William H. Taylor, *Antioch and Canterbury: The Syrian Orthodox Church and the Church of England, 1874–1928*. Gorgias Press, Piscataway, 2005. ISBN 1-59333-312-9. [2], ix, 135 pp. $76 [Luxury edition of 50 copies, ISBN 1-59333-235-1, $234]

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At the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century the Syrian Orthodox Church found itself and its people divided between two powerful empires, the Ottoman Empire in the Middle East, and the British Empire in India. In the Ottoman system it had the limited advantages of being a recognised millet, and its Patriarch possessed an Imperial Firman recognising him as the official representative of his community and forbidding any others from interfering in his decisions concerning appointments or management of properties and endowments. But unlike the Syrian Catholics, Chaldeans, Maronites, and other uniate churches who were under the declared protection of France, and the Byzantine Orthodox churches who were under the protection of Russia, the Syrian Orthodox had no foreign supporters or sponsors, and so were disadvantaged both in the regular outbreaks of inter-communal fighting over the ownership of churches and other properties, and in obtaining funding for schools and similar projects. In British India, and those notionally independent parts of India under British 'protection', the Patriarch was accorded no special status, and although the colonial authorities in theory abjured any interference in religious affairs, the reality was often far different from this. In particular, since 1816 evangelical missionaries from the Church of England, belonging to the Church Missionary Society (CMS), had been actively working among the Christians of South India and attempting to reform them according to Protestant ideals, with the result that the local Syrian Orthodox community was split, with, from 1843, one part owing allegiance to the new pro-Reform metropolitan Mar Athanasius, and one part to the established pro-Antiochene metropolitan Mar Dionysius. This led to bitter disputes over jurisdiction and property which dragged through the Indian courts for the rest of the century, and unsurprisingly both the Anglican hierarchy in India and the civil

colonial authorities almost always gave support to the pro-Reform metropolitan and his successors.

It was in these circumstances that in 1874 Patriarch Peter III (in current Syrian Orthodox reckoning Peter IV) and Bishop Abdallah Sadadi of Jerusalem (later Patriarch Abdallah), travelled to London in an attempt to establish closer relations with the Church of England. The account of this voyage, and of subsequent similar contacts between Anglicans and Syrian Orthodox up to 1928, is the subject of this excellently researched monograph by William Taylor, which began life as a 1987 MPhil thesis at the University of Lancaster under the expert supervision of Chip Coakley, and which makes full use of key archival sources in the UK, such as the correspondence of the Archbishops of Canterbury at Lambeth Palace, and British Foreign Office files in the Public Records Office, as well as Syrian Orthodox accounts of these encounters published in Arabic. As such it makes a fine companion volume to Coakley's own larger-scale work, *The Church of the East and the Church of England. A History of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Assyrian Mission* (Oxford: OUP, 1992).

But readers should beware that this is not a particularly cheerful or edifying tale! Patriarch Peter arrived in England in August 1874 looking for the equivalent of an Ottoman Firman recognising him as the head of the Syrian Orthodox community in India, as well as hoping for British government agreement to act as protectors of the Syrian Orthodox in the Ottoman Empire, and for the Church of England to finance his educational and printing initiatives. Unfortunately, although wise in the ways of Ottoman imperial politics and local inter-denominational rivalries, he had no experience or knowledge of the complexities of British politics and cultural attitudes, nor of the decentralised, disorganised, and doctrinally diverse nature of the Church of England. Consequently, like an infantryman in no-man's land, he found himself caught in vicious cross-fire, often without being able to determine who was firing at him, or why. For many in the nineteenth-century Church of England, the Patriarch was the head of a heretical and decadent church, to be condemned both for its christological doctrines and for its primitive and unreformed practices, whether the use in scripture and liturgy of an ancient language not understood by the people, or its many 'superstitious' rituals and customs. The evangelical protestant wing of the Church of England in particular,

both in England and in India, openly and fiercely attacked him, and rejected his claims for the jurisdiction of his metropolitan in India. Even the more moderate Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge (SPCK) refused to consider funding schools or printing because this would have been to support a church whose beliefs they opposed. At the same time, although the Patriarch had received official permission for his journey to London, the Armenians in Istanbul had since denounced him to the Ottoman authorities for seeking foreign interference in the empire, the Ottoman ambassador thus refused to give him any support, and the British Foreign Office was becoming increasingly jumpy about the consequences of his visit, and utterly opposed any idea of British support for his church which could yield them no possible advantage, and would only empoison Anglo-Ottoman relations which were of key importance for British regional interests.

After spending six months in England, Patriarch Peter left for Cairo and then India with very few of his ambitions fulfilled. Whilst civil authorities in India had been reprimanded for publicly favouring the pro-Reform metropolitan, the Anglican church authorities still clearly gave him their full support. The government refused to even consider intervening on behalf of the Syrian Orthodox within the Ottoman jurisdiction, and his political manoeuvring in London had clearly alienated potential sympathisers and allies, and had earned him the suspicion of the Ottoman authorities. Only within the realms of education and printing had he achieved some minor successes. He had made friends with a number of English families and clergy who promised him their support, and in March he had been granted an audience with Queen Victoria who clearly took to him, and asked to see him again. With the aid of these friends, and a generous donation from the Queen, the Syrian Patriarchate Educational Fund was established. This channelled some money towards Syrian Orthodox schools, and helped in the purchase of printing presses set up in the monastery of Dayr al-Za faran[1], but after a brief flurry of activity the Fund sank into desuetude, and was almost entirely forgotten by the Anglican authorities. In 1892 it paid for O.H. Parry's trip to Tur Abdin which led to the 1895 publication of his

[1] An account of this press and its publications is soon to be published by David Taylor and Jack Tannous.

Six Months in a Syrian Monastery—described, rather depressingly, by Taylor (p.72) as 'the most singular achievement' of the Fund.

Bishop Abdallah Sadadi (now known as Mar Gregorius) returned to England in late 1887, where he remained until late 1888, and so was present for the Lambeth Conference of 1888 at which Anglican bishops from around the world were gathered. This encounter sparked some interest in the idea of inter-communion between the two churches, though discussions moved at a snail-like pace. He returned for a third visit (now as Patriarch Ignatius Abdallah) in 1908, and on this occasion discussions went far further than before, though there was never any real prospect of intercommunion. The Patriarch was more than aware of the internal divisions of the Church of England and the problems they posed; 'I myself am most anxious for a rapprochement between the two churches, if it can be accomplished without the sacrifice of any vital doctrine. We are entirely at one with the High Church party, but the attitude of Low Churchmen is a great obstacle' (Taylor, p.98). In reality internal divisions within his own church were just as problematic, and it was the opinion of contemporary observers that he was unwilling to commit himself to any agreement for fear that opponents in India would seize upon his statements and use them against him. Discussions about intercommunion continued into the 1920s, but by then the political context of the Syrian Orthodox had changed dramatically, and the incentives for intercommunion were greatly reduced.

The third visitor around whose trips to London this book revolves is Afrem Barsoum, another future patriarch (and an impressive scholar), who came first in 1913 as a simple monk, and then in 1920 as the Metropolitan of Syria and the Syrian Orthodox envoy to the Paris Peace Conference, and finally in 1927. On each occasion he tried to gain financial and political support from the Church of England, but was constantly rebuffed. As he wrote to Randall Davidson, then Archbishop of Canterbury, in 1928; 'The ordinary expressions "I will try", and "I am sorry", and "I regret" intimidate me. I regret very much that our church cannot engage the attention of the Episcopal Church and my three missions in 1913, 1920, and 1927 have been unsuccessful' (Taylor, p.109). It is not surprising that the astute Barsoum realised that there was no advantage to be gained in the future from attempted alliances with European nations and churches, and so in the post-Ottoman world

he instead (especially after his elevation to the patriarchate in 1932) sought to link his church to the rising tide of Arab nationalism. This policy was arguably instrumental in gaining his church one of the longest periods of toleration and peace it had known in centuries, although it is now the subject of keen internal debate.

William Taylor's monograph *Antioch and Canterbury* neatly demonstrates the impact of international politics and internal faction-fighting on the relationship between the Church of England and the Syrian Orthodox Church over a key fifty-year period. It is a fascinating read, and impeccably documented, though not always very uplifting or encouraging! Repeated attempts at contact, on the initiative of both parties, ultimately yielded no substantial or lasting ecumenical results. The Anglicans were unwilling to provide any substantial financial support, and were incapable of delivering political support, and the Syrian Orthodox were unable publicly to compromise their doctrinal position. (The only positive note is that, almost by accident, it did inaugurate a period of Syrian Orthodox printing and publishing in the Middle East that became an important vehicle for education and identity-formation.) In our own age, after break-through doctrinal agreements between the Catholic Church and the Syrian Orthodox, it is to be hoped that a new generation of Anglican and Syrian Orthodox leaders will once again attempt to foster links between the two churches.

On a technical note, it should be noted that the book shows some signs of having been rushed through the final stages of preparation. In chapter I, footnotes 10 to 21 at the bottom of the page should be renumbered 9 to 20, in order to correspond to the relevant note numbers in the text. The list of abbreviations is not mentioned in the list of contents but is to be found after the bibliography, although not ordered alphabetically. The index is frankly a mess. 'Eastern Churches Committee' should go under E, not D; the only entry under G is 'Heber, Reginald'; Syrian bishops, Mar Athanasius, Mar Dionysius, etc, are lumped together under M; Queen Victoria is under Q, Sultan Mahmud under S, etc. There are many typographical errors; those which particularly caught my attention (or amused me!) are the following: on p. 63, n. 34, for 'See page 75', read 'See page 57'; Parry's description of Patriarch Peter, p. 75, as 'living day by day far removed ... from the softening influence of familiar intercourse with me', should read not the

conceited sounding 'me', but 'men'; on p. 107, line 22, for 'the Parish Conference', read 'the Paris Conference'; on p. 112, n. 87, for 'the Wet Syrian Church' read 'the West Syrian Church'; on p. 119, paragraph 2, line 2, for 'complicated a lot of', read 'complicated the lot of'. The many other slips should not cause too many problems for readers.

The luxury edition, limited to fifty copies and printed on high quality paper and in a red cloth binding, was produced to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the enthronement of the current Syrian Orthodox Patriarch, Mor Ignatius Zakka I Iwaz, which fell on the 14th September 2005. It has an extra page in which the Kiraz family dedicate the volume to this worthy successor to patriarchs Peter, Abdallah, and Afram, whose own ecumenical initiatives have been rewarded with incomparably greater success.