A short Version in Syriac and Arabic of the
Gloria in Excelsis Deo, with Additions by St.
Athanasius the Great*

[Una breve versión siriaca y árabe de Gloria in Excelsis Deo,
con adiciones de S. Atanasio el Grande]

Rifaat EBIED
The University of Sydney
rifaat.ebied@sydney.edu.au

Abstract: The manuscripts preserved in the Mingana Collection –Mingana
Syriac MS 83 and Syriac MS 155– contain, inter alia, an interesting short
piece dealing with the text of the Gloria in Excelsis Deo in Syriac and Arabic
respectively with additions by Saint Athanasius the Great. The purpose of
this paper is to draw the attention of scholars and colleagues to the
existence of this hitherto unpublished work as well as to present its text
and provide an analysis of its contents, linguistic features and likely
authenticity.

Resumen: Los manuscritos conservados en la Colección de Mingana –
Mingana Syriac MS 83 and Syriac MS 155– contienen, inter alia, una breve
pero interesante parte del texto Gloria in Excelsis Deo en siriaco y árabe,
respectivamente, con anotaciones de San Atanasio el Grande. El objetivo
de este trabajo es mostrar a los investigadores y compañeros la existencia
de estos manuscritos inéditos, así como presentar el texto y un análisis
del contenido del mismo, sus rasgos lingüísticos y su autenticidad.

Keywords: Mingana Collection; Syriac MS 83; Syriac MS 155; Gloria in Excelsis
Deo; Saint Athanasius the Great.

Palabras clave: Colección de Mingana; Syriac MS 83; Syriac MS 155; Gloria in
Excelsis Deo; San Atanasio el Grande.

*Collectanea Christiana Orientalia 14 (2017), pp. 65-71; issn-e2386-7442
A version in Syriac and Arabic of the “Gloria in Excelsis Deo”

Introduction

The rich collection of the Mingana Syriac, Arabic and Garshûni manuscripts, preserved in the University of Birmingham Library (England) contains numerous valuable, and in some cases unique, works. Volume I of the Catalogue in particular contains a number of seminal works on a variety of Patristic and Christian subject matters in Syriac and Arabic (Garshûni). Two of these manuscripts, Mingana Syriac MS 83 and Syriac MS 155, contain a piece dealing with the text of the Gloria in Excelsis Deo in Syriac and Arabic respectively with additions by St. Athanasius the Great.

History of the Hymn

Gloria in excelsis Deo is the title and beginning of a hymn known also as the Greater Doxology as distinguished from the “Minor Doxology” or Gloria Patri and the “Angelic Hymn”. The title is often abbreviated to “Gloria in Excelsis” or simply “Gloria”. It is an example of the psalmiidotici (‘private psalms’), i.e. compositions by individuals in imitation of the biblical Psalter that were popular in the 2nd and 3rd centuries. Another surviving example of this lyric poetry is the Te Deum. The hymn begins with the words that the angels sang when the birth of Christ was announced to shepherds in the Gospel of Luke, chapter 2, verse 14. Other verses were added very early, forming a

---

* An updated version of a paper presented at the St. Andrew’s Patristic Symposium 2012 on St. Athanasius the Great [St. Andrew’s Greek Orthodox Theological College], Sydney, 28-29 September 2012.


doxology, which in the fourth century became part of morning prayers, and is still recited in the Byzantine Rite Orthros service.⁴

The Manuscripts

The text of the present piece has survived in the following Mingana manuscripts:

(i) MS Mingana Syriac 83, dated A.G. 2096 = A.D. 1785. The part of the manuscript which comprises our Syriac text consists of fols. 142a-143b. This manuscript contains a collection of prayers and tracts of a mystical character in Syriac, including the prayer of Philoxenus of Mabbūg; the vision of Macarius of Egypt; the commandments of our Lord to his disciples and the Trisagion, the first part of which is said to have been recited by the angels near the tomb of our Lord, and the second part by Joseph and Nicodemus.⁵

(ii) MS Mingana Syriac 155, dated ca. 1830 A.D. The part of the manuscript which comprises our Arabic text consists of fols. 91b-92a. This manuscript contains a number of different works in Syriac and Arabic (Garšūnī), including a miracle in Arabic of Saint George in the city of Baghdad; theological questions asked by Saint Basil and answered by Saint Gregory Nazianzen and various prayers in Arabic to be recited by the faithful.⁶

The Present Piece

The Syriac and Arabic superscription of this short piece in both manuscripts attribute the additions to the text of the hymn entitled “Praise of the Angels on the day of the carnal birth of our Lord” to

---

⁴ Cf. The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, p. 685.
⁵ For a detailed description of the contents of this manuscript, see A. Mingana, Catalogue of the Mingana Collection of Manuscripts, vol. I: Syriac and Garšūnī Manuscripts, pp. 206-208.
Saint Athanasius “Patriarch of Alexandria”. For the sake of comparison I reproduce below the text of the Syriac and Arabic versions of the original hymn, i.e. without any additions, together with present-day Greek text of the same and its translation. This is followed by the Syriac and Arabic text and translation of the additions attributed to Saint Athanasius of Alexandria. A comparison of the Syriac text of the piece with that of the Arabic shows that, with the exception of a few insignificant variations such as orthographic readings and the omission, addition or abbreviation of a word, they are substantially the same. Some features of the Arabic text indicate that it may have been translated from Syriac.

Text

Present-day Greek Text

Δόξα Σοι τῷ δείξαντι τὸ φῶς. Δόξα ἐν ὑψίστοις Θεῷ καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς εἰρήνη, ἐν ἀνθρώποις εὐδοκία.

’Ὑμνοῦμεν σε, εὐλογοῦμεν σε, προσκυνοῦμεν σε, δοξολογοῦμεν σε, εὐχαριστοῦμεν σοι, διὰ τὴν μεγάλην σου δόξαν. Κύριε Βασιλεῦ, ἐπουράνιε Θεὲ, Πάτερ παντοκράτορ, Κύριε Υἱὲ Μονογενὲς, Ἰησοῦ Χριστὲ, καὶ Ἀγιον Πνεῦμα. Κύριε ὁ Θεός, ὁ ἡμῶν Θεός, ὁ Υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ, ὁ Υἱὸς τοῦ Πατρὸς, ὁ ἐμὲ τὴν ἁμαρτίαν τοῦ κόσμου, ἐλέησαι ἡμᾶς, εἰς τὸν κόσμον τῆς ἁμαρτίας τοῦ κόσμου. Πρόσωψα τὴν δέος ἡμῶν, καὶ σῴζῃ τὴν ὑπὸ τοῦ Πατρὸς, καὶ ἐλέησαι ἡμᾶς. Ὁτι οὐ εἶ μόνος Ἀγιός, ὡς εἰς τῷ Κύριος Πατρός, ἐς δόξαν Θεοῦ Πατρός, ἐς καθ' ἑκάστην ἡμῶν ὑποτασίαν σε, καὶ ἐν τῷ ἐν τῷ πάντων καὶ ἐν τῷ πάντων τῶν αἰώνων καὶ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦ αἰώνος.

----

Syriac: “ܘܩܕܝܬܐ ܐܬܐܦܩܝܘܣ ܦܞܪܝܪܟܐ ܕܐܠܟܪܧܕܪܝܐ”; Arabic: “وكمّلها القدّيس اثناسيىس بطرك اسكندرية” (and it was completed by St. Athanasius, Patriarch of Alexandria”).
تمسحة الملائكة التي سيحوها في يوم مولد سّبنا بالجسد: وكلها القدّيس التاسيس بطرد
إسكندرية

السيح الله في العل وعلى الأرض السلام والرجاء الصالح لبني البشر: نسبحك بارككن
خدمك نسجد لك ونطق بجسد. نشكرك من أجل عظمة مجدك: الرب خلق ومالك
سابو، الرب الآلب ضابط الكلّ، الرب الآلهة الإبن الوحيد يسوع المسيح مع روح القدس: الرب
الإله يحمل الله الإبن كملة الآب الحامل خطايا العالم اريحنا يا حامل خطايا العالم: أصغي لنا أذنك وأقبل طلبنا: أياً الجلس بأجهد عن بين أبه إشفق وأفرح علىنا: ان
وحذك قدوس: أنت وحذك الرب يسوع المسيح مع روح القدس: الهجد للإله الإبن أمين
في كل حين وكل أيام حياتي أباركم: وأسبح لإسم الإله المبارك إلى الأبد الذو هو
ثابت إلى أبد الآبدين أمين.

Syriac Version (Mingana Syr. MS 83)

..
A version in Syriac and Arabic of the “Gloria in Excelsis Deo”

English Translation

Glory to you who has shown us the light. Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, goodwill to all people. We praise you, we bless you, we worship you, we glorify you, we give thanks to you for your great glory. Lord, King, heavenly God, Father, almighty; Lord, the only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, and Holy Spirit. Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father who take away the sin of the world, have mercy on us, you who take away the sins of the world. Receive our prayer, you who sit at the right hand of the Father, and have mercy on us. For you only are holy, only you are Lord Jesus Christ, to the glory of God the Father. Amen. Each day we bless you, and we praise your name forever and to the ages of ages.

Additions attributed to St. Athanasius

The following is the Syriac and Arabic text of the additions ascribed to Saint Athanasius of Alexandria in both manuscripts:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arabic (Garshûni)</th>
<th>Syriac Version</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Version (Mingana Syr. MS 155)</td>
<td>(Mingana Syr. MS 83)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

مبارک آنت یا ربّ ضناط الکلّ إله آباناً:
مستح اسمه ومعظم بالنسابح: إلى أب
الآبدين آمين: لك يلبق المجد: ولّك يلبق النسبح: وّلك يلبق الحقّ مع إبنك الوحيد: وروحك الحقّ الفذوس:
من الآن وإلى دهر الذاهين آمين. 5 يا ربا
يسوع المسيح باب رحمتك لا تغلق في وجهنا

 setSize:9.6x9.6 計算機語數量
 setSize:9.6x9.6 計算機語數量
Translation of the Additions

Blessed are you, Lord Almighty, the God of our fathers. Your name is glorified and magnified by praises for ever and ever. You are worthy of glory; you are worthy of praise. Acclaim befits you, the God and Father of all, the Father of Truth with your Only-Begotten Son and your All Holy and Life-giving Spirit. Now and for ever and ever, Amen. Our Lord Jesus Christ, do not shut the gate of your mercy in our face. We the sinners, your servants, confess; have mercy on us. O Lord, your love caused you to come down to us from your position (place) so that through your death our mortality has become null and void: have mercy on us.

Conclusion

The Authenticity of the Piece with its additions must be questioned. Based on the language and the contents of both manuscripts, this piece probably belongs to the Pseudo-Athanasius works attributed to St. Athanasius which are of uncertain authenticity and are unlikely to be genuine Athanasius. To the best of my knowledge it does not rank amongst the surviving genuine authentic works of Saint Athanasius. It most likely falls into the category of valued works ascribed to Saint Athanasius the Great and sheltered under his authority. It is to be ranked with the spuria rather than with the merely dubia. None the less it is not without interest to Patristic scholars who are concerned with the out put of the great Theologian and Church Father of Alexandria.

Ms: مينوتتنا, clearly following the Syriac: مینوتتنا.