

THE SYRIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OF ANTIOCH AT A GLANCE

By

MAR IGNATIUS ZAKKA I IWAS

Patriarch of Antioch and All the East

Translated into English

By

EMMANUEL H. BISMARJI



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H. H. MAR
IGNATIUS ZAKKA I, IWAS

PATRIARCH OF ANTIOCH AND ALL THE EAST AND THE
SUPREME HEAD OF THE UNIVERSAL SYRIAN
ORTHODOX CHURCH

INTRODUCTION

BY THE TRANSLATOR

The Syrian Orthodox Church is the oldest known church, after the Church of Jerusalem. Syriac is its official language, which had been the dominant language in all the East for a long period of time. Jesus spoke it, since it was the main prevailing language at that time. The domain of the church extended over all of Syria, Palestine, Celicia, Mesopotamia and Persia. Because of its influence in this whole area, its trace is still obvious in the Syriac names of several places and villages up to this date.

In spite of the difficulties, intrigues, persecution and divisions it encountered during its long history, the Syrian Orthodox Church still persists in all the world. There are about three million Syrian Orthodox people, about half of them in India, and the rest spread all over the world.

Today this church is fortunate to be headed by a spiritual leader, His Holiness Mar Ignatius Zakka I Iwas, the Syrian Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch and All the East and the Supreme Head of the Universal Syrian Orthodox Church. An authority on church history and other religious matters. His Holiness was born in Mosul, Iraq on April 21, 1933. He got his elementary education in the community schools and continued at St. Ephrem Theological Seminary of Mosul. He graduated in 1954, with honors, and obtained the diploma of said seminary in theology, philosophy, history, canon law, and in Arabic, Syriac and English. In June 1954, he was ordained a monk. In 1955 he became the secretary to the late Patriarch Ephrem I Barsoum, and then to his successor, the late Patriarch Yacoub III, who consecrated him as a priest on Novembre 17, 1957, and awarded him the Holy Cross, in appreciation of his invaluable services. He accompanied the late Patriarch Yacoub in his pastoral visits to Damascus, Lebanon, Egypt, North and South America. In 1960 he joined the General Theological College of the Episcopal Church in New York and the University of New York in the United States of America, where he studied oriental languages and pastoral theology and mastered the English language within two years. In 1962 and 1963, he

was delegated by his predecessor to attend the two sessions of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council as an observer. On November 17, 1963, he was ordained an archbishop of Mosul, then he was transferred to the diocese of Baghdad in 1969, until his election as patriarch on July 11, 1980. In 1967 he was appointed acting bishop for the two bishoprics of Europe, in addition to his diocese. In 1978 and 1980, he was appointed acting bishop to Australia, where he visited the Syrian Orthodox congregation twice and opened a church in Sydney and one in Melbourne. On September 14, 1980, he was enthroned on the See of Peter. He is the author of several books and a member of several academic institutions.

Many books have been written on the Syrian Orthodox Church, but none is as complete and precise as this book. Needless to say, nobody is more competent and well versed to write on this subject than His Holiness, Mar Ignatius Zakka I.

In one of my frequent visits to His Holiness, after he assumed the apostolic see of St. Peter, he asked me if I would be willing to translate this book from Arabic into English. I accepted this difficult task gratefully, as it displayed His Holiness' confidence in me.

Several factors motivated me to accept this job:

1 – The faith in God implanted in me by my parents since my childhood. In gratitude, I dedicate this translation to their memory.

2 – My duty towards the church which I like to serve. And, this field is where I can serve best.

3 – To answer the versatile questions that my American colleagues in the Foreign Service, and other foreign friends ask me about the Syrian Orthodox Church.

For the above reasons and many others, I chose to translate this book. I believe that this translation is one of the very few to be done in this part of the world. Most of the translation of books from Arabic is usually done in Europe and/or in the United States of America; where due to language structure difficulties, the original idea of the book is often lost in the course of translation. Either because of misunderstanding the true intent of the author, or/and because of word by word translation, rather than a literal translation of ideas, the result is a dull piece of literature. One advantage that

worked in my favor, was that I was close to the author who was always more than willing to receive me and discuss certain technical and ecclesiastical expressions, in order to maintain the original idea of the book; and, his door and heart were open at all times to assist me with my job.

Emmanuel

THE SYRIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OF ANTIOCH AT A GLANCE

The Syrian Orthodox Church is the Church of Antioch, whose foundation goes back to the very dawn of Christianity, when Antioch, was the capital of Syria¹ and one of the three capital cities in the Roman Empire². The gospel was first carried to Antioch by some of Christ's disciples who fled Jerusalem because of the Jewish persecution, after the martyrdom of Deacon Stephen about 34 A.D. Antioch was visited by

1 - Dr. Assad Restom, *History of the City of Antioch* (Beirut 1958). Volume 1, p. 14, from the *British Encyclopedia*, 9th ed., Vol. 2, p. 130.

2 - Selucas I Nicatur built the city of Antioch on the Orontes River in Syria in 311 B.C., after the division of the Kingdom of Alexander the Great. He called it Antioch after his father, Antiochus. It was the capital of Seleucids until the Roman conquer in 64 B.C. The Syrians liked it and adopted the first month and the first year of its foundation (October 311 B.C.), as a general date in their religious and civil records. They shifted to the A.D. date only at the beginning of this century.

Barnabas, one of the seventy preachers, and by Paul the Apostle. They both stayed there for a whole year preaching the gospel, following the example of St. Peter who preached the gospel there and established his apostolic see about 37 A.D.

According to some historians, the conversion of the city of Antioch itself was carried out by Peter the Apostle. It was done in two stages: the first was the conversion of the Jews from whose ranks the Christian Church was established;¹ and the second was the conversion of the pagans who included Arameans, Greeks and Arabs. This took place after the settling of the case of Cornelius and his acceptance in the church²

1 - It is believed that Peter the Apostle was in Antioch in 34 A.D., the year he established his see. The Ascension of Jesus was in the year 30 A.D, Paul believed after that date by one year. He came to Jerusalem after three years, that is in the year 34 A.D., he did not find any disciples, except James, our Lord's brother. According to the church rites, Peter was then in Antioch, where he stayed for seven consecutive years, until 41 B.C. Some scholars believe that the birth of Christ took place four years earlier than the date used today.

- See Patriarch Ignatius Yacoub III, Kanisat Antakya Sourya, Damascus 1971, pp 3-6.

2 - Dr. Assad Restom, History of the City of Antioch (Beirut 1958).

- The incident of Cornelius is detailed in Chapters 10 & 11 in the Book of Acts, in the New Testament.

As we go through the events recorded in the New Testament, we find that during St. Peter's second visit to Antioch, he refrained himself from mingling with the converted gentiles, even after their baptism. Because of his fear of the Christians in Jerusalem who had contended with him regarding the reception of Cornelius. However, St. Paul opposed him publicly.¹ Further, some of the Jewish converts compelled gentile converts to be circumcised so that they might become Jews, before they became Christians. In order to settle this problem, a council was held in Jerusalem in 51 A.D. and it was decided that "We trouble not them, which from among the gentiles are turned to God. But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollution of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood". This decision was sent to Antioch through Paul and Barnabas accompanied by Judas surnamed Barnabas and Silas.² This event gives us an idea on the importance of the Syrian Church of Antioch at

1 - The Apostle Paul said to Peter "If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?" - Galatians 2: 14.

- See also Lestus Doueiri, Mujaz Tarikh al - Massihieh (Egypt 1949), p. 55.

2 - Book of Acts, Chapter 15.

the dawn of Christianisty.

The Book of Acts witnesses the earnest zeal that the members of the Church of Antioch had possessed and their consideration for their fellow-men. They collected alms and sent it through Barnabas and Saul to the poor in Jerusalem. The Book of Acts also testifies that it was in Antioch that the disciples of Jesus Christ were first called Christians.¹

When Peter and Paul had to leave Antioch for the sake of preaching, they appointed two bishops, Aphodius who was assigned for the Christians of pagan origin, and Ignatius the Illuminator for those of Jewish origin². The two were spiritually united after 68 A.D. under the auspices of Ignatius the Illuminator. It was he who called the Church of Antioch "The Universal Church", since it comprised both the gentiles and the circumcised. Ignatius of Antioch was the first to apply the adjective "universal" to the Christian Church.³

1 - Book of Acts — 11 : 26

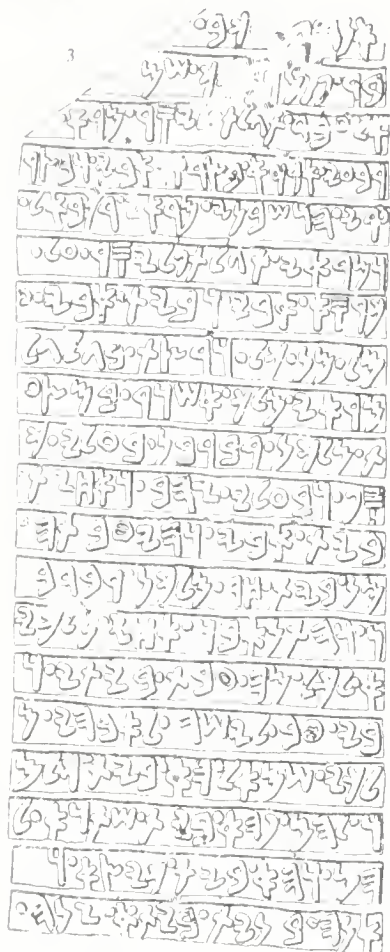
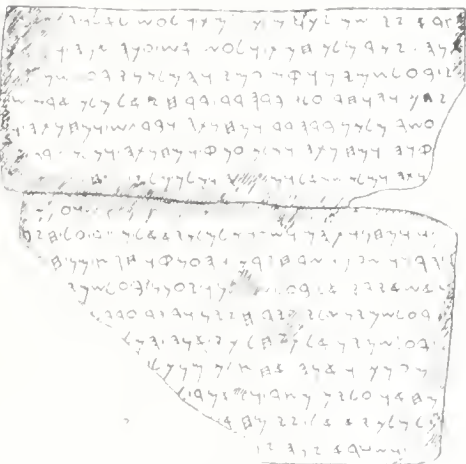
2 - Eusebius of Caesarea, Church History, 3 : 22

3 - Patriarch Yacoub III, Kanisat Antakya Souryia (Damascus 1971).

THE SYRIAC LANGUAGE IN ANTIOCH

The Syriac language is the Aramaic language itself, and the Arameans are the Syrians themselves. Whoever has made a distinction between them has erred. Through the passage of time and developments, Syriac appeared with the Aramaic to call anybody speaking the language – it is a linguistic name. After the spread of Christianity, the name Syriac outweighed the Aramaic, because the disciples, the first preachers of Christianity were Syrians linguistically. In the early centuries, when it was revealed that the disciples spoke Syriac, every Aramean who accepted their teachings and became a Christian, changed his original Aramaic name with a Syrian name. He would be proud to be a Syriac and as a result the Syriac name became a flag for the Christian faith and the Aramaic a synonym for a pagan. To the extent that the Syriac translation "Peshitta" known as simple used the name Aramaic to distinguish a pagan¹. This is how the Aramaic calling of the Christians almost vanished in the land of Aram and replaced by the Syriac calling which became synonymous to Christianity

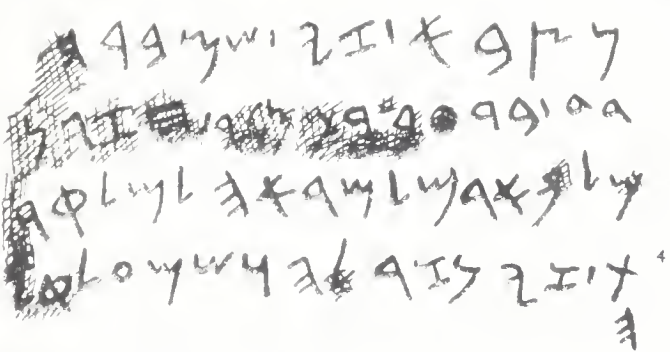
1 - Letter to the Galatians 2 : 14 and 3 : 28



من اقدم
الكتابات
الارامية
في القرنين
التاسع والثامن
قبل الميلاد. نقلت
عن كتاب "الابجدية"
للعالم
دافيد ديرنجر
مع كتابها اوتيسها
ومعها كتابهم وحسبوا
الحبيل مع ما كتبها
وهي من مملكتها. نصيب
مع كتابها "وانك كتابها"
ومعها كتابها
الكتابية التي
ابها كتابها

Fig. 126 - Royal Early Aramaic inscriptions (ninth and eighth centuries B.C.)

- 1. Canaanite-Aramaic inscription of Kilamuwa, son of Khaya (?), king of Yadi.
- 2. Inscription of Zakir, king of Hamath and La'ashor/Lu'ash.
- 3. Inscription of Bar-Rekub, king of Sam'al.
- 4. [Sam'al, a small Aramaic state now represented by the Kurdish hamlet of Zenurlu, had considerable importance in the world of its time". 4. Earliest royal Aramaic inscription, the stela of the Aramaean king Ben Hadad.



from «The ALPHABET» David DERINGER.

Ⲁ	ⲁ	Ⲃ	ⲃ	Ⲅ	ⲅ
(Ⲁ) ⲁ	Ⲃ	ⲃ	Ⲅ	ⲅ	Ⲇ
(Ⲁ) ⲁ	(Ⲃ) Ⲃ	(ⲃ) ⲃ	(Ⲅ) Ⲅ	(ⲅ) ⲅ	(Ⲇ) Ⲇ
ⲇ	Ⲉ	ⲉ	Ⲋ	ⲋ	Ⲍ
ⲍ	Ⲏ	ⲏ	Ⲑ	ⲑ	Ⲓ

الحركات الشرقية
الغربية
قد اقتبس هذه الحركات من الحروف اليونانية
- التي قابلناها بين () بالحروف اللاتينية
هذه الحروف اليونانية بدورها مقدسة كرمز ميلتها من أصل آرمي
(ومعنا نقابل تلك الحروف الآرامية القديمة بالاسطرخيلية):

in heart and soul. Hence, when we say the Syrian Church we mean the Christian Church. The Syriac language is also known as the Aramaic. Originally it was the language of the Arameans¹ who had settled since the 15th century B.C., in the lands of Aram of Damascus and Aram of Mesopotamia.²

This language had spread far and wide in the ancient world, to the extent that the alphabets of many other Oriental languages were developed from Aramaic³. During the reign of King Nabo Blassar, it was the official language of the Babilonian Court, and during the reign of Darius the Great (521 – 486 B.C.), it was also the official language between the various districts

1 - Dr. George Post, Dictionary of the Holy Bible (Beirut 1913), Look under Aram.

- Adai Ashir, History of Kaldo & Athur (Beirut 1973), Vol. 1, p. 16.

- Breasted. Earlier Ages, Chapter 211, p. 109.

- Gregorios Youhanna Bar Habraeus, Summary of Nations (Beirut 1962).

2 - The Greeks called these lands Mesopotamia, that is between two rivers. It comprised upper part of Tigris and the convergence of Tigris and the Euphrates, near the mouth of the river. Aram of Damasscus included inner Syria, Palestine and Lebanon. The word Aram means the elevated land.

3 - Al-Arabi - Arabic Literary Magazine published in Kuwait, No. 81 for 1965.

of the Persian Empire.¹ It attained the status of an international language² in the whole East for a long period of time. The Jews had learned it and used it since the Babilonian conquer in the fifth century B.C., as their common language, at the expense of their own Hebrew language, since they had forgotten it. Jesus Christ and his disciples used Syriac.³

1 - Dr. Philip Hitti, History of Syria, Lebanon and Palestine.

— The First Book of Ezra 4 : 6 & 7.

2 - Dr. Ali Wafi, Feqh Al-Lougha (Cairo 1944), p. 120.

— Chabot. Aramaic Languages. p. 9.

— Kaldō & Athur, 1 : 16.

3 - It is the language known as Palestinian Syriac and sometimes called Hebrew. Eusebius of Caesarea (263 - 339 A.D.), stated in his book 'Al-Dhhour Al-Ilahi, (the Syriac manuscript is kept at the British Museum under No. 12150, it was written in 411 A.D., published by Rev. Paul Bejan in Paris in 1905), about the disciples before being inspired by the Holy Ghost that "They are people from Galilee, knowing nothing except the Syriac language". While the Holy Bible was translated to several languages, however, it kept several expressions in their Syriac forms, e.g. (Abba) meaning father (Gal. 4 : 6) ; (Talitha Cumi) meaning Damsel, I say unto thee, arise (Mathew 9: 23 & Mark 5 : 41) and (Tabitha Cumi) meaning you deer arise (Acts 9 : 40) ; Look also Mathew 27 : 46 ; John 20 : 16 and Acts 1 : 19 , and etc. Parts of the Book of Daniel, Ezra and Nehemiah and all the gospel of Mathew and the Epistle to the Hebrews were written in Syriac. The Holy Bible was totally translated into Syriac towards the end of the first century after Christ, for the benefit of those that became Christians from the Syrians and Jews.

Thereafter it remained dominant over a large section of the Orient, until the end of the 7th century A.D., when Arabic became popular, and Syriac started to decline gradually.¹ Some of its dialects, however, are still being used in Tour Abdin, Turkey, the villages around Mosul and other villages in Northern Iraq and in Maloula, a village near Damascus, Syria. The trace of its influence is obvious today in the name of several cities and villages in the Middle East and in their common dialects.²

At the dawn of Christianity, Syriac was the mother tongue of the original inhabitants of Antioch, especially of those living in its suburbs, as well as those in the interior parts of Syria.³ Syriac was also the language of the Jewish immigrants in Antioch whereas Greek was the language of the colonists of the Greek community brought in by the Seleucids.⁴

Dr. Philip Hitti says that as a second linguistic expression, the name Syrian in English refers to

1 - Dr. George Post, *Dictionary of the Holy Bible*, 1 : 58.

2 - Dr. Anis Freha, *Dictionary of the Names of Lebanese Cities and Villages* (Beirut 1972).

3 - Patriarch Ephrem Rehmani, *Al-Mabaheth Al-Jalia fi Al-Liturjia Al-Sharqia* (Deir Al-Sharfeh 1924), p. 23.

— Dr. Assad Restom, *History of the City of Antioch*.

4 - *Al-Mabaheth Al-Jalia*, p. 151.

all the people speaking Syriac (Aramaic), among them those in Iraq and Iran. As a religious expression, it refers to the followers of the Ancient Syrian Church, some of which have spread in Southern India. The name (Syrus), a Syrian, for a Roman, it meant any person speaking Syriac.

The Church of Antioch started to use the Syriac language in its religious rites. They celebrated the first mass¹ employing the Syriac liturgy written by St. James, the brother of our Lord, Archbishop of Jerusalem. This same liturgy is being used in the Syrian Orthodox Church all over the world until this date. The mass is celebrated in Syriac and in the local and national languages. Many of the church fathers wrote their religious and scientific books in Syriac.²

ECCLESIAL STATUS OF THE CHURCH OF ANTIOCH

The Church of Antioch is considered to be the most ancient and widely known, after the

1 - Kanisat Antakya Sourya, pp, 3 & 8.

— Al-Durar Al-Nafisa fi Makhtassar Tarikh Al-Kanisa, Patriarch Ephrem I Barsoum (Homs 1940), p. 143.

2 - Patriarch Ephrem I Barsoum, Al-Lou'lou' Al-Manthour (Baghdad 1976).

destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. by Titus, the Roman Emperor. It was from Antioch that the disciples went to the then known parts of the world, spreading the gospel and establishing churches, monasteries and schools which produced many illustrious scholars who enlightened the world with their religious and scientific achievements.¹ The fathers of the Syrian Church of Antioch made great and memorable contributions in the study of the Holy Bible – Old and New Testaments. It was their translation of the Holy Bible into the Syriac language that came to be known as (Peshitta) simple. They also translated the Bible into Arabic, Persian and Malayalam (a South Indian language).² Their work was not limited to translation only; it included commentaries and exegesis of the Holy Scriptures. They have left behind them a rich heritage that should be counted as unique. This church played a great role in spreading the gospel to the different nations of the world such as Arabia, Armenia, India and Ethiopia, and in the process, it suffered the loss of thousands of martyrs.³

1 - Patriarch Yacoub III, *Al-Kanisa Al-Suryiania Al-Antakyaia Al-Arthodoxia* (Damascus 1974) pp. 10-15.

2 - Patriarch Yacoub III, *Tarikh Al-Kanisa Al-Suryiania Al-Antakyaia* (Beirut 1953), Vol. 1, pp. 117-119.

3 - Patriarch Zakka I Iwas, the author of this book and

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE SEE OF ANTIOCH BY PETER THE APOSTLE

Reliable historians such as the scholar Orijans (d. 256 A.D.), Eusebius of Caeserea (d. 340 A.D.), Youhanna Al-Dhahabi Al-Fam (d. 407 A.D.), Hieronymus (d. 420 A.D.) and Mar Sewerius Al-Antaki (d. 538 A.D.), have unanimously commented on St. Peter's efforts in Antioch, where, as mentioned earlier, he established his Apostolic See. He was the first of its patriarchs to whom the line of succeeding patriarchs is traced. Eusebius of Caeserea¹ says: "In the fourth year after the Ascension of Jesus Christ, St. Peter proclaimed the word of God in Antioch, the great capital, and became its first bishop".² He also says in his Church History: "Ignatius became famous and was chosen to be the Bishop of Antioch and the successor of St. Peter".³ In the calendar of feasts, Hieronymus⁴ fixed the 22nd day of February as the day of establishment of the See of St.

present Patriarch. A lecture given in Vienna, Austria on 4/5/1972 in English. Its Arabic translation was published in the Damascus Patriarchal Magazine, 10th year, 1972, No. 96, p. 326.

1 - Eusebius of Caesarea, Church History.

2 - Patriarch Ephrem I Barsoum, Al-Durar Al-Nafisa (Homs 1940), p. 340.

3 - Eusebius of Caesarea, Church History.

4 - Jerome, Latin Church Father of the 4th century.

Peter in Antioch. The Catholic Church still celebrates this feast on this same date.¹

We can, therefore, surmise that St. Peter was the first Patriarch of the Apostolic See of Antioch. He had many illustrious successors, including St. Ignatius. This succession has remained unbroken up to the time of the present patriarch, the author of this treatise. He is the 122nd among the legitimate patriarchs,

HEADQUARTERS OF THE SEE OF ANTIOCH

The headquarters of the See of Antioch was, until 518 A.D. in Antioch. On account of many historical upheavals and consequent hardships which the church had to undergo, it was transferred to different monasteries of Mesopotamia. In the 13th century, A.D., it was established in the Monastery of Deir Al-Zaafran, near Mardin, Turkey. In 1959 it was transferred to Damascus, Syria.

THE NAME OF ST. IGNATIUS TAKEN BY THE PATRIARCHS OF ANTIOCH

In the early centuries, the Patriarchs of

1 - Patriarch Yacoub III, Man Hua Al-Batriark Al-Shar'i, published in the magazine Al-Mashreq of Mosul, 1st year, p. 836, quoted from the Roman Calendar (Rome 1852).

Antioch had kept their original names, even after being installed as patriarchs. However, when Patriarch Yeshou was enthroned in the year 878 A.D., he adopted the name Ignatius, out of his veneration for the great martyr, Ignatius the Illuminator who had been patriarch in the first century A.D. Four other patriarchs followed his example. When Patriarch Yousef, son of Weheb, Bishop of Mardin was installed in 1293, with the name Ignatius, this custom was confirmed and it has remained an unbroken tradition in the Syrian Orthodox Church up to this date.

THE SEE OF ANTIOCH AND ITS RELATION WITH THE OTHER APOSTOLIC SEES

According to the church laws which took shape in the first centuries, the bishop of the main city (Metropolis), was named Metropolitan, which means the bishop of the capital city or the pedestal of the kingdom. Through various regional and ecumenical councils, the bishoprics were eventually attached to the archbishoprics and the great and equal apostolic sees were specified as Antioch, Alexandria and Rome. At the Council of Constantinople (381 A.D.) the See of Constantinople was also added to those



MONASTERY OF DEIR AL-ZAAFRAN, NEAR MARDIN,
TURKEY ESTABLISHED IN THE 8 TH CENTURY.
THE HEAD QUARTERS OF THE SEE OF ANTIOCH
FROM THE 13TH CENTURY, A. D., UNTIL 1959

three. All these four sees attained high status, due to the political importance of these four cities and their strategic locations.¹ In the middle of the 5th century, the bishop of each of these cities was named patriarch, which means the head of fathers.² Every see had its own jurisdiction and all the churches within it were subjected to its religious authority through the local seats (centers of bishoprics and archbishoprics). In 325 A.D., the Council of Nicea, specified the authority of each of these sees, saying: "Preserve the old custom in Egypt, Libya and the five cities, since the bishop of Alexandria had authority over all of these places, as the Bishop of Rome had also the same authority. Also the dignity of the churches in Antioch and the rest of the bishoprics must be kept fully intact".³ The Council of Nicea did not create these privileges, but only confirmed them.⁴

1 - A lecture by the author in Vienna, Austria on 5/5/1972. Its Arabic translation was published in the Damascus Patriarchal Magazine No. 97, 10th year, Sept. 1972.

2 - Patriarch Ephrem I Barsoum, Al-Durar Al-Nafisa, Vol. 1, p. 398.

3 - The Lebanese Synod, p. 311.

- Patriarch Doueihi, Maronite Patriarch, Manaret Al-Aqdas, 1:22.

4 - Jesuit Father De Friz, Al-Kersi Al-Rasouli Wal Batriarkia Al-Sharqia Al-Catholikyia, published in the magazine Al-Wehda Biliman in Lebanon 1971.

FELLOWSHIP OF FAITH AND AUTHORITY OF THE COUNCILS

The four Sees of Antioch, Rome, Alexandria and Constantinople were identical in faith and doctrine, as well as being equal in authority and privileges. It was a custom for the occupants of these sees to exchange, upon their election, copies of their creeds in order to receive the right of fellowship. The receipt of this right of fellowship, however, was not considered as the installation of the patriarch in his position: but it was only a necessary requirement to exercise his authority legally.¹ The historical events testify to the fact these four great sees were not only autonomous,² but also autocephalous,³ which means that none had authority over the others and none might interfere in the affairs of the other sees. In the case of bishops also, no bishop could interfere in the affairs of the others. Whenever some local or internal problem or dispute occurred between the bishops of an archdiocese, a regional council of bishops, under

1 - Same pp. 7,9 & 10.

2 - Autonomous: self directing freedom, esp. moral independence.

3 - Autocephalous: being independent of external and especially patriarchal authority - used esp. of Eastern national churches.

the chairmanship of its archbishop would be convened to settle the matter. The council was considered above the bishops and even as the highest authority in the whole archdiocese. If any major problem and grave case relating to the faith emerged, a general or ecumenical council¹ was convened, whose authority was above all the bishops and archbishops, including the bishops/patriarchs of the four great sees. Since all the bishops over the world were invited to such a council and had the right to take part therein, and as no one was to be absent, except for genuine reasons, therefore, the universal church was represented fully. As a consequence, all the bishops had to accept the decisions of that council and enforce them in the whole church. This council was considered as the supreme authority in the whole church.²

No bishops, even those patriarchs of the four great sees, had authority to take action in any major faith problem individually, since that was the responsibility of the councils. Contradiction of opinions and

1 - Ecumenical: worldwide or general in extent, influence or application. Representing the whole of a body of churches.

2 - Lecture by the author in Vienna, Austria on 5-5-1972.

diversification of decisions taken by the regional councils relating to matters of faith often confused the universal church. When such cases were discussed in the ecumenical council, the council would pass its judgment which would be accepted by the universal church as if it were a divine decision. Councils of this type were convened to authenticate the genuineness of the true faith and to reject heresies. The declarations of faith in the Nicene creed, for example, were included in the writings of the fathers in detail and were accepted by the church since its dawn. The council, however, formulated it very clearly and asked the faithful to stand by its terms, or else they would be subjected to excommunication.¹

DIVISION AMONG THE FOUR GREAT SEES

In 451 A.D., the Council of Chalcedon² was convened, it resulted in the division of the apostolic sees into two groups. The Sees of Rome and Constantinople became one group,

1 - Lecture by the author in Vienna on 6-9-1973.

2 - Chalcedon a district within Constantinople, which is Istanbul.

while the Sees of Antioch and Alexandria into another. These latter two sees remain united in faith until today, and each of these has its own leadership and absolute independence, as was the case at the beginning. The other two sees or Rome and Constantinople split also from each other in the 11th century A.D.

JURISDICTION OF THE SEE OF ANTIOCH

The pontiff of the See of Antioch had always had a prominent position in the church. His religious authority extended from the Greek Sea in the West to the far end of Persia and India in the East; and from the border of Asia Minor to the frontiers of Palestine in the South.

The church of Antioch was one and was headed by only one patriarch. There was no other one besides him in all the Eastern Countries² and his jurisdiction extended over the lands of Damascus, Palestine, Cilicia, Mesopo-

1 - Bishop Gregorios Georges Shahin, Nahjon Wassim (Homs 1911), Vol. 1, p. 14.

- Patriarch Rehmani, Al-Mabaheth Al-Jalia, pp. 23, 24 & 28.

2 - Lemon the French, Moukhtassar Twarikh Al-Kanasi; translated by Rev. Youssef Daoud (Mosul 1873), p. 178.

tamia, parts of Asia Minor and all of Persia.¹ His authority was dominant over all the Christians in these districts, irrespective of their nationality, race or language. The larger dioceses had archbishops and the smaller ones, bishops taking care of their spiritual administration, while they were all obedient to him.²

MAPHRIANATE (CATHOLICATE) OF THE EAST

The countries which were lying beyond the Eastern boundaries of the Roman Empire altogether was known as the East. It was, during the time of Jesus Christ, under the Persian rule, from where the Magi came to Bethlehem and worshipped the Lord and presented their gifts to Him.³ When they returned to their countries, they proclaimed the news of Jesus' birth. As there were Jewish communities in the East, some of them might have been present in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost. The Book of Acts identifies Parthians, Medes and Elamites

1 - Patriarch Ephrem I Parsoum, *Al-Durar Al-Nafisa*, p. 143.

2 - Rev. Butros Nassri, *Dhakhirat Al-Adhan fi Twarikh Al-Mashriqa wal Maghriba Al-Suryian* (Mosul 1905), p. 73.

3 - The Gospel of Mathew 2: 2.

and the dwellers in Mesopotamia.¹ It is beyond doubt that some of them who believed in Christ conveyed the gospel to their countries.

Church history records that Addai, one of the seventy preachers, was sent by his brother, the apostle Thomas to Edessa, capital of Abgarite Kingdom and cured its king Abgar V from leprosy and converted him together with all the inhabitants of the city. Then Addai preached in Amed (Diarbekir), in the South of Arzen, in the Eastern valley of the Tigris River, and in Bazebdi. After which he came to Hidiab (Arbil),² where he settled down with his friend, Mari, preaching. The Syrian historians, Mor Michael the Great, Bar Hebræus and Bar Salibi add that the apostle Thomas passed through these places and preached their inhabitants on his way to India. That is how Christianity spread since the first century all over the East, where churches were erected and bishoprics established.

1 - The Book of Acts 2:9.

2 - Mari bn Suleiman, Akhbar Fatarikat Kursi Al-Mashreq, from the book Al-Maldal (Rome 1899), 1. 1.

- Patriarch Ephrem I Barsoum, Al-Durar Al-Nafisa, Vol. 1, pp. 76 & 77.

- Eugene Tisserand, Khoulassa Tarikyia Lilkanisah Al-Kaldania; translated by Bishop Suleiman Sayegh (Mosul 1939), p. 76.

In the third century, a number of bishoprics were gradually organized and a general leadership was established for them with Madaen as its center, in the ecclesiastical region under the jurisdiction of the Apostolic See of Antioch.¹ Its bishop was called Bishop of the East or Catholicos of the East, and was later known as the Maphrian² of the East.³

The Catholicos of the East had general authority over the churches in his district, in collaboration with the Patriarch of Antioch. The political situation hindered this relation since the headquarters of the See of Antioch was within the Roman Empire while the East was subject to the Persian rule and the enmity between the Persians and the Romans was severe.⁴

In 431 A. D., the Council of Ephesus excommunicated Nestorius, the Patriarch of Constantinople. A number of bishops from Syria together with the majority of the teachers and students

1 - Al-Durar Al-Nafisa, p. 586.

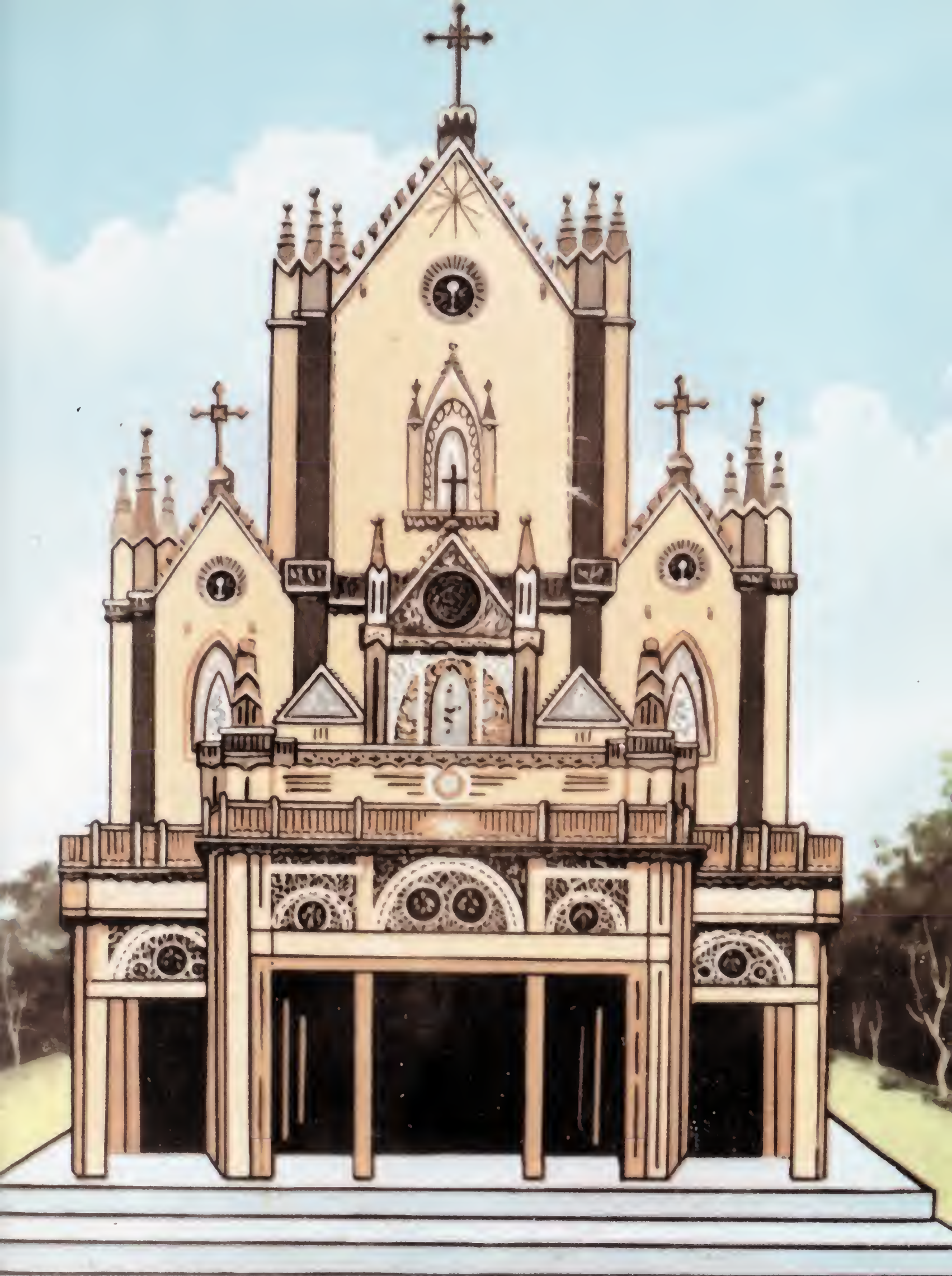
- Nahjon Aassim, p. 12.

2 - Catholicos: general father.

Maphrian: a Syriac word meaning fruitful.

3 - Patriarch Ignatius Yacoub III, Dafacat Al-Tib fi Tarikh Deir Mar Matta Al-Ajib (Zahle 1961), p. 51.

4 - Same pp. 42 & 43.



ST. MARY'S CHURCH
MENARGOD, INDIA

of the School of Edessa sided with him. Hence, Nestorius' teachings were spread in the East with the exception of Tikrit and Armenia. The result was the division of the Syrians from the religious and doctrinal points of view, into two groups. This division affected even the Syriac language which came to be distinguished in its phonetic and calligraphic styles, called as the Western Style and the Eastern Style. The Western Style in the land of Damascus and the Eastern Style in the lands of Mesopotamia, Iraq and Azerbejan. The Eastern part cut off its relations with the See of Antioch, except the Orthodox people in Iraq¹ who remained loyal to the Apostolic See of Antioch, enduring great hardships because of that. In the year 480 A.D., Barsouma, the Nestorian Bishop of Nusaibin, slandered against the faithful orthodox of the East to Fairouz, the Persian king, accusing them that they were spying in the interest of the Byzantine Kingdom. As a result, Fairouz slaughtered many of them shedding their innocent blood. After the death of Barsouma, Christophorus, the Armenian Catholicos, visited the East and consecrated Monk Garmai, bishop in the Monastery of St. Mathew and gave him authority to consecrate

1 - Al-Lou'Lou' Al-Manthour, p. 16.

bishops, as the Catholicos of the East. Christophorus also consecrated Monk Ahodemeh bishop in Baerbye.¹

In 559 A.D., Yacoub Baradaeus visited the church in the East and consecrated Ahodemeh as General Bishop (Catholicos) for it and was considered the first General Bishop of the East, after the Nestorians had captured its see.²

In 628 A.D., a reconciliation was reached between the Persian and Roman Empires. Patriarch Athanasius I (595-631) sent his secretary Rabban (Monk) Youhanna to the East. He met with Bishop Christophorus, head of the Menastery of St. Mathew and discussed with him the subject of resuming relations between the See of Antioch and the Church in the East. The bishop convened a synod which was attended by Monk Yauhanna and four regional bishops. They elected three monks, Marotha, Ithalaha and Aha, and requested the patriarch to consecrate them bishops. The patriarch regretted in order to preserve the old custom of the Church of the

1 - Dafakat Al-Tib, p. 34, quote from Al-Tarikh Al-Kanassi, by Bar Hebraeus, Vol. 2, pp. 87 & 99.

- Tarikh Mar Mikhail Al-Kabir, p. 35.

2 - Dafakat Al-Tib. p. 35.

- Al-Lou'lou' Al-Manthour, p. 26.

East, which in the absence of the catholicos, and in case of an unavoidable necessity, three bishops together can consecrate a new bishop. Then the Eastern bishops, and in the presence of the patriarch's bishops consecrated the chosen monks bishops. The patriarch installed Marotha, one of the three new bishops, as Bishop (Catholicos) of Tikrit, and gave him authority to preside over the East, on his behalf. The above incident shows that the Church in the East was autonomous and that its catholicos who was installed by the patriarch had authority over all its bishoprics. Also we can see in the history of the church, that the patriarch was enthroned by the fathers of the church with the cooperation of the catholicos. Several attempts have taken place for infringing this tradition.

Mar Marotha of Tikrit (d. 649 A.D.) was the first to be called Maphrian and from him the Maphrianate took its succession. It is worth mentioning that the bishoprics of the East increased in number and prestige to the extent that they outnumbered the dioceses of the See of Antioch, during the time of Mor Gregorios Bar Hebraeus who was the Maphrian of the East (1264 - 1286), as he himself declared. Bar Hebraeus is considered as one of the most famous scho-

larly Maphrians of the East.

The headquarters of the Maphrianate was first in Tikrit and remained there until 1089 A.D. Subsequently, it was transferred to Mosul, then brought back to Tikrit until 1152, when it was transferred to St. Mathew Monastery. For some time the Maphrianate was shifted to Bartleeh, near Mosul and then to Mosul itself.

In the past, it was the custom to have the Maphrian keep his episcopal name, even after his installation. But since the 16th century, it was decided to have the name Basselios added to his original personal name. In the year 1860, after the death of Maphrian Mor Basselios Bahnam IV of Mosul, the Maphrinate was abolished by a decision of a synod.

REINSTATEMENT OF THE OFFICE OF THE MAPHRIANATE

On May 21, 1964, the office of the Maphrianate was reinstated according to a resolution of the synod held at Kottayam, South India. It was presided by H. H. Mor Ignatius Yacoub III, the late Patriarch of Antioch and All the East, and attended by all the bishops of the Syrian Church in India and three bishops



الواجهة الشرقية لديومسار كبريال "قرتين، قرب مديات - تركيا"
 "جدا مدرستا بومنا وهدنا خانا اهدب، حمه وحا وهدب - اهد وحا"

The Eastern Facade of St. Gabriel's Monastery (Karbin near Midyat - Turkey).



"قرب الموصل - العراق"
 "حمه وحا وهدب - اهد وحا"

مفاز عام لديومسار
 بومنا وهدنا وهدنا وهدنا

GENERAL VIEW OF ST. MATHEW MONASTERY, NEAR
 MOSUL, IRAQ

from the Middle East who had accompanied His Holiness on his apostolic visitation to India. The author of this book was one of those three bishops. It was decided that the headquarters of the Maphrian should be in India, and that the jurisdiction of the Maphrianate is limited to India and to the East of India only.¹

Since 1964, the Maphrian is elected by the Holy Synod of the Syrian Church in India and installed by H.H. the Patriarch of Antioch and All the East who is the Supreme Head of the Universal Syrian Orthodox Church. He represents the Syrian Orthodox Church in India in the Universal Synod of the church, when it is convened for the election and enthronement of a patriarch. The present Maphrian is H.B. Mor Basselios Paulos II.

SCHISMS IN THE CHURCH OF ANTIOCH

The Church of Antioch (Syrian Church) endured in its history painful incidents, which divided its flock into several sects at different

1 - Damascus Patriarchal Mahazine, 3rd year, 1964, No. 21; pp. 6 & 7.

- Patriarch Zakka I Iwas, *Merkat fi Hayat Ra'i Al-Rouat* (Homs 1958), p. 344,

times These incidents, a few of which, will be briefly discussed, greatly enfeebled the church.

In 431 A.D., the Council of Ephesus rejected the teachings of Nestorius, Patriarch of Constantinople who claimed that there were two separate persons and natures in Christ. Patriarch Yuhanna of Antioch supported him. He was succeeded by his nephew, Domnos who also unfortunately accepted the same heresy. He was deposed in the year 449 A.D. by the Second Council of Ephesus and was replaced by Maximus. The teachings of Nestorius were accepted by some Syrians in the Persian Empire, in some parts of Syria, Palestine and Cyprus. They formed a church, breaking away from the See of Antioch in 498 A.D. They chose a leader for themselves who called himself catholicos. Their first catholicos was Babai who had his headquarters in Selucia, Near Madaen in Iraq. This was later transferred to Baghdad in the year 762 A.D. At the beginning of the 15th century it was shifted to Al-Kosh and in 1561 to Erumia,¹ both in Iraq.

As a result of the Council of Chalcedon in 451 A.D., the four great sees were split into two

1 - Al-Durar Al-Nafisa, p. 585.

groups and confusion dominated over the church discipline. Illegal interference took place in several bishoprics and fishing in troubled waters was considered a great gain. The Roman See was able to win a Nestorian bishop called Temotheos, the Bishop of Cyprus. In 1445 A.D., he joined the Catholic Church with a group from his church. It should be remembered that this group comprised members of the Syrian Church who had already embraced the Nestorian ideas, Pope Ojanus IV declared: "It is henceforth forbidden to treat those Syrians who had left Nestorianism and joined the Roman Church as heretics, but they have to be distinguished with the particular name of Chaldeans.¹ Five years later in 1450 A.D., they turned back to their Nestorian Church. But disputes soon arose in that church when Patriarch Shemoun's Synod passed a resolution to the effect that no patriarch should be installed from outside his own tribe. When such a decision was taken by Shemoun's Synod, a parallel synod which opposed Shemoun was convened in Mosul and a great number left Shemoun and joined the Roman See in 1553. Accordingly Pope Julius III consecrated for them Patriarch Yuhanna Sulaka.

1 - Rev. Ishaq Armaleh, *Al-Salasel Al-Tarikhia* (Beirut 1910), p. 135.

This split did not last long, since Patriarch Yuhanna Sulaka was killed in 1555 A.D., and the relation with the Roman See was severed.

Until 1827, there were two patriarchs for the Chaldeans, one of whom was called Patriarch of Amed, and the other, Patriarch of Babylon. In that same year, the distinction between the two Patriarchates of Amed and Babylon was abolished by Pope Leo XII. As of 1830, that is from the time of Patriarch Yuhanna Hermez, there was only one patriarch who was called the Patriarch of Babylon. Yuhanna Hermez was the first patriarch of the united Patriarchate of Babylon. In the middle of the 19th century, Patriarch Yousef Odo¹ who, unlike his predecessors, was known to have liked the Oriental Church and its ancient traditions, was installed as the Patriarch of Babylon.

Turning back to the See of Antioch, we shall see that since the time of Maximos (449 A.D., – 512 A.D.), it was usurped by patriarchs who had followed the formulation of the Council of Chalcedon and by others rocking from one

1 - Cardinal Tisserand, *Khoulassa Tarikhyia Lilkanissa Al-Kaldania*, p. 107. From a bull issued by Pope Ojanus IV.

- *Nahjon Wassim*, p. 57.

side to the other. During this critical period, the famous Patriarch Peter II who is known as Al-Kassar, was installed to the Holy See of Antioch.

In 512 A.D. Mor Sewerius was enthroned as the Patriarch of Antioch succeeding Philibianos who was deposed because of his unsteadiness of faith. Mor Sewerius ruled the holy see in peace until 518, when he was sent into exile. When the Orthodox Emperor Anastas died, he was succeeded by Justinos I who was a supporter of the Council of Chalcedon.

He sent into exile most of the orthodox bishops including Patriarch Mor Sewerios who died in the year 538, while in exile in Egypt. Mor Serjis succeeded Mor Sewerios to the Holy Throne of Antioch. Through all these great storms the See of Antioch struggled hard to keep the succession of its patriarchs up to this date.

The followers of the Council of Chalcedon seized the opportunity of the exile of Mor Sewerios, to install from among themselves patriarchs with the title of "Patriarch of Antioch". The most famous of these patriarchs was Ephrem of Amed. From this time (518 A.D.), the series of Byzantine Patriarchs started. Most of those

Byzantine Patriarchs were Syrians and others from Greek colonies. Those patriarchs and their followers were called "Melkites", which means the followers of the king. They were so called since they followed the doctrine of the Council of Chalcedon which was upheld by the then king. They used the Syrian rites until the 10th and 11th centuries, when they changed to the Greek rites. But, because of their ignorance of the Greek language, they used the Syriac translation of the Greek rites. In later centuries, after they learned the Greek language, they started to use the Greek rites both in Greek and Arabic languages. They collected the Syriac codices, which were preserved in the library of St. Mary's Monastery (a Syrian Monastery which the Greeks later occupied), in the village of Saidnaya, near Damascus and burned them all.¹

At the beginning of the 7th century, a dispute arose among the followers of the Council of Chalcedon within the jurisdiction of the See of Antioch, because of the emergence of a new dogma of two wills in Jesus Christ. It resulted in a division among the Maronite monks in Lebanon leading to the establishment of a se-

1 - Nahjon Wassim, Vol. 1, pp. 72 & 73.

parate patriarchate. In the 12th century, they joined the Roman See¹ and started calling their patriarchate "The Patriarchate of Antioch".²

There were further new foundations of Patriarchates of Antioch splitting off from the original Patriarchate of Antioch. At the beginning of the 17th century, through the influence of some Kapuchian monks, and with the assistance of the French Consul, a group in Aleppo, Syria, left the Holy See of Antioch. They approached a Maronite bishop in 1657 who consecrated for them an Armenian priest, Andraos Akhijian who was originally from Mardin, Turkey, a bishop whom they called patriarch. The Syrian Catholic Patriarchate³ started with him. They called their patriarch 'Patriarch of Antioch'.

At the beginning of the 18th century, a split took place among the Greek Orthodox, which led some to abandon their patriarchate and follow the Roman See. They established for themselves a separate patriarchate which

1 - Same, Vol. 1, p. 8.

2 - Rev. Issa Assa'd, *Al-Turfa Al-Naqia mn Tarikh Al-Kanisa Al-Massihia* (Homs 1924), appendix p. 453.

3 - Nahjon Wassim, Vol. 1, pp. 41 & 42.

- *Al-Mashreq*, magazin published in Mosul, 1st year, p. 847.

they called 'Patriarchate of Antioch'. They are known as Greek Catholics.

In the last quarter of the 18th century, a group of Syria Orthodox in Iraq was compelled to join the Roman See, through the connivance of the French Consul, who advised the Ottoman ruler to impose heavy taxes on the Syrian Orthodox people. The Consul encouraged the Dominican missionaries who had already spread in Iraq, to persuade the simple Syrian Orthodox people to ask for French protection, in order to get rid of the burden of taxes. But when they approached the French officials for help, they were told that unless they followed the Pope of Rome, no help would be provided for them. This is how catholicism spread in Iraq. The first group to embrace it, were the inhabitants of Karakoush in 1761 A.D. Later, in the middle of the 19th century, other groups from Bartelleh and Mosul¹ followed them.

MOR YACCOUB BARADAEUS

As a result of the oppression of the leaders of the Syrian Orthodox Church by the Byzantine Emperors, many holy fathers were martyred,

1 - The author, Al-Merqat, pp. 24 & 25.



ST. THEODORA, BYZANTINE QUEEN
AND THE DAUGHTER OF A SYRIAN ORTHODOX PRIEST
IN MANBEJ, SYRIA, AND THE WIFE OF EMPROR JUSTINIAN

some were exiled, others severely persecuted and the rest scattered. At one stage, i.e, 544 A.D., because of all these hardships and chaos, there were three living bishops left for the Syrian Orthodox Church.

At this critical stage, God raised up an indefatigable man called Yacoub (Jacob) Baradaeus to defend the church. He went to Constantinople and was respectfully received by Queen Theodora, the daughter of a Syrian priest in Manbej, Syria, and the wife of Emperor Justinian. She was serving the exiled bishops and supporting them in their sufferings. Through her influence, Mor Yacoub was consecrated general bishop in 544 A.D., by Mor Theodosius, Patriarch of Alexandria who was then in exile in Constantinople. Mor Theodosius was assisted by three bishops who were also under imprisonment. After his consecration, Mor Yacoub travelled far and wide vigorously organizing the affairs of the church. He consecrated twenty-seven bishops and hundreds of priests and deacons. Before his death on July 30, 578 A.D., Mor Yacoub had strengthened the church to survive disasters. Every year on July 30, the church respectfully and gratefully celebrates his feast.¹

1 - Bishop Youhanna Dolabani, Al-Mithal Al-Rabani (Buenos Aires 1942).

- Patriarch Yacoub III, Al-Mujahed Al-Rassouli (Damascus 1978).

Thus the Syrian Orthodox Church withstood the heavy blows of Byzantine persecution and maintained the apostolic faith, affirmed by the three ecumenical councils. The Holy See of Antioch remained united with the See of Alexandria, and they continue in communion with the Armenian Orthodox Church and the Ethiopian Church sharing the same faith and doctrine.

In the 8th century, the Byzantines, in their seventh council described the Syrian Orthodox Church as the 'Jacobite Church', after Mor Yacoub Baradaeus. Their intention was to disgrace and degrade the noble Syrian Orthodox Church. Though Mor Yacoub is indeed one of its famous and great fathers, but not its founder. Since the Syrian Orthodox Church was not established by him, and since he did not introduce any fresh doctrine into its apostolic faith, we repudiate the title 'Jacobite'.¹ The Syrian Orthodox Church also denies the designation 'Monophysite' which is Euthychean and which means that the human nature in Jesus Christ was mingled with the divine nature and thus became a mixture and its attributes confused. Eutuches and his teachings were rejected by the

1 - Archdaacon Ne'matallah Denno, Iqamat Al-Dalil ala Istemrar Al-Esm Al-Assil (Mosul 1949).

Syrian Orthodox Church, which follows the footsteps of St. Cyriq of Alexandria who believed that Jesus Christ was perfectly human and at the same time perfectly divine, and has only one nature from two united natures without any mixture, confusion or transformation.¹

THE SYRIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH TODAY

The number of followers of the Syrian Orthodox Church today is around three millions. The majority of them reside in India and the rest are spread mainly in Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Jordan, Turkey, Egypt, Europe, North and South America and Austratia. Its supreme head at present is Mor Ignatius Zakka I Iwas, Patriarch of Antioch and all the East, the 122nd successor of St. Peter in the legitimate line of Patriarchs of Antioch. The supreme head is looked upon as the common father of all Syrian Orthodox people wherever they are. He is obeyed by the catholicos, prelates, clergy and laity of all ranks in the Syrian Orthodox Church. The name of the patriarch is to be mentioned

1 - Patriarch Zakka I Iwas, Akidat Al-Tajsed Al-Ilahi (Aleppo 1981).

before that of the catholicos in India and of the bishops in their respective dioceses, during the eucharistic services, at the end of the daily prayers, on religious festivals, and during other spiritual ceremonies such as ordinations, consecrations, and etc. His title is 'His holiness Moran Mor Ignatius, Patriarch of Antioch and All the East and the Supreme Head of the Universal Syrian Orthodox Church'. His religious prerogatives include the installation of the catholicos, the consecration of the legally elected bishops and the consecration of chrism. provided that at least two bishops are present with him for the ceremony. He also has the authority to convene universal synods and other synods of which he is the chairman. He cannot be deposed unless he introduces heresy in the orthodox faith of the church, ratified by the three Ecumenical Councils of Nicea, Constantinople and Ephesus and the teachings of the saintly fathers, or deviates from the canonical laws, or suffers from mental disorder or is guilty of serious misconduct.

The patriarch is responsible to the holy synod consisting of all the bishops of the Apostolic See of Antioch, which is considered to be the supreme authority in the church. The synod is vested with the authority for the election and



ST. GEORGE CATHEDRAL
HASSAKE, SYRIA

installation of patriarchs, the approval of the election of bishops, the examination and trial of bishops in case of their deviation from the doctrine and canonical laws, their transfer from one bishopric to another, the acceptance or rejection of their resignation and their deposition, if at all necessary. The synod also has the authority for the creation of a new diocese or the abolition of an existing one. The meeting of the synod is considered legal, if it is attended by at least two-thirds of its members. Synodal decisions, taken by majority, become effective upon their approval by the patriarch.¹

The Syrian Orthodox Church today consists of twenty-seven dioceses, ten of which are in India, and the rest are spread in different parts of the world. Each diocese has a bishop who administers its spiritual affairs, ordains its priests, monks and deacons, consecrates altars, churches and the holy oil for baptism and codifies by-laws for its welfare. Each diocese has an ecclesiastical board and a laymen's board to help its bishop in its administration.

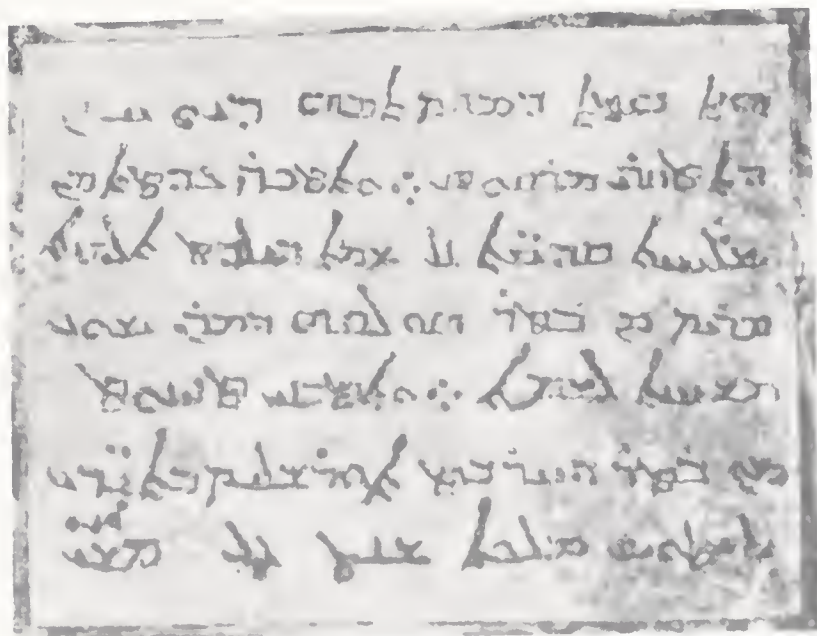
1 - The Constitution of the Syrian Orthodox Church issued by the Synod of Homs in 1959 and amended by the Synod of Damascus 1979.

All the dioceses maintain the orthodox faith of the church and keep its ancient apostolic traditions. The church rituals are performed in Syriac along with the local language. In the past the church had hundreds of monasteries, a few of which still flourish. The most famous ones are in the Middle East:

- 1 - St. Mathew's Monastery near Mosul, Iraq;
- 2 - St. Gabriel Monastery in Tour Abdin, Turkey; both of these monasteries date back to 4th century.
- 3 - St. Hananya Monastery, known as Deir Al-Zaafran, near Mardin, Turkey, established in the 8th century.

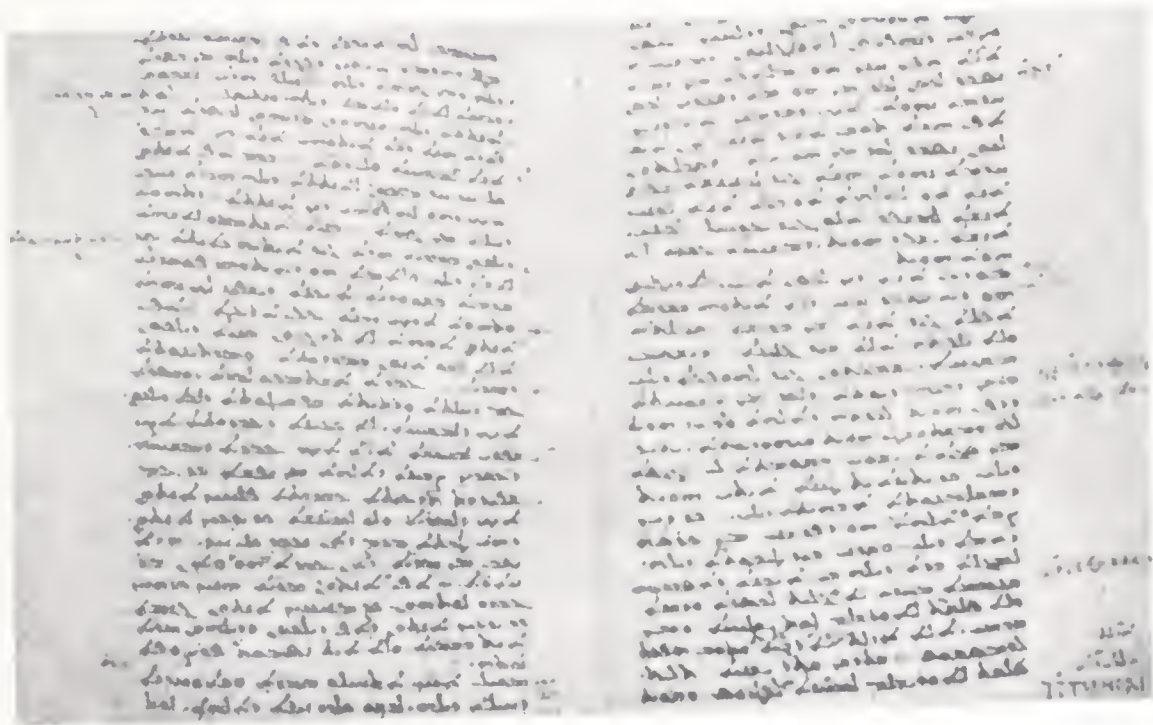
In each of the last two monasteries, there is an elementary theological school.

- 4 - St. Mark's Monastery in Jerusalem, which deserves the pride of Christianity, because it includes the upper room, where Jesus Christ took the Last Supper with his disciples. The historicity of this has been confirmed by the inscription discovered in 1940, under the plastering of the church in the monastery. The inscription is in Syriac and it dates back to the 6th century. It reads as follows: "This is the house of Mary, Mother of John, Called Mark".



الرقعة الآرامية من القرن السادس اكتشفت سنة 1940 في دير مار مرقس
 في جبل الزيتون في القدس

THE SYRIAC INSCRIPTION TABLET FROM THE 6TH
 CENTURY WHICH WAS DISCOVERED IN 1940 AT
 ST. MARK'S MONASTERY IN JERUSALEM



رسائل القديس بولس على رق مخطوطة من القرن السابع في دير مار مرقس

الرسائل المكتوبة في جبل الزيتون في القدس

LETTERS OF ST. PAUL A MANUSCRIPT ON PARCHMENT
 FROM THE 7TH CENTURY AT ST. MARK'S MONASTERY
 IN JERUSALEM

The church has two theological seminaries, one in the mountains of Lebanon and the other in India, where the clergy are trained.

The Syrian Orthodox Church is progressing and growing actively. In the opinion of a Greek Orthodox historian: "The Syrians are active, hard workers and economical, that is why you can hardly find a beggar among them. In spite of all the great crises that they endured, they are still maintaining their economical standard, because of their love to work steadily, and their remoteness from imitating the foreigners in spending extravagantly".¹ Another researcher from the Episcopalian Church, in the last century, said the following about the Syrian Orthodox Church: "It is within the possibilities of God's providence that they might yet take new root downwards and bear fruit upwards, if the people who still cling passionately to their ancient faith, were once freed from the domination of foreign religion and power, under which they have so long and so cruelly been oppressed, As it is, in all their present feebleness, they are the representatives of the ancient church, which once flourished in these eastern and southern lands".²

1 - Rev. Issa Ass'ad, *Al-Terfa Al-Naqia* (Homs 1922), appendix p. 424.

2 - Rev. Edward L. Cutts, *Turning Points of General Church History* (N.Y. 1890), p. 446.

The Syrian Church is a member of the World Council of Churches, which it joined in the year 1960, through the efforts of the late Patriarch, Mor Ignatius Yacoub III of blessed memory. It is represented today by Archbishop, Mor Gregorios Youhanna Ibrahim of Aleppo in its Central Committee. It is also a member in the Council of Local Churches and collaborates with the other Christian Churches, and takes part in the ecumenical and theological dialogues at official and non-official levels.

CONCLUSION

This is a panoramic view of the Church of Antioch, the true Church of the East, commonly known as the Syrian Orthodox Church, whose faith, liturgy and tradition are distinctively Oriental and are at the same time a witness to the undivided early church.

This church battered by the events of history and torn by schisms, is still the custodian of a great heritage, I am hopeful that through prayer and dialogue, its scattered parts can be brought together again and its wounds healed. Communion of Faith could be restored among its different sections, and excommunications and

curses could be wiped out. Then grace will abound, leading to the unity that was at the dawn of Christianity, and the gospel imperative "That all may be one", will be fulfilled.

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