

**Martyrs, Saints & Prelates
of
The Syriac Orthodox Church
Volume I**

Fr. K. Mani Rajan, M.Sc., M.Ed., Ph.D.

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(Volume I)

By

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Preface

This book is a collection of biographies of martyrs, saints, doctors and prelates of the Syriac Orthodox Church. Although a few books are available in Malayalam, there is a felt need for biographies in English based on Syriac traditions and research literature. This work is an earnest attempt to meet this demand.

In seeking information contained in this book, my search extended to different sources. For the last twenty years I have purchased or borrowed every book I could find on the subject. Dr. Thomas Joseph Thattunkal gifted me a few books on this topic. My late grandfathers Shri. Mani Varghese, Kannanayakal and Deacon Varghese Cherian, Pulimoottil, had left behind a few books in their collection for my use. I have spent several hours in different universities in California, U.S.A. in search of the resources. All such resources were gleaned for compiling this book.

The prospect of creating a rich source of biographical details of Syrian fathers occurred to me while I was compiling my first book *Queen of the Sacraments*. Then I had no time to spare in the midst of my doctoral studies. I had already written three volumes, each containing thirty biographies, in Malayalam. A few of my friends suggested that they

should be published in English. However, financial support was not forthcoming to start the task. It is Mr. John Philip, Kottaparambil and Mr. Chandy Andrews who did the liaison work for funding the publication.

How can I express an adequate word of appreciation to the many who were so kind to me? I am deeply indebted to our Pontiff, the Patriarch, Moran Mor Ignatius Zakka I Iwas for according apostolic benediction to this publication. His Grace Mor Julius Kuriakose, Metropolitan of the Simhasana churches and institutions, read the draft of the book and suggested a few corrections. His Grace suggested to rearrange the biographies chronologically. His Grace Mor Athanasius Geevargis, the Patriarchal vicar for the Indian affairs, read the manuscript and pointed out some mistakes in the statement of historical facts. Also, a few distortions in the related literature were rectified as suggested by His Grace.

The draft of the manuscript was edited and corrected by Dr. Annamma Joseph, Head of the Department of English (Retired), Government College for Women, Thiruvananthapuram. She spared much of her valuable time in going through the minute details of the draft. I am grateful to her for the suggestions and corrections. I am much obliged to SOCMNet.org (Internet Platform of Malankara Jacobite Syrian Christians) for funding the publication. Mr. Thomas Daniel (Regi) contacted all the members of the SOCMNet.org and entrusted the publication of the book with M/s The Travancore Syriac Orthodox Publishers, Kottayam.

I sincerely thank M/S Vijaya Book House, Athirampuzha for the layout and cover design of the book. The printing was done by M/S Dona Colour Graphs, Kottayam with utmost care.

I earnestly wish and hope that the English speaking diaspora of the Syriac Orthodox Church will find this book interesting and enlightening.

Kunnamkulam
15 August 2007

Fr. (Dr.) K. Mani Rajan

Feast of the Assumption of St. Mary

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Abbreviations Used

c.	- Circa, meaning approximately
St.	- Saint
Sts.	- Saints
p.	- Page
pp.	- Pages
Trans.	- Translator(s)
Vol.	- Volume
ed.	- edition
rev. ed.	- revised edition
Ed.	- Editor
Eds.	- Editors
M. E.	- Malayalam Era
MSS	- Manuscript

New Testament Abbreviations

Rom	- Romans
Acts.	- Acts of the Apostles
1 Cor.	- 1 Corinthians
2 Cor.	- 2 Corinthians
Phil.	- Philippians
2 Ths.	- 2 Thessalonians
Gal.	- Galations

1. St. John, the Baptist

(B. C. 3 – A. D. 32?)

John is the son of Zachariah the Priest, and Elizabeth (Luke 1:13). The birth of John was almost six months before the birth of Jesus Christ (Luke 1:26, 31). The birthday of John, the Baptist, is celebrated on 24th June in the Syriac Orthodox Church and is a feast, which has a long tradition.

John was born at En Kerem or Ain Karim in Judea in the beginning of the first century A. D. His raiment was of camel's hair, and he was girt with a girdle of leather like E-li'-jah (2 Kings 1:8; Mathew 3:4). His food was locusts and wild honey (Mathew 3:4; 1 Samuel 14:25–26). The translation 'locust' is wrong. In the original translation, the reference is to carob pods (fruit) of the locust tree, a mediteranian tree or a variety of wild cassava (a tubular root). This is also known as St. John's bread.

John separated himself from the society with a vow of Nazarite (Luke 1:15; Numbers 6:3-4). John, the Baptist, is the forerunner of Christ who prepared the way for Christ (Mathew 11:10; Luke 1:76). He came in the sprit and power of Eli-jah (Luke 1:17). Jesus testified: "Among those that are born of women, there is not a greater prophet than John, the Baptist" (Mathew 11:11; Luke 7:28).

John started his mission in the 15th year of the reign of Tiberius (c. A. D. 28-29) on the banks of Jordan River (Encyclopedia Americana, 1988). He preached from Inon (near Modern Neblus) to Jerico in the Valley of Jordan. The usage “desert” or “wilderness” is to be understood as places where there was less population.

The essence of John’s preaching is: “Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Mathew 3:2). He travelled all Judaea and the entire region round about Jordan (Mathew 3:5) and many were baptized of him in Jordan confessing their sins (Mathew 3:6). He was tough with his admonition: “The axe is laid unto the root of the trees; therefore every tree which bring forth no good fruit is cut down, and cast into the fire” (Mathew 3:10).

Birthdays of saints are not usually celebrated in Syriac Orthodox Church with a few exceptions. The birthday of John the Baptist is celebrated in the Church because John was filled with the Holy Spirit in the womb of Elizabeth before birth (Luke 1:41).

The virtues of John, the Baptist, are unique. “He must increase and I must decrease” (John 3:30). John, the Baptist, was beheaded on August 29 for he said to Herod that it is not lawful for him to have Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife (Mathew 14:1-12). Herodia was the daughter of Aristobulus and the wife of Philip, half-brother of Herod (Josephus, Book 18, Chapter 5).

The body of John, the Baptist, was buried at Sebaste. According to the tradition among Syrians, the head of St. John the Baptist was brought to Damascus from Jerusalem sometime in the early century of Chirstian Era and interred it in the church in Old Damascus (now Ommayyad Mosque). The prayer on the feast day reads: “Lord, grant us courage to stand

by truth even if we are put in prison and tempted with worldly treasures.” Three feasts of John the Baptist are celebrated in the Syriac Orthodox Church. Those are - - June 24 - Birthday, August 29 - Martyrdom (beheading), and February 24 - finding of the head of John, the Baptist, at Homs, Syria. (The birthday of John the Baptist is also celebrated two weeks before Christmas)

2. St. Stephen, the Martyr

(? – A. D. 35/36)

Stephen was a Jew who spoke Greek. Historians do not record his birthplace. He was probably born abroad and later came to live in Jerusalem (White, 1991). He may have been educated in Alexandria. Saul and Stephen are believed to be of same age (Pollock, 1985).

After the Pentecost, many were converted to Christianity. Of the converts, there were two sets of people - - the Hebrew speaking natives and the foreigners who spoke Greek. Stephen belonged to the second group. Jerusalem had an ethnically mixed population and the apostles tended to be more traditional, whereas Stephen and others were Hellenists with a modern outlook (Day, 2002). At Jerusalem the Greek speaking, Jewish converts were a minority. “Now in those days, when the number

of disciples was multiplying there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists (Greek speaking Jews), because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution" (of food by the apostles as practiced by the early Jerusalem Church) (Acts. 6:1). Then the twelve summoned the multitude of disciples and said, "it is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables" (Acts. 6:2). Therefore, the apostles asked the faithful to choose seven men of good reputation; full of Holy Spirit and wisdom to be appointed for the business for the apostles themselves had no time for it. The apostles ordained them the first Deacons (Acts. 6:6). Among the seven, Stephen was the head. The fourth diptych of the Holy Qurbano remembers him as "the illustrious Saint Stephen, chief of the Deacons, and first of the Martyrs."

Deacon Stephen was an effective speaker and performed miracles (Acts 6:8). This provoked hostility of the elders of some synagogues in Jerusalem. They were not able to resist the wisdom of Stephen. Then they secretly introduced men to accuse him of blasphemy (impious speaking about God). Stephen was seized and taken to Sanhedrin (the Jewish Council). According to Pollock (1985) seventy-one judges sat on great benches which curved either side of the President's place in the Half of polished Stones (p. 24). He had to face trial there. They also set up false witnesses who said: ". . . we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs which Moses delivered to us" (Acts 6:13-14).

Stephen countered their accusations carefully and concluded saying, "Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the just one, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers"

(Acts 7:51). As the members of the council listened to Stephen, they became furious and ground their teeth at him in anger. But Stephen, full of Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right side of God (Acts. 7:54-56). They took him outside the city and stoned him. The murderers laid their clothes on the ground to be guarded by Saul, who would later become St. Paul. As Stephen died, he cried: "Lord, do not charge them with this sin" and he prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" (Acts. 7:59-60). The feast of St. Stephen, the Martyr, is celebrated on January 8.

3. St. James, the Disciple

(? – A. D. 44?)

James is the son of Zeb'-e-dee, a fisherman (Mathew 4:21), and Salome. Salome is the sister of St. Mary. James, the Lord's brother, the first Bishop of Jerusalem (Galatians 1:19), is known as the James, the Just. James, the son of Zeb'-e-dee, is known as James, the greater. Some historians infer that James, the Greater was called Greater, because he was called by Jesus ahead of James, the son of Alphaeus. James, the Greater is at least twelve years older than James, the Lesser. James, the son of Alphaeus who is younger is known as James, the Lesser.

James, the son of Zeb'-e-dee, is also known as

Bo-a-ne'r-ges. The Greek word *Bo-a-ner'-ges* means the sons of thunder (Mark 3:17). The impetuosity of James and John is the reason for the name (Nelson's Encyclopaedia, 1913). Samaritans did not receive Jesus because he was going to Jerusalem. Then, James and John said: "Lord will you command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elia did?" (Luke 9: 52-56). This indicates the quick temper of James and John, which earned them the name Bo-a-ne'r-ges (White, 1991). It is also suggested that Bo-a-ne'r-ges is an unknown Armaic title (Encyclopedia Americana, 1988).

James was with Jesus Christ to witness many important events - - at the mountain of transfiguration (Mathew 17:1-2), when the only daughter of Ja-i-rus (a ruler of the synagogue) was raised from the dead (Luke 8:42, 49-56), at Geth-sem'-a-ne (Mathew 26:37) for prayer, and when Peter's mother-in-law was healed (Mark 1: 29-31). He was always in the company of Jesus Christ.

James preached the Gospel at Jerusalem (Galatians 2:9) and Judea. St. Paul speaks of James as one of the pillars of the Church. James is the first martyr among the disciples. He was killed with a sword by King Herod Agrippa (Acts 12:1-2) in c. A D. 44. The body of James was buried at Jerusalem. Later, the holy relics were transferred to different places. The feast of James, the Greater, is celebrated on May 1 in the Syriac Orthodox Church.

4. St. James, the First ArchBishop of Jerusalem (?- A. D. 62)

Our Lord's brother, James (Yacoub), is the son of Joseph's (first) wife (Mark 6:3; Abdul Ahad, 1948, p. 217; Joseph, 2005, p. 21). The Eastern Fathers interpreted "brothers" as stepbrothers, sons of Joseph by a previous wife; while the Western Fathers understood them to be first or second cousins. Never are they called sons of Mary (The Orthodox Study Bible, 1993). James and the other brothers were not among the disciples of Jesus for they did not believe in Jesus before the resurrection (John 7:5).

James ate only vegetables. He neither drank wine nor ate meat. He did not use sandals or cut his hairs (Abdul Ahad, 1948). Hegesippus describes him as 'James, the Just' because of his virtue and righteousness (cited in, Cross Livingstone, 1974). St. James was in the habit of being alone in the church and was frequently found on his knees. This caused his knees to turn hard like that of a camel (cited in, Eusebius, 1980).

Several biblical references suggest the role of St. James (Jacob) in the early Church. Jesus appeared to James after his resurrection (1 Cor. 15:7). St. Paul met St. Peter and St. James at Jerusalem probably in A. D. 38 (Gal. 1:18-19). James, the Bishop of the Jerusalem, in a synod in A. D. 51 spoke authoritatively: "Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those

from among the gentiles who are turning to God, but that we should write a letter telling them not to eat any food that is ritually unclean because it has been offered to idols; to keep themselves from sexual immorality; and not to eat any animal that has been strangled, or any blood" (Acts. 15:19-20). After this synod everybody left for different countries except James. When St. Paul came to Jerusalem in A. D. 58 for the last time, only James was there.

Persecutors of James demanded a denial of his faith in Jesus Christ in public. He, then affirmed his faith that Christ, Our Lord and Saviour, is the Son of God. They threw him down from the top of the church. Even though he survived the fall, he was subsequently beaten to death with a fuller's club (club of laundrymen). He suffered martyrdom in A. D. 62 (Abdul Ahad, 1948).

He formulated the divine liturgy of St. James. He celebrated the first holy Qurbano. He wrote the general epistle of St. James in A. D. 61 at Jerusalem. The fifth diptych of holy Qurbano remembers him saying: "The venerable St. James, the first ArchBishop of Jerusalem, apostle and martyr." The feast of St. James, brother of Our Lord is celebrated on June 19.

5. King Abgar V of Urhoy

(? – A. D. 65)

Abgar Kings ruled Urhoy during B. C. 132 - A. D. 224. Abgar V was in power during A. D. 22-25 and A. D. 31-65. Abgar V is also referred to as Abgar, the Black, in a few historical books. This distinction 'the Black' was in popular use so as to distinguish him from Abgar who was white in complexion that ruled Urhoy during A. D. 26-31. The Chronicle of Zuqnin and that of Elia of Nisbis provide two lists of the Kings of Edessa (Brook & Taylor, 2001, Vol. I, pp. 155-157).

The city of Urhoy is known by different names. Urhoy is the mother of all the cities of Mesopotomia. The Greek name of Urhoy is Edessa and in Turkish it is known as Urfa. The Syriac name Urhoy is common in Syrian Orthodox liturgical texts. This city was established in A. D. 132 by the Syrian King, Ario (Abdul Ahad, 1948).

Abgar V who was the King during the reign of Tiberius Caesar of Rome sent a letter to Jesus. This fact is referred in the Church History of Eusebius and in the Syriac document known as the Doctrine (teaching) of Adai. Moreover, the prayers in the middle of the Lent (in the fifty-day Lent) affirm this historical fact. The letter of Abgar V and the reply of Jesus as given in the teaching of Adai are reproduced below (Brock & Taylor, 2001, Vol. II; Aphrem I, 2000).

Letter of King Abgar to Jesus

Abgar the Black to Jesus – “The good Physician who has appeared in the region of Jerusalem, my lord, greeting! I have heard concerning you and your healing, that you are not healing with medicines and herbs. For, by your word, you open the eyes of the blind, you cause the lame to walk, and you cleanse lepers, and the dumb you cause to hear, and spirits and demons and the tormented by your very word you heal; even the dead you raise. And when I heard the wonderful great things, which you do, I decided either that you are God who came down from heaven and have done these things, or you are the Son of God who does all these things. For this reason I have written to beg you to come to me, as I worship you and heal a certain sickness which I have, as I have believed in you. Moreover, I have heard this too, that the Jews are murmuring against you and are persecuting you and even want to crucify you, and are intent on harming you. Now I possess a city, small and beautiful, which is enough for both to live there in quite.”

The reply of Jesus to King Abgar

“Blessed are you who, not having seen me, have believed in me, for it is written concerning me that those who see me will not believe in me, and those who do not see me will believe in me. Now concerning what you wrote to me that I should come to you, the matter concerning which I was sent here is henceforth completed, I am going to ascend to my Father who sent me, and when I have ascended to Him I will send you one of my disciples who will heal and restore the sickness you have, and everyone who is with you he will convert to eternal life. And your town shall be blessed, and no enemy shall ever have dominion over it again” (also, see, Eusebius Book 1:13)

Abgar's emissary, Hannan, was a painter. He wanted to draw a picture of Jesus. But the dazzling brightness of his face made it impossible for him. Then, Jesus covered his face with a cloth and gave it to Hannan to be given to King Abgar. This is the rendition of the Greek writer John of Damascus. These details are repeated in the prayer in the middle of the lent. However, Abdul Ahad (1948) recorded that Hannan painted a portrait of Jesus from his memory and gave it to King Abgar.

There are several renditions about the portrait of Jesus. Veronica, the woman who was healed by Christ of a hemorrhage, used her headcloth to wipe the face of Jesus when he fell beneath his cross on the road to Calvary. It is the imprint of his face that was left on the cloth, which Veronica took, to Rome and by which Emperor Tiberius was healed (White, 1991). In A. D. 944 this handkerchief (mandylion) kept in Urhoy was taken by Byzantine emperor Romanos I to Constantinople. The relic remained in Constantinople until A. D. 1204. The Crusaders took the mandylion to Rome and Mushe of Mardin claims to have seen it in Rome (Brock & Taylor, 2001, Vol.II).

After the ascension of Jesus Christ, Adai, brother of St. Thomas, was sent to Urhoy as was promised in the reply of Jesus (Aphrem Aboodi, 1966; Aphrem I, 2000). Abgar was healed of leprosy and was baptized by Adai (Abdul Ahad, 1948). King Abgar built a church in Urhoy and was the first King to embrace Christianity. Adai was the first Bishop of Urhoy. The memory of King Abgar, the Black, is celebrated in the middle of the fifty-day lent (a movable date).

6. St. Mary, Mother of God

(B. C. 14? D. 66?)

Mary was born in B. C. 14 in the little Galilean village of Nazareth to a holy couple Joachim and Ann of the royal race of David. They were already far advanced in age and had almost ceased to hope that God would bless them with a child. Their long-felt desire was gratified by the birth of Mary, the chosen one of Adam's race.

Joachim was the second son of Eleazar of the tribe of Juda and the race of David. Ann (Deena) is of the tribe of Levi and the race of Aron. Joachim is also known as Yunochir or Heli (Abdul Ahad, 1948).

The gospels refer to Joseph to whom Mary was betrothed as the son of Jacob (Mathew 1:16) and the son of Heli. The genealogy of Joseph makes it evident that Joseph is the grandson of Matthan (Mathew 1:15-16; Luke 3:24). One explanation of the above reference to Joseph as the son of Jacob and Heli is that Joseph is the son of Jacob by birth and Joseph is the son-in-law of Heli (Heli's daughter Mary is betrothed to Joseph). This genealogical analysis is available in Abdul Ahad (1948). However, the Orthodox study Bible (1993) advances another possibility. There was a law (Deut. 25:5,6) that the brother of a man who died without a child should marry the wife of the deceased and raise up an heir for his brother. The most likely explanation is that Jacob and Heli were born of the same mother, but of different fathers. When Heli died after a childless marriage, his brother

Jacob married the widow, who became the mother of Joseph. Joseph was a carpenter from Nazareth. He had seven children. James, Joses, Judas and Simon are referred to as brothers of Jesus Christ (Mark 6:3).

Mary was given to the Jerusalem temple at the age of three in accordance with a vow. Until the age of thirteen Mary helped in the church by stitching the vestments and preparing the accoutrements. It was customary that children beyond the age of thirteen were not allowed to stay in the church. Thus, Mary was entrusted to the care of Joseph of Nazareth.

Mary appears in the New Testament first when the Angel Gabriel announces the message of the favour of God (Luke 1: 28). Then Mary is seen, when Jesus was dedicated in the Jerusalem temple for naming (Luke 2:21-22), when they went to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover (Luke 2:41-42), at the wedding in Cana of Galilee (John 2:1), when a multitude was listening to Jesus (Mark 2:31), at the cross of Jesus (John 19:25) and when Mary together with disciples (Acts 1:14) was praying in the upper room (St. Mark, Jerusalem). The role and virtues of St. Mary, the Mother of God, can be gauged from these verses in the Bible.

All Christians accept St. Mary as a model to emulate. The early Church at Jerusalem had a close association with St. Mary. Protestant theologians content that Mary was a passive instrument in the salvific act of Jesus Christ. However, St. Mary was not timidly submissive for she had the free will to choose. This is evident from her response: "Let it be to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38). There is another argument that Mary became the Mother of God 'only by grace' (*sola gratia*). This would suggest that God unilaterally imposed the mission on her. It would again go against the basic theological teaching of free will.

St. Paul suggests the need for meaningful response to the divine call as is evident in the following verses. “We beg you who have received God’s grace not to let it be wasted” (2 Cor 6:1). “Keep on working with fear and trembling to complete your salvation” (Phil. 2:12).

There is an important role for St. Mary in the redemption of mankind. However, the Catholic and Protestant Churches occupy the opposite poles on this matter. The Catholic Church goes to the extent qualifying St. Mary as *corredemptrix* (Macquarrie, 1991). This term projects St. Mary to have an equal status in the redemptive act of Jesus Christ. The Protestant Church considers Mary as a lady used for Jesus to take flesh from, which was possible for any woman (Genesis 3:15; Gal 4:4). The Syriac Orthodox Church qualifies St. Mary with different names, which are indicators of the theological teachings about her. Perpetual virgin (Yacoub III, 1985), Mother of God (Cayre, 1935), Mother of Church (Bernard, 1960), first among the saints and the second Eve are a few of the qualifications. The teachings of Patriarch Severios of Antioch and that of Philoxinos of Mabbug are relevant in understanding the concepts about St. Mary.

The Syriac Orthodox Church does not accept the immaculate conception of St. Mary as declared by Pope Pius IX in 1854. In contrast, Mary was born with the original sin. “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Cor. 15:22). “Therefore, just as through one man’s sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all man, because all sinned” (Rom 3:23; Rom. 5:12). “All” refers to mankind and it will be reasonable to include St. Mary in the group. The concluding prayer of the holy Qurbono after the final blessing includes St. Mary for whom the sacrifice was made.

The New Testament is silent about the life of St. Mary after Pentacost. Some writers content that she lived with John, the disciple, as entrusted by Jesus Christ at the cross (John 19:25-27). A few suggest that she spent the rest of her life at Ephesus and died in A. D. 66? However, Abdul Ahad (1948) suggests that St. Mary lived only for five years after the ascension of Our Lord and died at Jerusalem at the age of fifty-one. The body of St. Mary was wrapped in linen cloths used for the burial of Jesus and buried in the Gethsemane. After that St. Mary was taken to paradise with her body in the company of angels and saints. The intercession of St. Mary is a basic tenet of the Syriac Orthodox Church.

There are seven feasts in the intercession of St. Mary.

1. January 15 – for seeds
2. March 25 – Annunciation to St. Mary
3. May 15 - for crops
4. June 15 – Dedication of the first church in honour of St. Mary
5. August 15 – Assumption of the Blessed Mary
6. September 8 – Birth of Virgin Mary
7. December 26 – Glorification of Virgin Mary.

7. St. Peter, the Disciple

(A. D.? - 67)

Peter was a fisherman from Beth– sa’-i-da, a city of Galilee (John 1:44). He was from the lineage of Naphtali (Abdul Ahad, 1948). Peter was known earlier as Symeon or Simon in Greek. Peter is the Greek translation for the Aramaic name Kepha. “You are Simon, the son of Jona: you shall be called Ce-phas” (John 1:42).

That Jo-na is the father of Peter which is evident from Mathew 16:17: “Blessed are you, Simon, Bar–Jo-’na.” Peter was married (Mark 1:30) and it is believed that he had a daughter (Abdul Ahad, 1948). They moved from Beth-sa’-i-da to Capernaum (Moothedan, 2001). The house of Peter is located near the Synagogue of Capernaum. A church has been built over the remains of Peter’s house. Peter’s wife might have accompanied him in preaching the Gospel (1 Cor. 9:5).

It is believed that Peter was the disciple of John the Baptist (John 1:40). His ardent belief in Christ (Mathew 14:28), confession of faith (Mathew 16:16), and anxiety about the well-being of Jesus Christ (John 18:10), are all evident in the Gospel. The liturgy and sacraments of the Syriac Orthodox Church, proclaim the primacy of St. Peter. He is the head of, and first among, the disciples of Jesus Christ. The name of

Peter appears first in the list of disciples (Mathew 10:2; Mark 3:16; Luke 6:14). Peter presided over the meeting convened for the election of Mat-thi'- as (Acts 1:15-26).

Peter is the man behind organizing the Church at Antioch. St. Peter established the Holy See of Antioch in A. D. 37 (February 22). Disciples were in touch with Antioch, from where they were commended to the Grace of God for the work (Acts 14:26). The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch (Acts 11:26). Jesus Christ stayed in the house of Peter (Hoever, 1989). Jesus travelled in the boat of Peter. Peter was the spokes-person of Jesus and the disciples (Mathew 17:24). St. Mark, the Evangelist, was the disciple of St. Peter (1 Peter 5:13).

After the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the napkin that had been around His head (John 20:7) was handed over to St. Peter (Mose Bar Kipho's Easter Instruction Chapter 18; cited in Abdul Ahad, 1948). Bar Sleeti has recorded that St. Peter used this napkin as headdress or head –gear (*Koobatho-Syriac*).

Heord Agrippa imprisoned Peter at Jerusalem in c. A. D. 44 (Acts. 12:1-19). He escaped from the hands of Agrippa. Thereafter, he preached Gospel in different places, ordained Bishops, and established churches at several places. Peter presided in the synod held at Jerusalem in A. D. 51. He was in Antioch during A. D. 53-60. Then he proceeded to Rome as a part of his visit where Nero was persecuting Christians. On the way to Rome Peter met Paul. They together went to Rome to strengthen the followers in the apostolic faith. Nero imprisoned them. It is certain that St. Peter and St. Paul were together in prison for about nine months before their martyrdom on 29 June A. D. 67 (Pollock, 1985, p. 307).

Abdul Ahad (1948) has recorded that St. Peter was crucified head downward on his request to kiss the feet of his master. According to Tertullian, St. Peter was crucified in the last year of Nero's reign at Rome (Hoever, 1989). Eusebius recounts that St. Peter was hung head downward according to his own request, not deeming himself worthy to die as his own Divine Master (White, 1991). The evening prayers on the feast of St. Peter also affirm this description. The feast of St. Peter is celebrated on June 29 along with that of St. Paul at the end of the lent in the intercession of Apostles from June 26 to June 29.

The successor of St. Peter is the head of the Syriac Orthodox Church. Now, His Holiness Moran Mor Ignatius Zakka I Iwas, is the 122nd successor of St. Peter.

8. St. Paul, the Disciple

(A. D. ? - 67)

Paul was born in Tarsus in Cilicia (Acts 9:11; 22:3). Before the conversion, his name was Saul. Paul's father was a rich and famous Jew of the Benjamin tribe and was a businessman (Abdul Ahad, 1948). His father was a Roman citizen and thus Saul was also (Acts 22:28). His mother died while he was a child.

Saul started his education at the age of six in a Jewish School at Tarsus (Aphrem, 1963). At that time there were three famous seats of higher learning - - Tarsus, Alexandria and Adena. Of the three, Tarsus was of the Hebrews to which tribe Saul belonged (2 Cor. 11:22; Abdul Ahad, 1948). At the age of fifteen he was sent to Jerusalem and was a student of Ga-ma'-li-el (a famous Jewish rabbi of the time), a Pharisee and a famous doctor of law of reputation. Paul was probably the best educated among the apostles and New Testament writers (White, 1991). According to the Jewish law, every Jew should know a craft (work). So Saul learned tent making (Aphrem, 1963).

Saul was a zealous Jew and was in the group who stoned St. Stephen (Acts 7: 58). Some Church fathers suggest that the martyrdom and prayer of St. Stephen, changed the course of Saul's life. He went to Damascus to threaten and slaughter the disciples of the Lord. When he came near Damascus, suddenly there shone around him a light from heaven. Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" And he said, "Who are you Lord?" Then the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads or spikes" (a proverb implying the futility of actions against an invincible force). So he, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what do you want me to do?" Then the Lord said to him, "Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do" (Acts 9: 1-6).

After this, Saul spent about three years in Arabia as a solitary (White, 1991) to prepare himself for his future missionary activity (Hoever, 1989). Thereafter he returned to Damascus, a focal place in the growth of the Church (Galatians 1:17; Nelson's encyclopaedia, 1913). Paul preached that Jesus is the Son of God

(Acts 9:20).

Jews plotted to kill Saul but it came to be known to him. He escaped through the wall in a large basket (Acts 9:23-25; 2 Cor 11:33). Saul went to Jerusalem and wanted to meet St. Peter, the head of the Church, and to join the apostles. But, the Church at Jerusalem did not accept Saul for they knew what Saul had done to the Church.

The work of Saul at Jerusalem resulted in the threat to his life. So, he returned to Tarsus (Acts. 9:30). It is believed that he stayed at Tarsus for seven to eight years (Aphrem, 1963). Paul went to Jerusalem with Barnabas during the famine in A. D. 44 with donations. He then went to Cyprus where Sergius Paulose, the governor, confessed the faith. Paul and Silas went to different places preaching gospel (A. D. 49-52) and Paul along with Barnabas attended the first synod at Jerusalem in A. D. 51 (Aphrem, 1963).

Paul had to face two problems that are relevant even today. They are: (1) The discrimination between Jewish Christians and those converted from gentiles and (2) The Christians newly converted at the instance of Paul, were considered to be lesser in rank than those baptized by the (original) early apostles. Also, the conservatism of converted Jewish Christians and the ultra spiritualism of those converted from the gentiles (Nelson's encyclopedia, 1913, pp. 257-258) were all matters of concern as much as it is for the present day Church in the wake of charismatic and other similar movements.

St. Paul suffered a lot for the Gospel. Once he was stoned and dragged out of the city of Lystra thinking that he was dead (Acts. 14:19). He recollects all those troubles and persecutions. "From Jews five times I

received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness . . .” (2 Cor.11: 24-28).

Paul was in prison for about two years (A. D. 57-59) and then went to Rome. Under the persecution of Nero, he was sentenced to death. Being a Roman citizen he was not tortured for long but was beheaded on 29 June A. D. 67. Before the martyrdom Paul and Peter were together in prison for about nine months (Pollock, 1985). St. Paul’s missionary work spans over thirtyone years. He supported himself and fellow workers by working with his own hands (Acts 20: 34). He also accepted material help for his basic needs (Phil. 4: 15-19). The feast of St. Paul is celebrated along with that of St. Peter on June 29 at the end of the lent observed in the intercession of the thirteen apostles.

9. St. Mark, the Evangelist

(? –A. D. 68)

Mark was born either at Jerusalem (The new encyclopedia Britannica, 1988) or at Irannappola, Africa (Abdul Ahad, 1948). The birth of Mark is believed to be at Jerusalem for the house of Mark's mother, Mary, was at Jerusalem. Mark is also referred to as John Mark (Acts 12:12).

A sixth century inscription discovered from the site of the house of Mary reads as follows: "This is the house of Mary, mother of John, called Mark. After the ascension of our Lord, Jesus Christ, into heaven, the holy apostles proclaimed this church in the name of Virgin Mary, Mother of God. Renewed after the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus in the year A. D. 73."

Several important events took place in this house, now called St. Mark's church, near the Jewish Quarter, Jerusalem. They are: the last supper and the washing of feet (John 13:12); the Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4); the election of Mathias (Acts 1:21-26); and the council of the apostles in A. D. 51 presided over by St. James, the brother of Jesus Christ and the first Bishop of Jerusalem; and St. Peter came to this house upon release from prison by an angel (Acts 12:12-13).

Mark was related to Barnabas, a Levite, and so he is believed to be a Levite (White, 1991). Mark appears to have been intimately associated with St. Peter and

might have been converted by St. Peter (Abdul Ahad, 1948). St. Peter refers to him as “Mark, my son” (1 Peter 5:13). Mark is believed to be one among the 70 emissaries Lord, Jesus Christ, had appointed (Luke 10:1). “Now a certain young man followed Him, having a linen cloth around his body (a cloak). They tried to arrest him, but he ran away naked, leaving the cloth behind” (Mark 14:51-52). This young man is believed to be Mark. Mark was a close associate of St. Peter and St. Paul. Mark might have spent at least five years in Rome.

There are different opinions regarding the Gospel according to Mark. Pappias (A. D. 65-135) suggests that the gospel was written at the request of Romans to record an accurate account of Jesus Christ from the mouth of St. Peter. The gospel was written either at Rome (Encyclopedia Americana, 1988) or in Italy around A. D. 60 (Hoever, 1989, White, 1991).

St. Peter ordained Mark Bishop for Alexandria probably in A. D. 61. Abdul Ahad (1948) has described in detail about his arrival in Alexandria. While travelling in Alexandria, he met a cobbler by name Anianos. His finger was punctured of the needle and he was in pain. Mark made clay and anointed his finger. Anianos was healed immediately. Anianos took Mark to his home where he preached about Jesus Christ. Several people believed in Jesus and were baptized. In A. D. 64, Mark ordained three Priests and seven Deacons. Anianos was appointed as their chief (episcopo). Then he left for Rome where he spent time with St. Peter and St. Paul until their Martyrdom in A. D. 67.

Mark returned to Alexandria where the Church was flourishing. The gentiles wanted to kill Mark. On the celebration of God Serabis, they tied Mark to the tail of a horse and made it run until his body was disfigured.

He was thrown into a prison for he was not dead. The next day he was further tortured and killed. The year of the martyrdom is given as A. D. 68 by Abdul Ahad (1948) and A. D. 75 by some others (e.g., White, 1991).

Gentiles put the body of Mark to fire. Immediately thunder and shower occurred and the fire was extinguished. Seeing these the gentiles ran away. The disciples of St. Mark buried the body at Alexandria. The feast of St. Mark is celebrated on April 25.

10. St. Mathew, the Disciple

(? -A. D. 70?)

Mathew is one among the twelve disciples of Jesus Christ. He is from Nazareth or Galilee and was of the Essakkar tribe (Abdul Ahad, 1948; White, 1991). He was a Jew and the son of Alphaeus (Mark 2:14). His original name might have been Levi and he accepted the name Mathew after becoming a disciple. In Greek, the word for disciple is "*Mathethai*." Thus, it is likely that the Jew (Levi) was later known as Mathew in the Greek. The evolution of the name is detailed in some books (e. g., Kallarangatt & Puthukulagara, 2001).

Mathew was called by Jesus while he was sitting at tax collectors place (Mathew 9:9; Luke 5:27) at Capernaum in the territory ruled by Herod Antipas (The new encyclopaedia Britannica, 1988 Mc Birnie,

2002). Mathew means the “gift of God.” The name of Mathew appears in the list of disciples as seventh or eighth (Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15; Mathew 10:3). This suggests that he joined the disciples much later than the other disciples.

Jews scorned the tax collectors. Tax collectors collected tax for the Roman government. They were considered to be anti-nationalistic. It was difficult to collect tax from Jews for they thought that they were God’s people and giving tax was to submit themselves to other people. Therefore, native Jews were appointed as tax collectors for the Roman government. A tax collector was a corrupt person and it was an embarrassment to be known as a collaborator of Rome. Several verses in gospels allude to this hostile attitude. “. . . saw Him eating with tax collectors and sinners . . .” (Mark 2:16). “. . . let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector” (Mathew 18:17).

According to Pappias of Hierapolis, Mathew composed the gospel in Armaic. (Eusebius, 1980). Since the time of Iraneous (c. A. D. 130-200) it is believed that the gospel according to Mathew in Greek is the translation of the original text in Armaic (Encyclopedia Americana, 1988). The gospel was written during the second half of the first century. The gospel was designed to convince that the Messiah had come in the person of Jesus, Our Lord, in whom all the promises about the Messianic Kingdom had been fulfilled.

Mathew evangelized a number of countries, which include Ethiopia, Persia and Parthia. Mathew went to Ethiopia during the reign of King Aeglippus. He raised the King’s son (from the dead) and several people believed in Christ. At his direction they constructed a church, which was named “the Resurrection Church.” An antique document, *3The Contendings of the*

Apostles, has reference to this incident (Kallarangatt & Puthukulangara, 2001). Mathew spent twenty-three years in Ethiopia.

It is uncertain whether he died a natural death or received the crown of martyrdom. Many authors also give the place of martyrdom differently. A few suggest that he was martyred during the rule of Emperor Domitian at Ethiopia. The place of burial is either Jabala or Antioch according to Mor Michael Rabo and Mor Bar Saleebi (cited in, Abdul Ahad, 1948). Robert Guiscard transferred the holy relics of St. Mathew to the Cathedral in Salerno, Italy from Brittany (White, 1991; Mc Birnie, 2002).

Six feast days of St. Mathew are given in the Syriac Orthodox Church calendar. They are: February 24, May 20 (Four Evangelists), June 30 (the twelve disciples), August 24, September 21, and November 16. These different dates suggest that the relics of St. Mathew were transferred to different places during the course of time.

11. St. Thecla, the Martyr

(? – A. D. 70?)

The biography of Thecla is not available in most of the books. The details given here are taken from a small book bought from the site of the tomb of Thecla during my visit to Homs, Syria in May 2000. The tomb and other structures at Ma'aloula (Ma'aloula is about 35 kilometers away from Maa'rat Saidnaya, Damascus, Syria) are under the control of the Greek Orthodox Patriarch.

In A. D. 45, St. Paul reached the city of Iconia on his way to Greece. Iconia is in Asia Minor near the border of Greece. St. Paul preached there and the speech inspired Thecla. However, her parents discouraged her. Her father was the governor of Iconia. He gave order to drive away St. Paul and to burn his daughter, Thecla. They arranged a fire to burn Thecla. Many people gathered there to see this. Thecla came forward and said: "O God of St. Paul, accept Thy maiden's soul for I wish to embrace you." Suddenly the sky became cloudy and thunder and lightning came with a sudden down pour. The fire got extinguished. Those gathered there become afraid and they ran home.

After the above incident Thecla stayed at the house of Onivoros, her neighbour. That family was praying for Thecla. Then, her father ordered that

Thecla be thrown to wild animals. They sat at her feet like sheep. The crowd wondered at this sight and praised God. Then, Thecla was tied to the horns of a bull. Fire came down and the rope was burnt and the bull attacked those assembled there to see the torture. Thecla was tortured by being made to stand in a room full of serpents. The serpents left the room. At last, the governor gave orders to execute her by beheading. However, Thecla escaped to Antioch.

The governor and the people of Antioch hastened to see Thecla. The governor asked Thecla about her journey. Thecla said: " I am the maid of God who created everything. I believe in Jesus Christ and in his Holy Cross." Thecla repeated the speech of St. Paul that she heard at Iconia. Thus, the governor believed in Jesus Christ. When she reached Al-Kalamoun (a place between Saidnaya and Malula, near Damascus, Syria) a few farmers were sowing wheat. Thecla raised her eyes to heaven and prayed that the wheat may be ready to reap. In a short while, the wheat field was ready for harvesting. The soldiers who were following her got confused and Thecla escaped capture.

Thecla reached Malula, which is a hilly place. She was so tired that she could not climb the hill. She knelt down and prayed: " God, you saved me from wild animals, the blazing fire, and the torture of my father. You helped me to travel a long distance and to reach this place safely." At this time the rock on which she was standing split into two and she landed safely in the opening. A stream started flowing beneath her feet. This rock is still there at Malula. She spent the rest of her life in this den in prayer, and worship of God. She used to pray for the sick and they were healed. She lived in the den eating green leaves and drinking

water until her death. The Arabic word *Malulin* means 'the mother of ailing'. The people at Malula speak the Aramaic dialect of Syriac, which Our Lord Jesus Christ spoke.

There are references to St. Thecla in the books titled - - (1) *Apocryphal acts of Paul and Thecla*, (2) *Book of women* and (3) *Book of Thecla*. Davis (2001) in the book titled - *The cult of St. Thecla: A tradition of women's piety in late antiquity* – has cited the three books and included information gathered from Asia Minor and Egypt. Catherine Burris of North Carolina University and Lucas Van Rompay of Duke University (2002) in their thesis titled - - *Thecla in Syriac Christianity, preliminary observation* – observes that Davis (2001) has left out the Syrian traditions about St. Thecla. The 97th Cathedral Homily of Mor Severios of Antioch is about St. Thecla which he delivered on her feastday, September 24. Mor Severios has compared the sufferings of Thecla to that of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego (Daniel 3) and to that of Daniel (Daniel 6).

Early Church fathers have affirmed about St. Thecla (Abdul Ahad, 1948). The prayers on the feast of St. Peter & St. Paul do mention this Martyr. The prayer at the time of death of faithful seeks the intercession of St. Thecla, the Martyr (Abraham, 1981). The feast of Thecla is on September 24.

12. St. Thomas, the Disciple

(? – A. D. 72)

St. Thomas, one among the twelve disciples of Jesus Christ, was a Jew. He was probably from Galeele (Aphrem, 1964; White 1992). Thomas in Armaic Syriac is known as *Teoma* and in Greek *Didymus* (John: 11:16; 20:24). The meaning of these words is twin (The encyclopedia Americana, 1988). The name “twin” was called because of his twin-brother Adai who later was the Episcopo of Edessa (Aphrem Aboodi, 1966; Curien, 1982). Thomas was most probably a carpenter (Britannica, 1988). The Bible has only a few references to Thomas, the disciple. Jesus went to Bethany after the death of Lazarus. Thomas along with other disciples went with Jesus. Thomas said to his fellow disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with Him” (John 11:16). The willingness of Thomas to follow Jesus unto death was fulfilled in his life.

On another occasion Jesus said, “And where I go you know, and the way you know” (John 14:4). Thomas said unto Him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going and how can we know the way?” (John 14:5). Jesus said to him “I am the way, the truth, and the life . . .” (John 14:6). Thomas puts questions like a child for he wants to know and believe. A f t e r the resurrection of Jesus Christ, He appeared to the disciples and Thomas was not with them (John 20:24).

The other disciples said to him, “We have seen the Lord” so he said to them, “unless I see in His hands, the print of the nails, and put my fingers into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe” (John 20:25). Doubt is the first step to belief. Jesus Christ cleared his earnest doubt. “. . . Jesus came and said to Thomas, reach your finger here, and look at my hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into my side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing. And Thomas answered and said to Him, “My Lord and My God !” (John 20:26-28). This confession of faith is repeated in the Holy mass when the second coming of Jesus is commemorated. This proclamation is the sum total of the salvific act of Jesus Christ on earth.

Apart from the New Testament references, Mor Aphrem, the Syrian (306-373); Gregory of Nazianzen (330-395), John Chrysostom (347-407), and Jacob of Sarug (451-521) have described the work of Thomas in India (Panicker, 1989; Koodapuzha, 1984; Kolangadan, 1995-96). These accounts are based on the ‘Acts of St. Thomas’. Some stone writings, coins and Tamil writings have been triangulated to suggest the work of St. Thomas in India (D’Souza, 1952; Paul, 1997). Moreover, the prayers of Syrian Church fathers written in the 4th and 5th centuries are relied on to establish that St. Thomas preached Gospel in India.

In the *memre*’ of Jacob of Sarug, it is said that the lot fell on Thomas to go to India. Thomas was hesitant to go to the black Indians (Panicker, 1989). Then, Thomas was sold as a slave to Haban (Aban), a merchant. It is also mentioned in prayers that he was sold as a mason for the construction of a building for a king (Abraham, 1981, p. 212). This 1st century king’s name is given as Gondaphorus (Kolangadan, 1995-96). The king is also referred as Gudnapher

(Menachery, 1973). Some coins of Gondophares and Gad (brother of the king) were discovered in North India in the 19th century. It must be said, however, that it by no means certain that Gordophares of the coins is the same person as Gudnapher of the Acts of St. Thomas (Menachery, 1973, p. 3).

St. Thomas was ordered to build a palace for the King. He was entrusted with twenty pieces of silver. However, when the King was absent, he used the silver for charitable purposes. When the King returned, he imprisoned St. Thomas, intending to flay him alive (White, 1991, p. 360). At that juncture, the King's brother died, and when the brother was shown the place in heaven that Thomas's good work had prepared for the King, he was allowed to return to earth and offer to buy the spot from the King for himself. The King refused, released Thomas, and was converted by him. The incident is alluded to in the evening prayer (*Bovuso*) of the first Sunday after Easter.

There are other accounts regarding the life of St. Thomas in India referred to by other writers. It is said that the King's brother (Gad) was called to life by St. Thomas after his death (Menachery, 1973). It is also mentioned that St. Thomas attended the marriage of the King's daughter. He was beaten up at the banquet. That person's hand was torn off by a dog, which St. Thomas healed (Panicker, 1989, p. 61). The miracle done at the wedding feast is referred to in the morning prayer of the first Sunday after Easter (Abraham, 1981, p. 213).

The Evangelisation of St. Thomas was primarily in the Kingdom of Gudnapher and then in places under King Mazdai (Menachery, 1973, p. 3). It is believed that St. Thomas landed at Kodungaloor in A. D. 52.

He preached gospel to Jews and then to Gentiles. He established houses of worship at Maliankara, Kollam, Niranam, Chayal (Nilakkal), Gokkamangalam, Paravur (Kottakkavu), and Palayoor (D'Souza, 1952; Aphrem, 1964). He appointed as priests elders from four Brahmin families, namely; Shankarapuri, Pakalomattom, Kalli and Kaliyankal and then went to Malakka.

In A. D. 72 he was pierced with a lance on December 18 and entered the heavenly abode on December 21 at Mylapore near Chennai, India. St. Thomas was buried at Mylapore. On 3rd July A. D. 394 the holy remains were transferred to Urhoy (Edessa) and interred there on August 22 (Aphrem, 1964). The relocation of the relic of St. Thomas to Urhoy is described in the *Hoothomo* of the feastday. Later the holy relics were transferred to the St. Thomas Syrain Orthodox Cathedral in Mosul, Iraq. A portion of the relics was discovered by His Grace Mor Severios Zakka (later Patriarch) in the altar of the St. Thomas church, Mosul, Iraq, during renovation work in 1964.

St. Thomas is considered to be the patron of builders by the Western Church. Three dates are observed as the feast days of St. Thomas. They are: New Sunday (a movable feast), July 3 – transportaion of the relic to Urhoy, and December 21– Martyrdom.

13. St. Luke, the Evangelist

(? –A. D. 80?)

St. Luke was born at Antioch and was a gentile. He was a physician and was a disciple of apostles (Col. 4:14). Eusebius has mentioned that Luke is of Greek origin. St. Paul has recorded that Luke was with him (2 Timothy 4:11) at the close of his ministry (c. A. D. 67). Details of St. Luke are not available after the martyrdom of St. Paul.

St. Luke was a fellow labourer of St. Paul in the missionary tours (Philemon 1:24). They earned their own living. "Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me" (Acts 20:34). St. Paul did the tent-making and Luke practised medicine (Acts 18:3).

Luke travelled along with St. Paul (c. A. D. 51-58) to Jerusalem. It is assumed that when St. Paul was in prison, Luke had occasion to mingle with the other apostles and to collect materials to write the gospel and the Acts of the Apostles. Luke is probably the only person among the gospel writers who is not of Jewish origin.

The gospel according to Luke is unique in certain respects. The childhood of Jesus is described in this gospel. The Magnificat is included in this gospel (Luke 1:46-56). Luke might have visited St. Mary to

collect these details. Luke drew the picture of St. Mary for the first time, which is preserved at the St. Mark's Syrian Orthodox Church, Jerusalem. Luke was not married. He wrote the gospel either at Achaia or Greece. He died at the age of eighty-four either at Boetia or Bithynia. The feast of St. Luke is celebrated on October 18.

14. St. John, the Disciple

(? - A. D. 100)

John is the younger son of Zebedee and Salome of Bethsaida. James, the son of Zebedee, and John his brother were the disciples of John, the Baptist. John, the Baptist testified: "Behold the Lamb of God" (John 1:36). On hearing this the two disciples (Andrew and John) followed Jesus (Adbul Ahad, 1948). James and John were fishermen (Mathew 4:21). They were called "Sons of Thunder."

John was different from the other disciples in various ways. John was the youngest of all disciples. Jesus loved John the most (John: 19:26). John is the only disciple who is seen standing by the cross. It is believed that John is the only disciple who did not receive martyrdom.

James and John, the sons of Zebedee, were surnamed Boanerges (Mark 3:17). The basis of this surname is attributed to their special traits of the

character such as impetuosity and zeal. (Mark 9:38, Luke 9:52-56; Nelson's encyclopedia, 1913). John was a witness to some important events during the ministry of Jesus Christ - - when the only daughter of Jairus was given life (Luke 8:41-42; 49-56) in A. D. 28; when Peter's mother-in-law was healed of a fever (Mark 1:29-31); at the mountain of transfiguration (Mathew 17:1-2) in A. D. 29; and at the Mount of Olives (Mathew 26:37) in A.D.30.

After the crucifixion of Jesus, John spent the rest of his life at Jerusalem and Ephesus (Hoever, 1989). St. Mary lived with John until her death as was entrusted by Jesus (John 19:25-27). Until A. D. 52 John lived at Jerusalem and later moved to Ephesus (Moothedan, 2001).

Once John was challenged by a Priest of Goddess Diana and gave him poison. John survived even after drinking poison (Day, 2002). Tertullian has recorded that at Rome Emperor Domician put John in boiling oil and he came out unharmed (Moothedan, 2001). He was later (A. D. 95-96) exiled to Patmos Island.

John built several churches in Turkey. John wrote the Gospel according to John, the three epistles and the Revelation. The gospel was written at Ephesus and the Revelation was written at the Island of Patmos. John died at the age of one hundred and twenty in A. D. 100. St. John was entombed at Ephesus and a church was built over his tomb. Later, this church was converted to a mosque (Hoever, 1989). The feast of St. John is celebrated on May 8.

15. Saint Ignatius Noorono, the Patriarch

(A. D. 35 - 107)

Mor Ignatius is the successor of St. Peter. He was the third Patriarch of Antioch for forty years, i. e., A. D. 68-107 (Eusebius, 1980). St. Evodius preceded him for about two years. He was the son of non-Christian parents, as inferred from his own letters (Ignatius of Antioch, 1968). It is opined that he was the disciple of John, the Baptist (Encarta encyclopedia, 2001). Some suggest that he was a persecutor of Christians (e. g., White, 1992).

Mor Ignatius is also known in Greek as *Theophorus* and *Noorono* in Syriac, which means 'the Fiery one or one clothed in fire.' The meaning of Theophorus is interpreted in two ways - - (1) God-borne and (2) God-bearer. The interpretation, God-borne is based on Mathew 18:2-3. "Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them. And said, verily I say unto you unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven." The child who was held in the arms of Jesus was the St. Ignatius of Antioch (Cayre, 1935; Cross & Livingstone, 1974; Ignatius of Antioch, 1968). The other interpretation, God-bearer is because of the virtue practiced by Ignatius in witnessing God as is expected of every true believer.

St. Ignatius had to face two groups with erroneous teachings. One group wanted the Church (after Christ) to be in tune with the Judaistic traditions and practices. They wanted to keep the Old Testament Sabbath, though were ready to discontinue circumcision. The adherents of this group were the Christians who were Essenes of Qumran. The other group was known as Docetist. Docetism can be summarized as follows: Christ had not had a real or natural body during his life on earth, but only the appearance and that all his acts and sufferings including crucifixion and resurrection were consequently illusions. It had been held that the Godhead descended upon the man Jesus at baptism, endowing him with miraculous powers and left him again before his death on the cross (Ignatius of Antioch, 1968).

St. Ignatius stood against these heresies. The details of his teachings against the heresies are described in his letter to the Church in Smyrna/Ephesus (modern Izmir in Turkey). "And every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God" (1 John 4:3). Against Docetism St. Ignatius stresses Christ's true humanity and identifies it with the healing food of the Eucharist (Douglas, 1978); the Body of Christ, the "medicine of immortality," without which we have no life within us (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1994). Further, he describes: every time this mystery is celebrated, "the work of our redemption is carried on" and we break the one bread that provides the antidote for death and the food that makes us live for ever in Jesus Christ. By the Eucharist we unite ourselves to Christ who makes us sharers in his Body and Blood to form a single body. It is the bread of angels, the bread from heaven, the viaticum. St. Ignatius has prepared a liturgy, which is rather lengthy.

Polycarp welcomed ⁵⁰St. Ignatius on his way to Rome (to be executed) under armed guard. Several

Syrian Christians and delegates from other churches at Smyrna received him. He wrote to churches at Ephesus, Magnesia, Tralles and Rome. Later from Troas, he wrote to the Philadelphian and Smyranean congregation and to Polycarp (Douglas, 1978).

In A. D. 107 he was thrown to hungry lions in an amphitheater (colosseum) with his companions Sosimos and Roppos (Aphrem, 1963). As he often wished: "The wheat of Christ (was) . . . ground by the teeth of beasts" (Cayre, 1935). He ended his saintly life exclaiming, "May I become agreeable bread to the Lord" (Hoever, 1989). The earliest witnesses recorded that only the hardest bones of his body remained. His remains were carried to Antioch where they became the object of pious veneration (Cayre, 1935; Hoever, 1989).

St. John Chrysostom in his oration mentions that the martyrdom of St. Ignatius was on October 17 (Smith & Wace, 1882; Cross & Livingstone, 1974). In the reign of Theodosius II (A. D. 408-450) the holy relics were transferred to another church within the city on December 20 (Smith & Wace, 1882). December 20 is the feast day of St. Ignatius *Noorono* in the Syriac Orthodox Church.

16. St. Agatha, the Martyr

(? – A. D. 251)

Many virgins were martyred during the third and fourth century A. D. Agatha is prominent among them. Agatha was born in Palermo or Catania, Sicily (White, 1991). She vowed her virginity to God.

The Consul Quintian (Quintanius) was ruling Sicily under Decian, the King. Quintian desired to marry Agatha and invoked laws against Christianity in an effort to seduce her (Encarta, 2001; White, 1991). In pursuance Agatha was sent to a house of prostitution and was ill-treated. She was tortured by rods, steel hooks in her sides and fire. Quintian promised that he would let her free if submitted to his wishes. Agatha said: "Christ is my life and Saviour" (Moothedan, 2001).

Agatha was subjected to various tortures and lastly her breasts were cut off, but she was miraculously healed when St. Peter appeared to her in a vision (Hoever, 1989. White, 1991). She was rolled over red-hot coals mixed with broken pieces of pottery. At this point a violent earthquake shook the town. Quintian, fearing that the people would rise up in protest, sent Agatha to prison where she died of her tortures. The year of her Martyrdom is believed to be A. D. 251 (Hoever, 1989; Moothedan, 2001).

According to tradition, about a year after Agatha's martyrdom, Mount Etna erupted and threatened to engulf the town with molten lava. A few faithful prayed in the intercession of Agatha and took her veil from her tomb and stood in the path of the oncoming lava. Miraculously the lava altered its course and the inhabitants of Catania were saved (Day, 2002).

The name of the virgin martyr Agatha is included in the calendar of Saint Jerome and in the calendar of Carthage (Britannica, 2001). The intercession of St. Agatha is specially requested in earthquakes and breast diseases. The feast of St. Agatha is celebrated on February 5.

17. St. Cyprian, the Martyr

(A. D. 200-258)

Cyprian was born in Carthage, Africa in A. D. 200. His father was one of the principal senators (Hoever, 1989; White, 1991). His parents were pagans and very wealthy. He was a student of law and later became an advocate. He was a Professor of rhetoric and a public orator. In the middle age he came under the influence of the Priest, Caecilian. As a result of this association, he made a vow of chastity and was baptized.

Cyprian was soon ordained Bishop in A. D. 238. Emperor Decius began his persecution in A. D. 250. Several Christians abandoned the faith. In A. D. 251, Cyprian returned from his hiding place. Several people came back to the faith. Subsequently a crisis arose in the Church regarding accepting those returning to the Church. A Priest, Novatus who had opposed the election of Cyprian, fuelled this. Cyprian was in favour of accepting those returning to the Church who was previously baptized in the Church, but opposed accepting those baptized by the heretics

and schismatics. Cyprian refused to recognize their validity. Cyprian although was lenient to laity in the above issue, was very tough with the clergy. Those Priests who joined heretics and later returned to the Church were not acceptable to him. In A. D. 252, Emperor Gallus persecuted the Church. In addition, Novatus the Priest, quarrelled with Cyprian. Cyprian opposed Pope Stephen I in the matter of baptism conferred by heretics. However, after the martyrdom of Stephen I (A. D. 257) the successors had good relations with Carthage. In August 257, Emperor Valerian passed an edict forbidding all assemblies of Christians and requiring all Bishops, Priests and Deacons to take part in the official worship or be exiled. On August 30, Cyprian was brought before the proconsul, Paternus, who exiled him to Curubus, Gulf of Hammamet. He was recalled and tried again in A. D. 258. On September 14 Cyprian was beheaded.

Cyprian was a theologian, Bishop, and a steadfast leader in the Church of Africa. Tertullian, the theologian of North Africa, influenced him. Cyprian has written about the use of the sign of the cross on different occasions. The Syriac Orthodox Church celebrates the feast of St. Cyprian on September 16.

18. Saint George, the Martyr

(A. D. 283? – 303)

George (Gurgis/Jurjis) was born in Cappadocia, East Asia Minor in c. A. D. 283. His parents were of royal origin as described by Meta Frastres (Moothedan, 2001). His Father is thought to be an army chief of Emperor Diocletian. George was also a high-ranking military officer in the army of Diocletian.

There are several legendary and historical descriptions about St. George and it is difficult to distinguish between the two. However, most of the books refer to an incident which is described here. One day George was riding a horse in the province of Lybia in North Africa. He came upon a city named Sylene. Near the city was a marsh, in which lived a dragon. The people had attempted to kill it but were poisoned by the creature's fetid breath. To placate the dragon, they offered it two sheep a day, but when they began to exhaust their supply of sheep, they were forced to substitute a human each day instead, casting lot to choose the victim.

At the time of George's arrival, the lot had just fallen to the King's daughter Andromeda (Sophia?). No one volunteered to take her place, so she was dressed in bridal finery and sent to meet the dragon. Riding upon this scene on a (green) horse George attacked the dragon and speared it with his lance. He

then fastened the princess's girdle around its neck, and the girl led the dragon into the city. The people were frightened and started to run away, but George told them not to be afraid – that if they would believe in Jesus Christ and be baptized, he would slay the dragon. The King and the people agreed. George killed the dragon, and it was carried away on four ox carts (White, 1991). George accepted no reward for his service, but he asked the King to build churches, honour Priests, and to be compassionate towards the poor.

George was martyred during the persecution of Diocletian at Nicomedia in the beginning of the 4th century. The persecution lasted for about seven years. During that period about seventy Kings were associated with Diocletian and historians mention different Kings in their account of the persecution. The persecution was as a result of George's refusal to worship Appalon and Hoclis, the pagan Gods.

George performed several miracles. Diocletian's wife Alexandria and his daughter Valeria believed in Jesus Christ. . This resulted in the beheading of Alexandria on April 8 at Diospolis in Palestine (now, Lod, Israel). George was beheaded at the same place on April 23 (Britannica, 2001; Encarta, 2001).

St. George is the patron saint of England. The reason for this may be that George was a Knight in the army or that he went to England as a delegate of an army, the truth of the matter is hard to ascertain. The coins of England bear the emblem of St. George. The reason for this may be that Richard I, Edward III, Edward IV, and Henry VII considered St. George in high esteem and their soldiers were believe to be under the protection of the saint. "St. George's arms" became the basis of the uniform of the British soldiers

and George's red cross appears on the Union Jack.

The writings of two Syrian churches, which date back to A. D. 494, suggest that George was martyred at Lydha (now, Lod, Israel). There were churches in the name of St. George during the time of Constantine, the Great, at Nicomedia, Ludia, and Thessalonica. The feast of St. George is celebrated on April 23.

19. Sts. Sergius & Bacchus

(?- A. D. 303)

Sts. Sergius and Bacchus were officers in the Roman army on the border of Syria (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2001). They were very close to Roman Emperor Maximian. Feast of the two saints are observed in the Churches in East and West. However, a detailed account of their life is not recorded anywhere.

The tradition is that Sergius and Bacchus were not willing to worship Jupiter for they were Christians. As a punishment they were dressed in female attire and were walked to Risafe, a city in ruins in Central Syria. At Risafe, they were beaten and Bacchus died there. Sergius was beheaded after being tortured. The year of the martyrdom is either A. D. 303 or A. D. 312.

In A. D. 431 Bishop Alexander of Hierapolis

renovated the church, which was built over the tomb of Sergius. The church at Risafe and the tomb are now famous pilgrim centres. The Byzantine Emperor Justinian I renamed Risafe as Sergiopolis. Justinian built churches in the name of Sergius at Istanbul and Palestine. The Church celebrates the feast of Sts. Sergius and Bacchus on October 7.

20. Sts. Barbara & Juliana

(? - A. D. 303)

Barbara was born at Nicomedia in Bithynia, modern Isnik, Turkey. She was the daughter of King Dioscorus (Aphrem, 1963; The encyclopedia Americana, 1988; Brock & Taylor, 2001). Barbara was very beautiful and her father kept her in a fort (Encarta, 2001).

Once Dioscorus went for a long journey. When he returned Barbara testified that she became a Christian. Dioscorus got angry with this and he wanted to kill her. However, Barbara escaped the attempt to kill her with a word. Thereafter, Dioscorus wanted to give her in marriage to a gentile King. Barbara resisted the decision. He threatened Barbara and took her to Marcian, the chief of the town. These efforts did not succeed and she was tortured by different means (Aphrem, 1963). The barbarous tortures of the time are detailed by Abdul Ahad (1948).

Juliana, a close friend of Barbara shared her persecutions. Juliana was also imprisoned. Later, Dioscorus beheaded Barbara and Juliana was martyred at Nicomedia. The date of martyrdom is given as 4 December A. D. 303 (Aphrem, 1963). A few accounts of the martyrdom give the date as c. A. D. 235 (e. g., Nelson's encyclopaedia, 1913; Encarta, 2001). Since the persecutions were during the time of Diocletian, it should be towards the end of the third century or in the beginning of the fourth century (The encyclopedia Americana, 1988).

On his way back after the beheading of her daughter Barbara Dioscorus was charred by lightening and thunder (Encarta, 2001). The faithful requests her intercession especially during lightening, thunder and storms. The Church celebrates the feast of Sts. Barbara and Juliana on December 4.

21. Forty Martyrs of Sebastea

(A. D. 320)

Martyrs are those who sacrificed their lives for their faith in Jesus Christ. The word "martyr" comes from the Greek word '*martyrs*'. *Martyrs* means witness (Nelson's encyclopaedia, 1913; Encyclopedia Americana, 1988). Originally, the word martyr was used for those who witnessed Christ. Later, the

word came to be used for those who laid their lives in witness of Christ. Martyrs are baptized in blood. Their intercession is precious to God. The feast of Forty Martyrs is celebrated during the forty-day lent of the Syriac Orthodox Church (actual date - March 9).

Sebastea is a town in the middle Turkey, Armenia Minor. It is the capital of Sivas. It is located in the Valley of Kizil River. Sabastea became famous towards the close of the 3rd century A. D. during the reign of Diocletian.

In the prayer for the feast of Forty Martyrs of Sabesteia, those martyrs are compared to forty palm trees by the side of streams which Ezekial, the prophet saw; the forty stars that dispelled the darkness of idol worship; the forty torches that glowed all night in the sea of Sebasteia and lighted up the whole world and the forty diamonds that are studded in the crown of the Church.

The forty-martyrs were soldiers in Sebasteia and they were martyred in A. D. 320. They were from different countries and belonged to the twelfth legion stationed at Armenia. The chief of the soldiers was Likkianos and the Governor was Agricalavos. King Liciniyoos ordered that all soldiers should offer sacrifices to idols. Those forty-martyrs refused to obey. Therefore, they were imprisoned.

After a few days, they were re-examined on the charges but they steadfastly held on to their contentions. Then, they were stripped and made to stand in the lake (river) of Sebasteia all night. They died of the chilling cold. The assurance of Jesus Christ, "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven" (Mathew 10:32) gave them strength to

face the trials and tribulations. They sang with King David that they would not forsake His Holy name even in hardships. These saints entered into the heavenly bliss through water and fire.

The names of the forty-martyrs are given in the *Sedro* of morning and evening prayers of the feast day of these saints, which falls on March 9.

22. Queen Helen

(A. D. 248 - 328)

Queen Helen (Helena) is the mother of the Roman Emperor Constantine who by the edict of Milan gave freedom of worship to Christians. Church historians of England have recorded that Helen is the daughter of King Cole (e. g., Hoever, 1989; Day, 2002). The birthplace of Helen is either York in England or Drepanum in Bithynia, Asia Minor. A few suggest that she is the daughter of an innkeeper in Drepanum (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2001; Encarta encyclopedia, 2001; White, 1991). In honour of Queen Helen, Drepanum was later known as Helenopolis.

Constantine Chlorus married Helen when he was an officer in the Roman Army (Hoever, 1989). When Constantine Chlorus was named as the successor of the Roman Empire in A. D. 293, he divorced Helen

for political reasons. Helen had a child who later became Constantine, the Great. Constantine Chlorus re-married Theodora the daughter (step daughter?) of emperor Maximian (Day, 2002; White, 1991).

In A. D. 306, the son of Helen, Constantine the Great, came into power. Then, Helen was given the priveleges of the widow of a king. Emperor Constantine won the war against Maximinas. This is remembered in the evening prayer for Friday and on the feast of Holy Cross on September 14. After the incident, Constantine was very kind to Christians. Helen embraced Christianity at the instance of Constantine at the age of sixty-three (Britannica, 2001; White, 1991).

Queen Helen was very considerate to the poor and needy. She was very kind to prisoners and army personnel. She constructed a few churches (White, 1991). She constructed churches at Mount of Olives and at Calvery (Hoever, 1989). Queen Helen was eager to discover the cross on which Jesus was crucified. This is evident from the song recited during the procession in the middle of the Fifty-day Lent.

Three crosses were discovered on March 24 while preparing the site for constructing the church at Golgotha. The Bo'outho of Mor Yacoub of Sarug (the Prayer of the third hour for Friday) describes the anecdote vividly:

“Judas stood up and girded his loins manfully and dug and found three crosses which lay together; the mother of the king was sad because of this, because she did not know which was the cross of the Son of God.

Judas said to her: do not be grieved,

blessed one, the Lord lives who will show you which is his cross. The Father was pleased to show the cross of light by means of a dead youth, who was being accompanied on the way to the grave.

When they placed them one after the other on the dead man, the people cried: living cross, show your power; the dead man saw the cross of light and rose from the bier and all who saw him gave glory to him who raised him up”

(The Book of Common Prayer of the Syrian Church, 1965, p.235).

This happened during A. D. 324-328. These portions of this cross were considered to be very precious and prelates used pieces of this cross in their handcross during the fourth century. A portion of the cross is inserted in the handcross of Saint Gregorius Abdul Jaleel (d. 1671) of North Paravur.

The last days of Queen Helen were spent at Palestine and her dead body was taken to Rome (White, 1991). Some others content that Helen returned to Rome (Moothedan, 2001) and died at Rome in August A. D. 326/328 (Hoever, 1989). The feast of Queen Helen is celebrated by the Western Church on August 18 and the Eastern Church on May 21 along with the memory of Constantine, the Great.

23. St. Yacoub of Nisbis

(? – A. D. 338)

Yacoub was born at Nisbis. At an early age he embraced solitary life. He was dressed in sheepskin and ate leaves and underground roots. Yacoub (James) of Nisbis is known as the Moses of Mesopotamia (Cross & Livingstone, 1974; Douglas, 1978). Ephrem, the Syrian, attended the Nicene Synod along with Mor Yacoub in A. D. 325.

Mor Yacoub was popular among the faithful of Nisbis. He was tortured under emperor Maximin. After the Nicene Synod, Arius, the heretic, took refuge under emperor Constantine. In A. D. 336 emperor promulgated an order by which the aged Alexander Metropolitan of Constantinople was asked to accept the heretic Arius (Cross & Livingstone, 1974). On receiving the order the Metropolitan knelt before the altar and prayed, "O Lord, take my life before I see Arius entering this church" (Aphrem, 1963, pp. 82-83).

At the above-mentioned difficult times, Mor Yacoub requested the faithful to observe fasting for seven days. Arius fixed a time to enter into the church. Several supporters of Arius assembled at the church compound. Before he could enter the church Arius died of pain in his stomach and a sudden illness. In A. D. 338, Sapor II, the Persian king, was almost to attack the city of Nisbis. However, the prayer and wisdom of

Mor Yacoub caused Sapor II to retreat. Mor Yacoub established a higher seat of learning at Nisbis in A. D. 303. During A. D. 313-320, he constructed a beautiful church in Nisbis.

The chronicle of Urhoy reveals that Mor Yacoub died in A. D. 338 (Douglas, 1978). He was entombed in the church, which he built. A few churches were built in the name of Mor Yacoub. In 1929 a small church was built in the name of Mor Yacoub at Kameshle. On 30 August 1936 oil came out like springs from different parts of the church. Many faithful and non-Christians collected this oil. This oil was used for blessings and Patriarch Mor Aphrem I Barsoum issued an Apostolic Bull about the event in February 1937. Mor Julius Elias, the delegate, brought the oil to Manjinikkara.

In 1952, the small church in the name of Mor Yacoub at Kameshle was demolished and a magnificent church was built in its place. Several miracles are being reported from this church. The feast of Mor Yacoub is celebrated on May 11 and July 15.

24. Mor Quryaqos & Morth Yulithi

(? – A. D. 354)

Quryaqos was born in A. D. 301 in Iconia, Turkey. His father was a chief of the army of Turkey. His mother, Yulithi was from the royal family. His father died in A. D. 304.

At the time of the persecution by Alexander, Yulithi left Iconia with her son Quryaqos to Tarsus, Cicilia. The soldiers followed them and caught them. They were brought before the Emperor Alexander. They were asked to deny Jesus Christ, to offer incense to God Sraphiyon, to drink wine and to eat meat offered to idols. Quryaqos and Yulithi were steadfast in their faith. They were chained and beaten up. The sequence of persecutions described include several barbaric tortures including pouring a solution of sulphur and salt in their nose (Abraham, 1975). During the imprisonment, the three-year-old Quryaqos converted four hundred and thirty prisoners.

The narration of torture includes nailing the body from shoulder to toe. On one occasion, Alexander sneered, saying: "If your God is capable of saving you, let him save you from me." Immediately an angel from heaven pulled out the nails from his body and forced it on the neck of Alexander. Then Alexander cried aloud exclaiming: "I believe that Christians have a living God. Pray for me that I shall believe and take refuge in him." St. Quryaqos extended his hand and

Alexander was relieved of the pain. In spite of all these Alexander did not believe in God.

On 15 July A. D. 304 Morth Yulithi, the mother of Quryaqos was beheaded. The very same day Quryaqos was thrown down from a height and thus martyred (Abdul Ahad, 1948). The feast of Mor Quryaqos and Morth Yulithi are celebrated on July 15.

25. St. Antony of Egypt

(A. D. 251 - 356)

The biography of St. Antony came to us through Mor Athanasius , the Great (A. D. 295-373) who had served St. Antony. Antony was born in the city of Kaman, Upper Egypt in A. D. 251. They were Christians and very rich. His parents died when he was about eighteen years old. His only younger sister was brought up under his care. Later his sister joined a nunnery. Antony sold all his ancestral properties and donated it to the poor and needy.

Antony practised very tough ascetism. "If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat" (2 Ths. 3:10). He worked hard with his own hands and shared everything with the poor. He ate food only once, after the sun set. He ate bread and drank water. He slept on the floor. He did not use oil on his body. The cloth he wore was of leather with fur inside. He lived in caves

and forts in the mountains. He lived up to the age of one hundred and five in good health, even with this life style.

Antony withstood the trials and tribulations of life reciting the Psalms and the Epistle of St. Paul to Romans: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" (Romans 8:35). "Though an army may encamp against me, my heart shall not fear, Though war may rise against me, in this I will be confident." (Psalm 27:3). He spent about twenty years in solitude. "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distress, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Cor. 12:10). Through the intercession of St. Antony, many were healed. At the age of fiftyfour (A. D. 305) he established a monastery at Fayum. This is considered as the beginning of Monasticism. Another monastery was later established at Pispir (White, 1992).

During the course of his solitary life, he came to the group of faithful only twice. The first happened in A. D. 311 or 313 at the persecutions of Maximos of Alexandria and the second to help Mor Athanasius of Alexandria against the heresy of Arius. St. Antony was very particular that he should not be second to his contemporaries in practising the virtues of Christian life. He was very humble. In the presence of a Deacon, he asked him to begin the prayer. To those who approached him for healing, he said: "Healing is from God. Healing is not of men." He also said that it is the will of God to heal according to his time and plan. Thus, the sick people learned the lessons of real Christian virtues.

St. Antony knew the time of his death. In A. D. 356 at the age of one hundred and five he admonished his fellow ascetics: "Love Jesus, trust in Him, keep away

from worldly pleasures, examine ones own life and repent, never boast if you can live without sin, never take pride if God answers your prayers or murmur if your prayers are not answered. Keep away from Arius and his followers. Don't be afraid if you see the authorities protecting them. Their victory will not last, it is to perish.”

St. Antony died in the thick forest. He insisted that his body should not be taken to Egypt. He feared that his body may be preserved in homes as they were doing in those days. He was of the opinion that his body should be buried as Christ was buried. He was against the practice of preserving dead bodies, prevalent in those days. He wanted two ascetics to conduct the burial service and the place of burial was not to be revealed to anybody. He wanted his headdress, bed-sheet, and dress made of sheepskin to be handed over to Mor Athanasius of Alexandria. The staff (T-shaped) was to be given to Makkarios whom he called to monastic life. After these instructions, he stretched his legs and joined the Holy fathers. The feast of St. Antony of Egypt is observed on January 18 in the Syriac Orthodox Church.

26. St. Basilius of Caesarea

(A. D. 329 - 379)

Basil was born at Caesarea, the capital of Cappadocia in A. D. 329. His parents were members of noble and wealthy families, and were Christians by descent. His grandparents on both sides had suffered during the Maximinian persecution. His maternal grandfather was deprived of his property and life. Macrina, his grandmother, on his father's side, and her husband, were compelled to leave their home in Pontus due to the severity of the persecution. His father, Basil, was an advocate and teacher of rhetoric. His mother, Emmelia brought up their ten children, five of each sex.

Macrina was the eldest daughter. The youngest son Peter's birth was almost contemporaneous with his father's death. Basil was the eldest of the sons, two of whom besides himself, Gregory of Nyssa and Peter of Sebaste, were Bishops. One son died in infancy. Naucratus, the second son, died when he was about 27 years of age. Among the five daughters, Macrina, the eldest, embraced a life of devotion. The other four daughters got married (Smith & Wace, 1877; Quasten, 1960).

Basil had his education at Caesarea, Constantinople and Athens (A. D. 351-355). At Athens he met Gregory of Nazianzus with whom he established a life-long

friendship. He returned to Caesarea in A. D. 356 after his education at Athens. He began his career as a rhetorician, which he renounced after sometime. He describes this spiritual awakening: "I had wasted much time on follies and spent nearly all my youth in vain labours, and devotion to the teaching of a wisdom that God had made foolish (1 Cor.1: 20). Suddenly I woke as out of a deep sleep. I beheld the wonderful light of the Gospel truth, and I recognized the nothingness of the wisdom of the princess of this world . . . "

Subsequently Basil received the sacrament of Baptism (c. A. D. 357) and was ordained Reader (Quasten, 1960; Douglas, 1978). Then he travelled to Egypt, Palestine, Syria and Mesopotamia in order to meet famous ascetics and to study their religious life (White, 1991). Their lives inspired him: "I admired their continence in living, and their endurance in toil. I was amazed at their persistency in prayer, and at their triumphing over sleep . . . " (Quasten, 1960; p. 205).

On his return, he divided his fortune among the poor and went into solitude on the Iris. Meanwhile, Macrina, his sister had begun a community life on one of their estates at Annesi on the River Iris with their widowed mother Emmelia (White, 1991). Gregory of Nazianzus visited him in A. D. 358 and they together prepared *Philocalia*, an anthology of Origen's work (Cayre, 1935; Quasten, 1960).

In A. D. 364, Eusebius of Caesarea ordained Basil Priest. Eusebius died in A. D. 370 and Basil was ordained Bishop of Caesarea, Metropolitan of Cappadocia and Exarch of the civil diocese of Pontus. He soon won the love and affection of his people. He established hospitals, homes for the poor, and hospices for travellers and strangers. Emperor Valens sent a delegate, Modestus, to Basil asking him to sign

a statement showing adherence to the Arian heresy. Basil was threatened with confiscation and exile if he did not oblige. The reply of Basil was as follows: “The confiscation of goods does not harm one who has nothing, perhaps, for these tortures and sufferings you need a cloak and a few books which are my whole life. Exile I do not know . . . for the whole world is of God . . . But death would be an act of kindness for it will bring me nearer to God, for Whom I live and for Whom I have been created and to Whom is the greater part I have died and to Whom I hasten” (Quasten, 1960, p. 206).

Modestus was astonished at these words. He said: “No one until now has spoken to me in such a manner . . .” To this Basil replied: “ Perhaps you have never met a Bishop before . . . Fire, swords, beasts and the instruments of tearing the flesh are wished for by us as delights more than horrors . . . you will not persuade us nor win us over to the impious doctrine (Arianism).”

Basil, besides being eloquent, was learned and unusually talented for organisation, and possessed great personal holiness. As an ascetic, he established a monastic system during that period. As a Bishop, he showed a genuine gift for leadership in ecclesiastical affairs and social needs. As a theologian, he showed determination to uphold Nicene doctrine (Douglas, 1978). He has written a text for the holy Qurbono. St. Basilius departed for his heavenly abode at the age of fifty on 1 January A. D. 379.

27. St. Gregory of Nyssa

(A. D. 335 - 394)

Gregory was born at Caesarea, Cappadocia (now Kayseri in Turkey) in A. D. 335. He is the younger brother of Basil of Caesarea. After a brief spell as Reader in the church, he became a teacher of rhetoric and thereby incurred the displeasure of his brother Basil for his entering into a secular life (Douglas, 1978). He married Theosebia but later returned to monastic life (Graff, 1954). This may be the result of the influence of his friend Gregory of Nazianzus, and Basil, his brother.

In A. D. 371/72 he accepted Basil's invitation, although rather unwillingly, to become the Bishop of Nyssa (Secunda, now Niksar in Turkey). He was exiled in A. D. 376 by the synod of Arian Bishops, which made the accusation that he was elected by unfair means and that he misappropriated funds. Emperor Valens, a pro-Arian, died in A. D. 378 and Gregory returned from exile.

Gregory was in charge of the diocese of Sebaste for a few months in A. D. 380. After the death of Basil, Gregory was one of the leading figures at the synod of Constantinople in 381. The doctrine regarding trinity is succinctly expressed in his treatise, *That we should not think of saying there are three Gods*. The emphasis is that the three persons (*hypostasis*) are distinctive but each act towards the created world is common to all three, having its origin in the Father, adored with

the Father and the Son and being perfected by the Spirit. He also suggested that we ought not to speak of three gods sharing the same substance of deity (or Godhead), because it is actually inaccurate and misleading to speak of three men when the 'man' in them is one and the same (Ferguson & Wright, 1988, p. 282).

Gregory has written on different themes, which include the Lord's Prayer, the Sermon on the Mount, Atonement, and Eucharist. His doctrine of Eucharist explains that salvation is communicated to the body through the Eucharist. The bread and wine become the elements of the body of Christ through the words of consecration so that as we receive them our bodies share divine immortality. Gregory departed for the heavenly abode in A. D. 394. The feast of St. Gregory is celebrated along with that of his brother St. Basil on January 1.

28. St. John Chrysostom, the Gold-mouthed (A. D. 347 - 407)

John was born at Antioch. His father, Secundus, who held a high position in the Empire died shortly after John's birth. Anthusa, his mother, widowed at the age of twenty, brought up John with utmost care. He learned rhetoric under Libanius, the best teacher of the time (Cayre, 1935). He was a student of theology under Diodore of Tarsus.

John's mother Anthusa died in A. D. 373 and John was practising ascetism on the advice of Basil at an early age. Bishop Meletius of Antioch ordained him Subdeacon (*Korooyo*). In A. D. 381 he was ordained Fulldeacon. His ascetic practices and fasting during lent period caused his physical health to deteriorate and he had to return to Antioch.

In A. D. 386 he was ordained Priest and he served Patriarch Flavian I until A. D. 397. Nekthariyoos, the Patriarch of Constantinople, died on 27 September 397 and Fr. John was elected to succeed him. On 26 February 398, Theophilus, the Patriarch of Alexandria, ordained him Bishop by name Chrysostom (Ivanios) and elevated him to Patriarchate against his will (Cross & Livingstone, 1974; Douglas, 1978; Smith & Wace, 1877).

Mor Ivanios was called the Golden-mouthed because of his skill in preaching. He had many opponents for he stood for the down trodden and for the revival of Priesthood. He spoke against the practices of the rich, which invited furious response from the wealthy (Britannica, 2001). Mor John Chrysostom spoke against the lavish spending of personal money. He exhorted that money is not personal. It is entrusted to the rich for its wise management and hence should be shared with the needy. He admonished lazy Priests and punished Bishops who were found guilty. His criticism of luxurious style of living, enraged the Queen and high officials. Added to these, Mor Chrysostom provided asylum for those ascetics of Egypt whom Theophilus, the Patriarch of Alexandria, had excommunicated. Moreover, he opposed erecting the sculpture of Eudoxia, wife of Arcadius, the emperor of Eastern Roman empire, near the church. It was also alleged that Mor Chrysostom referred to Eudoxia as Jezebel.

In A. D. 403, Theophilus of Alexandria called a synod of all the Bishops of Syria and Egypt in Oak, Bosphorus. Mor Ivanios did not attend the meeting. In his absence, he was dethroned and Theophilus compelled Eudoxia to send him to exile. However, there was a large number of people who supported Mor Ivanios. Meanwhile, because of an earthquake, there were some accidents in the King's palace and Mor Ivanios was called back. But in the next year he was exiled to Cucusus and was imprisoned there.

Mor Ivanios wrote about 200 letters to the faithful of Constantinople. Several friends visited him in exile. Then he was taken to Pontus (eastern end of the Black Sea). The troubles, the journey and bad weather made him suffer a lot and on 14 September 407, he

departed for his heavenly abode at Comana, Heleno Pontus praying: "Praise to God for everything." After thirtyone years, on 27 January 438, the relics of Mor Ivanios were taken to Constantinople from Comana. Bishop Proclus and Emperor Theodosius II received the holy remains and interred them at the church of the Aspotles.

John Chrysostom (Mor Ivanios) was an orator and an interpreter. His speeches were on the Gospels of Mathew, John, and on the eight epistles of St. Paul. He prepared a text of the Holy Qurbono. He used several analogies in his speeches, which included Moses and Christ, baptism and the crossing of Red Sea, and the lamb of Passover and the lamb of God. The faithful cried in repentance while listening to his speeches.

The twelve Baptismal instructions of St. John Chrysostom are well known. These are speeches delivered in A. D. 390 at Antioch to those who were preparing for baptism and to those who were baptized. Of the twelve instructions, the manuscripts of eight were discovered from the monastery at Mount Athos in Greece. Newman Press, New York, published the English translation of the twelve instructions in 1963. John Chrysostom has also written six books on Priesthood. Those books deal with the symbolism, descriptions and glory of Priesthood. St. Vladimir's Seminary, New York, published the English translation of the six books in 1964. The feast of St. John Chrysostom (Mor Ivanios) is celebrated on November 13 in the Syriac Orthodox Church.

29. Mor Barsoumo, chief of Mourners

(A. D.? – 458)

Barsoumo was born at the village of Otton near the city of Smeshath. His parents were Hanock and Zachia. The life story of Barsoumo, chief of the mourners, written by his disciple Samuel, the Priest, is kept in the library at St. Mark, Jerusalem (Zafaran, MSS 117).

Barsoumo is known as the head of the mourners. His name is known differently in the historical books - - Barsuma and Barsoma. One day Barsoumo went for a festival in the city of Smeshath. He happened to be alone on the bank of Euphrates. He was crying. A monk by name Abraham met him and asked: "Why are you crying?" Barsoumo replied: "I want to be the slave of Jesus Christ, our Lord." Abraham took him to the monastery and taught him ascetic practices. His teacher Abraham, the ascetic, died in c. A. D. 409.

After the death of his teacher, Barsoumo visited the holy land. On return, he stayed on a high mountain. The faithful built a monastery for him at that place and he stayed there. The Dayro of Mor Barsoumo is near Melitine. On a summer night Barsoumo went out of his room and looked at the shining stars. He thought of his humble self and the mighty creations of God. He decided on that day that he would not sit

in the presence of his master. That day onwards he remained standing before the Lord and supported himself on a rock whenever he was tired.

In A. D. 449 Barsoumo attended the second Synod of Ephesus as the representative of all monasteries of the East. He was given the authority over other monasteries by Caesar Theodosius (to settle disputes and issues). After the death of Theodosius II, the army chief Markkian took charge.

Barsoumo felt bad about the decision of Chalcedon synod. The Chalcedonians read an order of excommunication of Barsoumo in a church. Then a prominent person testified that his son was seriously ill and Barsoumo's prayer healed him. The faithful was unanimous in their conviction of the saintly life of Barsoumo and Chalcedonians could not do anything.

Barsoumo was a close friend of Mor Dioscoros, the Patriarch of Alexandria (Smith & Wace, 1877). Mor Barsoumo entered his heavenly abode on February 3 A. D. 457/58.

30. Mor Simon, the Stylite

(A. D. 390 - 459)

Mor Simon is the first among the pillar ascetics. The term stylite originated from the Greek word '*stylos*' which means pillar. Simon was born in the village of Sesan, a place on the border of Cicilia and Syria (Smith & Wace, 1887; Cross & Livingstone, 1974; Douglas, 1978).

Simon was a shepered at a young age. While in the field with sheep, he saw a vision. Later, he disposed of his properties and the assets of his aunt, which had been entrusted to him. He distributed part of the proceeds among the poor and the needy. The remaining assets he took to the monastery of Eusebona at Tell 'Ada, situated between Antioch and Alleppo. He joined the monastery with his brother Shemse when he was in the teens.

Later, he dug a pit of about 4 ft in the garden and stood in the pit for about two months. After the midnight prayer he used to stand with a big stone hung around his neck. He also stood on a roller to resist sleep in the night. His fellow hermits were jealous about these practices of Simon and raised some false accusations against him. Thus, he left the monastery of Eusebona. The head of the monastery gave him four coins which he refused to accept and said: "May your prayers be the viaticum for me."

Mor Simon reached the village Telanissur, Dair Sem'an. He sat beneath a tree and prayed, "O God, My Lord, by Thy will you protected me from all adversities. Help and guide me until I reach the heavenly abode." He then travelled and reached the monastery of Maris. Maris is the son of Barathoon and was the head of the village. He healed several sick people while staying in this monastery.

Mor Simon was in the habit of observing the forty-day lent in all its seriousness. During the forty-day lent he did not eat anything. In A. D. 423, he prepared a platform of about 4 ft. high and stood on it for about five years. Mor Simon was going around the nearby villages to preach Gospel. Angels, prophets Elijah and Moses appeared to him. Several miracles happened through the intercession of Mor Simon.

Mor Simon spent about forty years on a pillar. He prayed, "O Lord, my God, let not the hands of mortal men be necessary for my help. Let not me step down from this pillar to see men on earth. Help me O Lord to end my life on this pillar on which I ascended by your grace. According to Thy will accompany the soul of Thy servant from this place."

Mor Simon had ulcers on his foot because of standing for long on the pillar. He suffered a lot for about nine months. Emperor Theodosius sent three Bishops to request Mor Simon to step down from the pillar. However, he spent time in prayer and fasting. In A. D. 459 (July) several people gathered around the pillar to listen to his words. Mor Simon departed for the heavenly abode probably on Wednesday July 27. His body was kept on the pillar for nineteen days in order to agree upon the place of burial. The body was carried in a funeral procession from the Fort of Simon (where he spent his time as a pillar ascetic) to

Antioch. The body was buried in a church at Antioch constructed by King Constantine. An evil spirited man touched the coffin during the funeral procession and was healed.

Now there are four churches near the pillar of Mor Simon. Those who followed his ascetic practices are called stylites. Daniel is one of the prominent disciples of Mor Simon. The Syriac Orthodox Church celebrates the feast of Mor Simon, the stylite, on July 27.

31. Mor Jacob of Serugh

(A. D. 451 - 521)

Jacob (Yacoub), was born as the son of a Priest, at Serugh in the village Kurtam which is very close to the Mesopotomian village Edessa (Urhoy), modern Urfa in SE Turkey is also known as Kurtak.

A few authors have mentioned about the inspiration of the child Jacob. At the age of three, while in the church, the child got out of the hands of his mother and went up to the altar during the time of epiclesis (during the invocation of Holy Spirit at the Qurbono). At the altar the child was given a drink by an angel (e.g., Aphrem, 1963; Jacob of Serugh 1997). He then returned to his mother joyfully.

He was a student at Urhoy at the age of twenty as can be inferred from one of his letters. King Zeno closed the school at Urhoy in A. D. 489. Jacob completed his education at the age of twenty-two and was ordained Priest. He served the village Hawra near Urhoy as Priest and corepiscopo. He composed most of his poetry (*memre*) when he was a corepiscopo.

The *memre*' focusses on practices rather than principles. Seventeen of those homilies were translated into English by Rev. Fr. Thomas Kollamparambil CMI (Jacob of Serugh, 1997). Bar Hebraeus recorded that he employed seventy amanuenses (copying secretaries) in writing his homiletic poems of which 760 exist (Smith & Wace, 1882).

After the Chalcedon synod, the faithful had to suffer a lot. However, Jacob of Serugh joined hands with Mor Severius, Patriarch of Antioch (A. D. 460-538) and Mor Philexinos of Mabug (A. D. 450-523) to protect the true faith. Jacob was ordained Bishop of Batnae in c. A. D. 519 when he was sixty-seven and a half years old (Smith & Wace, 1882).

He was a voluminous writer. His writings include those about the great men of the Old Testament, about angels, and the mysteries of the Son of God, two anaphoras, an order of baptism, and six homilies - - on Nativity, Epiphany, Lent, Palm Sunday, The Passion, and the Resurrection. Apart from these he has written the biographies of Mor Daniel and Mor Hananiah (Smith & Wace, 1882; Aphrem, 1963).

After Ephraim, says Prof. W.Wright, "we may mention three writers of verse, Balai, Cyrillions, and Issac of Antioch. These, however, are cast into the shade by Jacob of Batnae or Sarug, one of the most prolific and at the same time most readable authors

of his class.” “In the wealth of words and ease of expression he ranks next to Ephraim”- Assemani (Cited in, Smith & Wace, 1882).

On 29 November 521, Mor Jacob departed for his heavenly abode in the midst of writing a poem on Mary and Golgotha. The holy remains were interred at the church in Serugh. The plaque on the tomb reads: “The Syrian Mor Jacob of Serugh, the Doctor and Consolidator of the true faith.” The feast of Mor Jacob of Serugh is celebrated on 29 November in the Syriac Orthodox Church.

32. St. Philexinos of Mabbug, the Martyr

(A. D. 450 - 523)

Philoixions was born at Tahal, Persia. He was originally named Xenaya (Smith & Wace, 1887; Douglas, 1978). He studied at Urhoy (Edessa) and at Tel' Ada, Antioch. He later joined the monastery at Karthmin and became a Priest.

On 18 August A. D. 485, Priest Xenaya was ordained Bishop by the Patriarch Peter II (Peter, the Fuller) for Mabbug (Hierapolis), by name Philoxinos. In A. D. 512, Patriarch Severios assumed charge replacing Flavian II. Bishop Philoxinos was one of the

most learned Syrian theologians and the spokesman of the Patriarch Severius of Antioch. A Syriac version of the New Testament was published by Mor Philoxenos in A. D. 508 (Douglas, 1978).

Mor Philoxenos has published several letters about the Chalcedon heresy, ascetic life, the perfect Christian life, the trinity and the incarnation, three texts of holy Qurbono, prayers for different hours, etc. About incarnation, he wrote: "The very personality of God the word descended from heaven and became man in the womb of the Virgin, personally without conversion. Thus, He became a man who could be seen, felt, handled, and yet as God He continued to possess the spiritual, invisible, and impalpable character essential to Deity. Neither the deity nor the humanity was absorbed one by the other, nor converted one into the other. Nor again by a combination of the two natures was a third evolved as by chemical transformation" (Smith & Wace, 1887; p. 392).

In A. D. 518, the faithful Anastas Caesar died and Justinus succeeded him. Justinus was a supporter of Chalcedonians. He persecuted the faithful, and Mor Philoxenos was first exiled to Thrace and then to Gangra in Paphlagonia, where he died of suffocation by smoke (Smith & Wace, 1887; Aphrem, 1963). The date of his martyrdom is given as 10 December A. D. 523.

33. St. Severios, the Great

(A. D. 459? - 538)

Severios was born at Sozopolis, Pisidia (Smith & Wace, 1887; Brooks, 1903). His father was a member of the Council of the city. The biographical details of Severios come down to us from his friend Zachariah of Gaza.

After the death of his father, Severios (the third son) went to Alexandria to study Greek, Latin, and rhetoric. Later in A. D. 486 he went to Beirut and studied law and practiced as an advocate there. At Beirut, he read widely on theology and published a book praising St. Paul - *Encomium of the Apostle Paul*.

Severios was baptized in A. D. 488 at Tripolis. It is not certain whether his parents were Christians. In A. D. 490 Severios visited Jerusalem and joined the monastery of Peter between Gaza and Majuma. He became ill due to strict ascetic practices in the monastery. Later he founded a monastery of his own.

Bishop Eppippanios ordained Severios Priest. He lived at Constantinople during A. D. 508-511. Patriarch Flavian II (A. D. 498-512) was removed from the Throne in A. D. 512. Severios was enthroned Patriarch on 6 November 512 (Brooks, 1903; Douglas, 1978; Aphrem I, 2000). After assuming the position as Patriarch, he continued the monastic life style.

He demolished all luxurious facilities built by his predecessor (Aphrem, 1963).

In A. D. 518 Justin I, a pro-Chalcedonian emperor, came into power and the writings of Patriarch Severios were burned. Anybody having in his or her possession the writings of Mor Severios were tortured. Subsequently, on 29 September A. D. 518, he was exiled from Antioch to Alexandria (Brooks, 1903; Aphrem I, 2000).

The teachings of Patriarch Severios on the incarnation is famous. "His conception of the incarnation was, that all the human qualities remained in Christ unchanged in their nature and essence, but that they were amalgamated with the totality of hypostasis; that they had no longer separate existence, and having no longer any kind of center or focus of their own, no longer constituted a distinct monad. On the contrary, the foci had become one. The monads were conjoined; the substratum in which the qualities of both natures inhered no longer had an independent subsistence, but formed a synthesis, and all the attributes subsisted in this composite hypostasis" (Smith & Wace, 1887, Vol. IV, p. 641).

The above confession of faith is repeated during the fracture and commixture in the holy Qurbano. That is, "He is One Immanuel, and is indivisible into two natures after the unity. Thus we believe and thus we confess and thus we confirm . . ." The fifth diptych remembers Mor Severios as "Patriarch Mor Severios, the crown of the Syrians, that rational mouth and pillar and teacher of all the holy Church of God, the meadow full of flowers who always preached that Mary is undoubtedly the Mother of God."

The responsory (*Manisso*) of Mor Severios sung in

the beginning of the celebration of holy Qurbano also proclaims the basic tenet of the Church regarding the incarnation of God, the Word. “. . . and did become incarnate of the Holy and glorious pure virgin, Mother of God, Mary; who did become man, being God without change, and was crucified for us.”

Patriarch Severios was a prolific writer. He has prepared a liturgy and several other prayers for special occasions, a list of which is available (Aphrem I, 2000, pp. 93-96). Mor Severios foreseeing his death called his disciples and said: “It is good that I am going to join Jesus Christ. You will also come to me there and will again unite.” He spent about twenty years in hiding (A. D. 518-538) and departed for the heavenly abode on 8 February (Saturday) 538 at Sakha, Egypt at the age of seventynine.

34. St. Yacoub Burd'ono

(? – A.D. 578)

St. Yacoub Burd'ono (James or Jacob) was born at Tella Mouzalat, near Nisbis, which is fiftyfive mile East of Edessa. Tella Mouzalat is also referred in certain texts as Constantina. He is the son of Theophilus who was a Priest of the Syriac Orthodox Church (Smith & Wace, 1882; Patriarch Aphrem I, 2000). His parents did not have children for a long time and in pursuance of a vow of his parents he was dedicated to God. At the age of two years, James was entrusted to the care of Eustathius, the chief of the Monastery (*Reesh Dayro*), at Phaselita, near Nisbis (Aphrem, 1963). He learnt Greek, Syriac and the basics of asceticism at the monastery.

One day Yacoub's mother visited the monastery and wanted to take him with her. He was not willing to go home even for a visit and said: "I am fully dedicated to Christ and that my mother has no share in me." After this incident, his mother died in about a year and his father died in about three years (Aphrem, 1963). After the death of his parents he distributed all the properties that he inherited from his parents among poor people and reserved nothing for himself (Smith & Wace, 1882). He said: "Let the wealth of the world be to the world." He released two slaves whom he inherited and left the house and estate to them.

After the training at Phaselita monastery, James was ordained Deacon and subsequently became a Priest. James was reputed for working miracles, and sick people came from far and near to be healed by him. St. James raised the dead, restored the blind to sight, gave rain, and even made the Sun stand still. When Edessa was attacked by Chosroes I, after the capture of Batnae and other towns on the Euphrates, the prayers of St. James saved the people and Chosroes was scared by a terrible vision (Smith & Wace, 1882). His fame spread all over the East. The Empress Theodora, a zealous member of the Jacobites (Syrian Orthodox Christians were called Jacobites after the leadership of St. Jacob) wanted to see him. However, James was not inclined to go to Constantinople. Later, in a vision, Severus, the Patriarch of Antioch, and Mor John, the late Bishop of Tella, directed him to go to Constantinople to which he obliged. He went to Constantinople in about A. D. 528 and remained there in a monastery for fifteen years (Cross & Livingstone, 1974).

On the arrival of St. James at Constantinople, Theodora received him with honour, but the court had no respect for him. Justinian, the Emperor, had resolved to enforce the Chalcedonian decrees universally, and the Bishops and clergy who refused to accept the decrees were punished with imprisonment, deprivation, and exile. As a result, Jacobites were deprived of their spiritual pastors and for about ten years many churches had to forgo the sacraments. The faithful were not ready to accept the sacraments from the heretics. Chalcedonians were known as the Melchites (*Malchoye*- the royal party or the Emperor's men) since the emperor ardently supported them.

Al-Harith (Aretas) Ibn Jabalah al-Ghassani, the Sheik of the Christian Arabs (A.⁹⁰D. 530-572), appealed to Theodora, and James was given a little freedom. At

that time, a number of Bishops from all parts of the East, including Theodosius of Alexandria, Anthimus, the deposed Patriarch of Constantinople, Constantius of Laodicea, John of Egypt, Peter and others came to Constantinople to mitigate the displeasure of the emperor. But they were detained in a castle in a kind of honourable imprisonment. They ordained James as the Bishop of Edessa in c. A. D. 541 (the date given by Asseman). Some authors have given the date as 542 or 543 (Cross & Livingstone, 1974; Patriarch Aphrem I, 2000).

The Syriac Orthodox Church should gratefully remember Yacoub Burd'ono for he is responsible for restoring the Church from extinction by his indomitable zeal and untiring activity. The Church was threatened by the persecution of the imperial power. The Christological doctrine (two natures in Christ) set forth by the Chalcedon synod (451) was not acceptable to the Syriac Orthodox Church. Although the political and dynastic storms swept that portion of the world, efforts of St. Yacoub preserved the Church whereby the Church since 6th century has been known as the Jacobite Church.

Jacoub Burd'ono travelled on foot the whole of Asia Minor, Syria and Mesopotamia, the adjacent provinces, and even to the borders of Persia. He both exhorted the faithful and sent encyclicals encouraging them to maintain the true faith. He ordained eighty-nine (27?) Bishops and two Patriarchs (Smith & Wace, 1882). The Patriarchs probably are Sergius (544-547) and Paul II (550-578). Aphrem (1963) has recorded that in A. D. 550 St. Yacoub (James) with the help of Augen, the Episcopa of Selucia, ordained Paul of Egypt as Patriarch of Antioch. Justinian, the Emperor, and the Catholic Bishops were angry at the successful

missionary labour of St. Yacoub. Rewards were offered for his capture. However, in his beggar's garb, aided by the friendly Arab tribes and their chiefs and the people of Syria and Asia, he eluded all attempts to seize him (Cross & Living stone, 1974). His labours strengthened the original Syrian Orthodox Church. Imperial persecution could not repress his work. Although there were many converts to Islam after the Arab invasion of Syria (c. 640), the Jacobite Church continued to produce a number of writers.

Yacoub Burd'ono is known by the surname Baradaeus. The surname Baradaeus is derived from '*baradai*' (clad in rags) or the ragged mendicant's garb, patched-up out of the old saddle-cloths which he used for his swift and secret journeys in Syria and Mesopotamia to avoid arrest by the imperial forces (Smith & Wace, 1882; Douglas, 1978). John of Ephesus states that the origin of his surname is that he cut a coarse robe into two pieces, and wore one-half as an under garment, and the other half as an upper garment without changing them during summer or winter until they grew quite ragged and tattered. Burd'ono, the nickname is derived from the Syriac word "*Burd- o*" meaning saddlecloth. The origin of the word from Arabic, Greek and Latin equivalents are detailed in Smith & Wace (1882, p. 329).

In the fifth and sixth centuries a large body of Christians in Syria repudiated those who had supported the Council of Chalcedon (A. D. 451) for affirming the dual nature of Christ. The Christological teaching of the Chalcedon can be summarized as: "We confess one and the same Christ Jesus, the Only-begotten Son, whom we acknowledge to have two natures, without confusion, transformation,

division or separation between them. The difference between these two natures is not suppressed by their union; on the contrary, the attributes of each nature are safeguarded and subsist in one person” (Poulet, 1956, pp. 240-241). Some writers refer to the Syrian Orthodox faith as monophysitism, which is totally wrong. Monophysitism is a Christological teaching of Euthyches that human nature of Christ was absorbed by the divine (Encyclopedia Americana, 1988).

The Christology of the Syriac Orthodox Church is known as Miaphysitism. Miaphysitism holds that in the one person of Jesus Christ, Divinity and Humanity are united in one “nature”, the two being united without separation, without confusion, and without alteration. Both natures (in Greek *Physis*) in Christ are in a state of indivisible and insoluble hypostatic union (retains all the characteristics of both). Euthyches (378-454) maintained that the Human Nature of Christ disappeared in the Divinity or the Divinity absorbed the Humanity. The Syrian Orthodox Church did not accept this heresy at any time.

The Syriac Orthodox Church affirms that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Incarnate Son of God, who took a perfect manhood without sin, and who bore the human sins on the cross and died for the sake of all humanity. Jesus made his human body one with his Divinity without mixing nor mingling nor changing. The teachings of St. Athanasius of Alexandria and St. Cyril of Alexandria are very important in understanding the tenet of Christology of the Syriac Orthodox Church. Monophysitism is not the tenet of the Syriac Orthodox Church. The term mono suggests one simple Nature whereas Mia refers to a composite Nature. The Christology is a broad area and beyond the scope of what is attempted here (<http://sor.eua.edu/wikipedia>).

Like many Copts, Ethiopians, and Armenians, Syriac Orthodox Church holds that Christ is not “in two natures” (human and divine) but is “one nature out of two natures.” St. Severios, the Patriarch of Antioch (A. D. 459-538), taught that “... all the human qualities remained in Christ unchanged in their nature and essence, but that they were amalgamated with the totality of hypostasis; that they had no longer separate existence, and having no longer any kind of centre or focus of their own, no longer constituted a distinct monad. On the contrary, the foci had become one. The monads were conjoined; the substratum in which the qualities of both natures inhered no longer had an independent subsistence, but formed a synthesis, and all the attributes subsisted in this composite hypostasis” (Smith & Wace, 1887, Vol. IV, p. 641).

Mor Yacoub Baradaeus, the Bishop of Edessa, was instrumental in organizing their community. Hence, they have been termed Jacobites (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2001). There were trustworthy Bishops who supported Yacoub Burd’ono. They include Mor John of Asia, Mor Ahudeme’ (the Persian King Kizra Anusharvan put him to death.) and Mor Yulian. John of Asia, a contemporary of Yacoub Burd’ono, has written two biographical accounts about him. They are: *Anecdota Syriaca*, Vol. II, edited by J. P. N. Land in 1875 (pp. 249-253; pp. 364-383) and *Ecclesiastical history* Part III, Payne Smith’s translation (pp. 273-278, 291). Bar Hebraeus account of Mor Yacoub Burdono written in 13th century in the *Chronicon Ecclesiasticum* relies on the above mentioned books (Cited in, Smith & Wace, 1882).

Yacoub Burd’ono died at the monastery of Romanus or Cassianus on July 30, 578 (Douglas, 1978; Patriarch Aphrem, 2000). His episcopate is

said to have extended over thirtyseven years, and his life, according to Renaudot to seventythree years. According to a short account by Cyriacus, Bishop of Mardin, the remains of Yacoub Burd'ono were kept at the monastery of Cassian until A. D. 622 (621?). Thereafter the relics were transferred to his monastery of Phaselita, near Tella Mouzalal by Mor Zakkai, the episcopa of Tella (Aphrem, 1963). He has written a liturgy in fifteen pages beginning with "O Lord, the most holy Father of peace" and several letters, which were published in Syriac. The feast of Mor Yacoub Burd'ono, the protector of faith, is celebrated on November 28. A portion of the relics of Yacoub Burd'ono was interred at St. Stephen's Basania church, Chelad, Kothamangalam by Saint Gregorius Geevarghese Chathuruthil.

35. Mor Moshe Bar Kipho

(A. D. 813-903)

Moshe was born at Kuhayl in the city of Balad, Mosul in A. D. 813. His parents were Simon and Mary. At an early age, Moshe joined the monastery of Mor Sergius situated between Balad and Sinjar (Aphrem I, 2000). His monastic life began under the guidance of Ramban Quryaqos of the monastery.

In A. D. 863, monk Moshe was ordained Bishop by name Severios for the dioceses of Beth Kiyona and Mosul. Mor Severios was the Periodentes for about ten years (A. D. 872-883) of the Tikrit Archdiocese after the death of Mor Malchezedek (Chediath, 1988; Aphrem I, 2000). Most of the encyclopedias provide no information about Mor Severios Moshe. However, Mor Dionysius Bar Saleebi (+1171) does mention about the letters of Moshe Bar Kipho.

Moshe Bar Kipho has written 54 chapters about the creation of Angels. He has quoted the works of Mor Ephrem (306-373), Mor Baselius of Caesarea (329-379), Gregory of Nazainzen (329-390), Gregory of Nyssa (335-394), John Chrysostom (347-407), Jacob of Serugh (451-521), Philexenos of Mabbug (450-523), Mor Severios Patriarch (459-538) and Mor Jacob of Edessa (633?-708).

Moshe Bar Kipho has written several books which include commentaries of Old and New Testament books, two liturgies, a commentary of the Holy Qurbano, Church history, treatises on themes such as Paradise, free-will, Priesthood, resurrection, etc. (for a detailed list, see, Aphrem I, 2000).

The renowned doctor and copious writer of the church, Mor Severios Moshe Bar Kipho departed for the heavenly kingdom on 12 February A. D. 903 at the age of ninety. The mortal remains are interred at the monastery of Mor Sergius. The feast of Moshe Bar Kipho is celebrated on February 12.

36. Patriarch Mor Michael Rabo, the Great

(A. D. 1126-1199)

Mor Michael Rabo was born in 1126 in Melitine (Malatya, Turkey). Michael's father Elia of Melitine was a pious Priest of the Qandasi family. This family has produced many prelates for the Church such as Athanasius Zakka, Metropolitan of Ayn Zarba (+1166); Michael's uncle, Maphryono Gregorius (Jacob) Yakoob (1189-1203); and Patriarch Michael II Junior, the nephew of Mor Michael (1292-1312).

Young Michael became a monk at the monastery of Mor Barsawmo near Melitine and was later ordained Priest and was appointed abbot of the monastery. The Patriarch Mor Athanasius VII bar Qutreh (1138-1166) passed away and the Holy See became vacant. Subsequently, the Holy Synod unanimously elected Ramban Michael to the Patriarchate of the Apostolic See of Antioch. Ramban Michael was not willing to accept the exalted position for he considered himself unworthy. Mor Dionysius Ya' qub Bar Salibi, Metropolitan of Amid (+1171) and another member of the Holy Synod persuaded him to accept the election. On 18 October 1166, Ramban Michael was consecrated Patriarch at the monastery of Mor Barsawmo by the Maphryono Mor Yuhanon Sarug (1164-1188) and twelve other Bishops. Soon after, the Patriarchal headquarters was shifted from Amid to Mor Hananya Monastery known as "Zafaran."

In 1168, Patriarch Michael visited the archdioceses of Jerusalem and Damascus. Holy Chrism was consecrated at the monastery of Mary Magdelene near Damascus Gate. On that Easter Day John (Yohanna) was ordained Metropolitan for Damascus. In 1169, a synod was held at the monastery of Mor Barsawmo.

The Patriarch Mor Michael Rabo has written several books which include a book on the ranks of Priesthood, liturgical texts on preparing for receiving Holy Qurbono, the duties of man, how to be a disciple of Jesus, and the need for repentance and confession. The most important work is the ecclesiastical and secular chronicle that begins from the creation until the year 1193 A. D. The manuscript of this unique work is kept at St. George's church, Aleppo.

Patriarch Mor Michael Rabo ordained one Maphryono (Mor Gregorios Yakoob, 1189-1203) and fifty-four Bishops. His Holiness departed for the heavenly abode on 7 November 1199. The mortal remains were interred in the new church at the monastery of Mor Barsawmo. Patriarch Mor Ephrem Barsoum describes him as “one of the greatest pontiffs of the Church of God, the finest of the Patriarchs of Antioch, a scholar, and a famous chronicler of everlasting name, of graceful pursuit, and of uncommon qualities, of widely known virtues, and of good deeds (cited in, Zakka I Iwas, 1999). The feast of Patriarch Mor Michael Rabo, the Great, is celebrated on November 7.

37. Mor Gregorius Yoochanon Bar Hebraeus (A. D. 1226-1286)

Mor Gregorius (Gregory) Yoochanon was born at Melitine (Malatya, Turkey) in 1226. Syrians called him Bar Hebraeus. He was called Abu al-Faraj or Abulfaraj in Arabic. He was also known as Ibri and Jaman Aldin.

The origin of the name ‘Bar Hebrae’us is that either he himself or one of his forefathers was born during the crossing of the River Euphrates (Aphrem I, 2000, pp 152-153). This is inferred from one of the

poems written by Bar Hebraeus himself. Some have given wrong explanations for his name that he is from a Jewish tradition and that his father was a converted Christian (e. g., Encarta encyclopedia, 2001).

Bar Hebraeus is the son of Deacon Tajal-Din Aaron who was a physician. He was christened with the name John (Yoohanon). He learned medicine from his father. The family migrated from Melitine to Antioch in A. D. 1243 due to the Mangolian invasion. In 1244, at the age of eighteen, he entered into ascetic life. Mor Ignatius III David (1222-1252) ordained him Priest. At the age of twenty, on 4 September 1246 he was ordained Metropolitan for Gubas/Jubas by name Gregorius. Later, the Patriarch appointed him to the dioceses of Lakhbin/ Laqbin and Aleppo. At the age of thirty-eight, on 19 January 1264 he was ordained Maphryono of the East by the Patriarch Ignatius IV Yeshu (1264-1282). The headquarters of Maphryono was at the monastery of Mor Mathai, Mosul, Iraq.

Maphryono Bar Hebraeus was a scholar and he was well accepted by all learned men of the time. He travelled to Nineveh, Baghdad and Mosul and selected a few for the monastic order. From among them he ordained twelve Bishops. He was instrumental in the construction of churches, monasteries and diocesan headquarters.

Bar Hebraeus was a scholar par excellence. He mastered medicine, astrology, philosophy, law, Syriac grammar and history. *The world history*, *Secular history* and *Church history* are the most acclaimed works of Bar Hebraeus. The history written by Bar Hebraeus is based on the history written by the Patriarch Mor Michael Rabo, the Great.

In the *Church history*, he described the period from St. Peter to the Syrian Orthodox Patriarchs until A. D. 1285. He has also written a history of Maphreyonos upto his time. Although the Syriac Orthodox Church does not recognize the Nesthorian Maphreyonos, he has included their history also in his writings.

He prepared the *World history* in Arabic, which was popular in Europe in the 17th century. He has written interpretation for the Old and New Testament books except for the Revelations (*Store house of secrets*). He has quoted the works of early Church fathers and (upto) Mor Michael Rabo in his writings.

Most of the works of Bar Hebraeus are in Syriac and Arabic. The book dealing with monastic life '*Dove*' and the '*Canon*' (10 chapters) were translated from Syriac by His Grace Mor Julius Yacoub and His Grace Mor Julius Kuriakose and are available in Malayalam. Bar Hebraeus is known as the "Sea of Wisdom." Rev. Fr. Biji C. Markose has prepared a thesis on prayers and fasts according to Bar Ebreyo (Chirathalattu, 2004).

Bar Hebraeus departed for the heavenly abode on 30 July 1286 at the age of sixty at Maragha. The mortal remains were interred at the Monastery of Mor Mathai, Mosul, Iraq which is a pilgrim centre. The feast of Mor Gregorius Bar Hebracus is celebrated on July 30.

38. St. Gregorius Abdul Jaleel

(A. D.? - A. D. 1671)

Mor Gregorius Abdul Jaleel was sent to India in A. D. 1665 at the request of Thoma Arkadiyakon of Malankara. A formal letter of request was sent to the Patriarch Ignatius Shemvun I (A. D. 1640-1659) through Deacon Stephen Aspar of Amid. The request was granted by Patriarch Abdul Masih I (A. D. 1662-1686).

Abdul Jaleel was born at Mosul, Iraq. He was ordained Priest upon completing his theological studies. In 1654, Patriarch Ignatius Shem'vun (Simon) I ordained him Bishop by name Themotheos. Until 1664, Mor Themotheos Abdul Jaleel served the diocese of Amid. Subsequently, Mor Themotheos was appointed Bishop of Jerusalem and the ecclesiastical name Gregorius was given as was the tradition. The father of Mor Gregorius was a rich man. Mor Gregorius had brought a share of his property with which he bought the Thorakkal property at Paravur. This property later became the asset of St. Thomas Syrian Church, North Paravur which was founded in A. D. 1566.

The Canon of Bar Ebroyo (1994) stipulates that there should be four Patriarchs - - Rome, Alexandria, Constantinople and Antioch. The Metropolitan of

Jerusalem shall be called the fifth Patriarch. Thus, Jerusalem although comes under the see of Antioch, shall be known as a Patriarchate, a special status accorded for various reasons.

The Diamper Synod, the Oath of Slanting Cross, and the circumstances in Malankara in A. D. 1653 were known to the Holy See of Antioch. It is at this juncture that the Patriarch deputed Mor Gregorius Abdul Jaleel to Malankara. Mor Gregorius landed at the coastal village of Ponnani, in North Kerala in A. D. 1664. He spent a few days at Ponnani in disguise for fear of the enemies of the Church. A few days later he met some Christian businessmen and revealed that he was a Syrian Bishop and started his journey to Kottayam (Curien, 2003).

On 1 July (*Midhunam* 17) 1665, Mor Gregorius ordained Thoma Arkdiyakon episcopa by name Marthoma I. Mor Gregorius and Marthoma I ordained Marthoma II.

Mor Gregorius Abdul Jaleel was working in the vineyard of the Church since his arrival in A. D. 1665. He visited churches, preached the true faith of the Syriac Orthodox Church, insisted on the use of leaven bread for the Holy Eucharist, allowed the marriage of Deacons before Priesthood and removed statues erected in the church. Mor Gregorius is known as the Ya'cub Bardaeus of Malankara for he saved the Church from the Roman impositions. Fortyfive of the sixtynine churches received Mor Gregorius with all respect and honour due to a prelate (Curien, 1982).

Mor Gregorius spent his last days at St. Thomas Church, North Paravur. Forseeing his death, he took a

bath and dressed and with the vestments entered the church and slipped into eternal life on 27 April (*Medam* 14) A. D. 1671. The church bell rang on its own and an unusual light spread all around.

The feast of Saint Gregorius is celebrated on April 27. The handcross used by Saint Gregorius had relics of saints in eleven cavities and one contained a portion of the cross on which Jesus was crucified. This handcross is set out for public veneration on the feast day. His Holiness Patriarch Ignatius Zakka I was declared Mor Greogorius a Saint vide Apostolic Bull No. 71/2000 dated 4 April 2000. Later, the name of St. Gregorius Abdul Jaleel was included in the fifth diptych of the Holy Qurbono vide Apostolic Bull No. E50/2006 dated 7 February 2006.

39. Mor Athanasius Shemvun, the Delegate (? – A. D. 1889)

The second half of the 19th century witnessed the invasion of Protestant missionaries into the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church. They had the support of the British. The Kottayam Cheriya Pally was in the custody of the Protestants following a Court order.

Patriarch Moran Peter IV returned to Jerusalem in 1877 after conducting the Mulanthuruthy Synod (in 1876). In 1880, Mor Dionysius Joseph Pulikkottil (who was ordained by Patriarch Moran Yacoub II in

1865) and Mor Gregorius Geevarghese Chathuruthil (who was ordained by Patriarch Moran Peter IV in 1876) wrote a letter to the Patriarch Moran Peter IV describing the difficulties in the Malankara Church due to the Protestant schisms. Understanding the situation, Moran Peter IV ordained Ramban Shemvun by name Athanasius and sent him to Malankara along with Deacon Sleeba (later the delegate Mor Osthathos Sleeba). Ramban Shemvun had visited India in 1849 along with Mor Athanasius Sthepanose of Thurabdin. They reached Kochi on 1 January 1881.

In 1879, Mor Dionysius Joseph filed a petition against Thomas Athanasius, the successor of Palakkunnath Mathews Athanasius for the recovery of properties in their custody. The Royal Court Judgement was in favour of Mor Dionysius Joseph in 1889. During this period (1881-1889) Mor Athanasius Shemvun was residing and conducting services at the Barsawmo's Church (Puthenpally) Kottayam. The Kottayam Valiyapally was also under the custody of the Protestants except the vestry to the South of the church (Philip, 1993; Stephen, 2006).

Subsequent to the Royal Court Judgement, Mor Dionysius Joseph regained the Old Seminary and Mor Athanasius Shemvun shifted his residence to the Old Seminary, Kottayam. Mor Athanasius Shemvun departed for the heavenly abode on 11 June 1889 at the Old Seminary. The mortal remains were interred at the Northern side of the altar of Mor Barsawmo's church (Puthenpally) Kottayam. The Foundation stone for Puthenpally was laid as per the direction of Mor Coorilos Yuyakim, the delegate of the Holy See of Antioch, on 15 February 1868 (Philip, 1993). The anniversary of Mor Athanasius Shemvun is celebrated on June 11.

40. Patriarch Mor Peter IV (III)

(A. D. 1799-1894)

Peter was born at Mosul, Iraq in 1799. He spent his boyhood at the monastery of Hananiah (Dier ez-Zafaran). He completed his theological studies and was ordained Priest. In 1846, Patriarch Moran Mor Ignatius Elias II ordained him Metropolitan of Syria by name Julius.

Moran Mor Elias II passed away in 1847 and Mor Ignatius Jacob II succeeded him to the Holy Throne of Antioch. Patriarch Jacob II passed away in 1871. Mor Julius Peter was enthroned in 1872 (*Edavam/ Midhunam* 4th). Moran Mor Ignatius Peter IV is also referred to as Peter III in many writings. However, Peter IV is more acceptable for several reasons. The Patriarch Aphrem I Barsoum has mentioned the name as Peter IV in different historical documents. There is no doubt about the research mind and competency of Moran Aphrem I in ascertaining historical facts. Another fact is that St. Peter, the Apostle is the first Patriarch, Peter I (A. D. 37- 67). He was followed by Peter II, the Fuller (Qassar) (A. D. 468-488); Peter III of Raqqa (A. D. 581-591) and Peter IV (A. D. 1872-1894). They were the 1st, 34th, 40th and 116th Patriarchs respectively (Yacoub III, 1985; <http://sor.eua.edu>).

The Syriac Orthodox¹⁰⁶ Church in Malankara was

under pressure from the Protestant heresies during the second half of the nineteenth century. Protestants were against intercession of St. Mary and the saints. They were against the prayers for the departed. Accordingly changes were made in the liturgy and prayer books. Mor Dionysius Joseph Pulikkottil informed Patriarch Peter IV of these developments. Realizing the danger to the Church, His Holiness Moran Mor Ignatius Peter IV, the Patriarch of Antioch, left Constantinople on 14 August 1874 by sea. Mor Gregorius Abdul Sathookki of Jerusalem also accompanied the Patriarch. They reached London.

Patriarch Peter IV stayed in London for seven months. During the stay His Holiness submitted a memorandum to Lord Salisbury. His Holiness also visited Queen Victoria. These efforts were to cancel the order that was in favour of Palakkunnath Mathews Athanasius who was pro-protestant although Patriarch Ignatius Elias II had ordained him at Mardin on 2 February 1842. Patriarch Peter IV succeeded in the efforts and the order in favour of Palakkunnath Mathews Athanasius (dated M. E. 1027 *Karkkidakom* 15th) was cancelled on 4 March 1876 (M. E. 1051 *Kumbam* 23).

Mor Dionysius Joseph Pulikkottil invited the Patriarch to India by a letter dated 11 January 1875. The Patriarch accepted the invitation and started his journey from London via Egypt on 22 *Meenom* 1875. His Holiness reached Mumbai on 7 May 1875. His Holiness visited the Madras Governor at Nilgiris and visited the Maharaja at Thiruvananthapuram.

The above-mentioned visits and political consultations changed the situation. The Patriarch Peter IV convened a Synod at Mulamthuruthy Marthoman church on 28th June 1876. Saint Gregorius

Geevarghese, Chathuruthil (then a Ramban) was the secretary and translator of H. H. Peter IV. Mor Dionysius Joseph Pulikkottil, Mor Gregorius Abdul Sathookki, 130 Priests and 144 laymen attended the Synod, the first of its kind. As a result of the synod, 'Suriyani Christiani Association', with a Managing Committee was formed according to democratic principles. The Malankara Church was organised into dioceses and the Patriarch Peter IV ordained six Bishops. His Holiness consecrated Holy Chrism on 15 August 1876 at Marthoman church, Mulamthuruthy. The Patriarch returned to Jerusalem in May 1877 after two years of stay in India.

H. H. Peter IV departed for his heavenly abode on 21 April 1894. The mortal remains are interred at Dier ez-Zafaran (Kurkuma) monastery. The Syriac Orthodox Church would not have existed in Malankara without the timely support and help from the Holy See of Antioch. The feast of Patriarch Peter IV is celebrated on April 21.

41. St. Gregorius Chathuruthil

(A. D. 1848 - 1902)

Gregorius was born at Mulanthuruthy on 15 June 1848 (M. E. 1023 *Midhunam* 3). His parents were Chathuruthil Mathew and Kallarackal Mary. Gregorius was called Geevarghese (Kochyppora). He had two brothers (Kurian and Varkey) and two sisters (Mary & Eli).

Mary, mother of Geevarghese, died when he was two years old. His elder sister Mary took care of him. He had preprimary education at the feet of Onakkavil Ayya and later with Mani. After the primary education his theological studies were with Rev. Geevarghese who was his father's brother.

After the death of Rev. Geevarghese (in 1865, because of smallpox) he continued his theological studies under Rev. Mathen Konatt and more notably under His Grace Mor Koorilos Yuyakim, the delegate of Holy See of Antioch (1846-1874).

Geevarghese belonged to Mulanthuruthy Marthoman Church. At the age of ten, on 14 September 1858, he was ordained subdecan (*Kooroooyo*) by His Grace Palakkunnath Mathews Athanasius at the St. George church, Karingachira. On 18 *Thulam* 1865 he was ordained full deacon by His Grace Mor Koorilos Yuyakim. In the same year he was ordained Priest

and subsequently was ordained Corepiscopo.

On 7 April M.E. 1047 *Meenam* 27, at the age of twenty four, V. Rev. Geevarghese Corepiscopo was ordained Ramban by His Grace Mor Deevannasios Joseph Pulikkottil II at Marthoman Church, Mulanthuruthy. On 10 December 1876 (M. E. 1052 *Vrischikam* 27) H. H. Moran Mor Ignatius Peter IV (III) ordained Ramban Geevarghese, Metropolitan at the St. Thomas Church, North Paravur and called him Gregorius. On 26 *Vrischikam* 1876 (M. E. 1052) Ramban Gevarghese executed and submitted a deed to H. H. Peter IV, the Patriarch of Antioch. The eleven clauses of the registered deed detail the terms of relationship. "If I defy any of the clauses, His Holiness has the right to notify the same and I shall pay 2850 British Rupees and shall take back this deed."

On 5 May 1877, H. H. Peter IV appointed Mor Gregorius Geevarghese Metropolitan of the Niranam Diocese. On 17 May 1877, H. H. Peter IV ordained Karavatt Mor Dionysius Shemvun and Murimattathil Mor Ivanios Paulose Metropolitans at the St. Lasarus church, Chiralayam, Kunnankulam, at which time His Grace Mor Gregorius Geevarghese was also present.

H. H. Peter IV used to call Mor Gregorius, Yoochanon for His Grace was the youngest of all the Metropolitans and the one whom he loved the most. His Holiness stayed in Malankara for about two years. His Grace Gregorius was a Ramban during the Synod of Mulanthuruthy in 1876 but was a close associate of H. H. in the consecration of Holy Chrism. The Bull of H. H. Peter IV written on 15 *Makaram* 1877 from Fort Kochi church regarding the correct practices of sacraments and discipline was translated and published by His Grace Mor Gregorius Geevarghese.

On 13 *Karkkidakam*₁1872, Arikupuram Mathen

executed a deed in favour of the Metropolitan who will be ever loyal to the Patriarch Moran Mor Ignatius seated on the Holy Throne of Antioch. Then onwards construction of a church was initiated at Parumala. The construction of the church was completed and consecrated with Holy Chrism on 15 *Makaram* 1895. On February 19 His Grace Gregorius started for the Holy Land tour. The group consisted of Deacon Sleeba (later the delegate of the Holy See, Mor Osthatheos), V. Rev. Kochuparambil Paulose Ramban, Vattasseril Geevarghese Kathanar, V. Rev. Thoppil Lukose Corepiscopa (South Paravur), Karingathil Skariah Kathanar (Thumpamon) and Puthenpurackal Geevarghese Kathanar (Kadmmanitta).

As per the directions of H. H. Peter IV, on 29 July 1889 His Grace Gregorius ordained Rev. Fr. Alvaris (a Jesuit Priest from Goa) Ramban. Ramban Alvaris was ordained Metropolitan by name Julius at the Old Seminary, Kottayam. On that occasion in which, Mor Athanasius Paulose Kadavil was the main celebrant. Mor Ivanius Paulose Murimmattathil and Mor Gregorius Geevarghese were the other two participants. As per the bull of H. H. Peter IV, on 29 May 1892, Rev. Fr. Reni Vilathi was ordained Metropolitan by name Themotheos at the church of Our Lady of Good Health, Sri Lanka. Mor Athanasius Paulose Kadavil, Mor Julius Alvaris and Mor Gregorius Geevarghese were the celebrants.

H. G. Mor Gregorius Geevarghese founded a few schools to facilitate the education of Syrian Christians and to withstand the influence of C. M. S. Missionaries. Mor Ignatius High School, Kunnamkulam (now, Govt. Model Girl's H. S.); St. Thomas School, Mulanthuruthy; Middle School, Thumpamon are a few of them.

H. G. Mor Gregorius Geevarghese was a man of prayer and fasting. His Grace emulated the example of St. Antony of Egypt. His Grace was suffering from piles, which became acute by August 1902. On November 2 (morning) His Grace was anointed for the sick and received Holy Qurbano. His Grace was called to eternal rest on 2 November 1902 (M. E. 1078 *Thulam* 20) Sunday (1.00 a. m. Monday?) at Parumala. Mor Dionysius Joseph was in deep sorrow and was not able to stand during the funeral prayers. The Holy remains were interred at Parumala on Tuesday 4 November 1902. As per the Bull of H .H. Ignatius Zakka I Iwas, the Patriarch of Antioch, the name of Mor Gregorius was added to the fifth Diptych of Holy Qurbano. The feast of Saint Gregorius is celebrated on November 2in the Syriac Orthodox Church.

42. St. Osthatheos Sleeba, the Delegate

(A. D. 1854 – 1930)

Sleeba was born at the village, Kafarso, (near Shrehre) near the city of Amid, Mesopotomia on 1 January 1854. He was born in the Abakkar family to Salbi and Naboon. He had two brothers and three sisters. His father Salbi died when Sleeba was a child. His father's brother, Priest Dhenha, was his first teacher. Later he learned Syriac and theology from very Rev. Samuel Ramban who was the vicar of the Damascus church.

In 1849 Very Rev. Samuel Ramban came to Malankara with His Grace Mor Athanasius Stephanos at the direction of His Holiness Yacoub II, the Patriarch of Antioch. Ramban Samuel returned home after eight years. At that time, the protestant missionaries were causing trouble in the Church.

His Holiness Patriarch Peter IV came to India in 1875. The Synod of Mulanthuruthy, the appointment of Mor Dionysius Joseph as Malankara Metropolitan, the administrative set up of the Church into seven dioceses, the ordination of Bishops including that of His Grace Mor Gregorius Geevarghese Chathuruthil helped to restore true faith in the Church.

Mor Dionysius Joseph and Mor Gregorius Geevarghese reported to the Patriarch, the difficulties

faced by the Church in the wake of the Protestant teachings (that the intercession of St. Mary is wrong and that the prayers for the departed are baseless). The Patriarch of Antioch intervened to protect the true faith, in the 19th century as it was done in the 17th century.

In 1880, the Patriarch Peter IV ordained Samuel Ramban Bishop by name Athanasius Shemavoon and sent him to Malankara. His disciple Sleeba was ordained Deacon and accompanied Mor Athanasius Shemavoon. They reached Kochi on 1 January 1881.

At that time, Kottayam Old Seminary and Cheriapally were in the possession of Protestant people. Therefore, a new church (Puthenpally) was established for the worship of the faithful. Mor Athanasius Shemavoon and Deacon Sleeba stayed at Puthenpally, Kottayam. In 1889, the Court Order came in favour of Mor Dionysius Joseph. Subsequently, Mor Athanasius Shemavoon and Deacon Sleeba moved to Old Seminary, Kottayam.

On 11 June 1889 Mor Athanasius Shemavoon departed for his heavenly abode while staying at Old Seminary, Kottayam. The mortal remains were interred at Puthenpally, Kottayam. Deacon Sleeba lost his teacher in a foreign land. He was not discouraged at the loss, but continued to work in the vineyard of the Lord.

Mor Gregorius Geevarghese (Chathuruthil) had a special affection for Deacon Sleeba. In 1895, Mor Gregorius visited the Holy Land for which all the arrangements were made by Deacon Sleeba and he accompanied the Bishop on his visit. Deacon Sleeba visited Mor Gregorius at Parumala on several occasions. On 2 November 1902, Mor Gregorius

entered eternal rest. Deacon Sleeba again felt a big vacuum. However, he continued with the gospel work. Deacon Sleeba could speak Malayalam although with a foreign accent.

In 1906, Deacon Sleeba returned to Mosul, Iraq along with Deacon Mathew (Chettalathumkara) who later became Catholicos Augen. Both of them stayed at the monastery of Mor Mathai, Mosul. Mor Coorilos Elias Kudso, the Reesh Dayro, ordained Deacon Sleeba Ramban. After two weeks Ramban Sleeba was ordained Priest. In March 1908, His Holiness Patriarch Abded Aloho II ordained Kassesso Sleeba Bishop by name Osthatheos at the church of Forty Martyrs at Mosul and appointed him the delegate of the Holy See of Antioch in India.

Mor Dionysius Joseph was in his old age and Mor Ivanios Murimattathil retired from his administrative duties. In these circumstances in 1908 the meeting of the representatives of the Church met and elected Kassesso Geevarghese (Vattasseril) and Ramban Paulose (Kochuparambil) to be ordained Metropolitans. They went to Mosul and the Patriarch Abded Aloho II ordained them Metropolitans at Jerusalem. The three newly ordained Bishops including the delegate, Mor Osthatheos, came to Kerala along with Ramban Augen.

Mor Dionysius Joseph departed for heavenly abode on 10 June 1908. Mor Osthatheos Sleeba, the delegate of the Holy See of Antioch, carried out the administrative duties of the Church. Mor Dionysius Geevarghese Vattasseril was designated as the Malankara Metropolitan in a meeting held at the Old Seminary, Kottayam. It is in the year following his assuming the charge of Malankara Metropolitan that Mor Dionysius Geevarghese rebelled against the Holy

See of Antioch. Later, Vattasseril Bishop's rivalry against Mor Osthathos caused Mor Osthathos to change His Grace's stay from Old Seminary where he had been staying for a long time.

In 1910, Bishop Vattasseril initiated a move to destroy the age-old apostolic succession of St. Peter in the Church. This issue caused a problem in Arthat Valiyapally. Those who believed in the Apostolic succession of St. Peter and the supremacy of the Patriarch of Antioch wanted to establish a church at Arthat, Kunnamkulam. A few faithful executed a gift deed of land in favour of the Holy See of Antioch and handed over the property to His Grace Mor Osthathos Sleeba, the delegate.

Mor Osthathos Sleeba laid the foundation stone of the Arthat St. Mary's Syrian Simhasana church on 9 October 1920. His Grace celebrated Holy mass in a temporary shed. The Holy relic of Mor Kauma brought by Mor Osthathos healed many ailing people. Several miracles are being reported through the intercession of Mor Osthathos. During this period His Grace founded churches at Malel Cruz and Vadavukodu.

His Grace was suffering from hernia. The physical health of His Grace deteriorated and since 1927 Mor Julius Elias was helping him to discharge the duties of the delegate. On 13 March 1930 His Grace was given the unction for the sick. On 19 March 1930 at 9.00 p. m. His Grace departed for eternal rest. The mortal remains of His Grace were interred at the Arthat St. Mary's Syrian Simhasana church founded by him. His Grace Mor Osthathos Sleeba was declared saint by the Apostolic Bull No. E 71/2000 of the Patriarch of Antioch, Moran Mor Ignatius Zakka I Iwas.

43. St. Ignatius Elias III Shakir

(1867-1932)

Mor Ignatius Elias III, the second son of Chorepiscopus Abraham and Maryam, was born in Mardin, Turkey. He was called Nasri. He had 4 brothers and 3 sisters. After the death of his mother, Nasri was brought up under the care of his elder sister Helena. He worked as a shoemaker in his teens and served the government for about three months. At the direction of Patriarch Peter IV, Nasri joined the theological school of the forty martyrs. In 1887, he joined Deir al-Za'faran and was ordained Deacon by Patriarch Peter IV. He became a novitiate (*sharwoyo*) in 1888 and a monk in 1889 upon which he came to be known as Elias. Elias was ordained Priest (*qashisho*) in 1892 by Patriarch Peter IV. (<http://sor.eua.edu>).

In the waning years of the 19th century, numerous Armenian and Syriac Christians were massacred in Turkey. Qashisho Elias endeared himself to the Armenian Christians providing refuge for about 7000 in the monastery of Mor Quryaqos. He was later appointed the Chief of the Monastery (*reesh dayroyo*) of the Mor Quryaqos as well as Deir al-Za'faran. In 1908 Qashisho Elias was consecrated Bishop of Amid (Diyarbakr) by Patriarch 'Abded Aloho II and was named Mor Iwanius. Mor Osthatheos Sleeba, the delegate of the Holy See of Antioch to India, was also ordained along with Mor Iwanius. In 1912, he was

transferred to Mosul. Patriarch 'Abded Aloho passed away on November 26, 1915, and Mor Iwanus was elected Patriarch and assumed the throne in 1917. The decree (*firman*) was issued to Patriarch Elias III by the Ottoman Sultan Muhammad Rashid. The Sultan conferred the Ismania medal to the Patriarch. In 1922, when civil war broke out in Turkey and Gazi Mustafa Kemal Pasha assumed leadership of the newly formed democracy. During this period Moran Mor Elias III spent a few months in Jerusalem and laid the the foundation stone of the church of Our Lady at Jerusalem on 22 March 1926. Moran established a printing press there and began publication of journals in Syriac and Arabic.

Mor Elias III was the last Patriarch to reign at the Kurkmo Dayro (Deir Za'faran) in Mardin, Turkey, the seat of the Patriarchate for most of the second millenium. He was received by Ataturk, the father of the Turkish Nation, and attended the first Parliament session in Ankara. Following the massacre of the Syriac Christians in South East Turkey in the waning days of the Ottoman Empire, and during World War I, the Patriarch was forced to leave Mardin. In the aftermath of the *saypho* massacres, Mor Elias III undertook pastoral tours to the Middle East, the first in 1919 and the second in 1925 to Aleppo and Jerusalem. Mor Elias III held a synod at Dayro d-Mor Matay, Mosul, Iraq in 1930.

Lord Irwin, then British Viceroy to India wrote to the Patriarch on December 1, 1930 requesting his intervention in person or through a delegate in resolving the schism that had erupted in the Malankara Church. His Holiness responded to the Viceroy's letter, on December 15, 1930 accepting his invitation with certain conditions. Given his cardiac problems, his

doctors attempted to dissuade him from the trip. His 75-year old sister also discouraged the proposed trip. His Holiness said to her, "Death is inevitable whether here or in India; I would rather sacrifice my life for the sake of our children in Malankara."

Mor Elias III left Mosul on February 6, 1931 accompanied by Mor Clemis Yuhanon Abbachi (who was ordained Bishop in 1923 for the Monastery of Mor Mathai, Mosul, Iraq). Rabban Quryaqos (later Mor Osthathos Quryaqos), and Rabban Yeshu' Samuel (later Mor Athanasius Yeshue Samuel of North America), his secretary Zkaryo Shakir (his brother Joseph's son) and translator Advocate Elias Ghaduri. They set sail to India on February 28, 1931 from Basra on the ship "Warsova" and disembarked at the Karachi port on March 5, 1931. They were received at Karachi by the Patriarchal Delegate Mor Yulius Elias Qoro, Mor Athanasius Paulos of Alwaye, and several clergymen and faithful. On 6 March 1931, the Patriarch and his entourage proceeded to Delhi by train reached Delhi on March 8, and visited Lord Irwin. On March 14, the Patriarch arrived in Madras and stayed as a guest of the British Governor Sir George Stanly. From there, he arrived at the Thrikkunathu Seminary in Alwaye on March 21, and offered the Divine Liturgy there on March 22.

H.H. Moran Mor Elias III convened conciliatory meetings at Alwaye, Karingachira and Panampady. The Patriarch led the Passion Week services at St. George church, Karingachira. A church delegates' meeting was held at Kuruppumpady on 5 July 1931. The Epiphany (*denho*) services in January 1932 were at the St Thomas church, Pakkil, Kottayam. Moran stayed at St. Ignatius Church, Pallom for a week.

On 11 February 1932, at the invitation of Father Kuriakos Elavinamannil, the Patriarch arrived at the Manjinikkara Mor Stephanos church from Kallissery. The inability to bring about reconciliation in the Church had weighed down heavily on the Patriarch; moreover, the hardships of the long travel had taken its toll of His Holiness. On arriving at Manjinikkara, the Patriarch said, "This place offers us much comfort; we desire to remain here permanently." On February 12, His Holiness requested the Priests who came to visit him not to leave for a couple of days. In the evening, the Patriarch recited many prayers of the unction (*qandilo*) and contemplated on the departed. On February 13, Mor Clemis Yuhanon Abbachi offered the Holy *Qurbano*; His Holiness gave the sermon during the liturgy.

After the noon prayers and lunch, as was his routine, the Patriarch spent time recording events in his journal; he asked for a dictionary to get clarification for the meaning of a word. Following that, he complained of pain in his head. Soon he fainted and was placed on a cot by the monks. He slipped into eternal rest at 2:30 p. m. Many eyewitnesses recount the deep gloom that cast its spell on the area that evening and the wails of the monks who accompanied the Patriarch.

Different opinions arose regarding the final resting place for the Patriarch — a situation that the Church in Malankara never had to confront before. The decision was in favour of interring the mortal remains in a plot of land to the north of the Mor Stephanos church, the title deed of which was transferred to the Patriarchate. On February 14, the funeral services of His Holiness were held there. Mor Dionysius Michael consoled the gathering.

Mor Ignatios Dayro church attached to the tomb of the late Patriarch was built by the Patriarchal delegate Mor Yulius Elias Qoro. The memory of the holy Patriarch is revered throughout the Church and especially in Malankara where thousands of pilgrims reach the tomb by foot on the annual feast day, February 13, from various parts of the Kerala State.

Mor Elias III is the only Patriarch of Antioch whose remains are interred in Malankara and his tomb stands as a towering symbol of the sacrifices made by the Syriac fathers to nurture the Church in Malankara. On 20 October 1987, Patriarch Mor Zakka I, through the encyclical E 265/87, permitted the Church in Malankara to remember his name in the fifth diptych.

44. St. Athanasius Paulose, the Protector of Faith

(A. D. 1869 - 1953)

Paulose (Kunjipaulose) was born on 23 January 1869. His parents were Mathai of Thekkekkara family, Ayyampally and Annamma of Pynadath family, Akapparambu. He had three sisters and two brothers.

At the age of seven, as an altar boy, Paulose read the fifth diptych during the holy mass celebrated by H. H. Patriarch Peter IV at the Angamaly church. This

was much appreciated by the Patriarch. Paulose had his theological studies under Ambatt Mor Coorilos Geevarghese. He was ordained Subdeacon (*Korooyo*) on 21 April 1879 by His Grace Coorilos. He had his secular education at the Government High School, Aluva and the C. M. S. High School, Kottayam. Later he became a teacher at Kottayam.

On 12 *Vrichikam* 1898, Deacon Paulose was ordained Priest by Saint Gregorius Geevarghese Chathuruthil (assisted by their Graces Pulikkottil and Kadavil Metropolitans) and on 15th, was ordained Ramban. Saint Gregorius presented Ramban Paulose a *Mosanaftso* (a head cover worn by Bishops) and *Bhatrasheel* (Uraroh Raboh). The prophecy of a future Metropolitan of the saint was fulfilled in A. D. 1910.

The Patriarch Abded Aloho II (Abd Allah) visited India in 1909. The Patriarch ordained Ramban Paulose Bishop on 27 *Edavom* 1910 by name Athanasius at the Akapparambu church. Mor Athanasius Paulose participated in the consecration of the holy Chrism on 19 August 1911 held at Marthoman church, Mulanthuruthy.

The Malankara Church was again divided when a deposed Patriarch by name Abdul Messeh was brought here in 1912 at the instance of some interested parties. Subsequently, Church cases restarted. His Grace Mor Athanasius was cautioned by some leaders that he may have to vacate the Aluva Thrikkunnath Seminary. His Grace's response was quick and firm: "My children, I don't fear, we have a landed property at Akapparambu, we will build a small house and live there."

On 6 *Dhanu* 1917, Malankara Metropolitan Mor

Coorilos entered eternal life and Mor Athanasius was elected to succeed him. In 1920, Mor Athanasius was in charge of Kandanad, Kottayam, Niranam, Kollam and Thumpamon dioceses. He was relieved of the duties of Kottayam, Niranam, Kollam and Thumpamon when Mor Dionysius Michael was ordained Bishop in 1926. The Kandanad diocese was later handed over to Mor Themotheos Augen.

The demise of Mor Osthatheos Sleeba, the delegate of the Holy See, in 1930 and that of His Holiness Patriarch Elias III in 1932 made His Grace very sad. The Malankara Suriyani Christhyani Association held at Karingachira on 6 September 1935 elected Mor Athanasius as the Malankara Metropolitan. The defeat in the case filed at the Kottayam District Court caused much agony to His Grace. He said to his helper Mathew: "Mathew! I am not going for anything. If the Court sends a warrant for the court expenses, we shall go to jail. We have to take with us the prayer book and the book of Psalms." His Grace had to face defections of Mor Dioscoros Thomas of Kananaya Diocese in 1939 (to the Roman Church) and of Mor Themotheos Augen in 1942 (to the Catholicos faction). His Grace stood firm during these hard times.

The Holy Mass celebrated by Mor Athanasius was really of a contrite heart. In his early eighties His Grace recited the Psalms with tears: "Do not forsake me when my strength fails" (Pslams 71:9). The Patriarch Aphrem I Barsoum called him "The Protector of Faith", a title that His Grace deserved by all counts. All acclaims his Grace's prayerful life and the courage he showed to protect the apostolic faith.

Mor Athanasius Paulose departed for the

heavenly abode on 25 January 1953. His mortal remains are interred at the Aluva Thrikkunnath Seminary. The Patriarch Ignatius Zakka I declared Mor Athanasius saint on 19 August 2004 (Apostolic Bull No.E 218/2004). The feast of the Saint Athanasius Paulose is celebrated on January 26.

45. Mor Aphrem I, Barsoum the Patriarch (A. D. 1887-1957)

Aphrem was born on 15 June 1887 at Mosul, Iraq. He is the son of Esthaphan and Susan and his baptismal name was Job. Job received his early education in a private Dominican school, studying French and Turkish as well as religious literature and history. He learned Arabic under Muslim scholars. In 1905, Job was a student at the Zafaran Monastery, Mardin, Turkey. Job was ordained Subdeacon (*Youfadyakno*) on 31 *Tulam* 1905 by Mor Dionysius Behanam. He was ordained full-deacon on 31 *Meenam* 1907 by the Patriarch Abded Aloho II and was called Aphrem. Deacon Aphrem was ordained Ramban on 1 *Medom* 1907 and was ordained Priest on 8 *Meenom* 1908.

In 1911, the responsibility of the printing press of Zafaran Monastery was entrusted to Father Aphrem.

In 1916, he attended the synod as the representative of the Bishop of Jerusalem to elect the successor of Patriarch Abd Allah II (d. 1915). On 20 May 1928, Father Aphrem was ordained Bishop by name Severios for the diocese of Syria by H. H. Patriarch Elias III.

Mor Severios Aphrem visited the world famous libraries of Oxford and Cambridge and prepared valuable books on Syriac literature, theology and history. He participated in the World Conferences held at Geneva and Lausanne on Faith and Order (August 3-21) in 1927 as the apostolic delegate. Thereafter he was sent to the United States where he established three new churches and ordained Priests. He also gave lectures on the Syriac language and literature at Providence University and the University of Chicago. The University of Chicago honoured Mor Severios Aphrem by giving him membership in the Asiatic Society.

Patriarch Elias III passed away on 13 February 1932 while visiting India. Mor Aphrem Barsoum was elected to be the Patriarch of Antioch on 16 January 1933. The new Patriarch was enthroned on 30 January 1933 assuming the ecclesiastical name Mor Ignatius Aphrem I Barsoum. Immediately after that His Holiness completed the construction of the Patriarchal headquarters at Homs, Syria and constructed churches at Beirut, Aleppo and Zahle. A theological seminary was established at Zahle, Lebanon, which was later moved to Mosul and then to Beirut.

Among the Patriarchs, Moran Aphrem Barsoum is comparable to Mor Michael Rabo, the Great (1166-1199). Moran Aphrem Barsoum was proficient in Syriac, Arabic, Latin, French and German. He has prepared *The Church history* since the time of Bar Hebraeus (1286-1940). *The history of Zafaran*

monastery, The history of Syrian dioceses (1687-1768), The history of the Church during the first four centuries, The biographies of Syrian fathers, The history of Thurabdin, The scattered pearls, Arabic-Syriac encyclopaedia are a few among his writings. There are several books, which still remain as manuscripts. The Syrian Christians should earnestly take up the translation/publication of these works.

Moran Mor Ignatius Aphrem I Barsoum served the church with determination. His Holiness was called to eternal rest on 23 June 1957. On June 27 the mortal remains were interred at the northern side of the altar of the Soonoro church, Homs, Syria. The feast of H. H. is celebrated on June 23.

46. Mor Yacoub III, the Patriarch

(A. D. 1912-1980)

Yacoub (Sleebe) was born at the village Barthle, near Mosul, Iraq on 13 October 1912. His parents were Touma and Smooni. He had his primary education in the village Barthle.

In 1923, he joined the monastery of Mor Mathai. In 1924, Mor Clemis Yoochanon ordained him Subdeacon (*Korooyo*). In 1929, H. H. Patriarch Elias III ordained him *Youfadyakno*. On 20 *Karkkidakom* 1933 H. H. Patriarch Aphrem I Barsoum ordained him Ramban and named him Abdul Ahad. During 1931-33 Deacon Sleebe was a teacher of Syriac at the Theological Seminary, Beirut.

In 1932, Mor Julius Elias, the delegate of the Holy apostolic see of Antioch in India, went to Homs to participate in the election of the Patriarch. After the enthronement of H. H. Aphrem I, on 30 January 1933 Ramban Abdul Ahad accompanied Mor Julius Elias to India. Mor Julius Elias ordained Ramban Abdul Ahad Priest in 1934 at Manjinikkara Dayara. During 1934-1946 Priest Abdul Ahad served the Holy Tomb of St. Elias III who ordained him Deacon. He was also a teacher at Manjinikkara Dayara.

In 1946, Abdul Ahad Ramban returned to Mosul, Iraq. Along with the Ramban, Mulayirikkal Paulose Ramban and Vayaliparambil Fr. Thomas Varghese went to Homs to be ordained Bishop. During 1946-50

Abdul Ahad Ramban was in charge of the Mor Aphrem Theological Seminary, Mosul. In 1950, H. H. Patriarch Aphrem I ordained him Bishop for the Beirut and Damascus dioceses by name Mor Severios Yacoub.

H. H. the Patriarch Aphrem I departed for the heavenly abode on 23 June 1957. On 27 October 1957, Mor Severios Yacoub was enthroned to succeed Late Moran Mor Aphrem I. Immediately after the enthronement, H. H. Yacoub III sent an apostolic bull (No. 82 dated 11 November 1957) clarifying his intentions to bring about peace in the Church. This bull was released when the church case was in favour of the Patriarch side as per the High Court order. His Holiness Yacoub III sent another bull No. 497 dated December 16 accepting the Catholicos Mor Baselius Geevarghese II. On 3 January 1963, Mor Baselius Geevarghese II breathed his last. Subsequently, on 22 May 1964, His Holiness Yacoub III, the Patriarch of Antioch & All the East canonically ordained Mor Themotheos Augen Catholicos at Kottayam.

His Holiness Yacoub III ordained thirteen Bishops and two Catholicos during his reign of 23 years as the Patriarch. The Syriac tunes of His Holiness are considered to be the best and are recorded as a valuable reference for those who learn Syriac tunes (*Ekkara*). His Holiness was a scholar and the paper presented at the Gottingen University, West Germany, in 1971 revealed his mastery of the faith of the Syriac Orthodox Church.

His Holiness visited the Pope in 1971 and 1980 and entered into dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church. As a result two joint declarations were signed. The orphanage at Achani, Lebanon; the theological seminary at Lebanon; Mor Severios College, Beirut; the diocesan headquarters at Bab Touma, Damascus;

Mor Aphrem library at Damascus are the fruits of the labour of H. H. Yacoub III.

Since 1960, the Universal Syriac Orthodox Church is a member of the World Council of Churches (W.C.C.). H. H Yacoub III took the initiative to send several Priests and Bishop for higher studies abroad. Also, delegates were sent to the theological conferences around the world whereby the glory of the Church was known to the Christian world.

His Holiness Yacoub III departed for the heavenly abode on 26 June 1980 at the age of sixty-eight years. On June 28 the mortal remains were entombed at the St. George Cathedral, Damascus. The feast of H. H. the Patriarch Yacoub III is celebrated on June 25.

47. Mor Themotheos Yacoub

(A. D. 1916-1986)

Yacoub (Kunji) was born on 31 July 1916 (15 *Karkkidakom* M. E. 1091) as the second son of Philipose and Mariamma, Parekulam, Thrikkothamangalam. He completed his school education from the Middle School, Vakathanam and the High School, Puthuppally.

The theological studies of Yacoub were under Rev. Fr. Itteera, V. Rev. Kochuparambil Geevarghese Ramban, His Grace Mor Themotheos Augen, and His Grace Mor Dionysius Michael. In 1932, Yacoub was ordained Subdeacon (*Korooyo*) by H. H. Patriarch Moran Elias III. In the same year he was ordained Fulldeacon by Mor Dionysius Michael on 24 *Medom* M. E. 1107. In 1941, on the feast of the Ascension of Our Lord, he was ordained Priest at St. Ignatius Simhasana Church, Kottayam.

On 11 September 1976 Fr. Yacoub Parekulam was ordained Ramban and on 19 April 1979 Ramban Yacoub was ordained Metropolitan by name Themotheos by H. B. Catholicos Mor Baselius Paulose II. Mor Themotheos Yacoub served the Church as a teacher in different seminaries such as Mor Aphrem Seminary, Chingavanam; St. James Seminary, Perumpilly; Mor Julius Seminary, Malelcruz Dayara;

and M. S. O. T. Seminary, Vettikkal, Mulanthuruthy. His Grace was an example for a life of prayer.

In 1975, His Grace founded St. Mary's Bethlehem Patriarchal church in his ancestral property for maintaining the true faith. His Grace celebrated Holy Qurbano on 18 January 1986 on the anniversary of Mor Dionysius Michael, at Pampady. On January 22 His Grace spoke at length about holy relics in connection with the relics of Saint Behanam at Poykkattussery St. Behanan's church. His Grace fell sick on that evening and departed for the heavenly abode on 10 February 1986 at 9.10 p. m. at Ankamaly. The mortal remains are interred at St. Mary's Bethlehem Patriarchal church, Thrikkothamangalam. The anniversary of Mor Themotheos Yacoub is celebrated on February 10.

48. Mor Julius Yacoub

(A. D. 1912-1992)

Yacoub (Kunjappan) was born on 27 December 1912 at Pampady, Kottayam. He was the son of Madappatt Chacko and Annamma. His parents died when he was a child and his elder brother took care of him. His primary education was at Pampady and Vazhoor. He had to discontinue his high school education while at N.S.S. High School, Karukachal due to ill health.

Yacoub pursued his theological studies at Sharbil Dayara, Thrikkothamangalam. The very Rev. Kochuparambil Geevarghese Ramban and Vanchithattil Kuriakose Ramban were his teachers at the Dayara. Mor Michael Dionysius was also staying there at that time. One of his colleagues was Parayakulath Yacoub (later His Grace Mor Themotheos Yacoub).

On 24 May 1942 Yacoub was ordained Deacon by Dionysius Michael at St. Mary's Church, Manarcad. On 19 August 1945 Deacon Yacoub was ordained Priest by Mor Dionysius Michael at St. Thomas church, Chengalam, Kottayam. A little later, Rev. Fr. Yacoub joined Manjinikkara Dayara. On 19 June 1955, Mor Julius Elias ordained him Ramban.

Ramban Madappattu Yacoub taught Syriac and liturgy to several students at Manjinikkara and at Malelcruz Dayara during 1962-64.

On 12 June 1975, Ramban M. C. Yacoub was ordained Metropolitan by Moran Yacoub III, the Patriarch, at St. George Cathedral, Damascus by the name Julius. His Grace was appointed to oversee the Simhasana churches and institutions that are directly under the Holy See of Antioch. In November 1990, H. H. Patriarch Zakka I Iwas honoured him with the title '*M'Shablono Thobo*' meaning the spiritual teacher.

His Grace Mor Julius Yacoub served the Holy tomb of Saint Elias III for about half-a-century. His Grace was the President of the Evangelical Association of the East during 1963-64. H. G. served Mor Julius Elias, the delegate, as the secretary and translator. His Grace has translated a few books from Syriac. Those, include the book titled '*Dove*' written by Bar Hebraeus, *the Biography of Mor Yuhanon M'rahmono*, *The history of Mor Augen*, the text of the sacrament of Holy matrimony which is in use in Syria, and a few prayers and *promoon- sedro*.

His Grace was very particular about prayer and fasting. His life, food and dress were all very simple. His Grace used to correct the mistakes of the clergy of all ranks for his training was by Mor Julius Elias and Mor Dionysius Michael who never compromised with the respect for the traditions and practices of the Church.

His Grace was getting ready for his departure and he prepared a place of rest for himself well in advance. His Grace converted his ancestral property into a

trust and a church was constructed on that land. On 21 January 1992 His Grace was admitted to hospital and on 24 January 1992. His Grace breathed his last. The mortal remains were interred at Manjinikkara on January 25. The memory of Mor Julius Yacoub is celebrated on January 24.

49. Mor Athanasius Yeshu Samuel

(A. D. 1907- 1995)

Yeshu was born on 25 December 1907 at the Mesopotomian village called Hilwa, South of Nisbin. His father Soumay was from Midyath and mother Khatoum from Basabrin, Thurabdin. He had a younger brother by name Malki.

Soumay died when Yeshu was only seven years of age. Thereafter, Khatoum and the two children moved from Hilwa with the help of Joseph, her husband's brother. They were forced to leave Hilwa because of the Kurd invasion. On the way Malki, the younger brother, was killed by the Kurds. Yeshu was in the company of Joseph but was missing when they reached Thurabdin. After a few days Khatoum found Yeshu who had been taken into the care of Fr. Demitrius and his wife Mary.

At the age of thirteen, Yeshu joined the school at Adena. Father Hannah Dolabani influenced the young Yeshu. Later he continued his education at Homs, Beirut and Damascus. At the age of fifteen Yeshu

visited Jerusalem to fulfill a vow of his mother.

In 1926, the Patriarch St. Elias III ordained him Ramban at St. Mark, Jerusalem. He joined the Coptic Seminary at Cairo and was a student there for about two years. He returned to Jerusalem and in 1931 was directed to reach Mosul to accompany St. Elias III to India. Ramban Yeshu was at Manjinikkara, India when St. Elias breathed his last. Ramban Yeshu stayed at Majinikkara for about a year. On 4 April 1932, Ramban Yeshu was ordained Priest by the delegate, Mor Julius Elias.

After his return to Jerusalem, Fr. Yeshu Samuel worked as the editor of the Patriarchal magazine. He was also the Patriarchal delegate at Jerusalem since Mor Philexinoze Jacob was physically weak. In December 1946, H. H. Aphrem I at Homs, Syria ordained Father Yeshu Samuel the Metropolitan for Palestine and Jordan. In 1947, Mor Athanasius Yeshu Samuel purchased the Dead Sea Scrolls (Qumaran Scrolls) discovered by Bedouin (a tent-dwelling nomad) from the caves of Ain Feshka, near Jericho.

On 19 October 1948 H. H. Aphrem I appointed Mor Athanasius Yeshu Samuel as the apostolic delegate to America and Canada. The main purpose of the trip was to collect funds for the Syrian Christians who were refugees in and around Jerusalem. This was an occasion to exhibit the Dead Sea scrolls in the United States and to find a potential buyer.

In 1949 two churches were consecrated, one at New Jersey in the name of St. Ephrem and another at Detroit in the name of St. Ivanius, the Goldmouthed. The Dead Sea Scrolls were displayed at the Library of Congress, Walters Arts Gallery at Baltimore, Durham Duke University at North Carolina and at Chicago

University. Dr. Willard F. Libby of the University Institute for Nuclear studies submitted the scrolls to Carbon dating on 9 January 1951. The studies revealed that the scrolls date back to A. D. 33. The scrolls include the Prophecy of Isaiah, the quotations from the book of Habakkuk, its commentary and the scroll of Lamech dealing with the worship, faith and laws of a Jewish group.

On 13 May 1952, H. H. the Patriarch appointed him as the Patriarchal Vicar of United States and Canada. In August 1952 another church was consecrated in the name of St. Ephrem at Quebec, Canada. In 1953, a Bishop's house was established at Hackensack, New Jersey. Meanwhile 15,000 U. S. Dollars were sent to Syrian Christians living as refugees in Jerusalem, Lebanon, and Jordan.

On 1 June 1954 an advertisement was placed in the Wallstreet Journal for the sale of the Dead Sea Scrolls. The scrolls were sold to Mr. Sidney Esteridge for \$ 250,000/-. The amount was invested as the capital for the "ArchBishop Samuel Trust"(Athanatius Yeshu Samuel, 1966).

Mor Athanasius Samuel organised several parishes in the United States. During 1957-93, His Grace sponsored several Priests from Malankara for congregations in the United States. His Grace wanted to be entombed at Manjinnikara but the idea was later abandoned. The County authorities of Burbank, California did not grant permission for his entombment there for the burial in a church is against the rules and practices of that country. Under these circumstances His Grace selected St. Ephrem Monastery, Holland as his resting place as early as 1993.

H. G. Mor Athanasius Yeshu Samuel has visited India several times. His Grace has published several

liturgical books in English. The texts of the Holy Qurbono and the sacraments are a few among the publications.

His Grace departed for his heavenly abode at 8.00 p. m. on 16 April 1995 at New Jersey. His Holiness Ignatius Zakka I, the Patriarch came down to New Jersey on May 2 and celebrated the Holy Qurbono and the body was taken to Holland by air. On May 5 the body was entombed at St. Ephrem Monastery, Holland. The anniversary of Mor Athanasius Samuel is observed on April 16.

50. Mor Baselius Paulose II,

the Catholicos

(A. D. 1914-1996)

Paulose was born at Cherai, Kochi, Kerala on 12 June 1914. He was the third son of Rev. Fr. P. P. Joseph*, Puthusseril and Mrs. Elizabeth Thomas, Eralil. He had three brothers and four sisters.

Paulose completed his school education from Ramavarma High School, Cherai. He learned Syriac from his father and from Rev. Fr. Mathai Vellakkunath. He continued his secular education at the C. M. S. College, Kottayam and the U. C. College, Aluva. In 1933, at the age of 19, Paulose was ordained Deacon by His Grace Mor Julius Elias, the delegate of the Holy See of Antioch, at Kottayam Valiyapally. In 1938, he was ordained Priest by His Grace Mor Julius Elias at Manjinikkara. Thereafter, Rev. Fr. P. J. Paulose served Mor Julius as secretary and was a teacher at Manjinikkara Dayara.

Malankara Metropolitan Mor Athanasius Paulose ~~of Aluva was in charge of the Kandanad diocese.~~ By * Rev. Fr. P.P. Joseph has written and translated several books from Syriac. He was a close associate of Rev. Deacon Sleeba and later he served Saint Osthatheos Sleeba, the delegate of the Holy See of Antioch, as secretary. He was also secretary to Mor Joseph Dionysius Pulikottil. In 1905, while serving the Church as Deacon, he authored a book titled *Ancient Church fathers and General Synods*. Mor Adai Study Centre, Changanacherry, has republished the book.

1952, Mor Athanasius was taking rest at Thrikkunnath Seminary Aluva. The representatives of the Kandanad diocese in its meeting held on 25 April 1952 elected Father P. J. Paulose as Metropolitan designate. Subsequently, on September 11 the Metropolitan designate left for Homs, Syria along with the delegate, Mor Julius Elias. His Holiness the Patriarch Aphrem I ordained him Metropolitan by name Philexinos on 19 October 1952 at Homs, Syria.

On January 12 the new Bishop Mor Philexenos Paulose took charge of the Kandanad diocese. At that time the adherents of the Patriarch of Antioch had no headquarters for the Kandanad diocese. Therefore, as a temporary arrangement, the property of the Holy Throne at Malelcruz was given as a residence for the Bishop. (The Malelcruz monastery was founded by the delegate Mor Osthathos Sleeba in 1923, which was given by a gift deed to the Holy Throne of Antioch by Kuriako of Valayal family, Vadayampady).

After the demise of Mor Dionysius Michael in 1956, the responsibilities of the Kottayam and Kollam dioceses were also given to Mor Philexinos Paulose. Since the unification of the Church in Malankara, His Grace served as the president of the Sunday School Association (1966-74). Since 1974, the Malankara Church again witnessed a division for various reasons (arguments such as the Catholicos is seated on the Throne of St. Thomas, the Malankara Church is autocephalous and that powers of the Patriarch of Antioch are at a vanishing point). Subsequently, Mor Philexinos Paulose was ordained Catholicos on 7th September, 1975 by H. H. Patriarch Mor Ignatius Yacoub III at Damascus, Syria by name Baselius Paulose II. The Catholicos visited churches and laid the foundation of several churches in and outside

Kerala. The Church went through a tough time with litigations and persecutions.

On 25 June 1980, the Patriarch Moran Mor Ignatius Yacoub III passed away at Damascus. On 14 September 1980, Catholicos Baselius Paulose II officiated in the enthronement of the new Patriarch Moran Mor Ignatius Zakka I Iwas. Thus, the Catholicos of Indian origin had a rare privilege in the Church history. The Catholicos received all his ordinations from the delegate of the Holy See and was ordained Metropolitan and Catholicos by the Patriarch of Antioch. On 1 September 1996 His Beatitude Catholicos Baselius Paulose II was called to eternal rest and was entombed at Malelcruz Dayara, which served as his temporary headquarters in 1952. It is unique that the Catholicos is entombed in the property gifted to the Holy Throne of Antioch. The feast of the Catholicos is celebrated on September 1.

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