

Adolph Edwin Medlycott, *India and the Apostle Thomas: An Inquiry with a Critical Analysis of the Acta Thomae* (London 1905; reprint Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2005). Pp. xviii + 303; \$95.00.

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Medlycott was born in 1838 in what is now Bangladesh; educated in British India and in Rome (PhD from the present Urban Papal University); served as priest from 1861 in Bengal and Punjab, then as professor of rhetoric in Rome; and was consecrated as the first bishop of the Syro-Malabar Church in Thrissur, Kerala, where he sat from 1887 to 1896, dying in Bangalore, his place of retirement, in 1918. His book on Thomas is sufficiently scholarly to merit reprinting, though professionally optimistic as to the possibility of proving the ancient tradition that one of the twelve original disciples of Jesus brought his master's teaching to India, where it still flourishes among the Thomas Christians. Ch. 1, for example, is entitled 'The Apostle Thomas and Gondophares the Indian King – *connection proved from coins and inscription*' (reviewer's italics). For while Gondophares was indeed the name of a first-century king of what is now Afghanistan, the connection with Thomas lies through the unhistorical *Acts*. All Medlycott's learning (he sometimes forgets that we may not read Greek and Latin) cannot masque this weakness; nor is the report that two Christians from Persia were arrested as spies on their arrival at Antioch in the year 139 (p. 18) sufficient evidence that the reputation of King Gondophares could not have reached the author of those *Acts* in any other way but by a tradition deriving from Thomas himself. After all, we know of Gondophares from coins and an inscription; and his coins, at least, might have reached the Roman Empire.

It is not difficult for Medlycott to prove, on the other hand, that there is a widespread tradition in the Christian Church that the field of Thomas' mission was India, where he was martyred, and that his body was reinterred 'in the West' (Ch. 2); but the earliest witnesses to this tradition date back to the fourth century (these say his bones were reinterred at Edessa in Mesopotamia), with the sole exception of the fictional *Acts of Thomas*. One can see why Medlycott felt obliged to argue, in a long appendix, that this novel is embroidered upon an historical core. Stripped of learned obscurity, the appendix claims that this core must have existed and been

accepted in the Church, for otherwise 'heretics' (Manichaeans and Gnostics, according to Augustine and Epiphanius) would not have chosen it as a vessel for the propagation of their ideas. This argument appears rather dated: the modern editors of the *Acts of Thomas* mention only the encratism prominent in the second part of the text, in which Thomas is martyred for convincing certain prominent married women to refuse to have sexual intercourse with their husbands; nor do they claim that the original *Acts of Thomas* were 'orthodox' (*Écrits apocryphes chrétiens*, ed. F. Bovon and P. Geoltrain, vol. 1, Paris 1997, 1324f.).

The tradition of the Church is the reason why western Christians visited India and asked to see the place where Thomas was killed and buried; and the fact that they did so is sufficient reason for that place to have been pointed out by the local Christians (Ch. 3). (The first pilgrims to the Holy Land, as Robin Lane Fox has pointed out, asked in vain where they might see Lot's wife, transformed into a column of salt: enterprising tour-guides showed her to later pilgrims, who went home satisfied.) Medlycott goes on to follow the relics of Thomas from India to Edessa in the third century, from Edessa to Chios in the twelfth, and from Chios to Ortona, where they are now alleged to rest, in 1258 (Ch. 4); and in this same chapter he explores further traditions concerning Thomas' martyrdom, which he calls 'historical records'.

There follows a catalogue of the other alleged apostles of 'India,' meaning anywhere from Yemen and Ethiopia to Malabar (Ch. 5): Pantaenus, attested by Eusebius; Frumentius, attested by Rufinus; and the Theophilus, attested by 'Philostorgius.' Medlycott believes this last, a native of the Maldives and a convert to Arianism, visited Malabar c. 354 and found Christianity well established there. Finally, Medlycott shows that 'there are no grounds for the supposition' that a disciple of Mani named Thomas 'ever went to India' (p. 203); and that this Thomas cannot, therefore, have been mistaken for the disciple of Jesus (Ch. 6).

The reprint is legible and relatively free of 'hairs', though not as crisp and black as one might wish; but the illustrations are of poor quality and the inscription of the year 103 (AD 46?), a copy of which Medlycott – p. 10 – published with his book, has regrettably been omitted altogether. As usual, with Gorgias Press, one must protest at the price.