

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for the *Journal of Theological Studies* (old series) can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_jts-os_01.php

pdfs are named: [Volume]_[1st page of article]

comparable to Mark, echoing in this respect Canon Streeter's estimate.¹ But I have also said that, especially for the Galilean Ministry, Mark 'is and must be our chief guide';² that 'an estimate of Proto-Luke which does not recognize this fact will only serve to bring the hypothesis into disrepute';³ and that 'it would be absurd to suggest that the comparison leads to any wholesale depreciation of Mark as a historical authority',⁴ since its position in this respect is 'much too well assured'. It is only too apparent that qualifications of this kind cannot be too clearly and strongly expressed. The charge of not going 'far enough' is equally without foundation. I could not agree, unreservedly, that to a large extent the basis of the L tradition in genuine dominical reminiscences 'has long been granted by the majority of scholars—of British scholars at least'. Here the saving clause is the qualification. As regards British scholars in general, the position is as Mr Hunkin describes it,⁵ and I have devoted half a chapter to the record of some of their labours. But outside Great Britain the situation is very different. One cannot forget Loisy's commentary, or the point of view expressed in *The Beginnings of Christianity*, or Harnack's spirited protest against widespread critical estimates of the Lukan writings in general, and the Acts in particular.⁶ It is with such things in mind that I have pressed the claim that Proto-Luke throws back the Lukan portraiture of Jesus into the earliest stages of Gospel tradition; and to say this is neither to say 'too little' nor 'too much'.

VINCENT TAYLOR.

THE OLD MALABAR LITURGY.

THE ancient Christian community of southern India must surely enlist the interest of every one interested in Church History or in Liturgy, whether it was founded by the Apostle St Thomas, or in the 4th century, or in the 7th. As is well known, the Malabari Christians were rediscovered in the 16th century by the Portuguese Jesuits, and the ancient Liturgy which they used was revised and expurgated by the Portuguese Archbishop of Goa, Aleixio de Menezes, at the Synod of Diamper in 1599.

The two articles contributed by Dom R. H. Connolly to this JOURNAL in 1914 (*J. T. S.* xv 396–425, 569–589) made a substantial advance in

¹ Cf. *The Four Gospels* p. 222.

² *Behind the Third Gospel* p. 234.

³ *Ibid.*, cf. p. 254.

⁴ *Op. cit.* p. 245.

⁵ Not, however, without neglect or depreciation of the Lukan tradition in the interests of Mark. Cf. *Christian Beginnings* p. 54 f, and witness Mr Hunkin's closing sentence: 'It is material which has been so skilfully woven into a patterned fabric that the original constituents of it can now be distinguished with difficulty and recovered only in part', *op. cit.* p. 262.

⁶ Cf. *The Acts of the Apostles* pp. xxvi, xli, xlii.

our knowledge of the history of the Malabar Liturgy. Whereas it had been assumed that Menezes had drastically transformed the native Liturgy and that its earlier form was now irrecoverable, Dom Connolly proved that the changes were small in extent (though in some respects important in intention), and that they had been duly recorded. The revisers had, in fact, faithfully carried out their declared intention: '*utque antiquus ritus, quantum patitur fidei sinceritas ac doctrinae puritas, seruetur*' (p. 422). When we substitute the few phrases which the revisers say they changed for the corresponding words of the revised text, we get exactly the (now) well-known East-Syrian Liturgy of the Apostles (i.e. Addai and Mari), still used by the East-Syrian Christians, the Church called also 'Assyrian' and 'Nestorian'. This, therefore, was the Liturgy used by the Malabari Christians when first the Portuguese rediscovered them.

It was a very satisfactory conclusion, both for the faithfulness of the Malabar Church to what it had received and also to the antiquity of the Nestorian Rite. The only objection was that it seemed too satisfactory. Could we say of this Rite, to adopt the words of Edmund Bishop, quoting an unnamed German writer: 'Both Churches agree in this matter, not because they have mutually influenced each other, but because both of them, in contrast with many Greek communities, preserved what was ancient' (*J. T. S.* xv 590)? I fear not. The object of this Note is to point out the possibility that, when the Malabar Liturgy was revised in 1599, it had only been used in India for about a century.

J. A. Assemani, in his wonderful *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, gives a long account of an embassy sent by the Malabari Christians in the year 1490 to Simeon, Catholicus of the Nestorians (*B. O.* iii 1, 590). Two of the three delegates arrived safely at Mosul, and asked the Catholicus to send them a Bishop, as owing to persecution from Indian Moslems they had now for a long time been without clergy. Simeon found the two delegates well instructed in the Faith; he sent them to stay for a time in a monastery and ordained them priests, and he consecrated two Syrians, Thomas and John, to go to India with them and be Bishops there. The two Bishops and the two Malabaris arrived safely in India and were met with great joy by the Christians, who received them with a procession bearing a book of the Gospels, a cross and a censer (*sic*),—nothing is said about service-books,—and so Church life in southern India was resumed. Bishop Thomas returned very soon to Mosul, but Bishop John ordained fresh clerics, and they kept such close touch with the successors of the Catholicos, that when the Malabar Church after a few years began to enter into relations with the Portuguese missionaries (1504) letters were sent to the Catholicus to inform him.

For our purposes the fact that is most important in all this is that

the Malabaris had in 1490 been for some time without a clergy. Who can doubt that when Bishop John from Mesopotamia appeared to restart the ecclesiastical organization he brought with him service-books of the Nestorian use and that the clergy whom he ordained used the books of their Bishop? When we bear in mind the story told by Assemani there is no mystery at all how the pre-Roman service used by the Malabaris came to be so like the Nestorian Rite. It is the Nestorian Rite, as practised by the Nestorians of Mesopotamia about 1490.

No doubt the Liturgy of Addai and Mari is very ancient. That is proved by the Homilies of Narsai (500 A.D.). In fact, it is older than Narsai, for Narsai's form of it appears to be a slightly revised form of this ancient service. No doubt also that the Malabari Church had always been in near relationship with the Nestorians of Mesopotamia, if it was not actually founded by them, for it was to the Nestorian Catholicus that the Malabaris sent, when they needed a fresh supply of clergy. But we cannot use the Malabar Rite as evidence for the Nestorian Rite in India earlier than the end of the 15th century, for there is nothing to suggest that the service-books used by the new clergy were an old and unrevised form taken from surviving Malabari liturgical codices.

In Dom Connolly's second article (p. 578f.) there is an interesting quotation from Raulin about the Malabar *forma consecrationis*. It seems that when the 'Chaldean Bishops from Babylon' came they added to or subtracted from the *forma consecrationis* at will. It was therefore then the custom to recite our Lord's words of Institution in some form or other, but the formula was not fixed. It could hardly, therefore, have stood in the Prayer-Books, and the oral tradition of what exactly it was proper to say was not yet fixed. Thus we gather that the service-books were like the existing Nestorian MSS of 'Addai and Mari', while the custom of including words of Institution orally had already sprung up. The *Antistes quidam*, therefore, who introduced and caused to be written out the formula quoted by Connolly from Raulin (p. 579), seems to have been a Malabari bishop of the 15th century. My impression is that he must have already been in touch with the Portuguese, and that his formula, while not a quotation of the Roman formula, was suggested by it. As Dom Connolly remarks, we would gladly know more about this Malabar prelate, but I feel sure that he lived after the Nestorian revival of 1490.

The conclusions of this Note are negative, and I am sorry the facts point the way they do. One would have wished to be able to prove that the beautiful and ancient Liturgy of Addai and Mari had had a long history in India. That may indeed have been the case, but I feel that the way the evidence points is that the actual Rite found in possession by the Portuguese in the 16th century in Malabar had been brought there less than a century previously.