

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

Cor-Episcopo K. Mani Rajan, M.Sc., M.Ed., Ph.D.



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2017

Dedicated to the blessed memory of

St. Mor Osthatheos Sleeba

(AD 1854 - 1930)

Delegate of the Holy See of Antioch in India

**Martyrs, Saints & Prelates of
The Syriac Orthodox Church
(Volume V)**

Cor-Episcopo K. Mani Rajan

First Edition 2017

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BY THE GRACE OF GOD
Ignatius Aphrem II
Patriarch of Antioch and All the East
Supreme Head of the Universal Syrian Orthodox Church



No EI 11/17

January 20, 2017

**Apostolic Benediction to our beloved spiritual son Very Reverend Dr
Mani Rajan Corepiscopus Kerala, India.**

We are happy to know that you are writing the fifth volume on saints, martyrs and church fathers who lived a holy life on earth and intercede for us in heaven. Every Christian is called to become a saint as Saint Paul reminds us that, *"He chose us in Him, before the foundations of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him"* (Ephesians 1:4). Our fathers taught us that sainthood is the natural path for those who receive the word of God with humility and act accordingly. We appreciate your efforts to make known to every believer the history of those common and ordinary people who reached the heights of sainthood through the mercy and grace of God so that everybody may strive to become a saint. May the Grace of God be with you. We extend our Apostolic Blessing to you. **ܘܚܨܝܢܐ ܕܩܕܝܫܐ ܕܩܕܝܫܐ**

Foreword

This, the fifth volume of Cor-Episopo Mani Rajan's *Martyrs, Saints and Prelates of the Syriac Orthodox Church*, brings the total number of individuals covered up to 250, the previous four volumes having appeared in 2007, 2012, 2013 and 2016. The range of saints and holy men and women covered is again admirably wide in time; thus the most recent person to be included is the learned and saintly Metropolitan Yuhanon Dolabani of Mardin (SE Turkey), who died in 1969 (and whom I had the great privilege and joy of meeting in 1966); and in view of the recent centenary of the massacres of 1915 in that region, known as 'the year of the sword (Sayfo)', it is good to have one of the martyrs of that year, Bishop Athanasius Denho. The earliest names included in the volume are ones familiar from the New Testament, Lazarus, Titus, Timothy, and Dionysius the Areopagite (to whom a number of very influential writings, produced c.500 AD, were attributed). It is good to have two equally influential monastic authors, Evagrius who wrote in Greek but most of whose works survive best in Syriac and Armenian, and Isaac of Niniveh – the modern Mosul, lamentably at present devoid of any Christian presence; Isaac's writings on the spiritual life are probably more read today in dif-

ferent Christian traditions than at any earlier time. The earlier Egyptian monastic tradition (to which Evagrius also belonged) is well represented by famous Desert Fathers such as Arsenius, Pambo, and the bandit who became a monk, Moses ‘the Black’.

Given how important translations of the Bible are in the life of the Church, the inclusion of three great biblical scholars is welcome, the martyr Lucian of Antioch who worked on the text of the Greek Bible, and two learned Syriac scholar bishops, Thomas of Heracleia, translator of the version of the New Testament known as the Harqloyo, and the polymath Jacob of Edessa, who revised several books of the Old Testament, bringing the Greek and Syriac textual traditions together. Another great scholar of the seventh century included is Severus Sebokht, who was one of the first persons to mention the use of Indian numerals (incorporating zero) in the Middle East.

The Syriac Orthodox heartland of Tur ‘Abdin, in south-east Turkey, is represented by Simeon/Shem’un of Qartmin, founder of the famous monastery of St Gabriel, and by the remarkable entrepreneur bishop, Simeon of the Olives (who was also associated with the monastery of St Gabriel). Churches and monasteries require upkeep and repairs, so it is good to find the name of Metropolitan John of Mardin who sponsored a great deal of restoration work in that area. The brother and sister martyrs Behnam and Sara gave their name to the famous monastery whose beautiful medieval

decoration has recently been much damaged when Daesh temporarily seized control of the monastery in the course of current fighting in Iraq. Sara is by no means the only woman saint to be included in the present volume, for seven other women are featured, among them the empress Theodora, wife of Justinian, who played an important role in the sixth century in protecting bishops and other clergy who had been driven out by her husband's religious policy.

Finally, mention should be made here of Xystus of Rome, whose Anaphora is one of those most frequently used in the Syriac Orthodox liturgical tradition.

Sebastian Brock
The Oriental Institute, Oxford University
22nd January, 2017

Acknowledgement

The fifth volume on *Martyrs, Saints & Prelates of the Syrian Orthodox Church* contains fifty biographies. The volumes I to IV were published in 2007, 2012, 2013 and 2016 respectively. I would humbly recite as St. Paul said “*I can do all this through him who gives me strength*” (Philippians 4:13).

Although biographies of saints and martyrs are available in Syriac and Arabic languages, only a few have been translated either into Malayalam or English. This volume mostly include saints who are less familiar to the faithful but are commemorated in the Church.

I am deeply indebted to His Holiness Moran Mor Ignatius Aphrem II, the Patriarch of the Holy Apostolic See of Antioch and Supreme head of the Universal Syrian Orthodox Church, for blessing this publication. I am grateful to Prof. Sebastian Brock, Former faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Oxford/Wolfson College, UK, for sparing time to write a preface to this volume.

The draft of the manuscript was edited and corrected by Prof. Usha Skaria, Retired faculty member of Vimala College, Thrissur. Prof. Usha has spared much of her time in helping this publication. I am grateful to her for the suggestions and corrections. The manuscript was reviewed by Dr. Annamma Joseph, Head of the Department of English (Retired), Government College for Women, Thiruvananthapuram in spite of her busy schedule.

I am much obliged to JSC Publications, Puthencruz, for taking up the publication of the book. I sincerely thank Mr. Julius C. Abraham, M/s Megapixel Graphics, Kottayam, for the layout and cover design of the book. The printing was done by M/s Mor Julius Press, Puthencruz.

I earnestly wish and hope that the English speaking Diaspora of the Syriac Orthodox Church will find this book useful to understand the life and teachings of our Church fathers. I am happy that I could bring out this volume on the 87th feast of Saint Mor Osthatheos Sleeba.

Kunnamkulam Cor-episcopo (Dr.) K. Mani Rajan
19 March, 2017

Abbreviations Used

| | |
|----------|--------------------------------|
| c. | - Circa, meaning approximately |
| d. | - death |
| ed. | - edition |
| cf. | - compare with |
| Ed. | - Editor |
| Eds. | - Editors |
| Fr. | - Father |
| H.E. | - His Eminence |
| H.G. | - His Grace |
| H.H. | - His Holiness |
| M. E. | - Malayalam Era |
| MSS | - Manuscript |
| n.d | - no date |
| p. | - Page |
| pp. | - Pages |
| rev. ed. | - revised edition |
| St. | - Saint |
| Sts. | - Saints |
| Trans. | - Translator(s) |
| Vol. | - Volume |

1. St. Titus, Disciple of St. Paul

(AD 11? – AD 105?)

Titus was a native of the island of Crete and a gentile by birth. He was converted to the Christian faith (Kitto, 1869; Butler, 1903; Britannica, 2016). Titus studied Hellenistic philosophy, the ancient poets, and sciences. He led a virtuous life and St. Ignatius, the God-bearer (d. AD 107) has testified to his virtues (<https://oca.org/saints/lives/2010/08/25/102393-apostle-titus-of-the-seventy-and-bishop-of-crete>).

At the age of twenty, Titus heard a voice in a dream, suggesting that he should abandon the Hellenistic wisdom that could not provide salvation for his soul. After this he wanted to familiarize himself with the teachings of the prophets of God. He first read chapter 47 of the Book of prophet Isaiah, which spoke to him of his own spiritual condition. At about the same time the news reached Crete about the appearance of a great prophet in Palestine and about the miracles he performed. The governor of Crete (an uncle of Titus) sent him to Palestine. The great prophet was the Lord Jesus Christ, born of the most holy Virgin Mary.

At Jerusalem, Titus saw the Lord. He heard His preaching and believed in Him. He witnessed the suffering and death of the savior on the cross. On the day of the Pentecost, after the descent of the Holy Spirit, those who gathered there spoke in various languages among which one was the Cretan language (Acts 2:11). Later Titus accepted baptism from St. Paul and Paul called Titus his son (Titus 1:4).

St. Jerome tells us that Titus was St. Paul's interpreter (Butler, 1903). Titus probably wrote what Paul dictated, or translated into Greek what he had written in Latin (Kitto, 1869). It is also argued that Titus is one among the seventy-two emissaries (Luke 10:1). Soon after the conversion of Titus, Apostle Paul took him to Jerusalem about the year AD 51. At that time there was a dispute about the converted Gentiles being subjected to the ceremonies of the Mosaic Law (circumcision). On their arrival there, some of the people were desirous that Titus should be circumcised. This was not only refused by Titus, but totally rejected by Paul. "My companion Titus, even though he is Greek, was not forced to be circumcised, although someone wanted it done" (Galatians 2:3).

Paul styles Titus his brother and co-partner in his labors; commends exceedingly his solitude and zeal for the salvation of his brethren. On a certain occasion Paul declared that he found no rest in his spirit, because at Troas he had not met Titus (2 Cor. 2:12-13).

After the controversy of circumcision ended at Jerusalem, Paul sent Titus to Corinth in order to resolve some disputes there (Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. I). After staying some time at Corinth, Titus went to Macedonia, in order to inform Paul of the state of the Church in that city. About the year AD 56(?), Titus again went to Corinth with the second epistle of Paul to the Corinthians.

Titus was especially entrusted with organizing the alms collection for the poor Christians of Judea and he made a subsequent mission to Dalmatia in AD 65 (2 Timothy 4:10). Titus was a zealous representative of St. Paul in Crete. According to tradition Titus was ordained bishop of Crete by St. Paul (Butler, 1903; Thurston & Attwater, 1990). The principal function of Titus was to ordain priests and bishops for the island of Crete (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:7-8). St. Chrysostom (d. AD 407) recorded: "... how great was the esteem of St. Paul for his disciple, Titus" (Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. I, p. 261).

When Apostle Paul was taken like a criminal to Rome to stand trial before Caesar, St. Titus left his flock in Crete for some time and went to Rome to be of service to his spiritual father. After the martyrdom of St. Paul in AD 67, Titus returned to Gortyna, the chief city of Crete. St. Titus peacefully guided his flock and toiled in enlightening the pagans with the light of faith in Christ. He was granted the gift of working miracles by the intervention of the Lord. During one of

the pagan feasts in honor of the goddess Diana (Artemis) (Acts 19:28, 35), Titus was preaching to a crowd of pagans. When he saw that they would not listen to him, he prayed to the Lord, so that the Lord Himself would show the misled people the deceitfulness of idols. By the prayer of St. Titus, the idol of Diana fell down and lay shattered before the eyes of all. On another occasion, St. Titus prayed that the Lord would not permit the completion of a temple of Zeus, and it collapsed. By such miracles St. Titus brought many to faith in Christ.

Titus died at the age of ninety-four and was buried in the cathedral of Gortyna, Crete, six miles from Mount Ida (Kitto, 1869; Butler, 1903). The feast of St. Titus is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 25 August.

2. St. Timothy, Disciple of St. Paul

(AD ? – AD 97 ?)

St. Timothy (Themotheos), the beloved disciple of St. Paul, was probably a native of Lystra in Lycaonia (Kitto, 1869; Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. I). His father was a Gentile, but his mother Eunice a Jewess. She, with Lois, his grandmother (2 Timothy 1:5) embraced Christianity, and St Paul commends their faith.

When St. Paul came to Derbe and Lystra, about the year AD 5, the brethren of Iconium and Lystra gave a good testimony to the merit and good disposition of Timothy (Acts 16:1-3). Subsequently, St. Paul took Timothy with him, in order to assist him in propagating the doctrine of his great Lord and Master. Timothy helped and assisted Paul through the whole course of his preaching. St. Paul calls him not only his dearly beloved son, but also his brother, the companion of his labors, and a man of God.

St Paul refused to circumcise Titus, whereas he circumcised Timothy, born of a Jewess, so as to make him more acceptable to the Jews (Acts 16:3). This might show that he himself was not

an enemy of their law. Timothy accompanied St. Paul from Lystra and sailed to Macedonia, and preached at Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea. Being compelled to quit this last city by the fury of the Jews, he left Timothy and Silas behind him to confirm the new converts there (Acts 17:12-14).

The Christians of Thessalonica were under a very heavy persecution learning about which he deputed Timothy to encourage them. The disciple returned to St. Paul, who was then at Corinth, to give him an account of his success. Upon this the apostle wrote his first epistle to the Thessalonians. From Corinth St. Paul went to Jerusalem, and then to Ephesus, where he spent two years. In AD 58 he seems to have decided to return to Greece, and sent Timothy and Erastus before him through Macedonia (Acts 19:22) to appraise the faithful of his intention, and to organize the collection of alms he wished to send to the Christians of Jerusalem.

Timothy was afterwards directed to visit Corinth. His presence was needed there to revive in the minds of the faithful the doctrine which the apostle had taught them. 1 Corinthians 16:10 has reference to this: "If Timothy comes, see to it that he does not have anything to be afraid of while he is with you, for he is doing the Lord's work as I am."

St. Paul, on his return to Palestine was imprisoned, and after a two years' imprisonment at Caesarea, was sent to Rome. Timothy seems

to have been with him for most of this time, and is named by him in the titles of his epistle to Philemon and to the Philippians (Philemon 1:1; Philippians 1:1). St Timothy himself suffered imprisonment for Christ and confessed His name in the presence of many witnesses.

Timothy was ordained bishop by St. Paul at Ephesus before St. John arrived there. St. Timothy is always described as the first bishop of Ephesus. St. Paul left St. Timothy at Ephesus to govern that church, to oppose false teachers, and to ordain priests, deacons and even bishops.

After apostle St. Paul came to Rome in the year 65, being then very near his death, he wrote to Timothy his second letter, which is full of remarks of kindness and tenderness for his dear disciple. St. Paul desires Timothy to come to Rome before winter (2 Timothy 4:21), and bring with him the cloak, the books, and the parchments which he left at Troas (2 Timothy 4:13).

In the year AD 97, under the Emperor Nerva, the angry heathens beat Timothy with clubs and stoned him to death. He was endeavoring to oppose their idolatrous ceremonies on the day of a festival called the Katagogia, on which day they walked in troops, everyone carrying in one hand an idol and in the other a club (Kitto, 1869; Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. I). They left the body on the spot where they had murdered him, which was removed then by some of his disciples, and interred on the top of a mountain

at a small distance from the city. The supernatural manifestations said to have taken place at the shrine are referred to as a matter of common knowledge both by St. Chrysostom and St. Jerome. The Syrian Orthodox Church celebrates the feast of St. Timothy (Themotheos) on 21 January.

3. Mor Isaac of Nineveh

(c. AD 613 – c. AD 700)

Isaac of Nineveh who was an anchorite and bishop was by birth a Syrian. When still quite young, he and his brother entered the great monastery of St. Matthew at Nineveh. His learning, virtue, and ascetic life came to the attention of the Catholicos George (AD 659 – 680), who ordained him Bishop of Nineveh (Wace, 1911). However, he resigned seeing the crude manners and disobedience of the inhabitants of the city. The saint felt that it was beyond his ability to guide them, and moreover, he yearned for solitude.

One incident is recorded in this regard, that is, once two Christians came to him asking to settle a dispute. One man acknowledged that he owed money to the other, but asked for a short extension. The lender threatened to bring his debtor to court to force him to pay. St. Isaac, citing

the Gospel, asked him to be merciful and give the debtor more time to pay. The man said, "Leave your Gospel out of this!" St. Isaac replied, "If you will not submit to the Lord's commandments in the Gospel, then what remains for me to do here?" After only five months as bishop, feeling that functions of the bishop interfered with the ascetic life, St. Isaac resigned his office and retired to the desert (south to the wilderness of Mount Matout, a refuge for anchorites) of Scete (<http://www.roca.org/OA/137/137d.htm>; <http://saintsresource.com/isaac-the-syrian/>).

He composed volumes on spiritual guidance, which include God's providence, prayer, obeying God, love towards your neighbor, judgments, and government (Wensinck, 1923; Sebastian, 2006; Hagman, 2010). The treatises on the behavior of excellence are much quoted by the old Syrian writers. His style teems with metaphor; his matter is often interesting, both theologically and historically. He treats mainly the ascetic life, its rules and spiritual experiences. Watching, fasting, silence, and solitude are means to self-mastery (Wace, 1911). The worth of actions is gauged by the degree of the love of God which inspires them. By the thoughts which stir within, a man may learn to what grade of holiness he has risen. There are three methods by which every rational soul can approach God, viz., love, fear, and divine training.

One of his writings is directed against those who asked, If God be good, why did He create sin, Gehenna, Death, and Satan? Elsewhere Isaac says that there is a natural faculty whereby we discern good from evil, to lose which is to sink lower than one's natural state; and this faculty precedes faith, and leads us thereto. There is also a faculty of spiritual knowledge which is the offspring of faith. He explains the "many mansions" of heaven as the different capacities of the souls abiding there, a difference not of place but of grace (Wace, 1911, p. 872).

Mor Isaac lived in solitude for many years, eating only three loaves a week with some uncooked vegetables. Eventually blindness and old age forced him to retire to the monastery of (Rabban) Shabar, where he died after attaining a high degree of spiritual perfection and was buried. At the time of his death he was nearly blind, a fact attributed to his devotion to study. The feast of Mor Isaac of Nineveh is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 13 May.

4. Mor Simon Zaytuni

(AD ? - AD 734)

St. Simon of Harran, more commonly known as Mor Sham'un al-Zaytuni of Harran, was a metropolitan of the Syrian Orthodox Church in southeastern Turkey during the 8th century (https://orthodoxwiki.org/Simon_of_Harran).

St. Simon, the son of Mundhir, was a native of Habsnas in Tur Abdin, Turkey. He undertook religious studies and eventually became a monk at Dayro d'Mor Gabriel (Qartamin) around AD 657. In AD 682, the Saint was ordained to priesthood and appointed the Abbot of Dayro d'Mor Gabriel.

St. Simon is credited with building many churches and monasteries in Tur'abdin. He carried out different projects, using a treasure (he found hidden in a cave?) found by his cousin David, one of which was planting 12,000 olive trees that eventually met the demand for oil of all the churches and monasteries of Tur' abdin. This earned him the nick name the Zaytuni (the Man of Olives). Because he was on good terms with the Muslim governor of Nisibis he could restore some churches in Nisibis. In addition, he built a mosque and school for the Muslim population of

the city. He also made arrangements for copying manuscripts. At the time of his death there were 180 copies of manuscripts in the library of the monastery.

In AD 700, St. Simon was elected Metropolitan of Harran, a city about twenty miles to the south of Edessa (modern Urfa), and became known as one of the greatest prelates of his age in the Church of Antioch. After his consecration to the episcopacy the Saint established a school in his home village, Habsnas. In AD 726 he attended the council of Manazgird.

In addition to his asceticism, piety and godliness, he was a man of learning. He wrote many books in defense of the faith of the Syrian Orthodox Church. St. Simon entered eternal sleep on 1 June AD 734 and is commemorated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 1 June.

5. Theodotus the Patriarch of Antioch

(AD? - AD 428)

Theodotus, the 29th Patriarch of Antioch, succeeded Patriarch Alexander in AD 417. He is described as “the pearl of temperance,” “adorned with a splendid life and knowledge of the divine dogmas” (Wace, 1911). Patriarch Theodotus was a true protector of orthodox faith and refuted the three heresies prevalent during those times - Pelagianism, Apollinarianism, and Messalianism.

Patriarch Theodotus called a council in the city towards the end of AD 418 and condemned Pelagianism and the anathematized Pelagius. Pelagius was a monk from Britain, whose reputation and theology came into prominence after he went to Rome sometime in AD 380. The Pelagian controversy involved the nature of man and the doctrine of original sin. Pelagius believed that the consequences of Adam and Eve’s sin were restricted to themselves only; and thereby denied the belief that the original sin was passed on to the children of Adam and thus to the human race (cf. 1 Cor. 15:22).

Patriarch Theodotus was humble and kind to his clergy. His gentleness brought back the Apollinarians to the church without rigidly insisting on formal renouncement of their errors. Apollinarianism was the heresy taught by Apollinaris the Younger, bishop of Laodicea in Syria about the year AD 361. He taught that Jesus was a man; He did not have a human mind but that the mind of Christ was solely divine. Apollinaris taught that the two natures of Christ could not co-exist within one person. Apollinarianism was condemned by the Second General Council held at Constantinople in AD 381. The Syrian Orthodox faith is that Jesus is a complete man and God (the Hypostatic Union). The hypostatic union is the term used to describe how God, the Son Jesus Christ, took on a human nature, yet remained fully God at the same time (cf. John 8:58, 10:30; John 1:14). The humanity and divinity of Jesus are not mixed, but are united without loss of separate identity.

In AD 426, Theodotus took part in the ordination of Sisinnius, the Patriarch of Constantinople. Theodotus along with the bishops assembled there addressed a synodical letter to the bishops of Pamphylia against the Messalian heresy (Smith & Wace, 1887, Vol. IV). Messalianism is a heresy that originated in about the year AD 360 and spread across Syria and Asia. The Messalians denied that the Sacraments, including baptism, gave grace and declared that the only spiritual power was constant prayer that led to possession

by the Holy Spirit. In short, Messalians rejected the sacramental life of the Church. The sect was finally anathematized by the third ecumenical Synod of Ephesus in AD 431.

After serving the Church as Patriarch for eleven years he departed for heavenly abode in AD 428. The Syrian Orthodox Church celebrates the feast of Theodotus, Patriarch of Antioch, on 3 June.

6. St. Jacob of Edessa

(AD 633? - AD 708)

Jacob was born about the year AD 633 in the village of Ayndaba (Indobo) in the district of Gumyah, in the province of Antioch (Smith & Wace, 1882, Vol. III). He studied the principles of the sciences, the books of the two Testaments and the books of the doctors of the Church under the visiting clergy Father Kyriakos.

Then he went to the Monastery of Aphthonios at Qinneshrin (Kenneshre, on the left bank of the Euphrates, opposite Carchemish) where he became a monk and studied the literature of the Greek language under Mor Severus Sabukht (d. AD 667). Together with his companion Athanasius of Balad, he completed his studies and became

well versed in philology and theology. He became well-trained in the ascetic and virtuous life as well. Then he journeyed to Alexandria for higher studies in philosophy. He returned to Damascus and proceeded to Edessa (Urhoi/orfah) and there he studied Hebrew. At Edessa, he became well known and was sought after by scholars (<http://www.socwus.org/ourchurch/St.%20Jacob%20of%20Edessa.htm>).

In AD 672 he was ordained a deacon and then a priest. In AD 684, he was ordained metropolitan of Edessa by his friend Athanasius II (AD 683-686), the Patriarch of Antioch. He remained in Edessa for four years, during which time he became very strict with the monks and clergy concerning the observation of laws that had been neglected. He expelled those who disobeyed him. In the meantime, Julian II (AD 686-708), the Patriarch of Antioch, and the bishops advised him to treat the clergy patiently. This suggestion made him more furious and, thereupon, he openly burned a copy of the neglected canonical rules. He resigned and left the diocese, taking with him his pupils Daniel and Constantine to the Monastery of St. Jacob in Kesum (near Samosata) while the more lenient Habib succeeded him as metropolitan of Edessa.

Shortly afterwards he accepted the invitation of the monks of Eusebona (in the Diocese of Antioch) to reside at their monastery. There he taught for eleven years the Sacred Scriptures

in the Greek text. After a short period, he was appointed a teacher of the Greek language at the same Monastery of Eusebuna. And when some of the monks showed their dislike of learning Greek, he left for the Monastery of Tel'ada accompanied by seven pupils. He remained at Tel'ada for about nine years, devoting his time to the revision of the translation of the Old Testament. The Book of Kings which he had translated in AD 705 is preserved at the library of Paris.

St. Jacob was a zealous and saintly man but was hot-tempered. He was a man of great determination and showed no leniency; thus, he was unable to administer the affairs of his congregation amicably. Mor Jacob was a man of unique knowledge, a poet, a translator, a historian, a philosopher-theologian and a commentator (Aphrem I, 2000).

The major works of Mor Jacob of Edessa are: (1) Revision of the Old Testament, (2) Division of the Sacred Books into chapters, prefixing to each chapter a summary of its contents and providing notes which contain extracts from the writings of Severus of Antioch, and (3) his unfinished "Hexameron" (a work on the six days of creation, which is divided into seven treatises, and which opens with a dialogue between the author and Constantine (one of his disciples). Further, as a liturgical author, Jacob of Edessa drew up an anaphora, revised the Liturgy of St. James, wrote the celebrated "Book of Treasures",

and composed orders of baptism, the order of the blessing of water on the eve of the Epiphany, and of the celebration of matrimony, and translated Severus's order of Baptism (Smith & Wace, 1882, Vol. III).

Numerous canons, important homilies, a valuable "Chronicle" which he composed in AD 692, and a translation of the "Homiliae Cathedrales" written in Greek by Severus of Antioch, are a few of the works authored by him (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08277b.htm>).

Towards the end of AD 707, upon the death of Mor Habib, the congregation of Edessa sent an invitation to Mor Jacob to return to them which he accepted in about AD 708. He resided in that city for four months, and then went to Tel'ada to fetch his library and his pupils, and he died there on 5 June AD 708. The Syrian Orthodox Church celebrates the feast of St. Jacob of Edessa, on 5 June.

7. St. John III of Sedre, the Patriarch of Antioch

(AD ? - AD 648)

St. John III, Patriarch of Antioch, is also known as Mor Yuhanon of Sedre. He was a prominent and energetic Church dignitary, a pious, intelligent and far-sighted man (Aphrem I, 2000). He entered the monastic order at the Monastery of Ousebuna (between Antioch and Beroea) where he mastered Greek and Syriac as well as theology.

He became the disciple and secretary of Patriarch Athansius I Gammolo (AD 595-631) and succeeded him to the Apostolic See in AD 631. He witnessed the Arab conquest of al-Jazira. He was a man who faced difficulties and hardships with patience (<http://www.soc-wus.org/ourchurch/St.%20John%20of%20Sedre.htm>).

At his request, the Gospels were translated from Syriac into Arabic by skilful Christian Orthodox Arab translators around AD 643, but this translation has not come down to us. He entered into an elaborate dialogue with the Amir of the Muslims on the facts of Christianity, which was written down by Severus, one of his secretaries. It is titled "Letter of the Patriarch Mor

John concerning His Conversation with the Amir of the Muslims.” This letter was translated into French and published by Nau (1915).

Moran John III also composed prayers of supplication known as the Sedre in Syriac , which he incorporated into the liturgy of the Church. They usually begin with praise and glorification of the Lord, God. Of these Sedre, a large collection can be found in the British Museum. Since many sedre came from the pen of this Father, he was nicknamed ‘John of the Sedre.’ They are written in a smooth and splendid style. Nine of these Sedre bear his name, the first of which is for Lent, the second for the Resurrection, the third and the fourth for the repentance of sinners, the fifth for the dispelling of ordeals, the sixth for evening, night and day and the seventh for morning, the eighth for the dead and the ninth for the Friday morning of the fifth week of fasting.

Moran John III has composed three prayers of supplication, to be used in the celebration of the Eucharist, the first of which begins: “Praise be to the pure sacrifice who became the priest of his person;” the second begins thus: “Praise be to the heavenly Lord of hosts;” and the third begins: “O Lord who are truly a good master.” He has also drawn a liturgy which begins: “O Lord, who are delighted by love and enjoys safety;” a homily on the consecration of the Chrism, which begins: “Beloved brethren let us talk philosophically a little bit on behalf of this present sacred feast”

and a letter to Marutha, Catholicos of Takrit (AD 628-649), which he wrote at the beginning of his patriarchate.

He also wrote a magnificent doctrinal treatise in thirty-nine pages addressed to the Chorepiscopus Theodorns, which he opened with a general proclamation to the children of the Holy Church, and declared in detail the creed of Faith in support of the true Apostolic belief, citing as evidence the Fathers, one of whom is John of Jerusalem. Furthermore, he condemned in this treatise the heresy of the Phantasiasts (Christ's body was only a phantasm, not a material substance), and concluded it with the history of the leaders of this heresy and the account of their false ordinations. He died on 14 December AD 648 and was entombed in the church at Amida, Diyarbakir, Southeast Turkey. The Syrian Orthodox Church celebrates the feast of Patriarch St. John III of Sedre on 14 December.

8. St. Shem' un of Qartmin

(AD? - AD 433?)

Yuhannon, the father of Shemvun (Samuel), was a wealthy man who was the leader of his village Eshtin, near a town called Sawro, Mardin. Yuhannon did not have children and he always gave alms to the needy and the poor of his village. He ceaselessly prayed to God to give him a child. (<http://www.soc-wus.org/ourchurch/st.%20shmuel.htm>). God heard his prayer and he was blessed with a son who was named Samuel. An angel of God appeared to Yuhannon and said: "The child will become famous and the name of the Lord will be glorified."

Samuel (Shemvun or Shemoun) grew up in the fear of God. He completed his studies in the village school. At the age of puberty, he started to love the ascetic life and he chose for himself to be alone. He built there a monastery and eight brothers came to live with him. God gave his father another son, Shomir, who helped his brother in the building of the monastery.

Samuel later moved to the mountains above Nusaybin (Nisibis). Many brothers joined him and in a few years the number of monks grew to about

thirty. Mor Karpos, the bishop of Sawro, came to visit him and ordained him a priest. The bishop visited Samuel as he was fleeing the persecution of the Persians. The troops of Shappur II (AD 310-379) took over the region of Amida, Dara, Edessa, and Harran and burned the houses. Some of the troops climbed the mountain and burned Mor Samuel's monastery. The troops took Karpos to their Marzaban (leader) which is mentioned in the inscriptions of Nusaybin and asked him many questions about his religion. He wanted Mor Karpos to deny Jesus which he did not and subsequently they cut his head off. Mor Samuel was able to retrieve the body of the martyred bishop. He buried him with great honor in the monastery which he afterwards renovated.

Later on, Mor Samuel left the monastery secretly and took with him the relics of Mor Karpos. He came to the village of Qartmin where he settled in the south near the spring. In Qartmin, there was a leader named Saliba. His four year old son was sick. His father took him to Mor Samuel to seek his prayers for his son and he recovered from his illness. Once Shemoun, a disciple of Mor Samuel, went out to collect water from a well. He found there some girls washing clothes. Some evil thoughts came to his mind. He was not able to fill his pot with water. He returned to his Abbot ashamed and told him the story. Mor Samuel said: "Let us go from this place before we are caught up in the trap of Satan." Shemoun said: "Let it be as you will (wish?), my Abbot." When

they finished the Morning Prayer they left asking God to prepare a place for them to dwell. They were guided by the angel of the Lord to build a monastery at a new site.

In the year AD 407 Mor Samuel healed Theodora, the daughter of King Arcadius, who was possessed by a demon. In gratitude Theodora built a glorious dome in the monastery of Mor Samuel. The monastery received further benefaction in the days of the victorious king, Theodosius the Younger, who in the first year of his enthronement sent his servants with gold. Subsequently, they built a (round) house of eternity (that is, a house of saints), a church in the name of the Mother of God, a double House of Martyrs to the North, another house outside of it which is called House of the Apostles and a church in the name of Forty Martyrs of Sebastia. Before the death of Mor Samuel there were 400 monks in the monastery.

St. Samuel entrusted the monastery to his disciple Mor Shemoun (Simeon) and departed for his heavenly abode in the year AD 409 (?). His body was buried in Beth Qadishe (the tombs of saints). However, the calendar of the Istanbul Diocese of the Syrian Orthodox Church dates the death in the year AD 433 and the feast on 19 January ([http://www.suryanikadim.org /content/takvim.pdf](http://www.suryanikadim.org/content/takvim.pdf)). The Syrian Orthodox Church celebrates the feast of Mor Samuel of Qartmin on 18 January.

Note: - Most of the details of this write-up are drawn from the translation of Rev. Fr. Dale Johnson from Syriac.

9. Mor Severus Sabukht, bishop of Qinnesrin

(AD 575? – AD 667)

Severus was a skillful and famous Doctor, a mathematician, a philosopher, who explored the obscurities of astronomical and natural sciences. He was born at Nisibin. He became a monk and was educated in the Monastery of Qinnesrin (a city southwest of Aleppo and east of Antioch). The monastery is also known as the ‘Eagle’s nest’ where Greek was taught extensively. He acquired knowledge of Greek, Syriac language and literature and of the Persian language. Later he spent his life teaching the writings of all the Syrian scholars, philosophy, theology, and mathematics. He was most proficient in astronomy, and even excelled the Greeks in this field (<http://www.syriacstudies.com/2015/0?9/10/severus-sabukht-d-667/>).

Many pupils studied under him, the most famous of his disciples were the Patriarch Athanasius II (d. AD 686), and Jacob of Edessa (d. AD 708). In AD 638 Severus was ordained a bishop of the city of Qinnesrin (his monastery?). He is also known as “Severus, the Mathematician.”

The writings of Severus cover the fields of theology, philosophy, and mathematics; of which very few have come down to us. He was one of the foremost scientific writers of his time. His works are mainly scientific or philosophical in character, although little has been translated into English. The details of his writings can be found online (<http://www.syriacstudies.com/2015/0?9/10/severus-sabukht-d-667/> and http://roger-pearse.com/wiki/index.php?title=Severus_Sebokht).

Mor Severus Sabukht died on 20 July AD 667 at an advanced age. The Syrian Orthodox Church celebrates the memory of Mor Severus on 20 July.

10. St. Gregory of Armenia, the Illuminator

(AD 257? – AD 331?)

Gregory (Mor Gregorius), the Illuminator, the apostle and patron of Armenia was born about the year AD 257 in Armenia (https://orthodoxwiki.org/Gregory_the_Enlightener). Gregory is also known as 'the Sun of Armenia' (Smith & Wace, 1880, Vol. II). Armenia was always the exposed frontier state between Rome and Persia.

(Prince?) Anak , Gregory's father, a Parthian, at the instigation of the Sassamid Ardashir, murdered King Khosrov I as part of a political rivalry. Gregory was an infant at that time. Anak, while trying to escape, was drowned in the Araxes River with all his family except two sons who were saved by their nurses. One son was carried off to Persia; the other son Gregory was taken by his nurse (foster mother Mary) to Caesarea in Cappadocia (modern Kayseri, Turkey) where he was raised as a Christian.

Gregory got married and had two sons. One son, Orhanes (Bardanes/Vertanes), later became a priest. The other son, Aristages (Aristakes)

became a monk, and later was ordained bishop who attended the Concil of Nicea in AD 325.

A son of the King Khosrov, Tiridates, who escaped the assassination, was trained in the Roman army, and eventually came back to drive out the Persians and restore the Armenian Kingdom (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07023a.htm>). In c. AD 280, Gregory returned to Armenia in the midst of a Christian persecution encouraged by King Tiridates III, the son of the assassinated Khosrov .

Tiridates was a zealot for the regional idols and was intolerant of Christianity and demanded that Gregory must renounce his Christian faith which he refused. Gregory was imprisoned in a burial pit (in a pit with venomous snakes?) for about thirteen years. During these times, Tiridates developed a serious ailment and suffered disfiguration. However, his heart softened after he was cured by the prayers of Gregory. In AD 297, Tiridates in gratitude, released Gregory from prison. Gregory observed fast for seventy days after his rescue from the pit. He then began to preach the Gospel to the people, urging them to reject the worship of idols and to follow Christ. Tiridates, repented and most of the people of Armenia, answered Gregory's call to accept Christianity. Tiridates was baptized by Gregory in AD 301. In that year, Tiridates adopted Christianity as the State religion. With the conversion of Armenia, the temples were destroyed and churches were built. This

happened while Diocletian was emperor (AD 284-305). Tiridates then became the first monarch in history to impose Christianity on his people. He did so about 20 years before Constantine I. Gregory and Tiridates upon hearing about Constantine's conversion set out with an army of 70,000 men to congratulate him.

In AD 302, Gregory was consecrated bishop of all the Armenians with his residence at Ashtishat in the province of Taron. In 303, Gregory built the Cathedral of Etchmiadzin near Mount Ararat. In AD 318, Gregory named his son, Aristages, as his successor and entrusted his grandson, Grigoris, with the duty to spread the Gospel of Christ throughout the Caucasus and Anatolia. Gregory then retired to (a mountain cave?) a monastery near Mount Sebul in the Daralia province of upper Armenia. He died in c. AD 331 and was buried at Thortan ([www.britannica.com /biography/Saint-Gregory-the-Illuminator](http://www.britannica.com/biography/Saint-Gregory-the-Illuminator); https://orthodox.wiki.org/Gregory_the_Enlightener; <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07023a.htm>).

The feast of Mor Gregory (Gregorius) of Armenia, the illuminator, is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 30 September.

11. Mor Athanasius Denho d Beth Rumi, Martyr

(AD 1836 - AD1915)

Mor Athanasius Denho was born in the village of Anhel in AD 1836. He was raised by religious parents of the Rumi family. After he grew up he decided to live in the monastery. He learned the Aramaic language and Syriac theology. He was tonsured a monk and later became a priest. He was ordained Metropolitan for the Diocese of Siwarach and Garagar.

Mor Athanasius Dehno was humble and virtuous in all his work. In 1915 when his diocese was attacked by barbarian Kurds, they arrested the Bishop and put him into a prison. The Bishop ran away from the village the following morning and after countless tortures he was killed by stoning (shattered his head with stones). The Bishop suffered martyrdom together with his two priests Yacoub and Joseph, and many adolescents and 60 other families.

The handcross of the Bishop is now kept at the St. Peter and St. Paul Church in Adiyaman.

He served the Episcopal Office for 33 years and became a martyr at the age of 79.

Note: The Syriac text of the biographical sketch prepared by Malfono Aziz d Beth'amono which was translated by Dr. Gewargis Acis is reproduced here.

12. St. Theodotus, Martyr

(AD? – AD 304?)

Theodotus was a devout Christian who had been brought up by a maiden called Thecusa. He was an innkeeper at Ancyra in Galatia (Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. II). He is described as a dealer of provisions elsewhere. Theotecnus, the governor, was entrusted with the duty of offering all provisions sold in the market to the gods first this would render the consumers unfit to receive Holy Communion. Theodotus supplied the Christians with bread and wine (Smith & Wace, 1887, Vol. IV) which was not offered to the gods.

In the early years of Diocletian's persecution, the Christians in the villages pursued their occupations and enjoyed daily worship, while those in the cities were suffering tortures and death at the hands of Theotecnus, the governor. Theodotus fearlessly assisted the imprisoned

Christians and buried the martyrs at the risk of his life.

Soon afterwards there was an annual feast of Artemis and Athene, during the course of which statues of the goddesses were washed at a pond, in which women consecrated to their service bathed in view of the public. At that time there were seven Christian maidens who were imprisoned; one among them was Thecusa (who brought up Theodotus). Theotecnus wanted the maidens to wear the garlands and robes of the priestesses which they refused. So they were condemned to be stripped, carried naked in an open chariot after the idols, and then to be drowned. They were drowned with stones tied to their bodies to prevent them from rising. Theodotus recovered the bodies and buried them. Susequently, Theodotus was arrested and beheaded.

The body of Theodotus was placed on a pyre. Suddenly a bright light shone around it, so that no one dared to approach. Theotecnus ordered it to be guarded all night in the place of common execution. Fronto, who was a priest (farmer?), and had a vineyard where he made wine, came to Ancyra to sell his wine. The gates of the city had been closed. He found the guards erecting a hut of willow branches wherein to spend the night. The soldiers invited him to join them, which he did. Discovering what they were guarding, he made them drunk with his own wine and carried off the martyr's body, placing it in the spot Theodotus

had marked as the site of a martyrium. The Acts purport to have been written by one Nilus, an eye-witness, is also believed to have been a fellow prisoner.

The feast of St. Theodotus is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 11 February.

13. St. Artemius, Martyr

(AD? – AD 363)

Artemius was a veteran of the army of Constantine, the Great, who was made imperial prefect of Egypt. In discharging this office he had to be a persecutor as well as a heretic. George, the Cappadocian, had intruded upon the episcopal throne of Alexandria with the help of the Arian emperor, Constantius. St. Athanasius had fled, and it was the duty of Artemius to find him, which he endeavored to do with great zeal among the monasteries and hermitages of the Egyptian desert (Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. IV).

Artemius was no less zealous against paganism, destroying temples and images, so that when Julian the Apostate became emperor the persecutor was in turn persecuted (Smith & Wace, 1887, Vol. I). Many accusations against Artemius were made to the emperor, including that

of breaking idols. He was accordingly deprived of his property and beheaded.

The Arian chronicler Philostorgius, states that the Emperor Constantius II commissioned Artemius to bring the reputed relics of St. Andrew the Apostle and St Luke the Evangelist from Achaia to Constantinople.

The feast of St. Artemius is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 20 October.

14. St. Aho, the Ascetic

(c. AD 419 – AD 524)

St. Aho was born around AD 419 in the city of Rish'aino (Rasul-'ayn), which is to the southeast of Nisibis in present day Syria near Hassekeh. His father's name was 'Ubadyo and Aho was one of his three children. At the age of twelve Aho, an intelligent boy became the disciple of a local monk (<http://www.soc-wus.org/ourchurch/St.%20Aho.htm>).

In c. AD 439, Rish-'aino came under the Persian siege. The great army of Persians came to Nusaybin and the Romans retreated before them. They were chased to Harran. During this time, Ubadyo, father of Aho, came to him and said "My son, behold, our residents wait outside the City

gate. Behold, your mother, and your brothers are with them. Rise, we shall go.” He agreed and went with him and when they crossed over the bridge of Euphrates about 200 people died in a stampede. When the Blessed Aho saw this, he returned to the city. His father, mother, and brothers went on their way and their father died on the way.

Mor Aho returned to Rish’aino and travelled to Nusaybin along with a young man about his age. When they were travelling, a unit of a troop of Persians leading many captives caught and bound them. They arrived at Nusaybin where they gathered all the captives. They were about 7000 in number.

Mor Aho was given to Michael, a Christian soldier, to serve as a slave. Michael discovered that Aho was a Christian and they made a deal to serve together in the military. So Michael took Aho to the King (who most likely was Yazdagrid II). Michael told the King that Aho was his nephew on his mother’s side, and he persuaded the King to make Aho a soldier. The King saw in the Blessed One a countenance like the countenance of an angel. He favored him and registered him like one of the soldiers.

Mor Michael and Mor Aho served in the Persian army for 18 years. In around AD 458, they decided to follow the Lord’s steps. They saw a dream. A man wearing glorious clothing appeared and said to them, “My brothers, rise, ascend at once together to the region to the west, for there

the Lord prepares for us a place that we might dwell in it.” They rejoiced greatly for they realized that the Lord prepared before them His way. Very early in the morning they took their belongings and started their journey. They travelled to Nisibis, the place of Mor Aho’s capture. They entered the village of Dara. A man by name Theodoros received them well. Theodoros had a son, called Heworo who was deaf and dumb. The child Heworo regained speech by their prayer. Heworo said to them that, “There was a man with you in the evening and he took me by the hand and gave me a cup of cold water. When I drank he said to me, “Rise, go and when I came near you my tongue was straightened.”

The fame of Aho and Michael spread throughout the region when this miracle was known. Theodoros built a monastery for them in the village, Kasar. In Kasar about 20 monks joined the two saints in the monastery. Later, Mor Aho and Mor Michael were offered a nearby vineyard in the village of Zamorto (KfarZamoro is the name of the ruin today). In Zamorto, St. Aho drove out a demon from a man called Hobel.

Mor Michael left the community after five years, returned to the region of Nineveh and built for him a monastery there. He built a pillar in it and sat upon it until his departure around 463 A.D. It is also about the same time that Aho took a trip to Jerusalem for a year and a half. On his return he decided to follow the Mediterranean coast. At

'Akka he boarded a ship which turned out to be owned by his brothers. He disembarked from the vessel in Antioch. His brothers could not persuade him to return to 'Akka with them and meet his mother. When Mor Aho's mother learned of this event she travelled to Antioch, joined a caravan to Nisibis and met Mor Aho near his monastery. Mor Aho out of guilt and devotion stayed by her side for nine years until her death in AD 474.

Meanwhile, Theodoros built another monastery (the White Monastery in the name of his son Hewaro) for Mor Aho in Tur'abdin. After the death of his mother and Theodoros, Mor Aho left his community again and travelled to a village called Hadas and performed miracles in the house of Dorsela and Maximus.

Mor Aho continued his journey and arrived in Athens where he stayed for five years which must have been about the year AD 480. He continued his journey to Constantinople and then to Hadas. Dorsela and Maximus sent their eldest son, Rumanos, to Mor Aho as a disciple. Mor Aho remained in the village for two years.

Mor Aho then ventured into Armenia and near the village of Ause he encountered pagans who were celebrating under a giant tree in which they believed resided a god. Mor Aho feared for his life and prayed to God. A tornado ripped up the tree and cast it in the river about a mile away. The people were furious at Mor Aho and they wanted to kill him because he told them that

Jesus Christ was his god. They demanded that the tree be brought back and their gods with it. Another storm caused two hours of darkness in the land. The pagans accepted the faith of Mor Aho.

In about the year AD 508, Mor Aho built a church and invited the Bishop of Miletene, Mor Kuriakos, who came and baptized many people and ordained many priests and deacons. A monastery was built and Mor Aho resided there for 22 years.

When the villagers heard that St. Aho was about to die, they all gathered around him weeping. He said: "My brothers this is the end of every man." They wept and said: "O Father of Peace and Mercies, where shall we go to find you and who shall be a leader for us like you? Stretch out your right hand and confirm your sons and daughters while we are standing. Give us peace and go in peace, merciful peace. Then go to the region of pleasures. We remain here tormenting ourselves. O Good Shepherd where will we go? Your flock is left without a shepherd. You saved us from the mad wolves that would have torn us apart."

St. Aho stretched out his hand and blessed them with the sign of the Cross. He turned and knelt in prayer and prayed: "O Lord God, mighty and holy, give to your servant in this hour the petition that I ask from you. ... Give them times of peace and seasons of blessings. ... Make them

fervent in all goodness and in every place where they perform vigil or intercession. In your name and in the name of your servant may there not be hail, nor blight, nor locust, nor plague.”

He turned to them and said, “My moment arrives.” He entrusted his soul to the Creator for eternal sleep. His face was illuminated like the sun. The people of the entire region gathered there and they made a great procession and conducted service for three days. St. Aho departed for his heavenly abode in the year AD 524 at the age of 105. The feast of St. Aho is celebrated on 19 April and 1 October.

15. St. Aggai, The Second Bishop of Edessa

(First Century AD?)

After the Ascension of Jesus Christ, Apostle Thomas sent Addai, one of the seventy-two emissaries, to Abgar. Addai (named Thaddeus in the history written by Eusebius) healed the king Abgar V from his ailment. Addai then preached the Gospel to the people and they were converted. The heathen altars were broken down, and the people were baptized. King Abgar induced the Emperor Tiberius to chastise the Jews for having crucified the Saviour (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen / 05088a.htm>).

Addai (Thaddaeus) could convert Aggai, a jeweller and wig-maker to the King and one Palut. Addai due to his poor health ordained Aggai as his successor and Palut a priest (Fortescue, 1913). Addai died in peace during the life time of Abgar V, the King in c. AD 81. Aggai succeeded Addai.

Like Addai, Aggai preached in various regions of the East. Aggai was martyred by Ma'nu, one of the unbelieving sons of Abgar while Aggai was sitting in a church (Burkitt, 1904). The reason for this brutal act was that when Ma'nu orderd Aggai to make a piece of heathen jewellery (Chinese cloth?), Aggai replied: "When my master (Addai) was feeding the flock of Christ, I used to work for your father (Abgar V, the King), but now it is my duty to feed the flock and I cannot follow another trade." The enraged King sent soldiers who broke his legs and Aggai died a martyr. Aggai was buried in the church.

Aggai could not ordain Palut a bishop and there was no bishop in Edessa. Therefore, Palut, the successor of Aggai, was ordained bishop by Seraphion, the Patriarch of Antioch (AD 191-211). The feast of St. Aggai is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 9 January, 9 July and 9 December.

16. Mor Philoksinos Yuhanon Dolabani, Bishop of Mardin

(AD 1885 – AD 1969)

Mor Philoksinos (Philexinose) Yuhanon Dolabani was born on 10 October AD 1885 in the outskirts of the Assyrian village Qelesh in Tur'abdin. He became a monk at the Monastery of Dayro d-Kurkmo at the age of 22. In AD 1933 the monk Yuhanon Dolabani was appointed by the Patriarch Aphrem I Barsoum (AD 1933 – 1957) to be the patriarchal deputy to Mardin and its environs. Dolabani was ordained bishop for Mardin and the surrounding areas on 4 May 1947 at Homs, Syria by the Patriarch. He came to be regarded as a great man among Assyrians, both as an enlightened Church father and as the confronter of the hostile Turkish authorities (<http://bethnahrin.de/2007/08/19/a-man-of-god-and-assyria/>).

The Assyrian Youth Federation and the Assyrian Federation in Sweden in March 2007 published the book entitled - - "The Biography of Yuhanon Dolabani and Other Writings." The entire book is in the Assyrian language, except for one of his writings on the Assyrians of Cilicia,

which is in Ottoman Turkish. Part 1 of the 7 parts book contains the biography of Mor Yuhanon Dolabani.

Part 2 contains a conversation between the late Patriarch Mor Ignatius Elias III and bishop Mor Diyonosius Gewargis from India, which took place in the Dayr al-Za'faran Monastery near Mardin, south-east Turkey. Part 6 and 7 of the book include poems and lists all literary works of Mor Dolabani which amount to approximately 100 books in total. A gist of the book translated into English by Mr. Tomas Isik is one of the sources of this write up.

The book describes the predicament of the Assyrians in Anatolia the years before, during and after the Seyfo Genocide in 1915. The book sheds light on the period of persecution and terrible massacres that were directed against the Assyrians during that time, thus helping to fill a gap in the history of the Assyrians.

Orphaned Assyrian children who survived the Seyfo genocide and ended up in the city of Adana were taken care of in the Assyrian school. Dolabani remained close to the Assyrian youth from the days he became responsible for the teaching in the Assyrian school for orphaned children in Adana, named after three Assyrian letters as "The Taw- Mim-Semkath School." It was also at "The Taw Mim Semkath School" that Dolabani composed most of his poems. Due to the continued persecutions of the Assyrians,

the Syriac Orthodox Church was forced to close the orphanage in Adana. But Dolabani later succeeded in re-opening “The Taw Mim Semkath School” in Beirut in AD 1922, making it a secure sanctuary for the orphans (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philoxenos_Yuhanon_Dolabani).

Dolabani was a man with missionary zeal. After the end of the persecution of the Armenian and Syriac Christians in early 20th century, he ordained many priests, monks and deacons, and sent them to very remote areas as far as ‘Bitlis and Van’ where the faithful had lost their clergy and forgotten about Christianity. Dressed as lay people, they baptized so many Syriac and also Armenian Christians who had no more clergy (Johnson, 2006, pp. 12-14).

The week before he died, when he saw his last article in the Patriarchal Magazine, he said: “I don’t like death to break my pen, because the Church and our youth still need my pen, but may God’s will be done.” Mor Philexiose Yuhanon Dolabani departed for his heavenly abode on 2 November 1969. He is buried in Deyr ul-Zafaran Monastery. The feast of Mor Pheliexinose Yuhanon Dolabani is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 2 November.

17. St. Mennas, Martyr

(AD? – c. AD 304)

Mennas (Menas) of Egypt was a soldier in the Roman army (Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. IV). He served in the Cotyaeum region of Phrygia under the centurion Firmilian during the reigns of the Emperors Diocletian (AD 284-305) and Maximian (AD 305-311). When the emperors began the fiercest persecution against Christians, the saint refused to serve these persecutors. He removed his soldier's belt (a sign of military rank) and withdrew to a mountain, where he lived an ascetic life of fasting and prayer (<https://oca.org/saints/lives/0577/11/11/103277-martyr-menas-of-egypt>).

Once Mennas happened to arrive in the city during a pagan festival. He preached faith in Christ, the Savior of the world. At his trial before the prefect Pyrrhus, the saint bravely confessed his faith, saying that he had come to denounce the impious. The prefect was angered, and had Menas arrested.

Pyrrhus offered to restore the saint's former rank if he would offer sacrifice to the pagan gods. When he refused, he was put to cruel tortures,

and was beheaded. This occurred in the year 304 (312?). Christians gathered the martyr's relics by night and hid them until the end of the persecution. Later, they were brought to Egypt and placed in a church dedicated to St. Mennas southwest of Alexandria.

The saint received grace from God to work miracles, and to help those in need. St Mennas is noted for healing various illnesses, delivering people from possession by demons, and as a protector, especially during times of war.

The feast of St. Mennas of Egypt is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 22 October and 11 November.

18. St. Zenobius and his Sister Zenobia, Martyrs

(AD ? – AD 290?)

Zenobius and his sister Zenobia were born in Aegae in Asia Minor (modern Turkey). From childhood, they were raised in Christian Faith by their parents, and they led pious lives (http://www.goarch.org/chapel/saints_view?contentid=263; http://www.antiochian.org/node/16782&gws_rd=cr&ei=WtQBWKnDG8WAwwTXvpo4).

Zenobius and Zenobia distributed their inherited wealth to the poor. The Lord rewarded Zenobius with the gift of healing various illnesses. He was also chosen bishop of a Christian community in Cilicia.

As bishop, St. Zenobius zealously spread the Christian Faith among the pagans. When Emperor Diocletian (284-305) began persecuting Christians, Bishop Zenobius was the first one to be arrested and brought to trial before Governor Licius. "I shall only speak briefly with you," said Licius to the saint, "for I propose to grant you life if you worship our gods, or death, if you do not." Zenobius answered, "This present life without Christ is death. It is better that I prepare to endure the present torment for my Creator, and then with Him live eternally, than to renounce Him for the sake of the present life, and then be tormented eternally in Hades."

By the order of Lycius, they nailed him to a cross and tortured him. St. Zenobia, his sister, saw his suffering, and bravely confessed her own faith in Christ before the governor. She was also tortured. The saints were ultimately beheaded. The priest Hermogenes secretly buried their bodies in a single grave. The feast of Sts. Zenobius and his sister Zenobia is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 30 October.

19. St. Pambo of Nitria, Abbot

(AD 315 - AD 385?)

Saint Pambo (Pampo) lived an ascetic life in the Nitrian desert in Egypt (Smith & Wace, 1887, Vol. IV). Abbot Poemen spoke of Pambo's three practices that are remarkable, viz., his fasting every day till evening, his silence, and his great diligence in manual labour. St. Antony inculcated in all his disciples the obligation of diligence in constant manual labour in a solitary life, both as a part of penance, and as a necessary means to expel sloth, and entertain the vigour of the mind in spiritual exercises (Palladius, 1898; Butler, 1866; [https://oca.org/saints/lives /2010/07/18/102051-venerable-pambo-the-hermit-of-egypt](https://oca.org/saints/lives/2010/07/18/102051-venerable-pambo-the-hermit-of-egypt)).

St. Pambo, after he left St. Antony, settled in the desert of Nitria on a mountain, where he had a monastery; but he lived sometime in the wilderness of the Cells, where Rufinus says he went to receive his blessing in AD 374. St. Melania the Elder, in her visit found the holy abbot Pambo engaged in his work of making mats. She gave him three hundred pounds weight of silver, desiring him to accept that part of her store for the necessities of the poor among the brethren. St.

Pambo without interrupting his work, or looking at her or her present, said to her that God would reward her charity. Then turning to his disciple (Origen?), he asked him to take the silver and distribute it among all the brethren in Lybia and the isles who were most needy, but charged him to give nothing to those in Egypt, that country being rich and plentiful.

Melania continued standing for sometime expecting to be glorified and honored by him and said: "Father, do you know that here there is three hundred pounds weight of silver?" The abbot, without casting his eye upon the chest of silver, replied: "Daughter, He to whom you made this offering, very well knows how much it weighs without being told, for He weighs the mountains. If you give it to God who did not despise the widow's two mites, and even preferred them to the great presents of the rich, say no more about it and be silent" (Butler, 1866; Palladius, 1898).

St. Pambo excelled most other ancient monks in the austerity of his continual fasts. The restraint of his tongue was admirable. Once a certain religious brother to whom he had asked for advice began to recite to him Psalm 39:1 - - "I said, I will watch my ways and keep my tongue from sin." When Pambo heard these words he returned to his cell saying that it was enough for one lesson and that he would go and study to put it in practice. This he did by keeping perpetual silence. Whenever it was necessary to speak

he did that after weighing well before he gave answer.

The disciples of St. Pambo such as Dioscorus (later Bishop of Hermopolis), Ammonius, Eusebius and Euthymius, mentioned in the life of St. John Chrysostom, became great ascetics. It was said that sometimes St. Pambo's face shone like lightning, as did the face of Moses. When Abbot Theodore begged St. Pambo some words of instruction, he said: "Go, and exercise mercy and charity towards all men. Mercy finds confidence before God."

St. Athanasius once desired St. Pambo to come out of the desert to Alexandria, to confound the Arians by giving testimony to the divinity of Jesus Christ. The saint seeing in that city an actress dressed up for the stage, wept bitterly. He was asked the reason of his tears. He said he wept for the sinful condition of that unhappy woman, and also for his own sloth in the divine service; because he did not take so much pains to please God as she did to ensnare men.

Pambo while on his death-bed, at the very moment of his passing, is reported to have said this to the bystanders, Origen and Ammonius and the rest of the brethren: "From the day that I came to this place in the desert and built my cell and inhabited it, I cannot remember having eaten bread that I have not earned by my hands. I have not had to repent of any word that I have spoken

up to the present hour. And so I go to God, as one who has not even begun to be pious.”

He died at the age of seventy in AD 385 without any sickness, pain, or agony, as he was making a basket. St. Pambo said to the brethren who stood near his deathbed: “I go to the Lord as one who has not yet begun to serve Him.” Melania took care of his burial (Butler, 1866; Palladius, 1898). St. Pambo is commemorated on 17 June in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

20. St. Moses, the (Black) Ethiopian

(AD 320? – AD 395?)

Moses was an Ethiopian by race and lived in Egypt during the fourth century. He was a servant or slave to an Egyptian official (Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. III). He was a man of huge stature. His master drove him out because he committed a murder. He joined a band of robbers. Because of his great physical strength, they chose him as their leader. Moses and his band of robbers were feared because of their many evil acts. People trembled at the mere mention of his name (<https://oca.org/saints/lives/2015/08/28/102414-venerable-moses-the-ethiopian-of-scete>).

Once Moses sought revenge on a man whose barking dog kept him from an intended

robbery of sheep. He swam the Nile and killed four of the man's sheep, swam back across the Nile with them. He butchered them, cooked and ate the best parts. He sold the skin for wine. Then he walked 50 miles to rejoin his gang.

Moses spent several years leading a sinful life, but through the great mercy of God he repented, left his band of robbers and went to one of the desert monasteries in the Valley Wadi al-Natrum (Skete). There he was completely obedient to the brethren, and he poured forth many tears of sorrow for his sinful life. After a while St. Moses withdrew to a solitary cell, where he spent his time in prayer and the strictest fasting.

St. Moses was not quickly freed from the passions. He went often to the monk, Abba Isidore, seeking advice on how to be delivered from the passions of profligacy. Being experienced in the spiritual struggle, the Elder taught him never to eat too much food, to remain partly hungry while observing the strictest restraint. But the passions continued to trouble St. Moses in his dreams.

Moses was tempted by demons to get back to his old habits. Moses went to Isiodre who lived in Skete and explained his conflict. He said: "What am I to do, seeing that the dreams of my soul darken my reason, by reason of my sinful habits?" He said to him: "Because you have not withdrawn your mind from imagining these things that is why you endure this. Give yourself to watching and praying with fasting and you will quickly be

delivered from them.” Listening to this advice he retreated to his cell and gave his word that he would not sleep all night nor bend his knees. So he remained in his cell for six years and every night he stood in the middle of the cell praying and not closing his eyes. And he could not master the thing. So he suggested to himself yet another plan, and going out by night he would visit the cells of the older and more ascetic (monks), and taking their water-pots secretly would fill them with water. For they fetched their water from a distance, some from two miles off, some five miles, others half a mile.

Several accounts note how for years he struggled with temptation to return to his robber life after he had chosen the monastic way. Once, while alone in his cell, four robbers attacked him. He tied them up, slung them over his shoulders and took them to the church where he dumped them, declaring that it was un-Christian to harm them and inquiring what was to be done with them. When the attackers found out who he was, they repented and joined the community (Palladius, 1898; Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. III).

After many years of monastic life, St Moses was ordained deacon. The bishop clothed him in white vestments and said, “Now Abba Moses is entirely white!” The saint replied, “Only outwardly, for God knows that I am still dark within.” Once, the bishop decided to test him and he directed the clergy to drive him out of the altar, insulting

him as an unworthy Ethiopian. In all humility, the monk accepted the abuse. Having put him to the test, the bishop of Alexandria, Mor Theophilus, then ordained St. Moses to the priesthood. St. Moses labored for fifteen years in this rank, and gathered many disciples around him.

When the saint reached the age of 75, he warned his monks that soon robbers would descend upon Skete and murder all those who remained there. The saint asked his monks to leave, in order to avoid violent death. His disciples begged the saint to leave with them, but he replied: "For many years now, I have awaited the time when the words of my Master, the Lord Jesus Christ, should be fulfilled: 'All who take up the sword, shall perish by the sword'" (Matt. 26: 52). After this, seven of the brethren remained with St. Moses, and one of them hid nearby during the attack of the robbers. The robbers killed St. Moses and the six monks who remained with him. Moses was buried at the monastery called Dair al-Baramus (Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. III). Their death occurred about the year 400 (<http://incommunion.org/2011/12/07/st-moses-the-black-a-patron-saint-of-non-violence-by-pieter-dykhorst/>).

The feast of St. Moses, the Black is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 18 June and 28 August.

21. Mor Eulogius, Episcopo of Edessa

(Fourth Century AD)

Emperor Valentius (AD 364-378), wishing to propagate the Arian heresy, fiercely persecuted the Orthodox. In the city of Edessa he removed St. Barses, a champion for Orthodoxy, from the bishop's throne. He sent him for confinement on the island of Arad. The Orthodox population there received the exiled saint with great honor. Later he was banished to the Egyptian city of Oxyrhynchos, but there also the warm welcome was repeated. Then St. Barses was banished to the very frontier of the imperial realm, to the faraway city of Thenon where, exhausted by his exiles, he died (<https://oca.org/saints/lives/2011/08/25/102395-st-eulogius-the-bishop-of-edessa-and-confessor>).

At Edessa the Emperor Valentius placed Lupus, an Arian pseudo-bishop in the episcopate. The Orthodox population of Edessa, both clergy and laity, ceased to attend their church, which had been seized by the Arians. They gathered outside the city and celebrated the divine services in an open area. When the Emperor learned of this, he ordered the eparch Modestus to kill all

the Orthodox who met for divine services outside the city. He informed the Orthodox that they should not attend divine services. The Orthodox, fervent with the desire to receive a martyr's crown for Christ, attended the prayer service. Eparch Modestus, obeying his orders, went there with his armed soldiers. Along the way he saw a woman who hastened with her small child willing to receive the martyr's crown. Moved by the fervor of the woman, Modestus turned back with his soldiers. Appearing before the Emperor Valentius, he urged him to cancel the decree to kill all the Orthodox and to apply it only to the clergy.

They led persons of spiritual rank to the emperor with the oldest presbyter Eulogius in the lead . The emperor urged them to enter into communion with the pseudo-bishop Lupus, but none of them agreed. After this he sent eighty men of clerical rank in chains to prison in Thrace. The Orthodox met them along the way, revereing them as confessors, and furnished them with all the necessities. Learning of this, the emperor ordered the martyrs to be taken two by two, and to disperse them to remote areas.

The holy presbyters Eulogius and Protogenes were sent to Thebaid the city of Antinous in Egypt (Smith & Wace, 1880, Vol. II). There, by their preaching, they converted many idol-worshippers to Christianity and baptized them. When the emperor Valentius died and was succeeded by the Emperor Theodosius (AD 379-395) the Orthodox

confessors remaining alive after the persecution returned from exile.

The holy presbyters Eulogius and Protogenes returned to Edessa. In place of the dead and banished St. Barse, presbyter Eulogius was ordained Bishop of Edessa by Eusebius of Samosate, and the presbyter Protogenes was ordained bishop for Mesopotamian city of Carrhae. Eulogius attended the council held at Constantinople in AD 381. Eulogius guided his flocks until his death, which occurred at the end of the fourth century. The feast of St. Eulogius is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 21 June.

22. Evagris, Ascetic and writer

(AD 344? - AD 398)

Evagris, ascetic and writer, was born at Ibora, in Pontus Galaticus in AD 344. He was ordained 'reader' by St. Basil, the bishop of Caesarea. After the death of St. Basil, Gregory Nazianzen ordained him deacon (Palladius, 1898; Smith & Wace, 1880, Vol. II; Malaty, 5005). Deacon Evagris accompanied Gregory to the great synod of Constantinople in AD 381 and left him with bishop Nectarius, since Evagris was skilled in argument against all heresies (Wace, 1911).

Evagris was troubled by temptations of flesh by the wife of an ex-prefect (Wace, 1911). This resulted in a prolonged illness (fever) lasting for about six months. Physicians were at a loss and could find no way to cure him. He moved to Jerusalem where Melania the Elder nursed him and said: “Son, your long illness does not please me. Tell me therefore what your thoughts are. ...” Then he confessed to her the whole matter. But she said to him: “Give me your word before the Lord that you will keep the monastic life; and, sinner though I am, I will pray that you may be granted reprieve.” Fearing God and respecting his own conscience he consented. So within a few days he got well, and travelled to the mount of Nitria, Egypt in c. AD 382 (Malaty, 2005).

He lived there two years and in the third year he entered the desert. So he lived fourteen years in the place they call Cellia. In the course of fifteen years, having purified his mind, he composed three holy books for monks, called Antirrhetica in which he taught the arts to be used against demons. He also wrote on asceticism and stillness in the solitary life. Theophilus of Alexandria wanted to ordain Evagris a Bishop which he refused (Wace, 1911). He once said: “Always keep your death in mind and do not forget the eternal judgment, then there will be no fault in your soul” (Malaty, 2005, p. 239).

Evagris in his chapters on prayer wrote: “Prayer is the flower of gentleness and of

freedom from anger. Prayer is the fruit of joy and thankfulness. Prayer is the remedy for gloom and depression. Go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and take up your cross so that you can pray without distraction. ... Prayer is an ascent of the spirit to God. If you long for prayer, renounce all to gain all" (Malaty, 2005, p. 239).

To one of his disciples he told the things that would happen to him after eighteen years. And he said: "From the time that I moved to the desert, I have not touched lettuce or any other green vegetable, or any fruit, or grapes, or meat, and nor I have taken bath. And later, in the sixteenth year of his life without cooked food, his flesh felt a need, owing to the weakness of the stomach, to partake of something cooked." However, he did not take bread even then having fed on herbs or gruel or pulse for two years. He attended the church on the Epiphany and died after a few days. Shortly before his death in AD 398 at the age of fifty-four (Smith & Wace, 1880, Vol. II) he told the disciples: "For three years I have not been troubled by fleshly desire after so long a life and toil and labour and ceaseless prayer." The feast of St. Evagris (surnamed Ponticus) is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 16 January.

23. St. Eugenia of Rome, Martyr

(Second/Third Century AD)

Eugenia, the daughter of Philip and Claudia, was a Roman by birth. She lived in Alexandria, where her father Philip (Philippus) was sent by the Emperor Commodus (AD180-192) to be the Prefect of Egypt. Eugenia received a fine upbringing and was noted for her beauty. Many illustrious young men wanted to marry her, but she rejected them (<https://oca.org/saints/lives/2000/12/24/103631-nun-martyr-eugenia-of-rome>).

Providentially, she became acquainted with the Epistles of the Apostle Paul. She yearned with all her soul to become a Christian, but kept this a secret from her parents. At that time, Christians were banished from Alexandria by the command of the emperor. Wishing to learn more about Christian teachings, she went outside the country in the company of her two servants Protus and Hyacinthus, dressed in men's clothes. She and her companions were baptized at a certain monastery by Bishop Elias. Thurston and Attwater (1990, Vol. IV) recorded the name of the bishop as Helenus of Heliopolis.

After a while the whole family received holy Baptism. But Philip, after being denounced by pagans, was dismissed from his post. The Alexandrian Christians chose him as their bishop. The new Prefect, fearing the wrath of the people, did not dare to execute Philip openly, but sent soldiers to kill him. They inflicted wounds upon St. Philip while he was praying, from which he died three days later.

Claudia, the mother of Eugenia, went to Rome with her sons, daughter, and her servants. There St. Eugenia lived a monastic life, and brought many young women to Christ. Claudia built a wanderers' hostel and aided the poor. After several peaceful years, the Emperor Galienus (AD 260-268) intensified the persecution against Christians, and many of them found refuge with Sts. Claudia and Eugenia.

Basilla, an orphaned Roman girl of imperial lineage, heard about the Christians and St. Eugenia. She sent a trusted servant to the saint asking her to write her a letter explaining Christian teachings. St. Eugenia sent to her her friends and co-ascetics, Protus and Hyacinthus, who enlightened Basilla, and she accepted holy Baptism.

Basilla's servant then told her fiancé Pompey that his betrothed had become a Christian. Pompey then complained to the emperor against the Christians for preaching celibacy and denouncing idolatry. Basilla refused to enter into

marriage with Pompey, and so they killed her with a sword.

They dragged Sts. Protus and Hyacinthus into a temple to offer sacrifice to the idols, but just as they entered, the idol fell down and was shattered. The holy Martyrs Protus and Hyacinthus were beheaded. They also brought St. Eugenia to the temple of Diana by force, but she had not even entered it, when the pagan temple collapsed with its idol. They threw Eugenia into a pit, where she remained for ten days. Subsequently, the executioner put her to the sword. The feast of Eugenia and her parents is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 24 December.

24. Sts. Behnam and his sister Sarah, Martyrs

(AD – AD 388?)

King of Persia, Sanharib (Sennacherib) ruled Nineveh. His son Prince Behnam had forty armed knights as his constant companions, but his daughter Sarah was afflicted with leprosy (<http://st-takla.org/books/en/church/synaxarium/04-keyahk/14-kiahk-behnam.html>).

One day prince Behnam went hunting in the wilderness with some of his slaves. He saw a large animal and chased it, separating himself from the group. Night came and he slept alone in the wilderness. He had a dream that someone was telling him to look for a man named Matthew, who lived in that mountainous area. St. Matthew would pray for his sister and she would be cured.

The next morning the prince found his party and they searched for St. Matthew. They found the saint in a cave in the mountain. The prince knelt before St. Matthew and told him about his sister and the vision he had. He asked St. Matthew to come with him to the city and see his sister Sarah. When they reached the palace, the prince went to his mother and told her about his vision

and that St. Matthew had come with them to pray and cure the princess of her disease.

The queen allowed Sarah to see the saint. St. Matthew prayed for the princess and she was cured. Then the saint began to tell them about our Lord Jesus Christ; how He died for all of us and how He gave us salvation and the power over sickness and death. Subsequently, they were baptized by the saint in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Afterward, the saint went back to his cave.

The king was surprised and delighted when his daughter went to meet him, seeing that she was cured of her disease. He asked her how it happened. St. Sarah told her father that our Lord Jesus Christ through the hands of St. Matthew cured her and that she and the prince are Christians. The king became angry that they were baptized and threatened them with severe punishment if they did not renounce their Christian faith. Behnam and Sarah refused to renounce their faith and tried to escape with some of their friends but the king's soldiers found them and killed them. They both received the crown of martyrdom.

Later an evil spirit possessed the king. It tormented him with pain and fear. The worried queen sent for St. Matthew, knowing in her heart that the saint had indeed brought about the cure for her daughter. When St. Matthew arrived, he prayed for the king and the Lord immediately healed him. The king was very glad to be free of

the terrible evil spirit and he and the queen listened to St. Matthew's words about the all powerful and true God. Both the king and queen believed in our Lord Jesus Christ and were baptized. Eventually the entire city believed in our Lord Jesus. The king built a monastery for St. Matthew and the bodies of his children, Sts. Behnam and Sarah were entombed in it. Many healings and miracles were attributed to the relics of St. Behnam and Sarah.

In July 2014, ISIS fighters reached the monastery and ordered the monks to leave immediately. On 19 March, 2015, ISIS fighters blew up the tomb of Mor Behnam and Morth Sarah with explosives completely levelling the structure (<http://hyperallergic.com/216393/another-treasure-lost-in-iraq-the-story-of-mar-behnam-monastery/>; http://www.suscopts.org/mightyangels/vol2_no3/stbehnam&sarah.pdf).

The feast of Sts. Behnam and Sarah is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 27 April and 10 December.

25. St. Arsenius, the Great

(AD 354 – AD 450)

St. Arsenius (Arsenius) the Great was born in c. AD 354 in Rome in a pious Christian family. Arsenius is also known as “the Roman” or “the Deacon.” He is one of the most famous monks of Egypt. He studied Rhetoric and Philosophy, and mastered Latin and Greek languages. St. Arsenius gave up philosophy and the vanity of the worldly life, seeking instead the true wisdom. He entered the ranks of the clergy as a Deacon in one of the Roman churches, dedicating himself to the service of God (Smith & Wace, 1877, Vol. I; <http://home.iprimus.com.au/xenos/arseniosgreat.html>).

Emperor Theodosius I (AD 379-395) ruled the eastern half of the Roman Empire. In about AD 383 he entrusted Arsenius with the education of his sons Arcadius and Honorios (Wace, 1911). Against his will, but in obedience to the will of Pope Damasos (Damasus) Arsenius agreed to teach the imperial children, hoping to teach them Christian piety as well (<http://catholicfire.blogspot.co.uk/2008/07/saint-of-day-st-arsenius-great.html>).

When Arsenius arrived at Constantinople, he was received with great honour by the Emperor Theodosius. Theodosius said: "Forget that they are the emperor's sons, for I want them to submit to you in all things, as to their father and teacher." The Saint devoted himself to the education of the youths, but the high esteem in which he was held troubled his spirit. St. Arsenius prayed to the Lord and he heard a voice telling him, "Arsenius, flee from men, and you shall be saved." Then in c. AD 394, removing his rich clothing and replacing it with old and tattered garments, he secretly left the palace, boarded a ship for Alexandria, and he made his way to Sketis, a monastery in the midst of the desert.

The brethren led him to Abba John Colobus (the Dwarfish), famed for his holiness of life (Wace, 1911). He, wishing to test the newcomer's humility, did not seat Arsenius with the monks for the meal (Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. III). He threw him a piece of dry bread saying, "Eat if you wish." St. Arsenius got down on his hands and knees, and picked up the bread with his mouth. Then he crawled off into a corner and ate it. Seeing this, Elder John said, "He will be a great ascetic!" Then accepting Arsenius with love, he tonsured him into monasticism.

Having taken on the struggle of silence he seldom left his seclusion. He came to church only on Sundays and Feast Days, observing complete silence and conversing with no one.

Although absorbed in constant prayer, the Saint did not refuse monks visiting him for his counsel and guidance. St. Arsenius was interested in handicraft work and wove baskets (mats) using fronds of date palms (leaves) soaked in water. He never changed the water in which he moistened the leaves, but only poured fresh water in it. When someone asked, he answered: "I ought to be punished by this smell for the self-indulgence with which I formerly used perfumes" (Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. III, p. 146).

St. Arsenius felt that many were fasting and observing vigil, but it was rare for someone to guard his soul from pride, greed, jealousy, and hatred of one's brother. In this they resemble graves which are decorated outwardly, but are filled with foul smell. He was heard to cry aloud in his cell: "Forsake me not, O God! I have done no good in Thy sight, but, in Thy goodness, grant me Your mercy to make a beginning" (Wace, 1911, p. 96).

A certain monk once asked St. Arsenius what he should do when he reads the Holy Scriptures and did not comprehend their meaning. The Elder answered, "My child, you must study and learn the Holy Scriptures constantly, even if you do not understand their power... For when we have the words of the Holy Scriptures on our lips, the demons hear them and are terrified."

The Saint often said, "I have often regretted the words I have spoken, but I have never regretted

my silence.” He spent fifty-five years at monastic labours and struggles. He spent forty years (c. AD 394-434) at Sketis, and ten years (c. AD 434- 444) on the mountain of Troe near Memphis. Then he spent three years at Canopus, and two more years at Troe, where he fell asleep in the Lord (Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. III).

St. Arsenius died at Troe in the year AD 449 or 450. When Arsenius was very near his end, he was weeping. The monks asked Arsenius: “Are you afraid Father?” Arsenius replied: “Truly, the fear that is with me in this hour has been with me ever since I became a monk” (Smith & Wace, 1877, Vol. I, p. 174). The feast of St. Arsenius is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 8 May (and on 11 July?).

26. St. Drosis, the daughter of Emperor Trajan

(AD ? - AD 95?)

St. Drosis was the daughter of Emperor Trajan (AD 98-117) , a fierce persecutor of Christians. In AD 99, he revived an earlier law which forbade secret gatherings that was indirectly aimed at the Christians. In AD 104, he issued a special law against those who believed in Christ.

During this time, the bodies of martyred Christians often remained unburied in order to intimidate others. Five virgins, Aglaida, Apollinaria, Daria, Mamthusa and Thais, took up the task of burying the bodies of those holy martyrs. They secretly gathered up the bodies, anointed them with spices, wrapped them in shrouds, and buried them. When she learned of this, Drosis, a secret Christian but not yet baptized, asked the holy virgins to take her with them.

On the advice of the court dignitary, Adrian, a guard was set over those who had been killed, to arrest anyone who tried to bury them. On the very first night, St. Drosis and the five virgins were caught. Learning that one of the captives was his own daughter, Trajan gave orders to hold her separately, in the hope that she would change her mind.

The holy virgins were sentenced to be burnt in a copper furnace. They bravely accepted execution and were granted crowns of martyrdom. Emperor Trajan saw a dream in which the five virgins were resting in the paradise and that Drosis would also be brought to paradise. When he woke up, Trajan flew into a rage and ordered that two huge furnaces be heated. At the ovens, an imperial edict was posted: "You who worship the Crucified, must offer sacrifice to the gods. If you do not wish to do this, however, then let each of you voluntarily cast yourself into this furnace." Many Christians willingly submitted to their martyrdom.

When she heard of this edict, St. Drosis also decided to accept martyrdom for Christ. In prison, she prayed to the Lord to release her from the prison walls. God heard her prayers, and the guards fell asleep. St. Drosis escaped and walked towards the ovens, but began to wonder, "How can I go to God without a wedding garment (i.e., without being baptized), for I am impure. But, O King of Kings, Lord Jesus Christ, for Your sake I give up my imperial position, so that I may be the lowliest handmaiden in Your Kingdom. Baptize me Yourself with your Holy Spirit."

After praying in this manner, St. Drosis anointed herself with chrism, which she had taken along with her, and immersing herself in water three times, she said: "the servant of God Drosis is baptized in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." For seven days the saint hid, spending her time in fasting and prayer. Christians found her and learned from her everything that had occurred. On the eighth day, the holy Martyr Drosis went to the red-hot ovens and cast herself into the fire (www.oca.org; <http://www.johnsanidopoulos.com/2011/03/saint-drosis-daughter-of-emperor-trajan.html>). The feast of St. Drosis is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 6 June.

27. St. Irini, Martyr

(AD ? – AD 384?)

Irini (Erini/Irene) was born during the reign of Constantine the Great in the Persian city of Magydus. The name Irene in Greek means peace (http://www.antiochian.org/111681_4202). Irene was the daughter of Licinius, governor of the region. Licinius brought up his only child, Irene, in the palace in their tradition. At the age of eight she began her education and continued for ten years under the tutelage of Apelianos (Appelianus), an educator renowned for his wisdom and intellect.

According to Apelianos, who was also Irene's biographer, an angel of the Lord appeared to Irene in a dream when she was a young woman and told her that she had been chosen to be the voice of the Messiah among her own people. When she told the venerable Apelianos of her dream, he stood in awe. When he saw it in its proper perspective, he warned the girl that the road ahead would have obstacles and that the journey would be an arduous one. She knew that her faith would sustain her.

Licinius at first attributed her new eagerness for Christianity to the whim of youth, and he

advised her to give up this madness. When her declarations for Christ continued unabated, he sternly warned her that he could tolerate no more. When she failed to comply he flew into a rage, threatening to have her trampled down in the arena by wild horses. Apelianos recorded that while Licinius was at the arena arranging the stampede to take his daughter's life, he himself was accidentally trampled upon.

Irene hurried to the side of her father, and as he lay mortally wounded she prayed to the Lord that he be spared. Her prayer was answered. Licinius recovered, repented, and was baptized into the Christian faith. For this he was promptly removed from office by the Persian King, Sedecian.

Turning to Irene, whom he considered a sorceress (witch?), Sedecian stated that he would restore her father to his post and allow her to go free if she disavowed Christ. She declined and was thereupon cast into prison. There she was subjected to inhuman torture and was given just enough food to sustain her until the next flogging. After Sedecian's death, she was released.

Miraculously regaining her health, she carried the message of the Messiah throughout the land, converting thousands to Christianity. Three consecutive successors to Sedecian: Savor, Numerianus and Savorian, all failed to halt Irene's advancement (propagation?) of Christianity. After imprisonment, torture, abuse of mind and body and making her physically incapacitated, it was

decided that Irene should be put to death. She was beheaded on the 5th of May, 384. The feast of St. Irene is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 5 May.

28. St. Hilaria, the daughter of Emperor Zeno

(5th Century AD)

Emperor Zeno (AD 474-491) was an orthodox believer, who loved the Church. He was well known for the Henoticon written in AD 482 in favor of the orthodox faith. He had two daughters, Hilaria and her sister, Thaepesta (<http://st-takla.org/books/en/church/synaxarium/05-topah/21-toba-hilaria.html>).

Zeno brought up his daughters in the fundamentals of the orthodox faith. Hilaria, since her young age loved to live a solitary life. When she was eighteen years old, she left her father's court and travelled to Egypt, disguised in men's clothing.

On her way, Hilaria, prayed at the churches of Saint Peter and Saint Mark. Theodorus, the deacon, accompanied her to the monastery. She first met St. Menas and then St. Pambo. The ascetics did not recognize her as a woman, for

she was only eighteen. She stayed there and learned the monastic practices (Wensinck, 1913; Drescher, 1947).

Three years later, Pambo came to know through a revelation that Hilaria is a woman and asked her not to reveal herself, in order to avoid any scandal. Nine years later, still being beardless, she became known as Hilarion, the eunuch (http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/hilaria_02_intro.htm).

Thapesta, her younger sister, who was at Constantinople, was afflicted by a demon. The emperor Zeno, not knowing what to do, left the matter to the monks of Scetis. Thapesta was brought before Saint Pambo. To everyone's astonishment, the eunuch Hilarion's reaction was extreme. She cried a lot. Moved by the cry, Pambo entrusted the afflicted young woman to Hilaria. Hilaria prayed for a week by which her young sister recovered. Thapesta did not recognize her sister. Then Thapesta received the sacraments and returned to her father in the palace.

When Thapesta arrived home, all those who were in the palace rejoiced in her safe return and offered many thanks to the Lord Christ. Her father asked her about her stay in Skete. She said that St. Hilaria, who healed her by her prayers, kissed her very often and slept in the same bed with her. When the Emperor heard this, he had some doubts about this monk. He then sent his servants to the elders in Skete asking them to send St. Hilaria, who healed his daughter, on

the pretext that there was another person to be cured at Constantinople (in order to receive 'his' blessings). When the elders ordered Hilaria to go to the emperor, she wept bitterly and requested to spare her. They told 'him' that the emperor was a righteous man who loved the holy Church and that it was only proper not to disobey him.

To avoid any scandal, Hilaria revealed herself to her father on condition that he would let her go back in peace to her monastery. For an hour the emperor Zeno remained stunned. Then Zeno requested her: "Pray to the Lord for me to keep me in the faith of my fathers." Only the empress and the younger sister were informed and they both cried with joy. St. Hilaria stayed with them for three months and returned to the monastery in Skete.

The Emperor Zeno wrote to the Governor of Egypt, demanding him to send hundred bushels of wheat and six hundred measures of oil and all that the monks needed in the wilderness on a yearly basis. Also, many cells were built for the monks. Since then, the number of monks increased in the wilderness. After her return to Skete, St. Hilaria died after five (twelve?) years. No one knew that she was a woman until after her death. The biography of St. Hilaria was written by St. Pambo. The feast of St. Hilaria is celebrated on 27 November in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

Note: All reference books mention that Hilaria had only one sister, Thaepesta. The Calendar of saints makes mention of St. Hilaria, daughter of Emperor Zeno with her brother Lazar, the feast of whom is celebrated on 13 January. This is yet to be sorted out.

29. Moran John IX Bar Shushan, the Patriarch of Antioch

(AD ?- AD1073)

Yeshu was born in Melitene (Malatya in Turkey), where he studied the philological, religious and philosophical sciences. He became a monk in one of the monasteries and studied under the Patriarch John VIII and achieved fame for both piety and eloquence.

He succeeded Athanasius V (AD 1058-1063) and assumed the name John. He is the ninth to assume this name after Athanasius V. He was known as Bar Shushan the scribe, who could write beautiful calligraphy. He copied many splendid books, and collected in one thick volume the memre (Poems) of St. Ephrem and St. Isaac, but left it incomplete. He did an excellent job in dividing the memre of St. Isaac into chapters, vocalizing them and commenting upon them. He also wrote a five page treatise, refuting the Malkite

doctrine, which opens with the Creed of Faith, a lengthy polemical treatise on the bad customs which had crept into the Armenian congregation, contradictory to Church customs, which he sent to the Armenian Catholicos, and an argument based on a difference of opinion with Gregory II, the Armenian Catholicos (AD 1065-1069), who was deposed and reinstalled later.

Bar Shushan's other writings are, a liturgy which begins "Fountain of love and goodness." He is also said to have written another liturgy, a short order of Baptism in ten pages used when death strikes a child suddenly and seven *husoye* for the Sunday preceding Christmas, for the evening and morning services of the commemoration of Mor Severus - his name is appended in the second *husoyo* - for the mornings of the first four Wednesdays of Lent, for the Fridays of the fourth and fifth weeks of Lent, mainly written for epidemic and the stoppage of rain, and for the first *qawmo* of prayer on Palm Sunday (Aphrem I, 2003).

He also composed splendid poetry, of which four poems remain, written in the heptasyllabic and the pentasyllabic meters, on the calamity of Melitene in AD 1058. Bishop Sergius of Hah (AD 1483) acknowledged that Bar Shushan wrote an excellent four page panegyric in praise of Jacob of Sarug, which begins "Jesus, the light whose shining brought joy to all the earth." He also wrote letters, in some of which he refuted his opponent,

and many homilies and treatises, all of which are lost; twenty-four canons of which there survives only the one on the obligatory nocturnal prayer for priests and deacons. He also wrote in Arabic a Synodical letter to Christodolus the Coptic Patriarch, and also refuted those who criticized the Syrians for using salt, leaven and a little oil in the bread made for Holy Mass.

He administered the Church efficiently, ordained seventeen metropolitans and bishops. He died on November 6, 1073. The feast of Moran John Bar Shushan is celebrated on 6 November.

30. Mor John of Tella

(AD 483 – AD 538)

John of Tella (John bar Kursos) was born in AD 483 at al-Raqqa, Northern Syria. His parents were rich and he received good education in both Syriac and Greek literature (Aphrem I, 2000; Malaty, 2005).

John worked in the army for a short period and then embraced monastic life in AD 506 at the monastery of Mor Zakka outside al-Raqqa. John pursued his studies in theology and religious sciences and was ordained priest.

In AD 519, John was ordained bishop of Tella. Patriarch Severios of Antioch (AD 512-538) appointed him a general representative of the Patriarchate. In about AD 521, the bishop was exiled by the Caesar Justin I for his adherence to the orthodox faith. He spent several years propagating the orthodox faith, travelling widely, often in secret, ordaining many deacons and priests. Later he found refuge at Jazira and finally settled in Sinjar and remained there for sixteen years.

The bishop visited Persia three times and also travelled to Constantinople during AD 532-533 to defend the orthodox faith. Bishop John was arrested by the Persian Magi, Governor of Nisbin (Aphrem I, 2000). In AD 537, Ephrem, the Malkite (Chalcedonian) Patriarch of Amid, held a council at Ras Ayn in an attempt to change the mind of Mor John in vain. Subsequently, he was detained and ill-treated.

Mor John endured all the ill-treatment and died on 6 February AD 538 at the age of fifty-five. The biography of Mor John was written by his disciple and companion, the monk Elijah.

The writings of Mor John of Tella include forty-eight canons compiled for the monks of his monastery and twenty-seven canons for the clergy. These are titled in some of the manuscripts as 'Canons of John of Tella to be observed by clergy, especially priests of the villages.' He has written a letter about the confession of faith which

begins: “The Apostle Paul has laid down for us a spiritual foundation which the waves of heresy cannot shake.” He has also written a commentary on trisagion.

Mor John of Tella worked tirelessly to defend the orthodox faith. The feast of Mor John is celebrated on 6 February in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

31. St. Mammias of Caesarea, Martyr

(AD 260? – AD 275?)

Mamas (Mammias) was born in Paphlagonia, Asia Minor in c. AD 260. His parents, Theodotus and Rufina, were pious and illustrious Christians. The parents of the saint were arrested by the pagans for the open confession of their faith and were locked up in prison in Caesarea in Cappadocia.

Knowing his own bodily weakness, Theodotus prayed that the Lord would take him before being subjected to tortures. The Lord heard his prayer and he died in prison. St. Rufina also died after him, after giving birth to a premature son. She entrusted him to God, beseeching Him to be the Protector and Defender of the orphaned infant

(<https://oca.org/saints/lives/2008/09/02/102459-martyr-mamas-of-caesarea-in-cappadocia>).

God heard the dying prayer of St. Rufina. A rich Christian widow named Ammia reverently buried the bodies of Sts. Theodotus and Rufina, and she took the boy home and raised him as her own son. St. Mamas was educated and he grew up in the Christian Faith under the care of his foster mother. Mamas by means of prudent conversations and personal example converted many of his own peers to Christianity.

The governor, Democritus, was informed of this, and the fifteen-year-old Mamas was arrested and brought to trial. However, Democritus decided not to subject him to torture, but instead sent him off to the emperor Aurelian (AD 270-275). The saint bravely confessed that he was a Christian before the Emperor. Subsequently, the emperor subjected the youth to cruel tortures. They tried to drown the saint, but an angel of the Lord saved St. Mamas. He then lived in the wilderness, not far from Caesarea. There the saint built a small church and lived in strict observance of monastic practices.

Soon he received a remarkable power over the forces of nature; wild beasts inhabiting the surrounding wilderness gathered at his abode and listened to the reading of the Holy Gospel. St. Mamas nourished himself on the milk of wild goats and deer. The saint did not ignore the needs of his neighbors. He prepared cheese from milk

and gave it freely to the poor. Soon the fame of St. Mamas spread throughout Caesarea.

The governor sent soldiers to arrest him. When they encountered St. Mamas on the mountain, the soldiers did not recognize him, and mistook him for a simple shepherd. The saint then invited them to his dwelling, gave them a drink of milk and then revealed his name, knowing that death for Christ awaited him. The servant of God told the servants of the Emperor to go ahead of him into Caesarea, promising that he would soon follow. The soldiers waited for him at the gates of the city, and St. Mamas, accompanied by a lion, met them there.

Surrendering himself into the hands of the torturers, St. Mamas was brought to trial under a deputy governor named Alexander, who subjected him to intense and prolonged tortures. When they threw St. Mamas to the wild beasts, those creatures would not touch him. Finally, one of the pagan priests stabbed him with a trident. Mortally wounded, St. Mamas went out beyond the city limits. There, in a small stone cave, he entrusted his soul to God. He was buried by believers at the place of his death.

Christians soon began to receive help from him in their afflictions and sorrows. St. Basil, the Great (Homily 26) and St. Gregory of Nazianzen (Oration 43) spoke very highly of St. Mamas. "Remember the holy martyr, you who live here and have him as a helper. You who call on his

name have been helped by him. Those in error he has guided into life”(Butler, 1866).

Saint Mamas of Caesarea (Mammas) was martyred c. 275 at the age of 15 in Cappadocia. He preached Christianity during his teenage years, and a lion from the fields is said to have remained with him as companion. The Syrian Orthodox Church commemorates the Martyr Mammas on 3 May, 29 May and 2 September.

32. Mor Thomas of Heraclea

(AD? – AD 627?)

Thomas of Heraclea (Tuma of Harqaloyo or Thomas Harkel) is one of the most distinguished and profound learned men, a thorough and prolific writer who attained the peak of the art of literature, and became the master of both subject and form. He belonged to Harqal, a village in Palestine. He studied at the Monastery of Qinnasrin and mastered the Syriac and Greek languages. He became a monk at the Monastery of Tar’eel (<http://www.soc-wus.org/ourchurch/Mor%20Tuma%20Harqaloyo.htm>).

He was ordained Metropolitan of Mabugh in the last decade of the sixth century. He

was persecuted by Domitian, the Malkite (Chalcedonian) Bishop of Melitene, supported by the authority of his brother-in-law King (Emperor) Maurice, and escaped to Egypt in AD 599, but later returned to his diocese. He went to Egypt for the second time during the Persian siege against Syria and Palestine and resided at a monastery at the Enaton (Nine-Mile stone) in the neighborhood of Alexandria. At this monastery, he undertook the revision of the Syriac version of the New Testament of Philoxenus→ Polycarp which he collated with four accurate Greek copies, thus producing in AD 616 a Biblical version known as the Heracleian version, which overshadowed other versions and whose quality has been unanimously recognized by scholars (Aphrem I, 2000; Smith & Wace, 1887, Vol. IV).

Mor Thomas made great efforts in order to produce this Biblical version which immortalized his name (for a detailed discussion, see, Smith & Wace, 1887, Vol. IV, pp. 1015-1021). This version spread through the libraries in the East and in the West, and was also used in the Church service. In the Book of Psalms at the Oxford library, there is a note that these psalms were first translated in the time of the Apostle Addai, translated again by Philoxenus of Mabugh, and later by Bishop Thomas of Harqal at Alexandria (Aphrem I, 2000). Thomas also assisted Athanasius I in holding the unity agreement with the Church of Alexandria, and visited the Emperor Heraclius with him at Mabugh in AD 627. He also drew up

an alphabetically arranged liturgy in ten pages beginning with “Eternal and compassionate Lord,” and translated into Syriac the liturgies of Dionysius the Areopagite, Basil, Gregory Nazianzen and John Chrysostom. The year of his death is not known (Smith & Wace, 1887, Vol. IV), but the Syrian Orthodox Church commemorates Mor Thomas on the 26 June.

33. Mor Yuhanon (John) of Mardin

(AD ? - AD1165)

Yusuf (Joseph) of Edessa became a monk in the Mountain of Edessa. In AD 1125, he was ordained a metropolitan of Mardin and its environs: Dara, Khabur, Kafar tut and Tallbasem. At his ordination he was given the name Yuhanon (John) and worked hard to improve conditions in his diocese.

He renovated the Monastery of Mor Hananyo (Dayr ul-Zafaran) together with twenty-four more monasteries and churches, some of which were newly constructed. He filled the monasteries with monks and enacted for them canons in a council he convened in the former monastery presided by Maphryono Ignatius II in AD 1153. He enacted forty canons in the council and another forty-one more for the monks of his own diocese. Shortly

before the year 1155 he composed a treatise about the mystery of the Holy Chrism and its composition, addressed to a certain Yeshu. In this treatise, which covers thirty-six pages, he discusses some ritualistic subjects.

Mor Yuhanon was distinguished for his proficiency in architectural engineering and he spent his life following the most commendable principles of architecture. He became the focus of attention and left behind a praiseworthy record. Patriarch Michael instituted a day in his commemoration and eulogized him in a poem (Aphrem I, 2000). Mor Yuhanon left for eternal rest on 12 July AD 1165. The feast of Mor Yuhanon is celebrated on 12 July in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

34. Moran Ignatius Nuh (Noah), the Patriarch of Antioch

(AD 1451 – 1509)

Nuh (Noah) was the son of Georges from Damascus, Syria. He was born at the village of Baqufa of Tripoli, Lebanon in AD1451(?) The family was Maronites. At an early age, Noah and his brother were converted to Syriac Orthodoxy by the bishop of Syria, Mor Dioscurus. As a result, Noah became a monk and priest, at the Monastery

of Saint Moses the Abyssinian where he studied the Syriac language and religious sciences under Thomas of Homs (Aphrem I, 2000).

In AD 1480, Noah was ordained metropolitan of Homs, upon which he took the name Cyril. Subsequently, he taught among the Maronites and converted many priests and their congregations to Syriac Orthodoxy. In AD 1489, Mor Cyril was ordained Maphryono of the East, and in AD 1493 was consecrated Patriarch of Antioch, and adopted the name Ignatius.

Patriarch Nuh has written an anthology in ninety-two pages, containing rhymed odes and verse pieces in the twelve –syllabic meter, some of which are arranged according to the alphabet. They are on suppli–cation, repentance, the state of the soul and how to control it, complaint against vicissitudes and the injustices of the rulers who are the descendants of the Huns and Kurds, description of roses, sojourn and communication with friends. Among these are two odes which he delivered to Homs and Mountain of Lebanon, as well as an eulogy of the ascetic priest Tuma of Homs. Another ode declares that the Lord is life and that He offers it to those who believe in Him; yet another, consists of 136 lines on the universal and particular natures, which he composed in response to the request of Malke, metropolitan of Ma’dan (Turkey). A number of manuscripts in his neat handwriting has survived, as well as a hymn in Arabic on the Virgin and a very brief historical tract.

During his tenure as Patriarch Noah ordained thirteen metropolitans and bishops. Moran Nuh departed for heavenly abode at Hama, Syria on 28 July AD 1509.

35. Theodora the Syrian Empress of Byzantine

(AD 500? – AD 548)

The Council of Chalcedon was held in AD 451. The Byzantine state adopted the resolutions of the Chalcedon and thus started persecuting those who rejected them. The Byzantines killed some of those who rejected the decisions of the Chalcedon and exiled others. Many died as a result of the severity of persecution, and still others were dislodged. In this crucial period, God sent to the Church Mor Ya`qub Burd`ono (d. AD 578), one of the greatest and foremost among the leaders of the Syrian Orthodox Church. Mor Ya`qub Burd`ono protected the Syrian Orthodox faith and encouraged its followers to preserve the Orthodox faith that it received from the righteous Apostles and Fathers.

Mor Ya`qub went to Constantinople and was received with great honor by Empress Theodora, who was the daughter of a Syrian priest from Mabug (Manbeij) and the wife of Emperor Justinian.

Empress Theodora helped the non-Chalcedonian Syrian and Coptic bishops, who were being persecuted and executed. She accommodated the bishops in her palace, thereby reducing their suffering perpetuated by the Byzantine State.

Theodora, the Empress of Byzantium, from AD 527 to 548, was born in AD 500 (497?) in the Syrian city Mabug (Manbej). Her father was Theophil (Acacius?), son of Me'no, a Syrian priest from the village of Kamua in the Azal mountain adjacent to the Syrian district of Jazirah. Theodora was brought up in a Christian environment at the home of her father, the virtuous Syrian Orthodox priest. Her father died when Theodora was seven years old (Wace, 1911).

Theodora was not only beautiful but intelligent. This probably won Justinian's love so much that he appealed against the old Roman law which forbade a patrician marrying a non-Roman citizen. Justinian and Theodora were married in AD 525 (Britannica, 2016). In AD 527, Justin, who was the Emperor of Byzantium and Justinian's father died. On 4 April 527 the couple were crowned Emperor and Empress. The consuls and magistrates took legal and religious oath which officially declared them equal rulers of Byzantium.

Justinian was a protector of the faith of the Council of Chalcedon, which the Byzantine state had adopted. In spite of this, Queen Theodora held on to the faith of her Syrian fathers who rejected this Council and its resolutions. The tempests of

ferocious persecution and their sweeping torrents failed to shake her faith (Zakka I, 2000; <http://www.soc-wus.org/ourchurch/St.%20Theodora%20Empress.htm>).

Theodora's intelligence and political acumen made her Justinian's trusted adviser. The most significant event during their rule was the Nika revolt of January 532. The two rival groups started a riot at Hippodrome. Justinian and his officials were unable to control the crowd and were prepared to flee. But Theodora spoke up and gave a moving speech: "Every man must sooner or later die, and how could an Emperor allow himself to be a fugitive? When you reach safety, will you not regret that you did not choose death in preference?" Her determined speech convinced Justinian and his officials and they attacked Hippodrome and emerged victorious.

In the past, Empresses had not been involved in the administration. Theodora brought about a change to this tradition. Theodora is credited with influencing many reforms, some of which expanded the rights of women. Her name is mentioned in nearly all the laws passed during the period (Britannica, 2016). She is also responsible for building hospitals and convents as a refuge for the homeless women. Justinian and Theodora built aqueducts, bridges, and more than twenty-five churches.

The details of Empress Theodora's life are based on the account of the Syrian Chronicler

St. John of Ephesus (d. 586?) who had close relationship with her family and knew her quite well. Theodora's enemy, the Chronicler Procopius, has given a different account to tarnish her glory (Wace, 1911).

Theodora on her deathbed requested Justinian that he should protect her small community of non-Chalcedonian refugees there. Justinian agreed to the request and kept his promise. Theodora died on 28 June AD 548 at the age of forty-eight (fifty-one?). Her body was buried in the church of Holy Apostle at Constantinople which they had built. The Syrian Orthodox church venerates her memory on 28 June.

36. Mor Palladius, the Solitary

(c. AD 367? – AD 425?)

Palladius was born in about AD 367 (363?) in Galatia (Cayre, 1935, Vol. I). Palladius embraced an ascetic life when he was about twenty years. He was a pupil of Evagris Pontus (Malay, 2005). Palladius travelled widely to acquaint himself with the life of those leading solitary lives (Wace, 1911).

Palladius visited Bethlehem in about AD 387. At Jerusalem he met Melania the elder and

Rufinus. In AD 388 Palladius visited Alexandria and the nearby monasteries (Malaty, 2005). He also met Didymus (d. AD 395) while on the journey. Thereafter Palladius retired to the Nitrian desert in about AD 390.

After spending a year in the Nitrian desert, Palladius went deeper into the desert known as Cells. There he spent nine years (Cayre, 1935, Vol. I). He enjoyed the company of Macarius the younger (d. AD 390) and Evagris Pontus (d. AD 399). During this period Palladius travelled the whole of upper Egypt and visited all leading solitaries.

Palladius returned to Palestine due to ill-health and then moved to Bithynia where he was called to the Episcopate in about AD 400 (Cayre, 1935, Vol. I; Malaty, 2005). Mor John Chrysostom (AD 347-407) ordained Palladius bishop of Helenopolis. Mor Palladius was one of the first victims of the persecution that was aimed at the followers of Mor John Chrysostom. Mor Palladius fled to Rome with many others since a decree was promulgated to arrest all those who had given assylum to bishops, priests or laymen who had communicated with Mor Chrysostom.

Mor Palladius and others were received hospitably in Rome about the middle of AD 405. Mor Palladius gratefully acknowledged the help and Mor Chrysostom wrote letters from Cucusus thanking the noble ladies of Rome and one Pinianus and his wife (Wace, 1911).

The whole group returned to Constantinople later but was confined in separate chambers in the fortress of Athyre and were compelled to renounce communion with Mor Chrysostom and to recognize Atticus. Threats and violence could not change the mind of Mor Palladius and he was banished to Syene, on the extreme border of Egypt (Wace, 1911) where he spent six years from AD 406 to AD 412 (Cayre, 1935, Vol. I). About the AD 408, Palladius composed his famous work 'Dialogue on the life of St. John Chrysostom' (Malaty, 2005).

In about AD 412 Mor Palladius was permitted to leave but was not allowed to return to his Episcopate in Helenopolis. Mor Palladius resided near Antinopolis in the Thebaid for four years and travelled to Mesopotamia, Syria and other parts of the eastern world. Peace was established in the Church in AD 417 and Mor Palladius returned to his episcopate in Helenopolis. But Mor Palladius later took charge of the episcopate in Aspuna in Galatia.

Mor Eusebius attended the Synod of Ephesus in AD 431 as the bishop of Aspuna. Therefore, it is assumed that Mor Palladius was not alive then or that he ceased to be the bishop of Aspuna before AD 431. Cayre (1935, Vol. I) has recorded that Mor Palladius became the bishop of Aspuna in his own province in Galatia and died in this episcopate (in AD 425?).

The feast of Mor Palladius, the solitary is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 29 November.

37. St. Dionysius Areopagite

(AD 9? – AD 96)

Saint Dionysius the Areopagite was converted to Christianity by Saint Paul in Athens. Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: “People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: ‘to an unknown God.’ So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship—and this is what I am going to proclaim to you” (Acts 17:22-23).

Some of those who heard the speech of St. Paul became followers of Paul and believed. Among them was Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus ...” (Acts 17:34). The word Areopagus in Greek is Areios pagos which means ‘the hill of Ares’ located to the west of Acropolis in Athens (<http://www.dictionary.com/browse/areopagus>). It was at this place the council or court of justice met in the open air on the hill. The name Areopagite denotes that Dionysius was a member of the court (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Areopagite>).

Dionysius was a highly educated philosopher of Greece, and one of the nine leaders of the city of Athens. He was born in the year AD 9. He had travelled to Heliopolis in Egypt to learn mathematics and astrology. There he saw for himself, in his early twenties, the eclipse of the sun contrary to all the laws of nature, which occurred at the death of the Son of God (Luke 23:44-45). His teachers could not explain it to him other than as a sign of changes in divine matters.

In his letters to Saint Polycarp of Smyrna (AD 69-155) he says that the astrologer he questioned had answered him rather by divine inspiration than by any natural knowledge. And he himself had cried out: Either the God of nature is suffering, or the entire mechanism of the world is going to be destroyed to return to its ancient state of chaos!

Dionysius made a number of journeys outside Greece and it is believed that he was present when the Apostles assembled at the glorious Assumption of the Mother of God. He wrote about the Mother of God and he became a friend of Saint John, the Disciple. He corresponded with St. Timothy, St. Titus, St. Polycarp and others of the Apostles' successors (http://sanctoral.com/en/saints/saint_dionysius_the_areopagite.html).

There are several prelates with the name Dionysius and there is a difference of opinion regarding the writings attributed to Dionysius Areopagite (Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. IV). Moran Aphrem I has dealt with this controversy in

his work. A liturgy and some prayers of the order of Baptism are ascribed to Dionysius Areopagite (Aphrem I, 2003).

Eusebius has recorded that St. Dionysius became the first bishop of Athens. A few historians have cited that he was burned alive at Athens under the Roman Emperor Domitian (Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. IV). The feast of St. Dionysius Areopagite is celebrated on 19 November in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

38. St. Isidore of Chios, Martyr

(AD ? – AD 251?)

Isidore was a native of Alexandria. He was an officer in the army of Emperor Decius. He went to Chios with the fleet which was under the command of Numerius. Isidore was identified as a Christian by the captain and it was communicated to Numerius (Thurston & Attwater, 1990. Vol. II).

Isidore was examined and he was threatened but he was steadfast in his faith. Since he refused to offer sacrifice to gods his tongue was cut off and he was beheaded. His body was sunk in a well but was recovered by Christians. The body was interred by a soldier called Ammianus, who was later martyred at Cyzicus. Myrope, a woman,

is said to have been flogged to death because of her charity in giving Christian burial to martyrs.

The feast of Isidore is celebrated on 14 April and 14 May in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

39. Mor Paul (I) of Edessa

(AD ? – AD 526)

There were two bishops of Edessa by the name Paul. One of them died in the sixth century (Paul I of Edessa, d. AD 526) and the other in the seventh century (Paul II of Edessa, d. AD 619). Moran Aphrem has attributed most of the details of Paul I to Paul II (Aphrem I, 2003) whereas others (e.g., Smith & Wace, 1887; Wace, 1911) have made specific mention of this confusion of the details of the two bishops.

Paul I of Edessa (initially bishop of al-Raqqah?) was consecrated bishop in AD 510 as successor to Peter whereas Paul II of Edessa was consecrated bishop in AD 594 or 595 as successor to Sergius (Aphrem I, 2003; Wace, 1911; Smith & Wace, 1887). When Justin became the Emperor, he forced the decrees of Chalcedon on Mor Severios of Antioch (d. 538) and his followers.

In November AD 519, Patricius was given the task of enforcement of the decrees of Chalcedon.

Mor Paul was asked to either subscribe to the decrees of the Synod of Chalcedon or resign. Paul refused to accept the decrees and took sanctuary in his baptistery. He was subsequently dragged out by Patricius and sentenced to be exiled to Seleucia. Justin reinstated Mor Paul after 44 days hoping to overcome his resistance. Justin was acting under the advice of the Patriarch Paul who usurped the seat of Mor Severios. The plan was to induce Mor Paul of Edessa to agree to conform to the decrees of Chalcedon secretly and to oppose it outwardly (Smith & Wace, 1887). But Mor Paul still refused to submit. In July AD 522, Mor Paul was banished to Euchaita in Pontus. As per a later imperial order Asclepius was placed in the seat of Mor Paul.

Mor Paul while in exile translated the Greek hymns of Patriarch Mor Serverios. Mor Paul was an eminent scholar in both Syriac and Greek literature (Aphrem I, 2003). This translation consists of 365 hymns of which 295 are attributed to Mor Severios and the rest to his contemporary John bar Aphtuniya, abbot of Kennesrin (d. AD 538) and others. The manuscript in the British Museum makes it clear that the work was executed by 'Paul, bishop of Edessa, when he was in the island of Cyprus in his flight from Persians' (Smith & Wace, 1887). Mor Paul also translated the Gloria in Excelsis Deo according to the traditions of Kenneshrin (Aphrem I, 2003; Smith & Wace, 1887).

The above mentioned translation was corrected by his famous successor Jacob of Edessa (d. AD 708). Although the translation is the work of Paul, the volume comprises a few hymns of the Church Fathers of later period. These are presumed to be incorporated by Jacob of Edessa when he revised the collection (Smith & Wace, 1877). This causes the confusion regarding the translation of Mor Paul (I) of Edessa and that of Paul (II) of Edessa.

Mor Paul has rendered great services to the Syrian Church and its literature by translating many works which earned him the title 'The Translator of Books.' He also composed a ma'nitho for the consecration of Chrism (Aphrem I, 2003). Mor Paul I returned to Edessa in March AD 526 and departed for the heavenly abode on 30 October, AD 526 (Smith & Wace, 1887). Paul of Edessa is commemorated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 23 August.

Note: It is also likely that the feast on 23 August is that of Mor Paul II of Edessa.

40. St. Amphilochius, Bishop of Iconium

(AD 340? – c. AD 400)

Amphilochius (Amphiloque or Amphilochus) was regarded by his contemporaries as the foremost man in the Eastern Church after his friends Mor Basil of Caesarea (d. AD 379) and Mor Gregorius of Nazianzus (d. AD 389). What is known about Mor Amphilochius and his family is from the writings of Mor Basil and Mor Gregorius (Wace, 1911; Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. IV).

Amphilochius was a native of Cappadocia. Amphilochius was educated as a lawyer and was practicing at Constantinople. In about AD 369 Amphilochius withdrew from worldly pursuits. He lived in retirement at Ozizala, devoting himself to religious exercises and taking care of his aged father (Ozizala was situated not far from Nazianzus). Amphilochius' cousin, Mor Gregorius of Nazianzus is probably the person mainly instrumental in bringing about the change in Amphilochius.

Around the same period Heraclidas had renounced the profession of Lawyer and was working in a hospital built by Mor Basil near

Caesarea. In a letter written in AD 372 or 373, Heraclidas urged Amphilochius to take leave of his father and to profit by the teaching and example of Mor Basil (Wace, 1911). This invitation was accepted by Amphilochius. It is safe to assume that Amphilochius was ordained bishop of Iconium at the very beginning of AD 374 at the age of about 35 years.

Mor Amphilochius visited Mor Basil during Easter in AD 374. The visit made a deep impression on the people of Caesarea. On a later occasion, Mor Amphilochius urged Mor Basil to write a treatise on the Holy Spirit which resulted in the work *de spiritu sancto* which was dedicated to Mor Amphilochius who asked for it. The work was sent to Mor Amphilochius engraved on vellum (Wace, 1911; Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. IV).

There are canonical letters by Mor Basil addressed to Mor Amphilochius. At the direction of Mor Basil, Mor Amphilochius managed the ecclesiastical affairs of Isauria, Lyconia and Lycia. Mor Basil invited Mor Amphilochius to assist him in the administration of his own diocese of Caesarea which was a burden on him. The confidence of Mor Basil in the young bishop Mor Amphilochius is a testimony to the character and discipline of Mor Amphilochius.

Mor Amphilochius delivered a panegyric at the funeral of Mor Basil. After the death of Mor Basil in AD 379, the association of Mor Amphilochius was with Mor Gregorius of Nazianzus. In AD

381 Amphilochius was present in the synod of Constantinople with his friend Mor Gregorius. The last letter of Mor Gregorius to Mor Amphilochius was written in the year AD 383 (Wace, 1911). The exact date of the death of Mor Amphilochius is not known. However, his name is not mentioned in connection with the troubles of St. Chrysostom in AD 403. Therefore, the death of Mor Amphilochius is assumed to be around AD 400.

Mor Amphilochius has written a commentary on the Gospels and a biography of Mor Athanasius of Alexandria (Aphrem I, 2003). The feast of Mor Amphilochius is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 23 November and 21 December.

41. Mor Paul, Bishop of Tella

(AD – AD 617)

Paul was one of the great scholars of his time, well-versed in Syriac and Greek. He was ordained bishop of Tella between AD 610 and 615, as a successor of Metropolitan Samuel. It is most likely that he remained only a few years in his diocese, for it was mentioned in the ancient history written by a monk from Qartamin that “Daniel the Uzi was ordained bishop of Tella, Dara and Tur’abdin in AD 615, and that in AD 622, Zacchaeus was the metropolitan of Tella (Aphrem I, 2003).

Mor Paul collaborated with Patriarch Athanasius I Gammolo (AD 595-631) in achieving reconciliation with the Church of Alexandria and he also signed the general proclamation in AD 616. Mor Paul has translated the Septuagint (a translation of the Hebrew Bible into the Greek language) into Syriac according to the most correct versions of the hexaplar texts (Old Testament texts) of Origen, a noteworthy task. Paul undertook this translation at the request of Patriarch Athanasius I either at Alexandria or at the Monastery of St. Antony near Enaton (the ninth mile stone) during his escape to Egypt because of the Persian War of AD 615-617. With great precision, he appended to the text the additions and the differences together with the marginal notes connected with the Greek texts and the text of the Septuagint. He was assisted in his work by many scribes, most famous of whom was Deacon Thomas, the secretary of the Patriarch. He completed the translation of the four Books of Kings (two according to the familiar version) on 14 February AD 616, at a time when the Syrian Church was in need for this exact translation during the theological disputations. It appears from old manuscripts that this version was used in the Church service books (Aphrem I, 2003).

A complete copy of the above translation was at the Monastery of St. Matthew (Aphrem I, 2003). A similar copy was found in the middle of the sixteenth century in the possession of the ancient Orientalist Andreas Masius. What may have been

brought to Masius by the Syrian metropolitan, Musa (Moses) al-Sawri, for publication must have been transcribed in the ninth century. However, after the death of Andrew in AD 1573, the first volume which contained the five books of Joshua, Judges, Kings, Ezra, Nehemiah, Judith and Tobit, disappeared. The second volume survives at the library of Milan. It contains the books of Psalms, Job, Ecclesiastes and the Books of Wisdom and the Prophets. Parts of this translation also survive at the National Library of France, Paris and the British Museum (Aphrem I, 2003).

Between AD 1787 and 1892, some Orientalists published the surviving Books of Jeremiah, Daniel, Ezekiel, the Psalms, Kings IV, Isaiah, the Minor Prophets, Proverbs, Job, the Song of Songs, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Judges, Ruth and parts of Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Joshua and Kings.

Prior to the translation of the Holy Bible, Mor Paul made a new translation of the order of Baptism by Mor Severus of Antioch. He also wrote an order of Baptism and a liturgy. Most probably, Mor Paul spent the rest of his life in Egypt. The Syrian Orthodox Church commemorates Mor Paul of Tella on 15 February.

42. St. Agapius of Caesarea

(AD? – c. AD 304)

Saint Agapius suffered martyrdom at Caesarea in Palestine under Diocletian (AD 284-305). Three times he was imprisoned for the faith (<http://soc-wus.org/ourchurch/St.%20Agapius%20of%20caesarea.htm>). Eusebius relates how Agapius was arrested, chained to a murderer (who was a slave) and taken to the amphitheater to be thrown to the wild beasts.

Urban, the governor of Palestine, as per the direction of Diocletian detained Agapius in prison for two years. According to tradition, the slave was pardoned, and Agapius was offered clemency if he would offer sacrifice to gods. When Agapius refused, he was left to be mauled by a bear, but was not killed. He was again imprisoned and on the next day was drowned in the sea (Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. III). According to Eusebius Agapius battled wild animals, and was beheaded. The Syrian Orthodox Church commemorates St. Agapius of Caesarea on 29 April.

43. St. Dimet of Persia

(AD? – AD 362?)

The biography of Dimet (Dometius) is confusing as there are two saints by the name Dimet (Dometius). The two have many details in common including the date of commemoration, 24 September. Therefore, further research is necessary to delineate the two from one another. However, the date of death is different; one in AD 362 and the other in AD 408 (http://syroorthodoxchurch.com/english-Dateien/st_dimet.html).

Dimet (Dometius) was a Persian convert who became a monk at Nisbis in Mesopotamia. He was ordained deacon and went to live in a cave and he converted many heathens of the neighborhood (Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. III). People flocked to his retreat to request his blessings and to be healed. Emperor Julian, the Apostate, accused Dimet of courting popularity because Dimet had reproached Julian for his impiety. Dimet said: "If these poor harmless folk come to see me, I cannot send them away." Julian was so enraged that he had him stoned to death (Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. III, m p. 275). The

feast of St. Dimet is celebrated in the the Syrian Orthodox Church on 24 September.

Note: As per another account, St. Dimet, a man in the Middle East was serving Emperor Valens (364-378). Dimet who was a follower of Arianism was granted that grace by which he realized that he had displeased the Lord. Subsequently, he asked the Emperor to allow him to go to Cyrus, near the village Qelith (Turkey). Later Schabai baptized Dimet. Dimet lived there from AD 378 to AD 408. He died on 24 September AD 408. In 478, a certain woman who was healed from her illness by Saint Dimet, took off the relics of the saint and had them transferred to bishop Theodore of Amid (Diyarbakir). Later, St. Joseph, a disciple of Bishop Theodore, built over the relics of St. Dimet a well-known and large monastery (http://syrorthodoxchurch.com/english-Dateien/st_dimet.html).

44. St. Lazarus of Bethany

(AD 5? – c. AD 65?)

Lazarus of Bethany was the brother of Martha and Mary (John 11:1-2). All the three were beloved friends of Jesus (John 11:5). Jesus visited them very often (Luke 10:38-41; John 11). It is inferred that the family was rich as there were many condoling friends on the death of Lazarus and that Mary poured very expensive perfume on Jesus' feet (John 11:19, 12:3).

In the absence of Jesus, Lazarus died, and was buried. Jesus, the Saviour, brought back Lazarus to life from the grave after four days (John 11:17,43-44). As a result many Jews believed in Jesus, but others went and told the Pharisees, and a council was therefore called to hasten the decree of the Master's death (John 11:45-46, 53-57).

Later, six days before the Passover, at a feast in some home in Bethany where Martha served, Lazarus sat at the table as one of the guests, when his sister Mary anointed the feet of Jesus (John 12:1-3). Many of the common people came there to see not only Jesus, but also the risen Lazarus. They believed in Jesus, and were enthusiastic in

witnessing His triumphant entry into Jerusalem and persuaded others from the city to meet Him (John 12:9,11,17-18). For this reason the priests plotted to murder Lazarus (John 12:10). But that was not accomplished.

According to an old tradition of Epiphanius, Lazarus was 30 years old when he was raised from the dead, and lived 30 years thereafter (<http://www.bible-history.com/isbe/L/LAZARUS/>). Lazarus was believed to have followed St. Peter to Syria. According to another tradition, Lazarus and his sisters were put into a leaking boat by the Jews at Jaffa. However, they landed safely on the island of Cyprus. He was made bishop at Kition (Larnaka) and died there after thirty years (Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. IV). There is another tradition that they landed in the south-east of Gaul (Farmer, 1997). They could convert many people and there Lazarus became bishop.

There is evidence that the memory of Lazarus was devotionally honoured both in the early days at Jerusalem and later throughout the Church. Etheris, a Spanish lady pilgrim (in c. AD 290), has recorded that a procession which took place on the Saturday before the Palm Sunday to the site from where Lazarus had been raised (Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. IV; Farmer, 1997). Lazarus of Bethany is commemorated on the Saturday before the Palm Sunday in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

45. Mor Paphnutius, Bishop of Upper Thebaid

(AD ? – c. AD 350?)

Paphnutius surnamed Bubalus was the bishop of Upper Thebaid. He was an Egyptian monk, who had been a disciple of St. Antony (Cross & Livingstone, 1974; Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. III).

Paphnutius suffered much hardship and cruelty during the persecution of Maximin(us) Daze (AD 305-313). He lost his right eye, was hamstrung in one leg and was sent to work in mines (Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. III).

The mutilated body of Paphnutius was an object of wonder and veneration at the General Council of Nicea in AD 325 (Wace, 1911; Cross & Livingstone, 1974). He was one of the most zealous in defending the Apostolic faith against the Arian heresy. He was one of the outstanding figures at the Council. He was much honored as a confessor of faith especially by Constantine (Wace, 1911).

Paphnutius was against clerical celibacy (Wace, 1911). Many bishops were in favour of

making a general law forbidding all bishops, priests and deacons from living with wives whom they had married before their ordination. Paphnutius opposed the motion, saying: "It was enough to conform to the ancient tradition of the Church, which forbade the clergy marrying after their ordination." Further he argued: "For the married the use of wedlock is chastity, he reminded the fathers, and implored them not to lay the yoke of separation on clerics and their wives" (Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. III, p. 539). To this day it is the law of the Syrian Orthodox Church that married men may receive all holy orders below the rank of episcopate and continue to live freely with their wives.

Paphnutius was a close associate of St. Athanasius, who in AD 325 was a deacon and secretary to Patriarch Alexander of Alexandria and succeeded him in AD 328. The feast of St. Paphnutius is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 20 July.

46. St. Xystus II of Rome, Martyr

(AD ? – c. AD 258)

Xystus II (Sixtus II) was the bishop of Rome after Stephen I for about one year. He was martyred under Valerian on 6 August AD 258 (Wace, 1911; Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. III).

Xystus was enthroned on 31 August AD 257. The predecessor of Xystus, Mor Stephen was involved in a controversy with Cyprian of Carthage (d. AD 258) in the matter of validity of baptism by heretics (rebaptism of heretics?).

Emperor Valerian had already published his first decree against Christians in AD 257 forbidding them from assembling in subterranean caverns to celebrate Holy Mass. In middle AD 258, while Valerian was preparing for the Persian war, he ordered to execute bishops, priests and deacons who held assemblies. Those in the official ranks were threatened to be killed, exiled and to be sent in chains to labour if they refused to renounce Christianity.

Xystus was seized by soldiers while he was seated on his Episcopal chair addressing the faithful in the cemetery of Praetextatus on the

Appian way (Wace, 1911). There is a reference to a different location, that is, St. Callistus on the Appian way across the road from the cemetery of Praetextatus (Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. III; Farmer, 1997). Xystus was beheaded along with four deacons (Januarius, Vincent, Magnus and Stephen) and several companions (Wace, 1911; Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. III).

St. Xystus is one of the most revered martyrs after St. Peter. He has composed a liturgy which is in use in the Syrian Orthodox Church (Aphrem I, 2003). The feast of St. Xystus (Xyste) is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 1 August.

47. St. Romanos of Antioch, Martyr

(AD? - AD 303)

Several faithfuls were martyred in the tenth persecution under Diocletian in AD 303. The hatred of Galerius, the adopted son of Diocletian, being stimulated by his mother, fuelled the persecution (<http://www.biblestudytools.com/history/foxs-book-of-martyrs/the-tenth-persecution-under-diocletian-a-d-303.html>).

The day fixed to commence the bloody persecution was the 23rd of February AD 303, that being the day on which the Terminalia was

celebrated. Terminalia was an ancient Roman festival in honour of god Terminus. The cruel pagans boasted they would put an end to Christianity. On the appointed day, the persecution began in Nicomedia with a large number of officers and assistants in charge. The churches of the Christians were invaded and all the sacred books were seized and burned. This was done in the presence of Diocletian and Galerius, who, not contented with burning the books, had the churches levelled to the ground.

The above vandalism was followed by a rigorous edict commanding the destruction of all other Christian churches and books. The edict was torn down from the place where it was affixed. The man responsible was arrested, severely tortured, and then burned alive. All Christians were imprisoned; and Galerius privately ordered to set fire to the imperial palace so that Christians might be accused as the culprits, and a plausible pretence given for carrying on the persecution with greater severities. Many houses were set on fire, and whole Christian families perished in the flames; and others had stones fastened around their necks, and being tied together were driven into the sea.

The persecution lasted for ten years. It is impossible to ascertain how many were martyred, or to enumerate the various modes of martyrdom. Racks, scourges, swords, daggers, crosses, poison, and famine were made use of in

various parts to exterminate the Christians. The city of Phrygia, consisting entirely of Christians, was burnt, and all the inhabitants perished in the flames.

Romanus, a native of Palestine, was a deacon of the church of Caesarea at the time of the commencement of Diocletian's persecution (Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. IV). During one of the persecutions against Christians Romanus resettled at Antioch, where he encouraged Christians in the faith by his example and fervent preaching (<https://www.holytrinityorthodox.com/calendar/los/November/18-02.htm>).

When the governor of Antioch, Asklepiades, was considering the destruction of the Christian church, Romanos called out to the believers to stand up for their sanctuary. He persuaded them, that if they managed to protect the church, then down here on earth would be rejoicing, and if they were to perish in defense of the church, there would still be rejoicing in the heavenly Church.

After a while, a pagan celebration, Terminalia, started in the city and many people from the surrounding areas had come to Antioch. Romanos began denouncing idol-worship and called on all to follow Christ. They arrested him and subjected him to torture. During the tortures the martyr saw in the crowd the Christian boy Barulas and, having directed the gaze of the governor to him, he said: "The young boy is smarter than you in your old age, that he does know the True God.

You however worship mere idols.” The governor Asklepiades gave orders to bring the boy to him. To all the questions of the governor, Barulas firmly and without fear confessed his faith in Christ, the True God. Asklepiades in a rage gave orders to fiercely whip Barulas, and then to behead him. Before his death the holy lad asked his mother, who was present at the execution, to give him something to drink, but the mother quieted him down to endure all the torments for the Lord, Jesus Christ. She herself placed her son’s head on the block, and after the execution buried him.

Being condemned for his faith at Antioch, Romanus was scourged, put to the rack, his body torn with hooks, his flesh cut with knives, his face scarified, his teeth ripped from their sockets, and his hair plucked up by the roots. Soon after he was ordered to be strangled on 17 November AD 303. The Martyr Romanos was sentenced to burning, but a sudden gust of rain extinguished the fire. The saint began glorifying Christ and insulting the pagan gods. The governor gave orders to cut out his tongue (Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. IV), but even after deprived of his tongue Saint Romanos continued loudly to glorify the Lord. Then the torturers sentenced him to hanging. The feast of Romanos is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 15 March and 18 November.

48. Macrina, the Elder

(AD 270? - AD 340)

Macrina, the Elder, grandmother of St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. Peter of Sebaste and St. Macrina the Younger, was born in about AD 270. She grew up a pagan in Neocaesarea. Most of the city she lived in was pagan, until St. Gregory Thaumaturgis became the bishop of Neocaesarea.

Macrina and her husband became acquainted with St. Gregory, and she eventually became his spiritual daughter (Farmer, 1997). St. Macrina so loved and revered him that she kept his relics with her during her entire life, finally settling them in a chapel at the family's estates at Annesi and cherished the wisdom he passed on to her.

St. Macrina lived in Neocaesarea during some of the worst persecutions of the early Christian era. In the persecution of Galerius and Maximin, Macrina and her husband left home and escaped to a hill forest of Pontus where they lived for seven years (Wace, 1911). They endured many hardships, but patiently waited and prayed for the persecutions to end. They survived on vegetables for over seven years.

St. Gregory Nazianzen describes the last persecution under Maximian as the most frightful and severe of all. Once the persecution had died down, Macrina and her family returned to Neocaesarea in AD 311. A short time later, the Roman authorities stripped them of everything they owned and turned them out into the streets. With nothing more than the clothes on her back to call her own, St. Macrina was forced to rely on the generosity and mercy of God in order to survive. Begging in the streets, telling stories for the few paltry coins it brought, and accepting the cast-off food and clothing of her former equals, she endured their pity, and the insults and mockery of the pagans in her town. She must have learned valuable lessons in humility.

Macrina raised her child, St. Basil (the Elder), as a single parent. In spite of the obstacles, she succeeded in passing on her faith and tradition to him. He became a lawyer and teacher of rhetoric, married Emmelia, a beautiful and devout Christian. Their household was remarkable for generosity and hospitality to the poor.

St. Basil and St. Emmelia's children, St. Macrina's grandchildren, nine of whom survived to adulthood, were raised in an intensely Christian atmosphere, taught to read from the Psalms and were thoroughly immersed in a Christian life. She taught her grandchildren to read from the Bible, trained them in piety and practical Christian values and told them stories of her spiritual father, St. Gregory Thaumaturgis.

The four eldest held so strongly to the faith their grandmother had taught them that we recognize them today as saints: St. Macrina the Younger, St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory of Nyssa, and St. Peter of Sebaste (<http://myocn.net/macrina-elder/>).

St. Macrina the Elder died around AD 340, when her eldest grandchild was only twelve. She never lived to see her grandchildren's success or their spirited defense of our faith. She left no letters, homilies or books. But by simply living what she believed, by simply being a mother and a grandmother, by teaching her children and grandchildren by word and example, by telling her children stories of her spiritual father and through her steadfast faith, St. Macrina the Elder became a bridge of theology, passing on the tradition entrusted to her. St. Macrina is commemorated on 14 January and 30 May.

49. St. Felicitas of Rome and her seven sons, Martyrs

(AD? - AD 164?)

St. Felicitas (Felichithas) was a noble pious Christian widow in Rome born of a rich family. She brought up her seven sons (Januarius, Felix, Philip, Silvanus, Alexander, Vitalius and Marcial) in Christian virtues (Wace, 1911). After the death of her husband she spent her time in prayer, fasting, and works of charity. Many embraced Christianity due to the edifying example of Felicitas.

Priests of idol worshippers complained to Emperor Antoninus Pius about the boldness with which Felicitas publicly practiced the Christian religion and how she withdrew many from the worship of the gods (<https://oca.org/saints/lives/2015/01/25/100300-martyr-felicitas-of-rome-and-seven-sons>). They added that in order to appease them, it was necessary to compel this lady and her children to sacrifice to gods. Antoninus sent an order to Publius, the prefect of Rome, to take care that the priests should be satisfied, and the gods appeased in this matter (Wace, 1911).

Publius ordered the mother and her sons to be apprehended and brought before him. When this was done he took Felicitas aside, and used the strongest inducements to make her offer sacrifice to the gods, that he might not be obliged to proceed with severity against her and her sons. But she returned him this answer: "Do not think to frighten me by threats, or to win me by fair speeches. The spirit of God within me will not suffer me to be overcome by Satan, and will make me victorious over all your assaults." Publius said in a great rage: "Unhappy woman, is it possible you should think death so desirable as not to permit even your children to live, but force me to destroy them by the most cruel torments?" "My children," said she, "will live eternally with Christ if they are faithful to Him; but must expect eternal death if they sacrifice to idols."

The next day the prefect, sitting in the square of Mars before his temple, sent for Felicitas and her sons, and said: "Take pity on your children, Felicitas; they are in the bloom of youth, and may aspire to the greatest honours and preferment." The holy mother answered: "Your pity is really impiety, and the compassion to which you exhort me would make me the most cruel of mothers." Then turning herself towards her children, she said to them: "My sons, look up to heaven where Jesus Christ with His saints expects you. Be faithful in His love, and fight courageously for your souls." Publius being infuriated at this behaviour, commanded her to be cruelly buffeted, saying:

“You are insolent indeed, to give them such advice as this in my presence, in contempt of the orders of our princes” (Butler, 1866).

The judge then called the children to him one after the other, and used many artful speeches, mingling promises with threats to induce them to adore the gods. Januarius, the eldest, encountered his assaults first, but resolutely answered him: “You advise me to do a thing that is very foolish, and contrary to all reason; but I confide in my Lord Jesus Christ, that He will preserve me from such an impiety.” Publius ordered him to be stripped and cruelly scourged, after which he was sent back to prison. Felix, the second brother, was called next, and commanded to offer sacrifice. But the generous youth replied: “There is only one God. To him we offer the sacrifice of our hearts. We will never forsake the love which we owe to Jesus Christ. Employ all your artifices; exhaust all inventions of cruelty; you will never be able to overcome our faith.”

The other brothers made their answers separately, that they feared not a passing death, but everlasting torments; and that having before their eyes the immortal reward of the just, they despised the threats of men. Marcial, who spoke last, said: “All who do not confess Christ to be the true God, shall be cast into eternal flames.” The brothers, after being whipped, were remanded to prison, and the prefect, hopeless to be able ever to overcome their resolution, laid the whole process

before the emperor. Antoninus having read the interrogatory, gave an order that they should be sent to different judges, and be condemned to different deaths. Januarius was scourged to death with whips loaded with plummets of lead. The next two, Felix and Philip, were beaten with clubs till they died. Sylvanus, the fourth, was thrown headlong down a steep cliff. The three youngest, Alexander, Vitalis, and Marcial, were beheaded, and the same sentence was executed upon the mother four months after in about AD 164. St. Felicitas is commemorated on 10 July in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

50. St. Lucianos, Martyr

(c. AD 240? - AD 311?)

Lucianos (Lucianus) was born at Samosata, Syria in about AD 240. He was educated at Edessa under Macarius. Lucianos went to Antioch, the high ranked theological school among the schools of the East (Wace, 1911). He became proficient in rhetoric and philosophy. Lucianos was ordained priest and later became head of the Antiochian school with Dorotheus. Even though Lucianos was a priest of Antioch, he was at Nicomedia in AD 303 when Diocletian first published his edicts against Christians.

Lucianos produced with the help Dorotheus, a revised text of the Greek version of the Old Testaments and the four Gospels (Attwater & John, 1996). Many mistakes had crept into the Old and New Testaments because of the inaccuracy of transcribers and in other ways (Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. I). This revised version was in use in the churches of Constantinople, Asia Minor, and Antioch (Wace, 1911).

During the persecution of Diocletian, Lucianos was imprisoned for nine years at Nicomedia (Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. I; Attwater & John, 1996). He was deprived of food for fourteen days and when almost dead of starvation, meat offered to idols were set before him which he did not touch. It was not in itself unlawful to eat such food as St. Paul had taught (1 Cor. 8:1-13). Lucianos was either starved to death or, more probably (according to St. Chrysostom) killed by the sword at Nicomedia in Bithynia and entombed at Drepanum, renamed as Helenopolis by Emperor Constantine (Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. I; Attwater & John, 1996). The feast of Lucianos is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 24 October.

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