seem to be very few to support the theory of a drastic separation of manuscripts by confessional criteria. In addition, if these 14 readings are subjected to a thorough analysis, it will be seen that only half of them fulfill the requirement of being ‘pure’ Eastern readings, that is, without support from Western manuscripts.

Indeed, the new material contributed by the Leiden edition of the Psalter, collated by Walter, corrects Barnes’ list. Though the new Eastern manuscripts support the 14 strictly Eastern readings, the new Western material behaves in an unexpected way, since in some cases it supports the Eastern *lectiones*. Dirksen recognizes this fact, although he does not put forth any resultant new accounting or draw conclusions. Following his own criterion, that is, making a judgment based only on the pure Eastern readings, it would be necessary to leave out of the list the 7 cases that receive the support of Walter’s new Western material: Ps. 58.12 (the Eastern reading is supported by Western manuscript 12t7); 65.11 (11t1); 104.16 (12t5); 104.24 (10t1^{mg}; 12t5.7); 107.9 (12t7; 12t9^{mg}); 147.16 (10t1; 10t2* ; 10t6^c; 12t2; 12t5.7–8); 150.6 (9t2* ; 10t4; 11t1). Thus, only 7 cases would remain, of which two are doubtful (106.7; 109.27), since the Eastern reading involved receives the support of the marginal reading of Western manuscript 12t9 (Melkite). In the opinion of the editor responsible

²¹ Dirksen, ‘East and West’, p. 473.

for the Leiden edition of the Psalter, the marginal readings of this manuscript, although they sometimes support Eastern readings, should not necessarily be understood to be the product of correction based on a Eastern manuscript.²²

The final result, on which it would be necessary to base a judgment, is that only in 5 (sure) cases²³ do the Eastern manuscripts line up together without the support of Western manuscripts. The conclusion, therefore, seems obvious: this is a very small number of cases on which to base the theory of a sharp division of manuscripts for confessional reasons. The only ‘way out’ to continue supporting a division such as that suggested by Rahlfs is to state, as Barnes does, that this division was clear at a particular time but wound up fading because of the mutual influence between the two traditions. The problem with this *way* is that it is purely hypothetical, as Barnes himself eventually recognizes when he describes his list of ‘Nestorian’ readings as ‘tentative’. On the other hand, Dirksen’s insistence on the presence of a handful of objective data that support the sharp division has been reduced, as has been seen, to a minimal level of expression.

So, in what situation is the Peshitta Psalter left? It has been seen that the clear separation of manuscripts into two traditions cannot be *proved* and, therefore, it is not possible to support, on the basis of the data analyzed, the exception that Dirksen proposes for the new paradigm that supersedes Rahlfs’ old theory. Does this mean that the book of Psalms is no different, in the area of textual tradition, from the rest of the books of the Peshitta? To reach this conclusion it would be necessary to overcome one last obstacle: the shadow of doubt that Barnes’ list of 84 hypothetically ‘Nestorian’ readings casts over the Psalter. It has been seen that neither this list, nor the more reduced one of 14, can *prove* the division that Rahlfs proposes. But it is true that to *prove* the contrary, that is, that this hypothetical division is not actually a division or that it is not decisive or, particularly, that it does not prevent one from arriving, through textual criticism, at the most ancient text possible, it is necessary to submit the list mentioned to examination. And that is precisely what will be done here.

²²) Cf. Walter, Vogel, and Ebied, *The Book of Psalms*, p. xix.

²³) It would be necessary to find out whether any of the Western manuscripts 1411; 1511; 1611.4–5; 1715, whose readings do not appear in the critical apparatus of the Leiden edition, supports these 5 Eastern readings.

5. Study of W.E. Barnes' List of Eastern Readings

Before analyzing these readings it would help to pause a moment to understand what it is that this study should uncover. From a drastic separation of manuscripts on the basis of their attribution to one or the other of the opposing confessional currents, it could be expected that a good number of variants could be explained on the basis of religious creed. A list of 'Nestorian' readings should show that the confessional factor (and not merely the geographical one), to a greater or lesser degree, has influenced the split in the textual tradition. If this is not the case, it would be necessary to begin to speak of 'local' texts rather than 'Nestorian' ones, that is, the division of the manuscripts must be understood, as happens in the case of other ancient versions of the Bible, on the basis of the geographic situation, not on the basis of confessional identity.

In addition, the list under study, which attests to both a tendency of Eastern manuscripts and the mixture of readings due to the mutual influence of the two traditions, is what leads Barnes to give up trying to attain a text earlier than the schism. The study of this list should therefore show that the variants involved are of such a nature that sound textual criticism cannot distinguish between an original reading and a secondary reading. In technical terms, the list should show that the neutralization of external textual criticism (the genealogical tree could not be reconstructed because of textual mixture) would render internal textual criticism incapable of distinguishing the original readings by itself.

After studying the 84 variants involved in Barnes' list, I can order the readings, on the basis of their nature, by using the following typology.

1. In 1 case there is a plus-minus of the conjunction *waw* (81.13).
2. In 9 cases a plus-minus of a preposition is involved (19.13; 39.7; 45.2; 62.9; 66.7; 78.6; 81.4; 129.2; 150.6).
3. In 10 cases a change of preposition is involved (35.20; 73.14; 85.3; 94.8; 102.20; 105.16; 110.2; 125.5; 135.9; 148.14).
4. In 7 cases there is a plus-minus of a *dalath* that functions as a relative in a clause that could omit it (12.9; 22.9; 45.3; 47.4; 69.36; 71.16; 131.2).
5. In 3 cases a plus-minus of the suffixed possessive pronoun is involved (87.6; 140.6; 146.5).
6. In 1 case there is a change in the suffixed possessive pronoun (86.8).
7. In 2 cases a plus-minus of the direct (10.15) or indirect (73.25) object pronoun is involved.
8. In 1 case there is a change in the direct object pronominal suffix (52.7).

9. In 4 cases alternate forms of nominal clauses are involved: either with or without an independent or enclitic pronoun, that is, tripartite or bipartite clauses (16.5; 42.9; 86.5; 104.25).
10. In 5 cases there are alternate forms of the construct chain: with or without genitive *dalath*, with or without a suffix on the first word (18.16; 36.7; 74.20; 104.3; 123.2).
11. In 1 case an alternate form of the existential predicate is involved (58.12).
12. In 4 cases there are alternate forms of the direct object: as a verb suffix or as an independent form (7.9; 26.1; 35.24; 54.3).
13. In 5 cases there is a change of a coordinated clause to a subordinated one: a change of a *waw* to a *dalath* (40.2; 49.10; 80.19; 106.7) or a *beth* (66.14).
14. In 1 case a change of versification is involved, with a change in the position of a *waw* (65.11).
15. In 1 case there is a change in word order: a transposition (17.6).
16. In 12 cases there is a change in the tense of a verb (which sometimes includes a change of person or number) which does not affect the content of the sentence (10.15; 37.22; 45.15; 49.20; 103.12; 104.1–2, 10, 16; 105.8; 119.4; 144.8; 150.6).²⁴
17. In 14 cases the change of a verb or a noun is involved:
 - a. In 2 cases there is an alternate form of the same noun (78.71; 123.3).
 - b. In 6 cases there are synonymous nouns or verbs (7.15; 68.10; 70.6; 104.24; 109.12; 119.176).
 - c. In 6 cases there are different nouns or verbs which are not synonymous (39.3; 68.19; 76.5; 104.20; 109.27; 147.16).

5.1. *In Search of 'Confessional' Readings*

The first task is to try to identify readings that can be described as 'confessional', that is, that can distinguish one Church from another. A good number of readings must be excluded from this discussion at the outset. It is obvious that in the readings included in typologies 1–5, 7, and 9–13 there is no trace of 'confessional' readings. The changes in them have to do with syntax and reflect the evolution of Syriac over time and space, or clearly show the malleability of a language that allows one to construct the same expression in a variety of ways.

²⁴) This variant is 'double': it has a change of person in the verb and a plus-minus of a preposition, so it is analyzed as part of two different typologies. Consequently, the sum of the cases studied comes to 85 and not 84.

In the case of typologies 6 and 8 the issue is changes in pronominal suffixes that do not imply any confessional arguments. In 86.8 the issue is the possessive pronoun that accompanies the word *God* in the expression *There is no (one) like you, Lord, God* [or *my God* (ܘܠܗܐ, Eastern reading), or *our God* (ܘܠܗܐ, Western reading)]. The Syriac reading, as a whole, departs from the one shown by the Masoretic Text [MT] (= Septuagint [LXX]): *there is no one like you among the gods, Lord* (באלהים אדני), which leaves room for polytheism.²⁵ Once באלהים is translated in antipolytheistic code as *Lord* (ܘܠܗܐ), there is no alternative but to translate אדני as *God* (in order not to repeat *Lord*, which would be the expected translation). The Eastern reading (*my God*) could have arisen as the original one from the Hebrew אדני, (the final *yod* would be understood as a first person possessive pronoun), while the Western reading (*our God*) could have arisen during textual transmission as a result of harmonization with a frequent expression in the Psalms ('Lord, our God', cf. 20.8; 90.5, 8, 9; 94.23; 105.7; 106.47; 122.9; 123.2).

In 52.7 the Eastern tradition reads, together with the MT, the LXX and the Syrohexapla [Syh], *Therefore God will crush you, he will destroy you* (...), while the rest of the tradition reads *Therefore God will crush him, he will destroy him* (...). It is difficult to explain the Western (majority) reading, which departs from the MT (= LXX), and which could be the original one. The Eastern reading could arise, as a correction, from the influence of the Greek reading of the LXX (whether directly or through the Syh).

In the variants included in typologies 14 and 15 no doctrinal questions are involved either. In 65.11 both the tradition called 'Nestorian' and the rest of the witnesses have a conjunction *waw* that is not in the MT. But the place where this *waw* is placed is different in the two traditions: *with rain you make grow its sprouts and you bless* [Eastern]; *with rain you make grow and its sprouts you bless* [Western]. In 17.6 the issue is a transposition of the order of a frequently recurring phrase, which can be expressed in a great variety of ways: *incline to me your ear* [Eastern]; *incline your ear to me* [Western].

In typology 16 are found the variants of the Eastern manuscript tradition that affect changes in the tenses of the verbs (which sometimes involve a change in person or number). In half of the cases (10.15; 37.22; 49.20; 104.1–2,

²⁵ The Peshitta Psalter is characterized by some antipolytheistic translations (cf. I. Carbajosa, *The Character of the Syriac Version of Psalms. A Study of Psalms 90–150 in the Peshitta* [MPIL, 17; Leiden: Brill, 2008], pp. 146–150).

10, 16) the variants merely reflect the divergences between the Hebrew text (as it has come down to us in the Masoretic tradition) and the Greek of the LXX. The original reading would have followed the Hebrew and the secondary one would be the product of the influence of the Greek tradition on the manuscript tradition. Also included are those cases in which a part of the manuscript tradition coincides with the shared reading of the MT and the LXX and the other departs from it. It is also very probable in these cases that the secondary reading has come through the influence of the LXX, directly or by way of the Syh. In the remaining cases (45.15; 103.12; 105.8; 119.4; 144.8; 150.6) irrelevant variants are involved, which may have arisen from an attempt to make the reading of the text simpler.

The fourteen cases included in the last typology could be thought of, at first glance, as those with some possibility of harboring variants of ‘confessional’ origin, since what is involved are changes of verbs or nouns. Eight of these cases, however, must be ruled out for this purpose, since the variant in question is merely an alternate form of the same noun (78.71; 123.3) or a synonymous form of the noun or verb in question (7.15; 68.10; 70.6; 104.24; 109.12; 119.176). It would be interesting to study the origin of these changes, but they certainly are not the result of ‘confessional’ issues, since the terms in question are interchangeable. A more careful study is required in the other six cases in which the alternate readings are not synonymous. They are presented below in their double tradition:

- 39.3: West: *my distress was stirred up* (ܘܕܝܠܝܢܝܢ)
East: *my distress was renewed* (ܘܕܝܠܝܢܝܢ)
- 68.19: West: *you gave* (ܘܘܫܬܘܬܝܢ) *gifts to men*
East: *you received* (ܘܘܫܬܘܬܝܢ) *gifts from men*
- 76.5: West: *You are radiant and anointed* (ܘܘܫܬܘܬܝܢ) *from your strong mountain*
East: *You are radiant and glorified* (ܘܘܫܬܘܬܝܢ) *from your strong mountain*
- 104.20: West: *all the beasts of the forest live* (ܘܘܫܬܘܬܝܢ) *in it*
East: *all the beasts of the forest pass through* (ܘܘܫܬܘܬܝܢ) *it*
- 109.27: West: *so that they may know that this is yours* (ܘܘܫܬܘܬܝܢ)
East: *so that they may know that this is your hand* (ܘܘܫܬܘܬܝܢ)
- 147.16: West: *he scatters the hoarfrost* (ܘܘܫܬܘܬܝܢ) *like ashes*
East: *he scatters the mist* (ܘܘܫܬܘܬܝܢ) *like ashes*

In 39.3; 104.20; 109.27 and 147.16 it is evident that the difference between the two readings involved has nothing to do with doctrinal issues. Moreover, the variants arise from the influence of the Greek tradition of the LXX

(directly or via the Syh) on the Eastern copyists (39.3;²⁶ 104.20;²⁷ 147.16)²⁸ or sometimes from a correction of the Western tradition that seeks to provide a more harmonious text (109.27).²⁹

The variant readings of 68.19 and 76.5 do appear at first glance to involve theological issues. However, in neither of the cases can the variant be attributed to a ‘confessional’ reading that distinguishes one Church from the other. In 68.19 the Eastern tradition seems to preserve the original reading (ܒܫܒܠܐ, *you received*), the one that coincides with the MT and the LXX, while the Western reading (ܒܫܒܠܐ, *you gave*) seems to arise from the influence of the New Testament [NT] reading *Ascending to the heights, he led captives and he gave* (ἔδωκεν/ܘܫܒܠܐ) *gifts to men* (Eph 4.8), which applies the psalm to Christ.

In 76.5 the origin of the variant readings must be related to the graphic similarity of the two words (ܘܫܒܠܐ/ܘܫܒܠܐ), which must have facilitated the transition from one form to the other. The original reading may well have been ܘܫܒܠܐ, *glorified* (which is the reading expected from the MT: cf. 8.2, 10; 93.4; 7a1 has ܘܫܒܠܐ in this verse!), from which the Western reading would have subsequently arisen (ܘܫܒܠܐ, *anointed*) due to the similarity of the written

²⁶ ‘In Ps. 39:3 the MT reads the expression, *my distress was stirred up* (וַעֲכַר) which most of the Pps manuscript tradition translates by ܘܫܒܠܐ, *was stirred up*, from the verb ܫܒܠܐ, which is the same that on other occasions (Josh 6:18; 7:25; 1 Sam 14:29; 1 Kgs 18:17–18) translates the Hebrew עָכַר. The reading ܘܫܒܠܐ, *was renewed*, from the MS 9t3 and from the MSS 8a1^c, 10t2, 12t1–5, 7, seems to arise from an influence of the LXX reading ἀνεκαινώθη, either directly or via the Syh reading ܘܫܒܠܐ, both having the meaning of *was renewed*’ (I. Carbajosa, ‘The Syriac Old Testament Tradition: Moving from Jerusalem to Athens’, in J.P. Monferrer-Sala [ed.], *Eastern Crossroads. Essays on Medieval Christian Legacy* [Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2007], pp. 109–130 [126]).

²⁷ ‘The MSS 12t3–5 and 8a1^c read, ܘܫܒܠܐ, *they pass through*, instead of ܘܫܒܠܐ, due to the influence of the LXX (διελεύσονται), either directly or via the Syh (ܘܫܒܠܐ)’ (Carbajosa, ‘The Syriac Old Testament Tradition’, p. 127).

²⁸ ‘The reading of the MSS 10t1.2* and of 8a1^c, 10t6^c, 12t2–5, 7, 8, *he scatters the mist* (ܘܫܒܠܐ) *like ashes*, seems to have been influenced by the LXX Greek reading, *he scatters the mist* (ὁμίχλην) *like ashes*, directly or via the Syh (ܘܫܒܠܐ)’ (Carbajosa, ‘The Syriac Old Testament Tradition’, p. 127).

²⁹ ‘...the transition from ܘܫܒܠܐ to ܘܫܒܠܐ can be understood not only because of the graphic similarity between the two terms (with three consonants in common), but because the expression constructed with ܘܫܒܠܐ yields a more harmonious text. The expression *so that they may know that this is yours* combines elegantly with the second stich *you, Lord, have done it*, and furthermore, it assimilates to similar expressions in the Psalter that use the form ܘܫܒܠܐ (such as 74:16, *yours is the day and yours the night*; 89:12, *yours are the heavens and yours is the earth*; 89:14, *yours is the arm and yours is the strength*)’ (Carbajosa, *The Character*, pp. 363–364).

forms (and to the theological resonances of the resulting text). The Eastern reading (ܘܒܪܝܢ) should be interpreted as a correction of the Western reading on the basis of the LXX (θαυμαστῶς). It is difficult to conceive of the Eastern reading as the original one, since ܘܒܪܝܢ would have been expected instead of ܘܒܪܝܢ.

It must be concluded, therefore, that in no case are the readings called ‘Nestorian’ on Barnes’ list characterized by a particular confessional position that can distinguish them from the ‘Western’ readings. It would be more just, then, to speak of ‘local’ readings than of ‘confessional’ readings. In this regard, the manuscript tradition of the Peshitta Psalter would be no different from other biblical manuscript traditions, whether of the Peshitta itself, of the original texts or of the ancient versions, in which the manuscripts are grouped by regions, forming families with similar characteristics.

5.2. *In Search of the Original Reading*

In addition to the foregoing data, another piece of information has come to light during the study of the features that distinguish the Eastern readings from the Western ones. In most of the cases that have been examined closely (16) it has been possible to distinguish, with greater or lesser probability, the original reading from the secondary one. This fact would seem to contradict the hypothesis of Barnes that the mutual influence between the two traditions might have resulted in a mixture of readings that would make it impossible to distinguish the original reading from the secondary one. To the 16 cases studied others can be added in which it is possible to distinguish with sufficient clarity, which is the original reading.

Thus, for example, in five of the eight cases of typology 17 that have not been studied, since the choice shown is between synonymous nouns or verbs (and, therefore, it does not seem to entail ‘confessional’ issues), it is possible to distinguish with considerable confidence between the original reading and the secondary one. These cases are presented below:

- 7.15: West: *Because he conceived evil* (ܘܒܪܝܢ), *and engendered falsehood and gave birth to evil* (ܘܒܪܝܢ)
 East: *Because he conceived evil* (ܘܒܪܝܢ), *and engendered falsehood and gave birth to deceit* (ܘܒܪܝܢ)

The two readings differ on the last word. Everything seems to indicate that the original reading is the Western one (ܘܒܪܝܢ), since it is the usual way in

the Peshitta Psalter of translating the Hebrew שָׁקֵר which is the source (in its 20 occurrences in Psalms, שָׁקֵר is translated 12 times by ܘܫܩܪܐ, four by ܘܫܩܪܘܢܐ and another four with the root ܫܩܪ). In no case is it translated by ܘܫܩܪܐ, which, moreover, is a *hapax legomenon* in the entire Psalter. In addition, the Peshitta Psalter has no problem repeating nouns in the same verse,³⁰ as happens in this particular case with the word ܘܫܩܪܐ in the Western reading (this same word is again repeated in 94.4 when translating two different Hebrew nouns). The noun ܘܫܩܪܐ is, in addition, one of the ‘catch-all’ words that appears most frequently in the Psalms (it translates 18 Hebrew terms). The Eastern reading should be understood as a correction to improve the style, probably under the influence of the parallel expression in Job 15.35: *they engender evil* (ܘܫܩܪܐ) *and give birth to deceit* (ܘܫܩܪܐ).

70.6: West: *You are my help and my deliverer, my God* (ܘܫܩܪܐ) *do not delay*
 East: *You are my help and my deliverer, Lord* (ܘܫܩܪܐ) *do not delay*

As can be seen, the divine name is what is at issue in this variant. Most manuscripts of the MT and the LXX have the name *Lord* (יהוה and κύριε, respectively). However, some Hebrew manuscripts have אלהי (my God), as do the Greek manuscripts of the Lucianic recension (ὁ θεός μου). Both deviations from the majority readings seem to arise from a harmonization with the parallel text of Ps. 40.18, in which only the divine name changes: *You are my help and my deliverer, my God, do not delay* (the Peshitta is unanimous in this case, translating with ܘܫܩܪܐ). The original Syriac reading could be the Western one, in view of the tendency of the translator of the Peshitta Psalter toward harmonization.³¹ In addition, it would not be possible to rule out the possibility that the harmonization was already present in the Hebrew *Vorlage*, so that the Western reading would have merely translated literally (following its usual correspondences: ܘܫܩܪܐ to translate both יהוה and אדני, and ܘܫܩܪܐ to translate אלהים).³² The Eastern reading of manuscripts 1211.3.4 could be understood as a correction resulting from the influence of the Greek translation of the LXX.

³⁰ Carbajosa, *The Character*, pp. 60–61.

³¹ Cf. Carbajosa, *The Character*, pp. 104–127, 174.

³² In a few cases the Syriac version deviates from these fixed correspondences. Two of these exceptions are 108.4 and 112.7, in which the Peshitta translates the divine name יהוה as ܘܫܩܪܐ, precisely for the sake of harmonizing with other expressions in Psalms, just as it does in the verse under discussion here.

- 78.71: West: *suckling flock* (ܡܚܢܡܐ)
 East: *flock that suckles* (ܡܚܢܡܐ)

The two terms can be considered interchangeable, as alternate forms of the same noun. It is therefore difficult to determine which is the original reading. However, the fact that the Eastern reading coincides with that of the Syh makes it possible to think that the Western one is original and the alternative arose through the influence of the Syrohexaplaric version.

- 104.24: West: *How many are your works* (ܡܚܢܡܐ), *Lord, and you made* (ܡܚܢܡܐ) *them all with Wisdom!*
 East: *How many are your works* (ܡܚܢܡܐ), *Lord, and you created* (ܡܚܢܡܐ) *them all with Wisdom!*

As can be observed, in this case what is at issue is the verb of the second stich. The Eastern tradition has the verb *ܡܚܢܡܐ* (*create*) and the Western tradition *ܡܚܢܡܐ* (*make*, from the same root as *ܡܚܢܡܐ*, *your works*). This case is similar to the one studied a little earlier in Ps 7.15. The original reading seems to be the Western one, since throughout the Peshitta Psalter the Hebrew verb *עשה* (which appears in this verse) is always translated with the Syriac *ܡܚܢܡܐ*. The Syriac version has no problem, in the different books of the Bible, with translating the frequent Hebrew verb pair *עשה* + noun *מלאכה* by joining the verb *ܡܚܢܡܐ* with the noun *ܡܚܢܡܐ*, as it appears in this text.³³ The only case in Psalms of this Hebrew pair, Ps 107.23, is translated with *ܡܚܢܡܐ*, *ܡܚܢܡܐ* according to most of the manuscript tradition, which very likely implies an original *ܡܚܢܡܐ*, *ܡܚܢܡܐ*, as some manuscripts preserve it.³⁴ The Eastern reading could have arisen from an interest in improving the style, which may have been influenced by the fact that two verses later the verb *ܡܚܢܡܐ* (104.26) appears.

- 119.176: West: *I wandered like a lost sheep* (ܡܚܢܡܐ ܡܚܢܡܐ)
 East: *I wandered like a lost sheep* (ܡܚܢܡܐ ܡܚܢܡܐ)

The nouns used by the two traditions are completely interchangeable. Both are *hapax legomena* in Psalms, as is the Hebrew noun that they translate (*שה*). In this case I would daresay that the original reading is the Eastern one, while the

³³) Cf. Gen. 39.11; Exod. 35.35; Lev. 7.24; Num. 4.3; Deut. 5.13; Judg. 16.11; 1 Sam. 8.16; 1 Kgs. 5.30; 2 Kgs. 12.12; 2 Chr. 24.12; Ezra 3.9; Neh. 2.16; Esth. 3.9; Jer. 17.22; Ezek. 15.3; Hag. 1.14.

³⁴) Cf. the discussion of this case in Carbajosa, *The Character*, pp. 362–363.

Western one could be explained by the influence of the Syriac versions of the NT on the manuscript tradition of the Psalter. Indeed, in Luke 15,6 both the *Vetus Syra* (Sinaiticus and Curetonianus manuscripts) and the Peshitta translate the Greek expression ‘my sheep that had gotten lost’ as ܘܒܝ ܘܠܘܢܐ ܕܘܢܐܝܢܐ. The reading of the Syh in Ps. 119.176, ܘܒܝ ܘܠܘܢܐ ܕܘܢܐܝܢܐ, may also have played a part in introducing the hypothetical change in the textual tradition.

When the data yielded by these individual studies is brought together, it is seen that in at least one quarter of the 84 cases in Barnes’ list internal textual criticism can distinguish between the original reading and the secondary one. It should be remembered that the 21 cases being studied are those that show the most ‘substantial’ differences between the Eastern tradition and the Western one (basically, the ones included in typologies 16 and 17). In most of these cases the secondary reading enters the manuscript tradition through the influence of the Greek tradition of the LXX (directly, through the recommended Greek readings of Greek or Syriac authors or through the Syh) or through the influence of the Syriac versions of the NT. The manuscript tradition most vulnerable to these influences is, without doubt, the Eastern one.

This last fact tends to support the theory of M.P. Weitzman about the history of the manuscript tradition of the Peshitta of the OT. This author states that ‘those mss which regularly preserve old readings come from west-Syriac centres’, while ‘the new readings originated at some prestigious centre in the east’.³⁵ It would have been precisely in the East, according to Weitzman, where the work of standardization, on the basis of new readings, would have begun, and it would eventually have had an effect on the West as well.³⁶ The latest studies of B. ter Haar Romeny on the manuscript tradition of Isaiah, based on the citations of the Church Fathers, point in the same direction.³⁷

³⁵ M.P. Weitzman, *The Syriac Version of the Old Testament. An Introduction* (UCOP, 56; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 302.

³⁶ Curiously, Weitzman offers the Psalter as an exception to this general theory, an assertion that the data actually contradict (cf. Weitzman, *The Syriac Version*, p. 304).

³⁷ Cf. Bas ter Haar Romeny, ‘The Peshitta of Isaiah: Evidence from the Syriac Fathers’, in W.Th. van Peursen and R.B. ter Haar Romeny (eds.), *Text, Translation, and Tradition: Studies on the Peshitta and Its Use in the Syriac Tradition Presented to Konrad D. Jenner on the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday* (MPIL, 14; Leiden: Brill, 2006), pp. 149–164.

5.3. In Search of Scribal Tendencies

Now it is time to give attention to the more than 50 remaining cases that have not been studied because they had nothing to say about the matter of the confessional character of the variants (those included in typologies 1–5, 7, 9–13). In this case the variants have to do with the evolution of the language, improvements in style, the clarification or specification of the text through its syntax. From a list of the Eastern readings a certain homogeneity in the syntactic options might be expected, or to put it another way, a marked scribal tendency might be expected, which would be one of the signs of the identity of the manuscript family. If this existed, it would have to show itself in cases such as the changes in prepositions (typology 3), the plus-minus of the relative *dalath* (typology 4) and especially in the alternate forms of nominal clauses (typology 9), of the construct chain (typology 10) and of the direct object (typology 12). These five groups of variants will now be studied.

a. Change of Preposition

35.20:	West:	כחכר כר
	East:	כחכר כר
73.14:	West:	כחכר כר
	East:	כחכר כר
85.3:	West:	כחכר כר
	East:	כחכר כר
94.8:	West:	כחכר כר
	East:	כחכר כר
102.20:	West:	כחכר כר
	East:	כחכר כר
105.16:	West:	כחכר כר
	East:	כחכר כר
110.2:	West:	כחכר כר
	East:	כחכר כר
125.5:	West:	כחכר כר
	East:	כחכר כר
135.9:	West:	כחכר כר
	East:	כחכר כר
148.14:	West:	כחכר כר
	East:	כחכר כר

It is in the usage of prepositions that the ‘spirit’ of a language, its distinctive character, is best seen. For this reason it is very difficult to establish a system of correspondences between the prepositions of two different languages.

In addition, within a single language, as happens with Syriac, there are prepositions that, in some cases, can be interchangeable. This being the case, the evolution of the language or its geographic situation can cause one preposition to lose importance relative to another. In the list of 10 Eastern readings given above, four cases can be identified (102.20; 105.16; 110.2 and 125.5) in which the Eastern reading systematically attests the preposition ܐ in contrast to the Western reading, which has ܐ (or ܐ, in 110.2). The attestations provided are few, but in this case it is possible to speak of a tendency peculiar to the Eastern readings (although in 105.16 and 110.2 they receive the support of Western manuscript 7a1), which privilege a particular preposition.

At times the difference between the Eastern reading and the Western one in the matter of prepositions merely reflects the tension between a hypothetical original *lectio*, which was probably translated freely from the Hebrew, and a reading—generally to be regarded as secondary—that tends to correct based on the Greek (which usually coincides with the Hebrew text). Even so, each case must be studied individually, since the opposite can happen: the original reading is adapted to the Hebrew (which would coincide with the Greek) and the secondary one is a correction in the textual tradition on account of accommodation, evolution of the language, improvement of the syntax, etc.

Thus, for example, in 73.14; 85.3; 102.20; 105.16, and 125.5, the reading of the Eastern family coincides with that of the LXX (and not always with that of the Syh) in contrast to the reading attested by the Western manuscripts, in which it appears to be a secondary correction. In the five cases the Western reading can be quite easily derived from the one found in the MT by following the characteristics of the Syriac translation. In 94.8, however, the Eastern reading (*understand, you [most] stupid among the people*), which coincides with that of the MT, the LXX and the Syh, could be the original one, while the majority one may have arisen from an accommodating or simplifying reading (*understand, you stupid [ones] of the people*).³⁸ In other cases it is the Eastern reading that appears to accommodate or simplify, as in 110.2 (the preposition ܐ seems to improve the syntax) or in 148.14.

³⁸ This is the opinion of Weitzman: M.P. Weitzman, 'The Originality of Unique Readings in Peshitta MS 9a1', P.B. Dirksen and M.J. Mulder (eds.), *The Peshitta: Its Early Text and History. Papers read at the Peshitta Symposium held at Leiden 30–31 August 1985* (MPIL, 4; Leiden: Brill, 1988), pp. 225–258 (251).

b. *Plus-minus Subordinating Dalath*

- 12.9: West: ܦܩܝܕܝܢ ܗܘܢ ܕܢܝܢ ܕܠܗܘܢ ܕܠܗܘܢ ܕܠܗܘܢ ܕܠܗܘܢ ܕܠܗܘܢ
 East: ܦܩܝܕܝܢ ܗܘܢ ܕܢܝܢ ܕܠܗܘܢ ܕܠܗܘܢ ܕܠܗܘܢ ܕܠܗܘܢ ܕܠܗܘܢ
- 22.9: West: ܕܠܗܘܢ ܕܠܗܘܢ ܕܠܗܘܢ ܕܠܗܘܢ ܕܠܗܘܢ ܕܠܗܘܢ
 East: ܕܠܗܘܢ ܕܠܗܘܢ ܕܠܗܘܢ ܕܠܗܘܢ ܕܠܗܘܢ ܕܠܗܘܢ
- 45.3: West: ܠܥܘܢ ܡܢܝܢ ܕܢܝܢ ܕܠܗܘܢ ܕܠܗܘܢ ܕܠܗܘܢ ܕܠܗܘܢ ܕܠܗܘܢ
 East: ܠܥܘܢ ܡܢܝܢ ܕܢܝܢ ܕܠܗܘܢ ܕܠܗܘܢ ܕܠܗܘܢ ܕܠܗܘܢ ܕܠܗܘܢ
- 47.4: West: ܕܠܗܘܢ ܕܠܗܘܢ ܕܠܗܘܢ ܕܠܗܘܢ ܕܠܗܘܢ ܕܠܗܘܢ
 East: ܕܠܗܘܢ ܕܠܗܘܢ ܕܠܗܘܢ ܕܠܗܘܢ ܕܠܗܘܢ ܕܠܗܘܢ
- 69.36: West: ܕܠܗܘܢ ܕܠܗܘܢ ܕܠܗܘܢ ܕܠܗܘܢ ܕܠܗܘܢ ܕܠܗܘܢ
 East: ܕܠܗܘܢ ܕܠܗܘܢ ܕܠܗܘܢ ܕܠܗܘܢ ܕܠܗܘܢ ܕܠܗܘܢ
- 71.16: West: ܕܠܗܘܢ ܕܠܗܘܢ ܕܠܗܘܢ ܕܠܗܘܢ ܕܠܗܘܢ ܕܠܗܘܢ
 East: ܕܠܗܘܢ ܕܠܗܘܢ ܕܠܗܘܢ ܕܠܗܘܢ ܕܠܗܘܢ ܕܠܗܘܢ
- 131.2: West: ܕܠܗܘܢ ܕܠܗܘܢ ܕܠܗܘܢ ܕܠܗܘܢ ܕܠܗܘܢ ܕܠܗܘܢ
 East: ܕܠܗܘܢ ܕܠܗܘܢ ܕܠܗܘܢ ܕܠܗܘܢ ܕܠܗܘܢ ܕܠܗܘܢ

One of the most outstanding characteristics of the Peshitta of Psalms, from the syntactic point of view, is the use of the particle ܐ, with very diverse functions, without any equivalent in its Hebrew *Vorlage*.³⁹ From the list given above it is not possible to deduce any particular tendency in the Eastern family in contrast to the Western one. In some cases the Eastern manuscripts subordinate the beginning of a clause to the preceding clause by means of an initial *dalath* (12.9; 47.4 [with support from Western manuscript 7a1]; 71.16). In other cases, however, it is the Western tradition that does it, departing from the Eastern one (22.9; 45.3; 69.36 [with support from Western manuscript 7a1]).

c. *Alternate Forms of Nominal Clauses*

In two cases (16.5 and 86.5) the Eastern manuscripts attest a tripartite nominal clause (which includes the independent or enclitic pronoun), while the Western ones have a bipartite clause. In two other cases, though (42.9 and 104.25), it is the Eastern manuscripts that attest a bipartite nominal clause that in the Western ones appears as a tripartite one. From these data no special tendency of the Eastern family can be deduced, since in some cases it attests a bipartite clause and in others a tripartite one. On the other hand, the Eastern manuscripts coincide with the Western ones in the rest of the numerous occurrences of nominal clauses, which the Syriac version translates in most cases as tripartite clauses.⁴⁰

³⁹ Cf. Carbajosa, *The Character*, pp. 39–42.

⁴⁰ This is one of the dominant characteristics of the Syriac translation (Cf. Carbajosa, *The Character*, pp. 33–36).

to determine this in the case of the variants that involve prepositions. In order to distinguish the original readings in the case of the variants due to the plus-minus of subordinating *dalath*, it would be necessary to do a study of the evolution of the language, over both time and geography, as well as an analysis of the tendency toward subordination in the different manuscripts, a task that is beyond the bounds of this article. There is an even faster way to do this: attempt to reconstruct the genealogical relationships by making use of what Weitzman calls the ‘distributional criterion’, that is, after identifying, with the help of the ‘intrinsic criteria’, the manuscript or combination of manuscripts which in determinate passages gives the most original text, we could decide to follow this witness or combination of witnesses also in cases where we cannot yet determine the most original reading.⁴² The genealogical tree would show the temporal precedence of one syntactic form or another. In the remaining cases, in which alternate forms of constructing the same Syriac expression are involved, it will not be easy to recover the original reading on just the strength of intrinsic criteria. As in the preceding case, it would be necessary to do a study of the evolution in time and space of these alternate forms, unless, once again, the distributional criterion is accepted to bear in the task.

5.4. *Conclusions*

The careful study of Barnes’ list of ‘Nestorian’ readings makes it possible to draw a series of conclusions that are relevant to the issue of the textual skepticism that surrounds the Peshitta Psalter.

First, it has been possible to prove that in the list that Barnes offers there is no trace of readings that can be described, from the ‘confessional’ point of view, as *Nestorian*. In other words, the readings called ‘Nestorian’ in Barnes’ list are not characterized, in a single case, by a particular confessional position that can distinguish them from the ‘Western’ readings.

Second, after submitting a good number of variants from Barnes’ list to study, it has in most cases been possible to determine, with greater or lesser probability, which is the original reading and which is the secondary one. In other words, the types of variants involved have not hindered internal textual criticism from successfully fulfilling its mission without the need for external criticism.

⁴² Cf. Weitzman, *The Syriac Version*, pp. 264–269.

Finally, after studying several groups of readings from the list in question, in which the identifying signs of a scribal tendency that could be called ‘Nestorian’ could easily be identified, the conclusion has emerged that this tendency is very weak and that it is evident in very few cases. Or to put it another way: the list of readings that Barnes offers does not attest a systematic revision of the text. Rather, it would be possible to speak, on the basis of the coincidence of some readings, of ‘local’ texts, thereby emphasizing the fact that it is geographic situation, not confessional character, that marks a particular group of manuscripts. This is the same conclusion at which D.J. Lane arrives in his studies on the books of Leviticus and Qoheleth,⁴³ in which he attributes the manuscript variants to the diversity of scribal schools (that is, he highlights a geographic difference, not a confessional one).

6. The division between Ancient Manuscripts and Younger Manuscripts

The results yielded by this study make clear that there is no basis for speaking of the Psalter as an ‘exception’ with regard to its textual tradition. The cases studied rule out the hypothesis that doctrinal (Nestorian-Jacobite) differences have played a predominant role in textual transmission, to the point of sharply splitting it into two traditions.

At this point the alternative, as Dirksen himself proposes for the rest of the books of the Peshitta, seems obvious: the actual line of division must be drawn between ancient manuscripts and younger manuscripts. To the former group would belong the manuscripts of the sixth to eighth centuries and some from the ninth century, while the second group would be made up of some manuscripts from the ninth century and almost all later ones.⁴⁴

This study has the virtue of reinforcing, on the basis of the book of Psalms, the conclusions that Dirksen presents for the rest of the books. Indeed, in most of the cases in which a distinction has been made between the original reading and the secondary reading, always with just the help of internal textual criticism, the most ancient manuscripts (6t1, 7a1, 8a1, 9a1) supported the *lectio* that has been identified as original. More specifically, if the focus is narrowed

⁴³ D.J. Lane, “A Turtle Dove or Two Young Priests”—a Note on the Peshitta Text of Leviticus’, in F. Graffin and A. Guillaumont (eds.), *Symposium Syriacum 1976* (OCA 205; Rome 1978), pp. 125–130 (129–130); D.J. Lane, ‘Peshitta Institute Communication XV. “Lilies that Fester...”: the Peshitta Text of Qoheleth’, *VT* 29 (1979), pp. 481–490 (484–487, 489).

⁴⁴ Dirksen, ‘East and West’, p. 478.

to the 10 cases that have been studied most carefully, it can be observed that in 7 of them (7.15; 39.3; 70.6; 78.71; 104.20; 104.24; 147.16), the reading that has been considered original, the Western one, was supported by the most ancient manuscripts without exception (6^{TI}, 7^{AI}, 8^{AI}, 9^{AI}).⁴⁵ Only in 3 cases has it been considered that the original reading could be the Eastern one. In 2 of them, however, this reading is supported by manuscripts of the importance of 9^{AI} (68.19) and of 6^{TI} and 8^{AI} (119.176). Only in the third case does the Eastern reading lack the support of manuscripts prior to the twelfth century (109.27).

Once intrinsic criteria have shown the priority of the most ancient manuscripts, will it be possible to form a more exact idea of the evolution of the language in the process of textual transmission. This will result in the ability to distinguish between variant readings that involve alternate forms of constructing the same expression, an aspect that has been left on hold due to the limits of intrinsic criteria.

7. Toward a Critical Edition of the Peshitta Psalter?

Now that the sharp division between Western and Eastern manuscripts has been shown to be non-existent, it seems fair to ask, is it possible to produce a critical edition—*stricto sensu*—of the Peshitta Psalter? If it is possible, has the time already come to begin such a task?

To the first question one would have to respond decisively in the affirmative. This study has shown that Dirksen's reservations about the book of Psalms are not based on the data. The radical split in the textual tradition, which apparently prevented Barnes from undertaking a critical edition of the Syriac Psalter, has been shown to be baseless. From the point of view of the manuscript attestation, the Psalms of the Peshitta are no different from other books of the same version or of other ancient versions of the Bible of which critical editions have been produced or are being produced.

The answer to the second question is more complicated. There is no doubt that scholars in Barnes' time were not prepared to produce a critical edition of any book of the Peshitta. For one thing, the Rahlfs paradigm on the division of the manuscript tradition was too heavy a burden. In addition, the valuable testimony of some manuscripts was not yet available (Barnes, for example, did not have manuscripts 8^{AI}, 8^{TI}, 10^{TI} and 11^{TI} at his disposal), a decisive factor on which the greater or lesser reliability of a critical edition depends.

⁴⁵ In 7.15 the reading of 6^{TI} is not clear.

Nor had the moment come to prepare a critical edition when in 1953 the Congress of the I.O.S.O.T expressed a desire to have available an edition of the Peshitta of the OT that was based on the manuscript evidence. The fruit of that desire was the creation, years later, of the Peshitta Institute of Leiden, whose principal task was carrying that mission to a successful conclusion. The decision that was made then (a diplomatic edition with a critical apparatus of variants) has been shown to have been the best one and, in a certain manner, the only one that could have been made in that era. In a way, the enormous job of compiling and presenting variants that the Peshitta Institute of Leiden has carried out has been the most important and most decisive step toward the undertaking of a critical edition.

Since the appearance of the different volumes of the Leiden edition (Psalms was published in 1980) a series of steps have been accomplished that have cleared the way for producing a critical edition. But some are still lacking. I will begin by presenting the advances, especially for the book of Psalms.

To begin with, studies on the translation characteristics of particular books of the Peshitta have been steadily produced, now based on the new material that Leiden offered. The individualized study of each book makes it possible to become familiar with the translation techniques employed in it—a decisive factor in distinguishing between variants in a critical edition. With regard to the book of Psalms, to the classic study of A. Vogel (1951),⁴⁶ who did not have the Leiden edition available, my own study is now added, one which covers, in an exhaustive analysis, the characteristics of the Peshitta in Psalms 90–150.⁴⁷ In this latter study I have been able to show how the influence of the Greek version of the LXX on the Peshitta should be situated basically in the process of textual transmission, not on the translator.⁴⁸ In another place I have had occasion to verify this point by studying the cases of the influence of the LXX (and of the Peshitta of the NT) on the readings of late manuscripts of the Peshitta Psalter, a phenomenon that should be understood within the cultural

⁴⁶ A. Vogel, 'Studien zum Peschitta-Psalter besonders im Hinblick auf sein Verhältnis zu Septuagint', *Bib* 32 (1951), pp. 32–56, 198–231, 336–363, 481–502.

⁴⁷ Carbajosa, *The Character*. There is another recent study of the translation technique of the Peshitta in Psalms 1–41, the work of J.-E. Eriksson (1989), which, however, has not ever been published. The work of J. Lund (1988) is not so much a study of the translation characteristics as a refutation of the hypothesis of the influence of the LXX on the Syriac Psalter (J.A. Lund, *The Influence of the Septuagint on the Peshitta: A Re-evaluation of Criteria in Light of Comparative Study of the Versions in Genesis and Psalms* [Ph.D. thesis Hebrew University Jerusalem, 1988]).

⁴⁸ Carbajosa, *The Character*, pp. 188–272.

context that surrounds the process of textual transmission, which saw a gradual growth in the prestige of the Greek version in the Syriac Churches.⁴⁹ The study done here of Barnes' list of 'Nestorian' variants has confirmed this tendency of the late manuscripts to accept readings that originate in the LXX.

The articles of Weitzman on the origin of the Peshitta Psalter and on its *Vorlage*⁵⁰ deserve special mention. Although these are studies of particular details rather than systematic studies, they shed light on aspects that are decisive for understanding the origin of the variants and distinguishing among them.

In addition, there has been progress in the understanding of the relationships among the manuscripts of single books, as well as in the determination of the character of some manuscripts of special relevance. The work of Koster,⁵¹ which has already been commented on, has put a hypothesis on the table about the evolution of the manuscript tradition that represents a starting point on which to build. To it other studies have been added which have clarified the relationships among manuscripts in some books.⁵² Along the same lines,

⁴⁹ Carbajosa, 'The Syriac Old Testament Tradition'. In some cases the Greek influence may have come through the *Syrohexaspla*. Hiebert's handy edition of this Syriac version of the Psalms is very useful (R.J.V. Hiebert, *The 'Syrohexasplarie' Psalter* [SBLSCS, 27; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989]).

⁵⁰ M.P. Weitzman, 'The Origin of the Peshitta Psalter', in J.A. Emerton and S.C. Reif (eds.), *Interpreting the Hebrew Bible: Essays in Honour of E.I.J. Rosenthal* (UCOP, 32; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 277–298; M.P. Weitzman, 'The Peshitta Psalter and its Hebrew Vorlage', *VT* 35 (1985), pp. 341–354.

⁵¹ Koster, *The Peshitta of Exodus*; Cf. also M.D. Koster, 'Peshitta Revisited: A Reassessment of its Value as a Version', *JSS* 38 (1993), pp. 235–268; *idem*, 'The Copernican Revolution in the Study of the Origins of the Peshitta', P.V.M. Flesher (ed.), *Targum Studies*, II. *Targum and Peshitta* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), pp. 15–54.

⁵² Cf. the studies of Koster on Exodus (Koster, *The Peshitta of Exodus*), of Walter on Numbers, Deuteronomy (D.M. Walter, 'Multidimensional Scaling (Mapping) of Peshitta Manuscripts of Numbers and Deuteronomy', in A. Rapoport-Albert and G. Greenberg [eds.], *Biblical Hebrew, Biblical Texts: Essays in Memory of Michael P. Weitzman* [JSOTSup, 333; London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001], pp. 178–199), Jeremiah (D.M. Walter, 'Manuscript Relations for the Peshitta Text of Jeremiah', in Van Peursen and Romeny [eds.], *Text, Translation, and Tradition*, pp. 231–253) and Kings (Walter's investigation about the relationships among manuscripts in the book of Kings will probably appear with Gorgias Press), of Dirksen on Judges (P.B. Dirksen, *The Transmission of the Text in the Peshitta Manuscripts of the Book of Judges* [MPIL, 1; Leiden: Brill, 1972]; P.B. Dirksen, 'The Ancient Peshitta MSS of Judges and Their Variant Readings', in Dirksen and Mulder (eds.), *The Peshitta: Its Early Text and History*, pp. 127–146) and of Brock and Weitzman on Isaiah (S.P. Brock, 'Text History and Text Division in Peshitta Isaiah', *ibidem*, pp. 49–

recent decades have seen a convergence of scholarly opinion around the value of manuscripts 5b1 and 9a1 as witnesses to original readings, not as the product of a revision in the direction of the Masoretic Text.⁵³ Even so, the studies must be done book by book, since a single manuscript that contains the whole Bible, such as 9a1, may have been copied not from a single manuscript but from several manuscripts of differing value.

With regard to Psalms, it is again necessary to cite Weitzman, who has argued for the original character of a good number of readings of 9a1 in the book of Psalms.⁵⁴ My study on the characteristics of the Peshitta Psalter has again confirmed, with new examples, that 9a1 preserves original readings that most of the textual tradition (if not all) has lost.⁵⁵ The clarification of the character of this manuscript, so unique because of its readings close to the Hebrew text, turned out to be essential to make possible a true critical study of the Syriac Psalter. In fact, Barnes, in the study that has been referred to throughout this paper, considered the readings of 9a1 secondary because he believed that they arose from a late revision toward the Masoretic Text.⁵⁶

What remains to be done in preparation for a critical edition? The answer here will be limited to the text of Psalms. Mention has been made of the advances with regard to the character of manuscript 9a1 in the book of Psalms. The studies that have been referred to, however, discuss only particular readings in which 9a1 seems to preserve the original text. Still lacking is an exhaustive and systematic study of this manuscript for the whole Psalter. Similarly, there is a need for a study, similar to that which has been done for other books, on the relationships among manuscripts within the book of Psalms. The starting point for this study could be Weitzman's doctoral thesis, *A Statistical Approach*

80; M.P. Weitzman, 'The Analysis of Manuscript Traditions: Isaiah (Peshitta Version) and Matthew', *Bible et informatique: méthodes, outils, résultats: actes du second colloque international, Jérusalem, 9–13 juin 1988* [Paris: Champion, Geneva: Slatkine, 1989], pp. 641–652).

⁵³ Cf. the history of this investigation, together with the criteria used to distinguish the original readings, in Carbajosa, *The Character*, pp. 354–359. The recent article by A. van der Kooij should be added, in which he discusses some readings of manuscript 9a1 in the book of Isaiah (A. van der Kooij, 'Ms 9a1 of the Peshitta of Isaiah: Some Comments', in Van Peursen and Romeny [eds.], *Text, Translation, and Tradition*, pp. 71–76).

⁵⁴ M.P. Weitzman, 'The Originality of Unique Readings in Peshitta MS 9a1'; Weitzman, *The Syriac Version*, p. 282.

⁵⁵ Carbajosa, *The Character*, pp. 376–377.

⁵⁶ Barnes, *The Peshitta Psalter*, pp. xvii–xviii, xliii.

to *Textual Criticism with Special Reference to the Peshitta of the Old Testament*, defended at the University College of London in 1973 and never published. In it there is an initial attempt to trace the relationships among the manuscripts of the Psalter, which includes a discussion of the position of 9a1 within the body of texts.⁵⁷ The recovery of Weitzman's material (which would have to be drawn out of the complex statistical framework in which it is embedded), within a broader study of the manuscripts of the Peshitta Psalter, would be welcome.

The latest initiatives of the Peshitta Institute have been centered on the use of the Peshitta in Syriac literature and in the liturgy.⁵⁸ This is very important territory in which there is still much to do. Every critical edition of a biblical text, whether original or in a version, should include a corpus of biblical citations from the earliest literature that follows the corresponding text or version. In the case of the Peshitta, this work is, if possible, more necessary, since the most ancient manuscripts, with few exceptions, are later than the sixth century AD. Together with the biblical citations of the Syriac authors, a study is needed of each author's mode of citation, so that it will be possible to distinguish a citation that intends to be explicit from a mere allusion or a citation given from memory.

The study of the use of the Peshitta in Syriac literature should not be limited to the authors of the first centuries. In some cases, the study of late authors can provide the key to identifying certain readings that have come into the more recent manuscripts. This is the case with the 'Greek' readings (from the LXX) that Barhebraeus, an author of the thirteenth century AD, recommends in his Scripture *scholia*, and which must have entered the textual tradition of the Peshitta from that time on, given the enormous influence that this author exercised on the Western tradition.⁵⁹

Nor should this study be limited to the authors who write in Syriac, as is demonstrated by the importance of the works in Greek of Eusebius of Emesa

⁵⁷ In one of the appendices of his posthumous work, Weitzman has left a brief synthesis of his model of the relationships among manuscripts in Psalms, including a 'map' of manuscripts, generated on the basis of a statistical program. The model, which was designed before the appearance of the Leiden edition of Psalms, is based on Barnes' collation of manuscripts (Weitzman, *The Syriac Version*, pp. 315–316, 321).

⁵⁸ The acts of the last *Peshitta Symposium*, held in Leiden in 2001, have been gathered in the volume R.B. ter Haar Romeny (ed.), *The Peshitta: Its Use in Literature and Liturgy* (MPII, 15; Leiden: Brill, 2006).

⁵⁹ W.E. Barnes, 'On the Influence of the Septuagint on the Peshitta', *JTS* 2 (1901), pp. 186–197 (187–188).

and Theodore of Mopsuestia for understanding the role of the Peshitta in Syriac literature.⁶⁰

With regard to the book of Psalms, some steps along this line have been taken in recent years. To begin with, in this case for several decades now, handy editions (not only because of their format, but because they include biblical indexes) have been coming out of the works of a vast number of Syriac authors (the *Scriptores Syri* series in the *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium* collection deserves special mention). Editions of this type facilitate the work of scholars of the Peshitta, because they make it possible to identify, through the index of biblical citations, the places where an author uses the Psalms. The material that remains to be published is still enormous. In the future it would be desirable to have a kind of *Biblia Patristica Syriaca*, in the image of that which exists at present for the Greek and Latin Fathers,⁶¹ which would cover the biblical citations or allusions of the Syriac writers. Especially useful are the recent editions of the Commentaries on the Psalter of some important Syriac authors.⁶² In addition, the first studies of the use of the Peshitta of Psalms in Syriac literature have been published,⁶³ a crucial link to using this literature for the purposes of textual criticism. Progress is still needed along this road.

⁶⁰ Cf. R.B. ter Haar Romeny, 'The Peshitta and its Rivals. On the Assessment of the Peshitta and Other Versions of the Old Testament in Syriac Exegetical Literature', *The Harp* 11–12 (1998–1999), pp. 21–31.

⁶¹ Centre d'Analyse et de Documentation Patristiques, *Biblia Patristica. Index des Citations et Allusions Bibliques dans la Littérature Patristique* (Paris: Les éditions du Cerf, 1975–). To date it covers only the Greek and Latin Fathers from the second century until the beginning of the fourth century.

⁶² C. Van den Eynde, *Commentaire d'Isô'dad de Merv sur l'Ancien Testament*, VI. *Psaumes* (CSCO, 433, Syr. 185; Leuven: Peeters, 1981); L. Van Rompay, *Tbéodore de Mopsueste. Fragments syriaques du Commentaire des Psaumes (Psaume 118 et Psaumes 138–148)* (CSCO, 435, Syr. 189; Leuven: Peeters, 1982); S.D. Ryan, *Dionysus bar Salibi's Factual and Spiritual Commentary on Psalms 73–82* (Cahiers de la Revue Biblique, 57; Paris: J. Gabalda et Cie., 2004).

⁶³ The following list is limited to the studies that have appeared in the last decade: D.J. Lane, '“Come Here...and Let us Sit and Read...”: The Use of Psalms in Five Syriac Authors', in Rapoport-Albert and Greenberg (eds.), *Biblical Hebrew, Biblical Texts*, pp. 412–430; C. Leonhard, *Isbodad of Merw's Exegesis of the Psalms 119 and 139–147: A Study of His Interpretation in the Light of the Syriac Translation of Theodore of Mopsuestia's Commentary* (CSCO, 585, Subsidia 107; Leuven: Peeters, 2001); D.G.K. Taylor, 'The Manuscript Tradition of Daniel of Salah's Psalm Commentary', in R. Lavenant (ed.), *Symposium Syriacum VII* (OCA 256; Rome: Pontificium Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1998), pp. 61–69; D.G.K. Taylor, 'The Great Psalm Commentary of Daniel of Salah', *The Harp* 11–12 (1998–1999), pp. 33–42; R.B. ter Haar Romeny, 'The Hebrew and the Greek as

In the study of the earliest Syriac Christian literature the Syriac versions of the NT should not be left aside. It has already been possible to see how these versions influence the process of textual transmission of the Peshitta Psalter by determining some readings (cf., above, the cases of Pss 68.19 and 119.176). Both Weitzman and I myself elsewhere have been able to show the influence that the Syriac versions of the NT have had on some readings of the Psalms.⁶⁴ A study of the Psalms cited in the NT, from the point of view of the Peshitta Psalter (paying attention to its textual richness) and the Syriac versions of the NT would be a great help.

Another vast field is that of the use of the Peshitta Psalter in the liturgy. Nobody is unaware that the massive use of the Psalms in Christian liturgy, from the earliest centuries, must have affected the manuscript tradition. It is not at all surprising that the textual variety of Psalm 141 (LXX 140) is closely linked to the fact that this psalm, as early as the fourth century, occupied a favored place in the evening liturgy.⁶⁵ Here too the work remaining to be done is still great.

After this review of the pending tasks it is hard to avoid the impression that the moment has not yet come to undertake the production of a critical edition of the Psalter. However, this project should not be very far off either. The basic foundations have already been laid and it only remains to complete the pending tasks. With this article it has been my intention to contribute to this project by removing the obstacle that the old dogma of Rahlfs represented for studies of the Peshitta Psalter.

Alternatives to the Syriac Version in Ishodad's Commentary on the Psalms', in Rapoport-Albert and Greenberg (eds.), *Biblical Hebrew, Biblical Texts*, pp. 431–456; H.F. van Rooy, 'The Text of the Psalms in the Shorter Syriac Commentary of Athanasius', in Van Peursen and Romeny (eds.), *Text, Translation, and Tradition*, pp. 165–175; H.F. van Rooy, 'The Peshitta and Biblical Quotations in the Longer Syriac Version of the Commentary of Athanasius on the Psalms (BL Add. 14568), with special attention to Psalm 23 (24) and 102 (103)', in Romeny (ed.), *The Peshitta: Its Use in Literature and Liturgy*, pp. 311–325; S.D. Ryan, 'The Reception of the Peshitta Psalter in Bar Salibi's Commentary of the Psalms', *ibidem*, pp. 327–338; D.G.K. Taylor, 'The Psalm Headings in the West Syrian Tradition', *ibidem*, pp. 365–378. Because of its value for the Peshitta Psalter I also include K.D. Jenner, 'Syrohexaplarische und proto-syrohexaplarischen Zitate in syrischen Quellen ausser den individuellen Exemplaren des syrohexaplarischen Psalters', A. Aejmelaeus and U. Quast (eds.), *Der Septuaginta-Psalter und seine Tochterübersetzungen. Symposium in Göttingen 1997* (MSU, 24; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000), pp. 147–173.

⁶⁴ Weitzman, *The Syriac Version*, p. 278; Carbajosa, 'The Syriac Old Testament Tradition', pp. 128–130; Carbajosa, *The Character*, pp. 364–366.

⁶⁵ Carbajosa, *The Character*, p. 258 (n. 181).