I. PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS

Immutable and traditional; these two adjectives are generally used to characterize the Near East.

Much has changed in the course of long ages in Greece, Asia Minor, Syria, Palestine, Egypt etc. One reign superseded the other. Many places were destroyed and their ruins offered the materials for another civilization. Hellenism, Islam and Mongolian invasions gave these countries a different aspect with regard to culture, religion and science. And yet, in reading the records of people who travelled in this part of the world one is struck by the words written at the beginning of this chapter. It is true, the Western business-spirit has also affected these countries and effaced much characteristic detail. And yet, the atmosphere of the Bible is still round these ancient places, though it was not specially guarded as a relic in a museum. Eastern people were the same in their manners and thoughts as centuries ago. Seeing them was a living commentary upon many passages of the Scripture and of the Churchfathers.

This was not the result of a retrogressive development; but the superstructure had changed while the basis had remained the same. The judgement we summarized is not based on the superficial observations of people who "did" the East and who were deceived by the romantic idea of being in the lands of the Bible. No, scholars who had made an intensive study of the history of these countries in various times, and travelled there with critical sense, declared that such a journey threw fresh light upon their studies and elucidated many points without all sorts of constructions of a Western studyroom. Meeting an Oriental man or woman makes many interpretations offered by a Western scholar simply impossible.¹

The book we propose to publish on the following pages belongs to a certain time and a certain department of the Christian East, viz. the Nestorian Church of the 11th cent. The Christian East does not belie its nature. It is and wants to be traditional. Almost every comprehensive study of this field of research stresses this point. Oriental Christianity forms a special type along with Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. It has a history of its own and because of that a particular connection with the ancient church.

(¹) From a long array of such witnesses we quote: A. Deissmann, Licht vom Osten⁴, Tübingen, 1923, S. 1 and passim; H. Th. Obbink, Op bijbelschen bodem⁵, Amsterdam, 1927, blz. 7-8, 13-16.
It lies outside the scope of this book to prove this verdict by a number of illustrations. It is sufficient for the present moment to refer to the judgement of some very competent scholars who have clearly brought to light the characteristic differences between Eastern and Western Christendom. The famous German scholar, Prof. Ad. von Harnack, formulated his opinion in this way: “Die morgenländische Kirche ist in kultureller, philosophischer und religiöser Hinsicht das versteinerte 3. Jahrhundert”. 1 In somewhat different words it was repeated by one of the best connoisseurs of the Christian East in its various aspects, Prof. A. Baumstark. His word is based upon a larger first-hand knowledge of the sources as that of Von Harnack and is therefore the more significant. He speaks of “der Greisenhaftigkeit des Morgenlandes in dem Haften an der Vergangenheit”; he calls it: “der christliche Antike”. 1

These words were spoken with regard to the whole complex of Oriental Churches, Russia and Abessinia, Persia and Greece. We need not to examine here the question whether it is right to view all these churches as a unit. For the particular church of the Nestorians in Mesopotamia does not form an exception to this rule.

Two quotations of experts, one Roman Catholic and one Evangelical, lead us on the same track. Dom. H. Leclercq makes in passing the following remark: “Si le donatisme avait duré jusqu’à nos jours, sans l’épreuve de la législation des empereurs et de l’invasion des Arabes, il nous offrirait probablement un phénomène archéologique infiniment précieux, comparable à celui de l’Église nestorienne. Celle-ci s’est cristallisée dans l’immobilité disciplinaire et liturgique et nous présente l’état antérieur à sa rupture avec l’Église comme une stratification aussi rare qu’intéressante”. 2 The conclusion of Prof. Heiler reads as follows: “Mag diese Kirche auch von ihrer einstigen geistigen Höhe herabgesunken sein, so hat sie doch... ihre reichen altchristlichen Schätze fast unversehrt erhalten”. 3

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It is a matter of course that the varying fates of history have changed here several things; there was growth and decline; the emphasis has altered. Yet all the authors quoted before suggest this question: is it not possible to expect in this way fresh details for our study of the New Testament and the history of the ancient church? Does this tradition begin at the 3rd and 4th cent. or already before? For if these churches have retained the aspect of Christian antiquity, it will enable us by studying their present state and history to solve many problems which are still open by defect of details. Some interesting observations on this line have been made about 25 years ago by Prof. de Zwaan in his inaugural address on: "the importance of historical study of Greek-Eastern Christendom".

Before giving some examples I wish to make two remarks. The first one is concerned with the problem of the relation between idea and phenomenon. It is not right to suppose that if the spirit remains the same, its expression in the visible world does not alter, for other influences, too, determine its formation. Although a certain church proclaims its traditional character, it is not advisable to conclude that all its forms of theology and cultus are identical with those of thousand years ago. This consideration warns us to be careful in making "Rückschlüsse" from the present condition. We can admit the unity of Eastern Christianity as against the West, and yet: every church has had its own origin and history and this is the reason why we observe unity in spirit and great differences in form between them. Only by a critical and comparative study of the facts we can fix what is ancient and what is of recent date. Secondly the study of Eastern Christendom is still in its very beginning. It may be somewhat bold to express this opinion in view of the long series of publications from Byzantine, Syriac, Coptic, Ethiopic,

(1) O. Linton, Das Problem der Urkirche in der neueren Forschung, Uppsala, 1932, S. 195: "Es muss der Versuch gemacht werden, das Recht der alten Kirche genetisch aus dem orientalischen Recht, regressiv aus dem Recht der anatolischen Kirchen zu verstehen. So ist das geschichtliche Problem über Recht und Urichristentum zu lösen". (Italics are mine). (2) J. de Zwaan, De betekenis van de historische studie van het Grieksch-Oosterch Christendom, Haarlem, 1912. (3) One example will suffice to illustrate this point. The well-known controversy of Russian Church history, called Raskol (cf. N. Bonwetsch, Raskolnichen, in: P.R.E.3, xvi, S. 436-443; B. Raptchinsky, Russische Christendom, Zutphen, 1935, blz. 130-162) shows us a schism, cause of great hatred, originating from some small corrections of the liturgy. Yet nobody will deny that the two parties were not animated by the same spirit. This is an extreme case of what is seen elsewhere; though the different churches show the same "spirit", they have not developed along the same lines.
Arabic, Armenian and Georgian sources and the great number of papers and books devoted to this research especially during the last 50 years. But if we see the vastness of this field, the result is comparatively small. The idea expressed in the foregoing quotations may have repelled many people; the interest was more directed to the fortunes of the Church in the West, which can easily be explained since its sources were nearer at hand and not written in many obscure languages, and since its study offered aspects which are of importance for the questions of to-day. What could be expected from "dead" churches? The publication of sources, the higher ecumenical interest; liturgical movements made many Western churchmen turn to the East and get a better understanding for the living forces of Eastern Christianity. And last not least, the discovery of a good many books lost in Western tradition but preserved in the East awakened the sense that from this side some more light upon the ancient church could be expected. But we are still at the beginning.

I cannot develop the thoughts expressed in the foregoing sentences more fully here, but they might not been forgotten in order to avoid too hasty conclusions.

It is a remarkable fact, as Prof. von Harnack once observed, that the history of the ancient church has been exclusively written from Western sources. Although it can easily be accounted for, as the first investigators met first with the Greek and Latin authors, while the East was inaccessible. But it must be emphasized that the Eastern Churches have had a separate existence with another connection with the early church than the West. From this point of view the invaluable merit of Prof. Felix Haase consisted in collecting the data scattered over so many publications. It is true that his book contains merely the outward history, not that of dogma, literature, worship etc.; the materials must be critically sifted, but at any rate he has laid an indispensable basis. It is premature to decide in what respect the previous opinions must be revised, but it may be considerable, e.g. with regard to some heretics. However it may be, historical research must consider all the materials

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available; and who would deny that additions are not very welcome?

The study of this part of Christendom does not only broaden the basis for our judgment, but it makes us discover lines which had once existed within the christian communities, but were left by the great masses and fell into oblivion. Some examples may suffice. The complete text of the book of Henoch would not be known unless by the canon of the Ethiopic Church.¹ Think of the many oriental versions of the so-called Churchorder of Hippolytus with its many problems of liturgy and order;² the Odes of Solomon³ which show a spirit very much akin to Gospel of John and the letters of Ignatius; the Epistula xi Apostolorum.⁴ Many fragments of lost works are contained in the commentaries written after many centuries; a striking case are those of Hippolytus' "Heads against the presbyter Gaius" found in the works of Dionysius bar Salibi (12th cent.).⁵

As to the study of the New Testament itself it is superfluous to show the importance of Eastern versions and Fathers for the textual criticism. Although scholars agree upon this point, it cannot be said that everything worth doing has been done here. On the other hand it seems to be often forgotten that the Eastern Church had a very rich exegetical tradition in its commentaries and scholia, not only of allegorical interpretation. The generally accepted rule for right exegesis is that it must be done "e mente auctoris". But the application of this rule supposes correspondence between the "mens auctoris" and the "mens explicatoris", and it is hard to realize this in practice. Psychology is very instructive and warning

Erscheinen des Artikels) die Forschung auf eine neue Basis gestellt" (S. 239) and: "Nestorius hat nur gewonnen durch die Erweiterung des Materials zu seiner Beurteilung" (S. 243).—F. Haase, a.a.O., S. 377–387.

¹ E. Schürer, Geschicht des Jüdischen Volkes im Zeitalter Jesu Christi, iii, Leipzig, 1909, S. 268–290; although large Greek fragments are known (S. 269 and several papyri) which offer a better text, only the Ethiopic version is complete and has been discovered first. ² R. Lorentz, Ægyptische Kerkorde en Hippolytus van Rome, Haarlem, 1928, blz. 5–14. Some of these Eastern versions were used for our Commentary, but I did not enter into an investigation of their mutual relations, since they have also a value of their own, as lawbooks for later ages in the particular churches which have transmitted them. ³ J. Rendel Harris and A. Mingana, Odes and Psalms of Solomon, Manchester, 1916–1920, 2 vols. ⁴ One of great discoveries of Prof. Carl Schmidt, Gespräche Jesu mit seinen Jüngern nach der Auferstehung, Leipzig, 1919, and: J. de Zwaan, The date and origin of the Epistle of the eleven Apostles, in: Amicitiae Corolla, London, 1933, p. 344–355. ⁵ Cf. O. Bardenhewer, Geschichte der altkirchlichen Literatur, ii, Freiburg i. Br., 1913, S. 569–570.
in this respect. If one gets acquainted with the history of the exegesis
of the N.T., it will be seen that various scholars trying to find an
"objective" interpretation react differently upon the same text.
This reaction depends not only upon the amount of knowledge,
but also upon philosophical, psychological and theological structure.
Nobody can totally break away from this, although he can be
corrected by others. Because of its identity with the men of the
ancient world the strange Eastern world anno 400 A.D. or 800
can be of some help. Knowledge of the reactions of these people,
quite different from those of the Western religious and scholarly
traditions, is far from worthless. At any rate it will help us to read
the New Testament in eastern light.

But is it allowed to use such young sources since so many changes
have altered the face of the Eastern world? Except by those who
accept the exegesis of the Fathers as authoritative, it is hardly done,
probably because of the great number of "zeitgenossische" sources
and since the changes are so clear. Yet if one observes the freedom
of the "Religionsgeschichtler" in explaining the N.T. from sources
which date from centuries before or after it, it is only making a
similar use of the Christian sources. And if one rejects the latter
method, the former, too, must be abandoned.

In realizing the many problems which are raised by the study
of the N.T. and history of the ancient church, it would be certainly
a mistake if the data which may be given by the Eastern church
were too rashly neglected. Of course, the present writer is quite
aware that this is an ideal at the moment, since so little has been
done to study the life of the Eastern Church itself. But it should
always be remembered.¹

¹ One of the latest and most striking examples is the use of the Mandaean
books. (2) I have only spoken of the importance of this study for the first ages of
Christianity. But I do not overlook that it has also an aim in itself to fill a
great gap in many books on the history of the Christian Church (cf. J. B. Kidd,
The Churches of Eastern Christendom from A. D. 451 to the present time, London,
1927, Prefatory note). One has only to remember the fact that these churches
faced the great problem which has not lost its interest, Christianity and Islam.
It goes without saying that this is a condition for right execution of the former
task. At present most of this study is made from a different point of view viz.
that of the "Konfessionskunde" (which describes the present situation of the
various churches and studies the history only in so far it has some bearing upon
the problems of to-day; cf. F. Kattenbusch, Lehrbuch der vergleichenden Konfessions-
kunde, Freiburg i. Br. 1892, S. 5: "Alles das [fällt] aus dem Rahmen unserer
Disciplin heraus, was im Laufe der Zeit zur blossen Episode geworden ist.
Was nicht mehr wirksam ist, das geht uns auch nichts an u.s.w."); in which
A very appropriate example of the above considerations will be found in the study of the early Christian liturgy, especially in that of the Eucharist.\(^1\) This is not an arbitrary choice, since the book we are about to publish, is concerned with "Questions on the Service of the Altar". It is impossible to investigate or even to sum up in a few lines the whole complex of questions which arise if one says: early Christian eucharist. But we should mention some of them.

"Do this in remembrance of me." The whole church has been faithful to this command of the Lord given at the last Supper (according to the earliest witness Paul, 1 Cor. xi 24). This remembrance formed the central part of the liturgy and of the faith of all Christians throughout the ages.\(^2\) Because it has been instituted by Jesus Christ some hours before and in view of His death, it is natural to assume that this act was preserved as purely as possible. No wonder that it contains a large part of tradition, since it is easier to hand down a rite than a thought without changing it.

This central sacrament of the Church can be studied from various points of view. One can ask: how should it be administrated at the present moment; and the answer will be found in various handbooks for the use of the ministers of the different parts in which the "Body of Christ" has been divided. The historical questions are only touched upon in so far they bear upon the present-day-liturgy.\(^1\) Since the history has often brought loss and gain in particular cases, it is quite another thing to ask: what was the structure and idea of the liturgy at a certain date in a certain place? For out of the meal in the upper room of Jerusalem has developed a long the Eastern Orthodox Church occupies most space while the lesser Eastern churches, such as Copts, Nestorians, Jacobites etc. are treated in a few pages. This proportion is right for the centuries after 1453 A.D., but it should be reversed, if one is concerned about the historical situation and importance before that date.

series of various rites. Every part of the Church has its own. In the Western Church the Roman rite prevailed over the Milanese, Gallican and Gothic rites.¹ In the East the churches of Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem etc. had their own liturgy which was guarded and enriched within the Eastern Orthodox Church or within the separate communities such as Copts, Syrians and Nestorians.² A survey of the materials is found in Lietzmann’s study on “Messe und Herrenmahl” ;³ Besides the liturgical manuscripts we have a good number of incidental references in the Fathers. The task of liturgical research is formulated in this way by Prof. Baumstark who devoted a large part of his study to it and is a great authority:⁴ “Die Sammlung und das Verhôr dieser (âussern) Zeugnisse (uber Dinge der liturgischen Entwicklung)—die auf âltern Stufen der Entwicklung stehenden liturgischen Urkunden selbst ... in befriedigender Ausgabe zu erschliessen, wo nötig zu erklären und den Zusammenhang der einzelnen untereinander zu bestimmen—Spuren ihres Werdeprozesses (which are shown by the liturgies) ... sorgfàltigst zu verfolgen und mit den âussern Quellenzeugnissen vergleichend zu verbinden.” If this laborious work has been done, the question arises if all those types can be reduced to a common “Grundform”; what was the cause of those changes; what is the connection with the Eucharist in the New Testament. The evidence of the N.T. is interpreted in many opposite directions ⁵ and the chain which links it up with the evidence of the 3rd and 4th cent. is thin. Generally it is assumed that the surrounding world had a good deal of influence (“hellenization”); was it on Paul or later? These are the great questions on which the discussion turns. If one reads

the modern books on them, it will be seen that the later Eastern rites play a great part.¹

The importance of this study is not only that we get an idea of the Christian cult at a certain date. Prof. Baumstark and Lietzmann have drawn attention to the fact that by the way of comparison certain facts of relation between several churches are detected which are not known from elsewhere.² But greater weight must be attached to the fact that the liturgy is an expression of Christian faith and life; it has been made to thank God for His salvation in Christ Jesus and it led many people in its ancient forms to a deeper apprehension of the Christian truth. On the other hand the thoughts connected with these obsolete forms were not always the same, and it is worth while to study this change of ideas. "The study of the Liturgy whatever else it may be, must also be a study in religious psychology"³ and it is a valuable way to understand the religious life of a church.⁴

There exists a great difference between the Eastern and Western form of the liturgy, along with an agreement in words, and in its conception. Did the traditional character of the East retain here the early-Christian idea?

It cannot be denied that much has already been done to elucidate the many problems of criticism, relation etc. of the liturgical sources, especially of the West,⁵ but the real idea of the structure of this study has been discovered during the last 50 years. Prof. Lietzmann⁶ calls his book "ein erster Versuch . . . einen Richtweg durch den Urwald zu schlagen". The oldest interest in this study was merely controversial. The Protestant theologians combatted the Mass as a medieval invention; the Roman Catholic scholars

defended it as the pure institution of our Lord. In the course of this debate the Eastern liturgies were published to show that the mass was not medieval and that the Roman Church was in accordance with the primitive one. This was the aim of Goar and Renaudot in editing their famous collections, though they contain so much stuff in their texts and notes which makes them still indispensable and which can serve a more objective purpose. When the polemical stimulus flagged, the liturgical study became mainly a part of Pastoral Theology, more studied by Roman Catholics and Anglicans because of their rich liturgical life than by Protestants. The Western forms stood in front. But there was a weakness, "a certain sterility of liturgical work in the last century; namely, that it has been in the main a study in ritual rather than a study in religion; as a consequence it has seemed to be in touch rather with professionalism than with life, and appears in its general character to be predominantly of clerical interest". During the last half of a century the deeper understanding of liturgical life, finding its expression in liturgical movements in all branches of the Church, the increasing importance of the study of the Eastern church and the discovery of many valuable documents have cooperated to an enhanced interest in the research of the liturgy of the ancient church.

Nevertheless it would be premature to think that everything is already clear. Much material is still waiting to be sifted. Liturgy is an expression and possession of the masses; it is quite different from the writings of certain persons belonging to a certain time.

"Still und geräuschlos vollzog sich allgemein bis zum 16. Jahrhundert und vollzieht sich heute noch im Orient aller liturgische Einzelfortschritt." This makes it often impossible to fix the date and origin of a particular prayer or action. The method of reconstructing an older stage by comparison of certain prayers and actions within various groups, will often give us a clue (although room must be left for the assumption of an original growth on both sides). At any rate it is impossible at the present state of affairs to draw long lines. The task of the moment is to publish, to estimate the sources as completely as possible and to fix their importance

(1) J. Goar, Euchologien, Lutetiae Parisiorum, 1647 (3, Venetii, 1730); E. Renaudot, Liturgiarum Orientalium Collectio 2, Francofurti ad Moenum, 1847 (1st ed. of 1716). (2) E. Bishop, i.e., p. 106. (3) A. Baumstark, Vom geschichtlichen Werden, S. 132, in a chapter: "Grenzen des Wissenkönnens".— Cf. the careful words of E. Bishop, written after a lifetime of study in this field, i.e., p. ix.
for a certain liturgical group. If this is done, one can go on to trace older layers, to reconstruct the liturgy of a former period and to answer the main questions formulated before.

Having this in view I publish this xith century writing of the Nestorians. The special Introduction and Commentary must help to fix its date, and investigate the traditional background. It must certainly be of some use to study this liturgy of the Nestorians, since competent authorities\(^1\) pointed out the great traditional value of the Nestorians and their writings. A survey of the research of their liturgy will form a proper introduction, as it helps us to find out the problems of this group and the bearing of their answer.


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