

# THE ORTHODOX SYRIAN CHURCH, ITS RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY



THE VERY REV. DR. KADAVIL PAUL RAMBAN.  
M. A. (MADRAS), M. A. (COLUMBIA), PH. D. (KERALA).

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وَمَا كُنَّا بِمُؤْمِنِينَ  
بِحَدِيثِهِمْ أَسِيْبًا . قَدْ كُنَّا فِي الْكُفْرِ  
مُتَمَرِّينَ  
قَدِّسَتْ أَرْوَاقُهُمْ

THE ORTHODOX SYRIAN CHURCH,  
ITS RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY

Very Rev. Dr. KADAVIL PAUL RAMBAN  
M. A. (Madras), M. A. (Columbia), Ph. D. (Kerala)

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ITS RELIGION AND GEOGRAPHY

REV. DR. KADAVIL  
M. A. (M.A., M.A., M.A., M.A., M.A.)

DEDICATED TO  
MAR GREGORIOS OF  
PARUMALA

Published in 1973  
by  
K. V. Parumala

1973



SYRIAN ORTHODOX PATRIARCH  
IGNATIUS YAKUB III





THE CATHOLICOS OF THE EAST

BASELIOS AUGEN I



ORTHODOX SYRIAN CHURCH

Catholicate of the East

(Seal)

Baselius Augen I

Catholicos.

No. 52/68

Kottayam-4

KERALA, INDIA

26th Feb. 1968

The Very Rev. Dr. Paul Ramban

Malelcruz Dayara,

Puthencruz.

Apostolic blessings to Very Rev. Doctor Paul Ramban.

We read with great interest your Ph. D thesis **The Orthodox Syrian Church, Its Religion And Philosophy.** We are happy to see a book of this kind which presents the doctrines and teachings of the Church in a readable form. We are sure this book will be helpful to those who would like to study the faith and traditions of our Church. We congratulate you for writing this thesis.

We hope that you would translate this book into Malayalam for the benefit of those who do not know English.

May God bless you and give you long life and enable you to write more books of this kind for the edification of the faithful.

May the Grace of our Lord be with you.

(Sd) Baselius Augen  
Catholicos of the East.







MAR GREGORIOS OF PARUMALA

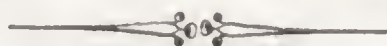




THE LATE KADAVIL POULOSE MAR ATHANASIOS



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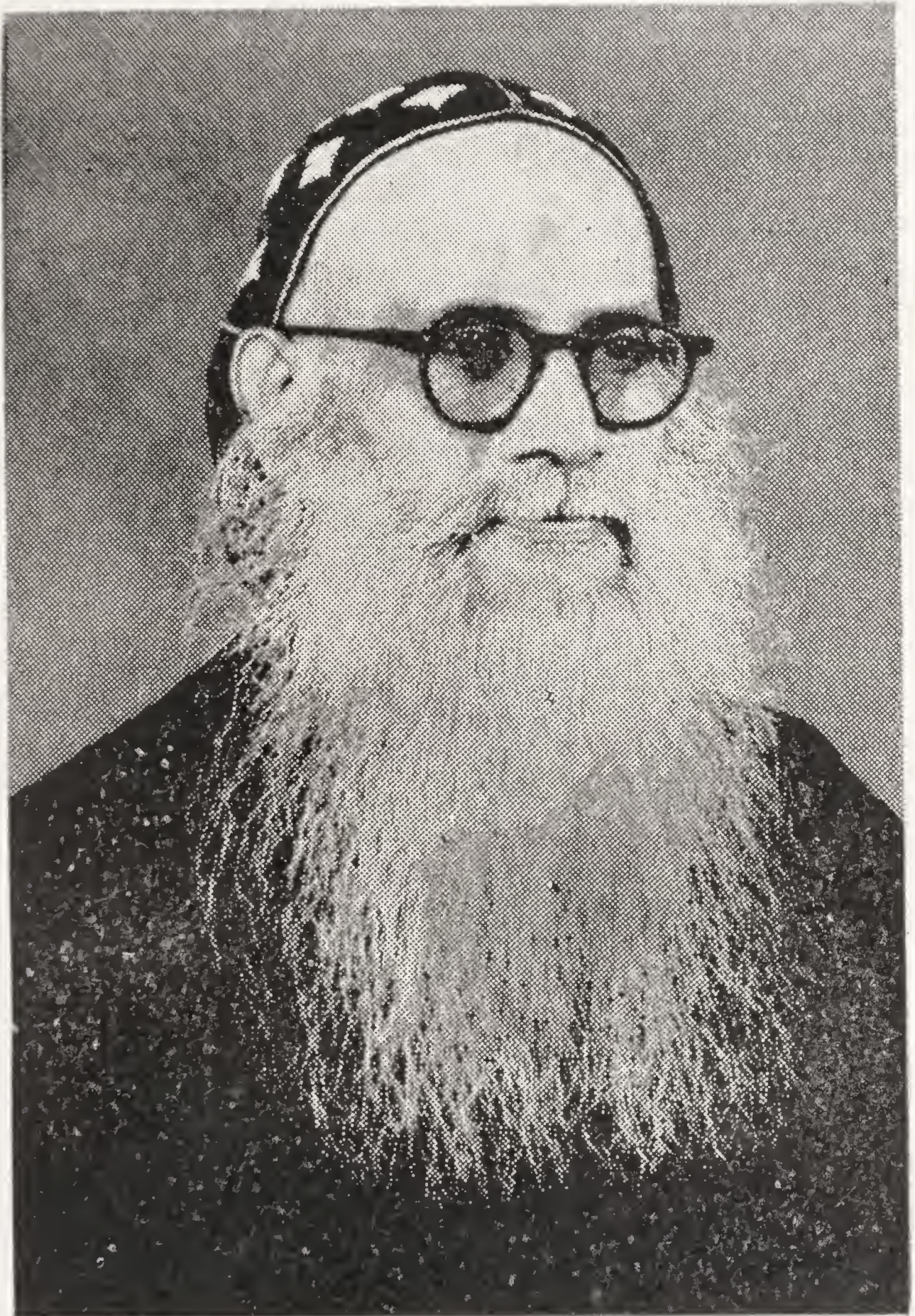
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VERY REV. DR. KADAVIL PAUL RAMBAN



## PREFACE

The object of this thesis is an exposition of the philosophy and the religion of the Orthodox Syrian Church which is one of the most ancient Christian Churches on the face of the Earth.

Many a learned person in England and America asked me during my western tour in 1950 and 1951 about the Philosophy and Religion of the Orthodox Syrian Church and it is to answer them that I have undertaken this humble work.

Religion has had a cultural influence on men even from primitive times. It held them together, it set them a goal and gave them rules of conduct, making life more serious and important. The belief in a soul that survives natural death has caused men to live a better life, not taking life as a passing phase or temporary phenomenon. As religion grew from its primitive form to the more evolved form by the reflective thinking of men, Philosophy of Religion also was formed.

The major religions of the world have their own distinctive philosophies. Though they are different in many respects, there are many points of contact also for them. The Orthodox Syrians existing through centuries as a separate community despite many vicissitudes of time and accidents of history, have formed for themselves a special philosophy of religion and religious ways.

At the beginning of the present thesis I have given a historical background which shows briefly the origin of this Church and its growth through nineteen centuries, especially in Kerala. The history of this Church in Kerala is traced here with special emphasis and with some details.

I have attempted to give a general outline of the Orthodox Syrian Philosophy of Religion. To the Orthodox Syrians I have sometimes referred as 'Syrians'.

Here I have discussed only the central doctrines of their Philosophy of Religion.

Fr. Kadavil Paul Ramban.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In 1950 I had the good fortune of staying in different parts of the U. K. as the guest of the Church of England. Then I made use of the libraries in some of the places I stayed in the U. K. and collected some valuable data about the Orthodox Syrian Church, which I have been able to incorporate into this thesis. The same year I went to New York for study in Philosophy of Religion. During that one year of my stay in New York I collected some useful materials from the different Libraries in that City.

I worked in the Kerala University Library and in different libraries in Trivandrum. In 1963 February I stayed in Madras in connection with this research work. There I used the Madras Christian College library, the Madras University library and the Theosophical society library of Adayar.

From July to October 1963 I made a study tour of the Middle East countries. I visited the ancient religious centres, libraries, scholars and leaders of the Orthodox Syrian Church there. In Cairo I visited the famous pyramids and the Museum which is full of antiquities related to primitive religion.

I had discussions with some of the learned men of the Orthodox Syrian Church in the Middle East countries about the subject of this research work and received some suggestions.

Arch-bishop Mar Athanasius Yeshue Samuel of New Jersey furnished me with information about the Orthodox Syrian churches under him in the U. S. A., Canada, Brazil and Chile. The Syrian Orthodox Patriarch Mar Ignatius Yakub III of Damascus gave me the list of the Patriarchs of Antioch from St. Peter the Apostle down to the present Patriarch. I stayed at Mar Ignatius Dayarah

of Omalloor where I had free access to Syriac originals for this research. Rev. Fr. Abraham Konat of Pampakuda was kind enough to place his rich Syriac library at my disposal.

I am thankful to all those who helped me in my work by lending me books or by giving me information or suggestions. I am indebted to the several authors to whose works I have referred or from whose works I have quoted in this.

The Kerala University awarded me research fellowships which enabled me to stay at Trivandrum to do my research work. I am very grateful to the University for the same. The Vice Chairmen of the Research Council of the University from time to time have guided me and encouraged me. I am indebted to them.

I am grateful to my superiors in the Church who kindly permitted me to stay out from my monastery to do continuous research work. My thanks are due to Dr. E. I. Warriar for supervising this research work. I am grateful to the U. G. C. for the aid granted to publish this.

Above all I thank God for helping me in doing this research work. To His name be glory.

Fr. Kadavil Paul Ramban.



## INTRODUCTION

### A. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND.

The Syrian Orthodox are called 'West Syrians' by some authors like A. J. Maclean . He refers so to them in the Middle East while he refers to them in Kerala as The Christians of St. Thomas. Howard, G. B. also uses the same expression about those in Kerala<sup>2</sup>. Some authors like F. L. Cross refer to them as 'Jacobites'. They are now known in the Middle East as The Syrian Orthodox. Recently they have called themselves as the Orthodox Syrians in Kerala. As I am now in that Church I have adopted that expression in this though some may disagree.

From the Middle East they have migrated to the U. S. A. , Canada, Brazil and such other places due to adverse circumstances at home. Their churches in the U. S. A are called 'Syrian Orthodox churches' except two called 'Assyrian Apostolic Churches'. There they are known as the 'Syrian Orthodox' as distinguished from their fellow immigrants, the Greeks from Syria who styled themselves as 'Syrian Orthodox Christians' in the U. S. A.

The Orthodox Syrians are numerically stronger in India than in other places. Some of them have migrated from Kerala to Persia, Soudi Arabia, Andamans, Ethiopia, Federated States of Malaya and to Ceylon. They are altogether only about two million in the world.

Our discussion will centre mainly round the Orthodox Syrian Church in India which forms the major part of their total number. The Church in Kerala originally known as Christians of St. Thomas, by its affiliation to the Syrian Orthodox

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1. Maclean, A. J. Article 'Syrian Christians' in Hastings' *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. 12. p. 172
  2. Howard, G. B. *The Christians of St. Thomas and Their Liturgies*, Oxford, 1864

Church of Antioch took over from it its present name. The Syrian Orthodox in the Middle East and those in Kerala are not racially one. They have the common name as they use the same Liturgical language, viz Syriac, have been under the same Syrian Patriarch and have the same religious faith and observation. The Orthodox Syrian Church of Kerala is by no means an offshoot or branch of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch. All Christians under the See of Rome are called Roman Catholics wherever they are and whatever their nationality. In the same way all those under the See of Antioch were called Syrian Orthodox.

From the Middle East they migrated to the West only since 1895<sup>3</sup>. But now they have there an Arch-bishop of their own, seventeen parish Churches three chapels and about 50,000 people in all.

The Christian Church in Kerala claims its spiritual origin from St. Thomas, the Apostle of Christ, who according to tradition<sup>4</sup> and history came to Kerala in 52 A. D. This is generally accepted though later on in the 18th century some authors had expressed doubts about it.

Whitehouse says: "Originally the Apostle Peter presided over the Church at Antioch;.....before leaving Antioch he appointed a vicar to act for him, whose successor the present Patriarch is"<sup>5</sup>. This succession is regarded by those under the Holy See of Antioch with pride.

The Christians of St. Thomas in Kerala who in their long history of over 1900 years had to suffer several vicissitudes, chose to submit to the See of Antioch at a later stage and looked forward to it for their succour. Due to such obligations and being proud of the succession

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3. Mar Athanasius Yeshue Samuel, *Brief History, of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch in The Americas*, (MSS), 1961, pp 1 and 3

4. Tisserent Eugene, Cardinal, *Eastern Christianity in India*, p. 2

5. Whitehouse, *Lingerings of Light in a Dark Land* pp. 81-82



from St. Peter, they chose to remain attached to the Antiochian Orthodox Syrian Church for some time.

The Synod of Niceae (A. D. 325) by its sixth canon had authorized the Patriarch of Antioch to be over all the churches of the East. This is upheld by many Orthodox Syrian authors. The decision of the Nicene Synod was re-affirmed by the second canon of the Constantinople Synod<sup>6</sup>. The Rev. Fr. Curien an Orthodox Syrian author quotes Roman Catholic authors like Rev. Frs. Plazid, Massaline and Vadassery to prove that the Kerala Church was under the See of Antioch from the fourth century.

Mosheim says that from the beginning, the whole of the Eastern Diocese was under Antioch and that the power of Antioch was spread in Asia and reached as far as India<sup>7</sup>. The Encyclopaedia Britannica says "The See of Antioch had supremacy beyond the Roman Empire, viz in Chaldea and India."<sup>8</sup>

But living eminent authors, Cardinal Tisserent and Arch-bishop Brown assume that the Kerala Church had no connection with Antioch till the middle of the 17th century.

Though Cardinal Tisserent mentions about the coming of Ahatalla (1653) in India, he regards the arrival of Mar Gregorios in 1665 as the first point of contact between the Jacobites and this Church. He says "In 1665 the Metropolitan of Jerusalem, Mar Gregorios arrived in India". He adds "We must wait however till January 1685 to find two genuine Jacobite bishops coming to India, Mar Baselios and Mar John"<sup>9</sup>.

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6. Abdal Ahad Ramban, V. Rev. *Syrian Church History*, vol. i, p. 615; Apraim Poulouse Ramban, *The Shemite Holy Fathers, etc.* p. 82; Philip, E. M., *The Indian Church of St. Thomas*, p. 62.

7. Mosheim, *Institutes of Ecclesiastical History*, pp. 232-234.

8. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 2. p. 154; 9th Edition

9. Tisserent, Eugene, Cardinal, Op. Cit., p. 142 and 143

In his book **Indian Christians of St. Thomas**, Bishop Brown speaks of the coming of Ahatalla as the first contact of Jacobites with the Christians of St. Thomas. He says, "It was apparently in answer to these letters that a bishop named Ahatalla sailed for India". Then he speaks of further contacts. "The letters sent by Mar Thoma and his friends to the Eastern Patriarch were answered in 1665, when Mar Gregorios, a bishop sent by the Jacobite Patriarch at Diarbekr, arrived in Malabar"<sup>10</sup>.

In their opinion this Church was under the Chaldean Church of Mesopotamia and Persia till the Jacobites came to Kerala from the Middle East in the seventeenth century.

Hence we can hold without dispute only that this Church had been under Antioch for the past three centuries.

We have observed that the Christian Church of Kerala is an ancient one dating back to Apostolic era. Some historians have said that in Kerala there were already Jews who had come from the Middle East for trade. They were baptized in good numbers. Some of the natives also were converted. Such converts were from the noble families of learned Nambuthiries. He ordained priests from those families and established seven churches in Kerala. From there he toured in other places and finally died a martyr near Madras. He was buried at Mylapore and his bones were removed to Edesa in 394 A. D.<sup>11</sup> according to one version.

In the 18th century Basnage denied the coming of St. Thomas to Kerala. Then La Croze denied it. Then Sir. W. Hunter the author of **The Indian Empire** and Dr. Milne Rae the author of **The Syrian Church in India** also denied the same. E. M. Philip and Rev. Fr. Jameson, two Orthodox Syrian authors of Kerala have controverted their arguments

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10. Brown, L. W., Arch-bishop, *The Indian Christians of St. Thomas*, pp. 99, 111-112

11. Philip, E. M., Op. Cit. pp. 12-50

and proved the coming of St. Thomas. Here we shall not enter into the details of those controversies.

The St. Thomas Christians were using Dravidian Liturgies in Kerala for a century. Then there were Persian influences on this Church. By 505 A. D. they lost the Dravidian Liturgies and started using Syriac Liturgies.

The Church in Kerala flourished while the one in Madras did not survive long. In Kerala the native princes favoured the Church. In 345 A. D. about four hundred persons of East Syrian stock<sup>12</sup> including a bishop and a few priests migrated from Edesa to Kerala under the leadership of Thoma of Cana. The Christians in Kerala helped the Hindu princes of Kerala and one of the princes Cheraman Perumal gave them seventy two honours written on copper plates.

At the oecumenical council of Nicea held in 325 A. D. John Bishop of Persia signed on behalf of Greater India. All these prove that there was a sufficiently important Church in India at a very early date.

The Church which started with the Pentecost at Jerusalem grew up gradually. The Lord's promise "Ye shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the world" had to be made good. The persecutions which the Christian Church suffered helped to purify it and promoted its growth<sup>13</sup>. With the disruption of the Jewish nation, churches of Palestine became rent and scattered. Christianity started and spread in many parts of the world. But rarely have churches anywhere preserved authentic memorials of their origin<sup>14</sup>.

The first oecumenical synod held at Nicea in A. D. 325 was very eventful. In that the See of Antioch was raised to a Patriarchate.

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12. Brown, L. W., Bishop, *The Indian Christians of St. Thomas*, p. 71

13. Abraham, C. E., Rev., *Church History*, pp. 130-132

14. Green, J. Samuel Rev. *A Handbook Of Church History*, pp. 52-56

In the third oecumenical synod held at Ephesus in 431, Nestor was excommunicated for holding the view that in Jesus Christ there were two persons, human and divine<sup>15</sup>. Nestor and his followers took refuge in Persia. They flourished there and they took the name 'Chaldean Christians'.

The Chalcedonian synod was held in 451 in which a separation between the monophysites and dyophysites took place. This was a significant turning point in the history of Christianity regarding the Orthodox Syrians. The synod decided that Jesus Christ had two natures. The Antiocheans, Alexandrians and Armenians held the view that Christ has only one indivisible nature in which the divine and human united without mixture, dimunition or mutual absorption. The Persian king and the supporters of the synod persecuted those who held this view and dubbed them 'Monophysite Heretics'.

Soon the Metropolitan of the East whose seat was in Seleucia of Persia, was raised to the status of Catholicos. The Catholicos in Seleucia died a martyr. The next Catholicos styled himself 'The Patriarch of Babylon' and accepted Nestorian faith in 498 A. D.

When Feros the Persian king and other Chalcedonians persecuted the monophysites, James alias Jacobus Zanzulus a monk was consecrated bishop and he went from place to place and encouraged the monophysites. The Chalcedonians condemned these monophysites as heretics and they in turn condemned the Chalcedonians. The Church under the Patriarch of Constantinople adhered to the Chalcedonian dyophysitism and was patronized by Byzantine Emperors.

Being organized and strengthened by James Burdaeus the Orthodox monophysites were called 'Jacobites'

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15. Anantha Krishna Iyer, L. K., *Anthropology Of The Syrian Christians*, p. 19; Philip, E. M., *Op. Cit* pp. 65-66.

by their enemies. They accepted Severios Patriarch of Antioch as the supreme head of their Church. Under the Catholicos of Seleucia now there were monophysites as well as Nestorians.

The king of Persia (501-531) patronized the monophysites. His successor also did so and they grew strong. In Seleucia there had been Orthodox as well as Nestorian Catholicoses upto a certain time. In the sixth and seventh centuries the Orthodox Syrians became so strong that there were at a time one hundred and three bishops and twenty Metropolitans under the Patriarch of Antioch<sup>16</sup>.

The famous historian Michael the Great says that from the ninth to the twelfth century the number of bishops the Syrian Orthodox had west of the Euphrates alone numbered about a thousand<sup>17</sup>. By the 13th century the golden period of the Syrian Orthodox Church in the Middle East came to an end.

We have already seen that in 345 A. D. an Edesan colony migrated to Kerala. A Second immigration took place in 825 under the leadership of Saphor Eso a merchant. There were two bishops Saphor and Aphroth with them. This group unlike the former one intermarried with the native Christians and settled down at Quilon.

By the tenth century the Syrian Christians in Kerala became so strong and influential that they crowned a king for themselves.

The Kerala Orthodox Church had been under Nestorian and Orthodox administrations when bishops from Persia were her shepherds.

In 1498 Vasco De Gama came to India for the first time for the purpose of trade. He came again in 1502.

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16. Hough, *History of Christianity In India*, p. 87

17. Michael The Great, *Macathbonooth Zabnae*, (Syr) vol. ii pp. 752-777

Then the Kerala Christians sought his help against the Hindus and the Muslims from whom they had suffered persecutions.

Meanwhile some important events took place in the Christian Church in the West. The Protestant Reformation of Germany headed by Martin Luther started in 1517 and in Switzerland and in western Europe, in 1516, led by Calvin and Zwingli. In 1529 they made their memorable protest at Reichstag. The Pope of Rome excommunicated Luther. The Church of England gradually joined the protestant group.

The Roman Catholics from Goa, aided by Vasco De Gama tried to bring the Orthodox Christians of Kerala under the Pope. They made several attempts. They started School, Orphanage, Seminary and Press in Kerala. They printed Catechism and other religious books to teach the Christians of Kerala. Their strongholds were Cochin and Cranganore.

During this period there were disturbances in the Babylonian Church. Troubles started between the Roman Catholics and Nestorians in Babylon, in Seleucia, in Mosul, in Diarbekir and in Kurdistan. The Churches were split and rent asunder. The Kerala Christians were unaware of or indifferent to these happenings and accepted them all alike.

In 1594 Menezis the bishop of Goa came to Kerala and managed to bring the Kerala Church under the See of Rome by 26th June 1599 at the synod of Diampher, much against the will of the St. Thomas Christians of Kerala.

According to cardinal Tisserent, his methods were his own and were not the sort which the holy See of Rome adopted anywhere. The decisions of that synod were neither approved at Vatican by the pope <sup>18</sup>.

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18. Cardinal Tisserent. Op. Cit. pp. 65-66

Ahatallah from the Middle East arrived in India in 1653 to help the Orthodox Christians; but the Portuguese and the Roman Catholics took him away and killed him. How he was killed was not known. According to Cardinal Tisserent he was taken to Goa and burnt alive. This offended most of the Christians of Kerala and they gathered together at Mattanchery in Cochin and made a solemn pledge on 3rd January 1653, holding on to a Cross by ropes and severed their connections with the Jesuits.

In 1665 Mar Gregorios Abdal Jaleel, Patriarch of Jerusalem came to Kerala with the letter of the Patriarch of Antioch. He cleared the Kerala Orthodox Church of Roman Catholic and Nestorian influences in religious matters. He consecrated Mar Thoma I a native bishop. The non-Catholic St. Thomas Christians now adopted the Syrian Liturgy and the Syriac prayers of the Antiochean Church and chose to be under the Patriarch of Antioch. Thenceforth they regarded themselves as part of the Antiochean Orthodox Syrian Church, adopting their religious customs and observances.

After 1663, the Dutch came in and ousted the Portuguese from their strongholds in India and Ceylon. The Dutch who helped the Syrians against the Roman Catholics now tried to persuade them to accept Protestant faith.

In the 18th century some Bishops and Fathers came from the Middle East, as per the request of Kerala Orthodox Christians to help them. Towards the end of this century they had to suffer much due to the invasion of Kerala by Tipoo Sultan who burned up many of their churches and plundered them. The East India Company helped them against the Sultan. Then they had to suffer much from the Roman Catholics, under the leadership of Mathoo Tharakan.

The French and the English now came to India for trade. They drove out the Dutch. The East India Company was headed by Macaulay.

Early in the 19th century some English scholars like Dr. Buchanan and Dr. Ker came to Kerala to study about and help the St. Thomas Christians.

In 1815 the Orthodox Syrians of Kerala founded a Seminary at Kottayam. They got aid from the Travancore and Cochin princes. At this time the Church Missionary Society of England came to Kerala to be of assistance to the Syrian Christians. They took charge of the Seminary at Kottayam. They had free access to the Syrian churches and they preached in those. They were anxious to unite the Orthodox Syrian Church of Kerala with the Church of England. They tried several means to achieve this.

Misunderstandings grew up between the Syrians and the C. M. S. At a synod held in 1836 at Mavelikkara, they tried to persuade the Orthodox Syrians, but were disappointed. The latter clung fast to the See of Antioch. In 1836 they finally broke up with the Syrians. The C. M. S. then started their own Seminary at Kottayam. Some of the priests left the Orthodox Church and studied in the new Seminary. One of them Rev. Mathews, later went to the Patriarch of Antioch and got consecrated as bishop Mathews Athanasius.

He became the leader of the reformist movement in the Kerala Church. He and his followers formed the new denomination called Mar Thomites.

In 1874 Patriarch Pathrose III came to Kerala, called together a synod at Mulanthuruthy, divided the Kerala Orthodox Syrian Church into seven Dioceses, consecrated seven bishops and made certain rules which were passed in that synod. By these the bond of the Orthodox St. Thomas Christians to the See of Antioch became more firm.

By about 1905 the Government of Turkey withdrew the recognition (Firman) of the Syrian Patriarch Abdal Masih. He was succeeded by Patriarch Abdallah whom the Turkish Government supported.



In 1909 Patriarch Abdallah came to Kerala when Mar Geevargese Dionysius vi was the Metropolitan of Malankara (Kerala). There grew up some misunderstandings between the Patriarch and the Metropolitan. The Kerala Orthodox Syrian Church was then rent into two parties, one upholding the Patriarch and the other upholding the Metropolitan.

There were several litigations in the courts of Kerala between these two parties which prevented for some time the spiritual growth of the Church in Karala. Several attempts were made from within and from without to reconcile the two parties, but all failed.

In 1958 the Supreme Court of India decided the Church case in favour of the Malankara Metropolitan. In 1958 December, the Patriarch of Antioch accepted the opposite party by a bull of his. This helped to re-unite the Church, though here and there some troubles remained till 1964, May.

The Syrian Patriarh of Antioch Mar Yakub III came to Kerala in 1964 May at the request of the Kerala Orthodox Church synod. Mar Augen Thimotheos was consecrated as Catholicos by the Patriarch and Metropolitans of both the parties in union. There were present at the consecration also Metropolitans from the Middle East. The new Catholicos is now known as Baselios Augen I, Catholicos of the East and Malankara Metropolitan. He is <sup>the</sup> supreme head of the Orthodox Syrian Church in India, which has gained autonomy of administration. Peace has been restored in this Church. It is now thinking in terms of growth, development and progress.



## B

### TOPICAL SURVEY

We have seen that the Orthodox Syrians in general have been zealous in guarding the purity of their faith and dogmas, from the early stages of their history. It is with pride that they regard their apostolic succession. Some of them regard their relation to the See of Antioch as honourable in the same way as some Indians regard the relation of the Indian Republic with the British Crown and Commonwealth.

They have been keeping up their old religious traditions and are reluctant to change them. They have a distinct philosophy of Religion which is akin to the Armenian, Coptic and Ethiopian.

The Greek and Russian Orthodox Churches have much in common with the Orthodox Syrians in matters of faith. The difference between the philosophies of Orthodox Syrians and the Church of England is negligible. There are many points in common between the Orthodox Syrian and Roman Catholic philosophies of Religion. But there are differences as well. The newly formed extreme Protestant Churches are far removed from Orthodox Syrians in their Philosophies of Religion.

Just as there are different philosophies of Religion for the different groups of Hindus in India, the various denominations of the Christian Church also have philosophies of Religion in varying shades. Why, each religious man has his own particular philosophy of Religion within the same sect or denomination.

As the Orthodox Syrians have played a significant role in the history of Christianity in the East, a study of their Religion and philosophy must not only be interesting but

instructive. Everywhere they have kept up their religious tenets and philosophy through centuries at great cost.

The Orthodox Syrian philosophy of Religion has not been collected and arranged in an orderly manner by any one. It lies in the many books of Syrian Orthodox authors as butter in milk and has to be collected with much effort. In the books of special prayers called **Penkeesa**, in the Promiyon Books of special days of feasts and of the Lents, in prayers for the rituals, in the Syriac book of daily prayers and in the books of the Sacraments one can find the Orthodox Syrian philosophy of Religion. Many of the above mentioned books are not printed yet, though some of them have been printed recently. Some have been translated into English and Malayalam though some still remain in Syriac, untranslated. The **Penkeesa Prayers** were not printed till 1963. In the Middle East countries the manuscript copies are more popular than the printed ones.

Some of the works of the ancient scholars of this Church in manuscript form can be seen at the Orthodox Church at Mardin, in the British Museum Library and in the Butler Memorial Library of the Columbia University in the city of New York.

The books of Catechism of this Church, published in Malayalam and English contain its philosophy of Religion. Some of their books have been published recently in Arabic and Turkish languages, in the Middle East. Let us examine briefly their philosophy of Religion.

Their philosophy is oriental in flavour. It has the Jewish back-ground, is full of gaudy and ritualistic hues and is not much reformed after the Synod of Ephesus, but is ancient. The Orthodox Syrians are proud that their philosophy of Religion is unmodified since the Apostolic times. It is less self-critical and more non-progressive than the Roman Catholic and Protestant philosophies of Religion. Reformists criticize it as being more spiritualistic and other-worldly than materialistic and pragmatic. Some

may accuse it of being stagnant and inadequate to meet the demands of modern times.

The Orthodox Syrians believe in a self-existent eternal and triune God. They refer to God as Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Their theoretical arguments for the existence of God are the usual causal and Cosmological ones. The historicity of the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ is their practical argument.

Regarding the creation of the Cosmos, their theory is as is given in the Book of Genesis. The Holy Bible according to them is to be understood with interpretation and not literally. Christ's Church is founded on the rock of faith. Its origin is from the Holy Trinity, including in it the angels, the departed and the living and is the source of religious knowledge as well as divine Grace. According to them, the Church is not made out of the Holy Bible nor is it founded on the same. For them some books are holy because the Church after scrutiny has declared them to be so.

Their philosophy of Religion does not include predestination. God knows everything and has a plan in total and for each one. The individual human being is created by God with freedom of will, is able to know Gods' will and to plan his life accordingly. He may do according to God's will or act disregarding the same. There is punishment and reward in this world as well as in the world to come as God chooses. God accepts the repentant and gives men chance to repent. There is no locality called 'Hell' or 'Heaven' but there will be the experience of the two after the day of Judgement. At the second coming of our Lord there is a common resurrection. There is no 'Millennium' after the Judgement. There are real angels and evil spirits.

They believe in corporate worship as well as in individual private prayers. They give importance to symbols and signs. Respect, adoration, veneration and worship are

different degrees of the same sentiment. The Syrians respect elders and also the pictures of Christ, of the Madonna and of the saints. It is usual for them to revere and kiss the Holy Bible, the Altar, the church, the Sanctuary and the like. We can see them respecting the Cross, holy things and the mortal remains of saints and martyrs; but they worship only God. In all their worship they face the east invariably. They deem it wrong to bow before graven images or idols, no matter whose representations they are, nor do they appreciate others doing so. Some of them have been famous as idol - breakers.

Intercession to the departed Saints and prayers for the departed are considered as right. The departed saints and the departed faithful are invisibly present at the holy Eucharist celebration. The Eucharist is central to all Orthodox Syrian worship. It is the mystical Body and Blood of our Lord, made so by the mysterious operation of the Holy Spirit.

The priest's office is holy. The priest is God's authorized representative on Earth, to pardon or to keep the sins of the people in his charge. The memorial feasts of saints are given importance and are celebrated with festivity. Thereby the departed saints are pleased and their blessings descend upon the living who honour them. The relics and mortal remains of saints and martyrs work wonders, healing the sick and dispelling evil spirits. Syriac language is used for worship because that is the nearest to the Aramaic that was spoken by Jesus Christ himself.

Celibacy, fasting and Lent are supposed to add to spiritual efficacy. Penance, self-denial and even self-torture to some degree are familiar in their religious life as in the Dionysian cult of ancient Greece. Mysticism is natural to the Orthodox Syrian monks and holy Fathers.

Singing, ritualism, colourful vesting and elaborate decorations of churches are characteristic of the religion of the Orthodox Syrians, especially in Kerala. These are

typically eastern traits, handed down from ancient Hebrews or copied from other religionists in the East.

Evil and good are both real and good will triumph in the end. Their's is an optimistic philosophy. They emphasize the importance of Sacraments as the proper means of Grace, essential to all believers. They believe that there is an occult power hidden in the Sacraments.

Private and personal confession of particular sins to a priest by penitents is not only encouraged but insisted upon. The spiritual value and the psychiatric benefit of the same are fully recognized.

Women are not regarded as inferior to men, but there are restrictions and limitations to their responsibilities and freedom within the Church and community, as this ancient Church is not yet free from all the Jewish taboos and traditions in these matters. The king or temporal authority is considered as 'God's Anointed One' and should therefore be obeyed and supported.

They recognize the efficacy of theological and secular studies. There have been men of outstanding ability in the fields of theology, philosophy and religion in this Church all along the centuries. Mar Aphraim the Lyricist, Moses Bar Keepho, Bar Hebraeus, Bar Sleeby and Chrysostom are some of them.

The Orthodox Syrians believe in missionary work and in the propagation of the Gospel. The canons edited by Bar Hebraeus of the 13th century was their commonly accepted book of rules. But the Orthodox Syrians of the Middle East have recently made new synodical decrees to suit their present conditions and the Orthodox Syrians of Kerala have recently made a Church Constitution to suit their changed conditions. The Syrians generally cling fast tenaciously to rules and traditions.

They give importance to laying on of hands in ordination and to its unbroken succession. The Orthodox

Syrians of the Middle East had frequently to suffer persecution and even martyrdom. Many of them were forced to flee from their homelands and a good number of them were massacred by the Ottoman rulers. The Syrians in Kerala had not experiences as bad as that.

Necromancy is deemed by them as a malpractice. The Church never allows it.

The Orthodox Syrians have their own special philosophy of Religion and traditions. We will go into the details of the same after discussing about Religion and Philosophy of Religion in general.







## PART - I

### 1

#### THE PLACE OF RELIGION IN LIFE TODAY

Before entering into a detailed discussion about the Orthodox Syrian Philosophy of Religion let us first of all survey the field of Religion in general.

Time was when science was supposed to be alien to religion. Growth in religious interest has however increased with mature thought<sup>1</sup>. There is now a phenomenal new outburst of religious interest in American Colleges and Universities, says Trueblood.

The sudden surge of Communism in many countries in recent years has awakened many a religious man from his slumber. Sunday schools are nowadays getting crowded. Many secular schools have now renewed the extra Scripture classes which they had dropped off recently. Many outstanding Universities have lately started special departments or chairs of Religion and Philosophy of Religion. Governments have realized the need of religious and moral instruction in colleges and schools.

Churches are uniting together, strengthening themselves and each other to put forth a joint front against Communism. Inter-religious movements also have sprung up in recent years. The institutions of different religions are being specially strengthened and activated nowadays.

Lately, the Moral Re-armament Movement has been making successful strides all over the world. In an

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1. Trueblood David Elton, *Philosophy of Religion*, p. 1.

indirect way Communism has helped to awaken religious men from their slumber.

The need for careful scrutiny of all facts is felt among the intellectuals of this age. This has led to a greater conflict of ideas. As Trueblood has put it, "There is neither peace nor war, but a tension". He adds "a tension is only good, as greater the tension sweeter the note produced"<sup>2</sup>. Religious people have now become bold enough to make an impartial and critical study of religious facts. The Holy Bible is credited by the new Christian generation as a unique revelation relevant to all times. In spite of centuries of reverence for the letter of the Scripture, it is amazing that it has now become possible to scrutinize the same with complete scientific honesty pointing out the legendary and the mythical in Scriptures. True religion sifted out from legend and myth has found a place in philosophy and philosophy of religion has become possible and interesting to many scientific minded persons.

Geology versus Genesis is not a serious problem anymore to serious groups. Now it is no longer necessary to choose between faith in science and faith in God. Man's effort to produce a good world by himself has not succeeded. The fact that death did not spare demi-Gods like Hitler, Mussolini and Stalin has prepared the way for better prospects of greater and higher religion. Man's feeling of inadequacy of mechanism has made him think about immortality and God. The decay of dogmatism in respect of natural law has given room for prayer before God.




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2. Ibid, quoting from William Temple, p. 9.

## 2

### A. THE THEORY ABOUT GOD

The great Orthodox Syrian scholar Bar Hebraeus discusses about God in his book *Zalgae*.<sup>1</sup> Mar Yakub deals with the existence of God in his book *Seemotho*.<sup>2</sup>

Bar Hebraeus says "The One who is, if He has also non-existence as one of His attributes, He has come into existence by the agency of another. Then that other must have some one to bring him into existence, which will lead to infinite regress until we come to self-existent Deity. He is the said Creator and God of all from whom all come to be." This is the same as the Causal proof.

Another proof he gives is from design. He says that from the house it may be easily proved that the house has an architect. Mar Yakub also says that when we see a house, chair or ship, even if the maker is not present, we know the maker. So also when we see the creations, we know God and that He created them. But Bar Hebraeus asks "Is it necessary that the architect should still continue to exist even after the house is built?". Thus the inference is not free from defect. The continued existence of the house depends upon the firmness of the foundation, the dryness of the walls and etc. In the same way the world depends upon God for its nature and existence. Hence He is the One God and Cause of all.

There are two ways of knowing the existence of God, from nature and from books, says Mar Yakub. He says that we have two expressions 'Eternal' and 'Transient'. The eternal is above time. He never began nor ends.

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1. Bar Hebraeus, *Zalgae*, part ii, p. 44.

2. Mar Yakub; *Seemotho*, ch. i, pp. 1-3.

Mar Yakub gives a novel proof from contradictions. He says that we see contradicting elements in this world. How can they exist side by side unless something other than those holds them together in the same world?. The world depends on that power. That is God and therefore God exists.

Regarding books, he says that the prophets and Apostles wrote that there is God. Moses the great prophet said 'In the beginning God created the Sun and the Earth.' Thus from Scriptural evidence we believe that there is God.

God never began nor ends, as already observed. According to Bar Hebraeus, the Self-existent was, is and shall be for He is from Himself. He cannot become non-existent. About Him Isaiah the prophet says 'I am the first and I am the heratter, there is no God before me, nor can be after me'. The Creator preceded creation and that precedence is not in measurable time. Hence His precedence is not measurable.

Mar Yakub says that there was no time that He was not and there will not be a time when He is not, but He always is. He is above beginning and away from cessation. If He is not eternal, He must be created; if created, there should be a Creator and that one needs another and so on ad infinitum. This leads to the fallacy of infinite regress. To keep the world as it is, there should be a God, a Creator. From Creations thus we infer the existence of God the Creator. From the limited we know the unlimited and from the transient we know the eternal. From those which have beginning we know the one who has no beginning and no end. He is omnipresent and omniscient. There is no bound to His knowledge.

He is incomprehensible and incorporeal. Anything which has a beginning is non-eternal. As He is not corporeal He needs no space. We cannot comprehend fully the Sun, stars and oceans. Then how can we hope

to comprehend God adequately?. We often refer to God by such symbolic expressions as 'Thy hand hold me', 'The eyes of the Lord are upon me' etc. only for the convenience of comprehending divine meanings.

God is not visible. If anyone claims that he saw God, it only means that he has seen something which is of God and not God. Those who saw the Son saw the Father only in this sense. If the heart is clean, one may see Him in visions symbolically and not actually with the eyes of the flesh. He cannot be localized and cannot be contained in thought or imagination. Mar Yakub points out to the words of David "Where can I hide from thee? If I ascend to heaven, there thou art and if I descend to Hades even there thou art".



## B. THAT HE IS ONE BUT THREE PERSONS

The number one is not divisible into further numbers. One is unenumerable and has no comparison. One is God. There is none to compare with God. The number one does not increase or decrease. Therefore God is One<sup>3</sup>.

According to Mar Yakub, there is one God, one nature, one essence, one God-head, one will but three persons like Mind, Word and Spirit. Bar Hebraeus says that if there were two Gods, either their two opinions should agree or one should be fulfilled and the other not fulfilled; in which case the unfulfilled is not of God. If God were two, how was creation done and did each one create half? Then they are half-Gods and neither of them is God. Therefore creation was done by one and that one is God and the Creator of all.

In the opinion of Bar Hebraeus, existence, knowledge and life are the essentials and not accidents of divine nature. The essentials of God-head are not generic but particular and are known by interpretation, Existence as the Father, Knowledge as the Son and Life as the Holy Spirit. They are but one in nature. There is only one God, one nature, one essence one God-head, one will with three names, but not three Gods. The Word we call the Son and the Spirit we call the Holy Ghost. God the Father begets and the Son is begotten, while the Spirit proceeds. They are three qualities, but one in essence and nature.

In nature, matter and form they are together. They go together. "He cannot be less than Nature nor be equal to Nature. Hence He is Three". The Father is the Cause and the effects are the Word and the Spirit. Angels and men have word and spirit. Mar Yakub calls the

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3. Mar Yakub Op. Cit. p. 4.

Father the Natural Cause and the Son the Effect. The multiplicity of the names of God does not indicate the multiplicity of persons, says Bar Hebraeus. They are only symbolic nomenclatures. The knowledge by which He knows Himself is the divine nature and His Word or Logos is the Son. Here the known and the knower are one. The words in the book of Genesis 'Let us make man in our own image'<sup>4</sup> and Isaiah referring to the cherubic exultation 'Holy, Holy, Holy'<sup>5</sup> refer to more than one, viz three persons in the God-head.

He is one true God of one nature, one authority, one will, the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. In Him there is no name without a person. There is no person younger or older than another and there is no change or alteration of personality in point of seniority or juniority. 'If we call Him the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are from Him. If we call Him the Son, the Father and the Holy Spirit are known through Him. If we speak of the Spirit, the Father and the Son are completed through Him. The Father and the Son are completed through Him. The Father begets and is not begotten, the Son is begotten and begetteth not, and the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and takes from the Son, being of the same nature and the same essence as the Father'.<sup>6</sup>

The Orthodox Syrians celebrate the feast of Pentecost fifty days after Easter. On that day they have three separate services, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. The passage quoted above is from the first service of that day. That passage is typical of the fondness of the Orthodox Syrians for abstractions in religion and philosophy.

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4. Genesis 1: 26.

5. Issiah 6: 3

6. Abraham Konat, Rev. Fr., Edit. *Book of Annual Feasts* (Syr.), 1937, pp 281-282.

Mar Yakub says that the Father created everything by the Word (Logos) which is the Son. The Word was hidden in the mind - womb of the Father. When thought stirred in the mind of the Father, the Logos came forth or was born. This took place before the world was. The Father ordered that creations be made, the Logos made them and the Holy Spirit completed them<sup>7</sup>. There was no time when the Word was not with the Father.

The three are not separable in the spatio-temporal sense like ship and water or like iron and wood. As light and heat are of the Sun, not separable from him, so are three persons in the God - head.<sup>8</sup> The three are one in their essence, nature, will, strength and dispensation. They are three personalities, not in the sense of human individuals. We cannot think of one of them without the other two, and so we say not three Gods but one only.

Both the Son and the Holy Ghost are from the Father, but not created. According to the Gospel "The Word was in the beginning"<sup>9</sup>. It is not the brain that creates the word which proceeds from the mind, but it is born of it, by the wish, says Bar Hebraeus. He adds 'The ring on the finger as long as it is on the finger needs the finger's movement for its own movement. So are the Son and the Holy Spirit'<sup>10</sup>.

We may ask how God can have son without a wife. Mar Yakub says that this question is applicable only to human beings. Son was born of the Father spiritually, not physically. It is like a ray of light from the Sun or word from the mind. We use human terminology for easier comprehension only, just as we say 'God heard' or 'God saw' etc.

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7. Paul Ramban, V. Rev. Fr., *The Jacobite Syrian Liturgies*, p. 27

8. Mar Yakub, Op, Cit. p. 6.

9. John 1: 1

10. Bar Hebraeus Op. Cit. p. 60



Fire has redness, light and heat. In the same way we have Father, Son and Holy Ghost in one God-head. An animal has life, memory and intelligence, but we call it just one animal and not three. The Sun has light and heat and yet is one Sun. So is the case of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The Father is not born of any one and the Son was born of the Father, not in time as we are, but mysteriously. But the Holy Spirit is neither born as the Son nor begets as the Father. He only proceeds from the Father, was seen symbolically as the dove<sup>11</sup> and as cloven tongues of fire<sup>12</sup>. He is holy by nature, is not sanctified by any other and is ever unchanging like the Father and the Son. There is not another born of the Father like the Son and therefore he is 'The only begotten'. The Logos or Word is the unique expression or utterance of the Father by which utterance the Father may be fully known. No other expression, utterance or creation of the Father has so fully expressed the Father as the Word and so he is the 'Only begotten Son', the like of whom there is not another. He was born of the Father without a mother.

We cannot say that the Father is before the Son even as the Sun is not before his light. We call the Son the Word or the Logos as he was born without sexual intercourse, as the word proceeds from the mind of every one without strain. The word is always characteristic of the one from whom it is born, intelligent or foolish. Wherever the Logos is there the Holy Spirit also is.

There are several implicit references to the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament and we see him more explicitly in the New Testament. The Holy Spirit cleanses, strengthens and endows ordinary persons with extra - ordinary gifts of tongues or understanding or healing. It is believed

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11. Mark 1: 10

12. Acts 2: 3

that the ability in fine arts and the talent for interpretation are the gifts of the Holy Spirit<sup>13</sup>.

At the Sacrament of Baptism, one receives the gift of the Holy Spirit when the baptist blows his breath in the form of the Cross on the face of the baptized.<sup>14</sup> This is as Jesus did on his Apostles. When he does this the baptist says "Give him thy divine breath which thy only begotten Son gave unto his holy Apostles"<sup>15</sup> When a person is ordained for the religious ministry, he receives the further gift of the Holy Spirit in a greater measure. The priest has a greater measure of this gift than the Deacon, the Bishop still greater and the Pontiff the fullest measure.

Immediately after Jesus Christ was baptized in the river Jordan, the Holy Spirit descended on him because he was as fully human as he was God. According to Orthodox Syrian faith the Spirit strengthens, enlightens and guides. The Syrians never accept the claim of any one who says that when the divine Spirit was possessing him he lost his senses, for the Holy Spirit never makes one lose one's natural senses. On the other hand it brightens up and enhances the natural senses and gives full recollection of all one heard, said or saw when the Spirit was acting on that person. If it is the other way round, it is the possession of an evil spirit or 'Jin'. The Holy Spirit brightens and enhances the powers of understanding and memory, not momentarily but permanently.

Aphraim the Syrian a great lyricist and saint of the Orthodox Syrians, is said to have received the gift of speaking Greek when the Arch-bishop Mar Baselius prayed laying his hand on the head of the former. Aphraim started talking Greek to the Arch-bishop who knew only

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13. Abraham Konat, Rev Fr. *The Book of Annual Feasts*, p. 314

14. Abraham Konat Rev. Fr. *The Book of Baptism and etc.* p.9

15. John 20:22

Greek and did not know Syriac which was the only language that the former knew. Aphraim never forgot the tongue he newly got. When a Greek noble had to talk to Pacomios who did not know Greek, the saint prayed for more than three hours and received the gift of talking Greek<sup>16</sup>. There are innumerable examples of such wonderful gifts of the Holy Spirit in Church history.

The main difference between the gift of the Holy Spirit and the possession of evil spirits is that in the former the consequences will be peace, tranquillity and joy, while in the latter they will be confusion, fear and anxiety often accompanied by a blinding of the senses. Next we will deal with the incarnation of the Logos.



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16. Athansius, Palladius and Others, *Paradise of the Holy Fathers*, Vol. i. Ch. xv. p. 307

## INCARNATION OF THE LOGOS

Our word after it proceeds from the mind takes visible form in writing. In the same way the Logos proceeding from the Father took flesh from the Virgin. It is the word that took flesh and not the Father or the Spirit. The incarnation was a sacrifice or humiliation on the part of God. When incarnated the Son became a little lower than the angels<sup>1</sup> and the Father became greater than him<sup>2</sup>. Logos is the complete utterance of God about Himself. But in human utterance the meaning of the utterance includes and transcends the utterance<sup>3</sup>.

When the Word took flesh, we say analogically that He descended from heaven and became man from the Virgin. But actually considering His transcendental power of divinity, He did not shift from His place for incarnation, because He is not spatio-temporal. In the confession of faith at the priest's ordination, in the Orthodox Syrian Church, the ordained says, 'When He took flesh from the Virgin, He did not move from His heavenly throne; He was at once on the heavenly throne and in the Virgin's womb'<sup>4</sup>. This is a mystery and not something natural. Mar Yakub puts it analogically thus; "As the mind of man reaches objects in the distant scene and his mind is not going out there either, so also is the Word when incarnated". The human soul is an entity between God and the gross body and the divinity of God may unite with every soul. In the case of Jesus the Man, divinity of God united in

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1. Hebrew 2:9

2. John 14: 28

3. Haas, W., Art 'The Theory of Translation' in *Philosophy*, No.141,  
July 1962

4. *Shalmootho of Ordination* (Mss), Alwaye, 1912

a special revelatory manner and in no other was divinity united in that manner<sup>5</sup>

The incarnation idea was already in the world through the Hindu Puranas and several other legends. It was also seen in the writings of Hebrew prophets as in the Old Testament. In the book of Isaiah one finds the word 'Behold the virgin shall conceive and bring forth a son and his name shall be called Emmanuel'<sup>6</sup>.

Bar Hebraeus says that the question may arise as to why God incarnated, while He could turn men to righteousness and save them by a simple gesture of His. The answer he gives is that God did not want to force man but left him to use his free will.

If there be three personalities in the God-head why should the Word have incarnated rather than the Father or the Holy Ghost? It is not the Father who is existence and the Holy Spirit who is life, but the Word alone who could have taken flesh. Nor is it anything else that exists or has life that can harbour the Word-God, but human being who has word. Therefore the Word took human flesh to save man 'made in His own image'.

The Word is not finite but eternal. There was no time when God was without the word like a mute animal. Therefore the Word which was with God from ever is eternal, is God and is not finite or human. The Word was not created, as God created everything by His Word.

God Himself incarnated as man cannot be redeemed to inherit eternal kingdom by the mediation of any one less than the eternal one. God sent angels, prophets and holy men first and tried but no one could save men. Mar Yakub compares it to the mending of a broken glass jar. When a glass jar is broken, no carpenter

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5. Bar Hebraeus, Op Cit. p. 63

6. Is. 7: 14

or mason could redeem it, only the maker of glass jars could do it. So also in order to mend us our maker had to come down.

Man had sold his freedom to Satan and God could not get man out of his hands by command or argument but only by paying the price. Only by paying a price exceeding the price of humanity could God redeem man and buy his freedom back.

Why did God not come to redeem man in the beginning?. God like a physician waited to see if man could help himself and came down only when man could not help himself and had realized enough the bitterness of his illness. Though Christ redeemed man by offering himself as a ransom, man still does sin. Mar Yakub says that by the redemptive act of Christ, the head of the serpent is crushed and the tail is still moving, but that will also stop moving gradually.

The Word incarnated in Jesus claimed to be God, the Son of God. He appeared to men in flesh but by his miracles including the raising of the dead, he convinced men that he is God of very God. The very act of incarnation was a miracle.<sup>7</sup> His incarnation is unique in that he took flesh without the co-habitation of male and female. Among those born of women he alone was so conceived. He took flesh from virgin Mary, a created person. Mar Yakub says that the Word did not become flesh as He does not change. The uncreated Logos became in flesh which is created. When the uncreated and the created united they became one Lord Jesus Christ. This was not mixture but union like water and wine without confusion or commingling. After the union he has only one personality and one nature. The Logos combined with a human body and human soul. By the combination there was no increase in the number. Surely it is not like the combination of physical bodies. There was no

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7. Bar Hebraeus Op Cit. p. 65

diminution, absorption or destruction in the union. What happened was a mystical union between the physical and the spiritual. God alone can effect this as in the creation of man with soul and body.

If man who is from the union of body and soul, has thereby two natures, then Jesus must have three natures, of God, of soul and of body. But one person has only one nature and so Jesus has only one nature combined from humanity and divinity. Once united he is one indivisible person. If any one has two natures, he needs treatment by a psycho-therapist. When the Logos and human personality united, as per Mathematics one and one should unite to form two, but there was only one as a result of this union. Therefore it is a mystery, a paradox, but nevertheless a true paradox, explained not by Mathematics but by what we may call 'Mysterymatics'. Once united they are 'Une' (French word for one) not 'twa'. Even at the time of his death on the Cross, his divinity did not separate either from his body or from his soul. His human soul separated, from his human body at the time of his death. These two he re-united later by his own power, an act which is beyond human power. In essence he was one with the Father and was completely similar to Mary physically. He was God-man or Man-God. His body gained immortality at his resurrection by combining with the God-head.

The Logos took the flesh in which Adam sinned. He died in it, and rose in it in order to redeem Adam's race which sinned in the flesh.<sup>8</sup> He died in the flesh willingly and rose as and when he wished, unlike us mortals.




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8. Ibid p. 85

## 4

### CREATION

According to Mar Yakub, God thought of angels. The thought was the very act of creation. He willed and suddenly they came to be. That God wishes and wills that something may become is the simplest way of His creation. When the angels came to be, they were acting. They were the first creation and they preceded the world. Many of the holy Fathers say that they were made along with the sky and the luminaries. Before the sky was, God alone existed. But some doctors like Gregorios Thevologos, Gregory of Nausa, Mar Ivanios, John the Lesser, James of Edesa and Moses Bar Keepho say that the angels were created in advance.

But job says 'when the morning star was created all the sons of angels trumpeted'. This shows that they were created before the stars. The Earth was created to put Adam in it. Adam's creation was necessary because some of the angels fell. Therefore the angels were before the Earth and man. Regarding creation, the Orthodox Syrian Church teaches that God did His creations ex-nihilo, in six days and on the seventh day He kept quiet as said in the book of Genesis. Christians and Jews agree in the idea of creation ex-nihilo<sup>1</sup>.

"The big first Intellect, the eternal invisible Light, the creative uncreated Cause which is God over all, by the magnitude of His goodness stirs towards creation. This is what called God-head to creation, in the large bounty of His goodness" says Mar Yakub.<sup>2</sup> He adds that God was

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1. William Potcat, H., Art 'Birth, Suicide and the Doctrine Of Creation' in *Mind*, vol. Lzviii, p 270

2. Mar Yakub, Op. Cit, p. 79.



holding His ocean of goodness from overflowing, but when His will was pleased, His wisdom judged in its omniscience that it is high time that He had created.

That Great Intelligence first created the spirits in the image of His intelligence. Later on it so pleased Him that He created physical things. Thus God the Father and creator of all by His word and Spirit brought into existence this visible creation in all its beauty and glory, decorated and wonderful. According to James of Edesa, by 'Sky' is meant fire and air. Moses Bar Keepho says 'By Earth is meant both water and land'. Mar Basil the saint also joins them and says that air, fire and water were all created together.

The light that God created on the first day He divided into three the same day, viz into the Sun, the Moon and the stars. When God created the world, He decorated it like a king's palace or a bride-chamber. Then He creates man and puts him in it as king and bride-groom because the whole world and all in it were made for him. But He created another so that man may not forget his limitation and think selfishly that the whole creation is his own. God created tangible and intangible things and made man from both, with a tangible body and intangible soul so as to make others know by seeing him that one is the creator of the visible and invisible. He made man in His own image, with freedom of will, with erect posture and in the shape in which the Son of God was to be revealed. He was created physically mortal and spiritually immortal. Man with his erect posture could be the master and crown of all creatures on the Earth.

The modern scientific explanation of the creation myth is not opposed to Philosophy of Religion. That creation versus evolution is no more a problem among philosophers of religion. The Orthodox Syrians also fall in line with the modern interpretation of the Creation myth. The six days of creation need not be actually six days with twenty four hours, but six stages. Creation need not be a momentary activity but gradual and evolutionary.

## 5

### THE HUMAN SOUL

The Orthodox faith is that God has ordained salvation or damnation for both the body and the soul<sup>1</sup> and not for the body alone or for the soul alone. Just as the body is the creation of God, the soul also is created by Him. The soul though it is immortal is created. It is not an uncreated part of God the eternal uncreated Soul nor is it immortal by its own virtue. It is immortal by the grace of God. The souls of human beings were not pre-existing but are created every time a human body is created.

According to Bar Hebraeus, plants have the power of taking in, containing, absorbing nutrition as well as excretion, in common with animals. They both have life, growth and reproduction. Animals have in common with men the above mentioned qualities, locomotion and the developed external senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch. They have also the internal senses of imagination, memory etc.

But man stands on a higher pedestal with a rational soul, self-consciousness and freedom of choice. The soul according to Bar Hebraeus, is the first perfection of the natural bodied organism because it is able to think about abstract things<sup>2</sup>. This power of abstraction is theoretical and practical in function. By the first it figures theoretically and believes in truths and by the second it achieves values.

Where and what is man's soul? That which you mean when you say 'I' is 'self', that is thyself. Thou

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1. Matt. 10: 28;

Mar Geevarghese Dionysius, *Mathopadesasarangal*, M. G. M. Press, Tiruvella (N. D.) pp. 44-45

2. Bar Hebraeus, *Zalgae* p. 113

art not any part of the body, but they are all thine. Then thy 'self' is something else. Self is not physical. If so when the external body perishes the 'self' also should perish. But it is not so. Hence the mind is the strength of the self. When a man goes mad, it is not the self (soul) which is in travail, but the organism due to disorder in arrangement.

The body by nature is from the earth, but the soul is not so. The soul's relation with the body is like that of the captain of the ship to the ship, with the difference that it has no body of its own like that of the captain. The body can be taken apart, but not so the soul, says Mar Gregorios of Nausa. He who creates the body creates the soul at the same time and does not add the soul on to the body later. Mar Yakub also agrees with this view<sup>3</sup>. The body and the soul were made by the simple gesture of God. The soul is created ex-nihilo. The souls of all men are alike in nature and essence, says Bar Hebraeus. They are simple, not constituted and hence not different in essence one from another.

That men are different, some very good, some very wicked, some simple, some cunning, does not prove that they are so by the nature of their souls, for many lustful men have turned to be self-contained, but no wolf has been converted to be a lamb nor a pigeon into a sparrow!

There are not more than one soul for a body, nor is the same soul for all bodies. If the latter were true, all that Peter knows Paul also must alike know. But it is not so. Thevologos objects to the idea that souls pre-existed and were later bound to the bodies.

The creation of the body and the soul must be understood from their origins. They are not formed from the time of the falling of the first drop of the genital fluid. The incomplete body does not hold a soul. St. Aphraim, James the doctor, Gregorios of Nausa, the Mabugian and

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3. Mar Yakub, *Seemotho*, p. 116

the Kurosian all agree that souls are created when the bodies get completed, because the perfect one never goes after the imperfect.

God created Adam and blew into him the breath of life. That breath brought into existence the soul which was not. The breath of God was not the soul. It was the Holy Spirit.

Human souls do not shift from body to body, for the rule is one soul for one body. Rational souls are bound to human bodies. Our souls are embodied for their perfection.

### **Why The Soul Was Created Rational**

There are three reasons for the soul being created rational, according to Bar Hebraeus.

1) The first and the most general reason is its simple existence. To God their becoming was more desirable than their non-existence. Hence the soul was created.

2) Through the medium of the body which is like a furnace of purification, it is lifted to higher perfection. From strength it proceeds to action, i. e. from the soul the mind shall be.

3) As the body is thick (gross) and material, by being related to it, that is all the more decorated and ennobled by its fellowship with the soul's dignity.

In the opinion of Gregorios Thevologos, the soul which is bound to the body, by waging moral and spiritual war becomes worthy of the glory above. It is purified like gold in fire. It is also up to her to draw the inferior one towards herself and place it higher, relieving it little by little from grossness. Even as God is doing unto the soul, the soul also shall be doing unto the body, making the inferior matter, its comrade, to be worthy of nearness to God.

Bar Hebraeus speaks of the four steps of the operation of the rational power of the soul through the mind or intellect.

They are:-

1) The power of comprehending intellectual ideas as in the case of children.

2) Instinctive knowledge as knowing that the whole is greater than the part. This is in addition to apriori knowledge.

3) The power to put into action all the secondary and acquired knowledge such as the relation between cause and effect and the difference between cause and non-effect etc. and the formation of ideas.

4) The power which acquires all essential and acquirable facts and brings them to memory. It always knows that it knows these. This is the state of perfection and semblance to God.

He who gets the mirror of the intellect naturally clear is a prophet or Apostle chosen from the womb and the Spirit is happy about him. The human soul being rational it gets angry or lusts awares. It is non-material, but is related to materials through the senses.

Mar Yakub discusses about the soul in the xxxiv chapter of his **Seemotho**. He says soul is mind and spirit. The three are more or less one, as doctors say, but are separate, not in essence, but in will, somehow. When something common to all is referred to, doctors speak of the soul and while they refer to higher values like cleanness of action, saints etc. they speak of the spirit, i. e. something finer. When the soul, mind and spirit reach the highest stage they are alike. The powers of the soul are desire, anger and rationality. The balance between desire and anger is kept by wisdom.

## The Qualities of the Soul

According to Mar Yakub, the qualities of the soul are:-

- 1) The capacity for choice of action.
- 2) Imaginative perception of distant things.
- 3) It rests with the body with which it is bound, when the body sleeps and vice versa.
- 4) It suffers when the body suffers pain whereas it is by nature above all pain.
- 5) It hates wickedness and loves righteousness, though it may fall and fail.
- 6) It is capable of doing different kinds of work.

Mar Yakub asks, "If the soul had all these powers and good qualities while in union with the body which is inferior, how much more abundantly will it have those when liberated from the body?". Some say that the soul has not thought, memory, rational knowledge etc. after separation from the body. But Mar Yakub says that though animals do not have these after death, the human soul possesses these all the better. In the xxxv chapter of his **Seemotho** he deals with the growth and development of the human soul and personality from infancy to the hundredth year.

Bar Hebraeus observes that the souls of prophets and Apostles have four special qualities. 1) They have the God-given power to heal the diseases of the souls. 2) They have wisdom given by the Holy Spirit over and above the wisdom got from human studies. 3) They can work wonders. 4) They can foretell future events.

Regarding divine visions that the soul receives, Bar Hebraeus says that when the imagination of the soul is active and dominates over rationality, then the soul flits from association to association and from figure to figure.

Then we interpret the lean kine as years of famine<sup>4</sup> and the winged lions as some countries. But when imagination is overcome by rationality of the soul, then the visions about actions come as 'Take the child and his mother and go etc'. These are about true visions. There are false ones also.

The soul is, as already said, imperishable because it is simple and unconstituted. Death is the separation between the body and the soul. Their relationship is not essential but accidental. The soul is stronger and the body gains strength from it.

After its break-up with the body the knowledge of the soul does not go. Though it needed the organs and senses for its comprehension, after departure its knowledge is not lost. As the Apostle has said that the soul does not lose its thinking and knowledge because it is the image of immortal God. According to Theologos, good souls comprehend the secrets of the goodness which is in store for them and enjoy a sweetness and bliss. The wicked souls have the opposite experience.

While in the body, the soul grasped facts only with the help of the body as it was bound to it, but when liberated it can do so without that. On the other hand the body depends upon the soul to become worthy of eternal bliss.

The question 'Where?' is spatial and does not suit the soul which belongs to a different dimension. Hence after departure it is in a particular state and not in a particular place. It lives with the live. The good soul as soon as it is liberated gets into the company of the heavenly hosts. This is called Paradise or Kingdom by some persons. Those souls which are good but not perfect are freed from material desires little by little. The wicked souls have the opposite experience. Both good souls

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4. Gen. 41: 4-7

and wicked souls are believed to visit the grave of their comrade bodies from time to time till the day of Resurrection. They change the nature of their comrade bodies and inherit finally what is awaiting them.

By the time the general Resurrection comes wicked souls will be ready for damnation and good souls will be ready to be promoted to the full experience of the Kingdom of God.





## 6

### FATE, DESTINY AND PREDESTINATION

The idea of fate arises at a certain stage of religious reflection and is found in all religions which developed through speculative thinking. Ancient Greek writings betray this idea in various forms as 'Fate' 'Doom', 'Nemesis' and 'Fortune'. 'Moirai' and 'Furies' also may be seen used in them to mean almost the same. Sophocles, Hesiod, Homer, Aeschylus and Euripides have made use of one or other of these ideas in their plays and poems<sup>1</sup>. The primitive religions laid stress on fatalism while the higher religions laid great emphasis on the idea of the freedom of the will.

In Hindu religious thought 'Karma' is the fate of man. Man is released from it by union with Brahman who is the free eternal Atman. Fate and wrath of God are referred to in the ancient Sanskrit medical books<sup>2</sup>. The fatalistic idea in general dominates Hindu life, the wrath of God bursting forth even on the most trivial occasions. Whereas the doctrine of Karma says that one is born in a particular way as a result of his sins in the previous life, the doctrine of predestination asserts that man is controlled by destiny or fate which divine providence pre-ordains. Thus man is unable to change what is already decreed by providence. This is an important issue in Philosophy of Religion.

According to Buddhistic thought, continuity of life is an inherent Fate in which man is enmeshed against his will. Deliverance from it is by renunciation and Nirvana.

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1. Butcher, S. H., *Some Aspects of Greek Genesis*, London, 1904, p. 109; Sophocles, *Antigone* 1337f.  
Aeschylus, *Prometheus Ninctus*, 511-525;  
Hasting's *Encyclopaedia of Rel. and Ethics*, vol, v. pp 786-788.
  2. Wise, T. A., *Commentary On The Hindu System Of Medicine*, London, 1860, p. 258.

The Sadducees denied the idea of fate and the Pharisees laid stress on it. The Essenes believed in an absolute fate. Though Christians in general do not accept this position, they believe in a co-operation of divine providence and freedom of human will and the election of a few by divine Grace, who do not fall finally. Some say that God foresees, not foredecrees and that man has freedom of choice<sup>3</sup> and to make use of Grace not to fall. There has been confusion at times in Christian writing between predestination, fore-ordination, foreseeing and election.

In the Christian Church, the idea of predestination has caused controversies. The Greek Fathers under Gnostic influence denied freedom and upheld reason and conscience. St. Augustine believed in predestination and St. Thomas Aquinas held it in a more refined and logical way. Luther, Erasmus, Zwingli and Calvin<sup>4</sup> adopted predestination idea emphasizing election. They did not modify Augustinian ideas.

Orthodox Islam believes in an absolute pre-destination. The omnipotent will of Allah is paramount in Islam. They call it 'Kismet-Allah'. Man has to submit to it. He is subject to Absolute Fate. The philosophers of Islam make it worse than it is in the Quran. Eastern peoples have a psychological tendency to fatalistic view as seen from the folk-lore and philosophies of the East.

Bar Hebraeus the Orthodox Syrian philosopher says that human acts are free and wilful. If they were determined and destined, then they do them by necessity and they could not but do those, and they could not do anything but what was destined and preordained<sup>5</sup>. Then instructions and admonitions etc. are of no avail. Will any one put a man in an ocean of roaring waves and then instruct him and entreat him to prevent his getting wet?, asks Bar Hebraeus. If our

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3. Douglas Browning, Art. 'The Moral Act' in *Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 12, No. 47, April 1962.

4. Calvin John, *Institutes*, Michigan, 1953.

5. Bar Hebraeus, *Zalga*, pp. 156-157



ST. SOPHIA'S CHURCH, ISTAMBUL



acts are pre-determined, then prophets and Apostles are of no avail. The words 'Bliss' and 'Damnation' meant for the good and the wicked respectively can have no meaning. Human acts are not determined by God. Bar Hebraeus confirms this by evidences from the different books of the Holy Bible and from theologians, in his **zalgae**.

God can prevent anything which man wishes to do, but that does not mean that He will force any one to do anything, though God is stronger than man and can change what man wishes to do. Because man who could sin refrains from doing sin, he is justified and accounted righteous and because man who could refrain from sin does sin, he is condemned. Hence advices and admonitions are not out of place. By our freedom we sometimes overstep our knowledge and then we sin.

If one believes in fate and Destiny where is moral responsibility of the individual? How can there be Community life if there is no moral responsibility? Then you cannot blame a person for an immoral act. He can say 'It is fate or destiny'. This is not practicable. There are many things in the universe which God has set to work in natural and mechanical ways, like the movements of the planets, the Sun and the Moon: and also the growth and death of plants and animals etc. Relatively their ways are more determined than the lives of men. Man who is the crown of creation is given personality, self-consciousness, moral sense and freedom of action. Even man's freedom is limited and restricted and subject to many natural laws. St. Paul says that he finds another law<sup>6</sup> in his members. His fighting against his instinctive wishes to freedom helped him to find this other law.

### **Fore-knowledge Of God.**

It is not necessary that God knows man's acts in advance. Foreknowledge does not put any responsibility of

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6. Rom. 7:23

action on the knower. Many know in advance what their friends are going to do, but that does not mean that they are in any sense responsible for the deeds. So also is God who knows what we are going to do. When God placed Adam and Eve in the garden and gave them the command. He knew that they will break it. But that does not mean that He had either determined it or wished it. Nor did God want to force them to obey it.

God created man with freedom of will and hence He wants man to choose for himself and do good avoiding evil. Thus he should grow in virtue little by little striving hard and deserve celestial reward. If man does good by pre-ordination, he does not deserve reward. Then there is no taste for the Kingdom of God and the rewards in heaven. God knows that man will be a nobler being with freedom of will than if he were to do what was pre-ordained. Then he will be like a robot or mechanism without any credit. Though man is free, his freedom is restricted and relative, being controlled by many laws of nature. He has no control over death, his stature or the organic nature of his body. He has only moral freedom. Some persons depend upon stars and write horoscopes by the calculations of Astrology. If pre-ordination was true and man had means of finding out future through Astrology, then all that must come true. But sometimes they do not come true. Hence the Christian is to rely on God and His guidance feeling that he has freedom to change his own life by his personal efforts and with the help of God.

God is good and only good comes from Him. He helps all those who strive to do good of their own will. Satan is just the other way. It is true that there are some like Jeremiah, Samuel, John the Baptist and Virgin Mary who are separated even from the womb. God takes special care of them and helps them. They are His elect. There are also wicked men so separated. We do not know fully the secrets of God's Providence-

The Orthodox Syrians believe in the freedom of man and in God's providence. They do not believe in Fate, Destiny and Pre-destination. The depth of God's wealth and wisdom no one has sounded, nor His judgments. He interferes in the lives of His elect and works wonders. To some He extends the normal span of life, if He pleases, and some He takes away in the middle of their lives. It is all entirely His providence. As St. Paul says "Hath not the potter power over the clay of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour and another unto dishonour?"<sup>7</sup> Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it 'Why hast thou made me thus?' In the words of Bar Hebraeus 'Let us not seek to know the secrets of God'. They will be fully revealed only after the last Judgment, in the Kingdom of God.



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7. Rom. 9:20-21

## PART - II

### 7

#### THE ACT OF VENERATION

Worship, adoration, veneration and respect are different degrees of the same sentiment. We worship God or a Deity, venerate a holy person or place and respect superiors and elders etc<sup>1</sup>. It is when we use the wrong expression of sentiment at the wrong place that we fail. We are not to give the same to anyone else as we do God. 'Give unto God what is God's and give unto Caesar what is Caesar's' are the words of Jesus Christ.

The Orthodox Syrian Church gives the primary place of all to God. Him alone do they worship. They do not worship the Virgin Mother or the saints. Worship is offered by them to the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost and to no one else. The Cross or any graven images or pictures are not worshiped by them. One may see in the Orthodox Syrian churches pictures of heaven and hell and also of the Father, Son and the Holy Ghost. These pictorial representations or paintings may be seen on the walls or on the ceilings of their churches and the purpose of these is educative. The illiterate and the immature can easily grasp ideas and stories through pictures<sup>2</sup>. In the ancient church of Agia Sophia<sup>3</sup>, in Constantinople one can see even today the ancient paintings of Scriptural stories, though the Church fell into Muslim hands in 1453 and is now used as a mosque. The fall of Adam and Eve, the Baptism

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1. Mar Yakub, Op. Cit. p. 29.

2. Ibid.

3. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. 1. Agia Sophia.



of Jesus Christ, the massacre of the babes and other Biblical events are seen depicted there pictorially. Such paintings may also be seen in some of the churches of Kerala such as the North Parur St. Thomas church, the Pallikkara St. Mary's church, the Kottayam Valiya Pally and the Kolenchery St. Peter's church. No Orthodox Syrian ever worshipped in front of these pictures. He only stands calmly looking at them and grasps the represented stories. The grown up explain these to children.

Regarding the worship of idols, as already hinted, the Orthodox Syrians have been very critical. Some of the Holy Fathers of this Church are famous as iconoclasts refusing to honour hand-made gods<sup>4</sup>. No graven image will be seen on a Cross in a place of worship of the Orthodox Syrians in Kerala. At a time when they were under Arch-bishop Menezis these customs had crept into their churches. Mar Gregorios, as already hinted in the Introduction, cleared the Church of those Roman influences in the 17th century<sup>5</sup>. The influence of the C. M. S. on this Church in the 19th century also helped to keep out these from her.

The Orthodox Syrian bows out of respect when he passes in front of a church. When he passes inside the church before the Sanctuary, again he bows. While entering a church he bows, makes the sign of the Cross on himself and says an appointed prayer<sup>6</sup>. When one enters the Sanctuary for service, one kisses the door of the Sanctuary and the four corners of the Altar, saying appointed prayers.

The book of the Gospels used in the Church is usually bound with costly materials and in a decorative manner and is placed on a special stand in the church where all those who enter may kiss it. They bow before

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4. Aphraim Poulose Ramban, *Silver Stars*, Tiruvella, 1963, pp. 27,

5. Brown, L. W., *The Indian Christians of St. Thomas*, p. 278.

6. *Book of the Prayers of the Easter Sunday and Holy Qurban Service*, Kottayam, 1939, part II, p. 1.

it when they kiss. The Syrians bow also before the Cross which is dedicated by a religious authority. Many Syrians put a small wooden Cross in the house on the Eastern wall of a room which they use for the family prayer. They put a Cross on the top and front of the churches. There will be a Cross guarding the cemetery. Many Syrians wear a Cross on the garland round the neck.

On the day of the Mind-Lent feast an wooden Cross is placed on a special stand in the middle of the chancel. All who enter go to it and kiss the silken cover hanging from the stand to receive the blessing from the Cross. Incense will be offered before that Cross at appointed times by the priest. In some churches pictures of the Holy Fathers are placed in respectable manner and incense is offered before them.

At all the feasts of the Church which have a procession, the Cross and the book of Gospels will be carried in front, in all honour<sup>7</sup>. The Cross is particularly honoured on Good Friday. There is a special service for the veneration of the wooden Cross. At this service they are on the verge of worship. That service will be dealt with separately.

They respect the departed saints and Holy Fathers as much as they respect living saints and Holy Fathers, if not more. They kiss the hands of priests, Rambans, bishops, the Catholicos and the Patriarch. They treat them with reverence as they have spiritual authority. Those in the monastic orders are respected more as their life is one of great sacrifice and renunciation. They light candles before the tombs of bishops and prelates and offer incense there. They prostrate before and kiss the tombs of Holy Fathers especially those from which miracles proceed.

In the church and caves in the vicinity of St. Mathai's monastery in Masul, one sees the tombs of many saints who have worked miracles when they lived and also

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7. Abraham Konat, Rev. Fr., *Natapati Kramam*, p. 2.

after their death. There are many other churches and monasteries of the Orthodox Syrians in other places in the Middle East countries and in Kerala where such wonder-workers are entombed. At the tombs of Mar Gabriel in Turkey, of Mar Gregorios at North Parur in Kerala, of Mar Gregorios at Parumala in Kerala and of Mar Elias III at Omalloor in Kerala also such miracles are witnessed to the present day. It is but natural that the faithful revere those tombs and light candles or place offerings there.

Regarding the respect of superiors and elders in Kerala, one can get a vivid picture from the following. The deacon seldom sits before a priest and a priest stands with folded hands when he meets a bishop. The son after he has passed the stage of the child, stands in respect before the father<sup>8</sup>. The wife does not sit before her husband and rises when he enters the house. In the present generation, in big cities and in civilized homes these customs are changing.

The customs among the Orthodox Syrians of the Middle East countries and in the Americas are to some extent different from those of the Orthodox Syrians in Kerala in these matters due to racial and cultural differences.

The Orthodox Syrians respect teachers or gurus very much especially in Kerala because there they are placed among the Hindus and they are themselves mostly Indians. The Hindus nearly worship the Guru. The blessings of the spiritual superior, parents and teachers are regarded as of great importance. The Orthodox Syrian celebrant remembers in the Holy Mass his parents, teachers and superiors every time he celebrates. When a priest celebrates for the first time, he invites his religious teachers, feeds them well and offers them gifts in cash or kind. The blessing of the teacher is held in much esteem and the curse of the teacher is greatly feared.

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8. Anantha Krishna Iyer, L. K., Op. Cit. pp 61, 62

## 8

### MARIOLOGY

The Orthodox Syrians revere Mary the mother of Jesus Christ as the Mother of God. They revere her much more than do the Protestants, but less than do the Roman Catholics and Anglo-Catholics. There is a large number of churches and institutions of the Orthodox Syrians in the name of St. Mary. They intercede to her in almost all religious services and prayers, except during the six days of the holy Passion week.

In the daily canonical prayers of the Orthodox Syrians, she is remembered in all the six prayers out of the seven. The prayer of the ninth hour which is exclusively about the departed and is very brief alone does not contain anything about her<sup>1</sup>. She is spoken of as the 'Virgin Eternal' in the prayers and various writings of this Church. She conceived as virgin and brought forth her son without breaking her seal of virginity<sup>2</sup>. She remained in the same manner unknown to man. She was not married and she never co-habited with man before or after the birth of Jesus Christ.

The word of God entered her through the ear and descended to her womb and took flesh from her uniting divinity with humanity never to separate. As she conceived without the seed of man, the child was physically after the mother. Mary was born like any one of us and was cleansed and purified later before she conceived her son. She was not born immaculate as the Roman Catholics say. It is believed that every one who is born of the co-habitation

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1. *Common Prayer Book* (Syriac) St Mark's Monastery Press, 1936, pp. 1-4, 48, 49.

2. Matt. 1:25



A SYRIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH





VIRGIN MARY MOTHER OF GOD





of man and woman inherits their sin because lust enters their hearts when they co-habit. This sin which the child inherits is referred to by the Psalmist in the words "My mother conceived me in sins"<sup>3</sup>. It is believed to be removed at Baptism. What the child inherits unawares shall be cleansed unawares.

Mary who was an orphan brought up in the Temple was betrothed before she was thirteen and was sent away with the righteous and elderly Joseph. Before she had attained puberty the angel came and announced to her. The Holy Spirit came down upon her, cleansed her and the Word descended to her womb. She became pure and holy virgin just before that moment of conception. St. Thomas Aquinas has said that she was not conceived immaculate, but was conceived like any one of us and was cleansed while in her mother's womb<sup>4</sup>. According to him she was first born in the womb and then purified. No one is reborn before one is born. She was purified of original sin. If she was not conceived immaculate, but was made holy by a cleansing process, then what is the harm in postponing that moment of cleansing a little upto the time just before she conceived, as the Orthodox Syrians believe?

She was not married but only betrothed to Joseph and she conceived before she could have been married. The Gospel writer testifies that Joseph was just and righteous and that he did not know her until she had brought forth her firstborn son. The miracles and unique events at the time of the Son's birth and later had certainly changed Joseph's attitude towards Mary to one of deep veneration and he being much elderly, of noble birth and righteous would never have thought of marrying her thereafter.

The Orthodox Syrian prayers and promiyons contain the prophecies of the Old Testament which indicate the

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3, Ps. 51: 5

4. Aquinas Thomas, St, *Summa Theologica*, Part III, Question 27, Article 1 of Summa, 1951, Madrid.

virgin's conception and her eternal virginity. At the Great Intercession of the Holy Mass, in the fourth 'Tubden' about the Virgin, they refer to her as 'Eternal Virgin' <sup>5</sup>. They address her in the **Penkeesa Prayers** and **Promyons** with the words 'Blessed art Thou' and 'Peace unto Thee' etc, narrating all the Old Testament prophecies about her. "Blessed art Thou, dove that brought forth the very old Vulture" and "Blessed art Thou tasteful salt which cured the bitterness of the world" are examples of their poetic expressions about her <sup>6</sup>. They praise her, bless her, give her peace and intercede to her. She is supposed to have been taken to Paradise and not to heaven. The day of her translation is celebrated as a day of feast every year, the date falling on the 15th of August.

The name 'Mary' is given to Syrian girls in all places and the name has never lost its popularity. In Kerala there is quite a large number of Marys. Almost every home is decorated with a picture of Virgin Mary. Her feast is celebrated in many churches, especially in the churches called after her. St. Mary's churches at Manarcad and Kandanad in Kerala are famous.

The observation of the 'Eight Days Lent' from Sept. 1st to Sept. 7th is very important at the St. Mary's church at Manarcad. It is a time-old practice there. Syrian ladies gather there by the thousands and observe this Lent in all devotion for seven days. Lately it has been adopted in very many other churches of the Orthodox Syrians in Kerala. This Lent is not canonically obligatory. It is not now seen observed in the Middle East.

It is reliably reported in the recent years that Virgin Mary appeared in some churches of the Orthodox Syrians in Kerala and in a church to the north of Syria. At Derik on the eastern end of North Syria a church was excavated about twelve years back. The said church was

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5. *Kurbana Kramam*, Kottayam, Op. Cit. , pp 70-72

9. *Penkeesa*, Op. Cit. , pp 70- 72

partly destroyed about six hundred years ago and gradually got buried under earth. The present Orthodox Syrian bishop of that area, Mar Kuriakose Osthathios, rebuilt the old church, completing the old mutilated edifice. Virgin Mary appeared to an old Muslim lady of that place in the night and told her that the place belongs to the Virgin. After re-dedication of the excavated church, Our Lady appeared first a short time on the wall of the Sanctuary and disappeared. She appeared again and stayed twenty four hours so that people of all kinds could come and see. One of those who witnessed the same said in 1963 that Our Lady appeared on the wall like a bright lady, clear ~~she~~ and distinct in life colour<sup>s</sup> and it seemed that any moment <sup>she</sup> would open her lips and talk. After this event, oil resembling olive oil started dripping down from the south eastern corner of the wall of the Sanctuary and it still continues. People receive it free for blessing and healing. People from all over the world go there even now due to this miracle.

As Jesus Christ changed water into wine at the feast of Cana in Galilee at the request of his mother, the Orthodox Syrians believe that Jesus who is God, will listen to Our Lady's intercession even now. Both Jesus and Mary are alive and active and they can hear our supplications. The Mother will intercede and the Son will act at her intercession.



## INTERCESSION TO THE SAINTS

We find that in the Orthodox Syrian books of religion, saints come next to Our Lady in the matter of veneration and intercession. Saints are remembered in all canonical prayers except those of the holy Passion week and the daily prayers of the ninth hour. In the holy Eucharist also they are remembered immediately after Virgin Mary. Intercession is made to them on all important occasions of worship and Sacraments. As in the case of our Lady, they too are praised, blessed and given peace (Slomo).

In the early centuries of Christianity, upto a certain stage saints were canonized, but later canonization was stopped to avoid controversies and disputes. Since that many have been recognized as saints and martyrs in different parts of the world as per local approval or consensus. In the Church Histories of Michael the Great, Bar Hebraeus, Eusabius and others and in other religious books like **The Paradise of The Holy Fathers** by Athanasius and Palladius and the **Silver Stars** of Aphraim Paulose Ramban, we see life histories of many saints and martyrs. Their total number will be very large. Many men and women have been wonder-workers while alive as seen in the Old and New Testament and history books. They have continued to work wonders even after they died in flesh. Many lame and sick persons who have interceded at the tombs of such saints have become whole. It may look silly to start enumerating such instances. There have been instances enough to convince us that though they are dead they are quick.

In a cave on the mountain on which Mar Mathai's monastery is situated in Musal, may be seen today several tombs of saints and monks who lived there since the fourth

century. The first tomb in that cave on the right hand side at the entrance remains partly broken. There is a story about it. The bishop who lives there now told the story on a day in 1963. There was a monk there with him a few decades back, by name Yakub. At the request of some friends he went alone to that tomb in the cave and tried to break it open to take out a piece of bone for a blessing. A voice came from the tomb as he struck the tomb with a pick-axe asking him to keep back. He struck again. The voice came again. He still struck and then a hand came forth from the tomb and smote him on his face. He fell down unconscious. Due to this they stopped opening up the tombs of saints for bones and relics.

Near the chapel of Mar Mathai's Monastery, in the northern room is the tomb of Mar Mathai the founder. He had worked miracles while alive and still continues to work miracles. Recently an young man possessed of evil spirit was brought there and healed.

Reports of such miracles and healing have appeared time and again from different places in the Middle East and in Kerala. If it is reasonable to request a living saint's intercession, there is nothing illogical in requesting the same when he is free from the bonds of flesh, especially when we have proof enough to believe that departed saints are still awake and quick<sup>1</sup>. Therefore the Orthodox Syrians celebrate the memorials of saints and martyrs, venerate them and intercede to them. Some of the memorials are big festivals in certain churches of Kerala.




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1. 2 Kings 13: 21;

Kochu Skariah, Rev., Art 'Life After Death' in *Sabha Chandrika*,  
Alwaye, vol. 10, No,5 of Sept. 1962, pp. 101-102.

## THE DEPARTED ONES

The Orthodox Syrians believe that the departed souls of the faithful are quick and hence they pray for them. If praying for the departed meant praying for the dead, it is futile. If praying for the living is beneficial, it is equally good praying for the departed, for the souls which are separated from the bodies are still alive. If the soul dies when the body separates, then religion comes to an end. Then there is no hell or heaven, no reward nor punishment. If there is a God and He is just, then the wicked who flourished in this life must be punished and the righteous who suffered should be rewarded after this life. Unless their souls are quick and there is a Judgment, our discussion is vain and there will be neither religion nor any Philosophy of Religion.

The practice of praying and fasting for the departed ones was existing among the Jews in the Old Testament period. We see several instances of that kind in the Old Testament<sup>1</sup>. Judas Macabeus who lived about B. C. 168 is seen collecting money and sending to Jerusalem as offering for the remission of the sins of those who died in the war<sup>2</sup>. The Old Testament practice was continued in the Christian Church as there was no reason to put a stop to the same.

In the canonical prayers and in the Holy Eucharist, the Syrians remember the departed and pray for their remission. It is believed that the Holy Mass which is mystically identified with the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross, is capable

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1. Deut. 34: 8; Ez. 28: 29; I Sam. 31: 13; II Sam. 1: 12; Neh. 9: 2;  
Jud 11: 40.

2. Mac. 2: 42-46

of giving pardon to the souls of the departed. Christ died on the Cross to save all men, from Adam to the time of his crucifixion and from the time of crucifixion to the day of Judgment, both the dead and the living.

Christ, after he was entombed, went in the spirit to preach to the departed souls<sup>3</sup>. If Christ's sacrifice was efficacious in expiating the sins of the departed, the Eucharist which is mystically one with the same and is a continuation of that, is capable of expiating the sins of those who are remembered in it. The last 'Tubden' or intercession in the Holy Mass said by the chief server is exclusively for the departed<sup>4</sup>.

The Orthodox Syrians believe that the departed are invisibly present and partaking in the holy Mass. When the celebrant says the last dismissal he is addressing 'the living with the departed'<sup>5</sup>. The very first prayer in both the Common Prayer Book of laymen and the **S'heemo** prayer book of the clergy is exclusively for the departed.

They celebrate the death anniversary of their departed ones with offering of Holy Mass for them. Those who can afford conduct a feast also on that day, feeding the celebrant, sexton, friends and near relatives. Those who attend the feast also pray for the departed ones. They believe that such celebration of Mass, the offering of incense at their tombs and the prayers for them all help the expiation of their minor sins which remain. Some persons when they write their will make provisions for the expenses of these annual events after their death.

On the death anniversary day, after the Holy Mass, the celebrant goes to the tomb of the person in question and offers incense there, placing the wooden Cross and

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3. 1 Pet. 4: 5-6

4. *The Kurbana Kramam*, Op. Cit. p. 67

5. Paul Ramban, *Jacobite Syrian Liturgies*, p. 31.

two lighted candles. If the actual grave is not within easy reach of the place where the Holy Mass is offered, they offer incense in the chancel placing Cross and lighted candles there. The relatives prostrate there, some shedding tears, pray for the deceased, touch the Cross and kiss the hand of the celebrant. The relatives usually bring small size candles and light round the grave or tomb before the incensing is done. Some bring flowers and strew them over the grave to honour the departed.

The prayers for the burial of the departed are solemn and important. As soon as one dies the matter is reported to the parish priest, a wooden Cross and two candles on candleholders are taken from the church to the house of the deceased and arranged at the head side of the dead person. According to the practice in Kerala, an oil lamp is kept lighted there from that day till the fortieth day, signifying that the soul of the deceased is still about the place.

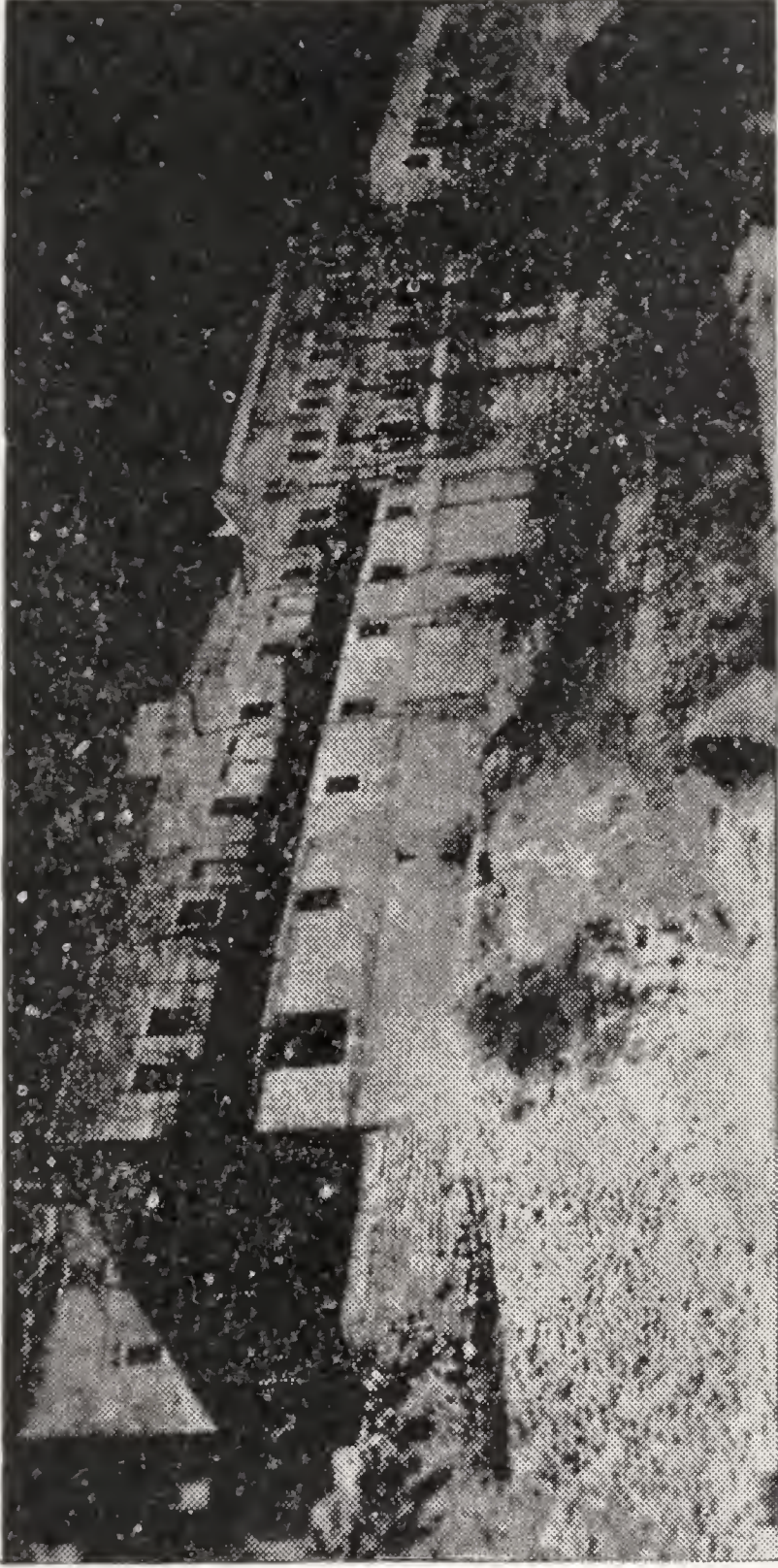
Arrangement will be made to celebrate Holy Mass for the departed upto forty days as is done in Kerala. They believe that the soul of the departed is allowed by God to go about freely and see round the whole universe for those forty days and on the fortieth day it is given rest. All the faithful ones enter Paradise on the fortieth day after death and remain waiting for the last day of resurrection<sup>6</sup>. This celebration of Mass for forty days is meant to cleanse the soul of the departed, from small imperfections that remain and to assure his entrance into Paradise.

The Syrians do not believe in praying for a man who died unrepentant, in gross sins. Prayers are not offered for a person who dies unpardoned in excommunication from the Church. They do not pray for a man who committed suicide as he has lost hope. But they pray for a person who is hanged or murdered or drowned by accident.

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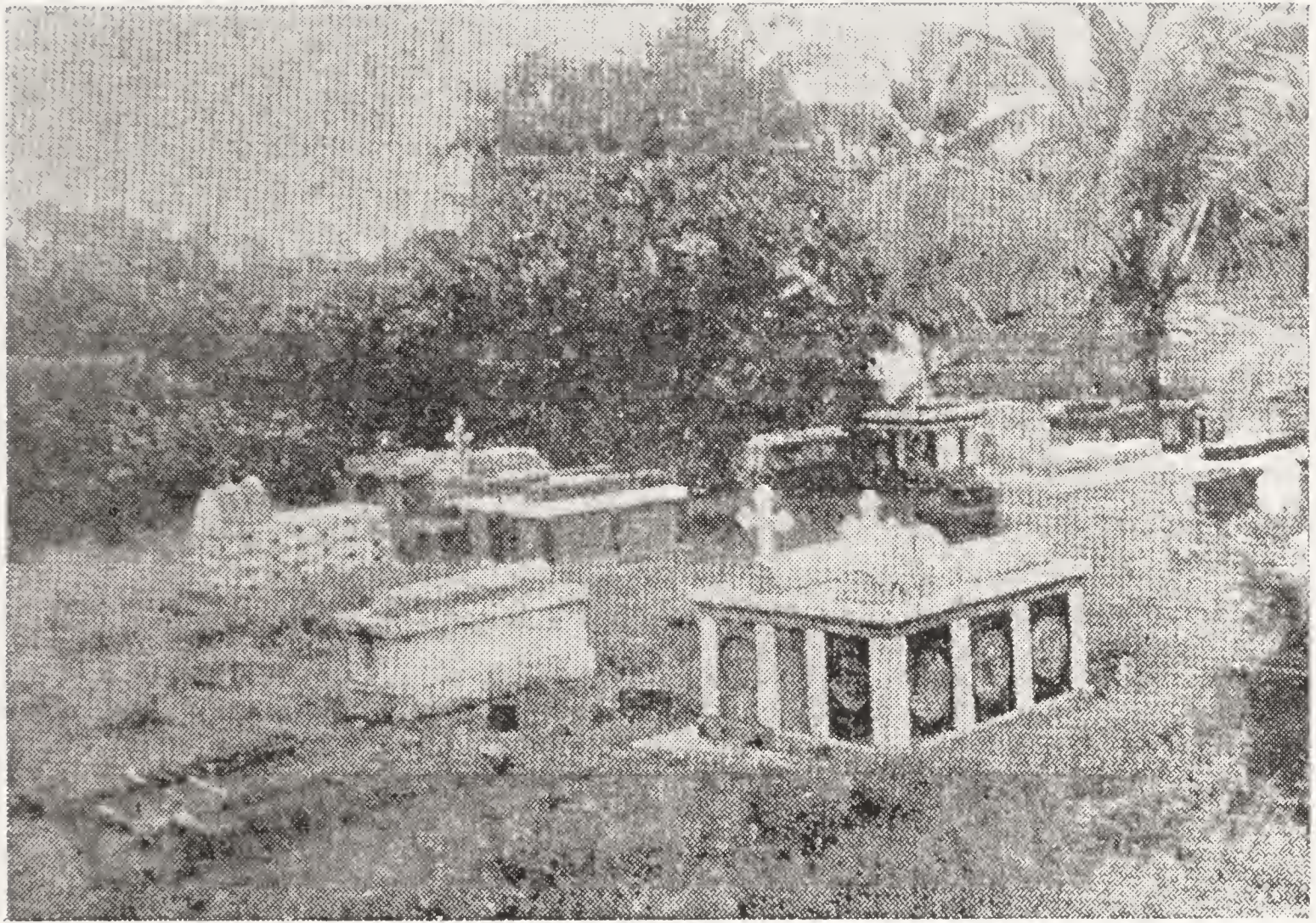
6. Abraham Konat, Rev. *Book of Baptism etc*, Op. Cit. p. 108





MAR MATHAI MONASTERY, MOSUL





THE DEPARTED ONES



The Baptism and Holy Chrism one receives as well as one's guardian angel are supposed to guard the soul of the departed one from the seizure of evil spirits. Special prayers are said to save the departed one from the invisible hosts hiding in the air<sup>7</sup>.

When a faithful member of the Church is seriously ill, he is advised to repent, confess and receive Holy communion. The Holy Communion is believed to be able to keep him protected and the absolution of sins he receives assures that he is going to enter Paradise with the faithful departed. The priest anoints the sick saying the prayers for his recovery. This anointment is also understood as a kind of protection against the forces of evil after one's departure.

At the burial also the priest pours oil or puts incense in the form of the Cross over the dead body saying an appointed prayer which runs thus;

“By this oil which is poured on his dead body, Lord give him escape so that he may not be caught by the opposing forces and camp of the enemy who are lurking in the air to wage war with the souls of men”<sup>8</sup>.

Before the dead body is placed in the grave, according to the practice in Kerala, they offer incense in the grave. It is also done with the same intention. In Beirut, Lebanon, at an Orthodox burial in 1963, it was seen that before the body was lowered into the grave, the deacon who was waving the censer emptied the whole contents of the censer into the grave. That also must have been done with the same motive.

The Syrians believe that the good acts of the departed person would bring good fortune and blessing upon posterity. They believe the converse also to be true.

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7. Ibid. p. 95

8. Ibid, p. 141; Bar Hebraeus, *Zalga*, p. 154; *Nomocanon*, Ch. vi:ii

Therefore they insist that a man dies repentant and absolved. For an additional assurance they observe Lent upto forty days for the expiation of their departed, celebrate Holy Mass for him, give alms and conduct a feast on the fortieth day and on the death anniversary day. The feasting on the fortieth day has two intentions, the first is that all may gather to pray for the expiation of the deceased and the second is that they may join in rejoicing at the entry of the person's soul into Paradise<sup>9</sup>.

Because the departed souls were believed to be attending the Holy Mass invisibly, they used to bury the dead inside the chancel of the church and around the church when the number of Christians was small and when there was less congestion for space. They did so also because the church was believed to be Paradise. Later they stopped burying them inside and the dead were buried around the church within hearing distance from the Altar. Later a separate cemetery sanctified and enclosed was made in most places, on one side of the church as near as possible. There is no rule as to which side should be chosen for the cemetery.

Mar Yakub says that the prayer for the dead is doubly good, for it helps to sanctify also the one who prays. It is an act of love to pray for your dead. Mar Yakub says "If thy brother is fallen in prison, will you not try if you can by all means to free him from there at any cost? If so, howmuch more will you knock at the threshold of the Church of God and at the places of prayers and at the places of martyrs for the remission of thy departed ones?"<sup>10</sup>

They believe in charities in the name of the departed especially out of the wealth of that person. In Kerala there is a practice of giving alms in cash to the poor within the premises of the church after the burial. When a rich person

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9. Mar Yakub, Op. Cit. p. 58

10. Ibid. p. 57

is buried a large number of beggars gather together near the church for this.

According to Orthodox Syrian faith and philosophy of religion, the soul of a deceased person will not enter another's body<sup>11</sup>. There is guardian angel as well as dark angel for every one. The guardian angel of God gives good inducements and protects while the dark angel misleads and tempts. When a person dies a sudden death the dark angel is said to get restless. It goes about and enters some person who is easily given to fear. Since females are easily susceptible to fear, ghosts and evil spirits easier enter and possess them. The dark angel of a departed person may enter some one and talk and would claim that it is the very soul of the departed one. But it wants a medium to talk. Priests expel such evil spirits by special prayers. Some such spirits depart when the possessed is taken to the tomb of a saint or martyr.

The Orthodox Syrians weep over their departed but not without hope. They weep not in despair<sup>12</sup>, but out of the sorrow of separation from the dear one. In the Old Testament period they used to weep in despair over the dead. Mary is seen weeping over Lazarus her dead brother. Even Jesus was moved to tears about Lazarus. Those who buried St. Stephen the martyr wept<sup>13</sup>.

There is a section of Christians who say that it is wrong to weep over the dead. That is out of a misinterpretation of the Pauline admonition that 'ye shall not weep over the dead like the gentiles, without hope'<sup>14</sup>. It is really unnatural and artificial to refrain from weeping and to repress such grief. By weeping out the sorrow the mind gets a relief from the emotional tension which if repressed may cause mental or physical ailments.

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11. Bar Hebraeus, *Zalga*, p. 121.

12. 1 Thes. 4: 14, 15

13. Acts. 8:2

14. Eph. 3: 13

Bar Hebraeus says that 'by the prayers for them, unpolluted souls of believers experience a certain delight. On the other hand, if they are polluted ones, these prayers help to cleanse the dirt on their mirrors' <sup>15</sup>. For this reason St. Paul prayed for the dead Onesiphorus <sup>16</sup>.

The faithful departed remain awaiting the immortal bliss they are going to inherit after judgment and the unfaithful remain awaiting damnation. But those who were sincere seekers after Truth and yet have not fully received salvation, shall be given the chance for the same, during the long waiting period before the general Resurrection. The Orthodox Syrians do not believe in a Purgatory.



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15. Bar Hebraeus, Op. Cit. p. 154

16. 2 Thim. 1: 16-18



## PART III

### 11

## THE ORTHODOX SYRIAN WORSHIP

### A. General

We have already observed that in general the Syrians face East for prayers<sup>1</sup>. This rule they keep wherever they are, at home or at church. Their churches are so built that the Altar is at the Eastern end. Only in the present generation some of their churches are built otherwise. In Kerala so far there is no exception to this rule. The Orthodox Syrian is not permitted to join in the worship of heretics.

They are keen about the canonical prayers of the seven watches of the day, which they conveniently pray at two times, viz in the evening and in the morning. Their canonical prayers or offices form an act of worship, because those are accompanied by prostrations or genuflections. When priests reside at churches or near about, canonical prayers with incense are said at church in the evening and in the morning. Where there are monasteries or Seminaries, the residents gather in their chapel regularly both in the evening and in the morning and pray with genuflexions, offering incense.

In Kerala married priests living with their families pray at home on ordinary days. When there are several priests to the same church and they officiate week by week by turns, the vicar for the week resides at church and conducts the canonical prayers offering incense. At such prayers folks from around the church seldom assemble in the Kerala churches, but in the Middle East it is not so.

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1. Mar Yakub, Op. Cit. p. 32

Those in monasteries and Seminaries have special prayers of penitence for the noon and an additional compline before retiring. In addition to these, monks, nuns and devout men pray certain private prayers codified for them by Holy Fathers, at the seven watches of the day. The clergy generally pray together in Syriac. Laymen pray in the mother tongue. The Liturgy forms the centre of their worship<sup>2</sup>.

Mar Yakub discusses their practice of facing the East in worship. He says 'God is Light'. The sensible light we see comes from the East. As it is from the East that God illumines the world's creations, we worship in that direction, which symbolically resembles God. Christ was crucified facing west and hence we pray facing eastward. We face east in remembrance of the original place from where we fell and came out. Finally we pray facing east as we expect the coming of the Lord from the east<sup>3</sup>.

The Orthodox Syrian prayers start by making the sign of the Cross on oneself and with the sanctification of the Holy Trinity. They start with the Trisagion and Kaumo and end with the same. They make the sign of the Cross with one finger<sup>4</sup> viz with the first finger. Mar Yakub says "When we worship the Cross, it is Christ we are worshipping. Christ is but one and not two and therefore we make the sign of the Cross with only one finger". In the Trisagion when they say 'Thou that was crucified for us have mercy upon us', they make the sign of the Cross on themselves with the right hand and prostrate till the knees, hands and forehead together touch the ground.

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2 Brown L. W. Cit. p. 216

3. Mar Yakub Op. Cit. p. 33;

Bar Hebraeus, *Nomocanon*, v: v p. p. 51

4. Mar Yakub, Op. Cit. p. 31.

If the genuflexions and prostrations at these offices are done in a scientific manner, adjusting the breath, they have the effect of Yogic Asanas. One should breathe out while prostrating and breathe in while rising. The time should be carefully and cleverly adjusted for breathing and prostrating.

There are certain days and occasions of joy when these prostrations are not allowed, viz Sundays, major feast days etc. Prostration symbolizes repentance and sorrow.



## B. The Holy Eucharist

Or

### Kurbono

The Eucharist we have seen is the central part of the worship in the Orthodox Syrian Church. In Moses Bar Keepho's commentary on the Liturgy, in the Introduction an explanation of the various names of the Eucharist is given as follows:

"We say that it has six names. It is called 'Assembly', 'Communion', 'Access', 'Oblation', 'Mysteries' and 'Perfection of Perfections'. It is called 'Assembly' because it assembled the scattered faculties that are in us, into unity with the one God, 'Communion' because we communicate mystically in the body of Christ and become one body with him" etc<sup>5</sup>.

The Orthodox Syrian Liturgy was in Syriac since this Church was under the Orthodox Syrian Patriarch of Antioch. The Antiochian Syrian Orthodox Church used only Syriac Liturgies. But at present they have both Syriac and Arabic Liturgies in their churches because most of the churches in the Middle East are within the Arabic speaking territories of Islamic rulers. Syriac is a refined form of Aramaic which Jesus Christ used to speak. The Kerala Orthodox Syrians have begun using Malayalam for celebrating the Holy Mass. They have Syriac and Malayalam Liturgies.

The Eucharist was instituted at the Last Supper of our Lord. He bid his disciples 'Do ye likewise until I come'. He trained them how to do it during the forty days he was with them after his resurrection. The first Eucharist celebration was in the upper room of St. Mark under the

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5. Moses Bar Keepho, *Commentary on The Liturgy*, (Syr) p. 1;  
Bar Hebraeus, *Zalgae*, p. 148



HOLY QURBANA BY MAR THEOPHILOS  
WITH PRIESTS AND DEACONS



HOLY QURBANA, PROCESSION



leadership of James called 'The brother of Our Lord'. That upper room was later destroyed, but now there stands in its place the St. Mark's chapel of the Orthodox Syrians where the Holy Eucharist is continued to the present day.

The disciples of Christ used to meet on Sundays to 'Break Bread'. Readings and sermons were added to this service gradually when the number of faithful communicants increased. In the early stages they conducted the service in attics and in most secret places for fear of the Jews who crucified their Master with the help of the Roman rulers. It was from the time of Constantine the Emperor who became a Christian that Christainity gained respect and status. Now they began to build churches in imitation of Jewish Synagogues as they thought themselves to be a 'New Israel'.

As already indicated, they started decorating the walls of churches with scriptural representations. In the **Didascalia** of the twelve Apostles, we find a description of the early forms of Eucharist celebration. The bishop or his representative alone used to celebrate. Songs and prayers were gradually added to the original Liturgy of St. James. Since the time of James the Liturgy has grown larger and larger. Other Liturgies were written by the doctors of the Church, keeping the general structure of the Liturgy the same as that of James.

In the first century, when the number of those present at the Eucharist service was small, they all communicated as a rule, but when the Church grew larger, the rule was changed<sup>6</sup>.

In the Old Testament we see sacrifices of different kinds for atonement. They foreshadowed the Eucharist Communion. Christ seems to have maintained the idea of Totemism and communion when he instituted the Sacrament

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6. Abdal Ahad Ramban, *Very Rev. The Syrian Church History* p. 598; Daniel, K. N., *A Critical Study of Primitive Liturges*, p. 44

which he called his 'Body and Blood'. Thus the primitive idea of eating the Totem as a communion and imbibing the spirit of the supernatural and having mutual fellowship was also maintained in it. Christ had already assured the disciples that those who eat his body and drink his blood shall have eternal life. They are in him and he in them. That is atonement.

The Orthodox Syrians believe that the consecrated bread and wine are mystically the Body and Blood of Christ. They are in every respect bread and wine even as Christ was hundred percent human while he was God as well. By consecration there is no material change, but the bread becomes Christ's Body by adding to it divinity in an invisible manner. Some persons call this 'Real Presence' of the Lord in the Eucharist. That is not comprehensible to the external human senses. Therefore the holy Fathers called the Eucharist 'The Holy Mysteries'. In Syriac it is called 'Roze Kadeesae' which means the same.

This was quite credible to the disciples though incomprehensible. They believed that the bread and wine are his Body and Blood because he had already done some miracles on the bread and had made wine out of water. So they could now believe a greater miracle or mystery on bread and wine. They had seen him giving sight to the blind, cleansing the lepers and raising the dead. Therefore they believed when he said 'This is my body' about the bread. They could all the more believe it from later experience, as St. Paul himself witnesses. He has pointed out that those who received the Eucharist in an unworthy manner died or fell ill thereby<sup>7</sup>. Jesus said 'My flesh is meat indeed and my blood is drink indeed'. The Eucharist is mystically identical with the atoning death of Christ on the Cross. Hence the Eucharist is for atonement.

In the Orthodox Syrian Church they always use leavened bread of wheat and wine for the Holy Mass. As

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7. 1 Cor. 11: 26-30; Geevarghese Dionysius, *Mathopadesasarangal*,



there is reason to believe that Christ used leavened bread (Lahmo) at his Last Supper, they insist on using the same in the Eucharist. They make the bread everytime they celebrate<sup>8</sup> and would not keep it ready-made for use on subsequent days.

The celebrant vests himself in attractive colours for celebrating the Holy Mass, attracting thereby the attention of all to the celebration. The present Cope or 'Phino' which he uses at the celebration is like the official dress of kings and might have been introduced since the time of Constantine who gave royal status to priesthood of the Church. The dress of the Orthodox priest in general is almost a continuation of the Aaronic dress of the Old Testament period. The Protestant churches put off all these after their reformatory revolution.

The Eucharist service is a religious drama<sup>9</sup> meant to arouse the higher feelings of the participants. Here the audience also has an active part to play. It is a live drama of the birth, death and resurrection of the Lord. All these are enacted on the Altar symbolically in all solemnity. The attractive vestments help to add awe and respect also. The waving of the censer and the jingling of the hand-bells and fans signify the clouds above the Mosaic Tabernacle and the rattle of angelic wings. All these have a magical and hypnotizing effect on the audience, preparing them to higher devotion, repentance and receptivity to blessings. The celebrant stands in the Sanctum Sanctorum as mediator between God and men. He intercedes for the people before God and disburses to them the blessings and gifts of God from the Altar. Through the Eucharist he absolves the living and the departed as did Christ on the Cross.

The Protestants in the west are now realizing the need for dramatic representation of religion. They have started emphasizing religious drama<sup>10</sup>. In some Protestant

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8. Brown, L. W. , Cit. p. 217

9. *The union Seminary Tower*, vol. 10: No, 1, Spring 1963, N. y. p. 6

10. Nomocanon ch. iv: ii

Seminaries now they have started a special course in religious drama. They simplified religious worship while protesting against the corruptions of the ancient Church and discarded all colourful dress and symbolisms. But now they feel that after all, these are necessary or helpful to arouse the finer feelings of the common religious man, but being reluctant to re-introduce them in worship, they have resorted to religious drama. They are developing it as an art in itself to provide worshippers thereby what they lost in worship. But the ancient Orthodox Church which maintained antique vestments and dramatic performance of the Eucharist service missed nothing and only gained in the long run.

G. B. Howard, an English man who studied about this aspect of this Church has spoken encouragingly about its ceremonial aspect, in his book already referred to. A small portion of the Holy elements from the Holy Eucharist used to be preserved in a chest on the Altar, to be given to some one who is in urgent need of communion. Sometimes it is given to patients on death bed.

The celebrant, server and communicants fast from the previous night till the end of the Communion. They keep off from all worldly pleasures including marital union from the previous night as the day is reckoned from evening to evening. Women who have menstruation would not be allowed to have communion until that is over <sup>11</sup>. They neither enter the church during that period out of respect for the Eucharist.

The church and Altar are regarded as holy after they are consecrated by the bishop. After the Eucharist is celebrated there, they are regarded all the more sacred.

The Syrians are earnest about going to church on Sundays for Eucharist service. In country-side churches the

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11. Daniel, K. N. , p. 44;

Abdal Ahad Ramban, V, Rev. Op. Cit. p. 598

attendance is very large. In University centres also attendance is good, as young people like to gather together at church regularly.

In the Middle East countries, Sundays are working days and Fridays are holidays. Therefore they have Holy Mass on Fridays. In Kuwait and Bahrain Fridays are observed as 'Sundays' by the Christians including the Orthodox Syrians.

Immediately after Baptism one is given Holy Communion. Thereafter annually one receives it on Maundy Thursday. On that day one can receive Holy Communion even if one does not attend the Eucharist service. To those who cannot go to church, the Holy Elements will be sent. The communicant if grown up, confesses his sins individually before a priest, gets pardon and then receives the Elements.

The rule that all who attend the Holy Mass should communicate was in force even at the time of Bar Hebraeus (1282) <sup>12</sup>. But now it is not so. Most people do not receive communion at the Eucharist services conducted every Sunday. They return home with their hearts up-lifted and souls appeased with fresh inspiration and a greater moral sense, for another week. They have profitted by listening to the readings, they have enjoyed the delightful tunes which they also joined in singing, they have had a time to stop and think, as they listened to the preaching, they have felt the unction of the many beautifully worded prayers and they heard the 'Peace be with you' several times. They have 'kissed' one another and the celebrant has craved pardon of them. In short, the senses of seeing, hearing, touch, taste and smell have all had their enjoyment as well as the intellect, the heart and the soul. They return home happy, strong and renewed persons, with repentance about their sins, fresh resolutions for a better life and at peace with their fellow men. The inertia or lag of the Eucharist service remains in the

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12. Matt. v: 23-24

worshipper for a week, the tunes echoe in his ears, the prayers spring up in his memory in clear accents at his moments of relaxation and the words of the Scriptures and the sermon which he heard come back to his mind when he is worried or tempted.

The use of sweet incense at the service has a purificatory effect. It is also supposed to have the power to expel evil spirits. Incense is not only antiseptic but the sweet smell invigorates people strained under a long service. The custom of lighting candles on the Altar at the service is handed down from the time of the Apostles, who used to gather in attics and secret places in Jerusalem for fear of the Jews.

The 'Kiss of Peace' remains a unique practice in ~~in~~ this Church. The intention is that all who attend the Eucharist service should be at peace with one another, forgiving and forgetting all offences<sup>13</sup>. Moreover St. Peter has admonished 'Greet ye one another with a kiss of charity'<sup>14</sup>. Nowadays the kiss is passed through the hands at the Eucharist service. This change in the practice from face to face kiss has an ethical and spiritual advantage.

Women generally gather in larger numbers than men at the Eucharist service on Sundays in Kerala. This might be due to the psychological fact that they are less free than men to stir out and meet their kith and kin, and gathering at church gives them an occasion for ventilating themselves. Moreover women are generally inclined to be more religious than men. It is where there is weakness that God is more needed and called upon. Due to the social structure in Kerala, women still suffer disabilities.

After the Eucharist service on Sundays and feast days, the congregation stays a while at church to talk to each other. Kith and kin and friends meet one another

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13. 1 Pet. v: 14

14. Mathen Konat, Very Rev. *Natapati Kramam*, p. 8

there. They exchange greetings, make friends, invite each other and go home happy. That is the social aspect of the Eucharist service.

Every other Sacrament is completed and sealed with the Holy Eucharist. After the Sacraments of Baptism, Marriage, Penitence, Ordination and Anointment, Holy Communion is received. Thus we have seen that the Eucharist is the centre of all Orthodox Syrian worship. It is meant to heal, absolve, protect, to assure eternal life and union with the Almighty, in fellowship with one's brethren. It is like the death of our Lord on the Cross, at once atoning and reconciling men with God the Father.

The Lord is figured as divine Lover and the devout soul of man is His beloved one. They unite in the Holy Communion of His Body and Blood. This is a mystical union in which the beloved soul is in Him and He in her. The soul enjoys the bliss of that divine union here through the external and internal senses. Here is atonement. It is not like the union of the Atman of the devotee with Brahman the Parama Atma where the former loses its identity. Here the beloved after atonement continues to enjoy the bliss in union with its Lover the Lord and changes into His image.



## C. OTHER IMPORTANT FORMS OF WORSHIP

### i The Mid - Lent Service

The Mid - Lent day is always a Wednesday. Easter and Lent are not calculated every year by fixed dates as Christmas is. They are fixed according to the Pascal Moon. Every year the Great Lent begins on a Monday, Mid - Lent falls on a Wednesday and Easter coming on the fiftieth day falls on a Sunday. The service for the Mid - Lent Wednesday starts on the evening of that Tuesday <sup>15</sup> because the day is reckoned from the evening in the Eastern Churches. After the first Kaumo of the prayer, the priest puts a wooden Cross on the special stand described before. The stand is covered with silk, two candles are lighted on either side, two fans are placed on it and the stand is placed in the middle of the chancel. This same Cross will be used for the Good Friday service and the Easter day service.

The Cross thus erected signifies the serpent of brass which Moses erected in the middle of the Tabernacle of Israel to save the people from the fiery serpents according to the command of the Lord <sup>16</sup>. The Cross thus raised is for the protection of the faithful members from evil and for the blessing of the year.

On this Wednesday morning, there will be celebration of the Holy Mass at about nine O'clock and at the close of the celebration there will be a procession round the church with this wooden Cross. The procession starts from the northern door of the chancel and goes anti - clockwise closing at the southern door. After the procession they re - enter the church and go to the Sanctuary. The Bishop or priest who leads the service stands before the Altar holding the Cross upright in his hands. After singing certain chants and prayers from the book of Feasts, he

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15. Num. 21: 8, 9

16. John 12: 12-19

raises it and waves it in the four directions with exultations. Then the people respond and the bells and fans sound. First he stands facing east, then west, then north and finally south. This course is followed twice.

When this is over, the priest and the choir go down to the chancel with the Cross and the Cross is put back on its stand. Then the priest offers incense there with appointed chants of the veneration of the Cross. Then they all kiss the special silken covering hanging down from the stand of the Cross and receive blessing, starting from the leader of the service.



## ii The Palm Sunday Service

The Sunday previous to Easter is known as Palm Sunday as all attend service at church on that day holding palm leaves. This Sunday service is usually well attended and will be very lengthy. It is one of mixed feelings of sorrow and joy, sorrow because the Holy Passion Week with scrowns is at the door, joy because it is the memorial of the glorious entrance of Jesus Christ to Jerusalem in the company of men and children involuntarily acclaiming 'Hosanna' in praise of the 'King of Israel',<sup>17</sup>

In the Kerala Orthodox churches, they use tender coconut palm leaves, taken usually from young trees. They also bring flowers to the church to be thrown up when the Gospel is being ceremonially read. Leaves of aromatic trees, cutpieces of coconut leaves and flowers are mixed and they throw them up in front of the priest who reads the Gospel ceremonially on that day, viz in the evening, in the morning, at the procession and at the Holy Mass. When the priest or Bishop reads the Gospel like that, facing the congregation westward, some of the choir boys stand in front of him holding in baskets the leaves and flowers to be thrown up. Both before the reading of the Gospel, at the introductory and when he reads from the Gospel in tune the words 'Hosanna, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of Lord: blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest',<sup>18</sup> they throw the flowers and leaves in front of him. It signifies that which is said in the Gospel 'And others cut down branches off the trees and strewed them in the way'. In the previous evening there will be only the usual prayers and the ceremonial reading of the Gospel.

After the canonical prayers and the silent preparation for the Mass the special service will begin. On Palm Sunday morning selected leaves from coconut palms in small

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17. John 12: 12-19

18. Mark 11: 9- 10



bundles will be placed on the prayer table in the chancel according to the custom in the Orthodox churches of Kerala. Those coming to the church as early as seven O'clock in the morning can attend the canonical prayers of the morning and hear the ceremonial reading of the morning Gospel. The evening prayers would generally be attended only by the choir, in Kerala churches. There will be a few women and children at church when the morning prayer is said at church. Others come in afterwards in time for the procession before the special service.

When the priest has finished the silent preparation for the Mass, he descends to the chancel with the choir. First the choir distributes the palm leaves to the people. By this time the church will be fully thronged. Now they go in a procession round the church holding the palm leaves. They start from the northern door. Colourful flags, coloured umbrellars, coloured canopy, wooden Cross, the book of the Gospels, candles, the rattling fans, censer and handbells are used at the procession. When the procession comes to the western door they stop there a while. Then the Gospel is read by the priest standing at the door, in the same ceremonial manner as at the evening prayer and morning prayer. This procession ~~sign~~ signifies the glorious entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem as said in the eleventh chapter of St. Mark's Gospel.

When the procession is over the palm leaves are collected back to be blessed. They will be placed on the prayer table in the chancel. If there be leaves that are torn or mutilated, they will be thrown away. The good leaves are gathered on the top of the table and an wooden Cross is also put at the eastern end of the table with two lighted candles on either side.

Then the priest starts the special service for the blessing of the palm leaves. The service contains several chants, prayers and readings. The blessed leaves are then lifted in the hands of the priest and waved in all the four

directions in the same way as he did with the Cross on Mid - Lent day.

The priest himself distributes the blessed palm leaves. He first places them on the Altars, takes himself, gives to the choir or deacons and then to the whole congregation. All who receive the blessed leaf from the priest accept it reverently with both hands and kiss it. Then the Holy Mass begins openly, all holding palm leaves. The server and priest put the palm leaf between the sash and the dress during the Holy Mass.

At the close of the Holy Qurbana, people return the leaves to the table in the chancel. Some persons who prefer to take leaves home are allowed to do so. They take those home in reverence for blessing and put those in a venerable place in the house. They deem those as a source of blessing. When the blessing of the leaves by the priest is done before the Holy Mass, the priest prays saying "Also bless the trees from which these were plucked and those who receive them." <sup>19</sup>




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19. *The Book of Annual Feasts*, p. 138

### iii Good Friday Service

The Friday previous to Easter is called 'Good Friday. In Kerala among the Syrians it is called the 'Friday of Sorrow' and among the Syrians of the Middle East it is called 'Friday of Crucifixion' and 'Great Friday'. During the whole week preceding Easter there are lengthy canonical prayers at church with many readings from the Gospels, Epistles and Old Testament. Usually that week is called the Holy Passion Week. The night prayers of the days of this week start at 4 A. M. at the churches in Kerala. The priest, the deacons and the servers will be present on the first three days of this week. On Maunday Thursday of this week there will be Holy Mass and a large congregation will be present on that day for general Communion. On Good Friday also the church will be full. The largest attendance at church during the year will be on Good Friday.

That day they come to church soon after day break and remain praying at church till afternoon, fasting and frequently prostrating. Of course there will be intervals and breaks. When the common people attend the long prayers of Good Friday, set in melancholy tunes sung mostly in Syriac and make several prostrations, they carry with them the impression that such long prayers and prostrations are special for that day. In fact the prayers for all the other days of the Passion Week are of the same kind and length. This the priests, the choir and the deacons alone know as others do not attend those.

On Good Friday there are two processions and a special service of the veneration of the Cross. Those were already hinted about in a previous section. The priest and the deacons finish the prayers of the night before day break on that day. The morning prayers of Good Friday start at 6.30 or 7 in the morning in most churches of Kerala. By that time a good number of people would gather at church.

When the melancholy tunes of the prayers are started, people go on kneeling and prostrating. When the Sedras are read they do the same. But when the incense is waved round, they stop and wait. In most churches they stand in rows and make the genuflexions simultaneously in co-operation and with a feeling of penitence. This reminds one of the idea of the angelic choir worshipping before the throne of God in heaven. The prayers are mostly sung in Syriac and the Promiyons, Sedras and readings are usually in the vernacular. When the Syriac tunes are chanted, the congregation sing the chorus as those are familiar to them.

During the break after the morning prayer, the priest or some one may preach. If there is no one to preach, they may read out the Old Testament lessons of the previous days of that week. In some of the Kerala churches they arrange for conducting guided meditations if a competent leader is easily available.

The prayers of the third hour begin at nine O'clock in the morning. The prayers will be over in about thirty minutes and they conduct the first procession. The officiating priest puts on vestments of dark colour. He spreads a piece of white linen over his right shoulder, takes the Cross from its stand and holds it in his hands reclining it on his right shoulder over the white linen and leads the procession starting from the southern door. They go round the church clockwise and re-enter by the northern door. Then the wooden Cross is put back on its stand and then there will be another interval as before.

At twelve they start the noon prayers and end with the prayers of the ninth hour. Then there is an interval again after which the special service of the 'Veneration of the Cross' begins. The maximum attendance on good Friday will be at this service. The climax of a religious drama is now coming. The first procession signifies the carrying of the Cross for crucifixion by our Lord from Pilate's

palace to Golgotha. Putting the Cross back on the stand after the first procession signifies that the Lord is crucified.

Now a table covered with white linen is prepared in the chancel, with two lighted candles on it. The priest takes the wooden Cross from the stand and places it flat over the linen on the table between the candles. The solemn service is now started. The whole service will take nearly three hours. After the main part of the service is over, they offer incense and venerate the Cross prostrating three times saying "We bow before the Cross by which salvation was given to us, and we say with the robber 'O thou Christ, remember us when thou comest'". The priest now kisses the Cross first, then the deacons and then the whole congregation one by one. In most churches offerings will be taken as they pass kissing the Cross.

When the kissing is going on, as seen in some Kerala churches, frankincense will be burned profusely in an earthen vessel placed on the floor under the table on which the Cross is placed. The sweet smoke will fill the whole place. The kissing here signifies the farewell kiss one may give to a departed dear one before burial. Many simple souls actually sob and shed tears as they thus kiss and pass. While the people go on kissing, the choir goes on repeating the words quoted above.

After all have kissed the Cross, the priest takes it from the table with the white linen and holds it horizontally in his arms, signifying the dead body of the Lord and goes round in procession inside the chancel singing in low tone a melancholy tune. Then he enters the Sanctuary in the company of the deacons and the choir and raises the Cross in all the four directions, in the manner in which he did on Mid-Lent day. This reminds one of the raising of the dead body of priests and bishops before their burial. Now the Sanctuary is veiled and appointed prayers are said in suppressed voice inside the Sanctuary.

Meanwhile the priest wraps the Cross in the white linen with cotton pad and frankincense and keeps it safe in

a shelf behind the main Altar, signifying the burial of our Lord. The Congregation will be saying 'Kurielison' in long drawn note repeatedly when this is going on. When the burial is over, the Sanctuary is unveiled and they sing the 'Angelic Hymn' and close with Trisagion and Kaumo.

Then they say the evening prayers of Saturday. After that, bitter juice specially prepared will be given to all who attended the service. The Cross is washed with rose water before its burial. That rose water is added to the bitter juice specially prepared from the leaves of bitter gourd, vinegar and asafoetida. That juice is drunk by all starting from the priest, in reverence, a few drops each. By drinking that, those who have been fasting from the previous evening break their fast. This service will be over by about 3 o'clock in the afternoon.

By the dry fasting on Good Friday, by the continued prostrations, lengthy prayers and drinking of the bitter juice, they identify themselves with the holy passions and sufferings of our Lord who took upon himself our sins, sorrows and burdens. It is only when we identify ourselves with the Lord's passions and death that we appropriate the expiatory benefit thereof.





PALM SUNDAY PROCESSION





#### iv. Easter Sunday service

The feast of Easter begins from previous evening as per general rule. They change the Altar spreads and other decorations of the church by evening. During the Holy Passion Week all decorations were of dark hue signifying sorrow. But now bright coloured decorations are substituted. The church and premises are scrupulously cleaned.

In the evening the priest, the deacons and the choir gather at church and say the evening prayers of Easter Sunday. These prayers have been rendered into Malayalam for use in Kerala churches. At the evening prayer there will be Gospel reading as on the evening of all Sundays<sup>20</sup> and feast days. During the whole of the Passion Week they have not kissed the hand of the bishop or priest nor given the Kiss of peace to one another. But after the prayers of Easter evening they do so.

At one O'clock in the night prayers begin at church that night. At the end of the mid-night prayers, the priest, the deacons and the choir conduct the 'Resurrection Service' silently inside the veiled Sanctuary. Then the buried Cross is taken out signifying the Lord's rising from the grave. The wrappings of the Cross are all removed. A red silken scarf is put over the Cross and it is brought to the door of the Sanctuary. The priest stands holding the risen Cross, facing the congregation. Two of the choir stand on either side holding lighted candles. Now all the lights of the church are lighted and every one in the church stands holding lighted candles or tapers. The priest thus standing announces that "Christ rose from the dead and struck his enemies back". The people respond and say in one voice

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20. As already hinted, the Orthodox Syrians reckon the day from evening. Hence in their religious language 'Sunday evening' means the evening previous to Sunday morning, viz the evening on which Sunday begins. All references in this will be that way.

“We believe and confess that he rose indeed”. At this response the church bell tolls, the hand-bells ring and the fans rattle. Cannons are fired outside the Courtyard at this time to make the occasion festive, as is usual in Kerala Orthodox Syrian churches. This is done three times, the priest announcing and they responding. The stand of the wooden Cross is removed from the chancel to the Sanctuary and the risen Cross is kept there on it, with two candles lighted on either side.

The priest, the deacons and the choir then descend to the chancel and continue the canonical prayers of the morning and the priest re-enters the Sanctuary after a little while to prepare silently for the Holy Qurbana. Meanwhile the deacons and the others finish the canonical prayers preceding the Holy Eucharist.

After the canonical prayers and the preparation for the Holy Mass, the veneration of the Cross is done. The risen Cross is now placed on the Altar, the Sanctuary is unveiled and certain prayers are said and hymns sung. Then the priest holds the Cross erect in his hands and they all go round ~~in~~ the church in a joyous procession, in all pomp and glory, starting from the northern door. At this procession the whole church and premises will be flood-lighted; everyone holds a lighted taper and the bells and fans sound. Cannons are fired and children light crackers. The priest and the choir sing delightful tunes set for the occasion. They re-enter the church through the southern door and the Cross is returned to its stand in the Sanctuary. Now the special lessons are read ending with the Gospel.

The priest then takes the Cross in his hands again and waves in all the four directions as on the Mid-Lent day. The special service ends with the Lord’s prayer.

When this service is over, the celebrant, the deacons and the choir kiss the Cross. Then it is taken down to the chancel for all to kiss. The kissing of the Cross by the people

could be postponed to the end of the Holy Qurbana as is done in many churches of Kerala. After this service the Holy Qurbana begins openly. By the time that is over the day breaks. When the Cross is being kissed by the people, in some churches offerings are taken in a special dish.

The Cross wrapped in red scarf symbolizes the risen Christ. Now they kiss the Cross with joy and a sense of relief as if they kiss ~~the~~ Lord who just rose from the dead. This Cross will thence be kept on the stand in the Sanctuary till the Feast of Ascension.



## v The Whit Sunday Service

We have made mention of the Whit Sunday service in connection with our discussion about the Holy Trinity. The service is in three parts, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost and is conducted on the fiftieth day from Easter, which falls on a Sunday.

In the previous evening they have special Penkeesa prayers etc and nothing more in particular. On Sunday morning the service starts usually very early. Most churches begin the service an hour before the usual time of Sunday service. The service and the Qurbana will be over usually before noon.

The Holy Qurbana is first celebrated and at the time of Kooklyons this special service is conducted. Three clean vessels are taken with pure water in them. A small bundle of leaves for sprinkling water also will be kept at the mouth of the vessels. The first service is in the name of the Father. One of the vessels will be placed on the steps of the Altar with water and a sprinkler and the celebrant will stand down from the step of the Altar; facing the Altar and the service begins.

After some chants and prayers there will be readings from the Old Testament, Epistles and the Gospel, followed by a Litany to which at each step the congregation responds by saying 'Kurielison' (Meaning Lord have mercy upon us).

Now all kneel down and bow their heads eastward. All together say in long drawn note 'Kurielison' three or four times while the priest is saying silent prayers. They are all awaiting the coming of the Holy spirit on themselves. When these prayers are over, the priest rises saying aloud "Rise ye by the power of God" and they all rise. The priest takes the sprinkler in his hand, one of the deacons takes the vessel of water and holds it on the right hand side of the priest and the priest sprinkles water on all with his right hand. All stand in their respective

places in reverence to receive the drops of water sprinkled, which signifies the gift of the Holy Spirit who descended on those present at Sion in the form of cloven tongues of fire. The priest goes thus down to the western door of the chancel and returns after sprinkling, to the Altar and the used vessel is kept aside. Then he takes the second vessel and conducts the second service in the name of the Son in the same manner. The last service is conducted similarly in the name of the Holy Ghost. When these three services are over the priest concludes the Holy Qurbana.

From Easter till the feast of Pentecost there was not any prostration at canonical prayers. They start that from this day after the kneeling at the Pentecost service. In the second service of this day it is said "When the Holy Spirit dawned and appeared to us in the form of the tongues of fire by divine benignity, we kneel down because we cannot endure His sight."

After the Pentecost service they all go home with their spirits rejuvenated by the fresh gift of the Holy Spirit, symbolized by the sprinkling of water on them by the celebrant.



## vi Christmas Service

Christmas is a fixed feast of the Church coming after a lent of twentyfour days and falls on the 25th of December. Till recently the Syrians have been observing Christmas according to the Julian Calendar, but now they have accepted the Gregorian or Western Calendar and the Christmas of the Syrians in Kerala synchronizes with that of the Western Churches.

Like other feasts, this also begins on the previous evening which they call 'Christmas evening'. The priest, the deacons and the choir gather at the church in the evening and say the special prayers from the Penkeesa. As on all other feast days there will be reading of the Gospel. In some ancient churches like the Parur St. Thomas church, the nave of the church will be strewn about with green blades of grass cut fresh from fields. Big coconut palm leaves cut fresh from the palms also used to be placed inside the chancel as part of the decoration. These remind us of the manger and the grass wherein Jesus was born in Bethlehem.

They assemble at church at one O'clock in the night. The heavy church bell tolls and people gather in good numbers at church inspite of the cold of December and bring with them frankincense and small size oil candles for use at the time of procession and the Fire-side service. The frankincense is collected by the sexton and cleaned. Then the priest blesses the same.

At the close of the third Kaumo of the mid-night prayer, they go round the church in procession in all pomp and splendour as on the Easter night. When they reach the western side of the church they stop there for the Fire-side Service. There will be a Cross-shaped pit on the western side of the church in the courtyard for this. It may be about three feet in length and one foot deep. The palm leaves which remain after the Palm Sunday service at the church would be quite dry by now. They are put into this pit to light the holy Fire. If necessary some clean and dry

twigs from good trees also will be used for the same purpose. A table will be placed on the western side of the pit at a distance of about four feet, allowing space for the procession to go round the pit after lighting the fire.

A cross and two lighted candles on holders will be placed on the table. The priest, the deacons and the choir stand close to the table facing east and begin the Fire-side service. After some chants and prayers, the Pauline Epistle is read. Then the priest goes to the eastern side of the pit and stands facing the pit and reads the Gospel of St. Luke from the first verse of the second chapter. When he comes to the fourteenth verse saying 'Glory to God in the height, and on Earth be peace and good will to men' he reads in long drawn musical tone, Then they all sing together the Angelic Hymn. Now the priest lights the fire on four sides of the Cross-shaped pit starting from the eastern side and the people go round the pit anti-clockwise thrice. As they go round, the priest and the deacons join them and drop frankincense little by little into the fire. After three rounds of procession at the fire-side, the priest resumes reading the Gospel from where he left and closes at the twentieth verse, Then the Trisagion and Kaumo are said. Some more prayers and chants follow at that table and they complete the main procession round the church and re-enter by the southern door.

In places where there is no courtyard for making the pit, they make use of a big metal basin to burn the fire and conduct the service in the chancel as was seen in the Orthodox Syrian church of New Jersey in 1950.

After the Service, the priest and the choir enter the Sanctuary and conduct the service of raising and waving the Cross in all the four directions as was done on Easter day. This may be done now or towards the close of the Holy Mass. This special service on Christmas day is optional. Hence some leave it. The canonical prayers are resumed after the Fire-side service and Holy Qurbana follows. Before they disperse after the Holy Mass, they all kiss the Cross

and put offerings as on Easter day. Here they kiss the Cross as if they are coming and seeing the new born Babe in the Manger and kissing him, and their offerings remind us of the wise men from the East coming and placing gifts before him.

The fire at the service reminds us of the bright light the shepherds saw when our Lord was born in Bethlahem. It also signifies the fire round which the shepherds were keeping watch over their sheep in the cold night.

When the ashes in the pit of the Fire-side service cool down, people take portions of those home for blessing or for protection against animal and plant pestilence. The faithful find the ashes wonderful.





## vii The Epiphany Service

Epiphany service is connected with the Baptism of our Lord in river Jordan. It is also symbolic and dramatic in nature. It is a fixed feast falling on the 6th of January. In the evening there will be special Penkeesa prayers and the reading of the Gospel.

In the morning on the 6th of January, they all gather together at church at about seven O' clock. After the canonical prayers, the priest finishes the silent preparations for the Holy Eucharist and starts the Epiphany service in the chancel.

One of the deacons or a server holds the jar of clear water with a small wooden Cross placed at the mouth of it and the face of the holder and the jar are covered with a thin towel. Then they all go in procession starting from the Sanctuary and go anti-clockwise around or inside the church as the case may be, according to convenience. The bells sound, the fans rattle and the censer is waved etc. After the procession they enter by the southern door and the jar is placed on the table in the chancel, kept covered with white linen. Two lighted candles on candle-holders will be placed on the table on either side of the jar. The carrying of the water jar around signifies the flow of river Jordan. That it is covered signifies the Old Testament period in which everything remained implicit and unrevealed.

The priest stands before the table facing east and begins the special service for the blessing of water. When the singing, prayers, readings and Litany are over, the priest blesses the censer as at the Holy Qurbana. Here the actions and prayers of the priest have resemblance to those of the celebration of the Holy Mass. The covering of the jar is lifted after some prayers, the wooden Cross is taken out of the mouth of the jar and the priest blesses the water. The lifting of the covering signifies that the Old Testament period is over and the Christ is revealed.

He takes the jar of blessed water and waves ceremonially in all the four directions as he did with the Cross on Easter day and Mid - Lent day, and with the palm leaves on Palm Sunday. The congregation makes the usual responses and the bells and fans sound. Then the blessed water and the small wooden Cross are taken to the baptismal tub in the church, the Cross is held erect in the tub and a few drops of the water are poured on it, signifying the Baptism of Jesus Christ. The Cross is then left in the tub and the tub is covered with its lid. At his baptism the Lord is supposed to dawn forth into the world in glory, being witnessed by the Father and the Holy Ghost who descended on him in the form of a dove <sup>21</sup> .

The priest returns to the Altar with the jar, places it on the Altar and celebrates the Holy Qurbana. After the Eucharist celebration all drink a few drops from that blessed water, starting from the celebrant. The remaining water in the jar will be kept in a chest in the Sanctuary. When some one in the parish is ill or in travail, they send for this water. They believe in its wonderful power and their faith works wonders very often. It is a commonly observed fact that this water kept in this way at church remains pure and clear till the epiphany the next year. That by itself is wonderful enough. Many who have kept ordinary water in similar jars otherwise have found that the water becomes foul and septic after a few days.

When Jesus descended to river Jordan, the water in it was sanctified. By his baptism in it, the evil elements invisibly present in it left it. Now pilgrims from all lands go there to take water from it. Some get the water of river Jordan to baptize their children with it. Jesus Christ was baptized not to be cleansed of sins like others, but because he was born as man he wanted to fulfill all that was expected of a member of the community. The Orthodox Syrian believes that the succession of the priesthood in the Jewish Church was thus continued through John the Baptist and Jesus Christ by this unique event.

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21. Mark 1: 10-11

## viii The Supplication To Our Lady

In our discussion under Mariology, we have already mentioned that the Orthodox Syrians believe much in the intercession of Virgin Mary. There is a specially set form of supplication to her used in the Syrian churches at the end of the Holy Eucharist on Sundays and feast days. It is in use in some of the Middle East churches and Kerala churches. It is voluntary and optional.

This supplication is conducted after the Kooklyon of Our Lady at the close of the Holy Qurbana. In Kerala this is conducted only upon somebody's special request. According to the practice in Kerala, the petitioners stand in front of the steps of the Sanctuary holding lighted tapers. In some churches the priest himself gives the same to the petitioners and in other churches the sexton or the deacon gives them.

The priest stands before the Altar, down from the Altar step, facing East and begins the supplicatory prayers. Two of the deacons or choir stand on his left and right holding lighted candles. The supplication service consists mainly of two prayers and three chants. The chants narrate the prophecies about Our Lady, about her virgin conception and etc. After the first chant the priest turns towards the west and walks upto the door of the Sanctuary where he stands for a while. As he moves westward a recessional is sung. While standing at the door of the Sanctuary he prays a prayer of intercession to Our Lady as given in the particular book. The intercession is to protect all those in distress, to help all faithful men, children, youths and old men etc. He prays particularly for those petitioners also, without mentioning names. After that another recessional is sung and the priest and the choir return to their original positions before the Altar.

Now those in the Sanctuary say 'Kurielison' etc a fixed number of times<sup>22</sup> and the congregation below repeat

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22. The number varies from church to church, some say five times and some say three times.

it the same number of times. Thus they complete the series until they end with the Lord's prayer and the 'Hail Mary'. Then the priest turns and walks westward to the petitioners. They kiss his hand and return the tapers either to the Sexton or to the priest according to local custom.

Those who come forward with this kind of petition are mostly women and this supplication is more popular in the churches of St. Mary than in other churches. Some of the petitioners have to appear for a public examination, some want children, others healing and so on. Such petitioners give in their names and pay a fixed amount for this special supplication. The names will be given to the celebrant who remembers them in the Holy Mass at the time of intercession. Their particular need for petition is secret between themselves and the Mother. Even the priest does not know. He only knows their names. Some already have got answer to their intercession to Our Lady and conduct this to fulfil their promise to do so and as a mark of gratitude. Such people when they have some difficulty or problem make such promises to Our Lady and intercede. They fulfil the same whether the petition is answered or not. The number of such petitioners is increasing every day. That shows that they get their petitions answered.

The Syrians have great faith in the intercession of Our Lady. When they ~~have~~ have their petitions answered their faith enhances.

These are in brief some of the most important and familiar forms of worship in the Orthodox Syrian Church. There are other forms of service and worship, of which some are obsolete and some fall under the category of Sacraments which will be discussed separately.

There are two special services which come neither under the heading of worship nor under the heading of Sacraments. They are The Washing of The Feet on Maundy Thursday and The Service of Pardon or Reconciliation at the beginning and close of the Great Lent.

## ix The Service of Pardon

or

## Reconciliation

This service is conducted on the first Monday of the Great Lent and on the last Saturday of the Lent. There are two separate texts for the two services on either occasion. The service is conducted at church and is led by the bishop or priest as the case may be. The general form of both the services is the same.

There are prayers, chants, petitions, promiyons, Psalms readings from the Epistles and Gospels. The general trend is penitential. Repentance, craving pardon, forgiving and loving are the main ideas of the readings, songs and prayers.

At the beginning of the Great Lent, on Monday morning this service is conducted after the prayers of the third hour. On Saturday before Easter, this service is conducted after the prayers of the ninth hour in the afternoon. Both the services begin with the 51 st Psalm which is penitential. The Epistles read are 1 John 4: 11-21 dealing with love, 1 Cor. 13: 4-10 dealing with charity and Gospels read are Matt. 18: 18-35 dealing with absolution and pardon of sin and Matt 18: 12- 22 dealing with redemption of the sinner.

The service closes only after the priest craves pardon of all those present. He prostrates before them three times and craves pardon of them three times. They also kneel down before him and reply in the same manner.

Finally he says 'May the Lord God pardon my sins and yours and absolve us'. Then he blesses them. They kiss his hands and they give the 'Kiss of Peace' one to another and forgive from the depth of their hearts all offences. Thus they enter the Lent in peace and close the Lent in peace.

The priest preaches at the last stage of the service on love, charity, repentance, forgiveness and pardon. No one is to enter the Lent with hatred or offences. If by some chance some one has offended his brethren during the Lent he should crave pardon, forgive and be reconciled before Easter comes. Thus the two services of pardon are at the two ends of the Lent, one at the beginning and the other at the close.

In many churches of Kerala this service is not usual in this generation. But it is conducted in some churches, Seminaries and monasteries. The services are well meant, well constituted and for the benefit of the faithful members of the Church.



## X The Washing Of The Feet

The service of the washing of the feet is dramatic, solemn and impressive. It is popular in the Orthodox Syrian Church to this day. This service is generally conducted on Maundy Thursday in the afternoon. Though there is no rule against it, this service is usually conducted only by bishops or those above their rank. Either the bishop makes arrangements for this service at his place or some church invites the bishop and makes arrangements for the same.

A platform is made in the chancel of the church or in a pandal near the church and the service is conducted on it. Seats will be arranged for the bishop and twelve others there. This is a dramatization of the event mentioned in the 13th chapter of St. John's Gospel. Jesus rose from the last supper, took water in a basin and washed the feet of his disciples and asked them to do so one to ~~an~~ another. His great example of humility and service is dramatized in this solemn service in the afternoon before Good Friday.

Several melancholy chants, prayers and readings constitute the service. Penitential Psalms, Old Testament readings, Epistles and Promiyons precede the Gospel. At the Gospel which is read by some one else, the bishop gets up and binds his loins with a towel and goes to wash the feet of the twelve disciples seated on the stage. The disciples are either priests, deacons or choir boys according to availability in each place and occasion. They come with clean feet and sit on the seats arranged for them on the platform. Some bishops give names to these disciples after the names of the twelve Apostles of Christ. Peter sits at the end to be washed last. No one likes to be called Judas. Hence some bishops do not name any one except Peter who of course has a definite role to play in this drama.

As said in the 13th chapter 6th verse of St. John's Gospel, when he came to Simon Peter, the latter objected saying 'Lord washeth thou my feet?' etc. This conversation

is enacted here. The disciple named Peter will be ready and prepared for this. Usually Peter's part is acted by some one who is a senior and respectable person in the clerical order.

When the washing is going on, thousands will be gathered around to witness the solemn service. The Choir will be singing appointed hymns for the occasion. The bishop washes the right foot of each disciple, wipes it dry and smears oil on it. He washes only the toe of the right foot to make the service simpler.

Either the bishop himself or some one at his request will preach a sermon on humility and service to fellow men. This service which is devotional, impressive and dramatic is very popular among the Orthodox Syrians.





## PART IV

12

### CELIBACY AND ASCETICISM

There used to be the celibate order in this Orthodox Church as a voluntary institution from early centuries of Christianity. There were men and women from the beginning who renounced everything and lived the life of poverty and piety. Celibacy is highly respected in the Syrian Church. It is not neglected as in the Protestant churches nor is it compulsory as in the Roman Catholic Church. In this Church bishops are chosen only from celibate order of priests as a rule. Very rarely widowers also have been chosen to be bishops after they remained some time in the monastic order.

The monastic order, according to Mar Yakub "Started with the sons of Elohim. Through Elija and Elisha it reached John the Baptist and Holy Apostles. They practised asceticism though they did not wear any special garb and Jesus Christ also showed that in his own person upto his baptism. From his resurrection upto forty days he taught them monasticism without eating meat. The carnivorous are more violent than the herbivorous. The latter are calm<sup>1</sup>."

There was among the Jews the Qumran Community which was ascetic, pious and puritan to the core. It has been alleged that John the Baptist was with them in the wilderness<sup>2</sup>. Some doubt that even Jesus Christ was

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1. Mar Yakub, Op Cit p. 41

2. Burrows, M. , *Dead Sea Scrolls*, p. 328; *More Light on the D. S.S*, p. 57.

associated with them<sup>3</sup> in some manner in his youth, about which period little is said in the Gospels.

In the **Nomocanon** Bar Hebraeus quotes the Apostles' canons and says: "The monk or nun is not appointed by any one nor ordained by the laying on of hands, because this order is of voluntary wish. The celibate shall continue in fasting, prayer and lamentation while looking forward to departure, not in luxury, drunkenness and idle talk. He shall spend his time also in reading holy Scriptures and in meditation on divine comfort<sup>4</sup>."

Among the Orthodox Syrians "Monasteries are common. The monks are often unordained, though some of them are in the holy orders. Monasteries are under the rule of the bishop of the diocese, except where a Patriarch or Maphrian is entombed, in which case they are directly under Patriarch"<sup>5</sup>.

There are no nunneries in the Middle East or in the Americas for the Orthodox Syrians at present, though there are a handful in Kerala.

The Very Rev. Aphraim Poulouse Ramban of Syria in his **Silver Stars** (published recently) discusses about the origin and growth of the monastic order seen in this Church. He says that the life of celibacy which is one of renunciation is seen from the very beginning of Christianity. The monks used to live in deserts and hills; some in two and some in three. He quotes from the historical work of Bar Hebraeus and says that since the beginning of the second century A. D. celibate life was seen quite clearly<sup>6</sup>. In the writing of Justin in 160 A. D. reference is made to thousands of nuns who lived in those days. In the writings of Tertullian in A. D. 200, mention is made

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3. Stendahl, Art, in *The Scrolls, And The New Testament*, p. 30.

4. *Nomocanon*, Ch. vii: 10, p. 92

5. Maclean, A. J. , 'Syrian Christians' Op. Cit. p. 173

6. Poulouse Aphraim Ramban, V. Rev. , Op. Cit. pp. 99-112

about the special honours given to those in the monastic order <sup>7</sup>.

Only by the fourth century monastic life was made orderly. During that century thousands of pure and elect persons spent their lives in deserts, caves and mountains, fasting and praying. Later on when monastic life became orderly, several men in the ecclesiastical order also took to this kind of life.

**The Paradise of the Holy Fathers** to which reference has already been made, gives us a vivid account of thousands of such holy men and women who lived in Egypt about the Nile valley in mountains and deserts <sup>8</sup>.

Those who lived in monasteries of Egypt in the fourth century have been engaged in different kinds of manual work and handicrafts. Some worked in the fields, some in the gardens, some were engaged in carpentry and some in making baskets. Still others were making clothes or tanning leather. A few were studying and some teaching. They knew the Scriptures by heart. Their habits were very simple, made of cotton or wool. They bound their waist with a belt or sash. They wore a cowl on their head. Their food was simple and meagre. Some practised penance by reducing bodily comforts, needs and food. Simon the Stilite and Bar Soum were famous for their ascetic achievements gained through fasting and vigil. They were spiritually rejoicing while physically they were in privation.

The dress of the Syrian monks is after the fashion of Anthony of Egypt, <sup>9</sup> who lived in the aforesaid period. They cut off their hair and grow the beard signifying renunciation of worldly vanities. They renounce vain pleasures and put their imagination on the benefits of the

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7. Ibid p. 99

8. *Paradise Of The Holy Fathers*, Op. Cit. 2 vols.

9 Mar Yakub, Op. Cit. p. 41.

perfect philosophies pertaining to celibacy. The monks fight perpetually against lusts by fast and acts of righteousness. To all outward appearance they are calm and quiet, during their spiritual works. The monastery has been called 'Penn' where the sheep take cover from bears.

They wear black dress signifying lamentation about human sin. Their wearing the cowl on the head on admission to the order signifies preparedness for service and for war. The leather belt is worn as Elija and John the Baptist had done, because it is dead, reminding the monk that he should make his body dead to lusts and passions. The monk is addressed 'Raban' in the Middle East, in Syriac language, meaning Mon Signor or Our Master. When this was in current use among the Chaldeans, they pronounced it as 'Ramban.' The Keralites copied it from them., Now that is current in Kerala.

The monk is admitted to the Holy Order by the Superior of the monastery<sup>10</sup> or a bishop. Though rule permits that a monk who is not a bishop, but is the Superior can admit others to the holy order, it is usually done by a prelate or one above the prelate.

At the service for admission his feet will be washed by the leader of the service, signifying that he is cleansed from all filth. He is given foot-wear which he has to use always and that means that he is to walk in the path of greater holiness. They generally wear wool because it is uncomfortable. They are not after the comforts of the flesh and they do not marry as they look forward to Him and Him alone. The angels do not marry and the monks have chosen to be like angels and strive to be so. Monks are to be angels in flesh. Mar Yakub says that for these reasons, holy Fathers respected the monks very much. The Orthodox Syrian people also do so. As said by Mar Yakub, all monks refrained themselves from eating meat.

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10. Bar Hebraeus, *Zalga*, p. 142

Bar Hebraeus speaks about the admission of persons to the monastic order. The service of admission is conducted not in the Sanctuary as in the case of ordination, but below at the entrance to the Sanctuary. The monk confesses faith and says 'I desired to approach God'. His hair is clipped at the service symbolizing that he rejects all the deeds which are dead unto God. He changes his dress signifying that he has put off the old man and the new dress he puts on signifies the new man renewed spirituality. The cowl or head-dress according to Bar Hebraeus signifies the crown of salvation. The top cap which he wears over the crown signifies glory.

At the admission service he prostrates before the members of his order meaning thankfulness for accepting him to the order <sup>11</sup>. He is to stand stretching his arms out like one hanging on the Cross and stand so for quite a while during the service. Mar Yakub says "This means that he is crucified to the world and its pleasures". At the close of the service he bears a wooden Cross over his shoulder. This is because our Lord said "He who wishes to be my disciple, let him take up his cross daily and follow me" <sup>12</sup>. According to the Nicene canon quoted by Bar Hebraeus in his **Nomocanon**, the monk shall not grow his hair. He should clear all hair off his head. He shall not wear rings of gold or silver on his fingers <sup>13</sup>.

Some of these monks, anchorites, recluses, coenobites and ascetic Fathers of the deserts have become great scholars and administrators of the Church. Others have become great authors. A few monasteries turned out to be great centres of learning <sup>14</sup>. There have been a few who turned out to be rebels who created schism.

Monasticism which started in Egypt spread out to other Eastern countries also. In the coast of South Palestine,

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11. Ibid pp. 143-144.

12. Matt. 16:24.

13. *Nomocanon*, vii: 10 p. 97; *Nicene Canon*, vol. ii: 84.

14. Aphraim Poulouse Ramban, *Silver Starsp.* 101.

in the desert places around Damascus, in Kores Desert, in Mount Edesa, In the Island of Gozertho, in Tur Abdeen of Turkey, in the mounts of Mosul in Iraq, in the mounts of Mardin, around Capadocia and Caesaria, and in Mount Senai we had monasteries and monks. We still have ancient monasteries in some of those places and a few of them are in the possession of the Orthodox Syrians.

From the East monasticism spread to the West, first in A. D. 330 when Mar Athanasius of Alexandria went to Rome, taking with him a monk Arsanios by name. By the close contact of the Kerala Church with the churches in the Holy lands monastic order came into existence in Kerala in the early centuries. The Ankamaly Dayarah and Vettical Dayarah are some of the earliest of which the former has ceased to exist and the latter is now only a monastery in name. Now there are Dayaraha in Kerala at Pathanapuram Kundara, Manganam, Pampady, Malelcruz, Omalloor, Piramadom, Perunad, Mulanthuruthy and Tiruvella. There is an Ashram in Tadagam of Coimbatore, founded for the Orthodox Syrians by bishop Pakenham Walsh.

Of the old Dayaraha or monasteries in the Middle East, the Saphron Dayarah and other Dayaraha in Mardin, Mar Mathai Dayarah of Mosul, Mar Gabriel Dayarah of Turkey, Mar Abraham Dayarah of Tur Abdeen and St Mark Monastery of Jerusalem are some of the famous ones now in the hands of the Orthodox Syrians.

Mar Anthony of the early part of the fourth century hailed from a noble family in Egypt. He went to the wilderness in his youth, renouncing everything and lived by the labour of his own hands. He attracted a large number of disciples by his ascetic excellence. The very first order of monks in the Orthodox Syrian Church is supposed to be the order of Mar Anthony of Egypt. There are not many orders of monks in this Church as there are in the Roman Catholic Church. Athanasius wrote the biography of Mar Anthony who lived 105 years and died in 356 A. D. Anthony left some valuable admonitions, suggestions and

epistles for the benefit of future generations. His life was with nature and in the wilderness. The *Book Of Dove* of Bar Hebraeus<sup>15</sup> is a very good work attracting men to the life of celibacy and spiritual contemplation.

Pakomios, another monk who built a monastery and lived in the desert, made the monastic life more orderly and systematic and set himself an example to others. He had about nine thousand disciples and each monk was allotted a separate cell to live in. Rules were made by him of which the most important one was that of obedience. His sister also became an anchorite like himself and established an order of holy women. In 348 A. D. Pakomios died at the age of 56 after working many wonders as a saint and healer. His order of monks flourished in the Middle East till the 11th century<sup>16</sup>. Mar Aphraim the Syrian and Baselius were examples of ideal ascetics.

Monastic order is now dwindling in the size of its membership and many monasteries have become mere historic monuments. In this Church at the admission to the order, the monk does not take any vows, unlike the Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches. There are very few set rules for them in general. Each monastery has its own rules of conduct, but all the monks dress alike everywhere. Though the number of monks in Kerala is just a handful, their rules and customs remain more or less the same everywhere.

In the Middle East, no priest remains unmarried unless he enters the order of monks. But in Kerala, there will be at least a dozen unmarried priests without monastic garb. Often such priests get elected to be Metroplitans and many monks remain unelected. The monks in Kerala often stay with Metropolitans to assist them in their work, or teach in Seminaries or live in contemplation and religious research.

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15. Bar Hebraeus, *The Book Of The Dove*, Syriac press, Mardin, 1916.

16. Poulouse Aphraim Ramban, Op. Cit. pp. 11-112

Because the monk does not take any vows, he is permitted by canons to renounce his order and get married<sup>17</sup>. An unmarried priest may become a monk. If elected to be bishop an unmarried priest has to become a monk before he is consecrated. In the Middle East laymen directly become monks and later if found worthy, they may be ordained as deacons or priests. Deacons also become monks. Many monks in the Middle East remain as sub-deacons or unordained. But in Kerala a person becomes a monk only after he has remained a few years as an unmarried priest.

The sweep of material civilization all over the world is perhaps dissuading persons from entering the monastic life. Protestant influence from the West which is opposed to the spirit of monasticism as an unnecessary element in the Church, also might have worked against the growth of the order. The lack of spiritual luminaries in monasteries as leaders to attract men to ascetic life, in the present generation also might be one of the reasons for the dwindling of the number of monks. One is reminded of Jesus Christ asking "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on Earth?"<sup>18</sup>.




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17. *Nomocanon*, vii: 10; Mar Geevarghese Dionysius Op. p. 53

18. Luk. 13:8



## FASTING AND MEDITATION

## A. Fasting

'And he said unto them, this kind can come forth by nothing but by prayer and fasting' (Mark 9: 29)

In the Orthodox Syrian Church fasting is much more important than in the Roman Catholic and Protestant Churches. The Anglo-Catholic section of the Church of England stands between the Orthodox and the Protestants in this matter.

The word 'Saumo' in Syriac is used to indicate fast as well as Lent, though there is some difference between the two in current English. Lent is nowadays observed by many without fast, but rather by changing diet from non-vegetarian to vegetarian and by saying the lental prayers. In the early days of the Church, people used to fast at least upto noon during the days of Lent and the words 'fast' and 'lent' were almost synonymous. But now the denotations of the two words are very different. The Syriac language has only one word for both, viz 'Saumo'.

Fast or lent began in the world with the divine command to Adam and Eve in the Garden<sup>1</sup>. He left them in the garden of Paradise in Eden free to eat fruits from all the trees but the one which stood in the middle of the garden. This restriction in eating was the lent first given to man. As this was not observed, we the children of Adam have to fast in all generations. In the Jewish Church they had observation of fasts as per the command of the Lord<sup>2</sup>. Both Moses and Elijah fasted for forty days.

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1. Gen. 2: 17

2. Joel 2: 12; zach. 7: 5-8.

The people of Ninve fasted, every one from the King down to the suckling babes and cattle, till the Lord's anger was averted <sup>3</sup>.

Jesus Christ himself fasted and taught his disciples to do so. When the disciples could not cast out an evil spirit from a possessed person and they brought him to Jesus, he said the words quoted above at the top of this chapter. He also told them how to fast. They were to anoint their head and wash their faces when they fasted in order that they may not appear to others as fasting<sup>4</sup>. The disciples of John the Baptist used to fast. John was a man of lental diet all along his life. He renounced animal food and wine, grew his hair and beard and wore coarse dress. The Qumran community to which he might have belonged was given to coarse life, much washing, fasting and prayers. When Jesus was asked why his disciples did not fast like the disciples of John, he replied: 'The children of the bride chamber shall not fast as long as the bridegroom is with them, but they shall fast when the bridegroom is taken away from them', meaning thereby that they will fast after he has ascended to heaven. This they did <sup>5</sup>. Later the disciples codified rules for annual observation of lent in the Church.

Many of the 'Desert Fathers' of the first five centuries were famous for their capacity for long fasts and the spiritual powers they attained by fast and prayer. The custom of fasting to attain Spiritual powers is a Dionysian cult by its origin and it was later made more refined and more spiritual in an orderly manner.

The first oecumenical synods of the undivided Church made canons about these periodical fasts for the faithful. But there were differences in the observation of some of the lental fasts in different places. The lental fasts now observed in the Syrian Church are indicated in the

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3. Jonas 3:4

4. Matt 6: 17

5. Act 13: 3

**Nomocanon** of Bar Hebraeus. They are more or less uniform all over the world among the Orthodox Syrians.

According to Mar Geevarghese Dionysius lent is meant for subjugating the desires of the flesh and to quicken the soul to divine matters<sup>6</sup>. It is an arm against Satan. Since the love of the stomach is the cause of many evils, lent helps us to get over those evils. 'A fast in the flesh is a feast in the soul'.

There was the custom of observing the Lent two days in the week among the Jews at the time of Jesus. That practice is continued in the Orthodox Church as per canon and thus Wednesday and Friday are days of lent, Wednesday in remembrance of the trial and judgment of Jesus and Friday in remembrance of his death on the Cross. The Great Lent is for forty nine days upto Easter Sunday, including the Holy Passion Week. Then there is the Christmas lent of twentyfour days, the fourteen days lent in August upto the feast of the Translation of Our Lady, the Apostles' Lent in June for twelve days upto the feast of St. Peter and St Paul and the Ninve lent of three days in spring. As mentioned before, they fast thirty nine days for the departed. They have the special seven days' lent in September upto the feast of Virgin Mary's birth on the 8th.

The Celebrant of the Holy Mass, the server, communicants and all who can, among those who attend the Mass, fast from previous evening till the Mass is over. The Lent of wednesday and Friday begin from evening and end by evening.

Lent is good not only for quickening the soul, but it purifies the body and sharpens the intellect, if properly observed. Men like Mahatma Gandhi have taken to long fasts for self-purification. It removes a good deal of toxin from the body, cures ailments and sharpens the appetite as well as the taste<sup>7</sup>.

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6. Mar G. Dionysius, Op, Cit. p. 35

7. Lakshman Sarma, K. , *Fasting Cure And Vital Economy*, pp. 62-64

Most of the lents in this Orthodox Church are so fixed as to come before an important day of feast and it is really very useful because it increases the power of digestion and makes one ready for feasting. The power of the will is necessary for observing fasts. If one has enough of that, one can fast without feeling hungry as did Jesus Christ. Only after fasting forty days did he hunger<sup>8</sup>.

The multitudes who heard Jesus preach in the wilderness remained three days continually without eating and he fed them after that, 'lest they should faint on the way'<sup>9</sup>. Till he stopped preaching they knew not hunger. They were all fed for three days by 'The word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God'<sup>10</sup>. Those who remain fully concentrated in pious meditation or in reading can keep fasting pretty long without feeling hungry. When overwhelmed by a strong emotion like piety, joy, sorrow or anger, the churning movements of the intestines are suspended and one does not feel any hunger. This has been proved about anger in the lab by psychological experiments done by Pavlov with dogs and cats.

During the Lent they are not to have marital union<sup>11</sup> and should refrain themselves from all hatred and vain pleasures of the senses. Even gaudy dress, golden ornaments and jewels are to be put off during the Lent. One should not go on talking much while keeping the stomach empty with lental fast<sup>12</sup>. Less talk, purity of heart, love, benevolence, more alms-giving, repentance and forgiveness are recommended for the lent period<sup>13</sup>. If one who observes the lent, hates his brethren or curses those who hate him, he fasts in vain. No one is permitted to fast on Sundays, on Saturdays,

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8. Matt. 4: 2

9. Matt. 15: 32

10. Matt. 4: 4

11. 1 Cor. 7: 5; Mar G. Dionysius, Op. Cit. p. 35

12. Abraham, Konat, Rev. Fr. Edit. *Prayers of the Great Lent*, (Syr) pp. 53, 58 and 59.

13. Ibid, pp. 52, 58.

major feast days, days of communion and the fifty days from Easter till the feast of Pentecost. On Sundays and Saturdays, of the Great Lent, on Mid-Lent, day, on the Fortieth Friday and Maundy Thursday, though they may break fast in the morning after the Holy Qurbana, they use only lental food.

As per rule, on all the days of the lents, they are to live on vegetable diet. But fish is not prohibited except during the Great Lent and the Ninve Lent. Those who observe the lents earnestly, observe dry fast till noon and they drink or eat only after the noon prayer and forty prostrations as is the custom in the Great Lent and Ninve Lent.

The zeal of people in the present generation about lent and fast is cooling down, as was said about monastic life. Man has begun to have greater confidence in the discoveries of science and technology than in the spiritual excellences which he may procure by fasting and prayer. The world over in general, man's sense of values is getting revolutionized. He seems to be more after the delights of the present world than after eternal bliss and heavenly joys.

Those who earnestly observe these lents enjoy real spiritual delight, attain mastery over their passions and are quickened in the spirit. They will have their rewards in the next world more fully for what they willingly gave up by way of fast in this transient world.

### **Some Extracts From The Prayers Of The Great Lent <sup>14</sup>.**

The soul and the body should fast together, the body from food and the soul from evils, evil thoughts and impure imaginations. If not, the fast is not useful. Blessed is the person who fasts in love, he shall rejoice with the angels in eternal life. He who gives alms while fasting shall be glorified, he shall be like the spirits and be in

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14. Ibid, pp. 39, 40, 52, 53, 54, 56, 58, 63, 64, 67, 68, 69, 72, 73. & 89.

their company, inheriting heaven. The fast which the Lord chose is this, 'O rich man, thou shalt make kindness thy earning in this world, O poor man, do not hate the one who gives thee., O my brethren, let us fast from all evils, from deceit and back-biting. Let your mouth refrain from eating and evil. Control your tongue when you fast, so that your fast may not be for your punishment. The fast secures for the wise the radiance of the angels and the wings of the spirit to fly up to heaven. O brethren let us be made glorious during the good days of the Lent and inherit eternal life. This is the fast in which we should not hate our brethren and our neighbours, but rather love our enemies. There are some who refrain from drinking wine, but kill their comrades in secret. It is not bread and water which cause sin, or expiate, for they were given by the Lord for the life of the body; move from evils and do good deeds, that is the lent which pleases the Lord. Fast from food and drink is but little and if one gives alms in Lent, it is great before the Lord. When you divide your bread with the needy and entertain strangers in your house, the Lord shall hear when you call Him and have mercy on you. He who fasts the fast of our Saviour, let him refrain all his thoughts from all lusts and let his vision be upon God. He who fasts is always in heaven. He who sows fasts and vigils shall reap on the day of resurrection what the ear has not heard and has not entered into the heart of man. O thou that fasteth, call the poor and give him bread, not that he shall come to you, but that you go after him and feed him fully, for the fields do not go after the farmer, but he goes after them with seeds to sow.



## B. Meditation

The word 'Dhyana' is used by the Orthodox Syrians of Kerala to mean retreat, meditation or contemplation. It is called 'Hoogoyo' in Syriac. This is the mystical part of religion. We have dealt with the general aspects of this in the early chapters.

Those dedicated to celibacy and monasticism live much more in contemplation than do others who are with family and 'in the world'. We have seen that this tendency to meditate comes down from primitive stages of religion. Men like Simon the Stylite used to spend nights in solitary places on the tops of hills or columns<sup>15</sup>, in fasting and contemplation. Their motives were to be in communion with the Almighty and to enjoy the blissful experience thereof, to attain greater spiritual power or to repair the soul bruised by the rough intercourse with the wicked world. Christ used to retreat to mountains and solitary places for this purpose as seen in the Gospels<sup>16</sup>.

The pious man who lives a dedicated life, though he lives in the world and with family, takes a little time of quiet every day at home when all is quiet and makes his Dhyana. Sometimes he takes an off from worldly duties and retreats to a suitable place, either alone or with others like himself, by arrangement. Collective retreats are often led by a retreat-Father. Some make use of books, some pictures, some both, to collect their thoughts in Dhyana. Bar Hebraeus' **Book of The Dove**, already referred to before, is a book that deals with contemplative life. The fourth section of the third chapter of that book deals particularly with contemplation.

Bar Hebraeus says in that book: "When the good person collects his thoughts in concentration, he rises from

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15. Baring Gould, Rev. S. *The Lives of The Saints*, p. 73

16. Luke 6: 12

glory to glory by God the Spirit and forgets not only things of this world, but even himself. He puts on the light of that chamber and sees himself as the image of God. From the full cups of that chamber he drinks and gets intoxicated and in that intoxication he says 'I and my Father are one, my Father in me and I in Him' etc<sup>17</sup>. Some persons take to Dhyana to receive guidance from God in solving a difficult problem. We see that the prayer of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemene was for that. Usually one reads from the Bible before meditation not only to collect one's thoughts and gain concentration but to cleanse one's mind. Bar Hebraeus while speaking about anchorites who do so adds: "for the freedom from lusts, so that they may be worthy of cleanness and that they may be sanctified by the word of God and to receive perceptibly the guidance of the Spirit"<sup>18</sup>. Further he adds: "The mind must have power to concentrate on and be drawn to its Lord without distraction. There is no need for a mediator. When thou wishest to see and converse with one who is beyond all comprehension and thought, should thou not cast off from thee all passions in thought? Moses put off the sandals from his feet. To get the mind free of distractions is not easy. It needs long and hard labour, spiritual work, hardship and torment."

For the beginner it is better to start by making audible converse with God. 'Then the spiritual prayer will follow'. The spiritually enlightened have warned us that in the beginning there will be difficulty in the concentration of the mind, but later it would become easier. When the soul experiences sweetness of prayer, it leaps above everything on the Earth and in the [sky. Some persons when they stand praying do not feel any weariness for days together. The Desert Fathers and saints used to spend long hours in such prayer. Aphlmoon the teacher of Pakomios was seen keeping vigil and praying thus silently in his cell<sup>19</sup>.

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17 Bar Hebraeus, *The Book Of The The Dove*, p. 55

18 Bar Hebraeus, *Ethicoon*, p. 5

19. Aphraim Poulose Ramban, *Op. Cit.* p. 108



Group meditations and guided meditations called 'Retreats' are gaining popularity among the Orthodox Syrians of the present generation, in Kerala. Individual meditations and private prayers were in vogue among them even from early centuries. There are special private prayers written down and published by Church Fathers for the seven watches of the day. Those are over and above the canonical prayers. Books of such prayers are available in Syriac and in Malayalam. The really pious use them. There are many who read from the Psalms or another part of Bible daily and meditate a few minutes.

An aged bishop of this Church who passed away recently was seen using the **Private Prayers**<sup>20</sup> for the seven watches and the Psalms with **The Imitation of Christ** for private devotion. There are also special books for personal as well as group meditations like the **Anudina Dhyana Mala, Bhagya Nikshepam** and **Matha Dhyanam** etc. published by Orthodox Syrians themselves.

In Kerala after group retreats, all who attend have confession and communion. Conducting retreats in an ideal place away from busy parts is usual in big towns and Cities. Those who attend them take bedding and such other things along with themselves and stay in a specially arranged camp in order to participate fully in them. When the retreaters are literate, they usually bring with themselves writing materials also and take notes as they listen to addresses.

The Orthodox bishop of each diocese in Kerala arranges for the retreat of the clergy in each diocese at convenient places every year during the Great Lent. The priests and the deacons of each diocese attend the same. The retreat will be for three days. They all stay together in the same camp, hear addresses, pray together, read, meditate and have self-examination followed by confession. The retreat usually closes with corporate communion.

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20. Poomoose Ramban, Very Rev *Private Prayers* (Malayalam) Kottayam, 1902

This kind of group retreat gives one a training in meditation and one should practise meditation in every day life. Each one is to take a little quiet time in the early morning and a little time in the evening. The morning meditation is good for daily guidance from God, for receiving His Grace and for the renewal of the Spirit in oneself. The evening meditation is for a review of the day's dealings, thoughts and words, for confession to God of any failures during the day and to thank Him for all guidance and protection etc. Those who sincerely practise this kind of daily meditations, live a really successful life both from the worldly point of view and from the spiritual point of view.

The celebrant of the Holy Mass kneels down before the Altar and meditates silently four times. He also meditates silently several times between his loud prayers while others are singing or saying responses, during the Holy Mass. From the evening previous to the celebration he is observing a sort of retreat which ends only with break-fast after communion. He is to refrain from free talk, especially with non-Christians<sup>21</sup>. Even laymen who receive Holy Communion keep off from conversation with non-Christians till Sun-set.

When one meditates in the morning before day-break or in the evening, after all work is over and the world is quiet and still, one can see oneself, more clearly and the Almighty in oneself, not through the gross senses, but through the inner spiritual senses. Thus he makes progress every day through meditative life. He gains spiritual strength and enjoys inner calmness. It was not in a day that great saints achieved this, but through long period of hard labour. Thomas A Kempis asks 'Would thou have that immediately

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21. Brown, L. W. Op. Cit., p. 278

which others after many tears and great labours have hardly obtained?'<sup>22</sup>. It requires preseverence to enjoy the bliss derived from a life of meditation. A man who practises meditation at home in private can be distinguished in the busy world from others, by the calmness of his face, the excellence of his behaviour and the success in his life.



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22. Thomas A Kempis, *The Imitation Of Christ*, Ch. zxxv: p. 287

## PART V

### 14

#### HEAVEN AND HELL

The Orthodox Syrians believe in heaven and hell. They believe implicitly the sayings of Jesus Christ about heaven and hell as given in the Gospels. But the traditional belief that these are spatio-temporal is not accepted by them anymore<sup>1</sup>. Heaven and hell are experiences, but real experiences. The wicked one experiences hell partly while in the flesh, looks forward to it with dread after departure from this life and inherits it fully after the Last Judgment<sup>2</sup>. The righteous and faithful ones also have similar advance experience of heaven. Heaven or hell will be inherited by the soul as well as the body, which will be standing together before the Judgment seat. The period of mercy is only upto the day of Judgment, after which justice alone will prevail and each one shall receive the reward he deserves according to his deeds. Repentant sinners will be absolved while alive or at any time during the said period of mercy. As already indicated, the Syrians do not believe in an articulated Purgatory<sup>3</sup>.

Bar Hebraeus refers in his *Zalgae* to the opinions of various Orthodox doctors on Paradise and the Kingdom of God. St. Thevologos asks 'what does it matter if the Kingdom of God is physical or intellectual'? St. Aphraim gave both the physical and spiritual interpretation. St. Philoxinos is in favour of only the spiritual interpretation.

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1. Bar Hebraeus, *Zalgae*, pp. 202, 233.

2. Mar Yakub Op. Cit. p. 114.

3. Brown, L. W., Cit. p. 295

“The Kingdom of God I know”, says Bar Hebraeus, “by the theory of heavenly materials, of the heavenly hosts and by the divine nature of the Holy Trinity”. The saying of Jesus Christ that “The Kingdom of God is within you”<sup>4</sup> seems to suggest that it is non-material. Sargis the righteous says that the Kingdom is not in anything physical but inside the perspective vision of the comprehension. Mar Evanis says that the robber on the right hand of Christ at the time of crucifixion was only admitted to Paradise and is awaiting admission to heaven. Mar Severius says that the good rewards promised to us is Kingdom of Heaven and not the joy of Paradise.

The Orthodox Syrians believe in an eternal heaven and hell, and not in a Millennium with a time limit, as already indicated. Heaven is the ‘Bosom of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob’. They often refer to heaven as the ‘Chamber of the bride-groom’ and to Christ as the ‘Bride-groom.’ Heaven is frequently referred to as the ‘Church of first-borns’ in their religious books. It is also called ‘Chambers of delight’, ‘the glorious barns’, ‘the place of Life’, ‘Thy right hand’ and ‘Barns of blessedness’. In some of their prayers of the burial service, it is called ‘Holy Chambers’ and ‘City of Life’

The Eastern Churches admit that after death there is an intermediate state before Judgment, though the belief is vague. But as already said they do not admit of a Purgatory as such. They have prayers for the expiation of the departed souls in the daily offices, in the burial services and in the Liturgy, as already indicated in our discussion about the departed.

In Paul’s Epistle to Timothy he has mentioned about his praying for the deceased Onesiphorus. By the second century it became an established practice. Tertullian points out to such a long standing custom . Though the

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4 Luk. 17: 21.

5. Hastings’ *Encyclopaedia* Op. Cit. vol, 11, p, 838

departed is believed to be helped by the intercession of others for him, major sins will not be absolved thereby <sup>6</sup>. The Roman Catholics taught this doctrine officially after the council of Lyons (1276) and re-affirmed it in the council of Florence (1439).

The Greek and Russian Orthodox Churches accepted that doctrine in 1672 and 1838 respectively, with some alterations. The Armenians, Syrians, Coptics and Abyssinians accepted only that there is a growth and development in an intermediate state, but not necessarily a Purgatory of purification.

Heaven is very often called 'The Kingdom of God' in the Orthodox Syrian books in Malayalam. In Syriac the familiar expression is 'Malcootho' meaning the 'Kingdom.' That 'His kingdom has no end' is confessed in the Creed which the Syrians repeat at every prayer. Some Fathers of this Church have expressed the opinion that at the last resurrection this world shall be renewed and cleansed by God through fire. The wicked in hell shall be in darkness and separated from one another, while those in heaven shall be in radiant light and together enjoying fellowship with one another <sup>7</sup>. The Orthodox Syrians speak of 'hell that extinguisheth not' and the worm that dieth not.' Heaven and hell are not material as things on Earth <sup>8</sup>, says Bar Hebraeus. They are so called only figuratively and are really spiritual experiences. The fire rises from oneself and returns to oneself <sup>9</sup>.

The idea of heaven attracts men to live a life of virtue in order to be worthy of entering it, after the Last Judgment. It gives encouragement to the virtuous to suffer evil and

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6. Mar Yakub, Op. Cit. p. 56

7. Mar Yakub, Op. Cit. 233.

8. Bar Hebraeus, *Zalgae*, p. 204.

9. *The Penitential Prayers For Noon*, syr Monday Prayer, 9th hour, Bovootho Of James, Stanza 3.

to resist temptations. The idea of hell makes the ordinary man dread and keep himself back from evil ways.

What if the Kingdom of God is going to be on the purified Earth or on one of the other Planets, as the physical body also is going to be in it along with the soul? To God who created all that is material and non-material, the two are alike. At His will the one can be transmuted into the other.

When man enters the Kingdom of God, he enjoys beatific vision of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. There the angelic Choir is glorifying God continually. There are several stages of heaven and hell <sup>10</sup>. The glory of each person while he is in heaven will be according to his righteousness, even as the stars are different, one from another in their radiance <sup>11</sup>.

There is a belief among some doctors of the Church that the Last Judgment and the end of the world will be postponed until the number of righteous men who are going to enter the Kingdom is equal to the number of angels who fell from heaven <sup>12</sup>.

The Orthodox Syrians believe that no one can enter heaven without believing in true God and getting baptized in His name. Those who believed in Him, but could not get baptized while alive, will be baptized on the Last Day, in 'Fire'. This 'Fire', Bar Hebraeus says is the preaching of true faith <sup>13</sup>. There are many who did not get the chance to hear of Him while alive. Such persons will be judged according to their consciences and be baptized in 'Fire' before admission to heaven. Those who have honestly sought after Truth, have indeed sought Him, for our Lord said 'I am the way, the Truth and the Life' <sup>14</sup>. If they did not know Him fully in this life, now, they will know Him then and be baptized making themselves worthy to enter the Kingdom of God.

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10. Mar Yakub, Op. Cit. p. 115.

11. 1 Cor. 15: 41

12. Mar Yakub, Op. Cit. p. 105 (Quoting Thevologos).

13. Bar Hebraeus, *Zalga*, pp. 208-209.

14. John 14:6

## ESCHATOLOGY

Eschatology deals with 'last things', about judgment and retribution. It also deals with the catastrophic end of the world and its renewal and such things. From primitive times there was a belief about the final destruction of the Earth for a renewal free of all ills. Some believed in an end at which would the Sun vanish, the moon fall and a conflagration follow.

The idea of a final judgment is seen only in later Hebrew history. Death itself was a judgment. In the writings of the prophets, Jahveh is said to appear in judgment upon Israel and all the nations. He punishes by the persecution from the gentiles and by captivity<sup>1</sup>. The time of woes is called 'The Day of Jahveh'. When it arrives, nature itself is convulsed the Sun, Moon and stars are darkened, the heavens are shaken and rolled together, the mountains and hills are scattered and the Earth is destroyed either by fire or water<sup>2</sup>. These ideas are adopted in the Orthodox Syrian Liturgy and prayer books. Gradually the Hebrews entertained the belief in a resurrection and a continued enjoyment of life in a renewed Earth with a renewed Jerusalem as its spiritual centre.

Prophet Haggai belived in the destruction of the heathen and the kingship of the Messiah; and Job spoke of a judgment followed by signs in the heavens. All nations will assemble in Jehosaphat valley for judgment. The purified nation of Israel will then enjoy peace and bliss. According

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1. Habakuk 1: 12.

2. Amos 9: 5; zaph. 1: 2 f; Nah. 1: 3f, Hag. 2: 6 and etc.



to Malachi, Elijah will come first<sup>3</sup> to judge the wicked and destroy them. We see the idea of a future retribution gradually evolved in Hebrew thought. That the righteous shall sit in judgment upon the wicked, is seen in the **wisdom** of Solomon<sup>4</sup>. Jeremiah and Ezekiel emphasize the salvation of the individuals, while the former prophets were concerned only about the nation as a whole.

The Eschatology of the New Testament turns on the truths of bodily resurrection, righteous judgment and the reward in future life. Paul seems to have been influenced by the Hebrew thought in the Old Testament and by Christ's own discussions<sup>5</sup>. As said in the Gospels, the Lord's day will come like a thief. Christ will appear suddenly in the sky with the trumpet of the arch-angel and accompanied by his angels, and the dead and living shall go up to meet him in the sky. The man of sin shall first appear in the Temple of God and be seated as God. But Christ shall then come and destroy him<sup>6</sup>.

Pauline Anti-Christ is similar to the Anti-Christ of the Apocalypse (Revelation). In I Corinthians the expectation is that Christ will come again after a short period of tribulations. For a brief period before the parousia, the true Christ shall reign and strive with his enemies. The last of his enemies, Death shall be done away with by the resurrection of all the faithful<sup>7</sup>. Then the mundane kingdom shall end and the Kingdom of God shall be established.

The day of the Lord shall be preceded by a spiritual out-pouring. All the resurrected shall have new bodies. Christ shall judge the good and the wicked at his coming with the general resurrection. Anti-Christ shall be overthrown and the wicked shall be put into flaming fire. On

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3. Malachi 3: 1

4. Solomon *Wisdom*, 4: 19f.

5. 1 Cor. 6:2 f; Matt. 19: 28; 2 Cor. 5: 10 etc.

6. Dan. 7:8; 11:35; Mark 13: 14 etc.

7. 2 Tim. 1:8-9: 2:8

that day saints and the angels shall judge the world with Christ<sup>s</sup>.

The Orthodox Syrians agree to the eschatology of the New Testament referred above. According to Bar Hebraeus, the saying of Jesus Christ to the disciples that he does not know the time the world ends, meant only that there was no use of their knowing it. Nor was there any harm, if they did not know it. As man he did not know it, but as God He knew<sup>8</sup>.

Bar Hebraeus refers to the Gospel in which Jesus says: 'When ye see the blemish of destruction as said by the prophet Daniel, standing where it should not, let the reader understand'. He said these in connection with the last days, after he rose from the dead. Bar Hebraeus adds about the last days' signs, the stirring of the oceans, the yelling of the Earth, and the birth of serpents and wild beasts from human mothers. He refers to the first book of Clemis called **The Testament Of Our Lord** which describes these in detail. Then he speaks of women bringing forth children who just when they are born will speak like mature persons. There will be political upheavals also. The deceiver the son of destruction, the Anti-Christ with his Crookedness with his ways set against the ways of the Christ shall come. When he sits in the Temple of God, Jesus Christ shall destory him, by the blast of his mouth.

Mar Yakub also refers to the Anti-Christ and calls him the 'False - Christ'. He says that the Anti - Christ would be conceived in Corezin. James the head of the holy Fathers said 'Dadan shall be a venomous serpent, striking the horse on the hoof, e. g. lepers shall be cleansed, the blind shall see and trees shall give forth fruits before their time, etc. These shall deceive even the elect saints. The Anti-Christ shall reign for three years in Jerusalem. Elijah shall arrive first and accuse him of his deceptions.

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8. Ibid 6:2 f

9. Bar Hebraeus, *Zalga*, Ch. V: 11 pp 219-220

According to Mar Yakub, then the Saviour shall descend from heaven with the sign of his Cross. The Virgin shall stand between the Earth and the sky and the symbol of the power of the persecutor shall be removed. He shall be damned and destroyed body and soul. In the Orthodox Syrian book of **The Baptism and Burials** etc. a brief description of the last day is given, viz about the Sun and Moon darkening and the stars failing to give forth light etc<sup>10</sup>. The Orthodox Syrians believe that the judgment of all shall be after the general Resurrection, at the second coming of Christ.

Bar Hebraeus says that as body and soul together did sin or good deeds, they should be together absolved or condemned. For this they should be together on Judgment Day. This is possible only by the resurrection in body. The body which is formed at the resurrection is from the parts of the original one. The form of the first body is lost, but its elements are retained.

After resurrection, bodies of the righteous shall shine like stars. St Paul says that if the seed which is sown, does not die, it will not sprout into life<sup>11</sup>. The caterpillar which wraps itself up in the pupa or cocoon never appears again. From the elements of its body, the new and glorious body of the butter-fly emerges. The bodies of the righteous shall be like those of the angels, and of the wicked as of the demons. The sex organs and stomach do not function. At the resurrection the bodies of all look as of the same age of thirty three years, as Adam was when created. Jesus Christ at his resurrection was also like that. He makes our bodies the semblances of the body of his glory. They all rise in the self-same bodies with the original members. Persons recognize each other. The natural powers in the members are changed. All the anger in the just will vanish. Our physical yearning towards our dear ones will change into spiritual fellowship.

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10. Abraham Konat, Rev. Fr. Edit *The Book Of Baptism and Burials* etc. Pampakuda, 1950, pp. 97-99; 108-109

11. 1 Cor. 15:35 f.

In the wicked, their passions and anger will be doubled. What they crave for will not be, and thus their distress will be more acute. Mar Yakub says that since the soul which is partner with the body shall be with the body to receive the reward as well<sup>12</sup>.

Mar Yakub also is of opinion that the same body which dies shall rise free of all imperfections. 'Sowed in imperfection rises in perfection'. Such risen bodies of the just will be free from filth, less heavy and transparent. He compares the change to that of earthen vessel which changes by entering the Kiln. Our bodies are purified as in a furnace by the Spirit. We are freed from vain delights of the flesh and we are decorated with incorruptibility.

Woman shall rise as woman and man as man, but they do not marry. Mar Yakub also agrees that they all rise as of the same age in which Jesus Christ rose. Their bodies shall be complete. There is none maim, blind or with spots, excess or reduction. The faithful rise in glory with radiant bodies free from passions. The radiance of their bodies is by the body of Christ which they have received through the Eucharist. The brightness of each one is according to the virtue that each one has attained. 'There is star whose brightness is greater than that of other stars, so also the resurrection of the dead'. They are covered by such spiritual garments as each one has gained.

The righteous are not anxious about the life after. But the non-believer who clings to this life dreads the moment of death. A good and faithful person faces it more or less gaily. Christian funeral march is growing more and more joyous in these days.

The Orthodox Syrians, as already said, do not believe in a Millennium, but only in the eternal reward to the just and the unjust. The just shall inherit eternal bliss and

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12. Mar Yakub, Op. Cit. Ch. 38: pp. 112-115

heaven and the wicked eternal torture in hell. In their Liturgy they mention the 'Hades that quencheth not and the worm that dieth not'<sup>13</sup>. There is no such thing as the salvation of the soul alone, but only a salvation of the person with soul and body together.

It is agreed that man was created for a purpose which will be fully revealed only at the end of time. Death is only a temporary separation. Immortality of the soul undoubtedly plays an important role in all the great religions. But man is composed of both body and soul and so the final beatitude must be after the re-union of man's severed parts. Immortality of the soul is only half of the story. Immortality of the individual means immortality of the whole personality in soul and body.



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13. Paul, Ramban, *Jacobite Syrian Liturgies*, Kottayam, 1959, p. 44

## THE PROBLEM OF GOOD AND EVIL

The problem of evil has been a nut hard to crack in many philosophies of religion. To thinking men of all ages it has been a real and inescapable problem. There are different approaches to this problem.

The Christian point of view in general is that this world with all its imperfections is the best possible of all worlds<sup>1</sup>. The imperfections present in it are like the necessary defects in a work of art. Some say that these are good for the discipline and growth of the faithful. Others believe that there will be ample compensation in the other world. For theists existence of evil is a problem, but it cannot be so for atheists. Even if we say that evil is illusory, the very fact of an illusion is bad enough to be an evil.

There are instances of suffering as the direct result of sin or as the result of parental sin and there are some who suffer as a result of no sin, but that the name of God may be glorified in them<sup>2</sup>. The burning nature of fire is good for cooking and the same can be evil when it burns up a barn house. Though the water we use is good by nature, for drinking as well as for swimming in it, it also causes drowning. What we think of as evil is necessary concomitant of some good. Some of the evils are challenges to our sense of moral duty. The deeply religious finds a solution by child-like faith as in the case of Job<sup>3</sup>.

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Ros, J. F., Art. 'Did God create The Only Possible World?' in *Review of Metaphysics*, vol. xvi: No. 1, Sept. 1962

2. Luk. 13: 1-5; John 9: 1-3

3. Job 42: 5-6

Moral evil and natural evil are different. The former starts from the freedom of the will and is more important. It was not the body that made the spirit sin, but it was the spirit that brought death to the body. In the animal kingdom there is no problem of evil. Granted that God is just, there must be another life in which the perfect justice denied here is fully achieved. The acuteness of the problem is providing an argument in favour of a future eternal life.

The Orthodox Syrian philosopher Bar Hebraeus says that evil is not something that exists. "It is but the absence of good. It does not exist of itself. When a man commits murder, what is the evil therein? Is his body evil? Is his sword evil? No, it is the stirring in his will which is the cause of the murder"<sup>4</sup>. He adds, "Natural actions incline towards good or bad. If good is natural, evil is moral. If evil is natural and intellectual and good is moral or legal, how can the same good be natural like kindness. Lust is not natural but moral." Cruelty according to him is natural evil as it involves prick of the conscience. Persecution is moral evil and not natural.

Regarding moral good and evil, God always likes good, not evil. He sent prophets and Apostles in order to instruct people about good and warn them against evil. He incarnated for this very purpose. God allows lesser evils along with a greater good, if it enhances the good. Though he admonishes man to do good, He does not force him against his free will. That is how he dealt with Adam.

In the opinion of Bar Hebraeus, if Adam and Eve did not break the command by the misuse of freedom, they could have lived life free from distress, sorrow and sighs. They would have been fed without their toil.

Mar Yakub discusses about good and evil in his *Seemotho*. He says that the Holy Fathers of the Church

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4. Bar Hebraeus, *Zalga*, pp 173-181

are of opinion that the bitter and unpleasant things are not evils of the world, but rather murder, slavery and such things which are against the will of God <sup>5</sup>.

Do good and evil spring from the same source? is the important question. God who is intrinsically good cannot be the source of evil also. In Him there is no evil and from Him no evil could be. He in whom there is any evil cannot be good. There is only one essence and that is good. Evil is not evil in essence, it is absence of good. God is naturally good. God is wise, strong and good, and the absence of wisdom, strength and goodness are the three evils. As darkness is the absence of light, so is evil the absence of goodness. Darkness adds to the beauty of light. As darkness disappears with light, disease goes when health returns, death goes when resurrection comes, sin goes by repentance, evil disappears with good.

Moral and intrinsic evils are as of the fallen angels or of the immortality of evil spirits or the unrepenting nature of a soul. These are from a kind of non-existence of good. Though much progressive thinking has been done on the problem of good and evil since the days of Mar Yakub, it is interesting to note that a thirteenth century Orthodox Syrian philosopher like him had done so much thinking on it. He takes up the question in detail, classifies many good things and evils and makes an analytical study of them at length. He distinguishes physical and natural evils from moral evils arising from the freedom of man. Some evils, he says, come with the knowledge of God for man's betterment and others are for testing man's righteousness. God leaves some persons to correct themselves. All these are consistent with His incomprehensible Providence. Mar Yakub adds that men think that these are evils in their own bitterness, but intrinsically they are not so. He is of opinion that God does not force us to do a thing. God knows what is going to happen. He leaves us to our freedom. Mar Yakub discusses in detail about

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5. Mar Yakub, Op Cit. p. 60



the sufferings of the saints. He says that by their suffering they learn humility, their endurance is proved, they are confirmed in the hope of resurrection and reward in the world to come, they are made examples to the ordinary people, they are purified of any filth that remains, Satan is put to shame by showing how they could hold fast to their truths and that Satan may not boast that he could have made them fall if only they were tempted someway.

Mar Yakub discusses about the wicked remaining safe. God gives protection even to the wicked in His bounty. By this the wicked will have no argument in their favour at the last trial before the Judgment seat about their follies. The responsibility for their damnation shall be on themselves and not on God.

When the righteous see the wicked prospering they may say: 'After all I am a sinner, see how they prosper and flourish'. That makes them humble and cautious. The wicked may take a lesson and warning that if the just are suffering thus, what about themselves if they do not receive their retribution here.

Why do sinners receive punishments in this life also? What they receive in this life, here, is but a token of what they will receive in the next world. Take for instance those killed by the flood at the time of Noah, the Sodomites killed by fire, the Pharaoh and his forces drowned in the Red Sea, those of the house of Dan and Abiram and others like them. Those who are spared in this world, by the kindness of God are not secure by any means, from the punishment awaiting in the world to come. It will be impartially meted out to them. These are in brief some of the views of the ancient Orthodox Syrian philosophers of Religion about the problem of Evil and Good.



## ANGELS, SATAN AND EVIL SPIRITS

## A. Angels.

Angels are real and not imaginary or fictitious. In the Bible they are mentioned several times. They are in-corporeal spirits. They are servants of God as already pointed out.

Mar Yakub says: "They are perfect, live, rational, good, given to anger, lovers of good things, essential, created, with beginning, immortal, holy, clean, strong, wise, radiant, resplendent luminaries, comprehending, understanding comprehending with mind alone, invisible, troubled only in thought, fully intangible, comprehended imaginatively by the mind only, non-material, incorporeal, formless, immeasurable, innumerable, simple in nature etc"<sup>1</sup>. The angels resemble the Creator, are aware that they are created beings, have life, essence and perpetuity etc. by the Grace of God, do not have prior knowledge as God has about things to come, glorify, praise and always sanctify God, are inclined to goodness, do the will of God, serve His wish and never do otherwise, are of one union, indivisible and calm and have only one opinion and one will. Each one stands at his own post of duty and changeth not.

Bar Hebraeus devotes a whole chapter in his *Zalga* for discussing about angels. According to him, they are higher beings than men and animals and stand between man and God in intelligence and rationality. According to Theologos, they were created because it was not sufficient for divine Grace that His contemplation alone stirred, but wished that His goodness be scattered and be overflowing,

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1. Mar Yakub, Op. Cit. p. 76

so that those who are being helped may increase into the many<sup>2</sup>.

They are called ethereal souls, perhaps a kind of non material fire, devoid of body. But they can appear in physical forms and are always represented as winged and capable of flying. An angel cannot be both in heaven and on Earth at the same time, nor in two places of the Earth at the same time. This God alone can do. Angels have free will and can sin, are more inclined to good than to evil and yet some of them fell.

By divine providence and care, they have holiness, not naturally, says Baselios in his third article against Euenomios. By the proximity to the Good one they are inclined towards good rather than to evil and because some of them fell, they cling fast all the more to the Good one. They are of different natures and essences, though they are known by the same generic name of 'Angels'. They are different in their individual forms and functions. They are known to be in three Churches and nine orders.

#### The Different Churches And Orders Of Angels.

	English	Syriac
First church	Seraphims	Srophae
(The highest)	Cherubims and Thrones	Croobae Mouthbae
The Middle Church	Primacies Powers and Principalities	Moravotho Hailavotho Sulthonae
The Lower Church	Dominions Arch-angels and Angels	Reesanvotho Rabai Malacae Malacae

There are slight differences of opinion among Orthodox Syrian doctors of Religion about the names and

2. Thevologos quoted in Bar Hebraeus' *Zalga* ch. iv.

orders of angels, but those are unimportant. The names of the angels indicate their functions. These names given here come to us from the Old Testament prophets like Joshua, David, Isaiah, Ezekiel and Daniel as also from St. Paul.

The angels are mediators between God and men. The first order of angels viz the Seraphims alone receive everything directly from God and they pass down to others what they receive. God never heard or replied men directly, but did so through the mediation of the angels. Some angels are known as guardian angels for they guard persons and places as already mentioned in an early section. Some of them are mentioned in the Bible with individual names like Gabriel and Michael. They act as God's messengers, come down to the Earth and convey His message. When the fall of some of them occurred, it was from all the nine orders<sup>3</sup>.

Once fallen, the angels of light became the angels of darkness. The angels are superior to men however righteous men may be, by the nature of their constitution and by their proximity to God; but man who is righteous is in a sense superior to the angels because he lives a righteous life fighting hard against the defect of his own constitution.

Man is called 'son of God' but the angels are not; they are only His servants. In that respect the angels are inferior to man. When David prophesied about the incarnation of Christ he said 'Thou made him a little inferior to the angels'<sup>4</sup>. This gives the sense that man is a little lower than the angels.




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3. Bar Hebraeus, Op. Cit. p. 78

4. Ps. 8:5; Heb. 2:7

## B. Satan And Evil Spirits

The causes for the fall of the angels were pride and the ambition to be equal with God. When they fell, the chief of the angelic choir and a large number of the angels from all the nine groups fell. As they fell their direction and nature changed. It is said that they fell head down. Whereas they were originally turned towards the True Light, now by the fall, their faces turned against it and towards darkness. Their maxim became 'Light be thou our darkness and darkness be thou our Light'.

They were not deprived of their intrinsic powers, for they could still fly at infinite speed, be anywhere in no time, assume any shape, and move or stir the elements or physical matter. In fact they often do these in order to trouble men. They were not deprived of their intelligence and hence they use cunningness in duping man which they started from the garden of Paradise.

They haunt burial places and give men the impression that they are the souls of the dead<sup>5</sup>. Evil spirits are subject to the chants of necromancers and may come forth at their command and even pose to be the ghosts or souls of the departed persons<sup>6</sup>. This is how Samuel's soul is said to have come forth when the witch invoked him<sup>7</sup>. It is believed that they occupy solitary places, deserted buildings, burial places and dry places. They rejoice in the fall of man and wage war with the faithful, particularly with the anchorites. **The Paradise of The Holy Fathers**, and the **Life of Mar Anthony** give us innumerable stories of their wars with saintly men and women who sought God. They bring subtle temptations in the way of such men and women to make them commit adultery, to quarrel, to keep vigils more than they can normally do, to commit murders and to be disobedient to superiors.

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5. Mar Yakub p. 78

6. Ibid p. 79

7. 1 Sam. 28: 14, 15

If Satan approached Christ when he was fasting in the wilderness, will he spare ordinary mortals? Devils enter even the swine. If Satan entered the serpent what prevents him from entering other animals? Sometimes devils enter a person as a gang<sup>8</sup>. The mentally weak ones are easily susceptible to the possession of devils. Often females are found possessed. They easily enter those who are given to fear, but can be expelled by fasting and prayer. The devils foretell future events as well as things happening in distant places. Thus men who are soothsayers make use of their services. However they cannot enter into or tempt any one without God's permission. There is neither love nor fellowship among evil spirits, but they join together in deceiving men<sup>9</sup>. Sometimes the evil one comes disguising as an angel of light.

Some rationalists say that there are no evil spirits as such, but that our evil inclinations are only personified and put in figurative language. But the Orthodox Syrians do not subscribe to such a view.

There is a common belief that the devils are afraid of the Cross, the Bible and the smoke of blessed frankincense. The Syrians say special prayers set by the Church to dedicate houses and even cattle sheds, by the help of a priest,<sup>10</sup> for protection against evil spirits. When a faithful man passes in the night through a dark and solitary place by himself, he makes the sign of the Cross on himself and repeats some familiar prayer as a measure of safety against evil spirits. A man who lives a virtuous life, saying the appointed prayers, keeping the rules of lent and fasts of the Church and receiving the Holy Communion at the appointed times, is not so much afraid of evil spirits as one who is not strict about such matters. Even the evil spirits cannot approach men without the knowledge and permission of God who is the Lord of the angels and of all the spirits, evil or good.

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8. Mark 5:9

9. Bar Hebraeus, *Zalga*, p. 107

10. Brown, L. W, Op. Cit. p. 280

## PART VI

# 18

## THE HOLY SACRAMENTS

### A. Introductory

Here Sacraments will be dealt with specially from the Orthodox Syrian point of view. The Syrians regard seven Sacraments as important.

The Orthodox Syrian definition of Sacraments is as follows: 'Sacraments are the visible holy acts of invisible Means of Grace,' which our Lord ordered and instituted<sup>2</sup> as necessary for the salvation of the human race'. In the **Catechism** of the Rev. Vailippampil Thomas Varghese Kathanar the words 'Means of Grace' are seen added to the older definition as given by Mar Geevarghese Dionysius. The addition however is welcomed and given recognition in the Church.

The seven Sacraments according to the Orthodox Syrians are Baptism, Mooron (Confirmation), The Eucharist, Confession (Penitence), Marriage, Priesthood and the Anointment of the sick. Of these seven, five are obligatory to all and two are optional. The optional ones are Marriage and Priesthood. The Sacrament of Marriage is for those who desire and Priesthood is for those who are called<sup>3</sup>. The Sacrament mentioned last in the list is often wrongly referred to as the 'Last Sacrament'. It is instituted with

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1. Annie Besant, Dr., *Esoteric Christianity*, p. 84

2. Mar G. Dionysius, *Op. Cit.* p. 9

3. John 15: 6

the intention of healing the sick <sup>4</sup>. It is not to be a sealing 'Last rite' before death, when all other hopes of recovery are lost.

The Sacraments of Baptism and Mooron are administered Continually in the same hour and common folks take the two together to be a single Sacrament, viz Baptism. These Sacraments of the Church are ordered and instituted by our Lord by words and examples. Many of his words and acts are not given in the Bible <sup>5</sup>.



4. James 5: 14

5. John 21: 25





BAPTISM



## B. Baptism

Christians conduct Baptism because it was instituted and ordered by Lord Jesus Christ. He not only baptized with the help of his disciples,<sup>6</sup> but also bid them do so, before his ascension in the words: "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, ~~and~~ of the Son and of the Holy Ghost"<sup>7</sup>.

The Orthodox Syrians have child Baptism as well as the Baptism of the adults. Children of the faithful members of the Church will be baptized from about fourteen days after birth. There is no definite rule as to how many days should pass after the birth of the child in order to be baptized. This is quite unlike the Jews who insisted that the circumcision of the child should be on the eighth day after birth.

According to the custom of the Syrians in central Kerala, the mother is supposed to be unclean upto twenty eight days after child bearing, after which she takes a ceremonial bath. Only after forty days would she go to church. A special prayer used to be conducted for the woman who thus goes to church after forty days. Nowadays this is not seen conducted in Kerala Orthodox churches.

In case of emergency, the child of a faithful member may be baptized at home. No one below the rank of a priest conducts Baptism. In Kerala the need for adult Baptism comes only when a non-Christian is converted to Christian faith. In the case of a child who is baptized, the God-father or the God-mother confesses the faith on behalf of the child at the time of Baptism, holding the hand of the baptized. But in the case of grown ups, the baptized themselves confess faith. First the baptized turns westward and denies Satan and his forces and then he

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6. John 4: 1, 2

7. Matt. 28: 19

turns eastward and confesses Jesus and the faith handed down by the holy Fathers. While denying Satan, the God-father looking westward with the child holds his left hand by the left hand; and while confessing the Lord and the faith, he holds his right hand by the right hand looking eastward. The west and left hand are associated with Satan and evil whereas east and right hand are always associated with the Lord and goodness.

Baptism is meant for cleansing from sin inherited or done. In the case of the infant, "there is only inherited sin. The grown up has to confess sins and the God-father serves only as a surety or 'Best Man' who undertakes to teach the baptized the faith and prayers of the Church properly. This is the first and primary Sacrament. No one is allowed to accept other Sacraments before receiving Baptism. It is the admission to the community of the faithful, to be worthy of the gift of the Holy Spirit, to inherit sonship of God and be saved from sins inherited or committed. In one's life there is only one Baptism. When the baptized happens to fall into sins baptism is not repeated but he is to confess and get absolution. Baptism is a second birth<sup>8</sup>.

If man was only soul, a spiritual and invisible cleansing by the Spirit would have been sufficient; but he is also flesh and hence he needs a cleansing in body with water as well. The Christian Baptism is for both. It is only to the holy that holy things can be given<sup>9</sup>. Baptism symbolizes not only cleansing but enlightenment as well. The Holy Spirit descended on Jesus, like a dove at his baptism. It is believed that this happens invisibly on all who are duly baptized in the Church. Before the baptized is taken to the baptismal tub, the baptist blows his breath on the face of the baptized in Cross form three times, symbolizing the gift of the Holy Spirit saying 'Give thou him the divine breath of thy only begotten Son who blew

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8. Mar Yakub, Op. Cit. p. 36

9. Bar Heb. *Zalgae*, p. 146

on his holy Apostles etc'<sup>10</sup>. This gift of the divine Spirit is a gift of Grace and not a right or claim.

The Orthodox Syrians baptize in a tub usually cut out of rock or granite. It is situated at the church, either in the chancel or in an attached side-room. They are opposed to Baptism by total immersion as is done by some protestants like the Non-Conformists. The Syrian baptist pours specially sanctified water over the baptized. According to Mar Yakub "This immersion in water makes man stronger like iron immersed in water after being heated. The potter's vessel after heating in the kiln is immersed in water to harden. So also we who are from earth, if not immersed like that will wither and return back to the earth we are from". When Christians from other denominations join the Orthodox Syrian Church, they are not rebaptized except those who have been baptized by total immersion. If a believer became a non-Christian and later returned to the original faith, he is not re-baptized<sup>11</sup>.




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10. John 20: 22

11. Bar Heb. *Nomocanon*, ch, ii, section 1,

### C. Holy Mooron

The Orthodox Syrians use a particular oil for Baptism and another more holy oil for Confirmation. At the Baptism, the baptized is first sealed on his forehead with the baptismal oil three times in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, after the blowing of the breath on his face. This seal with the Baptismal oil is for protection against evil forces. The baptismal oil is consecrated by the bishop or Metropolitan. The Holy Mooron is consecrated generally by the Patriarch or the Catholicos only. (In rare cases of emergency a Metropolitan also does it)<sup>12</sup>. According to Mar Yakub "He who wrestles anoints himself so that the opponent may not get grip over him easily".<sup>13</sup> Here the opponent is the evil one.

The baptismal tub symbolizes the tomb of Jesus Christ and the mixture of warm and cold water into which Holy Mooron is dripped is the womb from which are born children of immorality. Drops of Holy Mooron poured into the baptismal water signifies the parental seeds which are powerful to produce new life. Here the spiritual birth takes place. It is re-birth. Pouring water over the baptized three times in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost signifies the three days Jesus Christ remained in the tomb, and the coming forth of the baptized from the tub signifies resurrection. As observed earlier, there is an occult side to Baptism.

For the anointment the baptist takes Mooron first on the thumb of his right hand and signs in Cross form on the forehead of the baptized three times. Then Holy Mooron is smeared all over him from head to foot. In the case of grown up females when they are baptised, specially authorized

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12 *Nomocanon*, Ch. ii; Mar G. Dionysius, Op. Cit. p. 24

13 Mar Yakub, Op. Cit, p. 36

14 Rom. 6. 3-4

deaconesses used to do this smearing behind some screens, but now the priest does the smearing in brief using his discretion and without any need for screens.

The baptized is given Holy Communion at once and taken to the Sanctuary. If female she is taken only to the door of the Sanctuary and made to kiss there. If male he is taken round the Altar and made to kiss the horns of the Altar, signifying admission back to Paradise. The Altar is the tree of life. Communion is the eating of its fruit and oneness with God.



## D. Priesthood

Priesthood is divine service, in the semblance of the service of the angels. 'Man becomes worthy of the laying on of the hand by the enlightening readings, physical movements and material things are made partakers of divine life'<sup>15</sup> says Bar Hebraeus. Dr. Annie Besant also has pointed out the importance of all these in her discussion on Sacraments<sup>16</sup>.

In divine service, the angels and men unite as one class. The angels have semblance to God, but men are different from the angels. A priest does not ordain himself, but is ordained by the laying on of the hand of the Metropolitan, who calls him to that position. Thereby the ordained receives a fuller gift of the Holy Spirit than he had at Baptism.

The enlightening calls to the laying on of hand are the prayers of ordination. 'The physical movements' are the standings, the waving of the bishop's hands, bowings and kneelings<sup>17</sup> in silence and the 'signs' are that of the Cross on the forehead. 'Physical matters' used are the vestments and the Body and Blood of the Lord which he receives.

High priesthood is a service with the knowledge of cleansing and enlightening which makes the worthy perfect, as it contains a more perfect consecration. We have both the heavenly priesthood which is spiritual in toto and the mundane and physical which is Mosaic or of the Covenant. The priesthood of the Christian Church is neither of these, but one from the incarnated Son, the Christ. Here through material objects we ascend to non material. Mosaic priesthood

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15 Bar Hebraeus, *Zalgae*, p. 136

16 Annie Besant, Dr., Op. Cit. p. 280

17. Drown, L. W., Op. Cit, p. 54



is dead and Christian priesthood is live, the former is the shadow and the latter the reality.

As the heavenly priesthood of the angels has three main divisions, so also the Christian priesthood which is its counterpart on earth also has three divisions, the prelates, the priests and the deacons. The Priests of this Church are usually married because they have to do parish work which necessitates free mingling with the opposite sex<sup>18</sup>. If the deacons are for cleansing, the priests are for lighting and the bishops are for completion or perfection<sup>19</sup>. The bishop is normally consecrated, not by the Patriarch or Catholicos alone but in the company of two or more bishops. Sometimes a bishop is consecrated by two or more bishops together without a Patriarch or Catholicos, in case of emergency. As already observed earlier, bishops are consecrated from among the unmarried priests only.

If by internal troubles and divisions in the Church or country, two persons are separately elected at the same time in two places for the office of the patriarch, 'Let him who is senior administer' is the canon of the Church <sup>20</sup>.

The Patriarch is not to enter the jurisdiction of the Catholicos or Maphrian without invitation and vice versa. The patriarch or the Catholicos appoints bishops to the respective dioceses for which they are consecrated. The bishops cannot change their dioceses without the permission of their superior. The Patriarch of Antioch is the supreme head of the Orthodox Syrian Church. A Catholicos has provincial autonomy, but nevertheless he is under the Patriarch, just as the presidents of the different republics are under the British crown within the Commonwealth.

When a bishop is consecrated, the Gospel is opened on his head, which symbolizes the Lord extending his hands

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18: Mar Geevarghese Dionysius, Op. Cit. p. 54

19. Bar Hebraeus, Zalgae, p. 138

20. *Nomocanon*. ch. vii: p. 63

to bless the Apostles at the time of his ascension<sup>21</sup>. The consecrated person is raised in a chair and all those present in the church make joyful noises. The raising signifies ascension. At the consecration of the present Orthodox Syrian bishop of Jerusalem, at Damascus, by the present Patriarch of Antioch on Sunday 21 July, 1963, when the consecrated was raised in a chair, women were making a special noise of exultation by vibrating their tongues in their mouths, and the whole choir sang 'Oxios' three times. Thus he sits in the chair raised, opens the book of the Gospels and reads out the appointed portion. (John 10: 1 - 16)

That the ordained stands on the knees at the service signifies subordination. The Patriarch or the Catholicos telling the candidate for consecration: "The Holy Spirit calleth thee" and leading him from the steps of the Sanctuary to the Altar signifies the divine call. He is to accept bishopric in obedience to the divine call, and no one is to desire to become a bishop.

The ordained person who receives the full gift of the Holy Spirit is not to give anything to the prelate who ordains him. Such giving is considered as a great sin and is called Simony<sup>22</sup>. The gift of the Holy Spirit is not to be bought for money. But there will be a general feasting of those who are invited to attend the service of ordination by the person ordained. A priest is given authority to pardon or to keep the sins of those under his charge. For this reason priests are respected. A priest has the keys of heaven with him, handed down from Jesus Christ through St. Peter.

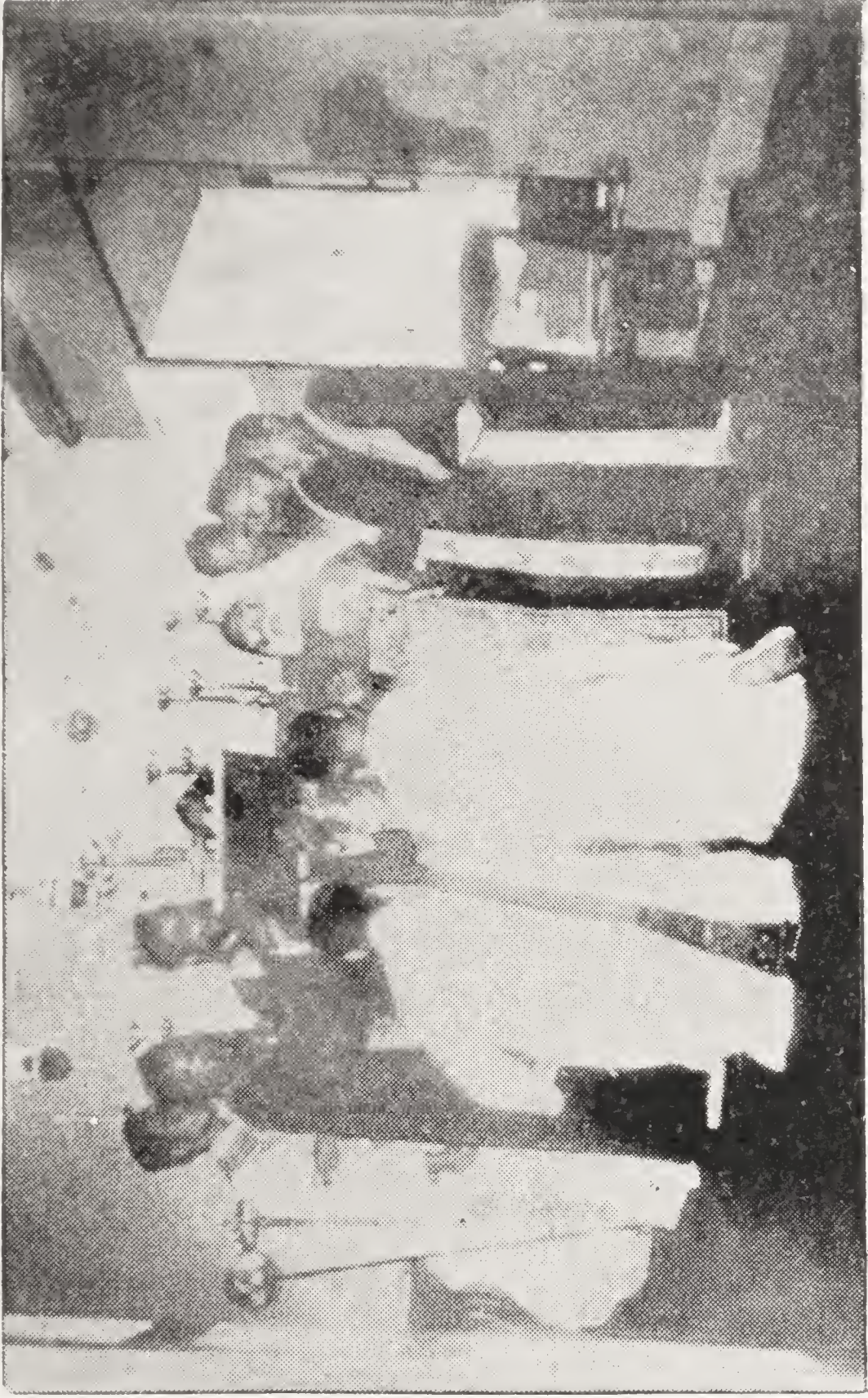
In the service of the Church a bishop may do all that a priest or a deacon does, but not vice versa. A monk who is a priest may celebrate the Holy Mass without a server, in case of emergency, but not so the lay priest<sup>23</sup>.

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21. *Zalga*, p. 138

22. Acts 8: 18-22

23. *Nono canon*, ch. vii: 10 (A married priest or priest who is not a monk is usually called a lay priest)



ORDINATION OF PRIESTS



The deacons, if at all they marry, should do so before they are fully ordained as priests. If a person after he is ordained a priest wants to marry, he may do so, only he falls from the status of the priest as per canon. A priest who happens to be widowed shall not normally marry again and if he does, he also falls from the status of the priest. The widow of a priest, however young is also not to be re-married.

Laymen of the Syrian Church kiss the right hand of the priest and of those above the rank of the priest. They usually kiss the back of the right palm and lift the same to their forehead saying 'Barek Mor' which means 'Bless Lord'. Whenever they meet a monk priest, a bishop or those above that rank, they kiss his right hand to greet him, as is usual in Kerala. They kiss the hand of the lay priest, usually only at the close of a religious ceremony or canonical prayer led by him.

The lay priest and the deacon generally live at home with the family, but the monk and bishop live in religious houses free from family life. It is usual in country parts, especially in Kerala, that when the faithful visit a bishop or monk, at the church residence some of them take with them gifts. They request his blessings and prayers when they thus meet him. This is an eastern custom and is found among the Hindus also in their dealings with Sanyasins and Yogins. They take children also to him to be specially blessed, as they did in the case of Jesus Christ. Generally the priest and the deacon wear black cassock on formal occasions. At other times, as is the custom in Kerala, they go about in white. But a monk or Ramban goes about only in black and the bishop in red or crimson, except at his own residence. The canon provides an exemption to the monk when he enters a town for some service. He may wear white over his black dress.

According to the custom and canon<sup>24</sup>, the bishops and Rambans eat together on the same table and the lay priests and the deacons eat on a different table. This is due to the difference in their diet and modes of life. The monks are not to mix freely with those in the lay order, males or females.

It is generally believed that the best and the choicest men in the Church are ordained. If choice men of good character are ordained, the future of this ancient Church would be secure and glorious.



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24. Ibid.

## E. The Sacrament Of Penitence

Or

### Confession

According to primitive Christian theories the heart is the seat of inborn evil impulse. Much responsibility belongs to evil spirits which tempt men. Offences may be expiated by penitence. St. Paul describes the flesh as radically antagonistic to God. The Church is more concerned about the means of avoiding and absolving sin than about the meaning of sin.

Original sin is removed by Baptism and sins of individual commitments are to be cleansed by repentance and confession. Confession is a Sacrament as necessary to the baptized as Baptism is to the unbaptized. If Baptism is the ship to sail to the Kingdom of God, confession is a second plank after ship wreck. The Roman Catholics, the Orthodox Churches and a section of the Church of England called 'High Church' or 'Anglo-Catholics' regard confession of sins as a Sacrament. They encourage private confession of individual sins to the priest. Unless the penitent confesses each sin, how can advice and guidance be given or penalty be imposed?

The conditions for forgiveness are faith, hope and repentance, like those of the robber on the right hand and the prodigal son. Sin is separation from the Lord as seen in Christ's parables. Atonement is coming back and being together and one with the Father, (At-One-ment). That is the aim of this Sacrament and is completed in the Holy Communion.

Repentance and remorse are different. Judas Iscariot had remorse but not repentance. A penitent while condemning himself rises above the self he is condemning. The publican who prayed 'God be merciful to me a sinner' was already on the road to saintliness. Like Paul a repentant person dissociates himself

inwardly from his sin and says: 'It is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me'. In the penitent there is a new insight, a fresh illumination and an anxiety to make atonement. The really repentant does not count the cost of repairing the lost equilibrium of peace or love. Really saintly persons are more ready to confess their sins than gross sinners.

Forgiveness implies a regeneration<sup>25</sup>. Forgiving others is a necessary pre-condition for being forgiven. We must forgive our trespassers and debtors before they come to us in repentance. We are to forgive seventy times seven, i. e. times without number. If we remember that any one has any grudge against us, even if we feel that we are innocent, we are to go out to him and get reconciled with him. Then how much more should we do so when we have actually offended another?

According to Jesus Christ, the sinner must not be left alone to repent, but must be sought and his error be pointed out. If he cannot be brought to repentance by any means, he may at the very last be rejected as a heathen and publican.

Christ forgave sins readily and authorized his Apostles to do likewise. Then it came to be that the bishop who is the disciple of the Apostles could forgive sins that occurred after Baptism. When the Church grew large by the admission of all sorts of people, it became expedient to delegate this power of forgiving sins, to the priests also. A physician of the soul must be a truly authorized one, i. e. a duly ordained person. He is not to give a permanent absolution, nor should he bind sins permanently. The confessor forgives as representative of God<sup>26</sup>. He who hears confession is not to be angry or lax. He is in the position of the psychiatrist and has to be tactful. Confession has

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25. Ez. 16: 63

26. Mar Geevarghese Dionysius, Op. Cit. p. 20



real psychiatric effect, over and above the pardon and the absolution of sin gained by it. The confessor must be a good example in act and advice and should give the appropriate medicine in accordance with the nature of the ailments. Bar Hebraeus says in his **Zalgae** "If the doctor is not informed in advance about the history of the case, he cannot treat and heal. So also the physician of the soul, if he is not informed about the moral ailments, he cannot heal. The patient who covers his pains and wants to be healed, fails in his intention". He explains how a penitent ought to prepare himself in true repentance to confess. If it is with true repentance that he confesses, then it avails.

The Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches worked out confession as an elaborate institution. Soon confessor's guides were written down and given recognition. In them many suitable prayers and readings are given to help the penitent. A long list of common sins also is given in them, with the help of which the penitent can easily have self-examination. He is to rely in his self-examination on the help of the Holy Spirit and not merely on his own memory in finding out old sins. He should first note them down, if he is literate, on a sheet of paper and use the same at the time of Confession.

Bar Hebraeus says that if the penitent is a learned or clever person, he should be given theoretical and practical evidences about the gravity of the sinful act. If he be a simple person, simple explanation and advice will heal. Sins are of different classes. Sins done under force is soon cleansed. The cause of sin is always important. The time factor also is significant. Sins grown old and chronic and done repeatedly are different from those done newly and not repeatedly. If a penitent confesses that he has misappropriated another's money, or property, he shall be forgiven only on condition that he shall return or compensate for the same. If he does not do so, his sin shall remain. Deadly sin is that in which one dies without repentance. Some Churches regard certain sins as mortal. Christ says

that the sin against the Holy Ghost alone will not be forgiven. The sin against the Holy Ghost is variously interpreted. Some say that it is a state of unrepentability and others say that it is persistence in sin.

God is merciful and if we repent we receive this forgiveness freely, but if we do not make ourselves worthy of forgiveness, we do not receive His free mercy and forgiveness. God shines His Sun upon the just and unjust alike. Even Satan will be forgiven if he repents and turns to God. But he would not repent and turn. If he who turns his face away from the Sun misses some of his light, does he who turns his face away from the Sun of virtue not miss the light thereof? If he turns his face again to the Sun, he receives the light again. As said in the Orthodox Liturgy, the Lord does not wish that any one should die in his sins and be lost, but rather that he should repent and be saved.

Most important parts of confession are the sense of guilt, repentance, the decision not to sin again, telling the sins frankly and unreservedly to the confessor, the absolution, the fulfilment of the penalty imposed and the receiving of the Holy Communion. A priest who hears confession is not to divulge to others what he heard in confession. He should impose just penalties like fasting, or giving alms and special readings from the penitential Psalms.

Only those who are adolescent and above are supposed to confess their sins to the priest. Laymen, the deacons, the priests, the bishops, the Metropolitans, the Catholicos and the Patriarch all alike would kneel down before the ordinary priest and confess sins without any distinction.

Whenever a person wants to receive Holy Communion he takes time for self-examination and confesses his sins before the priest. He who comes for ordination confesses his sins prior to ordination and gets ready. Those who get married also do so. The sick person who is to be anointed also does so.

God and the angels rejoice about a sinner who repents and turns to God more than about saints who do not need to repent. This the Lord made clear from the parables of the prodigal son and the lost sheep. The Father goes down to embrace the repentant son returning to Him. In that embrace is communion, oneness and atonement. Here the human soul becomes one with the Eternal Soul, not like a drop of water falling into a bucket of water and losing its identity in union. In the Christian atonement the soul of man unites with its Lover without losing identity and continues to enjoy the oneness.



## F. Marriage.

The Orthodox Syrians regard Church-marriages as sacred and the union in such marriages as a union which God effects through the priest His representative. Marriage is not merely an external union, but a spiritual union as well<sup>27</sup>.

In the Orthodox Syrian Church, marriage includes betrothal and the blessing of the crowns. The two are separate services, but together form one Sacrament. Betrothal service is first conducted with the blessing of the rings. In the Middle East and among the Cnanites of Kerala, betrothal service is conducted an year or a few months before the wedding which is completed by the blessing of the crowns. But among the non-Cnanites of Kerala, the two services are conducted within the same hour, so that the common folk regard the whole as a single service. But the service book used by both communities is the same and they have in it separate orders of service for both betrothal and wedding.

As a general rule, the husband should be elder to the wife<sup>28</sup> as Adam was to Eve. In Kerala Church, till recently, child-marriage was in vogue. Now it is prohibited by state law. The late Patriarch also had admonished in a book he published, not to conduct such marriages<sup>29</sup>.

Love marriages are almost unknown in the Kerala section of this Church. The older canons also do not encourage free mixing between prospective brides and bride-grooms. Marriages are usually arranged by parents. But the parents allow them to see each other formally on one or two occasions for mutual approval before the betrothal. In the Middle East, love marriages are now quite

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27. Mar G. Dionysius, Op. Cit. p. 28

28. Anantha Krishna Iyer, Op. Cit. p. 78

29. Aphraim Ignatius Patriarch, *The Text of Blessing Rings and Crowns*, Homs, 1948, pp, 9-15, 16-17.

common among the Orthodox Syrians. It is encouraged both by the Church and the parents there. There are some rare instances of love-marriages among the Syrians of Kerala. In Kerala the family is the unit and not the individual, as in the West. Western influence has changed very much the customs in the Middle East and a little in Kerala, even in the matter of matrimony.

Divorce is rare in this Church. It is allowed only in the case of serious adultery, incurable diseases which stand in the way of conjugal union or such serious matters. Difference of opinion is never an adequate ground for divorce in this Church. At a certain stage after marriage, if the two so agree, they are allowed to separate in order that both may enter monastic orders<sup>30</sup>. There is one such instance at present in Kerala.

The widow or widower may normally re-marry. A person who has married a second time is not normally allowed to enter the Sanctuary, whether priest, deacon or layman.

In Kerala first marriages are usually conducted on Sundays and second marriages on other days. Marriages will not be conducted on lentil days. The Church does not allow poly-gamy.


On fixing the date of the marriage, it will be announced in the Church usually on two consecutive Sundays, before the actual wedding, for public approval. Those who marry should be either distant relatives or unrelated persons. Relation upto seven generations is usually reckoned in this connection. The relation by standing as God-Father or God-Mother at Baptism also will be taken into account in this connection. The Orthodox Church is neither for nor against birth-control. This modern issue has not been taken up so far, officially by this very ancient Church.

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30. *Nom canon* ch. viii: i, p. 102

## G. The Anointment Of The Sick

The Sacrament of the Anointment of the sick was meant for healing as said by St. James <sup>31</sup>, the disciple of Jesus Christ. The believer when he falls ill, should first call the priest and ask him to pray, anointing him in the name of the Lord. A special order of service is instituted for this in the Church, as may be seen in the **Book Of Baptism etc.**

The Syrians use a specially sanctified oil for anointment and it will be always kept at the Church or at the residence of the priest. Of the three holy oils used in this Church, this one is prepared by the simplest process. There are two separate services for the anointment of the sick, the usual brief one given in the **Book of Baptism etc** and the other lengthy one which lasts for three hours and given in a separate book called **The Book Of The Kandeela Service**. The latter is usually conducted for the priests, the bishops and prominent laymen. It needs a good measure of pure olive oil. The oil is poured into a deep plate or bowl in which wheat dough is spread. Five tapers of cotton are lighted on small splinters standing inside the bowl or plate. One after the other they are lighted during the course of the three hours' service. By the end of the service, the oil becomes warm due to the heat of the lighted tapers standing in the bowl or plate in Cross form  like this. The oil taken from it on the right hand thumb of the leader of the service (the priest or bishop) is sealed in Cross form on the forehead of the sick person first. At the end of the service, according to the custom in Kerala, the oil is sealed on forehead of all those present. Much oil would still remain. It is collected in clean bottles and kept in the custody of the priests or the bishop. It is used for further anointment of the sick when the shorter service for the same is conducted. If it is not by

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31. James 5: 13-16

this process, pure olive oil is specially sanctified by the bishop or by the priests who are specially authorized by the bishop <sup>32</sup>.

'Faithful prayer of the righteous person helps to heal'. The anointed person as well as the anointing priest must have true faith. Then only will the healing be sure and immediate. There are priests and laymen who believe in the value of anointment done at the very beginning of illness. In such cases, immediate favourable results are generally observed.

This Sacrament is to be administered when the sick person is in a conscious state, so that he can also join in the prayers of the service. If the illness is so serious that the whole service could not be conducted before the expiry of the sick one, the priest abbreviates the service and anoints him quickly. He then says only the words of the actual anointment on that occasion. He leaves out readings, Promiyns and etc.

The priest anoints the sick man on the forehead eye-lids, ears, nostrils, tongue, lips, chest, arms, navel knees, and feet. The oil is taken on the right thumb and the priest makes the sign of the Cross with it at the respective places, praying that the patient may be pardoned the sins he or she has committed through the respective parts. When not in hurry, several prayers are said, hymns sung, lessons from two epistles read and the prescribed portion from the Gospel of St. Mathew read, as given in the book of that service.

The whole service is penitential in sense, tone and tune. The priest is to use only the appointed prayers given in the Book for this purpose and is not to say any extempore prayers as he wishes.

The confession of sins and Communion on such occasions is recommended as good. If the illness is due to sin, when sins are confessed and pardoned, the patient

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32. Mar. G. Dionysius, Op. Cit. p. 30

easily recovers. Holy Communion is for the healing and protection of the body and the soul. Hence if he receives Holy Communion, he gets healing of body and soul alike and quicker.

We have already discussed about the Holy Sacrament of Eucharist under the head of Worship in a previous chapter.





## PART VII

### 19

## THE PLACE OF WOMEN IN THE ORTHODOX SYRIAN CHURCH

In an earlier chapter we have observed that in the beginnings of evangelization women used to be ordained. The deaconess was ordained only to clean and arrange the Sanctuary, to serve the sick and to anoint the grown up women who are baptized. She was not supposed to touch the Altar. The priestess or Kaseestho was not to celebrate the Holy Mass. The Eucharist reserved in the Sanctuary used to be taken out by her to be given to women and children in case of emergency in the absence of the priest and the deacon. The priestess used to take out the Holy Elements from the chest and commune herself<sup>1</sup>. These were stopped later by synodic decision. "The feet that rushed to the tree in Paradise, is not to tread the place of the King of kings, as they are not clean and the hand that plucked the fruit in Eden is not to be waved over the Holy Qurbana of God-head"<sup>2</sup>. This is the opinion of the holy Fathers of the Orthodox Syrian Church in the later stage.

The Jews gave no respectable place to women in their Church. To allow women to enter the Sanctuary was a revolution in the Christian Church which was an outgrowth of Judaism. But practical difficulties and perhaps individual instances of failure might have induced the holy Fathers to stop mixed service in the Sanctuary, not that women were

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1. *Nomocanon*, Ch. vii: iv, p. 81

2. *The Penitential Prayers Of The Noon*, Mid-day hour Boyootho of Thursday.

in any sense inferior to men. There are priestesses in some Protestant Churches of America and west Germany doing all the functions of the priests. There is controversy in the west regarding the ordination of women in the Church <sup>3</sup>.

The menses of woman was a taboo against her entering the church or Sanctuary <sup>4</sup>. Evidently the Jewish custom in this matter was continued in this ancient and unreformed Church. In olden days, the wife of a priest used to be ordained as 'Bars Kyomo' in this Church. Her duty was to arrange women and girls to stand in orderly manner at church service, to teach the girls to sing properly at church service and to maintain discipline among the females at church.

Women are to cover their heads at prayer, be it at home or at church or when they meet a Church dignitary. In the Orthodox Syrian church at North Bergen, U. S. A., as was observed in 1951, all females including babes in the arms of mothers, were seen keeping this rule. In Kerala, usually, they cover their heads with the top end of their Sarees or with long towels or pieces of net.

Regarding the position of women at church during worship, the old custom in Kerala churches is to keep them in the rear. But now it has changed in most churches. In the Middle East churches they were seen standing on one side. At the St. Thomas church at Mosul and at certain churches in Turkey, a fence was seen inside the church, on the left side, separating women from men. This might be out of an extra sense of chastity and not due to any feeling of inferiority or superiority.

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3. Runnyon, Mary, Edith, Art. 'Should The Church Ordain Women?' in *Arunodayam*, Kottayam, 1969, vol. 14: No. 10 and 11, Nov. pp. 8-10

4. Anantha Krishna Iyer, Op. Cit. p. 93

Women are not allowed to preach at church according to the Pauline advice<sup>5</sup>. They may talk in the meetings of women. In Kerala they have a well organized St. Mary's women's Association. Conferences and retreats are held by them and they make speeches in them. Women are appointed as Sunday school teachers nowadays in many places, in Kerala and in the Middle East. They are successful in teaching children, especially the chants of the Holy Qurbana.

The deaconesses used to serve the sick as nurses, in olden days. Now there is hardly any deaconess in this Church. There are a handful of nuns. They live in convents in Kerala, but are not deaconesses.

With the exaltation of the holy Virgin, women have overcome their old inferiority brought upon them by the failure of Eve, but the Church does not give all women the status of Our Lady. Woman always craves for freedom and equality. In Kerala, in the parish meetings, woman has no voice so far. But there is a tendency in general for a change in this matter.



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5. 1 Cor. 14,34

## CHURCH, STATE AND ADMINISTRATION

## A. Church And State

The Orthodox Syrian Church always has respected temporal authorities and stood for them. 'Give unto Caesar what is Caesar's and give unto God what is God's' <sup>1</sup> is the verdict of Christ. It has been already observed that the Church came to occupy its high status by the aid of king Constantine. It is no wonder that this Church in return allowed the faithful king a chair in the Sanctuary, making him equal with the bishop. Whereas a non-Christian is not allowed to enter a church, a king even if he is a non-Christian, if he is going to believe, is allowed entrance into the Sanctuary of the church <sup>2</sup>. This is exceptional. They regard the king or ruler as the 'Lord's anointed one' and obey him.

At the celebration of the Eucharist, they remember faithful kings and rulers in the Great Intercession <sup>3</sup>. The Syrians who migrated to Kerala under the leadership of Cnai Thoma gave support to the native princes, helping them with money and men at times of wars and difficulty. They fought for the ruling princes and won their favour. As already mentioned, in the Introduction, the ruling Rajah, Cheraman Perumal out of gratitude gave the Syrians seventy two special honours, written on copper plates. They were given top-most rank in society and equal seat with royalty. They showed fidelity and patriotism <sup>4</sup> and many Syrian Christians have held high positions under their rulers from times immemorial. L. K. Anantha Krishna Iyer says in his

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1 Matt. 22: 21

2. *Nomocanon*, Ch: i: vi, p. 9

3. *Jacobite Syrian Liturgies*, Op. Cit. p. 22

4. Anantha Krishna Iyer, L. K., Op. Cit. pp. 54-55.

**Anthropology,** “The Syrian Christians of Cochin and Travencore have been all along and are even now a very flourishing community. Their prosperity is mainly due to the religious tolerance of the native Governments and the protection and patronage of the early Hindu rulers of the two states as evidenced by the Copper Plates granted by one of the Perumals of Kerala”. “They were numbered among the noble races of Malabar”. “They were very strong and powerful and their bishops were respected and feared like kings”. “They were given seats by the side of kings and their chief officers”. “The Syrian Christians were almost on a par with their sovereigns. They are allowed to have military force of their own”. “A native prince was respected or feared by his neighbours, according to the number of Syrians in his dominions”

“They were always esteemed and patronized by their rulers, as much for their general fidelity and regard to truth, as for their skill and military prowess. But notwithstanding their war-like appearance, their disposition was very peaceable”.

“One other interesting point connected with the early history of the Syrian Christians is that they still cherish the tradition of having attained to the dignity of possessing a king of their own at Villiarvattom, near Udayamperur, and that at the death of the last king without issue, the kingdom lapsed to the Cochin Royal family <sup>5</sup>.”

The Cochin royal family which took over all that belonged to the expired Syrian Christian king, has all along given considerable help and patronage to the Syrians in many matters including the construction of churches. The royal family of Travencore also has given them several grants and gifts during the last century as seen from books of Church History.

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5. Ibid pp. 54-57

## B. Administration

Regarding the administration of their own Church, they have been using the **Nomocanon** of Bar Hebraeus. The parish is administered by the vicar and a committee elected from the male members of the parish congregation, every year. Their decisions should be sanctioned by the bishop of the Diocese. The bishop has power to veto decisions of the Parish assembly or of their committee. The Methran or bishop is elected by the representatives from the parish churches. The transfer of the bishops is unknown in this Church. If he is found incapable, he may have to give up and retire to a monastery. The transfer of the priests is newly started in Kerala Orthodox Syrian churches.

The Patriarch or the Catholicos administers with the counsel of his Majilis or synod. He has power to veto synodic decisions and the synod has power to elect as well as to remove a Patriarch or Catholicos, according to older canons. But as already said in section B of the Introduction, in the Middle East they have adopted new canons suiting the time and the place. In Kerala also they have passed a new Constitution and that is accepted by the civil court. Their administration now is according to the new Constitution. In general the Syrians are democratic in their Church administration.

Disputes of the Church about temporal matters are taken to civil courts in Kerala and to ecclesiastical courts in the Middle East. The Governments in the Middle East not only approve those ecclesiastical courts, but also help to execute their decrees.

## PART VIII

### 21

#### CHURCH AND OTHER ACTIVITIES

##### A. Education

We read in the life history of St Paul that he sat at the feet of Gamaliel and studied<sup>1</sup>. That was the way in ancient times everywhere in the world. Wherever there was a learned man, disciples gathered round him and he taught them.

Aphraim the Syrian taught in the theological school at Nseebeen, thirty years from the time he was twenty two years old. In Edesa alias Urhoi of Turkey, there were many monks and anchorites on the mount. Aphraim the Syrian went there from Nseebeen when that place was captured by the persians and he joined the monks and the anchorites early in the fourth century. There was a theological school there and he tried to raise the standard of the same. Soon the school became famous and disciples from different countries thronged there<sup>2</sup>. He taught there for ten years until at the age of seventy he died.

In Kerala also since the past few centuries, there were theological schools run by the Syrians for the Syrians. These were the centres of religious lore. Each religion in India, the Hindu, the Muslim, the Persian and the Buddhistic etc had its own school. There existed in Kerala also schools which trained men in wrestling and in the fight with the

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1. Acts 22:3

2. Aphraim Poulosé Ramban, Op. Cit. pp. 114-116

sword or the cudgel etc, where men of all religions studied alike. There were schools or 'kalaris' in which drum-beating, dance, kathakali and singing were taught. In Kerala there were also 'Asans' to teach the three 'R's.

With the advent of the Portuguese in Kerala, Roman Catholic Seminaries and printing presses were started for educating the Syrians. But these could not prevail much on the Syrians. Then came the C. M. S. who started Grammar Schools to teach English. Their men taught English and women taught sewing. The Syrians studied both. But when a Seminary was started by the C. M. S. to teach the Syrians, they feared that they will be taught faith that is different from their own and so they non-co-operated.

The British started schools in different parts of India. That led to the general advance in modern education of the people, especially of the christians who readily responded to the invitation to study. Later on the christians of Kerala started their own schools for general education. As for religious and theological studies the Syrians were content with their own private schools, seminaries and monastery-schools. For secular studies they went to the schools of others.

When there was sufficient number of Indians who had finished secondary education, the foreign missionaries started colleges in different parts of India as in Madras and Kerala. Some of the Syrians studied in those. When they graduated they started their own schools and colleges in Kerala. The Governments of Cochin and Travancore also started colleges of which originally English men were in charge. Gradually several secondary schools were started by educated Syrians all over Kerala. Now in Kerala the Orthodox Syrians have eight colleges of their own. Government and other private agencies also started several colleges. The Syrians have now about twenty secondary schools in Kerala under their own management. Now they have in Kerala a first grade theological college running a



degree course. In the Middle East they have two seminaries, one in Zahlæ of Lebanon and one in Zaphron Dayarah of Mardin in Turkey.

Sunday schools are very active in the Orthodox Syrian Church of Kerala. There are more than one thousand Sunday schools with a central directorate and regular system of teaching. They have a course of ten standards and the Director issues certificates to those who graduate. Prizes are awarded annually to those who top the list of successful candidates in each standard. The Sunday school anniversary and the prize distribution are joyous events in every parish church.

In the Middle East, the Orthodox Syrians run Secondary schools in Kamesly and in Alepo. At Beirut of Lebanon they have a school cum orphanage. In Mosul, Iraq also they have a secondary school. Colleges of any kind are very few in the Middle East and those seen there now are run by the Islamic Governments and foreign agencies as in Alepo, Cairo, Baghdad, Istanbul and Beirut. It was very lucky that India was under the British rule for a century. During their rule they started colleges and schools in various parts of India. An Indian who visits the Middle East now feels gratitude to the British who promoted education and culture in India.

Instead of regular Sunday schools, in the Middle East they run Summer schools in parish churches when the secular schools are closed. In them children receive religious instruction. They conduct Sunday schools in Orthodox Syrian churches of America on Sundays, regularly. In Kuwait as already observed, they run 'Sunday schools' on Fridays, as Fridays are as Sundays for them. In Kerala and America they have specially printed books for Catechism.



## B. Missionary Work And Charity

### i-Missionary Work

In the early centuries, there have been some evangelization in the Orthodox Syrian Church in the Middle East countries. There Christians have suffered persecution in all generations. The Ottoman emperors and Caliphs took over the persecution which the older heathen rulers had started. The seed of the Church was the word of God and the blood of martyrs was its manure. In spite of occasional massacres and persecutions, by the miracles of saints and by the discourses of learned holy men many had become Christians in the Middle East countries. But now the power of the Islamic community has increased so much in most of these countries that Christians have a bad time there in general. Many have migrated to the Americas to escape Islamic persecution. No open preaching or missionary work among non-Christians is permitted in those countries.

St. Thomas the Apostle came with the power of the Spirit, performed miracles and broke the 'Good News' to the learned men of Kerala. Many believed and became Christians. Later, Portuguese missionaries came and made some converts. They gave money and used cunning methods instead of spiritual power and miracles. Still later the C. M. s. missionaries came from England and attracted the people by methods different from those of St. Thomas the Apostle.

Both the Roman Catholics and the C. M. S. converted many people belonging to the backward classes of Kerala whom they continually helped. Since about forty years, the Evangelical Association Of The East<sup>1</sup> and the Servants of of The Cross, Started by Rev. Fr. Geevarghese Athunkal and bishop Mar Pathros Osthathios respectively in the Orthodox Syrian Church of Kerala, have done considerable missionary

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1. Broun, L. W., Op. Cit. p. 161

work. They have converted to Christianity about twentyfive thousand persons in about thirty years' time, from the backward classes. There are also some other minor organizations of the Orthodox Syrians in Kerala doing evangelical work.

The Evangelical Association of The East which was started in 1925 has about fifty missionary stations and about thirty five institutions. It has a democratic constitution. The field of its work extends to South Canara in the Mysore State of India. Under Rev. Fr. Alexander Mangatampillil, the Mar Ignatius Evangelical Association had been doing work in Ankamaly and suburbs. Their main work had been medical mission. They ran a 'Free to Poor' hospital and used to go round homes of poor and backward class people, giving them the love of Christ and teaching them all good things, but never insisting upon any one of them being converted.

The idea of medical missionary work is attracting the attention of the Orthodox Syrians of Kerala. St. Marys' Orthodox Syrian church at Manarcad, Kerala is now running a Christian hospital in an excellent manner. There is now a scheme before the Planning Committee of the Orthodox Syrian church to start a Mobile medical mission<sup>2</sup>. Plans are under way to start a mission hospital at Kolenchery in the name of this Church.

Summer time conventions are now usual among the Syrians of Kerala. This idea was copied from other Protestant denminations. Many Syrian churches in Kerala conduct such convensions. These conventions are slight improvements on the retreats already discussed in an earlier chapter. At the end of the conventions Holy Communion is not insisted upon and the conventions are held mostly in outdoor pandals. Retreats are for a select group but the conventions are for all and a big miscellaneous gathering attends those.

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2. *The Kerala Bhushanam* (Malayalam Daily), Kottayam, 11th March, 1964, p. 1.

Very often Summer Classes for Bible study are conducted in some Syrian churches of Kerala. They have newly started the V. B. S. (Vacation Bible School) in imitation of Protestant groups. Since a decade it is growing popular among the Syrians.

There is then the Mar Gregorios Syrian Students' Association. It enlists young Orthodox Syrian boys of colleges and secondary schools as its members. They hold an annual conference and retreats concluding with corporate Communion. Termly retreats also are sometimes held under the auspices of this Association in Christian colleges and secondary schools. A girls' section of the Orthodox Students' Association has also been formed newly. It is run on parallel lines with the other one.

The Orthodox Syrians are getting more missionary minded every year. They are trying to keep pace with other christian denominations in these matters, and feel the great challenge to evangelize the whole of India giving the light which they received from the Apostle to their non-Christian brethren.





PROCESSION OF SYRIANS  
WITH COLOURED UMBRELLAS AND CHURCH FLAGS



## ii Charitable Works

From the time of Bar Hebraeus, we see in the canons of this Church definite instructions to parish churches<sup>3</sup> to set apart funds for the poor, for the widows and for the entertainment of strangers. The prayers of the Lent reflect these ideas. Those have already been mentioned in the section dealing with fasting. The monks who lived in the caves, mountains and wilderness made many things by their own manual labour and sold those. They bought their food by selling those. What remained from their food they sent to the poor people around them<sup>4</sup>. This is in accordance with the principle that the rich man is to go after the poor and needy and feed them rather than wait for them to come to him.

We see that in the Middle East countries the Syrians have charitable institutions like orphanages in Beirut, Mosul, Homs and other places. Many poor children are taken care of by these. Help is extended to those by the Syrian Orthodox in the U. S. A. In Haseja of Syria they have a fund in the church for helping the very poor members of its parish.

In Kerala there are orphanages run by the Syrians, at Perumbavur, Keezhillam, Sasthamkotta and other places. The one at Perumbavur is run by the Evangelical Association of The East mentioned before. At the Big church of Ranni, they have a 'Poor People's Aid Society'. In some Orthodox churches like the St. Mary's at Thrippunithura, there are special boxes of offering placed in the chancel of the church to help the poor.

The Servants Of The Cross already referred to receive funds from people of Kerala and from foreign countries by which they distribute clothes to the poor female converts of the backward class, every year. In a humble

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3. *Nomocanon* Ch. I. section 3. p. 6

4. Aphraim Foulse Ramban, *Op. Cit.* p. 101

way a Ramban started a scheme for building small houses for the very poor people around the Malelcruz Monastery in Vadayampady of Kerala. This also was helped by foreign donation. Some poor people in that village have already got cottages built and wells dug under that scheme. The St. Mary's hospital at Manarad already mentioned is giving free treatment to many poor patients.

There are several individuals in this community who are doing works of charity in a silent and private way, as per the advice of our Lord who said 'When you give alms, do it in private so that your left hand may not know that which the right hand is giving'<sup>5</sup>.

The St. Mary's Women's Association is now and then collecting clothes for the poor lepers of the Leper hospitals in Kerala and distributing those among the patients. There are many Syrians who help poor students for their education.

More organized work could be done by this Church in these matters. There are some rich churches and a few very rich churches of the Orthodox Syrians in Kerala. They can do much more charitable work if they join together. Rich Orthodox Syrians who are doing charitable works in private, can do better service if they get together and do those in an organized manner.




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5. Matt. 6: 3 - 4



## C. Orthodox Syrian Church

And

### Publications

The most important books of the Orthodox Syrians are The Gospels, The Liturgy, Biblical Commentaries, Prayer Books, Promyon Books, The Book of Ordination, The Book of Kandeela, The Book of Rituals and Sacraments, the Text of the burial of Priests etc. They have also the poetic works of great doctors like Aphraim the Syrian. Bar Hebraeus, Moses Bar Keepho, Mar Dionysius Bar Sleeti, Mar Yakub, Michael the Great are popular authors and commentators. In the Middle East the works of many of these authors as well as the books mentioned above were not printed for a long time. They used to be copied by monks and scribes. It is a time-old custom in those countries to copy books on leather or parchment, colourfully decorated with artistic designs in the beginnings of the books and at the heads of chapters. As already mentioned, the Syrian Christians had not printed most of their valuable books for a long time.

Copies of such hand-written books of the Syrian Christians were brought to Kerala, by the Holy Fathers from the Middle East who came to Kerala in the early centuries. Sometimes when Fathers went to the Middle East from Kerala, they procured copies of such religious books and brought them home. But the Orthodox Syrians of Kerala, who are more literate have now got many of those books printed.

Paul Bedjan of Paris has collected many of the Syrian Orthodox books in Syriac and got them printed. He has also published the translations of many of them. Now those in the Middle East also have started printing Syrian Orthodox Books, in Syriac, Arabic, Turkish and French.

A monk of Kerala has recently translated into English and published four of the Jacobite Syrian Liturgies, The Order of the Service of the Holy Qurbana and also the Daily Prayers For Laymen, for the use of the English speaking Syrians in different countries.

The Syrians of Karala have published Malayalam translations of many of the Church Books. There are also original works written and published in Malayalam and English by Orthodox Syrians of Kerala.

According to the rule of this Church, no book related to the faith, doctrines, services and history of it should be published without proper censorship and imprimatur of the authorities of the Church. Ordinary simple books may be printed by the permission of the bishops. But important books must have the Imprimatur of the Patriarch or the Catholicos.

Many of the ancient doctors of this Church while leading pious lives were also deeply immersed in religious study and research. Those in the monastic orders have been mostly the authors, commentators and historians of this Church.

The Syrians have Magazines connected with the Church. The **Malankara Sabha** published from the Catholicate at Kottayam, The **Sabha Chandrika** published from Thrikkunnathu Seminary, Alwaye, The **Orthodox Youth** published from the Old Seminary, at Kottayam, and The **Church Weekly** published from Malayala Manorama Press at Kottayam are some of their religious journals in Kerala. There is an Arabic Magazine of the Syrian Orthodox published from the Patriarchate at Damascus, Syria. The **Malayala Manorama** a daily Paper published from Kottayam is owned by Orthodox Syrians and has been supporting the cause of this Church all along. The **Deepam** a daily from Ernakulam is also owned and published by an Orthodox Syrian.

## D. Church And Aesthetics

The Orthodox Syrians show particular aesthetic sense in the matter of church equipments, festivals and ceremonies. As already indicated they have their own Syrian type of music with variable tunes. They use paintings and pictures for decorating their churches, as already hinted. Sanctum Sanctorum is often decorated with very fine ornamental carvings on wood. The construction of the arch of the Sanctuary betrays very fine taste and architectural skill. Ornamental frontals of Syrian churches in Kerala also show fine artistic talents. Fine curves, pinnacles and ornamental Crosses on such frontals are typical of Syrian Christian architecture.

As already pointed out in connection with the procession of Christmas and Easter nights, they like to have the display of colourful flags and umbrellas bordered with ornamental silvery pendants. The St Mary's church at Manarcad has a few hundreds of those, in all the colours of the rainbow. When they go forth to receive a very honourable visitor, they take these out. Men stand in two rows holding those up before the visitor as he arrives.

The ornamental gold Cross and silver Cross taken out on festive occasions are also of elaborate workmanship displaying fine taste for artistic works. Poor Syrian churches borrow some of these from the rich ones on festive occasions.

Church music of the Syrians is now mostly without accompaniments, both in Kerala and in the Middle East. Of late, a Hammond Organ has been introduced in their church in West New York, New Jersey. In some churches of the Cnanites of Kerala, the fiddle is seen used at church service. It is a remnant of the old custom. In the last century there were more musical accompaniments in these churches, perhaps handed down from the Jews. But gradually they went out of fashion and use. Now the Syrians give more emphasis to vocal chants. They train the deacons at the Seminaries to sing the Syriac tunes

and the Sunday school teachers train children to sing at religious services, all without accompaniments.

Hymns are not necessary for those in high spiritual level. It is only for the ordinary man that music is meant. "Music lightens the pains and strain of the monastic who spend long time in prayer, just as the mother's song soothes the child and the songs of caravan the camels striding through the long deserts. It also sweetens the soul, and songs hold better in the memory than prose".

The tunes of their daily offices have variations. Most part of the canonical prayers of the clergy is in metrical composition of Syriac. The tunes are generally taught with the help of the book **Beth Gazo** otherwise known as **Ekorō D' Keenotho**, by experts. There are about fourteen ordinary classes of tunes with eight variations in each, used for common prayers and services. Some tunes like the 'Kookoyo' has nine variations. The deacons, the monks and the Church Fathers in the Middle East are particularly fond of these tunes. It is only a couple of decades now since attempts have been made to record the Syriac tunes making use of the notations of Western music.

The eight variations of tunes in each class are used in couples every week during ordinary days. First tune is used on the first Sunday beginning with Kudas Eetho. On the next day the fifth tune is used and the day after it again the first variation comes. Thus the two variations alternate till the next Sunday. The next Sunday they start the second variation coupling with the sixth and alternating every day till the third Sunday. On the third Sunday they start the third variation coupled with the seventh. Always difference between the numbers of the coupling variations is four. Thus when they have finished eight weeks, they start with the first variation over again. One goes with five and five goes with one, reversing the

order. It is very interesting and relieving to the singer to follow the cyclic arrangement for the use of the variations of the tunes.

The Orhodox Syrians express fine aesthetic taste of a typically eastern kind, handed down from very early times. Their services and ceremonies satisfy the aesthetic sense of man fully in all respects.



## CONCLUSION

All along, it has been observed that the Orthodox Syrians have through many centuries maintained in all earnestness a special philosophy of Religion. As an ancient Church without much modification in religious observances, it has been respected by the other Churches in the world. Though not strong in number, like the Roman Catholics and Protestants, the Orthodox Syrians are still respected everywhere. When a Prelate or a Ramban of this Church goes out to England or America, the people there respect him. The official dress of the prelates and the Rambans reminds them of the ancient Fathers in the beginnings of Christianity.

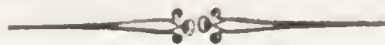
Using of Syriac language in worship by this Church gives it an antique air because that was more or less the tongue which Jesus Christ used. The long beard and the flowing gown of the Fathers of this Church also reminds others of Jesus Christ and his disciples.

No one has so far been able to criticize seriously the faith and philosophy of this Church. Some might say that they are primitive and still others might say that they are unreformed. Those who had accused this Church of Monophysite heresy have now come to realize that after all, Monophysitism of the Orthodox Syrians is not a heresy at all. It was only verbal difference that existed between their accusers and themselves. They both could agree in essence, though not in words. If a Syrian priest or bishop joins another Christian denomination, he is accepted gladly as he is.

The Orthodox Syrians, as per canon, are not to pray with other Christians who are not of their own faith. They have neither extempore prayers.

If Roman Catholic priests join the Orthodox Syrian Church, they are not re-ordained, but they have to deny particular heresies and confess the Orthodox faith.

There may come a tendency in this Church to be satisfied with external forms and miss the internal Grace in religion. Any one will be sorry to see at any stage, more of 'Churchianity' than true Christianity in this Holy Church which has produced many saints, scholars and martyrs in all generations. It requires no cleansing in the matter of faith and doctrines. Any institution however well constituted, tends to be lethargic and complacent when it grows old and antiquated. An old pool of water needs cleansing. Once cleaned of all filth, the pure fountain from below will give forth good sweet springs of water as at the beginning. It is not necessary to discard or cover up the pool, if you see it dirty now. It needs only cleansing, for the fountain below is natural, pure and of Divine origin.



TO HIS NAME BE GLORY FOR EVER  
AMEN.

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سوريا والعراق بتدخل الحكومة الفرنسية .

## ٢٤ - حالتها الحاضرة

كانت الكنيسة السريانية الأرثوذكسية في ما مضى مؤلفة من بضعة ملايين من النفوس . غير أنها من جراء الاضطهادات والحروب تضاءلت شيئاً فشيئاً حتى أضحت عدد نفوسها اليوم يربو على المليون وربع المليون . وهي منتشرة في سوريا ولبنان وما بين النهرين وفلسطين والعراق وتركيا ومصر والهند والأمريكيتين . ولها كليات ومدارس عالية ، وإكليريكية . في الموصل والهند . ولها اثنتان وعشرون أبرشية مطرانية ، عشر منها في الهند . يرثسها اليوم العلامة الكبير مار أغناطيوس أفرام الأول برصوم بطريرك أنطاكية وسائر المشرق . خليفة القديس بطرس الرسول . والمئة والعشرون في عداد بطاركة أنطاكية الشرعيين أو المئة والحادي والأربعون بما فيهم غير الشرعيين . ولقبه « قداسة الحبر الأعظم » ويقوم حالياً في حمص - سوريا . غير أن مقر الكرسي الرسمي هو دير الزعفران في ماردين - تركيا وهو أعظم كرسي بطريركي في الشرق .

## ٢٣ - الانشقاق الثاني

في الربع الأول من القرن السابع انسلخ عن الكنيسة السريانية الأرثوذكسية رهبان دير مار مارون على أثر الاضطهاد الذي أثاره على الكنيسة السريانية هرقل البيزنطي (١). وفي النصف الثاني من القرن السابع عشر انفصلت بمساعدة القنصل الفرنسي فرنسيس بارون : شرذمة من الكنيسة السريانية في حلب تابعة روما . برئاسة أخيجان الساحر (٢) الذي سمته بطريكاً . وكانت رسامته مطراناً من مطران ماروني في حلب ، وبتريكاً من بطريك الروم الأرثوذكس بعد أن أعاد رسامته السابقة من الشماسية حتى الأسقفية (٣) . ثم ما عتمت أن رجعت إلى الكنيسة قبل انتهاء هذا القرن . وفي النصف الثاني من القرن الثامن عشر ظهرت مرة أخرى برئاسة ميخائيل جروة مطران حلب باسم « الطائفة السريانية الكاثوليكية » واستولت على عدد من كنائسنا وأديرتنا في

(١) التاريخ الكنسي لابن العبري في ترجمة البطريرك اثناسيوس الأول المعروف بالجمال .

(٢) نهج وسيم للمطران جرجس شاهين السرياني الكاثوليكي ج ١ ص ٤١ و ٤٢ .

(٣) تاريخ الأزمنة للبطريك اسطفانوس الدويهي الماروني ص ٣٥٦ و ٣٥٧ .

وتستنكر سعادة القديسين الحالية . ووجود المطهر ، وأوراق  
الغفرانات والحبل بالعدراء مريم بلا دنس .  
٧ - بخلق النفوس والأجساد سوية مستنكرة تناسخ الأرواح ،  
وبالقيامة العامة والدينونة التي يثاب أو يعاقب فيها الإنسان أبدياً  
تبعاً لما يفعله من الخير أو الشر بارادته وحرية المطلقة .  
٨ - بأنها في جهاد متواصل مع العالم والشيطان تحت راية  
المسيح ، لذلك ترسم علامة الصليب على وجهها وتصلي سبع  
مرات في اليوم متجهة نحو الشرق بخشوع وركوع ما عدا أيام  
الآحاد والأعياد السيديّة والحمسين ( بعد القيامة ) . وتستعمل  
البخور ، وتتلو الأسفار القدسية من العهدين معترفة بالأسفار  
المعتبرة عند بعضهم « أبو كريفيا » ، وتمارس الوعظ ،  
وتنشئ الكنائس بأسماء العذراء والدة الإله والرسل والشهداء  
والقديسين وتعيد لهم وتقبل صورهم للذكرى والافتداء لا  
للعبادة ، وتحفظ يوم الأحد لأنه يوم الرب كما ورد في الكتاب .  
وتقدس الرهبنة وبتولية الرهبان والأساقفة ، وتفرض الزواج  
على الكهنة خدمة الرعية ولا تأذن لهم بزواج ثان عند ترملمهم  
بحسب التقليد الرسولي وقرار المجمع النيقاوي . وتمارس  
صيامات خمسة هي صوم الميلاد والباعوث ( أو نينوى )  
والأربعين والرسل والسيدة العذراء فضلاً عن يومي الأربعاء  
والجمعة على مدار السنة ما عدا أيام الخمسين . وفي سر  
الأوخارستيا تستعمل الخمير لا الفطير . والميرون يقدهه اليوم  
البطريك وحده . ويُسمح به المعتمد حال خروجه من جرن .

## ٢٢ - عقائدها الاخرى

فضلا عما تقدم تعترف أيضاً بالأمر التالى :

١ - بأقنوم واحد ومشية واحدة وفعل واحد للسيد المسيح من أقنومين ومشيتين وفعلين كاعترافها بالطبيعة الواحدة تماماً ، وفقاً لاعتراف الكنيسة المسيحية جمعاء قبل سنة ٤٥١ .

٢ - بانبثاق الروح القدس من الآب فقط كما نص الانجيل المقدس وصرح المجمع المسكونى الثانى سنة ٣٨١ .

٣ - بتولية مريم العذراء قبل الولادة وحين الولادة وبعد الولادة معلنة أن إخوة الرب يعقوب ويوسى وشمعون الخ... المذكورين فى الانجيل المقدس هم أولاد يوسف من زوجة سابقة .

٤ - بتجسد الإله من مريم العذراء ولذلك تدعوها « والدة الإله » .

٥ - بصباب الإله المتجسد حقاً وتألمه بجسده ، وموته ودفنه وقيامته بينما لاهوته لم ينفصل عن نفسه أو جسده لحظة واحدة حين كان معلقاً على الصليب أو مدفوناً فى القبر .

٦ - بالأسرار السبعة المعروفة ، وبالاستحالة الجوهرية فى سر الأوخارستيا . وبسلطان الكاهن على غفران الخطايا وإمساكها . وبوجوب الصلاة عن أرواح الراقدين وتقديم ذبيحة القربان عن الأحياء والأموات المؤمنين ، وبشفاعة القديسين وأم المؤمنين التى انتقلت إلى السماء نفساً وجسداً .

الثاني من أساقفة بلاد العرب ولبنان الفينيقي وسوريا وبلاد  
الفرات وقيليقية (١) . وسنة ٥٠٩ في المجمع القسطنطيني المنعقد  
بأمر الملك أنسطاس ، والذي أحرق طومس لأون الروماني  
وقرار المجمع الخلقيدوني الأصلي بنصه وفصه (٢) . وتقبل  
هنوطيقون زينون نقضاً للمجمع الخلقيدوني . الذي قبله  
بطاركة أنطاكية والاسكندرية والقسطنطينية وأورشليم وغيرهم  
سنة ٤٨٣ . وتصرح بعقيدها الخالدة القائلة بطبيعة واحدة من  
طبيعتين للسيد المسيح بدون اختلاط أو امتزاج أو تبليل أو  
استحالة وفقاً لقول مار كيرلس الاسكندري والمجمع الأفسسي  
الأول سنة ٤٣١ (٣) لا كهذيان المبتدع أوطاخي كما خلط  
وضلل بعض المغرضين من الكتبة البيزنطيين وغيرهم . تشهد  
بهذا مؤلفات القديسين فيلوكسينوس المنبجي وسويريوس  
الانطاكي ويعقوب السروجي وغيرهم من جهابذة الأرثوذكسية  
الذين عاصروا شقاق الكنيسة .

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- (١) تاريخ زكريا الفصيح مج ١ ص ٢٣٢ - ٢٣٥ .  
(٢) رسائل مار يعقوب السروجي ص ٦٣ - ٨٣ وتاريخ مار ميخائيل  
الكبير ص ٢٥٩ - ٢٦٠ والتاريخ الكنسي لابن العبري في ترجمة فلابيانس الثاني  
والخريدة النفيسة ج ١ ص ٥٨٢ و ج ٢ ص ٧ .  
(٣) تاريخ كلدو واثور مج ٢ ص ١٣٥ والخريدة النفيسة ج ١ ص ٤٧٢  
- ٤٨٢ وتاريخ جون جيزلر مج ١ ص ٣٩٩ و ٤٠٨ ودائرة المعارف  
النيويوركية Religion and Ethics تأليف جيمس هاستينكس ١٩١٥ مج ٨  
ص ٨١٢ - ٨١٤ .

أن يحرموا مصنفاتهم النسطورية (١) . وقد حرمته الكنيسة  
 السريانية الأرثوذكسية وشقيقاتها في الايمان سنة ٤٧٦ في  
 المجمع القسطنطيني المنعقد بأمر الملك باسيليسكوس وب رئاسة  
 القديس بطرس الثاني بطريرك أنطاكية ( ٤٨٨ + ) والقديس  
 طيمثاوس الثاني بطريرك الاسكندرية ( ٤٧٧ + ) وحضور  
 خمسمئة أسقف (٢) . وقد بعث إلى باسيليسكوس برسالة شكر  
 ستمئة أسقف كانوا قد اجتمعوا في أفسس ، كما وقع مرسومه  
 في حرم المجمع الخلقيدوني مار بطرس الثاني الانطاكي  
 والقديس طيمثاوس الثاني الاسكندري وبولس الأفسسي  
 وأنسطاس الأورشليمي وأساقفة آسيا الصغرى والمشرق وغيرهم  
 من الآباء وكانوا سبعمئة أسقف (٣) . وسنة ٤٨٢ في المجمع  
 القسطنطيني المنعقد بأمر الملك زينون وبتأييد بطرس الثاني  
 الانطاكي وبطرس منغوس الاسكندري وأفاق القسطنطيني (٤) .  
 وسنة ٤٨٥ في المجمع الانطاكي الملتئم برئاسة البطريرك بطرس

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- (١) لقد نقضه ايضاً مجمع الخلقيدونيين الخامس في القسطنطينية سنة ٥٥٣  
 بحرمه أساطين النسطرة ومصنفاتهم النسطورية .  
 (٢) تاريخ الانشقاق تأليف جراسيموس مسرة متر وبوليت بيروت للروم  
 الأرثوذكس ج ٢ ص ٢٦٥ والخريفة النفيسة تأليف الأسقف أيسيدوروس  
 السرياني القبطي ج ١ ص ٥٣٣ و ٥٨١ .  
 (٣) تاريخ زكريا الفصيح مج ١ ص ٢١١ - ٢١٣ و ٢١٥ وتاريخ مار  
 ميخائيل الكبير ص ٢٥٠ - ٢٥١ .  
 (٤) تاريخ زكريا الفصيح مج ١ ص ٢٢٣ - ٢٣١ والخريفة النفيسة ج ١  
 ص ٥٣٣ و ٥٤٩ و ٥٨٢ .

العنيف الذي بز اضطهادات القياصرة الوثنيين (١) .

## ٢١ - عقيدتها الخالدة

تعترف الكنيسة السريانية الأرثوذكسية بثلاثة مجامع مسكونية هي المجمع النيقاوي المنعقد سنة ٣٢٥ بأمر الملك قسطنطين الكبير وبرتاسة القديس أوسطاثاوس بطريرك أنطاكية (٣٣٧+) ضد بدعة أريوس المنكرة الوهية السيد المسيح . والمجمع القسطنطيني الملتئم سنة ٣٨١ بأمر الملك ثاودوسيوس الأول وبرتاسة القديس ملاطيوس بطريرك انطاكية (٣٨١+) ضد بدعة مقدونيوس المنكرة الوهية الروح القدس . والمجمع الأفسسي الأول المنعقد سنة ٤٣١ بأمر الملك ثاودوسيوس الثاني وبرتاسة القديس كيرلس بطريرك الاسكندرية (٤٤٤+) ضد بدعة نسطور القائلة بالطبيعتين والأقنومين في السيد المسيح . وبأن العذراء مريم ليست والدة الإله . وتقبل الإيمان النيقاوي - القسطنطيني الذي ختمه المجمع الأفسسي حازماً كل من يدخل عليه زيادة أو نقصاناً . وتقبل كذلك المجمع الأفسسي الثاني الملتئم سنة ٤٤٩ بأمر الملك ثاودوسيوس الثاني وبرتاسة القديس ديوسقوروس بطريرك الاسكندرية (٤٥٧+) تذيلاً للافسسي الاول . وتحرم المجمع الخلقيدوني الملتئم سنة ٤٥١ بأمر الملك مرقيان النسطوري ، الذي قسم جسم المسيح إلى اثنين بتأييده هرطقة نسطور وقبوله أساطين النسطرة دون

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(١) تاريخ مار ميخائيل الكبير ص ٢٦٦ - ٣١١ والتاريخ الكنسي لابن العبري في كلامه عن البطارقة المذكورين .

بصيدنايا أحرقت مخطوطات سريانية شتى كانت تشمل عليها  
مكتبة الدير .

ولئن انفصل الملكيون عن الكنيسة السريانية الأرثوذكسية  
سنة ٤٥١ وأقاموا لهم بعض البطارقة بقوة الملك البيزنطي .  
بيد أنهم عادوا فاتحدوا ثانية مع الكنيسة في سنة ٤٧٦ . حتى  
ذا كانت سنة ٥١٩ انشقوا ثانية واستقاموا ببطاركة خلقيدونيين .

## ٢٠ - اضطهاداتها

كان لمجمع خلقيدون سنة ٤٥١ أسوأ الأثر في نفوس  
المؤمنين . فقامت بواسطته فتن في كل مكان واختل حبل  
الأمن في كثير من البلاد . وفي ٧ شباط سنة ٤٥٢ أصدر مرقيان  
ووالنطينس الثالث مرسوماً يقضي بعزل الاكليروس والموظفين  
في الجيش إذا هم خاصموا جهرًا في موضوع الإيمان . وفي  
سنة ٤٥٣ أثار مرقيان اضطهاداً عنيفاً على الأرثوذكسين فيه  
استشهد ألوف من الرهبان والكهنة والأساقفة والمؤمنين . وفي  
سنة ٥١٨ توفي الملك أنسطاس الأرثوذكسي وخلفه يوسطينس  
الخلقيدوني الذي أثار شدة عظيمة على الكنيسة السريانية  
الأرثوذكسية وشتمها في الإيمان لأغراض سياسية . فنفي  
أكثر من خمسين أسقفاً سريانياً في سوريا ولبنان وما بين النهرين  
وفلسطين . وطرده ألوفاً من الرهبان من أديرتهم ليحتلها  
الملكيون بدلا منهم . وقد كان للبطاركة الملكيين : بولس  
وأوفروسيوس وأفرايم الآمدي ضلع كبير في ذلك الاضطهاد



النسطوري من جسم الكنيسة السريانية معظم الكنائس في بلاد فارس والعراق بقوة المملكة الفارسية ولأغراض سياسية . وفي سنة ٤٥١ ، انسلخ بعضهم من الكنيسة السريانية في المملكة الرومانية تابعين تعليم نسطور الذي أيده الملك مرقيان النسطوري البيزنطي في المجمع الخلقيدوني . فأطلقت عليهم الكنيسة السريانية اسم « الملكيين » (١) لأنهم تركوا إيمان الآباء وتبعوا رأي مرقيان الملك . و « روما » و « خلقيدونيين » و « يونانيين » . أما العلامة ابن العبري فيسميهم « السريان الملكيين » (٢) وعلى تراخي الزمن وتمادي الأحقاب تركوا طقسهم الانطاكي السرياني القديم وبدلوا به الطقس البيزنطي الحديث . وذلك في القرن العاشر . مستخرجين إياه من الأصل اليوناني إلى السرياني . وظلوا يقضون صلواتهم وطقوسهم البيعية باللغة السريانية وبخطهم السرياني الخاص المسمى « الملكي » حتى أواخر القرن السابع عشر ثم نقلوها إلى العربية وتبرأوا من السريانية (٣) . روى الكاتب حبيب زيات في كتابه « خزائن الكتب في دمشق وضواحيها » وفي المشرق البيروتية سنة ١٩١٠ ص ٣٣٣ أن راهبات دير الشاغورة

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(١) تاريخ أغابويوس المنبجي طبعة شيخو ص ٣٧ ومقدمة تفسير القداص لابن صليبي والقائد الأمين لمكسيموس « ظلوم ١ : ٦ .

(٢) منارة الأقداس ف ٣ ق ٦ اساس ٤ .

(٣) راجع مقالنا « من هو بطريك انطاكية الشرعي » في مجلة المشرق الموصلية السنة الأولى ص ٨٥٢ .

دقيقاً وصرحت بأنه من العصر الروماني (١) : ودير مار مرقس في القدس الذي هو بيت مريم أم يوحنا الملقب مرقس حيث أنجز المسيح الفصح الموسوي وغسل أقدام التلاميذ واستودعهم سر جسده ودمه ولفظ خطابه المشهور . وفيه كان الرسل يجتمعون ، فأتاهم الرب بعد قيامته والأبواب مغلقة وأعظاهم سلطان الكهنوت . وبعد صعوده إلى السماء كان الرسل ومريم أم يسوع وإخوته مواظبين فيه على الصلاة فحل عليهم الروح القدس وكرسوه كنيسة باسم والدة الإله مريم (٢) . وفي كنيسة مار دودو الكبرى في باسبرينه - طور عبيد لم يزل جثمان الشهيد المفريان مار شمعون المانعمي السرياني ( ١٧٤١ + ) محفوظاً لم يعثره خبال يزار تبركاً (٣) .

## ١٩ - الانشقاق الاول

في سنة ٤٣١ انعقد المجمع الأفسسي الأول وحرّم نسطور لبدعته النكراء ، فحازبه نفر من أساقفة الشرق حرّمهم الكنيسة . وفي الربع الأخير من هذا القرن سلخ برصوم النصيبيني

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(١) بيان بطريركي في زنار سيدتنا مريم العذراء . حمص ١٩٥٣ ص ٢٧

- ٢٩ -

(٢) راجع مؤلفنا « تاريخ الكنيسة السريانية الانطاكية » ج ١ ص ٩٢ -

. ٩٤

(٣) ترجمته بقلم قداسة البطريرك أفرام الأول برصوم في المجلة البطريركية

للسنة السادسة ص ٢٧ .

الثاني قيصر الروم ( ٩٧٥ - ١٠٢٨ ) وألزمهم أن يضربوا  
سكة الدولة سنة ففعلوا ولم تنقص ثروتهم . ثم جاء اليهم بنفسه  
واستقرض منهم مئة قنطار ذهب أي نحو مليون دينار ذهب .  
وافتدى أحدهم من الأتراك خمسة عشر الف نفس من الأسرى  
بخمسة وسبعين الف دينار (١) .

## ١٨ - ذخائرها

واحتفظت بذخائر مسيحية شريفة كانت قبلة أبصار  
المؤمنين . منها صورة السيد المسيح التي أنفذها إلى أبحر الخامس  
ملك الرها منقوشة على منديل وكان لها شأن عظيم في الكنيسة  
السريانية ، حتى ابنتى لها الوجيه اثناسيوس آل جوميا الرهاوي  
هيكلًا فخماً في الرها كما أسلفنا . وفي سنة ٩٤٢ طلبها ملك الروم  
من الخليفة المتقي بن المقتدر لقاء إطلاقه عدداً كثيراً من أسارى  
المسلمين فأرسلها (٢) . وزنار العذراء والدة الإله الذي حصل  
عليه مار توما الرسول عند انتقال العذراء إلى السماء . وكان  
قد حفظ أولاً في الهند ثم نقل إلى الرها سنة ٣٩٤ ومنها إلى  
حمص في أواخر القرن التالي حيث أودع كنيسة السيدة العذراء  
التي أسسها البشير ميليا سنة ٥٩ م . والتي عرفت بعدئذ بكنيسة  
أم الزنار . وما زال فيها يحج إليه الناس من جميع الملل والنحل .  
وقد فحصته مديرية الآثار السورية في صيف ١٩٥٣ فحصاً

(١) التاريخ المدني السرياني لابن العبري ص ١٩٧ و ١٩٨ .

(٢) تاريخ مختصر الدول لابن العبري ص ٢٨٧ .

ملكية وقرى وبساتين . فشاد كنائس وديورة كثيرة فخمة في  
الرها ومصر منها هيكل فخم عجيب في الرها غشاه بالرخام  
وصفحه ذهباً وفضة . وضع فيه صورة السيد المسيح التي  
كان قد بعث بها إلى أبحر الخامس ملك الرها (١) وإيوانيس  
آل الرصافي الرهاوي من كبار رجال الدولة الرومية وأعظم  
أغنياء الرها الذي أنزل في داره الملك الفارسي كسرى الثاني  
أبرويز . واستعمل في مادبه الآنية الذهبية والفضية فقط .  
فكانت الموائد والبصواني والصحون والملاعق والأقداح وكل  
حاجات المائدة من الذهب والفضة (٢) والرئيس ماروثا بن  
حبيب التكريتي الذي ابتاع في القرن الثامن « دير السريان »  
المشهور في مصر من البطريك الاسكندري باثني عشر الف  
دينار . والكاتب علي بن سوار المعروف بابن الحمار البغدادي  
الذي جدد في القرن العاشر قبة كنيسة القيامة قبلة النصرانية (٣)  
وآل أبي عمران التكريتيون الذين استوطنوا مدينة ملطية سنة  
٩٩١ وابتنوا فيها وفي ضواحيها أدياراً للربان والرواهب .  
وتعهدوا أهل البؤس بالصدقات فحسدتهم على ثروتهم باسيليوس

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- (١) تاريخ مار ميخائيل الكبير مج ٢ ص ٤٤٧ - ٤٤٩ والتاريخ المدني  
السرياني لابن العبري ص ١١٢ - ١١٣ والرهاوي المجهول مج ١ ص ٢٩٤ -  
٢٩٥ .  
(٢) التاريخ المدني السرياني لابن العبري ص ٩٢ - ٩٤ والرهاوي المجهول  
مج ١ ص ٢١٦ و ٢٢١ - ٢٢٤ .  
(٣) راجع ما كتبه المؤرخ الرومي الملكي يحيى بن سعيد الانطاكي في ذيله  
على تاريخ سعيد بن بطريق ج ٢ ص ١٢٥ و ٢٤٠ .

خلورس التي صرفت هممتها في تأييد الدين المبين بعد تنصر ابنها  
قسطنطين الكبير . وأنشأت كنائس جليلة في أورشليم والأماكن  
المقدسة والرها وطنها وحلب وغيرها من البلدان . واستحقت  
ابنها على عقد المجمع النيقاوي نصرة للحق . واكتشفت خشبة  
الصليب المقدس . والامبراطورة ثاودورة ( ٥٤٨ + ) ابنة  
قسيس منبج السرياني (١) وزوجة القيصر يوسطينيان البيزنطي  
التي بذلت كل ما في وسعها في سبيل خير كنيستها السريانية .  
وسط المظالم الوحشية التي أثارها عليها البيزنطيون . والقائد  
السرياني المنبجي في جيش هرقل ومن أسرة البطريرك الانطاكي  
اثناسيوس الأول المعروف بالجمال ( ٦٣١ + ) الذي استرجع  
سنة ٦١٤ خشبة الصليب من الفرس وسلمها إلى هرقل (٢).  
والزعيم الكبير بطرس بن يوسف الحمصي الذي شيد في حمص  
نحو سنة ٤٨٠ دير مار باسوس العظيم . وأثنه وزينه وحبس  
عليه قرى كما مر معنا (٣) . واثناسيوس آل جوميا الرهاوي  
الذي جعله الخليفة الأموي عبد الملك بن مروان ( ٦٨٥ - ٧٠٥ )  
كاتباً ومدبراً لأخيه الفتى عبد العزيز حين أقره على إمرة  
مصر . وأصاب ثروة طائلة واقتنى أربعة آلاف عبد وقصوراً

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(١) تاريخ الراهب القرتميني السرياني طبعة لوفان سنة ١٩٥٣ ص ١٩٢  
والتاريخ المدني السرياني لابن العبري ص ٧٨ .

(٢) تاريخ مار ميخائيل الكبير ص ٤١٨ - ٤١٩ .

(٣) سير الشهداء والقديسين طبعة بيجان مج ٤ ص ٤٧١ - ٥٠٥ ( سيرة

مار باسوس ) .

وما بين النهرين (١) .

## ١٦ - نظريات علماءها

وانك لتجد عند هؤلاء نوابغ السريان كثيراً من النظريات التي هلك لها الغربيون حين أبرزها علماءؤهم . منها نظرية هرذر الفيلسوف الألماني « الإنسان عالم صغير » التي تجدها عند مار أحو دامه الجاثليق والشهيد السرياني في القرن السادس في كتابه « الإنسان عالم صغير » ونظرية غليليو الفلكي الإيطالي القائلة بدوران الأرض التي تراها عند الأسقف السرياني الرهاوي في القرن العاشر في كتابه « علة كل العلل » . وفي هذا الكتاب نفسه ترى تماماً نظرية نيتشه الفيلسوف الألماني « الإنسان الكامل » .

## ١٧ - أعيانها

وقد أنجبت الكنيسة السريانية الأرثوذكسية أبناء بررة زادوا عن حياضها بكل ما أوتوا من قوة وحيوية . منهم : أبحر الخامس ملك الرها الذي راسل السيد المسيح ووطد دعائم المسيحية في بلاده . والملكة هيلانة الرهاوية ( ٣٢٦ + ) ابنة قسيس قرية « فجي » السرياني (٢) وزوجة القيصر قسطنس

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(١) سير نساك المشرق بقلم يوحنا الأنسي .

(٢) تاريخ اغابوريوس بن قسطنطين الرومي المنبجعي من مؤرخي القرن العاشر

للميلاد . وتاريخ جرجس ابن العميد التكريتي السرياني ( ١٢٧٤ + ) .

( ١٢٤١ + ) اللاهوتي واللغوي . والبطريرك يوحنا بن  
المعدني ( ١٢٦٣ + ) الخطيب المفرد والشاعر المجيد . والمفريان  
مار غريغوريوس بن العبري ( ١٢٨٦ + ) دائرة معارف  
القرن الثالث عشر (١) .

## ١٥ - طلابها الجامعيون

وكان طلاب العلم السريان : فضلا عن اغترافهم من  
مناهلهم العلمية الخاصة يتوافدون إلى كليات بيروت والاسكندرية  
للتخرج في الحقوق والآداب . ومن أشهر خريجي كلية بيروت  
الفقهية الطائفة الصيت من السريان بعد انقسام الكنيسة :  
أوكسون أخو أوسطاثاوس متروبوليت بيروت ( ٤٤٣ -  
٤٦٠ ) (٢) . وأوغريس السميساطي الفيلسوف النبيل عراب  
القديس سويريوس الانطاكي . ومار سويريوس الانطاكي  
نفسه . وكان ثلاثهم من أساتذة الكلية المذكورة . وزكريا  
الفصيح أسقف مدلي . ويوحنا روفس القس الانطاكي الذي  
كتب للبطريرك بطرس الثاني الانطاكي ( ٤٨٨ + ) واليشع  
الليقي وزنودور الغزي وأنسطاس الرهاوي من رفاق مار  
سويريوس (٣) . والناسك الكبير توما ابن حاكم بلاد سوريا

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- (١) راجع المؤلف المنشور في تاريخ العلوم والآداب السريانية تأليف قداسة  
البطريرك أفرام الأول برصوم طبعة حمص سنة ١٩٤٣ .  
(٢) تاريخ زكريا الفصيح مج ١ ص ١٨٢ .  
(٣) سيرة مار سويريوس الانطاكي بقلم زكريا الفصيح .

الملافة . ومار فيلوكسينوس المنبجي ( ٥٢٣ + ) من أقطاب  
الزمان . وبولس الرقي ( ٥٢٨ + ) من كبار الأدباء . ومار  
وحنا التلي ( ٥٣٨ + ) من ثقات علم الفقه . والقديس  
يسويريوس الانطاكي ( ٥٣٨ + ) تاج السريان وأمير البيان ،  
ويوحنا بن أفتونيا ( ٥٣٨ + ) من بلغاء الكتاب . وزكريا  
الفصيح المؤرخ والفقهاء ( القرن السادس ) والجاثليق مار أحو دامه  
( ٥٧٥ + ) الفيلسوف اللاهوتي . والقديس مار يعقوب  
البرادعي ( ٥٧٨ + ) المجاهد الرسولي . ويوحنا الأفسسي  
( ٥٨٧ + ) المؤرخ الكبير والبشير الشهير . وقس بن ساعده  
( ٦٠٠ + ) أسقف نجران الحطيب والحكيم . وساويرا سابوخت  
( ٦٦٧ + ) الفيلسوف والفلكي والرياضي ناقل الأرقام الهندية .  
والأخطل ( نحو ٧١٠ م ) الشاعر التغلبي المشهور . ومار  
يعقوب الرهاوي ( ٧٠٨ + ) بحر العلماء وقطبهم . وأنطون  
التكريتي الامام اللغوي ( القرن التاسع ) . والبطريك ديونيسيوس  
التمحري ( ٨٤٥ + ) المؤرخ المعروف . واوانيس الداري  
( ٨٦٠ + ) اللاهوتي والمفسر القدير ، ومار موسى بن كيفا  
( ٩٠٣ + ) الفيلسوف والمفسر وملفان البيعة . ويحيى بن  
عدي ( ٩٧٤ + ) شيخ الفلاسفة وإمام النقلة المجودين .  
والأسقف الرهاوي الفيلسوف مؤلف كتاب « علة كل العلل »  
( القرن العاشر ) . وديونيسيوس بن صليبي ( ١١٧١ + )  
المفسر الطائر الصيت . والبطريك مار ميخائيل الكبير  
( ١١٩٩ + ) المؤرخ المشهور . وسويريوس يعقوب البرطلي



أساتذتها وطلابها . ومدرسة دير قرتمين التي فتحت أبوابها منذ منتصف المئة الخامسة وتخرج فيها أربعة بطاركة وسبعة وسبعون أسقفياً . وعاماً حتى القرن الحادي عشر . ومدرسة دير قنسرين التي كانت أكبر مدرسة لاهوتية علمية منذ القرن السادس حتى القرن التاسع فالحادي عشر . وتخرج فيها سبعة بطاركة . ومدرسة دير مار متى التي ازدهرت في النصف الثاني من القرن السابع حتى أواخر القرن الثالث عشر . ومدرسة دير مار حنانيا المعروف بدير الزعفران التي كانت مباءة للعلم زمنياً مديداً وأنجبت واحداً وعشرين بطريركاً . ومدرسة دير مار برصوم التي اشتغلت بالعلم والثقافة منذ القرن الثامن حتى الثالث عشر وتخرج فيها خمسة بطاركة .

#### ١٤ - علماءها

وقد نبغ فيها جهابذة تشي بهم الأصابع وتعتقد عليهم الخناصر وكانوا المجليين في حلبة العالم . فاتخذ العرب الفاتحون كثيرين منهم أساتذة استعانوا بهم في نقل كثير من الآليف السريانية واليونانية إلى العربية وكانت في كل فن ومطلب . أشهرهم : ططيانس الفيلسوف (١٨٠ م) ولوقيانس (٣١٢ +) مؤسس المدرسة الانطاكية . وأوسابيوس أسقف حمص (٣٥٩ +) ومار أفرام نبي السريان وشمسههم (٣٧٣ +) والذهبي الفهم (٤٠٧ +) أمير المنابر الذي لا يجارى . ومار بالاي الملقان . ومار يعقوب السروجي (٥٢١ +) كنارة الروح المقدس وإكليل

و  
مار قوما العمودي العجائبي الذي أحيى ميتاً .

### ١٣ - مدارسها

واشتغلت بجميع أصناف العلوم من لاهوتية وفلسفية ومنطقية وطبية ولغوية وتاريخية ورياضية وفلكية وما إليها . وأنشأت كثيراً من معاهد العلم كانوا يأتون إليها من كل فج عميق . وكان لها أثر بالغ في تاريخ الثقافة . أشهرها مدرسة انطاكية اللاهوتية التي أنشأها مار ثوقيانس السرياني السميساطي سنة ٢٩٠ . وانحطت بظهور البدعة النسطورية سنة ٤٣٠ . ومدرسة نصيبين التي أسسها مار يعقوب النصيبيني في الربع الأول من القرن الرابع وعلم فيها ملفاننا الكبير مار أفرام السرياني حتى سنة ٣٦٣ التي فيها اضطروا واصلتها إلى مغادرة نصيبين هرباً من سابور الثاني الفارسي . ومدرسة الرها التي وسعها مار أفرام سنة ٣٦٣ وفتح فيها كنوزه العلمية حتى وافته المنية عام ٣٧٣ وقد لعبت دوراً مهماً في عالم اللاهوت والأدب والفلسفة . ونقل المؤلفات اليونانية اللاهوتية والفلسفية إلى اللغة السريانية حتى دعيت « أثينا سوريا » (١) وكان يؤمها الطلاب من جميع البلاد الشرقية ولا سيما الفارسية فسميت مدرسة الفرس . وفي سنة ٤٨٩ قوضها القديس قورا مطران الرها والملك المؤمن زينون لتغلغل التعليم النسطوري بين

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(١) دائرة المعارف البريطانية طبعة ١١ ، مج ١٩ ص ٤٠٧ .

نحو سنة ٣٥٠ . ومار ابراهيم الرهاوي - القيدوني ( ٣٦٦ + )  
منصر قرية قيدونا . ومار يوليان الشيخ منشىء دير في جبل  
حسماي بقرب الفرات في القرن الرابع ومجترح المعجزات . ومن  
تلاميذه أفاق مطران حلب المشهور . وفي القرن التالي أنشأ  
السريان باسمه ديراً بظاهر القريتين - حمص حوى شيئاً من  
رفاته . وقد اغتصبته فرنسا المحتلة معتبرة إياد من أملاكها !  
ومار متى الشيخ الأبحر شاطي - آمد في القرن الرابع صاحب  
الدير المعروف باسمه في جبل الفاف - الموصل . ومنصر  
الشهيدين مار بهنام وأخته سارة ووالدهما سنحريب حاكم أثور  
وكثيرين من كورة نينوى . وما زالت معجزاته الحارقة تتعاقب  
حتى يومنا هذا . ومار عبدا مؤسس دير في المدائن عاصمة  
الفرس ، وهادي جمهور من المجوس إلى الدين المسيحي . ومن  
تلاميذه عبديشوع الناسك السرياني الذي أنشأ دير مار توماً  
جنوبي قطر . كان أهلاً بمثي راهب في حدود سنة ٣٩٠ .  
ومار صموئيل الصوري - شمالي ماردين . المعروف بالمشتيني  
الذي بنى دير قرتمين المشهور بدير مار كبرئيل سنة ٣٩٧ .  
ومار مارون على ضفاف العاصي ( ٤١٠ م ) ومار برصوم  
( ٤٥٧ + ) رئيس النساك . العجائبي والمجاهد في سبيل  
الإيمان الأرثوذكسي . الذي اجتذب إلى الدين المسيحي خلقاً  
كثيراً من الوثنيين واليهود وأنشأ بعض الكنائس . ومار شمعون  
( سمعان ) العمودي ( ٤٥٩ + ) المتشف والمبشر الذي هدى  
إلى حظيرة يسوع كثيرين من العرب واللبنانيين وغيرهم .

المشهور شرقي مديات - طور عبيدين - الذي عمره سنة ٣٩٧  
الناسك السرياني مار صموئيل المعروف بالمشتيني وتلميذه مار  
شمعون القرتميني بحسب التصميم الذي أظهره له الملاك . وقد  
جاد القيصران هنوريوس وأرقاديوس لبنائه بمال جزيل .  
وأطلق عليه بعدئذ اسم رئيسه ومطرانته مار كبرئيل ( ٦٦٧ + ) .  
وحوى خزانة كتب ثمينة اشتهرت منذ القرن الثامن . ودير مار  
توما في قنسرين على شاطئ الفرات الذي أنشأه سنة ٥٣٠  
العالم السرياني مار يوحنا بن أفنونيا وقد عصف به الدهر في  
القرون الوسطى . ودير مار برصوم الشهير بقرب ملطية الذي  
صار كرسياً بطريكياً في القرن الحادي عشر ثم اندثر . ودير  
مار حنانيا المعروف بدير الزعفران شرقي ماردين . وهو دير  
كبير ، صار كرسياً بطريكياً منذ سنة ١٢٩٣ . ودير مار بهنام  
ويعرف بدير الحب في ولاية اثور الذي اغتصبته الفرقة المنفصلة  
عن الكنيسة السريانية سنة ١٨٣٨ . ودير مار باسوس في  
حمص الذي بلغ عدد رهبانه في القرن السادس ستة آلاف  
وثلاثمئة . وطمست أخباره على تراخي الزمن . ودير مار  
مرقس في القدس وسيا تي الكلام عنه .

## ١٢ - نساكها

واشتهر بين نساكها الكثيرين : مار هيلاريون ( ٢٨٨ -  
٣٧١ ) مؤسس الرهبنة في فلسطين وسوريا ، وهادي العرب .  
أهل بلدة الحلاصة جنوبي بحيرة لوط الذين حادثوه بالسريانية

الدنيا وندفوا غبارها عن أقدامهم وروضوا نفوسهم على  
التقوى والبتولية والعفاف والتواضع والطاعة والصوم والصلاة  
فضلاً عن اشتغالهم بصنوف العلوم . فأسدوا الى المجتمع  
البشري فضلاً عميماً . ذلك أنهم هذبوا أخلاقاً . وهدوا أمماً  
إلى الدين المبين . ورفعوا رايات الثقافة في كل الأصقاع .  
وطوقوا العلم بقلائد نفيسة . وخلدوا أصناف العلوم والفنون  
بمجلدات ضخمة . وإذا علمت أنه في القرن الخامس كان في  
جبل الرها وحده ثلاثمائة دير يقيم فيها تسعون الف راهب كما  
مر معنا . وفي القرن السادس أمضى رسالة الايمان مئة وخمسة  
وثلاثون رئيس دير في سوريا الجنوبية وحدها : أدركت ولا  
شك أن عدد الرهبان السريان بلغ في ذلك العصر الذهبي  
الستمائة الف !!!

## ١١ - أديارها

وأشهر هذه الأديار : دير مار متى على جبل الفاف شرقي  
الموصل . وهو دير عظيم . أنشأه في أواخر القرن الرابع  
سنحريب حاكم أثور ووآلد الشهيدين مار بهنام وأخته سارة .  
إجابة إلى رغبة مار متى الناسك السرياني . وقد بلغ عدد  
رهبانه في القرن التالي اثني عشر ألفاً . واشتهرت مكتبته النفيسة  
في أواخر القرن السابع . وهي تحتفظ الآن بأجمل ترجمة للإنجيل  
المقدس من السريانية إلى العربية ، تظن أنها الترجمة التي عملها  
بطيركنا يوحنا أبو السدرات كما أسلفنا . ودير قرتمين

ومار حبيب الشماس الرهاوي والقديس بمفيلس القس البيروتي سنة ٣٠٩ ومار لوقيانس السميساطي مؤسس مدرسة أنطاكية اللاهوتية سنة ٣١٢ ومار سلوانس أسقف حمص الذي صار فريسة للوحوش في مسرح حمص سنة ٣١٢ ومار شمعون برصباعي ( ٣٤١ + ) وشهدوست ( ٣٤٣ + ) وربعشمين ( ٣٤٦ + ) مطارنة المشرق ومار آباي ومار بهنام بن سنحريب حاكم أثور ومار يوحنا ابن النجارين ( أواخر القرن الرابع ) ومار باسوس ( ٣٨٨ + ) ومار برسهيدي مطران دير مار متى الذي فتك به برصوم النصيبيني النسطوري سنة ٤٨٠ ومار فيلوكسينوس مطران منبج وملفان الكنيسة الذي خنقه البيزنطيون بالدخان سنة ٥٢٣ ومار أحودامه جاثليق المشرق ( ٥٧٥ + ) والمفريان مار شمعون المانعمي ( ١٧٤٠ + ) .

## ١٠ - وهبتها

وعززت شأن الرهبنة - فلسفة الدين المسيحي - فأست منذ القرن الرابع للميلاد . مئات من الأديار ، في أصقاع كثيرة من ولاية الكرسي الأنطاكي ، أي في سواحل فلسطين الجنوبية وبادية الشام وبرية قورس والجزيرة ، وجبال الرها والإزل ( ماسيوس ) المشرف على نصيبين وطورعبدین . وقردو ، والفاف في العراق ، وماردين وضواحي قيصرية قبادوقية والبنطس وملطية . وبلاد فارس والهند ، انضوى إليها ألوف بل ربوات من الرجال والنساء عزفوا عن زهرات

علمائنا العرب من بني طي وتنوخ وعقيل : الانجيل المقدس  
من السريانية إلى العربية بأمر من بطريركنا القديس يوحنا أبي  
السدرات . إجابة إلى رغبة عمير بن سعد بن أبي وقاص  
الأنصاري أمير الجزيرة . وفي سنة ١٢٢١ نقله من السريانية  
إلى اللغة الفارسية الأستاذ يوحنا ابن القس يوسف السرياني  
التفليسي برسم السلطان علاء الدين بن كيخسرو بن قليج  
أرسلان . وفي أوائل القرن التاسع عشر نقله الراهب  
فيلبس السرياني الملباري من السريانية إلى الميام – لغة ملبار  
الهند – وفي الربع الأول من القرن العشرين نقل الملفان الحوري  
متى السرياني الملباري العهد الجديد من السريانية إلى الميام .

#### ٩ – شهادتها

وقدمت أوفياً من الشهداء . إثباتاً لحقها وتأيداً لصدق  
إيمانها . أشهرهم بعد الرسل والمبشرين : مار اغناطيوس  
النوراني ثالث بطاركة أنطاكية الذي صار فريسة للوحوش في  
رومية سنة ١٠٧ . ومار شربيل الرهاوي الذي نشر بالمنشار  
سنة ١٠٥ . والقديس سمعان أسقف أورشليم الذي صلب سنة  
١٠٦ وشمشون أسقف حدياب ( أربيل ) الذي قتله المجوس  
سنة ١٢٣ لتعميده منهم خلقاً . والقديس بابولا الانطاكي سنة  
٢٥١ ومار جرجس الطائر الصيت سنة ٣٠٣ ومار عزرائيل  
السميساطي ، ومار قوزما ومار دوميان الطبيبان من بلاد  
العرب ومار كوريا ومار شمونا الناسكان الرهاويان سنة ٣٠٦

## ٧ - نشرها لغتها السريانية

واهتمت بنشر لغتها السريانية الوطنية بين مختلف الشعوب الشرقية . منها الكنائس العربية والفارسية والهندية التي استعملت الطقوس السريانية في عبادتها . فأتقن اللغة السريانية كثيرون منهم ونقلوا الكتاب المقدس منها إلى لغاتهم . ومنها أيضاً الكنيسة الأرمنية التي استعملت اللغة السريانية وكتبت لغتها المحكية بالأبجدية السريانية . فنبغ بعض أساقفتها بالسريانية . بل أن ميسروب أحد علمائها اخترع الأبجدية الأرمنية بمساعدة الاستاذ دانيال السرياني . وقد رعاها بعض أساقفة سريان . منهم الأسقف دانيال سنة ٣٤٧ والجاثليق خريستوفوروس في أواسط القرن السادس (١) .

## ٨ - عنايتها بالكتاب المقدس

واجتهدت في نشر الكتاب المقدس بين مختلف الشعوب . فقد غاص في محيطه الواسع ملافتها العظام واستخرجوا لآله اللآلاء طوقوا بها جيد البشرية . وعلاوة على اهتمامهم البالغ به بلغتهم السريانية . متناولين إياه درساً وترجمة وتفسيراً : فقد عنوا بنقله إلى بعض اللغات الحية أيضاً . ففي حدود سنة ٤٠٤ تعاون الملقان دانيال السرياني والأستاذ ميسروب الأرمني على نقله من السريانية إلى الأرمنية . ونحو سنة ٦٤٣ نقل

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(١) التاريخ الكنسي لابن العبري المقالة الثانية في ترجمة مار احو دامه .



المشهور « دياطسرون » أي مزيج الأناجيل الأربعة .  
فاستعملته كنيسة الكنائس المجاورة حتى القرن الخامس .  
وفيهما لمع برديسان الفيلسوف والشاعر السرياني المجيد (٢٢٢+)  
وانتشرت فيها وفي ضواحيها الكنائس والأديرة ولا سيما في  
جبلها الذي سمي « الجبل المقدس » لكثرة الأديرة والصوامع  
التي ازدان بها . ذكر المؤرخون أنه كان فيها ثلاثمئة دير .  
يقيم فيها في عهد الملك ثاودوسيوس الثاني ( ٤٠٨ - ٤٥٠ )  
تسعون الف راهب .

## ٦ - أثرها في التبشير بالانجيل

وحملت الكنيسة السريانية الأرثوذكسية مشعل الانجيل  
الوضاء إلى مختلف البلاد والشعوب . ولا سيما القبائل العربية :  
التغالبة والحميريين والقطريين وبني كندة وبني طي وعقيل  
وتنوخ والغساسنة والنمر وبني شيبان « ثعلبة » وبني بكر بن  
وائل في ديار بكر وقسم من المناذرة . والفرس والأفغان  
والهنود وأهل الصين . كما كانت لها يد بيضاء على نصرانية  
الأرمن . وفي القرن السادس هدت جماعاً غفيراً من الأحباش  
بواسطة القس يوليان السرياني . وثمانين الفاً من الوثنيين في  
بلاد آسيا الصغرى وقاريا وفروجيا ولوديا بواسطة مار يوحنا  
السرياني الآمدي أسقف أفسس . وبهمة الامبراطورة ثاودورة  
السريانية زوجة يوسطينيان البيزنطي .

القرون الأولى كانوا يوناناً جنساً كما كان مثلاً انيقطس بن يوحنا السرياني الحمصي (١) أسقفاً لرومية (١٥٥ - ١٦٨ م) . ذلك ان الكنيسة المسيحية في صدرها كانت تتوخى العقيدة لا الجنسية .

### ٥ - مدينة الرها السريانية

واشتهرت بين المدن السريانية : مدينة الرها . وهي من أقدم مدن الشرق وكانت عاصمة أمارة سريانية في ما بين النهريين العليا . يحكمها الملوك السريانين المعروفون بالأباجرة الذين رفعوا رايهم فوقها مدة أربعة قرون . تأسست سنة ١٣٢ ق. م. على يد الملك السرياني أريو ودالت سنة ٢٤٤ على عهد ملكها أفراهاظ ابجر الحادي عشر . وكانت لغتها السريانية الفصحى (٢) . وقد عاصر السيد المسيح ملكها ابجر الخامس أو كومو الذي أنفذ إليه رسالة بالسريانية وتناول منه جواباً مباركاً إياه ومدينته كما أثبت أوسابيوس القيسري (٣) والمؤرخون الثقات . وكان أدى أخو مار توما الرسول وأحد السبعين مبشراً : بشيرها الخاص وأول أساقفتها . ثم أصبحت أم كنائس ما بين النهريين وثالثة المتروبوليتيات اللائذة بالكرسي الأنطاكي . وفيها ألف ططيانس الفيلسوف السرياني نحو سنة ١٧٢ كتابه

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(١) تاريخ حمص ص ٣٩٣ .

(٢) كتاب المدخل الى النحو السرياني لابن العبري .

(٣) تاريخه الكنسي ١ : ١٣ .

## ٤ - الأعلام اللاتينية واليونانية فيها

ولا عبرة بوجود أسماء أعلام لاتينية أو يونانية لبعض البطارقة والأساقفة في أنطاكية وفي الأبرشيات السريانية الأخرى . ذلك أن السريان كغيرهم اتخذوا هذه الأسماء بتأثير الدولة اليونانية والأدب اليوناني السائد في الشرق يومذاك . منهم القديس « النوراني » ثالث بطاركة انطاكية ( ١٠٧ + ) الذي مع كونه سرياني المحتد استبدل اسمه السرياني « باغناطيوس » اللاتيني الذي يعني « النوراني » أيضاً . وهكذا كان يفعل الكثير من الأدباء السريان الآراميين ، فيبدلون أسماءهم السريانية بأسماء يونانية . منهم برفيريوس الفيلسوف الصوري الآرامي ( ٢٣٣ - ٣٠٥ ) م الذي استبدل اسمه « ملكو » السرياني « برفيريوس » اليوناني (١) والقديس « أحسنايا » المنبجي ( ٥٢٣ + ) الملقب السرياني الشهير الذي تقل اسمه السرياني عند تسقفه إلى فيلوكسينوس الاسم اليوناني . ولكي تتأكد من سريانية أولئك الآباء راجع « رحلة سيلفيا » إلى الأماكن المقدسة في ختام القرن الرابع ترها تصف أسقف أورشليم بأنه مع كونه يعرف السريانية ، يخطب دوماً باليونانية . فتنقل خطبه إلى السريانية مباشرة بواسطة كاهن يقف إلى جانبه (٢) . على أننا لا ننكر أن بعض بطاركة أنطاكية في

(١) تاريخ حمص تأليف الحوري عيسى أسود طبعة حمص ١٩٢٩ ص ٢٨٢ .

(٢) رحلة سيلفيا ٥ : ٥ .

## ٢ - مركز رئاستها

وكان مركز رئاستها مدينة أنطاكية عاصمة سوريا في صدر النصرانية ، حيث أسس القديس بطرس الرسول كرسيه الرسولي وصار أول بطاركته . ومع وجود جالية يونانية فيها إلى جانب الوطنيين السريان ، فقد استعمات كنيستها الطقوس السرياني . والليتورجية السريانية الأنفة الذكر . فبحق إذن نسمي الأبرشية الأنطاكية باسم الكنيسة السريانية .

## ٣ - حدود رئاستها

وامتدت رئاسة كرسيها الانطاكي إلى أقصى الشرق المسيحي على اختلاف أجناسه . وبعبارة أخرى على آسيا كلها . وقد أيد هذه الرئاسة مجمع نيقية سنة ٣٢٥ بقانونه السادس . ومجمع القسطنطينية سنة ٣٨١ بقانونه الثاني . وكان هذا الكرسي يرئس في أوج عزه اثني عشر كرسياً مطرانياً ومئة وسبعة وثلاثين كرسياً أسقفياً في الشرق الروماني وحده . وفي القرنين التاسع والعاشر كان يرئس عشرين كرسياً مطرانياً ومئة وثلاثة كراسي أسقفية . أي كان يخضع له أساقفة بلاد سوريا وفونيقية وبلاد العرب وفلسطين وقيليقية وقبرص وما بين النهرين وبلاد الفرس والهند . بل كانت الكنيسة السريانية الأرثوذكسية في عهد الخلفاء العباسيين ممتدة من الصين إلى أورشليم فقبرص .

## ١ - الكنيسة السريانية الأرثوذكسية

هي سليلة تلك الأمة العظيمة المتحدرة من آشور وآرام  
ابني سام بن نوح . والمستوطنة منذ أقدم العصور بلاد سوريا  
ولبنان وفلسطين وما بين النهرين العليا والسفلى حتى خليج  
فارس شرقاً وقبرص غرباً . اعتنقت الدين المسيحي المبين في  
صدره على أيدي السيد المسيح ورسله ومبشره الأولين .  
فكانت أول كنيسة مسيحية ظهرت في أورشليم واليهودية  
وفلسطين . واستعملت في عبادتها : اللغة السريانية المقدسة ،  
لغتها الوطنية . ولغة السيد المسيح ووالدته الطوباوية ورسله  
الأطهار (١) . بل بلغتها احتفلت المسيحية في أورشليم بالقربان  
المقدس لأول مرة . وقد تبنت الليتورجية الأولى ، ليتورجية  
القديس يعقوب أخي الرب أول أساقفة أورشليم ، التي دونت  
باللغة السريانية ، وعنها تناقلتها كنائس اليونان والرومان .  
وبلغتها سمعت أحداث البشارة الخلاصية لأول مرة . وبها  
تناقش سنة ٥١ م المجمع الرسولي الأورشليمي أساس المجامع  
وأعظمها شرفاً .

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(١) كتاب الظهور الالهي لاوسابيوس التيميري ٤ : ٦ .

## توطئة



سألنا بعضهم أن نكتب لمحة في الكنيسة السريانية الأرثوذكسية وأثرها في المجتمع البشري ، لذلك نضع هذه الضميمة العباقة بين يديك أيها القارئ الكريم لتستنشق منها عبير أجداد هذه الكنيسة العريقة ، وتحني الرأس أمام عظمتها وصمودها كالطود الشامخ حيال طوارىء الزمان وطوارق الحدثان . ذلك أنها تأسست على صخرة الإيمان التي لن تقهرها أمحال الهاوية . وليس لنا من وراء ذلك سوى تمجيد الله وخدمة كنيسته .

بيروت ١٥ نيسان ١٩٥٧

+ سويريوس

אֲנִי מְחַבֵּב מְאֹד לְךָ הַלֵּב הַזֶּה וְלֹא מְחַבֵּב כְּבִישׁ מִשָּׁהוּ  
מִשָּׁהוּ אֲלֵפִים, אֲלֵכָה בְּהַתְּחִילָה הַלֵּב  
מִן הַיָּמִים הַזֵּה לְךָ מִן הַיָּמִים הַזֵּה  
לִּי מִשָּׁהוּ הַיָּמִים הַזֵּה לְךָ מִשָּׁהוּ לְךָ מִשָּׁהוּ  
אֲלֵכָה מִשָּׁהוּ הַיָּמִים הַזֵּה לְךָ מִשָּׁהוּ לְךָ מִשָּׁהוּ  
אֲלֵכָה מִשָּׁהוּ הַיָּמִים הַזֵּה לְךָ מִשָּׁהוּ לְךָ מִשָּׁהוּ  
אֲלֵכָה מִשָּׁהוּ הַיָּמִים הַזֵּה לְךָ מִשָּׁהוּ לְךָ מִשָּׁהוּ  
אֲלֵכָה מִשָּׁהוּ הַיָּמִים הַזֵּה לְךָ מִשָּׁהוּ לְךָ מִשָּׁהוּ  
אֲלֵכָה מִשָּׁהוּ הַיָּמִים הַזֵּה לְךָ מִשָּׁהוּ לְךָ מִשָּׁהוּ

+ *Handwritten signature*

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# الكنيسة السريانية الارثوذكسية

بقلم

سويريوس يعقوب

متروبوليت بيروت ودمشق وتوابعهما للسريان

بيروت ١٩٥٧





١٩٥٧

# الكنيسة السريانية الارثوذكسية

بقلم

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بيروت ١٩٥٧







## About The Author

The very Rev. Dr. Paul Ramban was born in 1914 at Parur in the noble family of the late lamented Kadavil Poulouse Mar Athanasius Metropolitan. He had a distinguished academic career. I know him since 1936. He is the grand nephew of the late lamented Ambat .Geevarghese Mar Coorilos Metropolitan, Kadavil Poulouse Mar Athanasius Metropolitan and Painadath Poulouse Mar Athanasius the Metropolitan of Malankara as well as the nephew of Painadath Geevarghese Mar Gregorios Metropolitan. He has travelled wide and is well read. He is well known as an author, speaker and retreat father. He leads a quiet life of humility and sacrifice. I wish his book all good luck.

Fr. M. Varghese Kocheril  
Alwaye.

## Other Works By The Author

Bible and India, Student Today, Vedanadam, Two Old Men, Daily Meditations, Acharya Sahai, Meditations On the Mother, Four Jacobite Liturgies, Meaning and Interpretation Of the Eucharist, Thesmestho De Kurobo, Daily Common Prayers, Promiyons and Sedras of S'heemo Prayers, The India, U. K. and U. S. A. I saw, Sheema Yathra, Five years in Central Jail and The Bible Reading Calendar.

Of these all but the last four are out of print. There are a few other works by the author not yet published.