

## **THE HISTORY AND BACKGROUND OF THE ARABIC VAN DYKE BIBLE**

By Dr. Edgar M. Feghaly

In 1848 a man by the name of Dr. Al Smith started the translation of the Arabic Bible from the original Texts. He started by translating the New Testament. Christian men who were scholars in grammar and languages assisted him. In 1857 and due to Al Smith's death, Dr. Cornelius Van Dyke continued the project of translation. The objective of this translation was to bring the Gospel to the Middle East and to put the Bible in the hands of the ordinary people.

### **Who Was Cornelius Van Dyke?**

Dr. Cornelius Van Dyke was not only a Bible scholar, but he was also a great educator and linguistic professor. He carried two earned Doctorate degrees in Literature and Theology. He was also an academician in the Arabic language, ancient languages of the Bible, Astrology, Medicine, and Sciences. He came as a Presbyterian missionary to Lebanon in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century sent by conservative Presbyterian churches. Together with Dr. Bliss he founded the American University of Beirut in order to educate students from all over the Middle East in the Word of God and in secular studies. His knowledge of the Semitic languages plus the Greek language enabled him to work with the top educators for the purpose of translating the Bible into the Arabic language. These men were believers in Christ.

### **The Influence of the Catholic Church**

In those days the Catholic Church was the dominating factor in Lebanon and anyone who was saved would have been converted from the Catholic Church. Due to the fact that the Catholic Church dominated the government, people who were born-again kept their legal status as Catholics because they could not get married or bury their dead if they were outside the church.

## **The Text Used For the Translation of the Arabic Bible**

Dr. Van Dyke translated the New Testament from the Textus Receptus and he translated the Old Testament from the Masoratic Text. He had an advantage in that since the King James Version was already in existence it was used as a guide during the translation. The beauty of the Van Dyke Bible is that it is equivalent in every way to the King James Bible. When one compares the verses, he will find that the translation is very accurate. Millions of people all over the Middle East were saved as a result of reading the Van Dyke Bible. Every missionary who came and ministered in the Middle East used the Van Dyke Bible. Like the King James Version, its simple language and beautiful style makes it readable and easy to memorize verses.

## **Was the Van Dyke a Catholic Bible?**

Dr. Van Dyke's hope was to translate a Bible that is simple and readable to be used by everyone in the Middle East. However, the Catholic Church rejected the notion of a simple Bible and in opposition they came up with their own translation which is known as the Jesuit translation. Their translation included the books of the Apocrypha in its pages as part of the inspired Word of God. Van Dyke translated his own which later became known as the Van Dyke Bible or the Boustani Van Dyke Bible. The Catholic Church opposed and resisted the Van Dyke version commanding Catholics not to touch or read the Van Dyke Bible claiming that it is a corrupt "Protestant Book". In addition one of the key men who took part in the translation project for the Van Dyke Bible was jailed in a Maronite Catholic monastery and starved to death by the Maronite Catholics as punishment for helping with the Van Dyke translation.

## **Did The Van Dyke At Any Time Include The Non-Inspired Books of the Apocrypha?**

Even though the original 1611 King James Version included the books of the Apocrypha in its pages, Van Dyke rejected the Apocrypha books and refused to include them in the pages of the Bible. Van Dyke rejected the Apocrypha because these books were not inspired books and he realized that the Bible should contain only the inspired Word of God and not historical books.

“With that said, the Van Dyke Bible is not a Catholic Bible. All Bibles that were translated for the Roman Catholic Church or for the Church of England, had to have the Apocrypha in it, including the KJB of 1611. Although we know that the KJB is God’s perfectly preserved Word for English speaking people, the translators were required by the Church of England to put in the Apocrypha. However, “They included these books between the canonical Old and New Testament books to show that they were not inspired (One Book Stands Alone, page 284 third paragraph by Douglas Stauffer).” In 1613 the Apocrypha was rightfully taken out of the KJB, which is another example of how God directed and preserved His Word for the English speaking people. The King James Bible was a Bible translated by permission from the Church of England. However, the Van Dyke Bible never needed permission from the Church of England nor from the Roman Catholic Church, so the Apocrypha was never put in, which in turn strongly proves that the Van Dyke Bible is not nor ever was a translation of the Catholic Church or the Church of England.

## **Why Would Van Dyke use the name “Allah”?**

Dr. Van Dyke was a very intelligent man. He was aware that Moslems and Christians worshipped God under the same name “Allah”. Wherever God was mentioned in the King James Bible, Dr. Van Dyke translated the word as “Allah” or “Elah”.

## **Did Dr. Van Dyke borrow the name "Allah" from the Koran in order to put it in the Bible?**

The answer is absolutely not. The word "Allah" existed and was used long before Muhammad was born or the Koran was conceived. The word "Allah" is not an Arabic word. It is an Aramaic word. As the English language borrowed the word "God" from Greek mythology to refer to Jehovah, the Arabs borrowed the word "Allah" from the Aramaic and used it to refer to their God. The word "Allah" is a neuter gender. It can refer to the moon god, to the god of this world (the devil) or to Jehovah. The Arabic and Aramaic alphabets do not have capital letters as the English alphabet has. They do not have capital G (God) or L (Lord) to refer to "Jehovah".

Why would a man with such great knowledge as Dr. Van Dyke use the name "Allah" in the Arabic Bible, especially when in those days the Moslem Ottoman Empire was oppressing and killing the Christians?

The answer is very simple. The Lord Jesus Himself used that word when He was preaching. When Jesus was living in Israel He spoke the common language of the people, which was Aramaic. Jesus preached in Aramaic and in Hebrew and therefore when John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world..." Jesus said, "For Allah so loved the world....".

In Mark 15:34 Jesus cried to the Father saying, "E-lo-i, E-lo-i, la-ma sabach-tha-ni?" The Lord, Jesus was quoting from Psalm 22:1. Jesus was uttering that verse in the Aramaic language. The word "E-lo-i" is pronounced in different ways. Arabic, Assyrian and Hebrew are Semitic languages and many of the words sound similar. The actual sound is "Ellahi" which is the same as "Allahi" (my God). Matthew transliterated the word to Hebrew by saying "E-li" (my-El or my-God) in Matthew 27:46. It is the same word throughout, but it is spelled differently to reflect a different way of pronunciation.

Any Bible student can go to any Greek, Aramaic, or Hebrew lexicon and look up the word "God" in Aramaic, and he will find out that the name "God" in Aramaic is "Allah". Here are some of the Old Testament Texts written in Aramaic: Daniel 2:46- 7:28; Ezra 4:8- 6:13; Ezra 7:12-26; Jeremiah 10:11; Genesis 31:47

Several years ago, when a pastor in Ocala, Florida brought up the issue of "Allah" to me, I contacted several American scholars who are familiar with the original language of the Bible text. They are all committed to the King James Version of the Bible. I asked them one single question: "Is the word 'Allah' found in the Bible?" Their answer was: "Yes, it is found in the Textus Receptus and also in the "Masoretic Text." They said, "Go to the chapters in the Bible that are written in Aramaic and you will find that the word "God" in those manuscripts is "Allah , "Eloi" or "Elah".

### **Who Are Those Attacking The Arabic Bible?**

Every time I meet men who attack the Arabic Bible claiming that "Allah" in the Arabic Bible refers to the moon god and therefore it is not the true word of God, I discover that they neither speak Arabic, ever lived in the Middle East, nor are they familiar with the Semitic languages.

### **Not Only Is The God Of The Arabic Bible Under Attack By Some, But Also Some Are Attacking The God Of Our King James Bible.**

A couple years ago I received an email, which came from an American Christian organization. It stated that God would never hear the prayers of Christians in America because they are using a false name for God and for God's Son. They are not praying unto God by His real and true name but are using a corrupt name for God when they address Him. The email went on to say that the word "Jehovah" is a corrupt name and that the true name for God is "Yahveh" and "Yahweh" and that "Jesus" is a corrupt name for the Son of God. The true name is "Yashoua" or "Yasoua". When I read this email I thought to myself that whenever the King James

Version uses the word "Jehovah" or "Jesus", the Van Dyke uses the word "Yahweh" and "Yasoua".

Even though I do not agree with this email (Christians know God by His characteristics and are praying to the true God), this is an example of people going to the extreme and splitting hairs.

### **The Roots For The Attack On The Arabic Bible**

Men who hold to the view that the Van Dyke Bible is not the word of God are basing their view on the belief that God inspired the original manuscripts but that the original manuscripts were lost. They believe that after that came the Textus Receptus which was produced out of 5400 different ancient manuscripts. Out of the Textus Receptus came the King James Bible. According to them, since all the manuscripts are corrupt and we do not have an original manuscript, therefore the King James Bible became the final verbally inspired Word of God and the one from which all Bibles should be translated.

We as Christians believe that the King James Bible is the preserved Word of God for the English-speaking people and that it is as accurate as the original. This can be proven on the light of the manuscript from which it was translated. But to say that the King James Version is the inspired word of God, that it is the original manuscript, and that it is God's final revelation to man from which we need to translate the Bible to all other languages is erroneous because we would be teaching double inspiration. They also go on to say that the King James Version corrects the Textus Receptus or the manuscripts from which it was taken. Whether or not these people know it they are saying that the King James Version has abrogated or nullified all other manuscripts.

Those who hold this opinion are shedding doubt on the Sovereignty of God and His Omnipotence. The Bible clearly teaches that God protects His Word. To say that God could not protect His word until the King

James Version was born and therefore kept the world in darkness throughout the centuries contradicts what the King James Bible teaches.

## **Who Teaches Evolving Inspiration?**

What makes the doctrine of abrogation dangerous is that it is not a Christian doctrine, but rather a Muslim doctrine. It is the heart of the teaching of Islam, not Christianity. Moslems teach the evolvement of revelation. The teaching of one revelation replacing another is found in many verses in the Koran.

One of those verses is Sura 16:101

“When we substitute one revelation for another- and Allah knows best what he revealed (in stages) they say thou art but a forger but most of them understand not.”

This verse is saying that people do not understand that God can in fact replace or substitute one revelation for another. Moslems use this verse to say that God revealed the Bible, but that God replaced the Bible with the Koran, which is the final revelation. This teaching is completely against the Word of God who is the same yesterday, today and forever and whose Word is forever preserved in Heaven and who can protect His word for every generation.

## **Second Article**

Dear Br. O'Malley,

I was asked to comment on an article that was in Christianity today regarding changing the term "son of God" in the Bible to say something else. You could see the original article online. The name of the article is "The Son Of God" and also here is my response and the input of another man. This is just for the mission board's info. so you'll be informed. If you have any additional comments please feel free to share them.

Thank you for giving me the article regarding the issue of the son of God. I knew George Husni (the center of this issue) from Lebanon. He and I were in the army together. I was a manager in the same company in Lebanon where George supervised some translations that the article referred to. I was invited to sit by the side of Kenneth Taylor as a representative of the company when he came and launched the translation project of the living Bible. In those days our understanding was that the living Bible translation was not a Bible but a paraphrase.

The idea that Christ is the beloved son who came from God is acceptable as an explanation for the term "son of God" but I would use it as a footnote or commentary on the bottom rather than to play with the manuscripts. As a matter of fact a more detailed explanation of what Christians mean by the son of God would be acceptable to the Moslems.

George is a friend of mine. He and I served the Lord in many campaigns in Lebanon in the late 60's and early 70's. George belongs to a school of thought that teaches that doctrines divide and therefore we need to put doctrines on the side and concentrate on evangelism. I differ with George on this.

The issue here is not whether we should or should not use the term "son of God". The issue is whether or not doctrine is important. I personally believe that doctrine should be the foundation of evangelism and that evangelism without teaching the Word of God will lead to spiritual chaos and a church that cannot discern right from wrong.

George goes to some East European countries and sometimes Turkey and participates in book exhibitions where Moslems come to buy books. He is good in conversing with Moslems. However, I believe the reports on salvations among Moslems are exaggerated. I also believe that trying



to yield to the Moslems on any doctrinal or Biblical issue will only weaken the Christian faith in the eyes of the Moslem. It will embolden the Moslem and give him further proof to think that he was right all along and that Christians were correcting the errors in their Bible.

The article states that the Moslems were more receptive to the idea that Christ is the beloved son.

A few years ago a group of Christians went to Turkey. They visited the mosques and apologized for what the Crusaders have done to Jerusalem and the Middle East. Later these Christians reported glories and said that God opened doors before them and that the Imams invited them to their mosques to speak. Someone in the West will say, "Praise the Lord that the Moslems are opened to hear the gospel!" The reality is that by apologizing these men proved to the Turkish Moslems that the Christians are murderers and that Islam is a peaceful religion victimized by the Crusaders. Most probably these Christians did not know that the Turks who occupied Jerusalem and were intercepting and killing the European pilgrims were the cause for sending the Crusaders.

Likewise, Moslems will cheer those who say the Bible is wrong and the translators were wrong to say that Jesus is the son of God.

Another issue presented in the article is regarding Sura Al Tawba 9:30. This is what the article says: "In fact [Sura Al Tawba 9:30] says God curses anyone who would utter the ridiculous blasphemy that Jesus could be Ibnullah [son of God]. Not only do Muslims disagree with Christians about the identity and nature of Jesus, they also incur a curse for even mentioning the phrase "son of God". "

This statement is misleading because it does not tell the whole truth. Al Tawba 9:30 states the following: "The Jews call Uzayr a son of God, and the Christians call Christ the son of God. That is a saying from their

mouth; [in this] they but imitate what the unbelievers of old used to say. Allah's curse be on them; how they are deluded away from the truth."

A shallow look at the verse makes one think that God is cursing those who claim that Jesus is the son of God. In reality even here the Koran is not in disagreement with what the Christians teach regarding the son of God. There are a few other Koranic verses dealing with the subject son of God. When we read and compare these verses we realize

that the Koran is responding to the Miriamite cult that existed in the day of Muhammad and taught that God had sexual intercourse with Mary and begot a son. Christians disagree with this teaching. We do not believe that God got married. The term "son of God" refers to the eternality and the source of the Lord, Jesus. Jesus is not the product of sexual intercourse. Changing the words "son of God" in the Bible is going to strengthen the Islamic argument regarding the corruption of the Bible and will make the Moslems teach that all along Islam was right and all along the Bible was wrong. The Moslem Imams are going to be teaching that the Christians removed the words "son of God" from the Bible.

The Koran teaches that God cannot get married. Here are some of the verses that clarify what Al Tawba 9:30 is implying:

Sura Al An'am [The Cattle] 6:101 says that God that created everything "...how can he have a son when he hath no consort?" The word consort is "Sahibat" in Arabic which means woman companion or mistress.

Sura Al Nissa [The Woman] 4:171 says "...far exalted is he above having a son. To him belong all things in the heavens and on earth..." This verse says that God does not need a son. He is too exalted to have sex and have a son.

Sura Mary 19:35 says "It is not befitting to [the majesty of] Allah that he should beget a son. Glory be to him! When he determines a matter, he

only says to it, "Be" and it is " Since God can create anything, He will not need to have an affair and give birth to a child. If He chooses to do so, He can say it and create a son.

Sura 21:26 again implies marriage and firstborn "And they say; [God] most gracious has begotten offspring." This verse again implies marriage and having a child.

These verses and other similar ones in the Koran explains Sura Al Tawba 9:30 and any sincere Moslem realizes that the curse here is to those who believe that God got married, had sex, and had a child.

Also in Sura 23:91 "No son did God beget, nor is there any God along with him".

Those who taught in the days of Muhammad that Christ is the son of God were implying that there is more than one God. Christians do not believe in this.

All this can be explained in footnotes that will clarify the matter without having to alter the scripture.

Professor Yarbrough (mentioned in the article) and I travel to Sudan annually and even though I do not know the Professor, like him, I have seen many Moslems accept Christ as their Savior. As a matter of fact it is estimated that there are about 4 million converted Moslems in Egypt and 100,000 in Saudi Arabia. There are hundreds of underground churches in North Africa and Arab countries. All these converted Moslems read the Bible and none of them have a problem with the term "son of God". There are many great Arabic Bible teachers such as the former coptic priest, Zacharias and Dr. Labib Michael and many others who have led many Moslems to the Lord using the Bible that is in our hands. They had no difficulty at any time with regard to the term "son

of God". They would disagree with organizations such as Operation Mobilization and those who would condone changing the term.

It is important for us in the West to understand that the word "son" in the Middle East does not always imply marriage. In the Middle East we say the son of a country, for example (Ibn Al Baled). This does not mean the country got married and had a son; it simply means that person comes from that country. When a Moslem gets saved the Holy Spirit opens his mind and he will have no difficulty understanding the meaning.

There are other issues that are problematic to the Moslems such as the Trinity. Should we alter the verses of the Bible to accommodate the Moslems on all these issues? What about issues by other groups such as the Catholics and the Mormon and Jehovah Witnesses? Once we start where do we stop?

There is a lot of depth in the word "son" which the Moslems and those who read the Arabic Bible will miss because it speaks of the intimate relation and the source of Christ.

I call upon George Husni and those who are trying to alter Biblical verses to be careful because in the book of Revelation God puts a curse on anyone who adds or subtracts from the Word of God. (Rev. 22:19)

The accuracy of Biblical translations must be put above the issues of the day.

God bless,  
Edgar M. Feghaly