

AN EXPOSITION OF ARTHUR JEFFERY AS A METHODIST MISSIONARY ORIENTALIST

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ABSTRACT

Arthur Jeffery (1892-1959), an Australia based missionary Orientalist is a big name among the Western scholarship on the Qur'ān particularly, the Textual Criticism and Qur'ānic Historiography. He took his Bachelor and Master degrees from Melbourne University, Australia and The University of Edinburgh of Scotland conferred on him Ph.D and D.Lit. He could not join British army in World War-I on health grounds so, he joined non-military war service as a Missionary. He was appointed in Solomon Islands, India and Egypt where he served the Mission. Semitic Languages were his chief interest. As a Linguist, he focused the Qur'ānic Text and left some remarkable works such as, 'Materials for the History of the Text of the Qur'ān', 'The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'ān', 'The Qur'ān as Scripture and The Koran: Selected Suras'. He spent last twenty years of his life at Columbia University New York and Union Theological Seminary. The present study seeks to highlight his contributions to the Mission in Oriental lands as Methodist minister and to expose his academic background as an Orientalist.

Key Words: Missionary, Orientalist, Contribution, Qur'ān, Text, Middle East

Biographical Sketch of Arthur Jeffery

Arthur Jeffery, an Australian American Orientalist, an Arabist, an author, a critic, a translator, a linguist, and an Islamicist was an ordained protestant Methodist minister. He was also professor of Semitic languages and a scholar of Eastern Texts. He was born on October 18, 1892 in Melbourne, Australia¹. He mainly chose the Qur'ān, the holy book of Islam, for his critical study. He authored remarkable works in this regard including "The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'ān", "Materials for the History of the Text of the Qur'ān", "The Qur'ān as Scripture" and "The Koran: Selected Suras". He rendered his missionary and ministerial services in Solomon Islands, India, Egypt and the United States of America respectively.

He was graduated in 1918 and then got his Master's Degree in 1920 from the University of Melbourne, Australia. During his stay in Egypt at the School of Oriental Studies of the American University in Cairo, he also read for a degree in theology and completed it in 1926 from Melbourne College of Divinity, Australia.² He did PhD (with special honours) in

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1929 and D. Lit. in 1938, from Edinburgh University Scotland, UK.³ As a theologian, he decided to be focused on Qur'ān studies and as a linguist; he tried to be more focused on the textual study of the Qur'ān. So the topic of his PhD dissertation was "The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'ān"⁴, his one of the most celebrated works on the holy text of Islam.

"Jeffery's interest in textual criticism of the Qur'an and his virtuosity as a linguist were a feature of his PhD dissertation, which traced the origin of some 300 non-Arabic words in the Qur'an. The dissertation, subsequently published in 1938 as a monograph titled *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'an*, became a classic in the field and has been republished as recently as 2007."⁵

During his stay at the University of Melbourne, Jeffery's interest in theology and philology, (Philology is, traditionally, the study of the history of language, including the historical study of literary texts), was aroused. In 1926, he received Bachelors Degree in theology from the University of Melbourne in pursuance of his interest. At this time, he was at S.O.S. in Cairo Egypt, a Muslim country, on the mission of Methodist ministry and he would have felt the need of a degree in theology. His philological keenness was supported by his stay in India where he availed opportunity of learning a variety of local languages (South). In 1921, when he joined School of Oriental Studies (SOS) at the American University in Cairo, he learnt Arabic and other eastern languages and finally became the professor of this particular group of Languages called Semitic Languages. John S. Badeau remarks on his tendency and then mastery in Eastern languages.

"In addition to his teaching he began that cultivation of linguistic and philological interests in eastern languages which became his scholarly preoccupation and his great contribution to Islamic studies. His interest in philology dated from student days and was quickly developed in India where he took the opportunity to master several of the local languages. After joining the School of Oriental Studies, in Cairo, Near Eastern languages became his field. With his brilliant mind and indefatigable industry he developed a scholarly ability in them that placed him in the first rank of Western Orientalists."⁶

As a Methodist minister and missionary, he happened to stay in Solomon Islands too⁷ as well as in India. This experience brought him in contact with the languages of different lands but he acquired just a working knowledge of some languages of the East and the West. When he was invited to the newly formed School of Oriental Studies (S.O.S) at the American University of Cairo by Dr. Charles R. Watson, the first president of University, Jeffery showed reluctance to join by saying that he "was not yet a qualified Arabic scholar and had only a working knowledge of some half dozen languages"⁸ It was S.O.S where he spent seventeen years and made up whatever the deficiencies once existed in linguistics generally and Arabic linguistics particularly.⁹ Lawrence R. Murphy remarks almost the same in his book recording the history of the American University in Cairo. He says,

“It was probably in Cairo that Jeffery developed most of his expertise in Arabic between 1921 and 1938. He was considered, from the time of his arrival at the newly founded School of Oriental Studies at the American University, the academic star of that School, precisely because of his extraordinary linguistic abilities.”¹⁰

Dr. Jeffery got married to the Secretary to the President of the American University in Cairo, Miss Elsie Gordon Walker in 1923 during his stay at SOS. The couple proved to be ideal in terms of good understanding and setting a culture of hospitality and academic feasts. Their home became a center of academic sessions where students, scholars and friends were able to grab food for thought and body as well. The remarks by one of his students are, “Their home quickly became a center of gracious and extensive hospitality, reflecting the many and stimulating interests they shared. Here came some of the most notable scholars in the Islamic field, and here too were held monthly "Shakespeare readings" which had nothing to do with Islamics and were therefore the more delightful to those immersed in the Muslim world and its problems.”¹¹

After leaving Cairo and the School of Oriental Studies and joining jointly the Chair of Near Eastern and Middle East Languages at Columbia University and Union Theological Seminary, the situation of Jeffery’s house was not different. It had a lot to teach and train the students and young scholars. FREDERICK C. GRANT, his colleague at Union Theological Seminary, shares his memories:

“Their home was a rendezvous for his students, and for visiting scholars, from far and near - Christian, Jewish, Muslim, and others. One met there, from time to time, some of the most eminent of foreign scholars, British, European, Near Eastern, Middle Eastern, Oriental; or outstanding students.... There was a certain formality about these teas, dinners, and evening gatherings. Conversation never sagged to the level of gossip of personalities. On the other hand, there was a warmth and *bonhomie* too, which everyone felt - especially if Dr. Jeffery could be induced to tell some of his inimitable stories, for example the famous "Copper bottom-ing-um-mum" which he told with never a slip. Elsie Jeffery was a perfect hostess, and her arrangements for even a simple tea were impeccable.”¹²

The native of Australia, British subject and the professor of Semitic languages at an American University breathed his last on Sunday, August 2, 1959 in South Milford, Canada. Actually, Dr. Jeffery used to spend his vacations in his summer house at Milford. That summer, he along with his family was vacationing there when he fell ill and could not recover. The funerals were arranged at the United Church of Canada in Annapolis Royal by his close friend and colleague Dr. John S. Badeau who was also there for vacationing. His burial was done at Wooden Cemetery Lequille, Annapolis country, Nova Scotia, Canada. Dr. Jeffery was survived



by his wife Elsie Gordon Walker Jeffery (1896- 1987).¹³ Later on Mrs. Jeffery was also buried at the same place beside Dr. Jeffery in 1987.

Jeffery's non-Military War Services (Mission)

Jeffery's mission in India began during World War-I when he was rejected for military service apparently on health grounds¹⁴. He decided to join non-military war service. "Being rejected for military service, he found in the Madras Christian College an opportunity to relieve British personnel as well as render certain type of non-military war service".¹⁵ He worked for five years at Madras Christian College as a teacher and missionary in order to perform certain type of non-military war services likely to be the promotion of Christian faith and church as well as the agenda of the colonial Masters. Jeffery had served as missionary in "Solomon Islands" ¹⁶ before he joined Madras Christian College, India where he spent five years (1916-1921) to perform his new assignment as a missionary. The island where Jeffery had been serving during World War-I was Guadal Canal which was described by him in a sermon at chapel. Frederick C. Grant, one of his friends and colleague at Union Theological Summary, accounts his sermon and his interesting way of preaching as, "I remember well the morning in chapel when he described Guadal Canal, three days after the American landing".¹⁷

Jeffery's life seems to be devoted for Christian mission through academic pursuits. Badeau, a Presbyterian Minister and Arabist, throws light on the missionary side of Jeffery's work in Cairo, in his posthumous tribute which seems mainly to have been of an academic nature.

"As a minister of the Methodist Church, he was devoted to the missionary enterprise and exemplified in his own life and interests a deep Christian concern. His scholarship had a Christian purpose, for he believed that only by a painstaking and exacting study of Islamic materials could the content of that faith be understood and a Christian contribution made to those who followed it". ¹⁸

The School of Oriental Studies (S.O.S) of the American University at Cairo which Jeffery joined in 1921, had been actually a training center for missionaries to be launched in Egypt and other colonies of Middle East for missionary services. Badeau introduces S.O.S in the following sentences: "Arthur Jeffery began his service in Cairo in 1921 as a professor in the newly-formed School of Oriental Studies (S.O.S) of the American University at Cairo. The S.O.S had been preceded by and grew out of the Language Study Center of the American Mission, a non-academic institution training missionary candidates for service in Egypt". ¹⁹ The teaching and training staff of the center consisted of missionaries and orientalists of prominent repute along with some local scholars. "In the staff of the newly-formed S.O.S much of the teaching was carried by members of the various mission groups operating in Egypt, chief among them being Dr. Samuel Zwemer, Dr. Earl E. Elder and Canon Temple Gairdner". ²⁰

Jeffery's missionary services were not limited to the academic institutions where he was appointed as academician and professor of Semitic languages but he delivered his sermons and lectures as a minister beyond them even in foreign lands like Jerusalem etc. He was very popular in church circles for his unique style of preaching Christian ethics and religiosity. Eric F.F. Bishop recalls his visits to Jerusalem, "My knowledge of him and Mrs. Jeffery deepened on their visits to Jerusalem in the days before they became denizens of the American School of Oriental Research. The first such visit was to participate in a Summer School in Islamic Studies in the middle twenties. Later on, after the establishment of the Newman School of Missions, they came again".²¹

His missionary lectures were so impressive and were full of missionary spirit. Frederick C. Grant, one of his colleagues at Union Theological Seminary New York, describes Jeffery's preaching sermons in the following lines,

"His sermons began, as a rule, with a story - from ancient literature, history, or tradition, whether Near Eastern, Byzantine, Arab or Egyptian. Then as he went on you began to see how the story was related to his text. Finally you caught the thrust of the whole, it meant something for *you*; it came home to your own private "business and bosom" (he rarely preached on public or social themes). I remember well the morning in chapel when he described Guadalcanal, three days after the American landing. For he himself had once been a missionary there, and he knew the place intimately and its people. Perhaps the best words to use are from the best definition of preaching, that by Phillips Brooks: his preaching was clearly the "imparting of truth through personality." His message was full of meaning for his hearers because it was full of meaning for himself."²²

As an Academician

Jeffery was very industrious person in nature and he excelled as an academician for the consistency he showed in achieving the endeavors he set for himself. As an academician and scholar of Islam and Semitic languages, he served in various capacities at different institutions throughout his academic life. He joined the Madras Christian College in 1916 and served there till 1921 when he was offered the professorship of Semitic languages at the newly formed School of Oriental Studies at the American University of Cairo, Egypt. He contributed a lot there to the academic aspect of the mission till 1938. In the same year, he accepted the offer of appointment both at Columbia University and Union Theological Seminary, New York City, USA and worked there at different positions till his last breath. Besides, he worked with the American Schools of Oriental Research in Baghdad and Jerusalem. During the academic year 1953-54, he returned to the post-revolutionary Cairo and served as the Director of the American Research Center for one year. Throughout his academic life, Jeffery enjoyed a prestigious status in contemporary academicians particularly



among the Orientalists. During his professional pursuits he continued studying to get academic and research degrees from the institutions of high prestige.

He has been regarded as great academician, islamicist and a bright scholar of languages and religious traditions in academic circles. "He became widely recognized as one of the most brilliant and penetrating students of Islam and headed the Department of Near and Middle East Languages at Columbia University, he never put his erudition on display, keeping it for the quiet and exacting tasks of teaching and research."²³ Badeau further comments on the scholarship of Jeffery in the following words,

"With his brilliant mind and indefatigable industry he developed a scholarly ability in them that placed him in the first rank of Western Orientalists. In 1929 he received his Ph.D. (with special honors) from Edinburgh University and followed this with a D. Lit. (summa cum laude) in 1938 from the same institution."²⁴

Frederick C. Grand mentions Jeffery's stay at Columbia University and Union Theological Seminary and highlights his scholarly status in the following words, "At both Columbia University and Union Theological Seminary, Arthur Jeffery has been one of the brightest luminaries of our time. I do not expect ever to find his like again."²⁵

Lawrence R. Murphy, in his book 'The American University in Cairo: 1919-1987' remarks about the scholarly brilliance of Jeffery which reads as, "It was probably in Cairo that Jeffery developed most of his expertise in Arabic between 1921 and 1938. He was considered, from the time of his arrival at the newly founded School of Oriental Studies at the American University, the academic star of that School, precisely because of his extraordinary linguistic abilities."²⁶

The comments on Jeffery's scholarship by his colleagues, Contemporaries and different academicians provide evidences of his brilliance in the fields of linguistics, religious texts and oriental studies. After he had got command in Arabic and Islamic learning at S.O.S, he was a regular commentator of Islam and often impressed even the Muslims with his knowledge and scholarship. "There were friendly Muslim scholars and one such remarked as he left: this man knows more of the beginnings of Islam than most of us".²⁷ Frederick C. Grant concludes his remarks in a posthumous tribute paid by him to Jeffery in the following words.

"Over a lifetime spent in clerical and academic circles, I cannot recall anyone else who reminds me of Arthur Jeffery, or of whom he reminded me. He was unique, in his simplicity, his charm, his devotion combined with his profound learning and clear exposition of ideas, his sometimes terrifying standards (especially for unprepared students in the qualifying doctoral examinations in languages, of which he had charge), his "meekness and gentleness" after the New Testament pattern of Christian piety."²⁸

His Contribution to the School of Oriental Studies (S.O.S)

Jeffery joined the school of Oriental Studies of the American University of Cairo in 1921 when he was working in the Madras Christian College India. He was invited by the first president of the University Dr. Charles R. Watson as a qualified orientalist and permanent faculty member. "The American University in Cairo (AUC) was founded in 1919 by the Americans devoted to education and service in the Middle East. For its first 27 years, the University was shaped by its founding president, Charles R. Watson, who wished to create an English-language University based on high standards of conduct and scholarship and to contribute to the intellectual growth, discipline and character of the future leaders of Egypt and the region".²⁹ Dr. Watson, who was born in Egypt and was the son of missionary parents from America wanted that the university should have been independent and free from any missionary and denominational influence.³⁰ After twenty five years, he was replaced by John Badeau (1945-1953), the US ambassador to Egypt (1961-1964), developed the AUC and brought it to postcolonial period. He also engaged Egyptian authorities to have a supportive hand to the University.³¹

"Through subsequent reorganizations, the University currently has 25 departments and institutes offering bachelor's, master's and graduate diploma programs, in addition to 13 cross-discipline research centers. The University offers 40 undergraduate, 52 master's and two PhD programs rooted in a liberal arts education that encourages students to think critically and find creative solutions to conflicts and challenges facing both the region and the world."³²

The school of Oriental Studies (SOS) was formed in 1921. It had been the Language Study Center of the American Mission, a non-academic institution training missionary candidates for service in Egypt. Its work was broadened when the language study center was transformed into school of Oriental Studies, under the vision of Watson. This University was conceived as 'bridge of understanding' between the Muslim World and the West. It was the conviction of the University President that there should be a faculty in which the westerners would be introduced to the best of Eastern Culture and Islamic educational experience just like the eastern and Egyptian students and scholars were going to be introduced to the best of western educational and research experience. Under such vision, the S.O.S was created and Jeffery was invited to join the school. But Jeffery was reluctant to accept this offer. He felt himself insufficient in scholarship and experience in view of the requirements of the position. "In answer to the University's invitation, Arthur Jeffery wrote that he had doubts about his own fitness for the position".³³

But he had to accept this offer on the insistence of Watson who had foreseen a brilliant scholar and researcher in young Jeffery. So, he began his service in the newly-formed school of Oriental Studies in 1921.³⁴ The school was one of the four faculties initiated at the university in beginning. The school served in training missionaries-businessmen, diplomats



and other westerners. The university and the SOS were moved from Tahrir Square in the heart of downtown Cairo to the planned community of New Cairo developed on the desert plateau east of the city.³⁵ In 1956, the School of Oriental Studies was incorporated into the Faculty of Arts and Sciences as the center of Arabic Studies.³⁶ It was done after Jeffery had left and joined Columbia University, USA nearly eighteen years before.

Arthur Jeffery contributed a lot to the SOS and met the expectations of Dr. Charles R. Watson more than what was thought by him. He was successful in setting standards and followable examples for his successors. He joined the school in 1921 and left in 1938 when he was offered the Chair of Near Eastern and Middle East Languages at Columbia University³⁷ of New York city, USA, and adjunct professorship at Union Theological Seminary of New York. According to Jeffery's friend, successor of Charles R. Watson as president of the AUC Badeau, his contributions to the SOS can be enlisted as it follows:

- As a teacher
- As a lecturer/speaker
- As a Researcher
- As a Person.

As a teacher, Arthur Jeffery set high standards of teaching to the students of religion particularly of Islamic Studies. He was never tired of teaching and giving himself to the students in holding them to the highest standards of scholarship. He always discouraged the superficial knowledge and favoured instead first-hand knowledge of primary sources. His beyond class-room teaching continued in personal sittings on teas and dinners also.³⁸ As a lecturer, he was endowed with the ability of making difficult and complicated subjects a matter of ease and interest. He never lost the meaningfulness of talk even in the company of just gossip. His lectures were burdened with both intellectual adventures and gateways into understanding the life of the Muslim World.³⁹ He was invited to different Missionary schools too for lecturing on Islam especially. His lectures were well prepared and mostly typed. As a researcher, and academician, he contributed to the SOS with a library of rich collections.

“Believing that primary sources are the basic materials of scholarship, he gradually built up collections of books that contain many rare and out-of-print volumes whose ensemble formed a unique instrument for Islamic study. The collection was the reflection of Dr. Jeffery's own methods, research standards, and exhaustive knowledge of available texts”⁴⁰

Jeffery was so keen in collecting and shelving the books in library that he knew even the exact location of books. While guiding a student on any book meant by him, he issued directions like this, “You will find what you want in the third book on the fourth self of the second tier on the west side of the Library”.⁴¹

Jeffery didn't stop getting higher education even when he was enjoying the privileges of professorship and directorship of the SOS. He got the degrees of Bachelors in Theology from the University of Melbourne in 1926, PhD. in 1929 and D. Lit in 1938 from the University of Edinburgh UK. In his research degree of Ph.D and his overall research, he opted mainly the holy scripture of Islam and its text for criticism. Major part of his works, therefore pursues the Qur'an and its related studies. "One of his major interests was the textual criticism of the Qur'an and on this he continued to work throughout his career. His first work in this field was *Materials for the History of the Text of the Qur'an* published in Leiden in 1937. This was followed in 1938 by *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'an*, published by the Oriental Institute Baroda, India. Both studies were based upon work done for his doctoral dissertations."⁴² During his stay at the S.O.S Jeffery produced a growing series of articles, reviews and lectures which had the foundation for his later and more extensive work at Columbia University.⁴³

Jeffery never forgot to serve Christian Mission while he was busying in teaching, research and management at SOS. He was a regular minister of the Methodist Church. His research, teaching and all scholarship had a Christian purpose. He was in practice to explain that only pains taking and deep study of Islamic Materials could serve the Mission and a Christian contribution be made in this regard. "This same scholarly Christian concern was expressed in his preaching. Drawing from his extensive knowledge of history and language, Dr. Jeffery would throw fresh illumination on the meaning of Scripture and the content of basic Christian convictions. None who heard his series in the American Mission Church on "The Apostle's Creed" can forget the penetrating and challenging views of the Christian life he presented".⁴⁴

For missionary concerns, he used to visit different places in Egypt and abroad. One of these was Jerusalem to which he visited more than one. "My knowledge of him and Mrs. Jeffery deepened on their visits to Jerusalem in the days before they became denizens of the American School of Oriental Research. The first such visit was to participate in a Summer School in Islamic studies in the middle twenties."⁴⁵ Both the missionary activities and the literature produced by Jeffery on the name of research questioning the authenticity of textual status of the Qur'an caused him to leave Egypt as agitation among the Muslims was enkindled. "Jeffery wanted to leave Cairo in 1938 because his work on variant readings of the text of the Qur'an was provoking Muslim antagonism to him".⁴⁶

Murphy in his history of the American University in Cairo notes. "Jeffery was criticized for examining Koran texts. As a result of these and other reports-some true, many exaggerated, others fabricated-a growing number of Egyptians no doubt became convinced that the American University of Cairo had attacked Islam".⁴⁷ Patrick J. Ryan in his article 'Jeffery: A Missionary Islamicist' has mentioned some other reasons of leaving Cairo and joining Columbia University and Union Theological Seminary. "But It is at least as likely that his American wife, the gathering storm of war in Europe, the instability of the late years of the Egyptian monarchy and the prestige of an appointment at Columbia all contributed to Jeffery's academic move".⁴⁸



Dr. Arthur Jeffery was personally a good human being, very generous, energetic and humble man. It was the S.O.S which groomed his personality in every aspect like his thirst for linguistics and philology, his scholarship, his service to mission and experience of administration. When he joined the school, he felt reluctant because of lack of scholarship but when he left it, he was confident enough to occupy the chair of Near Eastern and Middle East Languages at Columbia University.

“It was probably in Cairo that Jeffery developed most of his expertise in Arabic between 1921 and 1938. He was considered from the time of his arrival at the newly founded School of Oriental Studies at the American University, the academic star of that school.....Jeffery made up for whatever deficiencies once existed in his knowledge of Arabic over the next seventeen years”.⁴⁹

One of the notable things about Jeffery's stay at S.O.S is his marriage with Miss Elsie Gordon Walker, then secretary to the President of the American University at Cairo Dr. Charles Watson. Their marriage proved to be success and she played an important role in Jeffery's professional and personal life. It was she who offered continuous hospitality to Jeffery's friends, students and other guests. She also played a role in his settlement at SOS first and then at Columbia University, USA, her homeland.

Jeffery had an opportunity at the School of Oriental Studies of the American University to work with some renowned scholars including the Muslims, the Orientalists and the Missionaries such as Dr. Samuel Zwemer (1867-1952), one of the founding fathers of Arabia Mission⁵⁰, Earl E. Elder (1903-1989) and Canon Temple Gairdner (1873-1928).⁵¹ Some other colleagues have also been mentioned, for example, Aziz S. Atiya (1898-1988), Joseph Schacht (1902-1969), Gotthelf Bergstrasser (1886-1933)⁵²

Jeffery at Columbia University and Union Theological Seminary (1938-1959)

In 1937, Jeffery visited the USA as visiting professor for a semester, at Columbia University New York City, and then received appointments at both Columbia University and Union Theological Seminary where he served and resided till his death in 1959. Columbia University was founded in 1754 with the title of 'King's College'. It was established by the royal charter of King George-II of England. It is the oldest institution of higher education in the state of New York and 5th oldest in the United States of America.⁵³

The department to which, Jeffery was the part of was the Department of Semitic Languages. Arthur Jeffery (1892-1959) a Qur'an scholar replaced Gotthel (1862-1936) and then Joseph Schacht (1902-1969) a scholar of Islamic law replaced Jeffery. On the other hand, Jackson's successor was Salo Wittmayer Baron (1895-1989) a professor of Jewish history.⁵⁴

Jeffery's Contribution to Columbia University (1938-1959)

It was he who bridged the historical gap between Islamic Studies and other disciplines until his own death in 1959.⁵⁵ Jeffery came and introduced both Religious studies and Area Studies in the faculty of Philosophy of Columbia University.⁵⁶ During his stay here Jeffery contributed to the university in different domains.

Curricula Development

Jeffery was deeply involved with the development of Religious studies curricula at Columbia University. He was primarily, a professor of Arabic and Syriac in a department dedicated to Semitic languages,⁵⁷ but he did his best to introduce some courses on Religious Studies, both at Columbia University and Union Theological Seminary, as he had an adjunct professorship there. The courses given by him at Columbia University were as follow:

- I. The History of the Arabs (Semitic 103)
- II. The Islamic Civilization (Semitic 104).⁵⁸

Thus Dr. Jeffery entered religious studies into the Department known generally as of Semitic languages. He played an important role in developing curriculum required both at Columbia University and Union theological Seminary a religious institution affiliated with Columbia University.

Research and Teaching

It has been already stated that he was appointed as adjunct professor of Semitic Languages at Columbia University and Union Theological Seminary, so Dr. Jeffery taught courses of languages and religions at both the institutions. As a teacher he was popular too among his students. At the same time, he continued authoring books, writing articles and editing and reviewing writings.

“He was in constant demand as a book reviewer, author of articles in journals and reference works (several not yet published, e.g. in the new edition of Hastings' *One-Volume Bible Dictionary*), and as a consultant and expert advisor to authors, editors, and publishers in the United States and elsewhere.⁵⁹

As he resided at the UTS, his house was a center of academic gatherings, where students and scholars of different backgrounds arrived and learned from Jeffery. During these discussions all were served with teas and dinners by Jeffery's wife.⁶⁰

Library Resources

Jeffery had a special interest in collecting books and developing rich research library. He did the same at the school of Oriental Studies of the American University in Cairo. Here at



Columbia University, he and his colleagues contributed a lot in developing research library. "Gothiel, Jackson, and Jeffery, all three took an active interest in the development of library resources for research and teaching, and Columbia University Libraries purchased their substantial research libraries from the widows".⁶¹

Administrative Contribution

During his service at Columbia University and UTS Jeffery remained the part of different administrative bodies and contributed to the development of the institutions through his vision and decisions. "Throughout his tenure, Jeffery pursued the reorganization of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies within Columbia's Faculty of Philosophy".⁶² In 1944, after Gray's retirement he served as an acting Chairperson of the Department of Indo-Iranian and Comparative Linguistics. In 1947, the French structuralist Aandré Martinet (1908-1999) took over from Jeffery as executive officer of the department. In 1954, Jeffery was appointed as the first chairperson of the newly formed Department of Near and Middle Eastern Languages. From 1954 onward till his sudden death in 1959, Jeffery recruited highly qualified scholars of Iranian studies and other area studies as well as languages. He arranged visiting professorships for Walter B. Henning (1908-1967), Bernhard Geiger (1881-1964), S.H. Shafaq, Jacques Duchesne-Guillemin (1910-2012), Stig Wikander (1908-1983) and Ehsan Yarshater (1920-2018).⁶³

Besides, he had "been the Chairman of the section on History of Religions in the Joint Committee on the Ph.D. degree in the field of Religion, offered and administered by Union and Columbia".⁶⁴ Jeffery himself wrote a history of the Columbia's Department of Semitic Languages. He noted that his own "main interest" was "Arabic and Islamic Studies".⁶⁵ He was also responsible for the programme of the "Master of Arts in Religion" under the joint sponsorship of the University and Seminary.⁶⁶

In the academic year 1950-51, Columbia University created a near and Middle East Institute where living languages of that area were to be taught as tools for non-Ph.D scholars. Jeffery started working with missionary zeal. To him, the primary stated purpose of this institute is to impart to a limited number of well-qualified American and foreign students knowledge, both general and specialized that will enable them to fill positions of responsibility as regional specialists in finance, journalism and in various branches of government service".⁶⁷ But later on the direction of the Institute was diverted in preparing bankers, reporters, diplomats and spies for the work in the Middle East. It was not exactly what Jeffery had started to do.

Jeffery's Contribution to Union Theological Seminary (UTS)

Jeffery joined Union Theological Seminary as an adjunct Professor and remained there till his last breath. The UTS was founded in 1936 and affiliated with Columbia University.⁶⁸ The following degrees offered by the UTS are approved and accredited:

- M. Div. (Master of Divinity)
- M.A (Master of Arts)
- S.T. M (Master of Sacred Theology)
- Ph.D.⁶⁹

The courses introduced by Jeffery at Union Theological Seminary were as below:

- I. "The Canon and Text of the Old Testament (Old Testament 17)"
- II. "The Psalms (Old Testament 64)"
- III. "The Eastern Churches (Church History 29)"
- IV. "Comparative Study of Religion (History of Religions 11.12)"
- V. "The Living Religions of Western Asia (History of Religions 19)"
- VI. "The Religion of Islam (History of Religions 42)"⁷⁰

Jeffery's Collaboration with the Munich University Project on the Qur'ān

Jeffery has mentioned in his writings that he has been in collaboration with German scholars Gothelf Bergstrasser and Dr. Otto Pretzl in the project of preparing Qur'ānic Archive at Munich University of Germany.⁷¹ Similarly, both the professors Dr. Bergstrasser and Dr. Arthur Jeffery contributed also in the famous Cairo Edition of the Qur'an 1924.⁷² Their collaboration shows that Jeffery and Dr. Bergstrasser decided to present a critical edition of the Qur'an under western critical methods putting aside the bindings of faith that have observed by the Muslims in Cairo Edition of the Quran. Bergstrasser travelled to different countries around the globe and collected photographs of various versions of the Qur'ān archived in libraries and museums. But he died in an accident while climbing Bavarian Mountains in 1933. He was succeeded by Dr. Otto Pretzl who took the same camera and visited various regions for the purpose but he also died in a plane crash in 1941 during World War II. Jeffery had collected variants of Quranic text for this edition.

Mr. Spitaler, another German Orientalist and Arabist, inherited the Archive but he could not contribute much. It was war time and finally the British Air Force targeted the 16th Century building of Jesuit College housing the Bavarian Academy of Science of Munich University and it was crumbled at the night of April 24, 1944.⁷³ The Archive was lost. Mr. Spitaler kept silent on it and pretended as if it had been destroyed in bombardment.⁷⁴

Mr. Spitaler died in 2003 and the photo archive was shifted from Munich to the Berlin Brandenburg Academy of Science and Humanities and Ms. Neuwirth, a Berlin Professor now in charge of the Munich Archive was given the charge of the archive. The State of Germany has funded this project from 2007 to 2024 for 18 years. Ms. Angelika Neuwirth is supervising the commentary section of the project whereas Mr. Michael Marx is Editor in Chief and Director Research.⁷⁵

Conclusion



Arthur Jeffery, an Australian American missionary Orientalist, joined non-military war service (Christian Mission) after being rejected as soldier on health grounds. He started from Solomon Islands and then served at India, Egypt, Jerusalem and finally the USA. He was graduated in Theology but had a special interest in languages thus worked as a professor of Semitic Languages at the School of Oriental Studies of American University in Cairo (1921-1938) and jointly at Columbia University of New York City and Union Theological Seminary (1938-1959). As a member of the Mission, he gave his contributions in various domains as teacher, trainer, speaker, administrator and author of writings on Islam, The Prophet of Islam and the Qur'ān as well as on Biblical Studies. He has greatly influenced Western and even Muslim scholarship on the Historiography of the Qur'ān. Now, he is considered top ranked Orientalist in the field of Qur'ān Studies particularly textual criticism of the Qur'ān.

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