

Introduction

Saint Mary the ever virgin, has a high and exalted place in The Church of the East. Fathers of the Church believe Virgin Mary has acquired a unique rank of veneration above all the righteous people merely because God desired to make His divine power to rest upon her. Thus, her place is higher than that of the Angels, Prophets, Apostles, Martyrs, righteous people and Doctors. The following anthem expresses the teaching of the Church regarding the supremacy of the Virgin Mary above the righteous people.

“The Lord who made the (His) Strong Power to rest in the virgin; and, has acquired the sole rank above all righteous-ones; and, she had become unto Your humanity, the Mother in Truth; and, forever and ever Your Power will remain in her; and, He will accompany us in Heaven and upon Earth; at all times we take shelter under her wings; Deliver us, like her, from the ridicule (*mocking*) of the heathen; and raise the head of our orthodox confession; that we may, with her, confess and glorify You; whenever we recall her, and have Mercy upon us.”¹

In the following anthem the clergy of the Church mention first the name of the Virgin Mary then the names of the righteous ones.

“By the Prayer of Mary Your begetter, and by the Prayer of the righteous ones in whom You are delighted (*who pleased You*), have mercy upon sinners who call upon You, O Christ, the hope of the lost ones.”²

By means of the following anthem the worshippers of the Church of the East offer their petitions to God the Father through the mediation of the Saints. However, the name of the Virgin Mary is mentioned first among the list of the

¹ (Khudra (Prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. Volume 1, the Tones of the aid P. 111)

² (Khudra (prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. Volume1 Commemoration of the Virgin Mary, P. 607)

Saints. This means the Fathers of the Church have given the most exalted place among all the Saints to the Virgin Mary.

“The Prayer of the Virgin Mary, the mother of Jesus our Savior, becomes to us the high-wall at all times, in the day and in the night. “O, Prophets, pray for peace; and the Apostles for tranquility, the martyrs, priests and doctors, may your prayers be a high-wall unto us.” ³

According to the teachings of the Fathers of the Church, The Lord God Himself gave Virgin Mary an exalted rank by choosing her from among all the virgin women, consecrated her womb to become the dwelling place of His divinity and give birth to His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ.

“With all generations we will bless the Virgin; that in her womb the Savior of all creation is celebrated • Glory be unto You, O, our Savior, for honoring Mary who begot You; And, You have exalted her commemoration on earth and in Heaven • Blessed is The Lord, who has magnified your feast, O Holy Virgin, Beseech from your Son, that in His love, He appeases creation.” ⁴

Therefore, the fathers of the Church have learned to honor the Virgin Mary; first from God the Father who chose her from among all the women to be the mother of His Son. And finally, from the angle Gabriel, who came down from heaven and as soon as he came to the presence of the Virgin Mary, he honored her by bowing himself before her.

“He passed over the city of the heavenly ones and emerged to our place.
He flew from the height, reached towards Mary, and bowed himself before her.
The servant saw the mother of the King and bent his head towards
And stretched out the massive and kept silence as someone prudent.
The ambassador approached and gave the letter that was full of peace,
Which was mystically written as in a mystery.
He opened it before her and began to read in his eloquence:

³ (Khudra (prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. Volume1 Commemoration of the Virgin Mary, P. 607)

⁴ (Khudra (prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. Volume1 Commemoration of the Virgin Mary, P. 612)

‘Peace be with you, the blessed one among the women, behold, my Lord is with you.’⁵
In accordance with the writings of Saint Ephrem the Syrian, the Lord Jesus Christ magnified the Virgin Mary because she gave birth to Him.

“Most of all those healed, I rejoice, for I conceived Him.
Most of all those magnified by Him, He has magnified me, for I gave birth to Him.”⁶

In the following hymn Saint Ephrem asks all the chaste woman to praise the Virgin Mary, because she, Mary, by being obedient to the Word of God removed the curse that Eve brought upon all mankind and especially upon women.

“Let chaste women praise that pure Mary.
Since in their mother Eve their disgrace was great,
Behold in Mary their sister their triumph was magnified.
Blessed is He who shone forth from them!”⁷

Blessed Mary, before giving birth to Jesus Christ said: “*From now on all generations shall call me blessed.*” (Luke 1:48b). Elizabeth was the first to honor blessed Mary as the mother of the Lord. It is written; “*Why am I so favored, that the Mother of my Lord visits me.*” (Luke 1:43)

In the Liturgical Calendar of the Holy Apostolic Catholic Church of the East; The Blessed Virgin Mary is honored with three main commemorations: 1. In Winter, in honor of giving birth to Jesus Christ, Son of God in the flesh; 2. In the 15th day of the Month of May, that which is known as the Commemoration of The Virgin Mary the Preserver of Seeds; and, 3. In the 15th day of the Month

⁵(Jacob of Serugh, Select Festal Homilies, translated from Syriac and introduced by Thomas Kollamparampil, CMI, with a foreword by Sebastian P. Brock, Center for Indian and Inter-religious studies (CIIS), Rome, and Dharmaram Publications (DP), Bangalore 1997 P. 49.)

⁶ (Ephrem the Syrian Hymns, Hymn on the Nativity, Hymn 2 P. 77 Translated and introduced by Kathleen E. McVey, Preface by John Meyendorff, Paulist Press, 997 Macarthur Boulevard, Mahwah, New Jersey 07430, Hymn on the Nativity, Hymn 2.7, P. 77)

⁷ (Ephrem the Syrian Hymns, Hymn on the Nativity, Hymn 2 P. 77 Translated and introduced by Kathleen E. McVey, Preface by John Meyendorff, Paulist Press, 997 Macarthur Boulevard, Mahwah, New Jersey 07430, Hymn on the Nativity, Hymn 22.N23, P. 183)

of August that which is called the Commemoration of the Falling Asleep of the Blessed Mother. ⁸

Regarding the three Commemorations of the Virgin Mary, it is recorded in the History of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the History of the Likeness of Christ as follows:

“And it came to pass that when the Apostles saw what had happened, they bowed the knee and did homage before the body of the holy woman, and then a cloud carried the Apostles from Paradise and set them in the upper chamber in Jerusalem. And (the Apostles) wrote down the triumphs of the Virgin in books among themselves and sent them into the four quarters of the earth, and they ordered that the believers should celebrate the commemoration of the blessed woman three times in the year. The first was to take place in the month of Khanun, on the eve of the Sabbath which came after the Nativity, for the day of her departure from this world was the day of the birth of our Lord; on the day on which she gave Him birth did she depart from this world. And the doctors of the Church have ordered that the first commemoration of the Virgin should take place after the festival of the birth of our Lord. And this Commemoration is celebrated for the sake of the first fruits of the corps, so that rain may come upon the early and the later corps, and they may increase at the will of their owners. And the second commemoration they were to celebrate in the month of Iyar, in the middle of the month, on the fifteenth day, and this commemoration was placed at this time for the sake of the filling out of the care of corn, so that they might come to perfection and might be reaped in peace. And the third commemoration they were to celebrate in the month of Ab, and this also was to take place in the middle of the month, on the fifteenth day thereof; and this commemoration was arranged on behalf of the vines and the vineyards, and all the lands which had to be irrigated.” ⁹

⁸(Khudra (prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. Volume1 Commemoration of the Virgin Mary, P. 601)

⁹ (The History of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the History of the Likeness of Christ which the Jews of Tiberias made to mock at. The Syriac texts edited with English translation by E.A. Wallis Budge, M.A., Litt. D. D. Lit., English translations London Luzac and Co. 1899. Pp.125-126)

The Commemoration of the falling asleep of the Virgin Mary is preceded by the fifteen days of a fasting season. The purpose of such fasting is to prepare the faithful sons and daughters of the Church spiritually for the celebration of the Feast of the falling asleep of the Virgin Mary. This fasting period starts on August first and ends August fifteen with the celebration of the commemoration of the departure (falling asleep) of the holy mother. During the 15 days of fasting, as it is the custom in the Church of the East believers eat only food which is a product of the earth. It is worth mentioning that dairy and animal products are completely forbidden during the fast season.

The feast of the annunciation of the Virgin Mary is celebrated annually in the most apostolic Churches on March 25th. However, in the Church of the East, since March 25th annually occurs in the season of the great Fast “lent” the celebration of the feast of annunciation is moved to the second Sunday of Advent. In addition to the above-mentioned commemorations and feasts of the Virgin Mary, Some Apostolic Churches, also celebrate the birthday of the Blessed Mother in the 8th day of the Month of September.

In the order of the celebration of the commemoration of the Virgin Mary the following rubric is written: *“If two Fridays fall between Christmas and Epiphany, the Commemoration of the Blessed Virgin, will be celebrated on the second Friday; if, however, there is only one Friday, falling between Christmas and Epiphany, on that Friday the Commemoration of the Blessed Virgin Mary will be celebrated.”*¹⁰

In the Church of the East all these Commemorations and feasts of the holy mother are celebrated with a special liturgy of evening, night and morning prayers followed by the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. In Honor of the Virgin Mary thousands of believers attend these liturgical celebrations.

¹⁰ (Khudra (prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. Volume 1, Commemoration of the Virgin Mary, P. 601)

Honoring the Virgin Mary, Fathers of the Church wrote many Homilies, poems, praises, hymns, anthems, and prayers. Many of these hymns and prayers are included in the liturgical books of the Church. Thus, the Holy name of the blessed Mary is frequently heard in all evening, night and morning prayers of the Church. Numerous churches are built and alters are anointed in reverence to her Holy name. Many mothers have called their daughters, Mary, after the name of the Virgin mother.

The Liturgical calendar of the Church of the East annually begins with the season of Advent which starts on the first day of December and ends with the Feast of the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ on the 25th day of December. There are four Sundays included in the Season of advent. The First Sunday of advent is dedicated to the annunciation of angel Gabriel to Zachariah the priest regarding the conception and birth of the forerunner, John the Baptist. The second Sunday is devoted to the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary regarding the conception and the birth of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The birth and the circumcision of John the Baptist is celebrated on the third Sunday of Advent. And the fourth and, the last Sunday of Advent is dedicated to the revelation of the mysterious and miraculous conception of the blessed Mary to Saint Joseph.

The gospel lesson which is read on the fourth Sunday of advent is taken from Saint Matthew the evangelist. In this part of the gospel angel Gabriel is revealing in a vision to Joseph, the betrothal of the Virgin Mary, that she ‘Virgin Mary’ is innocent and that she has mysteriously conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is written: *“But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”* (Matthew 1:20-21)

In the Nicene Constantinople Creed of the 318 fathers, composed in the year 325 in addition to the name of Jesus Christ, the Name of the Virgin Mary and

that of Pilate, are mentioned. The name of the Virgin Mary is mentioned to confirm the truthfulness of His birth in the flesh. However, the name of Pilot is mentioned to confirm the authenticity of His crucifixion. It is written:

“Who for us men and for our salvation descended from Heaven and became incarnate by the Holy Spirit and became man. And was conceived and born of the Virgin Mary; He suffered and was crucified in the days of Pontius Pilate.”¹¹

Finally, the fathers of the Church of the East In regard to the devotion of the Virgin Mary in the following prayer say:

“Why am I stretching out my words? These I have already spoken, and again, I say them; I have wandered far from Her commemoration; and to relate Her story; I am not worthy • I have believed, O my Lord, in truthfulness, that She is Your begetter in purity, as I am proclaiming with a loud voice; that She is The Lady of all the Virgins • If Gabriel worshiped unto her, and in fear gave to her peace; cursed is the mouth which praises her not; and the tongue which does not magnify her • O, Lady and the Mother of my Lord, in prayer from your pure mouth, beseech the forgiveness of trespasses, to the ones who will sing this anthem • And unto me, the feeble one, and unto the whole congregation, who gather in all the Church, and put aside for you three feasts, beseech forgiveness, together with remission of sin; and, unto your Son glory at all times.”¹²

Regarding the celebrations of the commemorations of the holy mother Saint Ephrem the Syrian says:

“Worthy of remembrance is the mother who gave birth to Him.
Worthy of blessings is the bosom that bore Him.”¹³

¹¹ (The liturgy of the Church of the East. Printed by Reverend Joseph E. Y De Kelaita, 1928, PP 15-16.)

¹²(Khudra (prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. Volume1 Commemoration of the Virgin Mary, Page 611)

¹³ (Ephrem the Syrian Hymns, Hymn on the Nativity, Hymn 2 P. 77Translated and introduced by Kathleen E. McVey, Preface by John Meyendorff, Paulist Press, 997 Macarthur Boulevard, Mahwah, New Jersey 07430, Hymn on the Nativity, Hymn 2.6, P. 77)

When the appointed time of The Birth of the Son of God in the Flesh had arrived, The Blessed Mary, as a virgin, filled with Grace, accepted willingly the earthly motherhood of our Lord Jesus Christ (*Luke 1:38*). Subsequently she was conceived and gave birth to Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world in Bethlem of Judia as it is written. She was visited by Sheperds and Magi who have come from the East and offered baby Jesus gifts.

Following the visit of the Magi and their return to homeland, The Angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream; he commanded Joseph to “. . . *get up and take The Child, and His mother and flee to Egypt, stay there until I instruct otherwise . . . Herod is searching for The Child to destroy Him . . . Joseph rose up and took The Child and His mother, and left the region that night for Egypt, and He remained there till the death of Herod, to fulfill the Words of God which were said by the Prophet, ‘out of Egypt I have called My Son. . .’*” (*Matt 2:13-15*)

The Holy Family proceeded to Egypt, they had encountered two thieves; one was named Titus and the other Dumachus. It was the express wish of Dumachus to rob the Holy Family; however, Titus, interrupted the intention of Damacus, and delivered the Holy Family from the robbing intention of the one thief.

Jesus remained in Egypt for two years till Herod the King had died an evil death. After Herod who had killed the children of Bethlehem and the surrounding region (at the time of the Birth of Christ Jesus), Herod Archelaus, his son, who had beheaded John the Baptist, governed in his stead (place). Then, it was the Angel of the Lord who went to Egypt and said to Joseph “. . . *get up, take The Child and His mother, and set out for the land of Israel, for those who had designs on the Life of The Child are dead. He rose up and returned to the land of Israel. He had heard, however, Archelaus had succeeded his father Herod as the king of Judea, and he was afraid to go back*

there, because of the warning he received in a dream, Joseph went to the region of Galilee, and there he settled in a town called Nazareth, in this way was the Prophet fulfilled, 'He shall be called a Nazarene.'” (Matt 2:19-23)

It is recorded in the Gospel of Saint John the Evangelist, when our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ was in his humanity dying on the cross, He saw His mother the virgin Mary and John the beloved disciple under the feet of the cross, He entrusted His Mother to John. It is written: “Woman behold your son” and to John “Behold your mother” (John 19: 25-27) From that very hour Saint John took care of the virgin Mary the mother of Christ as his own mother.

The Virgin Mary was with the Holy Apostles on the day of Pentecost. (Acts 2:14) According to the Church tradition the Virgin Mary remained in the home of the beloved disciple in Jerusalem. At the time of the death of the Virgin Mary the disciples of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ except Saint Thomas returned to Jerusalem from the four corners of the world to be with the blessed mother in the moment of her death.

The tradition says following the falling asleep of the blessed Mary the Mother of Christ her body was taken and laid in a tomb near Garden of Gethsemane. When the Apostle Saint Thomas arrived three days after her falling asleep, he desired to see her, the tomb was found empty. The angel appeared to the apostles and informed them about the assumption of the blessed Mary. Later on the blessed Mary also appeared to the Holy Apostles.

The Genealogy of the Virgin Mary

Saint Mary, the holy Virgin is from the Tribe of Judah, and from the Household of King David. She was related to Elizabeth, the mother of John, the Baptist. According to the gospel of Saint Luke Saint Mary and Elizabeth are cousins. Saint Luke says Elizabeth is “the virgin’s cousin” (*L.1: 36*). According to Saint Matthew the Evangelist, Salome, the wife of Zebedee, the mother of James and

John is also related to the Virgin Mary. (*Mathew 27:56, 19:25*). Mar Shleemon Metropolitan of Basra says:

“And it is asked, why do the Evangelists make the generations of the Messiah rest on Joseph, and not on Mary? we say, because it was not the custom of scripture to make a descent rest on a woman; only by the mention of Joseph that he was her betrothed, the Virgin is known along with him, that she had come down from David in descent, in that it was commanded that every tribe should marry in its own tribe, even if opportunities occurred from tribe to tribe, But Joseph and Mary were mutually children’s children and brothers, in as much as Eliezer begat two sons, Mathan and Jotham, and Mathan begat Jacob, and Jacob Joseph; and Jotham Zadok, and zadok Mary; and the name of her mother was Dinah, and this was sister of Elisabeth, as also the Angel said, “Behold Elisabeth thy Cousin.” The thing was arranged in this way by the divine intimation that the kingdom of the house of David, and the priesthood of the house of Aaron, should have the fulfilment of their types in Christ.”¹⁴

Based on the words of the angle Gabriel to the Virgin Mary “Elizabath, your kinswoman,” Saint Ephrem believes there is possibility that Mary was from the house of Levi, take it into consideration that the Evangelist has clearly said elsewhere, regarding Joseph and Mary that were both from the house of David. We learn from the genealogy of Joseph that the household of David continued as far as Joseph, the betrothal of Mary, and the birth of her child Jesus Christ was registered through the name of Joseph, for the sake of the family of David.

“From what the angle said to Mary, namely, “Elizabath, your kinswoman,” it could be supposed that Mary was from the house of Levi, nevertheless up to this, the prophecy was established within the framework of the husbands. The family of David continued as far as Joseph, who had espoused her, and the birth of her child was reckoned through the framework of the men, for the sake of the family of David. It is in Christ that the seed and family of David are brought to completion. Scripture is silent about Mary’s genealogy since it is the generation of men that it numbers and reckons. If Scripture had been accustomed to indicating the family line through the mother, it would be in order for one to seek the family of Mary. But, lest the words “Elizabath, your kinswoman” were to show that Mary was also from the house of Levi, take note that the Evangelist has said elsewhere, concerning Joseph

¹⁴ (*The Commentaries of Isho dad of Merv, Bishop of Hadatha of Assyria (c.850 A.D.) on the New Testament, Volume, Edited and Translated by Margaret Dunlop Gibson, introduction by James Rendel Harris (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1911), Pp.12-13*)

and Mary, that were both of the house of David,” (Lk1:27) The angle did not say to Mary that Elizabeth was her sister but “Elizabeth, your kinswoman.”¹⁵

Mar Shleemon Metropolitan of Basra says, by carefully studding the genealogy of Mary and Joseph we reach to a clear result that Joseph’s father Jacob and Mary’s father Zadok were cousins and therefore Joseph and Mary both were from the same household of King David. Furthermore, Jesus according to the flesh was the son of Mary and according to the Law the son of Joseph. Hence whichever you choose, whether according to nature or according to Law, Christ is found to be the son of David.

“Know too, O my brother, that Mattan the son of Eliezer, whose descent was from the family of Solomon, took a wife whose name was Ashta (for Essetha) and by her begat Jacob naturally. Mattan died, and Melchi, whose family descended from Nathan the son of David, took her to wife, and begat by her Eli (Heli); hence Jacob and Heli are brothers, (the sons) of (one) mother. Eli took a wife and died without children. Then Jacob took her to wife, to raise up seed to his brother, according to the command of the Law; and he begat by her Joseph, who was the son of Jacob according to nature, but the son of Heli according to the Law; so whichever ye choose, whether according to nature or according to Law, Christ is found to be the son of David. It is moreover right to know that Eliezer begat two sons, Mattan and Jotham. Mattan begat Jacob, and Jacob begat Joseph; Jotham begat Zadok, and Zadok begat Mary. From this it is clear that Joseph’s father and Mary’s were cousins.”¹⁶

In the following Hymn, Saint Ephrem justifies the birth of Jesus Christ, the second Adam, from the Virgin Mary by likening Virgin Mary to the virgin Earth which gave birth to the first Adam. Hence, he calls Saint Mary the second Eve. Ephrem also believes that the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem Ephrata the city of King David is the fulfilment of Micah’s Prophecy. Moreover, regarding the kingly descendant (succession) of Christ, Saint Ephrem depends on the two

¹⁵ (Saint Ephrem’s commentary on Tatian’s Diatessaron, Carmel McCarthy. Published by Oxford University press on behalf of the University of Manchester, 1993 Pp. 53-54, 1.25)

¹⁶ (Mar Shleemon, Metropolitan of Basra, Book of the Bee, the Syriac text Edited from the Manuscript in London, Oxford, and Munich. With an English Translation by Ernest A. William Budge, M.A. Oxford, at the Clarendon press, 1886. p.74)

gospels of Matthew and Luke. Both of these evangelists confirm that the genealogy of Mary and Joseph is from the kingly household of David. Then why do the Evangelists make the generations of the Messiah rest on Joseph, and not on Mary? Simply because it was a Scriptural tradition to register the succession of Kings in the name of men instead of women. So Ephrem says; through Virgin Mary Jesus is the Son of David in the flesh, and the son of David through the name of Joseph.

“Teach me, my Lord, how and why.

From a virgin womb it was fitting for You to shine forth for us.

Was He a type of a splendid Adam (taken)

From the virgin earth that not been worked until he was formed

Why then was it necessary that she, a daughter of David,

Be betrothed to Joseph (Matthew. 1:18) and that then your birth

From her womb be without man?

The succession of Kings is written in the name of men instead of women.

Joseph, a son of David, (Mtt. 1:20) betrothed to a daughter of David,

For the child could not be registered in the name of His mother.

He became, therefore, Joseph’s offspring without seed,

And His mother’s offspring without man,

And by the two of them He bound Himself to their people,

So that among the kings He is written, Son of David.

It was not fitting that from the seed of Joseph He be born,

Nor without Joseph that from Mary He be conceived.

He was not registered by the name of Mary, who gave birth to Him.”¹⁷

Saint Ephrem in his commentary on Tatian’s Diatessaron, strongly believes that Virgin Mary is not from any other tribe but rather from the house of David. He builds his belief in the words of Gabriel to the Virgin Mary saying: “*The Lord will give him the throne of his father, David. (Luke 1:32)* According to the prophecies of the Old and New Testament, Jesus, is the son of Mary in the

¹⁷ (Ephrem the Syrian hymns, translated and introduced by Kathleen E. McVey. Paulist press, New York. Mahwah. Hymn on the Nativity, Hymn 2.12,13, 14. Pp. 78-79)

flesh, and not the son of Joseph and He, Jesus, did not appear in the body from any other lineage, except from David.

“If Mary had been from another tribe, it would have been a lie [to have said], from the house of David. For the angel said, The Lord will give him the throne of his father, David. (Luke 1:32) He is the son of Mary, however, and not the son of Joseph. He did not appear in the body from any other lineage, except from David. For [the prophet] said, there will come forth a shoot from the stock of Jesse, and a scion (Implant) will blossom from his root. (Isaiah 11:1) Zachariah also testified [to this] when he said, He has raised up for us a horn of Salvation in the house of David, his son. (Luke 1:69) In like manner also the apostle said, Our Lord Jesus Christ came from Mary, from the seed of the house of David. (a citation from the apocryphal third letter of Saint Paul to Corinthians 3 Cor.5) written about 190-206 AD.) He wrote to Timothy as well, remember Jesus Christ, he who rose from the dead, he who came from the seed of the house of David. (Timothy 2:8) In the Letter of the Romans he said, it was promised beforehand in in the Holy Scriptures, concerning his Son, who appeared in the flesh from the seed of the house of David. (Romans 1:2-3).”¹⁸

Regarding the genealogy of Jesus Esho Dadd in his commentary on the gospels says Matthew counts the natural descent through Mary and Luke the legal descent through Joseph.

“Matthew counts the natural descent, and Luke the legal one; for the generations of Solomon and Nathan are mingled together by the raising of the seed of the one who had died childless, by right those very sons were of others and were called of others; so that both of the generations by means of Joseph end with Joseph, according as thus; for where thou countest the generations from David as by means of Solomon, the third from the end is Mathan, he that begat Jacob, the father of Joseph; and (if) from Nathan who was from David according to the word of Luke as , again the third from the end is the son of Melchi; but Joseph is the son of Heli, son of Melchi; and because Mathan and melchi took the very same wife, they had two sons, the children of one mother, her name was called Estha, of which the masculine is Asa; inasmuch as the law did not forbid a widow or a deserted wife to belong to another .

Mathan who was from Solomon, therefore took her first, and begat Jacob; and after the death of Mathan, Melchi, who was from Nathan, took her, and from her begat Heli. But Heli died childless; but his brother Jacob took his wife, and begat Joseph; therefore, it is written, that Jacob begat Joseph, who was his son by means, but by law the son of Heli; hence Mathew

¹⁸ (Saint Ephrem's commentary on Tatian's Diatessaron, An English Translation of Chester Beatty Syriac MS 709 with introduction and notes by Carmel McCarthy. Published by Oxford University press on behalf of the University of Manchester, 1993 Pp. 54-55,1.26)

shows by means of the descent of natural generations, that the Messiah was born according to the voices of the prophets.”¹⁹

The annunciation of the Angel to (Yonakir) Zadok in respect to the Conception and Birth of Mary.

In accordance with the teachings of the Apostolic Fathers, the parents of the Blessed Virgin Mary were known as *Yonakir*, later *Zadok* (*i.e.* “The Righteous One”) and *Dinah* (*i.e.*, “judgment”) later *Anna* (mercy) both were righteous persons before our worshipful God. They were rich in earthly wealth. However, they were not blessed with children as other family members and their friends.

In their Semitic society they were brought under the severe condemnation of blame. It was strongly believed that married couples without children were cursed by God for not being fruitful. In the Temple worship those with children were permitted to offer their sacrifices, first; then, those who had no children at the very end. This order in worship was very grievous to both blessed souls, namely: *Yonakir* and *Dinah*, parents of the Virgin Mary.

Finally, *Yonakir*, father of The Virgin Mary went out into the desert and erected a tent to engage himself in prayer and supplication before God. He grieved, wept in bitterness, and covered himself with a covering of profound sadness. His wife, *Dinah* (the mother of The Virgin Mary), also joined him in prayer and supplication before God. It is here that God the Father through an Angle announced to them that their prayers have been heard and their sacrifices of tears have been accepted and *Dinah* will conceive and will give birth to a daughter.

Following upon this desert encounter, they returned to their own home. *Dinah* conceived and gave birth to the Virgin Mary. As soon as Virgin Mary was born, the name of her mother was changed from “*Dinah*” to *Hanna* “*Anna*” to

¹⁹ (*The Commentaries of Isho dad of Merv, Bishop of Hadatha (c.850 A.D.) in Syriac and English*, ed. and tr. Margaret Dunlop Gibson, intro. James Rendel Harris (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1911), P. 11.)

give witness to the mercies which God in His loving kindness has bestowed upon her. The name of her father was also changed from Yonakir to “Zadok” which means the justified one. And the newborn daughter was called “Maryam.” Maryam in the Aramaic language means “the highest one, lifted up.” It worth mentioning that the birth of Maryam brought a great joy and happiness to the parents of the Virgin Mary. Mar Shleemon Metropolitan of Basra says:

“This Zadok, who was called Yonakir, and Dinah his wife both were righteous before God, and were rich in earthly riches and in goods and chattels; but they had neither fruit nor offspring like other people. They were reproached by the people for the barrenness, and they did not allow them to offer up the offering except after everyone else, because they had no children among the people of Israel. And Yonakir went out into the desert, and pitched his tent outside the encampment, and he prayed before God with mournful tears, and put-on garments of mourning; so also did Dinah his wife. And God heard their prayers and accepted their sacrifices of their tears. The Angel of God came to them, and announced to them the conception of Mary, saying, ‘your prayer has been heard before God, and behold, He will give you a blessed fruit, a daughter who shall be a sign and a wonder among all the generations of the world; and all families shall be blessed through her. Then they two praised God, and Zadok returned to his habitation. And Dinah his wife conceived and brought forth Mary; and from that day she was called Hannah (Anna) instead of Dinah, for the Lord had had compassion upon her. Now the name ‘Mary’ (Maryam or Miriam) it interpreted ‘lifted up’ ‘exalted’ and they rejoiced in exceedingly.”²⁰

It is recorded in the History of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the History of the Likeness of Christ that after Hanna gave birth to her daughter Mary she conceived again, and she brought forth a daughter, and called her name Paroghitha saying.

“And it came to pass that when Mary was ten years old her parents said, “let us take her up to the temple of the Lord that she may dwell before Him, even as we have vowed” but Dina her mother said unto Yonakhir her father, “let us wait until she knows herself, before we will take her up.” “Now, in those days Hanna conceived, and she brought forth a daughter, and called her name Paroghitha saying, “Mary shall belong to the Lord, and Paroghitha (i.e

²⁰ (Mar Shleemon, Metropolitan of Basra, Book of the Bee, the Syriac text Edited from the Manuscript in London, Oxford, and Munich. With an English Translation by Ernest A. William Budge, M.A. Oxford, at the Clarendon press, 1886. p.76)

“Pullet”) saying, “Mary shall belong to “the Lord, and Paroghitha shall be a delight unto us “in her stead”; so Younakhir and Hanna rejoiced in Paroghitha their daughter.”²¹

Following a period of six months after the birth of the Virgin Mary, her parents said to one another, “. . . *we will not let her walk on the ground;*” they carried her everywhere, till the day they went to the Temple with their thanksgiving sacrifices. Once they had offered their sacrifices to God, she was presented to the Chief Priest, who in turn placed his hands upon her head saying the following blessing: “. . . *Blessed art thou among women . . .*” When the Virgin Mary was three years old and was weaned of breast feeding, she was taken by her parents to the Temple as they have promised. In the Temple, they entrusted her to the High Priest. The High Priest offered this petition saying: “. . . *submit yourself to the older women who are here present residing in The Temple.*” It is recorded in Saint Mary’s Biography that she was brought up in the temple from her childhood and was consecrated to God. While she was in the temple, she was surrounded by many pious women who became unto her influential mentors. While residing in the Temple, Virgin Mary, with a joyful heart, and pious passion, engaged herself in the ministry of the Temple of God. During her stay in the temple both of her parents died.”²²

The parents of the Virgin Mary took her to the temple. They laid their hands upon Mary’s head and they blessed her. It is recorded in the History of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the History of the Likeness of Christ:

“And it came to pass that when Mary was twelve years old, her parents invited seven virgins to go up with them to Jerusalem, and they put lamps into the hands of each of them; and they took Mary up to the temple of the Lord. And the priests received her, saying, “The Lord God of Israel shall bless thy name, Mary, for in thee hath He revealed the redemption of the Hebrew nation, and of the Gentiles also in the last days.”²³

²¹ (The History of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the History of the Likeness of Christ, The Syriac Texts Edited with English Translations by E. A. Wallis Budge, M. A., LITT. D.D. Lrr., London: Luzac AND Co. 1899 P. 16)

²² (Mar Shleemon, Metropolitan of Basra, Book of the Bee, the Syriac text Edited from the Manuscript in London, Oxford, and Munich. With an English Translation by Ernest A. William Budge, M.A. Oxford, at the Clarendon press, 1886. Pp.76-77)

²³ (The History of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the History of the Likeness of Christ, The Syriac Texts Edited with English Translations By E. A. Wallis Budge, M. A., LITT. D.D. Lrr., London: Luzac AND Co. 1899, Pp. 16-17)

As soon as Virgin Mary had attained twelve (some say 14) years of age, and because she was beautiful in appearance, the Chief Priest and priests took counsel together, praying before God to reveal unto them what to do about this young woman. It was then that an angel of God revealed to the High Priest the plan of God regarding the betrothal of the Virgin Mary to Joseph the righteous. *Shleemon of Basra says:*

“Because she was beautiful in appearance, the priests and the high priests took counsel and prayed before God that He would reveal to them, what they should do with her. And the Angle of God appeared unto the high priest and said to him. ‘Gather together the staves of the men who have been left widowers by their first wives, and are well known for piety, uprightness, and righteousness, and what God sheweth thee, do.’ And they brought many staves and laid them down in the temple; and they prayed before God that day and its night.”²⁴

The Chief Priest then entered The Temple and gave each staff to the rightful owner; and as he held in his hand the staff of Joseph a white dove came out of the staff, hovered upon the staff of Joseph, and rested upon it. At this time, The Chief Priest went toward Joseph, kissed his head, and entrusted the Virgin Mary to his care. Joseph because of his old age, was hesitant to take such a responsibility. Then the Chief Priest informed him not to bring upon himself the judgment of God by breaking His commandment. Thus, concluding the instructions given to Joseph the pious believer, he took The Blessed Virgin to his home. Shleemon of Basra says:

“The chief priest went into the temple and gave to each of them his staff, and when Joseph took his staff in his hand, there went forth from it a white dove, and hovered over the top of the rod, and sat upon it. The chief priest drew near to Joseph and kissed him on his head, and said to him, ‘the blessed maiden has fallen to thy lot from the Lord; take her to thee until she arrives at the age for marriage, and (then) make a marriage feast after the manner and custom of men; for it is meet for thee (to do so) more than others, because ye are cousins.’ Joseph said to the chief, ‘I am an old and feeble man, and this is a girl, and unfit for my aged condition; it is better to give her to one of her own age, because I cannot rely upon myself to watch her and guard her.’ The chief priest said to him, ‘take heed that thou dost not

²⁴ (Mar Shleemon, Metropolitan of Basra, Book of the Bee, the Syriac text Edited from the Manuscript in London, Oxford, and Munich. With an English Translation by Ernest A. William Budge, M.A. Oxford, at the Clarendon press, 1886. p.77)

transgress the command of God and bring a punishment upon thee.' So, Joseph took Mary, and went to his dwelling place.”²⁵

The hand of God was obviously seen in the act of giving Mary in marriage to Joseph. Joseph was reluctant to take Mary as a wife to himself; one because he was married and second because he was an old man and Mary was too young for him. Nevertheless, the chief priest informed Joseph, that it is God who has set her apart and has given her unto him. And among the children of Israel there is none who is nearer in kinship unto her than him, neither by race, nor by family succession. In other words, Mary and Joseph were each the child of the other's uncle. So, finally Joseph surrendered to the divine will of God and took Mary and brought her to his home and established her residence therein. It is recorded in the History of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the History of the Likeness of Christ:

“Let the trumpet be sounded, and let the Hebrew who are in Jerusalem be gathered together, that is to say, those of the tribe of Judah, and especially those of the house of David, and let Mary be given unto the man in whom I shall shew the sign” and the high-priest went forth and said unto the people, “the Lord hath said, let the trumpet be sounded, and let the men of the tribe of Judah and of the house of David be gathered together, and let them come into the temple until it be full so that they may see what the Lord saith concerning Mary.

And it came to pass that when they were gathered together, Joseph was found with them; and as they were assembled, and were waiting to see what would take place, behold a snow-white dove went forth from the sanctuary, and alighted upon the top of Joseph's staff, and then flew upon his head, after which it went back and entered the temple and into the sanctuary. Then the people cried out with a great cry, saying, “God is righteous in all His ways. For there is no man here who is so closely akin unto Mary as Joseph, and it is meet that she should belong to him.”

“And Joseph was an old man, and he had a wife who was herself called Mary, and by her he had two sons, Jacob and Joseph. And Joseph said unto the chief priests, “How is it possible for me to take this wife? For I am an old man, and my wife is of sons, and daughters.”

²⁵(Mar Shleemon, Metropolitan of Basra, Book of the Bee, the Syriac text Edited from the Manuscript in London, Oxford, and Munich. With an English Translation by Ernest A. William Budge, M.A. Oxford, at the Clarendon press, 1886. p.77)

“And the chief priests answered and said unto Joseph, “This thing is from before the Lord, and it is He who hath set her apart and hath given her unto thee; and among the children of Israel there is none who is nearer in kinship unto her than thou, neither by race, nor by familysuccession.”

“Now Joseph was the son of Jacob, and the son of Matthan, of the one according to the law, and of the other according to what was true, and Mary was the daughter of Yonakhir, the son of Matthan; thus, Mary and Joseph were each the child of the other’s uncle.

So, Joseph took Mary and brought her to his home, and established her dwelling- place therein.”²⁶

The annunciation of Angel Gabriel to Virgin Mary

Regarding the conception of our Lord

St Luke the Evangelist recorded in length the story of Saint Mary the Holy Virgin, (*Luke 1:26-38*). Saint Luke says while Virgin Mary was betrothed to a righteous man whose name was Joseph, from the house of David, Angel Gabriel came down from Heaven and announced to her that she will be conceived with a child by the Power of the Holy Spirit. The Child Jesus whom she would conceive in her womb will be called the Savior of The World. It is written:

“Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. And having come in, the angel said to her, “Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!” But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. Then the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son and shall call His name JESUS.”²⁷

²⁶ (The History of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the History of the Likeness of Christ, The Syriac Texts Edited with English Translations By E. A. Wallis Budge, M. A., LITT. D.D. Lrr., London: Luzac AND Co. 1899, Pp. 19-20)

²⁷ (Luke 1:26-32)

Virgin Mary had problem understanding the manner of a Virgin conception. Then the angel of the Lord explained to the Virgin Mary the manner of her virginal conception saying: *“The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.”* (Luke 1:35) Virgin Mary upon hearing the explanation of the angel of God she totally submitted her will to the will of God saying: *“behold the handmaiden of the Lord, let it be to me according to your word. . .”* (Luke 1:38) At this time God the Word, came down from heaven, united Himself with the flesh formed in the womb of the Virgin Mary by the Power of the Holy Spirit, and thus she conceived in her womb the Son of God, whom she shall call His name JESUS. Saint Jacob of Serugh says:

“Let it happen to me, according to your word sir”, Mary says,
She gave her consent and henceforth she received the fruit in her womb.
She by her free will opened the door and then the King entered,
So that through free will, the perfect seal might be honored.”²⁸

However, regarding that the angel of the Lord said to Mary: *“that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.”* (Luke 2:35) Esho Dadd says:

“But the Diatessaron says that that which is born in her is of the Holy Spirit, the ineffable and infinite word; the birth that is in her, he calls the assumption and formation of the man, who within the womb was separated from her, even though He was not yet born.”²⁹

Angel Gabriel assured Virgin Mary that in her virginity she shall conceive in her womb and bear a son. Then He explained to her the significance of the meaning of the name of the child to be born and its role in the economy of Salvation. Since Virgin Mary is the earthly mother of the Son of God, the angle of the Lord gave her the privilege of calling Him Jesus. Saint Ephrem says:

“(The words), In the sixth, are reckoned in relation to Elizabeth’s pregnancy. The angel was sent to a Virgin, (Luke 1:26-27) and he said to her, *behold in your virginity you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus.* (Luke 1:31) He was

²⁸ (Jacob of Serugh, Selct Festal Homilies, translated from Syriac and introduced by Thomas Kollampampil, CMI, with a foreward by Sebastian P. Brock, Center for Indian and Inter-religious studies (CIIS), Rome, and Dharmaram Publications (DP), Bangalore 1997 P. 60)

²⁹ (*The Commentaries of Isho dad of Merv, Bishop of Hadatha of Assyria (c.850 A.D.) on the New Testament, Volume, Edited and Translated by Margaret Dunlop Gibson, introduction by James Rendel Harris (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1911), P. 14.*)

speaking about him who was to appear in the body. (*This is one of Ephrem's typical ways of referring to the mystery of Incarnation.*) He did not say to her, "*That name which is called Jesus,*" but, *you shall call his name.* This shows that this name is of the economy, which is through the body, since Jesus in Hebrew means Saviour. For (the angle) said, *you shall call his name Jesus, that is Saviour, for he shall save his people from sins.* This name therefore refers not to his nature but to his deeds."³⁰

In the following poem, Saint Jacob of Serugh is articulating the conversation between the Virgin Mary and the angel Gabriel. Since the message of the angel of the Lord regarding the Virginal conception was so fresh to Virgin Mary, it was difficult to comprehend it. Thus, in this encounter she is cautiously asking angel Gabriel, how is it possible for a Virgin to conceive and, give birth to a child without marital relations or human seed? Here Jacob of Serugh is also contrasting the thoughtlessness of Eve to the prudence of the Virgin Mary saying:

"Do not be to me like the deceitful serpent that spoke and moved on.
Await, let us see what you are teaching if you are true.
How it is possible for this to happen which I have heard from you
When no man has known me (carnally) from the time of my birth.
At what time has any womb given birth without marital relations,
And where and when did this happen among women?
Which earth has given forth a sheaf when it has not been sown,
And what cluster has sprung up from a vine without it being tilled?
What fruit has there been in a tree without irrigation?
What field has arrived at a heap (of corn) without a ploughman?
By whom has it been seen that a conception has taken place without conjugal relation,
And who is the one who has experienced the state of giving birth and has not been known (carnally)?
Who has seen an embryo in the womb of a virgin?
Or who has encountered virginity preserved even after conception?
If you do not give me explanation it is difficult for me to be convinced
And if you do not debate with me unto the end, you are not true,"³¹

³⁰ (Saint Ephrem's commentary on Tatian's Diatessaron, An English Translation of Chester Beatty Syriac MS 709 with introduction and notes by Carmel McCarthy. Published by Oxford University press on behalf of the University of Manchester, 1993 p. 52, 1.25)

³¹ (Jacob of Serugh, *Selct Festal Homilies*, translated from Syriac and introduced by Thomas Kollampampil, CMI, with a foreward by Sebastian P. Brock, Center for Indian and Inter-religious studies (CIIS), Rome, and Dharmaram Publications (DP), Bangalore 1997 Pp. 52-53.)

The fathers of the Church in the following Anthem are speaking clearly about the encounter of Gabriel the head of the angels with the Virgin Mary. His awesome appearance terrified her, and his message of virginal conception disturbed her. She tried to assure him that she had never known a man and had a fellowship with anyone. She was also anxious that the daughters of the kings, the virgins the daughters of the chiefs and the Hebrew woman will be jealous of her. Regardless of all these things which may happen to her, Mary was able to say yes to the Word of God delivered to her by the angel of God and accept all kinds of pains and sufferings for the sake of fulfilling the Divine will of God.

“When Gabriel was to be sent, the Head and the Chief of the Angels, came down and announced unto the The Virgin Mary about the glorious birth of Christ our Savior • Mary saw the celestial one, and, quaked and was terrified at his presence; his appearance was awesome as like that of fire; like a strong light; ‘who are you, O man?’ said she unto Him; ‘From your brilliance (of light) I am quaking!’ ‘I am Gabriel the Head of the Angels, I have come down to you to announce to you that you will conceive miraculously, and you will give birth to the Son of Wonder’ • ‘For your God’s sake, let that not happen to me, O Gabriel!’ ‘And, by the Lord about whom you have spoken to me; that, I have never known a man! And to have fellowship (with them) was not known to me! If you are the angel whom you say to me you are, why do you not have pity upon my poor self? If the daughters of the King hear of me, and the virgin daughters of the chiefs • And, the Hebrew women will be jealous of me, will say; ‘from where did this poor soul have this?’ that she gave birth to the Lord and to the King, how can a rich man encircle his wealth within my poor soul • I am the handmaiden of The Lord, let it be to me, O my lord, according to thy word.”³²

Jacob of Serugh contrasts Virgin Mary who is a young girl to Zachariah an old priest. Mary for the sake of understanding the manner of her virginal conception questioned the angel of the Lord. The angel of the Lord did not blame her for seeking understanding. But rather he answered her question in detail. She believed in the answer given to her by the angel and, totally surrendered her

³² (Khudra (prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. Volume1 Commemoration of the Virgin Mary, P. 630)

will to the Divine will of God. Zachariah too, questioned the angel of the Lord regarding the conception of his wife Elizabeth with John saying: “How it shall happen?” The angel condemned him because he disputed the angel. Since Zachariah doubted the message of God delivered to him, his speaking power was taken away from him. Thus, from the time of his encounter with the angel of God till the time of the birth of his son John the Baptist, he remained dumb. People who have doubt in the Word of God cannot preach the Word of God to others.

“And there is someone who inquires, yet he is not belittled because he is on the side of truth. And there is another one who disputes, and his discussion ends up in loss. Because Mary questioned, she was not blamed by the angle. She was eager to learn; she was not given over to investigate. Zachariah had been rebuked because he asked in the holy of holies, And the sentence of silence was given for doubting speech. To the same instructor both have brought the same question But to both of them not the same aspect was shown in his discourse. The watcher blamed the priest because he asked: “How it shall happen? But to the young girl he gave the crown of explanation, not blaming her”³³

Fathers of the church differ regarding the exact time of incarnation. There are some who say with the voice of Hail to you Mary! The Word of God dwelt in the Virgin. However, some others say, that with that voice that said, the Lord is with you, some flesh or a drop of blood was taken from the womb of the Virgin Mary and by the power of the Holy Spirit was made a son and eternally united to the Divine Word of God and thus became a temple to the most glorified Trinity. Ambrose of Milan and Ephraim the Syrian agree with those who say that when Mary said, “*behold I am the handmaiden of The Lord, let it be to me, O my lord, according to thy word.*” The Word of God dwelt in the Virgin and was united with the material which He took. Isho dad say:

³³ (Jacob of Serugh, Select Festal Homilies, translated from Syriac and introduced by Thomas Kollamparampil, CMI, with a foreward by Sebastian P. Brock, Center for Indian and Inter-religious studies (CIIS), Rome, and Dharmaram Publications (DP), Bangalore 1997 P. 57.)

"For with the voice of Hail to thee! The Lord of the greeting also dwelt in the Virgin; for was not the greeting sufficient, and did not Heaven give greeting to the Earth? Some say, that with that voice that said, the Lord is with thee, some material was taken up, that is to say, one drop of blood was formed from the Virgin, and was deified, and was made a Son, and was united with God the Word, and became a temple to the adorable Trinity. Others say, that when Mary said, Behold me the hand maid of the Lord! The Word dwelt in the Virgin and was united with the material which He took. Ambrose of Milan and Ephraim the Great tell this last explanation."³⁴

Nestorius by explaining the meaning of the words of the angel delivered to the Virgin Mary: "*The Lord is with thee, and the lord is from thee.*" confirming the two natures in one person of Jesus Christ. The Lord in His Divinity is with the Virgin Mary and in His Humanity, He is from the Virgin Mary. Yet the Son of God and the Son of Mary are not two sons but one and the same Son.

"Nestorius says that the Lord is with thee, and the Lord is from thee; with thee on the one hand in Godhead, from thee on the other hand in manhood."³⁵

God send angel Gabriel to Virgin Mary. He informed her that she has been chosen from all the virgins to become the dwelling place to the temple of God the Word, which was formed in her by the power of the Holy Spirit. Virgin Mary wisely asked the angel of God; how can a Virgin outside a wedlock conceive and give birth to Jesus Christ the Son of God? The messenger of God replied, God the Word will come down from heaven and will be united with the man formed by the power of God the Holy Spirit in your pure womb. As soon as Mary humbly responded, "*behold the handmaiden of the Lord, let it be to me according to your Word,*" The Word of God was simultaneously, eternally united with the flesh, without mixture or co-mingling. Thus, the holy mother conceived and gave birth to Jesus Christ above the law of nature. It is worth mentioning that she, the Virgin Mary, maintained her virginity even after giving birth to her first born son. Mar Narsai the Harp of the spirit regarding the

³⁴ (*The Commentaries of Isho dad of Merv, Bishop of Hadatha of Assyria (c.850 A.D.) on the New Testament, Volume, Edited and Translated by Margaret Dunlop Gibson, introduction by James Rendel Harris (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1911), P. 150.*)

³⁵(*The Commentaries of Isho dad of Merv, Bishop of Hadatha of Assyria (c.850 A.D.) on the New Testament, Edited and Translated by Margaret Dunlop Gibson, introduction by James Rendel Harris, M.A. Volume I, P. 150, Cambridge, At the University Press 1911*)

annunciation and the conversation between Angle Gabriel and Virgin Mary says:

“O those who have believed in the father who has send His peaceful Son
And was revealed in the flesh by mercy of his great love.
Investigate the deed of the earthly life of the beloved Son:
Who on behalf of all, the receiver (recipient) has dwelled in the body taken from her.
(God) Chose the Virgin, blessed among women without division:
To become the abode unto the temple which was formed within her without marriage.
The pure one conceived above (the law of) nature by the power of the creator:
And gave birth and sustained in her Virginity as it has been witnessed.
The angel who announced unto her stands at the presence of God:
Unto the shepherds he announced His birth before twilight.
After the angel announced to Mary and gave her peace:
She conceived and gave birth as Isaiah has prophesied.
He will buy back the world and will save the nations from the robber:
Behold you shall give birth to the Lord Christ the Son of the hidden one.
Wisely responded the Virgin bodily and spiritually:
How can a Virgin who has not known a man give birth to Christ?
The blessed one will send His spirit and His strength as ruler:
Upon this your son and becomes holy and a ruler Son.
The only begotten Word descends in the pure flesh:
And becomes one Son in the oneness of the flesh and the being.
All creations, will this King save and renew:
Who will shine from you and unto him will worship and genuflect all the knees.
Had no doubt, the daughter of Abraham, on that voice:
That by the barren women and without human seed has created fetus.
Humbly she responded behold my soul unto the highest Lord:
A handmaiden He pleased me to be, let it be to me according to your Word, peace be upon
me.
The Word was united with the flesh on this moment:
The union without mixture and without co-mingling.”³⁶

In the following doctorinal Hymn the fathers of the Church summarize the conversation between the Angle Gabriel and Virgin Mary.

³⁶ (The book of Turgama (The translated), Metropolitan press, Dora, Baghdad, Iraq, p.3.1997)

“Glory to He who has sent the Angel unto Mary, and proclaimed to her about the conception of Jesus our Savior: (response) New things humankind has heard; through the conception of the daughter of humankind; because forth from the daughter of humankind has sprouted the wheat without seed; and buried within her mortal being; the yeast of life, “behold,” said the angel, “you shalt conceive and give birth;” When had this happened? And was this ever heard; that virgins gave birth to infants without seed? • It was said, ‘The Power of the Highest shall rest upon you,’ to portray the image of man, upon the tablet of your members; and shall spring-forth from your womb; The Shoot of Wonder: for this is simply clear to His wisdom, as He has made Adam; and from his rib created Eve, (He) can create within you an infant without seed. • The damsel saw the Man, was true in his promises and she began to reveal to him the truth of her thoughts. If she has received the seed and falls within her hearing: ‘behold I am the handmaiden of the LORD:’ let it be fulfilled in action the good news of your words and will rest within my members, the image of the race of Adam.”³⁷

Gabriel’s appearance To Mary

When time has arrived for God to save mankind, He send angel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary. At the beginning angel Gabriel gave the greeting of peace to Mary the kinswoman of eve, the mother of death, because the Son who will be born from you will loosen the bonds of death. Angel Gabriel is addressing Virgin Mary as a palace of flesh that is going to become an edifice for Jesus. Then he the angel proclaimed the will of God in the ears of the Virgin Mary, telling her God the father has willed to establish His Divine image within your limbs by the power of the Spirit, without the seed of human being. Mar Narsai in his liturgical homilies says:

“There went forth His (good) pleasure, and He came unto His own in order to visit (His own).

As it befits one without limit to visit His own.

He sent His (good) pleasure through a spiritual envoy.

And the vigilant one proclaimed a new message in the ears of flesh.

In a sign of peace, He sowed His (good) pleasure in a land of flesh,

³⁷(Khudra (Prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. Volume 1, the third Sunday of Advent P. 157)

In order to uproot error and sow hope for those without hope.
(a greeting of) peace the vigilant one gave Mary at the beginning of his words.
In order to loosen the bonds of that condemnatory sentence (imposed in Paradise).
Peace He mingled (together) with grace and gave (it) to the pure one,
In order to wash the bitterness that the evil one sowed in the ears of Eve.
Peace to you Mary, kinswoman of eve, the mother of death,
Because to the fruit that (will come forth) from you (will) loosen the bonds of (mortality)!
Peace to you, woman, palace of flesh that (is to become) an edifice for a man,
Because the King has willed to establish His image within your limbs
By the power of the Spirit, He has willed to construct a temple in your womb,
So that it might become (His) a dwelling place and He might dwell therein through (His)
good pleasure.
Without the pigments (of human seed), He depicts an image on the tablet of your body,”³⁸

God the father sends angle Gabriel, the chief of the angels to the City of Nazareth to a virgin engaged to Joseph. The angle of God gave the holy virgin the good news of the conception and birth of the savior of the world. Blessed Mary was troubled by the word of angle Gabriel. She had never heard about the conception of a vergin with a husband. However as soon as the angle of God explained to her the manner of her conception, she submitted her will to the divine will of God. The following anthem says:

“And unto the City of Nazareth Gabriel the Head of the Angels was sent, to proclaim into the ear of The Virgin the Good News of tranquility which rejoices all. The celestial one brought and gave to her the epistle in which peace was marked (*noted*) • ‘Peace be unto you, O Mary,’ said he, ‘from you shall shine forth The LORD of all.’ She was held (*captivated*) in wonder and amazement, and she was troubled by his word; and the angel responded, saying to her, ‘The Power of the Father, will rest upon you.’ • ‘And you shall give birth by the

³⁸ (Narsai’s Metrical Homilies on the Nativity, Epiphany, Passion, Resurrection and Ascension of the Lord. Edited and translated by: Fredrick G. Mcleod, S.J. P.41) (Narsai metrical Homilies Pp. 43-45)

Power of the Spirit to the Son of the Highest, and He shall become the Head, the Lord, and the Judge: and by Him shall Creation be renewed, while singing glory to Him.”³⁹

The difference between the feast of annunciation and the feast of the Nativity of Jesus

Saint Ephrem believes, the feast of the birth of Jesus Christ is greater than the feast of annunciation. He supports his argument by the fact that only one angel announced to the Virgin Mary the good news of the conception and birth of Jesus Christ. However, a multitude of angels announced the birth of Jesus Christ.

“For greater is the joy of the birth than the conception.
Indeed, one angle announced to us Your conception.
The joy of your birth throngs of watchers announced.
Blessed is Your announcement on Your day!”⁴⁰

Yet Narsai thinks Jesus’ conception is glorious simply because He was conceived without the help of the human seed.

“His conception is exalted because it has had no connection with human seed,”⁴¹

We are learning from the following anthem that both, heaven, and earth rejoiced at the time of the annunciation of the conception of Jesus Christ the Savior of the world.

“At the Annunciation of the conception of our Savior; the earthly and spiritual ones have rejoiced; for they have seen that salvation and true life is (*have been*) proclaimed! They cry out ‘glory!’ to the Lord who wills in His grace; and has descended in His mercy, dwelling in the Virgin; and, formed from her a Man, and united HIM to the will of HIS hiddenness;

³⁹ (Khudra (Prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. Volume 1, the second Sunday of Advent, P. 146)

⁴⁰ (Ephrem the Syrian hymns, translated and introduced by Kathleen E. McVey. Paulist press, New York. Mahwah. Hymn on the Nativity, Hymn 22.37 P. 185)

⁴¹ (Narsai’s Metrical Homilies on the Nativity, Epiphany, Passion, Resurrection and Ascension of the Lord. Edited and translated by: Fredrick G. Mcleod, S.J. Pp. 43-45)

henceforth, we all, cry out with the angels; ‘blessed is your annunciation, O, holy and virgin mother.’”⁴²

The feast of the Nativity of our Lord in the flesh is the most holy of all feasts. It is called the chief and mother of all the holy feasts of the Lord. Without the feast of the Nativity of the Lord the other feasts such as Epiphany, Resurrection, Ascension, Pentecost, Transfiguration and finding of the Cross. Saint John Chrysostome says:

“A feast day is about to arrive, and it is the most holy and awesome of all feasts. It would be no mistake to call it the chief and mother of all holy days. What feast is that? It is the day of Christ’s birth in the flesh. It is from the day that the feasts of the theophany, the sacred Pasch [Passover], the ascension and Pentecost had their source and foundation. Had Christ not been born in the flesh, he would not have been baptized, which is the Epiphany or manifestation. Nor would he have been crucified, which is the Pasch. Nor would he have sent down the Spirit, which is Pentecost. Therefore, just as different rivers arise from a single source, these other feasts have their beginning in the birth of Christ.”⁴³

Time of annunciation

According to some of the Church Fathers, Annunciation occurred at 9:00 A.M., on Sunday, March 25. Nonetheless Other Church Fathers say annunciation happened in the year 307 of Alexander, son of Philip of Macedonia on the first of Nissan. Sleemon of Basra says:

“At the ninth hour of the first day of the week, on the twenty fifth of the month of Adar, though some say on the first day of the month of Nisan, which is correct, in the three hundred and seventh year of Alexander the son of Philip, or of Nectanebus, the Macedonian, six months after Elizabeth’s conception of John, the archangel Gabriel appeared to Mary and said to her, ‘Peace be to thee, O full of Grace! Our Lord is with thee, O blessed among women!’ As for her, when she saw (him), she was terrified at his words, and was thinking what this salutation was. The Angel said unto her ‘fear not Mary, for thou hast found grace with God. And behold thou shalt conceive and bear a Son, and thou shall call his name Immanuel, which is interpreted, “our God is with us” This child shall be great, shall be called

⁴² (Khudra (Prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. Volume 1, the second Sunday of Advent, P. 144)

⁴³ (Saint John Chrysostome on the incomprehensible nature of God 6.23-24, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament III Luke, Edited By Arthure A. Just Jr. General Editor Thomas C. Oden. Inter Varsity Press, Downers Grove, Illinois.)

the Son of the Highest.’ Mary said to the Angel, ‘Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to thy word.’ And the angle went away from her. (Luke 1:26-45)”⁴⁴

Mar Narsai believes it was in the month of April that God the Word came down from heaven and dwelled in the temple of the flesh formed by the power of the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary. For Narsai there is a relationship between the time the first Adam was conceived and the time the second Adam was conceived. He believes both (first and second Adam) were conceived at the same time. Based on Narsai’s calculation then the birth of Jesus took place in the month of December.

“In April, He grafted the power of vitality into the vine of her body.
And she carried the cluster that gladness the universe in the month of December.
At the time when the earth conceived the first-born Adam at the beginning,
The second Adam was structured in the earth of her body.
One spiritual being was the envoy who (proclaimed) the annunciation of [conception];
But on the day of his birth, multitude descended and shouted forth (their) glory.
The vigilant one gave a sign to Mary as an assurance of her conception.”
The fruit that has blossomed in sterile which had grown old and wasted [away].
“Behold, Elisabeth has also conceived unexpectedly.
The envoy is conceived before the king who is to come.
And the king is conceived in extraordinary way without intercourse.”⁴⁵

Some fathers of the Church have believed that it was in year 303 of Alexander on the 31st day of March on Sunday at the 9:00 am while Mary was sitting in the temple of God according to some knitting the curtain for the entrance of the holy of holies the angle Gabriel announced the conception and birth of Jesus Christ to her. It is worth mentioning that while Virgin was sitting in the great house of God weaving threads for the curtain of the temple angle Gabriel appeared to her. It is written:

⁴⁴ (Book of the Bee, the Syriac text (Mar Shleemon, Metropolitan of Basra) Edited from the Manuscript in London, Oxford, and Munich. With an English Translation by Ernest A. William Budge, M.A. p.78)

⁴⁵ (Narsai’s Metrical Homilies on the Nativity, Epiphany, Passion, Resurrection and Ascension of the Lord. Edited and translated by: Fredrick G. Mcleod, S.J. P.41) (Narsai metrical Homilies p. 49-51)

“And it came to pass in those days that the chief priests wished to make a curtain (or veil) for the temple. And they sent and brought virgins to weave it, and they appointed Mary to help them to weave it, then Mary rose up and went to the house of the Lord. And in three hundred and third year of Alexander, on the thirty-first day of the month Adar, on the first day of the week, at the third hour of the day, which Mary was sitting by herself in the great house of God, Gabriel, the angel of the Lord, appeared unto her in the form of a venerable old man, so that she might not flee from him. And he said unto her, “peace be unto thee, O thou woman who art full of grace, our Lord is with thee, O thou who are blessed among women.”⁴⁶

Mary visits with Elizabeth

Immediately, following the visit of the angel, the Blessed Mother, St. Mary rose up hurriedly and went to the mountain village of Judea (*Luke 1:39*) “... *it came to pass that when Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit ... and she spoke out with a loud voice, saying ‘blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, and whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? Lo, as soon as the voice of thy greeting fell upon my ears the babe leaped in my womb for joy, and blessed is she that believes for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her by the Lord...’*” (*Luke 1:41-45*)

Immediately after Virgin Mary heard the words of angel Gabriel regarding the conception of Elizabeth with John the Baptist, she went out to visit her to learn about the truth of her conception. Mary, the castle of the King entered the house of Zachariah the priest, greeted Elizabeth the mother of the forerunner. When the herald heard the voice of the mother of the King of Kings, rejoiced in her presence and his mother Elizabeth was filled with the Spirit. Then Elizabeth with a loud voice cried out and said: “Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb. Then she continued saying: But why am I so favored, that the woman who has been chosen from among all the women to

⁴⁶(The History of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the History of the Likeness of Christ, The Syriac Texts Edited with English Translations By E. A. Wallis Budge, M. A., LITT. D.D. Lrr., London: Luzac AND Co. 1899, Pp.21-22)

become the mother of the Lord should come to me? Mar Narsai in the following Hymn says:

“Mary carried the great wealth within her limbs.
And went forth to learn (the truth of) the vigilant one’s words through experience.
The wealth –laden vessel entered the house of poor ones.
And the barren womb suddenly became enriched at the sound of her words.
The castle of the King greeted the mother of the servant.
And the infant began to leap for joy in the womb in the presence of his Lord.
O conceivers who from their infant babes have gained wisdom!
The barren one carries the ‘voice’ of the one who it is written proclaims hope.
The virgin carries the fulfilment of the mysteries and the expectation of the (Gentiles).
The herald heard the voice of the mother of the King of Kings.
And rejoiced in her presence and gave joy to his own mother by the Spirit of (revelation).
The barren one longed for the conception of the virgin
And answered and said: “Blessed is your child above all children!
Who is it who has granted a child (woman the favor) to enter into the presence
Of the woman who has been deemed worthy to become the mother for the lord (of the universe)?”⁴⁷

Thus, it is strongly believed that St. John the Baptist in the womb of his mother (Elizabeth) worshiped Jesus Christ his Lord; He who was still being carried in the womb of his mother Virgin Mary.

As soon as the words of Elizabeth fell upon the ears of the Virgin Mother, she was fully convinced that she is pregnant with the Lord of Glory, and she began praising the Lord God who is in Heaven, saying: “. . . *my soul does magnify The Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, He has regarded the low estate of His handmaiden, . . . from this time forth all generations shall call me blessed . . . for He who is mighty has done great things . . .*” (Luke 1:46-56)

Regarding the visit of the blessed mother to Elizabeth saint Ephraim the Syriac says:

“John jumped for joy to make an announcement concerning his future preaching. The infant of the barren woman exulted before the infant of the Virgin. He sought out His mother’s

⁴⁷(Narsai’s Metrical Homilies on the Nativity, Epiphany, Passion, Resurrection and Ascension of the Lord. Edited and translated by: Fredrick G. Mcleod, S.J. P.41) (Narsai metrical Homilies p. 51)

tongue and desired to pronounce a prophecy concerning the Lord. Therefore, Elizabeth's conception was kept hidden from Mary six months, until the infant would have limbs and sufficiently formed to exult before the Lord with his jumping and become a witness to Mary through his exultation. Moreover, that he exulted in the womb of his mother was not of himself, nor because of his five months, but so that the divine gifts show themselves in the barren womb that was now carrying him. It was also so that the other womb, that of the Virgin, would know the great gifts given to Elizabeth, and that the souls might believe in the seeds they had received through the word of Gabriel, cultivator of both grounds. Since John could not cry out in his exultation and render witness to his Lord, his mother began to say, "You are blessed among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb." Our Lord prepared his herald in a dead womb, to show that he came after a dead Adam. He vivified the soil of Adam through his body."⁴⁸

Blessed Mary staying with Elizabeth.

Mary informed her aunt Elizabeth about the good news that the angel Gabriel had delivered to her secretly regarding her conception with the Son of God by the power of the Holy Spirit. Elizabeth praised Mary and called her blessed are you among women for believing in the fulfilment of the message of God delivered to her by the Angel. Mary replied to Elizabeth saying, "*From henceforth, all generations will call me blessed,*" Then after staying for about three months with Elizabeth, Virgin Mary returns to Nazareth to clarify to Joseph her betrothed husband the mystery of her miraculous conception. It is worth mentioning if Mary had become pregnant through the help of human seed, it would have been right for her to hide herself from her betrothed husband not exposing herself to him. Saint Ephrem says:

"When she 'Mary' had revealed to [Elizabeth] what the angle spoke to her in secret, and that he called her blessed because she believed in the realization of the prophecy and the teaching that she heard. Then Mary gently brought forth the fruit of what she heard from the angle and Elizabeth: "*My soul blesses the Lord.*" Elizabeth had said, "*Blessed is she who has believed,*" and Mary replied, "*From henceforth, all generations will call me blessed,*" It was then that Mary began to preach the new Kingdom. "She returned to her husband to clarify the

⁴⁸ (Saint Ephrem the Syrian, Commentary on Tatian's Diatessaron 1.30, Ancient Christian commentary on Scripture, New Testament III Luke Edited by Arthur A. Just Jr. General Editor Thomas C. Oben. Inter Varsity Press, Downers Grove, Illinois P. 21)

matter, for if she had become pregnant through human fruit, it would have been appropriate for her to flee from her husband.”⁴⁹

The holy mother Virgin Mary remained for a period of three months with Elizabeth; then she returned to her home. According to the writings of the Church Fathers, the reason the holy Mother left her cousin Elizabeth before the birth of John the Baptist, is in this manner: first: It was not fitting that Mary the mother of our Lord should serve Elizabeth the mother of the servant during the time of giving birth to her son John. Secondly: John the Baptist is the lesser light; it would be he who would pinpoint Christ later. John the Baptist is considered the morning star, which shines just before the Sun breaks forth and lightens the whole world, dispelling the light of the morning star. So, the Church Fathers reasoned the attention to the birth of John the Baptist would have been dispelled should the presence of the Virgin Mother be noted; for she carried in her womb, Jesus Christ, The Son of God in His Divinity and the Son of Man in His humanity. Isho dad in His Biblical commentary says:

“And Mary abode with Elizabeth about three months and returned to her [own] house. And why did she return? It would have been fitting according to the custom, that she should now remain longer, and see the new things that were in the birth –giving of her aunt, as not only relatives, but strangers from afar congregated to her. Nevertheless, she went, because it was not fitting that the Mother of our Lord should serve the Mother of the servant. When the time is come for a star to be born, the Sun goes away, that there may be room for the splendor of its light; the Lord gave room for the Servant to be born.”⁵⁰

Some other Fathers of the Church of the East say, Virgin Mary stayed with her aunt Elizabeth for about three months and then she left the house of the priest Zechariah immediately before the time has arrived for Elizabeth to give birth to her son, John, the Baptist, because Elizabeth asked Mary to go back to her own house. Elizabeth believed if Mary who is caring in her womb the lion’s whelp is present at her house the lamb (Baby John) that is in her womb will be afraid to be born. In addition to the above-mentioned reason Mary left the house of

⁴⁹ (Saint Ephrem's Commentary on Tatian's Diatessaron: an English translation of Chester Beatty Syriac MS 709 with Introduction and notes, Carmel McCarthy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993, page 56. 1. 28)

⁵⁰ (*The Commentaries of Isho dad of Merv, Bishop of Hadatha (c.850 A.D.) in Syriac and English*, V.1, P. 153, ed. and tr. Margaret Dunlop Gibson, intro. James Rendel Harris (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1911)

Elizabeth because it is not proper that Jesus the King should be serving His forerunner servant John. Jacob of Serugh says:

“Mary remained three months with the Levites.

And the time came for the sterile woman to bring forth the herald of truth.

the ewe approached and cast herself down in front of the lioness.

and sought from her (Mary) to yield to her (Elizabeth) feeble self.

‘Go, withdrew the lion’s whelp into your calm house.

Because the lamb that is in my womb fears to come to birth on account of Him

The pangs of travail have vexed me, and I fainted and fell down on the couch of pains.

And the one-year-old lamb saw the aged lion and he (the lamb) was struck with terror.

For he would not go out unless that powerful one departed

because it is not proper that the King should be attending to the lowly.

it is not that that the Lord should stand, and the servant should recline.

and there is no means by which the Fire should serve before the straw.”⁵¹

When time has arrived for Elizabeth to give birth to her son John the Baptist, she pleaded Virgin Mary to leave her house. Elizabeth strongly believed it is not possible for Mary the mother of the Lord to serve Elizabeth the mother of the forerunner (Servant). Immediately, Mary rose and returned to her house in Nazareth.

“Rise up, and get thee to thy house, for it is impossible for thee to stand and to minister unto me whilst I am ill in childbed, and it is impossible for the mother of the servant to sleep upon a bed whilst the mother of the Lord standeth ministering unto her. Rise up, and get thee to thy house, and do honour to the gift which hath come unto thee; for nothing which is created can abide it. So, Mary rose up and returned to her house with the hope of the gift which she bore.”⁵²

Mary is called the wife and the espoused of Joseph.

The writers of the holy gospels call Virgin Mary “*espoused to Joseph*” (*Mat 1:18*). Then it is recorded that Joseph had planned to divorce her privately (quietly). (*Matthew 1:19*). Again it is recorded that she is the wife of St Joseph. The Holy Book says that all engaged couples are husband and wife; by way of

⁵¹(Jacob of Serugh, *Select Festal Homilies*, translated from Syriac and introduced by Thomas Kollamparampil, CMI, with a foreword by Sebastian P. Brock, Center for Indian and Inter-religious studies (CIIS), Rome, and Dharmaram Publications (DP), Bangalore 1997 P. 66).

⁵² (*The History of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the History of the Likeness of Christ, The Syriac Texts Edited with English Translations* by E. A. Wallis Budge, M. A., LITT. D.D. Lrr., London: Luzac AND Co. 1899, P6)

an example, Rachel is called the wife of Jacob, before the performance of the marriage ceremony, it is recorded: “. . .and Jacob said to Laban, give to me my wife, for my days are fulfilled that I may go in unto her...” (Gen 29:21) It is also known that, thus, the holy Mother Virgin Mary is recorded in the Holy Bible as the wife of Joseph, even before the marriage ceremony. Within the Orthodox and The Apostolic Church, the Righteous Spouse Joseph is always referred to as the “*betrothed*” thus to confirm the Virginity of the Ever-virgin Mary, even after the birth of Jesus Christ. The birth of Jesus Christ from the Virgin Mary manifests His divinity, whereas His birth of a woman manifests His humanity! As previously noted, it was St Joseph who had the command of God and took Mary to his home. He never did, as her righteous spouse, participate in the consummation of conjugal acts; for it is written: “. . . before they came together, she was found with Child of The Holy Spirit . . .” (Matt 1:18b). The above-mentioned verse from Matthew the Evangelist clearly confirms the conception of the Virgin Mary without the help of the human seed. Mar Narsai says:

“Through the power of the Spirit, He formed him: without the seed of intercourse, *so that He might be in everything like to Adam, the first image.*

For just as through Adam: death entered and corrupted his race.

(so) by Adam, the second image: He will release those oppressed by death.

In everything (belonging to) Adam shared: the man, the second Adam,

And after he was tried through suffering: he redeemed from death (those who (are mortal)).⁵³

Mary is returning to her home:

The response of Elizabeth to Virgin Mary’s greeting. “*Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb, and whence is this to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? Lo, as soon as the voice of your greeting fell upon my ears the babe leaped in my womb for joy and blessed is, she that believes for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her by the Lord.*” (Luke 1:41-45) proves the truthfulness of the words of angel Gabriel. Thus, Mary returned home with a firm hope, carrying in her womb the most precious

⁵³ (Narsai’s Metrical Homilies on the Nativity, Epiphany, Passion, Resurrection and Ascension of the Lord. Edited and translated by Fredrick G. Mcleod, S.J. P.41) (Narsai metrical Homilies p. 109)

gift to mankind, Jesus Christ the Son of God. Narsai says:

“Mary understood that there were proven true the words of the spiritual one
And acquired an unwavering hope within her mind.
To her home she returned with the gift that she was carrying
And was looking forward (to the time) when she would see (her) hope in a visible (form)
For nine months, she sheltered the wealth in the vessel of her body,
Until it descends into the haven of birth according to the order for child-(bearing)
She proceeded amid the waves of calumny (stirred up) by the insolent,
Until she descended to Bethlehem according to expectation.”⁵⁴

Joseph recognizes Mary’s pregnancy:

After six months Joseph realized that Mary was with child. He was troubled in his thinking, what answer will I give to The Chief Priest about Mary’s condition? Now, he began questioning the purity of the Virgin Mother. Joseph asked Mary about the cause of her pregnancy. Mary with tears responded, “*I have never known a man.*” Yet she did not reveal to Joseph her encounter with angel Gabriel. Shleemon of Basra says:

“He (Joseph) asked the Virgin Mother: . . . Whence hast thou this? And who has beguiled thee, O perfect Dove? Wast thou not brought up with the pure Virgins and venerable matrons in the temple of the Lord?’ And she wept, saying, ‘As the Lord God livith, I have never known man not had connexion with anyone; but she did not speak to him of the angle and the cause of her conception.”⁵⁵

Regarding that Joseph is questioning Virgin Mary about the person who has deceived her and destroyed her virginity Jacob of Serugh says:

“O honorable dove, who has cut off the wings of your beauty.
And plucked and carried off the sound feathers of your virginity?”⁵⁶

⁵⁴ (Narsai’s Metrical Homilies on the Nativity, Epiphany, Passion, Resurrection and Ascension of the Lord. Edited and translated by: Fredrick G. Mcleod, S.J. P.41) (Narsai metrical Homilies Pp. 51-53)

⁵⁵ (Book of the Bee, the Syriac text (Mar Shleemon, Metropolitan of Basra) Edited from the Manuscript in London, Oxford, and Munich. With an English Translation by Ernest A. William Budge, M.A. Oxford, at the Clarendon press, 1886. P. 79)

⁵⁶ (Jacob of Serugh, Select Festal Homilies, translated from Syriac and introduced by Thomas Kollampampil, CMI, with a foreword by Sebastian P. Brock, Center for Indian and Inter-religious studies (CIIS), Rome, and Dharmaram Publications (DP), Bangalore 1997 P. 68)

Virgin Mary responds to all the inquiries of Joseph regarding her conception without the help of human seed. She told Joseph that she is not shameful and, nobody has taken away from me the pearl of my virginity. She assures Joseph that she is ever Virgin and the seal of her virginity stands secure. The choice stone which was entrusted to her betrothed husband Joseph is not broken. Jacob of Serugh says:

“Mary said: “it is enough Joseph, conclude your discourse.
In all these matters I am not despicable, my God testifies.
The pearl is guarded in me and it is not stolen,
And the seal of virginity stands firm, and no one has damaged it.
Seals of my maidenhood are preserved, and I am assured.
And the door of the palace of my youthfulness is shut up and I am sealed.
No one has carried away that beryl that is betrothed to you.
And the choice stone is not broken that was entrusted to you.
The fair crown of my youthfulness is preserved in its beauty.
That precious treasure of my virginity stands firm in me,”⁵⁷

Scriptural and natural Testimony for Mary’s Virginity

Mary proves to Joseph her ever virginity by reciting to him examples from the Scriptures and from the nature. She brings to Joseph’s attention the birth of Adam from the virgin Earth and the birth of Eve from Adam without the help of human seeds. In addition to scriptural proves for her ever virginity she brings to Joseph’s attention some additional proves from the law of nature. For example, the tree which gave birth a lamb which will be sacrificed on behalf of Isaac and the rock which gave birth to rivers out of wed lock. Jacob of Serugh says:

“Mary said: “if you seek testimony for my words.
It is easy for you to hear both from Nature and from Scripture.
Who was united (in marriage) to the virgin earth that gave birth to Adam?
And even Adam, with whom was he joined for the birth of Eve?
Who was united (in marriage) with the tree when it gave birth to the lamb?

⁵⁷(Jacob of Serugh, *Selet Festal Homilies*, translated from Syriac and introduced by Thomas Kollamparampil, CMI, with a foreward by Sebastian P. Brock, Center for Indian and Inter-religious studies (CIIS), Rome, and Dharmaram Publications (DP), Bangalore 1997 P. 68)

Or who knew the rock when it gave birth to rivers?
By what spirit did the staff sprout forth in an unusual manner?
Or by what marital union did a lifeless jawbone bring out water?
In these wombs who has generated these offsprings,
For, is this alone, that which happened in me, untrue?
And if you are not convinced by nature, although it is very much true,
Scripture too will not be able to teach you by its secrets.
Read in the prophets and see the story that resembles mine,
“Behold, a virgin shall conceive and give birth to Immanuel?
Is this saying true for you or is it false?
Has it been believed by you or is there still suspicion in your mind?
Joseph said: “There is suspicion regarding you on account of two things.
It is also truly right for me to flee from you.
If your conception is from adultery, God forbid! That in future
I should mix my purity with a body that has committed fornication with strangers.
And if your offspring is from the Spirit, I do not venture.
To approach the pure castle, in which the King has resided.
I do not investigate what your conception is or from whom it is
Because even should I search it out the (same) end would happen to me.
Whether from adultery or from the Spirit, is an object of terror for me.
And why therefore should I debate many things with you?”⁵⁸

Joseph is thinking to divorce Mary secretly:

St Matthew the Evangelist writes: “*Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example . . . Was of the mind to put her away. . .*” (Matthew 1:19) Being a righteous man, the pious spouse Joseph, showed mercy toward his pregnant intended bride, Virgin Mary. He thought within himself, if he divorces her publicly, she would be stoned to death for sinful behavior. According to the Mosaic Law, we are taught that in the event any female who was engaged, and was caught in adultery, was to be stoned to death. The righteous

⁵⁸ (Jacob of Serugh, Select Festal Homilies, translated from Syriac and introduced by Thomas Kollampampil, CMI, with a foreward by Sebastian P. Brock, Center for Indian and Inter-religious studies (CIIS), Rome, and Dharmaram Publications (DP), Bangalore 1997 Pp. 70-72)

Joseph exercised mercy by not wanting Mary, his intended wife to be stoned to death. It is written:

“If a man happens to meet in a town a virgin pledged to be married and he sleeps with her, you shall take both of them to the gate of that town and stone them to death, the young woman because she was in a town and did not scream for help, and the man because he violated another man’s wife. You must purge the evil from among you.”⁵⁹

Mar Isho-dad of Merv in his commentary on the New Testament, regarding the righteousness of saint Joseph say:

“What is that Joseph her husband was a just man, and was not willing, but was minded to Privately? For in what was Joseph seen to be just? For either he knew the Virgin to be holy, or to be corrupted; and if she were corrupted, it was right to expose her and to reprove her. Nevertheless, Joseph was just and merciful, his justice antagonized his mercy, and his mercy his justice; for his justice oppressed him, that he should not allow an adulteress within his house; and his mercy counselled him, that he should send her away privately; because he knew that he would deliver her to death, if he exposed her; therefore, he thought of merely sending her away. And that privately, that is, on the one hand, because he would not transgress the law by living with a guilty woman; and on the other hand, as he had compassion on her, he knew that if she were exposed, she would be liable to death.”⁶⁰

In all of this, the righteous spouse, Joseph was both a righteous and merciful man/spouse! It is the righteousness of Joseph which oppressed his mercifulness; and, to the contrary, it was the mercifulness of Joseph which oppressed his righteousness. Why? Because of his righteousness he was forced not to keep an adulteress woman in his pious home. And it was his mercifulness forcing him not to officially divorce the Virgin Mary. He chose rather to consider doing so privately. He knew that had he made it public he, himself, would be delivering her to an awesome terrifying stoning death, according to the Law of Moses.

⁵⁹ (Deuteronomy 22:23-25)

⁶⁰ (*The Commentaries of Isho dad of Merv, Bishop of Hadatha (c.850 A.D.) in Syriac and English*, V.1, P. 13, ed. and tr. Margaret Dunlop Gibson, intro. James Rendel Harris (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1911)

As we consider this passage, we see the Righteous Spouse St Joseph is thinking as a normal human being; what to do? It was God who had revealed to him just exactly what he was going to do. In a dream, God showed him that the Virgin Mary had conceived by The Power of the Holy Spirit. It was here that God had released the righteous Joseph from his human (wrong) thinking. He was alerted not to act upon any wicked action, as it affects the Virgin Mary. God fulfilled this by sending forth an angel to the Righteous Joseph. It is written: “. . . *while he thought upon these things, behold the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying: ‘Joseph, thou son of David, do not fear to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of The Holy Spirit.’*” (Matthew 1:20)

The Angel of the Lord explained to the Righteous Joseph, further: “. . . *she shall bring forth a Son, and you are to call Him, ‘Jesus,’ for He shall save His people from their sin . . .*” (Matthew 1:21) You are to call Him Jesus, which means “*savior*” the Name Jesus reveals to us exactly the mission which Jesus Christ would fulfill here upon earth (as The Savior of humankind). To assure and confirm to the righteous Joseph the conception of The Virgin Mary, the Angel recalled and recited the prophecy of the Prophet Isaiah, “. . . *behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son and shall call His Name Emmanuel.*” (Isaiah 7:14)

It is recorded in the gospel of Saint Mathew that the angel of God told Joseph the betrothed husband of Mary. “*The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel*” (which means ‘God with us’”). (Matthew 1:23) Isho dad of Merv in his biblical commentary is asking, why the Angel said: “*He shall be called Emanuel, yet we do not always call Him that.*” Isho Dad explaining the meaning of the name Emmanuel says: “*We say, that is a custom of Scripture to tell names instead of facts,*” Our Lord Jesus Christ was called by fifty-two names, each one of these names signifies one quality or characteristic of our Lord. Thus, some of these names signify His Divinity, and some of them signify His Manhood; and some of them signify the person of the Unity. So, the name Jesus signifies about His Manhood; but the name Emmanuel signifies the person of Unity who is a perfect Man and a perfect God. Isho dad of Merv says:

“And it is asked, why the Angel said: He shall be called Emanuel, yet we do not always call Him that. We say, that is a custom of Scripture to tell names instead of facts, like this passage, Hasten the spoils, and hurry the booty; for the boy was not called so; but in order to say, that in his birth there was captivity and spoil, and thou shalt be called the city of Righteousness, and the city of faith, for it was not called thus, but it continued to be called Jerusalem; since he indicates that deeds were done in it beyond its human name; or he calls it so that it may rest in that deed, in the truth of the thing instead of the name. Thus, also this Emmanuel; for Emmanuel signifies God and Man; that God is with us; all is in this, because He is like us in nature, and because He is the Mediator and High Priest of our profession with God, and because by means of Him we are made familiar with God, who is incarnated. And if anyone doubts about how He is called Jesus above, but here Emmanuel, let him know this, that our Lord is called by fifty-two names, some of them being about His Divinity, and some of them about His Manhood; some of them are appropriate to the person of the Unity; thus, Jesus signifies by adoption about His Manhood, by energy about His Godhead; but Emmanuel signifies about the person of Unity which is from Godhead and Manhood.”⁶¹

Saint Matthew the Evangelist very carefully recorded the words of angel Gabriel delivered to Joseph saying: “*That that which is born in her is of the Holy Spirit, when He was not yet born, and he did not say, that which is conceived in her? And again, that which is born in her, but not from her?*” (Matthew 1:20). The angel of the Lord by saying: “*that which is born in her*” is trying to avoid attaching the Divine Word of God, (*God the Word*) to the birth as heretics, out of their ignorance do. However, in another place the same evangelist says: “*that from her was born Jesus who is called Christ.*” Fathers of the church of the East believe that: “*that which is born in her*” signifies His Divinity and “*that which is born from her*” signifies His Humanity. “Nestorius says that the Lord is with thee, and the Lord is from thee; with thee on the one hand in Godhead, from thee on the other hand in manhood.”⁶²

Based on this Biblical understanding the fathers of the Church of the East confess two natures in Jesus Christ: The Divine nature born from God and the Human

⁶¹ (*The Commentaries of Isho dad of Merv, Bishop of Hadatha (c.850 A.D.) in Syriac and English*, V.1, P. 14, ed. and tr. Margaret Dunlop Gibson, intro. James Rendel Harris (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1911)

⁶² (*The Commentaries of Isho dad of Merv, Bishop of Hadatha of Assyria (c.850 A.D.) on the New Testament, Edited and Translated by Margaret Dunlop Gibson, introduction by James Rendel Harris, M.A. Volume I, P. 150, Cambridge, At the University Press 1911*)

nature born from Mary. These two natures are not mixed, not comingled but rather eternally united in one person of Sonship. Thus, the son of Mary and the son of God are not two sons but one Son Jesus Christ. Isho dad of Merv says:

“It is asked, why does Matthew say, that that which is born in her is of the Holy Spirit, when He was not yet born, and he did not say, that which is conceived in her? And again, that which is born in her, but not from her? Here the heretics are foolish, because by this they attach God the Word to the birth, as if God was born in her; but let them know, that that very Evangelist said above, that from ‘her was born Jesus who is called the Christ; for that confounds them, that it is of the Holy Spirit; for if God the Word is born by the Holy Spirit, then He is made and not the Maker; and the heresy of the Arians will rejoice. Again, that which is born in her, makes vain this, that she shall bring forth a son, which is put afterwards. For if He were born in her, how can she again bring forth? Then two births are left to one conception. Therefore, this that which is born in her, is put instead of that which is conceived.”⁶³

Virgin Mary tried her best to convince her betrothed husband Joseph that she is conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit. Joseph was not willing to believe her because her conception without the help of human seed was not ordinary.

Joseph being a righteous man did not want to put her to shame, nor to take her as a wife for himself. He thought he will divorce her secretly. It was at this time that the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and convinced him that the Virgin Mary is innocent, and she is in truth conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit. The angel of God brought to Joseph’s attention the promise of God to King David that from his descendants according to the flesh He will raise up Messiah. The angel also assured Joseph that the conception of Virgin Mary is the fulfilment of the prophecies of the Old Testament. Lastly the analogy of the birth of Eve from Adam alone without a mother prefigures the birth of Jesus Christ from the Virgin Mary without a human father. Saint Ephrem says:

“Mary was trying to convince Joseph that her conception was from the spirit, but he did not accept (it) because it was an unwonted thing. When he saw however that her countenance was serene, although her womb was heave, he was not willing to put her to shame, being a just man, (Mtt.1:19) but neither (was he willing) to receive her as a husband, for he thought

⁶³*(The Commentaries of Isho dad of Merv, Bishop of Hadatha (c.850 A.D.) in Syriac and English, V.1, P. 13, ed. and tr. Margaret Dunlop Gibson, intro. James Rendel Harris (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1911)*

that she had had intercourse with another man. In his uprightness therefore he judged that he should not take her, but also that he should not denounce her. Saint Ephrem says: *“Therefore, the angel appeared to him and said, Joseph, son of David, (Matthew 1:20) to remind him of David, the head of his ancestors, to whom God had made a promise that from his descendants (Psalms 132:11) according to the flesh he would raise up Messiah. Do not be afraid to take Mary your spouse, because what is in her is from the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 1:20) If you are in doubt as whether the virgin’s conception was without intercourse, listen to Isaiah who said, Behold the virgin will conceive, (Isaiah 7:14) and to Daniel, A stone was cut off, but not with (human) hands.(Daniel 2:34, 45) This is not like that (other passage), look at the mountain and the well; (Isaiah 51:1-2) since that (passage implies), a man and a woman, whereas here it is (written), not with (human) hands. Just as Adam fills the role of father and mother for Eve, so too does Mary for our Lord.”*⁶⁴₃₎

Mary asks Jesus to reveal the truth of her conception to Joseph.

Virgin Mary while she was fixing her eyes on her womb with a great sorrow prayed to her unborn Son. Asking Him to reveal the truth related to her conception to all those who are longing to learn about her conception above the rule of nature and especially to her betrothed husband Joseph, the foster father of Jesus so that he (Joseph) may not perish but rather enjoy Jesus’ Nativity. Saint Jacob of Serugh says:

“With sighing utterances, she whispered to her son gently.
And with prayers she spoke to Him mournfully.
She turned her eyes towards her womb discerningly.’
Having fixed her eyes on her womb affectionately.
“O true One, for whom I am calumniated, manifest your truth.
Let the truth of your mother be not hidden from the needy ones.
Reveal your action to the foster father whom you have there for you on earth,
Lest he be alienated from the mystery of your nativity.
O Merciful One, merciful as you are, have pity on his righteousness.
And with your revelation let his heart rejoice and let him forget his suffering.
My Son, do not hide your conception from him so that he may not perish,
Defend your mother so that he may not be in doubt.”⁶⁵

⁶⁴ (Saint Ephrem's Commentary on Tatian's Diatessaron: an English translation of Chester Beatty Syriac MS 709 with Introduction and notes, Carmel McCarthy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993, page 61,

⁶⁵ (Jacob of Serugh, Select Festal Homilies, translated from Syriac and introduced by Thomas Kollampampil, CMI, with a foreword by Sebastian P. Brock, Center for Indian and Inter-religious studies (CIIS), Rome, and Dharmaram Publications (DP), Bangalore 1997 P.72)

The angle of God is revealing the truth of Mary's conception to Joseph:

While Joseph was thinking about divorcing Mary secretly an angel of God appeared to him in a vision explaining to him "*the doubtful Joseph*" the truth about Virgin Mary's conception. The angel of God called Joseph "*the son of David*" to remind him that Mary's conception is the fulfillment of the prophecy of Jacob which says: "*From the house of David there would shine forth the King*" and again it is the fulfillment of the Prophecy of Isaiah saying: '*Behold a virgin shall conceive and give birth to Immanuel.*'" (Isaiah 7:14) Jacob of Serugh says:

"And when the thoughts have carried Joseph that what he should do, He was immersed in sleep because he had been doubtful in (this) worry. The herald came to manifest the truth to the one who doubted. And to explain to him the revealed truth in a hidden vision. He called and said to him: "O son of David, do not be in doubt. At the beginning of his phrase, he gave the crown to him, seeing that he is the son of David. He called him 'son of David' indicating to him that he might understand. That from the house of David there would shine forth the king of whom Jacob had written. Do not be alarmed or doubtfully afraid of her. Because the offspring from her is the One who removes the earth's adultery. This, which has happened is what Isaiah too proclaimed: 'Behold a virgin shall conceive and give birth to Immanuel.'" ⁶⁶

Joseph believes in the divine conception:

The Pious and Righteous Spouse, St Joseph did not know about the significant event which would take place in the world through his intended bride and wife; and the role in which she would be involved (in it). Thus, as he witnessed that the intended bride and wife was pregnant (or heavy with a Child), God in His eternal mercies did not leave him (Joseph) in doubt. God revealed this Mystery of Virgin Mary's pregnancy to St Joseph through the Prophets and the Angels.

⁶⁶ (Jacob of Serugh, *Select Festal Homilies*, translated from Syriac and introduced by Thomas Kollampampil, CMI, with a foreword by Sebastian P. Brock, Center for Indian and Inter-religious studies (CIIS), Rome, and Dharmaram Publications (DP), Bangalore 1997 Pp73-74)

Thus, in that revelation of God Joseph's doubt was eliminated. It is written: “. . . then Joseph being raised from his sleep, did as the Angel of the Lord had commanded him, and took unto himself, his engaged intended.” (Mat 1:24).

Jacob of Seugh says:

“Come, enter and be mistress of the habitation of your virginity.
And while I rejoice, I will minister to your holiness.
Behold, from today I have dismissed from my mind (the idea of) marital union,
And to your purity I am submitting myself because your Son is my Lord.”⁶⁷

Virgin Mary lived with her betrothed husband, Joseph the righteous till our Lord entrusted her to John the beloved disciple. Since then, Joseph became a Cherub of flesh to the Virgin Mary. He served, adorned, and honored her in a holy manner. Jacob of Serugh says:

“Joseph led the believing woman and she entered with him,
And the virgin lived with the holy man in continence.
He was serving and adoring and honoring her and being glad before her,
Extolling, confessing, and serving her in a holy manner.
Holding back in awe from her while hearing her prudently,
His body is sanctified and his heart shining together with its thoughts.
The Carpenter became a Cherub of flesh for the Artificer of the universe,
And with virtue he took up the service in great fear.”⁶⁸

The faith of St Joseph caused him to be submitted to The Divine Will of God, and he in turn demonstrated his strong faith by his active deed, when he became the guardian of the Virgin Mary and her Son Jesus Christ. The individuals who do not believe that Jesus Christ in His manhood is born of the Virgin Mary for the salvation of Mankind, are to be considered as the sons of perdition and have

⁶⁷ (Jacob of Serugh, *Select Festal Homilies*, translated from Syriac and introduced by Thomas Kollampampil, CMI, with a foreword by Sebastian P. Brock, Center for Indian and Inter-religious studies (CIIS), Rome, and Dharmaram Publications (DP), Bangalore 1997 P.75)

⁶⁸ (Jacob of Serugh, *Select Festal Homilies*, translated from Syriac and introduced by Thomas Kollampampil, CMI, with a foreword by Sebastian P. Brock, Center for Indian and Inter-religious studies (CIIS), Rome, and Dharmaram Publications (DP), Bangalore 1997 Pp.75-76)

no portion in the gifts of eternal life, nor of Christian salvation. Jacob of Serugh says:

“He saw the virgin; he folded his hands and prostrated before her.

“Peace be with you, the mother of the king who has come to our world.

I am adoring the womb, the conveyance of the Lord of kings.

I am believing in you, young girl, who carries the Lord of truth.

..... Now that I have learned, I will not cease from His praise.

I would become a herald of truth for Him among the calumniations.

Come, enter and be mistress of the habitation of your virginity.

And while I rejoice, I will minister to your holiness.

Behold, from today I have dismissed from my mind (the idea of) marital union,

And to your purity I am submitting myself because your Son is my Lord.”⁶⁹

Joseph as a step farther embraced the Son, Jesus and he served Him as God.

Now Joseph is free of doubt. He strongly believes Jesus is the Son of God. He

also considers, it is a blessing to be the foster father of the Son of God. So,

Joseph, not knowing that Virgin Mary had carried the Saviour of the world in her womb planned to divorce her. Saint Ephrem says:

“Joseph caressed the Son.

As a babe, He served Him.

As God, He rejoiced in Him.

As in a blessing, and he was attentive to Him.

As to the Just One a great paradox!

“Who has given me the Son of the Most High

To be a son to me? I was jealous of Your mother.

And wanted to divorce her, (Matt.1:19) I did not know.

That in her womb was a great treasure.

That would suddenly enrich my poverty.”⁷⁰

⁶⁹ (Jacob of Serugh, *Select Festal Homilies*, translated from Syriac and introduced by Thomas Kollampampil, CMI, with a foreword by Sebastian P. Brock, Center for Indian and Inter-religious studies (CIIS), Rome, and Dharmaram Publications (DP), Bangalore 1997 P. 75)

⁷⁰ (Ephrem the Syrian hymns, translated and introduced by Kathleen E. McVey. Paulist press, New York. Mahwah. Hymn on the Nativity, Hymn 22.16, P. 108)

People, out of their ignorance thought Joseph was the father of baby Jesus. So, Jacob of Serugh in one of his poems is asking Joseph to come and show who the father of the baby Jesus is.

“O Joseph, come, show to us the Father of the Child
Since you are treated wrongly because of Him and the truth calls out that you are not His father.”⁷¹

The conception of the Virgin Mary taught mankind a new way of conceiving and giving birth to a child. She conceived without the help of human seed. And in her virginity, she gave birth to Jesus the Son of God. Saint Ephrem says:

“And since the lyre looks toward its master,
My mouth looks toward You. Let Your will arouse.
Your mother’s tongue. Since I have learned by You
A new way of conceiving let my mouth learn by You.
A new (way of) giving birth to new glory.
“If difficult things for You are not difficult.
But easy, so that the womb conceived You.
Without intercourse, and without seed
The womb gave birth to you, it is easy for the mouth.
To be fruitful and to multiply your great glory.”⁷²

The angle of God announces the conception of Jesus to Mary not to Joseph:

The angle of God announced the news of the conception and birth of John the Baptist to Zachariah. He did not announce it to Elizabeth, simply because, Elizabeth had a husband and Zachariah was the biological father of John. Joseph the betrothed husband of Mary had no relationship with the conception and birth of Jesus. It was the Virgin Mary who alone, by the power of the Holy

⁷¹(Jacob of Serugh, *Selct Festal Homilies*, translated from Syriac and introduced by Thomas Kollampampil, CMI, with a foreward by Sebastian P. Brock, Center for Indian and Inter-religious studies (CIIS), Rome, and Dharmaram Publications (DP), Bangalore 1997 P. 125)

⁷² (Ephrem the Syrian hymns, translated and introduced by Kathleen E. McVey. Paulist press, New York. Mahwah. Hymn on the Nativity, Hymn 15, P. 146)

Spirit, conceived and gave birth to the first-born son of God. Thus, the angle of God did not announce it to Joseph but rather to Mary alne. Saint Ephrem says:

“Zachariah went to the angel, that it might be seen that his child was inferior to the angle. The angle came to Mary, that it might be known that her child was the angle’s Lord. The angle came to the Temple, lest it be pretext for those who wanted to find a pretext for an alien [God] (luke1:11 and Ps. 110:1) the angle did not go to Elizabeth, for Zachariah was the progenitor of John. Nor did Gabriel go to Joseph, since it was Mary alone who gave birth to the first–Born. Gabriel did not go to Elizabeth, because she had a husband, but he went to Mary that he fulfils in his [own] name the symbolic place of a husband. God has heard the voice of your prayer. (Luke 1:13) If [Zachariah] had known that this was to be, he would have prayed well. But if he had not believed that this was to be, he would have made supplication poorly, [His prayer] was close to being realized; he was in doubt as to whether it would be.”⁷³

The Birth of our Lord in the Flesh

It is recorded in the writings of the Fathers of the Church that Jesus Christ was born in the year 307 of Alexander, son of Philip, which was the year 43 of Augustus Caesar and in the 35th year of Herod the king, in the month of first Kanoun (December) 25 of it, on Wednesday at night before the cock crows. At the time of the birth of Jesus Palestine was under the jurisdiction of the Roman Empire. A year earlier, the Emperor Caesar Augustus of Rome had sent to Quirinius, the Ruling Governor of Syria, and ordered him to take a census of his region for taxing purposes. Thus, all men went to their own hometown to register according to the law.

Joseph too went forth from Galilee to Bethlehem the City of David in Judea to register his name. He took his betrothed wife Mary with him. Currently, Mary was almost at the time to give birth and was only 13 years old. Joseph, being incredibly careful about her condition, placed her on the back of a donkey.

⁷³ (Saint Ephrem's Commentary on Tatian's Diatessaron: an English translation of Chester Beatty Syriac MS 709 with Introduction and notes, Carmel McCarthy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993, page 45. 1.11)

They started their three-mile trip towards Bethlehem and Joseph noticed that she had laid her hand upon her abdomen, her face was wrinkled with discomfort and Joseph knew the time was coming. Mary requested Joseph quickly to make an accommodation for her because the labor was setting in.

As they reached Bethlehem, Joseph comfortably placed Mary on the ground and immediately went to look for a mid-wife. He found a mid-wife whose name was Shalom and she guided them to a nearby stable where she helped Mary give birth to Jesus. When Joseph had returned to the cave, he saw that the cave was bright with light and behold a Child wrapped in swaddling clothes was laid in the manger.

There were Shepherds who had been watching their flock at night, then suddenly the angel of God appeared to them, with the glory of the Lord shining about them, the shepherds were very much afraid. The Angel said to the shepherds not to fear for they have come to announce to them a joyful tidings that Christ the Lord was born to them in the City of David. They had been given a sign, the sign was, they will find a Baby wrapped in swaddling clothes, laying in a manger. The Angelic Hosts joined in the great choir of The Heavenly being singing: *“Glory to God in the Highest and on Earth peace and a good home to mankind.”* (Luke 2:14) Saint Ephrem writes the angel said to the shepherds:

“Today there is born to you a life-Giver (Luke 2:11) (The angel) did not say, “There is born a man, who will be a Life-Giver, or who will be a Messiah,” but rather, *today there is born to you a Life-Giver, who is;* not “who is to become,” but who is the Lord, the Messiah.”⁷⁴

As soon as the Angelic hosts disappeared into Heaven, the shepherds said to each other *“let us go, now, to Bethlehem to see what has come to pass, that which the Lord has made known to us . . . and they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph with The Babe laying in the manger.”* (Luke 2:15-16)

⁷⁴ (Saint Ephrem’s commentary on Tatian’s Diatessaron, Carmel McCarthy. Published by Oxford University press on behalf of the University of Manchester, 1993, page 66, II.13.)

Thus, immediately after the departure of the angels the shepherds who were watching their sheep at night came to Bethlehem to worship the Baby Jesus. These shepherds did not come with empty hands. They brought three kinds of gifts with them: one for Joseph, one for Mary and one for the Baby Jesus. Saint Ephrem the Syriac also believes, that by the Divine power of God, the Magai came to meet Baby Jesus in the same day the shepherds visited Him.

“Now Mar Ephraim says that the shepherds came with gifts of three kinds; flesh, and milk, and praise; flesh as for Joseph; milk, as for the mother; praise as for the Child; and he says also that the coming of the Magi was accomplished also in that day by the Divine mandate working marvels. Now the Birth was revealed to the Shepherds; in His Resurrection to a woman, His gospel was entrusted to publicans and fishermen, and tent-makers.”⁷⁵

On the very night Jesus was born an angle was send by God to Persia Iran of today to inform them about the birth of the King of kings. The angle arrived at Persia at the time the inhabitants of the land were celebrating a national festival, in which they were worshipping the fire and the stars. This feast was annually celebrated on the twenty - fifth day of the first Kanun, which is the exact day of the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ. As soon as a great light shone upon them, they left everything and without delay they went out to see what the light was instructing. They saw a bright star, standing over Persia. Then the Persian kings asked their priests, saying. “What is this star which we see?” They immediately answered, saying, “The King of kings is born” And this star which we have seen is one of our gods who has come to inform us about the birth, so that we may go and offer unto Him gifts and worship Him. E.A. Wallis Budge says:

“And on that night a watcher was send into Persia, and he who showed himself unto the Persians in the form of an exceedingly brilliant star, which lit up the whole region of their country. Now all the people of Persia were celebrating a great festival, wherein they were worshipping the fire and the stars, on the twenty - fifth day of the first Kanun, which is the day

⁷⁵ (*The Commentaries of Isho dad of Merv, Bishop of Hadatha (c.850 A.D.) in Syriac and English*, Volum.1, P. 158, ed. and tr. Margaret Dunlop Gibson, intro. James Rendel Harris (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1911.)

of the festival of the birth of Christ; and all the Magians were arrayed in their festal apparel, and they were proudly celebrating their festival, when suddenly a great light shone upon them. And they left their kings, and their feasting, and their pleasures, and their houses, and they went forth to see what the light was; and they saw a fiery star, which was like unto the great sun in its light, standing over Persia. Then their kings cried out unto their priests, saying, "What is this sign which we see?" And involuntarily they answered, as in prophecy, saying, "The King of kings is born, and the God of gods, and "the light of light. And this star is one of our gods "who hath come to inform us concerning the birth, "So that we may go and offer unto Him offerings and pay homage unto Him." ⁷⁶

Esho'dad of Merv in his commentary on the gospel of Matthew records that Jesus Christ was born in the month of the first Kanoun (December) 25 of it. And in the month of Nissan the Magians came from the East to worship the newly born King and offer Him gifts. But Babhai the Persians depending on the teaching of the Sacred Scriptures believes in the day and the night that our Lord was born the Magians came.

"A calculation concerning what year of Alexander and at what time (of year) our Lord the Christ was born. In the year 307 of Alexander, son of Philip, which was the 43rd year of Augustus Caesar, in the 35th year of Herod the king of the Jews, in the month of the first Kanon (December), on the 25th of it, on a Wednesday, in the night before cockcrow, our Lord was born of the Virgin, she is being 13 years of age; and she died at 51 years of age; and at that time Quirinus was sent a governor; and in the month of Nissan the Magians came. But Babhai the Persians said that in the day and the night that our Lord was born the Magians came; and not after two years, as those who have not investigated say; and this, he says, is quite evident from the scriptures, that when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, there came Magians; now they were three sons of kings, and nine from among the nobles of the lands; and the king of the Persians who sent the Magians was called Pirshabour; and these came by the guidance of the likeness of a star. "Lo, we saw his star in the east, because in the midst of the star was shown the likeness of Virgin embracing her son; and it is evident from

⁷⁶ (The History of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the History of the Likeness of Christ. The Syriac Texts Edited with English Translations by E.A. Wallis Budge, M.A. LITT. D. D. Lit., London Luzac and Co. 1899. Pp. 34-35)

many things that it was not real star, nor an imagination, nor a fantasy, nor automation, but an angle who shone like a star from Persia to Bethlehem;”⁷⁷

Father Mansur Al Mukhales says, the Magians set out from their county early in the morning, at the time cockcrows. They followed the star which appeared to them and at the day - break they arrived at Jerusalem.

“So, the three men, who were kings, and sons of kings of Persia, took, as in a mystery, three pounds of myrrh, and another three pounds of gold, and another three pounds of frankincense; and having arrayed themselves in their costly apparel, with their crowns on their heads, and their treasures in their hands, they went forth from their country at the time cockcrows (early in the morning), along with nine (eminent) men who were with them. And they began to travel along the road, and to follow the star which had appeared unto them. That same angle who carried the prophet Habakkuk from Jerusalem (to Babylon), and who carried food to Daniel the prophet when he had been cast into the den of lions in Babylon, by the power of the Holy Spirit carried the kings of Persia to Jerusalem. They set out from Persia at cockcrow, and at the day - break they entered Jerusalem. And they asked the people of Jerusalem, saying, “Where was the king born? We have come to see Him.”⁷⁸

The letter Yodh of the Aramaic language also stands for the number 10. Saint Ephrem in his Hymn of the Nativity connects the first letter (Yodh) of the Aramaic version of the name Jesus, ‘Isho’ to the tenth of April, the day of the incarnation of God the Word in the Virginal womb of the blessed Mary. In addition to that Number ten is considered a perfect number and number six the date of His birth in January, is considered a perfect number as well. Saint Ephrem says:

“Light was like a harbinger.

To the Bright One to whom Mary gave birth,

⁷⁷ (*The Commentaries of Isho dad of Merv, Bishop of Hadatha (c.850 A.D.) in Syriac and English, V.1, Pp. 14-16, ed. and tr. Margaret Dunlop Gibson, intro. James Rendel Harris (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1911.)*)

⁷⁸ (Father Mansur Al Mukhales, *Rawaa al a’ayat (The Magnificent of Feasts), Christian Major Feasts, the twelve Feasts, Baghdad, 1998, Pp. 35-36*)

For His conception was in the victory of the sun. Blessed be the Conqueror!

“Yodh” stands at the beginning of Your name.

It stands at the tenth in the month of April.

On the tenth You entered the womb.

Your conception was in a symbol of the perfect number.

The number ten is complete.

On the tenth of April You entered the womb.

The number six is also perfect.

On the sixth of January, Your birth gave joy to the six directions.”⁷⁹

Jesus Christ was born in Kanon, the month that earth does not produce fruits. It was on this month that the Virgin Mary gave birth to the hope and redeemer of the whole world. The Son whom Mary gave birth is the light of the world. He, Jesus, is the Lord of all, equally worshipped with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. Sons and daughters of the Church of the East by means of the following anthem pray as follows:

“In the month of Kanon, in which the earth does not yield fruits, the LORD desired to show the fruit of the Virgin which was the cause of all good things and the good hope of all creatures. And HE is the True Light, Christ the LORD of all, worshiped with His Father and His Holy Spirit.”⁸⁰

Jacob of Serugh compares the birth of Jesus (His descending) in the month of Kanun to the descending of the degrees of cold weather. And he connects His ascension into heaven in the month of Huziran (June) to the lengthening of the day light and expulsion of darkness.

“He (*Jesus*) descended in *Kanun*, as also the sun descends in degrees.

⁷⁹ (Ephrem the Syrian hymns translated and introduced by Kathleen E. McVey. Paulist press, New York. Mahwah. Hymn on the Nativity, Hymn 27, Pp.210-211.)

⁸⁰ (Khudra (prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. the second Monday of the season of Advent, Volume. 1, P. 148.)

He ascended in *Haziran* and by His light He chocked darkness.”⁸¹

The time of the birth of Jesus namely the month and the season in which He (Jesus) was born reveal the conditions of people at that specific period. Jesus was born in the month of January when nights were too depressing because of their length. He was born in winter when the whole world was miserable and, stopped generating new lives. It was at such time that Jesus Christ the gladdener and, the Savior of the world was born. Saint Ephrem says:

“In January when the nights are long,
Daytime without limit hone forth to us.
In winter when the whole creation is gloomy
The beauty that gladdened all of creation emerged.
In winter that made the earth barren,
Virginity learned to give birth.
In January that stilled the birth pangs of the earth,
The birth pangs of virginity came.”⁸²

We have said in the beginning that at the time of the birth of Jesus the King, Emperor Caesar Augustus of Rome had sent to Quirinius the Ruling Governor of Syria and ordered him to take a census of his region for taxing purposes. The purpose of this census was to show that people are indebted to the Roman Emperor. In contrast, Jesus Christ was born to cancel our debt of breaking the commandment of God in paradise and to pay it in full by His death on the Cross. It is recorded in the book of Exodus (Ex.12: 3-6) that Moses commanded the people of Israel saying on the 10th day of April take an

⁸¹(Jacob of Serugh, Selct Festal Homilies, translated from Syriac and introduced by Thomas Kollampampil, CML, with a foreward by Sebastian P. Brock, Center for Indian and Inter-religious studies (CIIS), Rome, and Dharmaram Publications (DP), Bangalore 1997 P. 342.)

⁸² (Ephrem the Syrian hymns translated and introduced by Kathleen E. McVey. Paulist press, New York. Mahwah. Hymn on the Nativity, Hymn 4, Pp.98-99.)

unblemished lamb, sacrifice it, and sprinkle its blood on their doorframes as a sign of protection from the angel of death. It is believed that this action of the Israelites prefigures the descending of God the Word on the 10th day of April and closed Himself with a Human body formed by the power of the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary. So, Jesus the Sun of righteousness was born in the month of January when the light begun to conquer darkness (Satan). Saint Ephrem the Syriac says:

“On the birth of the Son, the king was enrolling.
The people in the census,
So that they would be indebted to him. To us the King came out
To cancel our debts, and He would be indebted to us,
The sun conquered and engraved a symbol.
On the degrees that it ascended. Since it ascended
It is twelve days, and today is.
The thirteenth; a perfect symbol
(January 6, the thirteenth day since December 25, the day of the Conquering Sun.)
Of the birth of the Son and of His Twelve.
Moses shut in the lamb in April.
On the tenth day a symbol of the Son
Who came into the womb and closed Himself up?
On the tenth day, He came out from the womb.
In this month when the light conquers.
Darkness is defeated to signify.
That Satan is defeated, and light conquers.
To shout out that that the First - born is victorious.
The dark One is defeated with the darkness,
And our Light conquers with the sun.”⁸³

⁸³ (Ephrem the Syrian hymns translated and introduced by Kathleen E. McVey. Paulist press, New York. Mahwah. Hymn on the Nativity, Hymn 5, Pp.107-108.)

Everything related to the birth of Jesus Christ took place according to the plan of God. From His birth in Bethlehem of Judaea, the house of bread, or His conception in April the month in which earth begins to bring forth life. As Saint Paul says, Jesus took upon Himself a form of a slave to liberate mankind from the slavery of Satan, sin, and death. Thus, the Lord wisely chose two months to fulfil His earthly Ministry; April (Nisan) for His conception and January (Canun) for His birth. Saint Ephrem says:

“In this blessed month in which manumission takes place,
The Lord came to slavery to call the slaves to freedom.
Blessed is He who brought manumission!
The Lord of the months chose two months for his action:
His conception took place in April (Nisan) and His birth in January (Conun).
In April He sanctified those conceived, and those He freed in January.”⁸⁴

The birth of Jesus the King of Kings at the time Emperor Caesar Augustus was governing was not accidental. The meaning of the name of the Roman Emperor Radiance or happiness pre-figured the birth of Jesus the King who will bring Joy and happiness to the whole world. The enrollment of the names of people in books for the tax purpose also is a symbol of the enrollment of the names of the followers of Jesus the King in the book of life. Saint Ephrem says:

“In the year of that king, who is called,
“Radiance,” (Caesar Augustus) our Lord shone forth,
Among the Hebrews, and “Radiance” and “Dawn”
Came to rule: a king on earth.
And the Son on high. Blessed be His power!
In the day of the king who enrolled people
For the poll tax, our Savior descended,
And enrolled people in the Book of life

⁸⁴ (Ephrem the Syrian hymns translated and introduced by Kathleen E. McVey. Paulist press, New York. Mahwah. Hymn on the Nativity, Hymn 22, P. 180.)

He enrolled (them), and they enrolled Him. On high enrolled us.
On earth they enrolled Him, Glory to His Name!”⁸⁵

Fathers of the Church in the following Anthem have compared the conception and giving birth of the Virgin Mary without the help of human seed to the Rod of Aaron. The rod of Aron sprouted and put forth buds without being planted in the Earth and without being irrigated. The rod of Aaron, by producing the fruit of wonder has revealed the power of the almighty God. The God who is omnipotent. God who can do everything He wills. After the same manner that same power of the almighty God came down from heaven and rested upon the Virgin Mary and made her worthy to conceive and give birth to the Savior of the world without the help of the human seed.

“Like the rod of Aaron put forth buds; Thus, the virgin was conceived, O unfaithful Jew; because that which was not planted, and it was not irrigated, it sprouted forth. The virgin without a husband, and without seed was conceived by the command of God. That rod was showing forth the fruit of wonder; and the Power of the Most High came and rested upon the one filled with grace. And was made worthy to give birth to Jesus Christ, the Savior of the World. HE, unto whom we give worship, saying; ‘Great are You, O LORD, in the (Your) dispensation of Your Grace, Lord of all, Glory be to You.”⁸⁶

The conception and birth of Jesus Christ from the Virgin Mary took place in accordance with the plan of God prophesied by the Prophets of the Old Testament. Micah prophesized about the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem of Judea. On the other hand, the name of King Herod was mentioned to indicate that the promise which the prophecy of Jacob delivered saying, the scepter shall not depart from Judea has fulfilled. Isho 'Dad says:

⁸⁵ (Ephrem the Syrian hymns translated and introduced by Kathleen E. McVey. Paulist press, New York. Mahwah. Hymn on the Nativity, Hymn 18, P.159.)

⁸⁶ (Khudra (prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. the third Sunday of the season of Advent, V. 1, P. 155.)

“Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod; for he recalls the place and the time, in order to show that all things took their fulfilment according to the voices of the prophets. Bethlehem, on the one hand, according to what Mica had prophesied, and thou also Bethlehem of Judea, art not little, etc. He mentioned Herod, on the other hand, on account of the promise which the prophecy of Jacob delivered. The scepter, it said, shall not depart from Judea, etc.; destroyed the genealogy books of the Jews; so as to make it appear that he came of the good stock of the Jews; and the robe of the priesthood was put beneath his seal.”⁸⁷

The following anthem describes all the activities which took place on the day of the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ.

“Shone to us from Mary the begetter of Christ, the hope of the whole world. The manger first carried Him, and now the Cherubim and Seraphim celebrate Him. And from the breast He nursed. Behold giving life to the whole world. The shepherds are rejoicing. And the Magi are offering presents. The angels unceasingly with the voice of thanksgiving say: ‘glory to God in the Highest, and upon earth peace, and a good for mankind.’”⁸⁸

Saint Jacob of Serugh talks about the two births of Jesus. He believes in His Divinity He (Jesus) is born from God the Father before time, and in His Humanity, He is born of the Virgin Mary at the end of time. Both of Jesus’ births are mysterious and indescribable.

“Neither that (birth) from the Father nor that from Mary is explained because unique is your nativity, hidden as well as revealed and it is ineffable.”⁸⁹

⁸⁷ (*The Commentaries of Isho dad of Merv, Bishop of Hadatha (c.850 A.D.) in Syriac and English*, V.1, P. 15, ed. and tr. Margaret Dunlop Gibson, intro. James Rendel Harris (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1911.)

⁸⁸ (Khudra (prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. the Commemoration of Saint Mary Mother of Christ. V. 1, P. 601

⁸⁹ (Jacob of Serugh, *Selct Festal Homilies*, translated from Syriac and introduced by Thomas Kollampampil, CMI, with a foreward by Sebastian P. Brock, Center for Indian and Inter-religious studies (CIIS), Rome, and Dharmaram Publications (DP), Bangalore 1997 P. 45.)

From the moment of conception, until birth, a child goes through the nine months of physical developments in its mother's womb. Jesus Christ, as a perfect man, was not exempted from this as he also remained in the womb of the Virgin Mary for nine months. Jacob of Serugh says:

“And when the edifice of His flesh was perfected spiritually.
And the structure of His corporeality stood ready in abundance,
And when He had accomplished the full measure of nine months,
The begetter of Adam wished to come into birth in due order.”⁹⁰

The date of the celebration of the Feast of the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ depends on the date of the annunciation of the Virgin Mary. For those who believe annunciation took place on March 25, the nativity of our Lord occurred on December 25th. However, those who believe that the Annunciation took place on April 6th, the Nativity of our Lord in the flesh occurred on January 6th. Father Mansur Al Mukhales, says:

“The celebration of the feast of the Nativity of our Lord entered the ecclesial liturgies in the West and in the East since the third and fourth Century but in different dates and with different meanings. The feast of Nativity was celebrated in the West on December 25th (First Kanoun) and in the East on January 6. It is recorded in the Historical documents that this feast was known in Rome before the Year 336. It has been said that the feast of Nativity was appointed to replace an ancient heathen feast of the birth of the sun which neither can be conquered nor will ever suffer. This feast occurs on December 25th, the date winter season overcomes on the 25th of December. Thus, the Church has always practically used the symbol of the sun in speaking about the Messiah, the Word of God which enlightens the World. (Malachi 4:2, John 8:12) It appears from the recent research that the date of this feast (Feast of Nativity) depends on the date of the Crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ which occurred on the 25th of March. And in the books of the fathers of the Church of the third century an ancient theory has been seen, this ancient theory says the Lord Jesus Christ entered and left the world on the same date. In other words, the date of the commemoration

⁹⁰ (Jacob of Serugh, *Selct Festal Homilies*, translated from Syriac and introduced by Thomas Kollampampil, CMI, with a foreward by Sebastian P. Brock, Center for Indian and Inter-religious studies (CIIS), Rome, and Dharmaram Publications (DP), Bangalore 1997 P. 76.)

of His Crucifixion (death) and of His conception are the same (March 25th). Then the date of the birth Christ on December 25th was assigned 9 months after blessed Mary on the day of annunciation on March 25th accepted Him in her pure womb. Those who believe annunciation took place on March 25th celebrate the Nativity of the Lord on December 25th. And those who believe annunciation took place on April 6th celebrate the Nativity of our Lord on January 6th.”⁹¹

The Place of the Birth of Jess:

Jesus Christ was born in the blessed town of Bethlehem. The town which was envied by fortified towns and cities. Saint Ephrem likens, the needy girl, Virgin Mary whom the virgin daughters of great men envied to Bethlehem whom towns and cities were envied as well.

“Blessed are you, Bethlehem, whom fortified towns
And fortified cities envied.
Mary, like you, women envied,
And virgin daughters of powerful men.
Blessed is the girl He found worthy to indwell,
And also, the town He found worthy to inhabit.
A needy girl and a small town
He chose to humble Himself.”⁹²

The following anthem says the prophecies regarding the birth of the promised Messia rested (fulfilled) in the blessed city of Bethlehem.

“In the viliage of David the promise (of God) towards David is fulfilled: and the course of prophets rested in Bethlehem. In the viliage of David the promise of prophesy is fulfilled, Christ the King has come and fulfilled their preachment.”⁹³

⁹¹ (Father Mansur Al Mukhales, Rawaa al a'ayat (The Magnificent of Feasts), Christian Major Feasts, the twelve Feasts, Baghdad, 1998, P. 21)

⁹² (Ephrem the Syrian hymns translated and introduced by Kathleen E. McVey. Paulist press, New York. Mahwah. Hymn on the Nativity, Hymn 25, Pp.302-303)

⁹³ (Khudra (prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. the forth Sunday of the season of Advent. V. 1, P. 169)

Prophecies about the virgin birth:

The birth of Jesus Christ from the Virgin Mary made all the prophets rejoice. Because it was on this day that their prophecies were fulfilled. Some of the prophets who prophesied the birth of a Savior are: King David the ancestor of Jesus Christ in the flesh, Isaiah is another one who prophesied the birth of Emmanuel from a Virgin and Zachariah is considered another one. Jacob of Serugh says:

“On this day let the band of the prophets rejoice.
Because behold, their secrets are explained by your nativity,
On this day let David, your father, touch his chords.
And with his harp let him sing about your nativity because it has appeared openly.
On this day let Isaiah too be aware in his tomb
Because behold, the Immanuel has come, as he prophesied.
On this day let the son of Amos come to praise
Because I have given birth to a babe, yet I am a virgin as he wrote about me.
On this day let Zachariah be awakened to rejoice with us
Because you are the man whose name is “Sunrise” in prophecy?”⁹⁴

Prophet Jeremiah had a pupil his name was Baruch. When he was personally offended, left His mentor, went out and settled in a heathen country. There he learned twelve languages and wrote a book called Avesta. Baruch now known as Zardusht prophesied about the birth of Jesus Christ from a Virgin without conjugal intercourse. Zardusht also informed his followers as soon as you see a special star on the sky be advised that the savior of the world is born. Go worship Him and present unto Him offerings, three gifts, gold, myrrh, and frankincense; because He is the King of kings,” Isho Dadd say:

⁹⁴ (Jacob of Serugh, *Selct Festal Homilies*, translated from Syriac and introduced by Thomas Kollampampil, CMI, with a foreward by Sebastian P. Brock, Center for Indian and Inter-religious studies (CIIS), Rome, and Dharmaram Publications (DP), Bangalore 1997 P. 87.)

“For it is written there, that as Zardusht was sitting at a fountain of water, a place that had been established as a bathing place for the ancient kings, he opened his mouth and said to his disciples, “hear, O my beloved, and sons whom I have educated in my doctrine; for in the latter days a virgin, a daughter of Hebrews, shall without conjugal intercourse bring forth a son in whom somewhat of the Divine nature shall dwell, and He shall do wonderful miracles and signs, and at His birth a star shall be shown to you. Go, bring Him offerings, three gifts, gold, myrrh, and frankincense; as He is the King of kings,”⁹⁵

God promised King David that one of his sons would set on his throne forever. This promise was fulfilled by the birth of Jesus Christ. Because it was Jesus Christ who was sent by God as a faithful Shepherd, to save the world. Saint Ephrem, in his commentary on Tatian’s Diatessaron says:

“If Mary had been from another tribe, it would have been a lie [to have said], *from the house of David*. For the angel said, *The Lord will give him the throne of his father, David*. (Luke 1:32) He is the son of Mary, however, and not the son of Joseph. He did not appear in the body from any other lineage, except from David. For [the prophet] said, *there will come forth a shoot from the stock of Jesse, and a scion (Implant) will blossom from his root*. (Isaiah 11:1) Zachariah also testified [to this] when he said, *He has raised up for us a horn of Salvation in the house of David, his son*. (Luke 1:69) In like manner also the apostle said, *Our Lord Jesus Christ came from Mary, from the seed of the house of David*. (a citation from the apocryphal third letter of Saint Paul to Corinthians 3 Cor.5) written about 190-206 AD.) He wrote to Timothy as well, remember Jesus Christ, he who rose from the dead, he who came from the seed of the house of David. (Timothy 2:8) In the Letter of the Romans he said, it was promised beforehand in the Holy Scriptures, concerning his Son, who appeared in the flesh from the seed of the house of David.”⁹⁶

The Birth of Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the Prophecy of Jacob. Saint Matthew has mentioned all the prophecies regarding the conception and birth

⁹⁵ (The Commentaries of Isho dad of Merv, Bishop of Hadatha (c.850 A.D.) in Syriac and English, V.1, P. 19, ed. and tr. Margaret Dunlop Gibson, intro. James Rendel Harris (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1911.)

⁹⁶ (Saint Ephrem’s commentary on Tatian’s Diatessaron, Carmel McCarthy. Published by Oxford University press on behalf of the University of Manchester, 1993. Pp. 54-55.1.26.)

of Jesus in his gospel to the birth of the Savior of Mankind in the flesh took place according to the plan of God. Theodore of Mopsuestia says:

“The Patriarch Jacob had already anticipated this very time precisely when he said. “The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs.” Matthew brought these same prophetic testimonies forward in order to show from them that everything came about according to the words of the prophets. On the one hand, he showed that Christ would come from Bethlehem, as had been said by the prophet. On the other hand, he demonstrated that this saying of Jacob prefigured that this was to occur in the time of Herod.”⁹⁷

On the day Jesus Christ was born, Magaies from the city of Shushan in Persia directed by an angle of God came to Bethlehem where Babay Jesus was. They worshipped him and offered him three gifts as they were instructed by their prophets. Gold of Faith, Myrrh of hope and the frankincense of love.

“So, the three men, who were kings, and sons of kings of Persia, took, as in a mystery, three pounds of myrrh, and another three pounds of gold, and another three pounds of frankincense; and having arrayed themselves in their costly apparel, with their crowns on their heads, and their treasures in their hands, they went forth from their country at cockcrow, along with nine men who were with them. And they began to travel along the road, and to follow after the star which had appeared unto them, when that same angle who took from Jerusalem (to Babylon) the prophet Habakkuk, and who carried food to Daniel the prophet when he had been cast into the den of lions in Babylon, by the power of the Holy Spirit carried the kings of Persia to Jerusalem. They set out from Persia at cockcrow, and at the day - break they entered into Jerusalem. And they asked the people of Jerusalem, saying, “Where was the king born? We have come to see Him.”⁹⁸

The Holy family Fled from Bethlehem to Egypt:

Following the visit of the Magi and their return to homeland, The Angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream; he commanded Joseph saying “. . . *get up and take The Child, and His mother and flee to Egypt, stay there until I instruct otherwise . . . Herod is searching for The Child to destroy Him... Joseph rose*

⁹⁷ (Ancient Christian commentary on Scripture, New Testament 1a, Matthew 1-13, Edited by Manlio Simonetti, General Editor Thomas C. Oben Inter Varsity Press, Downers Grove, Illinois P. 21)

⁹⁸(The History of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the History of the Likeness of Christ, The Syriac Texts Edited with English Translations By E. A. Wallis Budge, M. A., LITT. D.D. Lrr., London: Luzac AND Co. 1899, Pp.35-36)

up and took The Child and His mother, and left the region that night for Egypt, and He remained there till the death of Herod, to fulfill the Words of God which were said by the Prophet, 'out of Egypt I have called My Son. . .'" (Matt 2:13-15)

The Holy Family on their way to Egypt, had encountered two thieves. One of them was named Titus and the other Dumachos. It was the direct wish of Dumachos to rob the Holy Family; however, Titus, interrupted the intention of Dumachos, and delivered the Holy Family from the robbing intention of his thief friend. The Holy Family arrived at the city gates of the city of Hermopolis. On both sides of these gigantic gates, there were two images made of lead. These images were created by wise and philosophers, and it is recorded in the Church tradition that they spoke like men. As the Holy Family entered the city it was these very images which spoke out with a loud voice saying: ". . . a Great King has entered into Egypt . . ." ⁹⁹

When the Egyptian Pharaoh heard about this incident, he was terribly disturbed and troubled. His fear was that of threatening his Kingdom; it might be taken away from him. His curiosity arose within his heart, wanting to know who the Royal Dignitary who entered his kingdom was.

Jesus remained in Egypt for two years till Herod the King had died an evil death. After Herod who had killed the children of Bethlehem and the surrounding region (at the time of the Birth of Christ Jesus), Herod Archelaus, his son, who had beheaded John the Baptist, governed in his stead. Then, it was the Angel of the Lord who went to Egypt and said to Joseph ". . . get up, take The Child and His mother, and set out for the land of Israel, for those who had designs on the Life of The Child are dead. He rose up and returned to the land of Israel. He had heard, however, Archelaus had succeeded his father Herod as the king of Judea, and he was afraid to go back there, because of the

⁹⁹ (Mar Shleemon, Metropolitan of Basra, Book of the Bee, the Syriac text Edited from the Manuscript in London, Oxford, and Munich. With an English Translation by Ernest A. William Budge, M.A. Oxford, at the Clarendon press, 1886. p.87)

warning he received in a dream, Joseph went to the region of Galilee, and there he settled in a town called Nazareth, in this way was the Prophet fulfilled, 'He shall be called a Nazarene.' ” (Matt 2:19-23)

Mary prophesied about the future of the gentile and gentiles.

While Joseph and Mary were traveling to Egypt, he (Joseph) saw that Mary's face was sometimes depressing, and sometimes pleased. Joseph asked her "What is that bothers you, O Mary?" Mary sadly replied to Joseph, "O Joseph, I vision two distinctive things which are surprising me. First, I see the nation of Israel suffering for not accepting the promised Messia. And secondly, I see the gentiles who are living in darkness, accepting the savior of the world and thus, the light shining upon them. It is recorded in the History of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the History of the Likeness of Christ.

“And it came to pass in the three hundreded and fourth year of Alexander that the registration [ordered by] Caesar Augustus took place, wherein every man was to register himself in his country, and in his city; and Joseph took Mary to go to his city Bethlehem. And as he and Mary were journeying along the road, he saw that Mary's face was sometimes sad, and sometimes glad. And Joseph answered and said unto Mary, "What aileth thee, O Mary?" And Mary said unto Joseph, "O Joseph, I see two distinct things which are full of wonder for me. I see the nation of Israel, which though being in the light, weepeth and mourneth, and I see that it is like unto a blind man that seeth not the sun. And I see the Gentiles, who are uncircumcised, and who dwell in darkness, and I see that light springth up upon them and round about them; and behold, they rejoice and are glad, even as is the blind man whose eyes have been opened and he seeth the light.”¹⁰⁰

Virgin Mary in the Prophecies of the Old Testament:

There are many prophets in the Old Testament such as David, Isaiah and Daniel who are prophesying about the birth of the promised Messiah from a virgin. All these prophecies were fulfilled in the birth of Jesus Christ from the Virgin Mary without the help of human seed. Saint Ephrem says:

¹⁰⁰ (The History of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the History of the Likeness of Christ, The Syriac Tecxts Edited with English Transalctions by E. A. Wallis Budge, M. A., LITT. D.D. Lrr., London: Luzac AND Co. 1899, Pp.31-32)

“Therefore, *the angel appeared to him and said, Joseph, son of David.* (Matthew 1:20) It was a wonderful thing that [the angle] also called him, son of David, to remind him of David, the head of his ancestors, to whom God had made a promise that from his descendants (Ps 132:11) according to the flesh he would raise up the Messiah. *Do not be afraid to take Mary your spouse, because what is in her is from the Holy Spirit.* (Matthew 1:20) If you are in doubt as to whether the Virgin’s conception was without intercourse, listen to Isaiah who said, Behold the Virgin will conceive, (Isaiah 7:14, Matthew 1:22-23) and to Daniel, *A stone was cut off, but not with [human] hands.* (Daniel 2:34-35) This is not like that [other passage], look at the mountain and the well; (Isaiah 51:1) since that [passage implies] a man and a woman, whereas here it is [written], Not with [human] hands, just as Adam fills the role of father and mother for Eve, So too Mary for our Lord.”¹⁰¹

The Fathers of the Church also acknowledge that there are many symbols, images, types in the Bible which denote to the Virgin Mary. They extensively studied and commented on these prophecies, symbols, types and signs recorded in the Old Testament. Many of these symbols and signs are included in the liturgical books of the Church. They believed, blessed mother is indeed the woman referred to in Genesis 3:15. “*And I will put enmity between you and a woman, and between you and her offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike hid heel.*” Yes, it was the son of a woman ‘Virgin Mary’ our Lord Jesus Christ, who bruised the head of Satan on the Cross.

Many religions, Christians and non-Christians address Blessed Mary as the “Virgin Mary”. Prophet Isaiah many centuries before the Advent of Christ prophesied about her saying: “*Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name, Immanuel which is interpreted God with us.*” (Is 7-14 (Mat 1:23) Fathers of the Church in the following Anthem declair that this Prophecy of Isaiah has come into fulfillment in Virgin Mary.

¹⁰¹ (Saint Ephrem’s commentary on Tatian’s Diatessaron, Carmel McCarthy. Published by Oxford University press on behalf of the University of Manchester, 1993, p. 66.II.13)

“This is The Virgin of Isaiah, which is (recorded) in his fourth volume, revealing that she would become the Mother of The Lord, and the begetter of the Son of the Highest.”¹⁰²

The meaning of the name of the Virgin Mary:

In the Aramaic language the name ‘Mariam’ is derived from the root ‘Rama, Ram’ which means; high, exalted, dignified, and elevated. In the following anthem the writer compares the Virgin Mary with heaven and, says as we expect from Heaven, so she is high and exalted.

“O, Reader, do not blame me, for calling her The Heaven; and, as I expect (*anticipate*) from Heaven, (*for She is the*) virtuous, high and exalted one. Our Lord who was hidden in Heaven, for six thousand years, and mankind was not saved, till she became unto Him a dwelling place (*a secon heaven*).”¹⁰³

Saint Ephrem also writes about the greatness and the exaltation of the name of the Virgin Mary. He makes it clear that Mary is exalted simply because of her Son Jesus Christ.

“Blessed are you also Mary, whose name.
Is great and exalted because of your Child.”¹⁰⁴

It was by prophecy that the Holy Mother was called Mary because she was exalted by her Son. It is written in the flowing anthem:

“Praise (cheerfulnee) unto you O Splendid womb; for you have prepared (all) happiness for the entire race of mortals; for the King Christ has shone forth unto us from you in wonder (*marvel*): when the head of the angels was proclaiming unto you the gospel, which was filled

¹⁰² (Khudra (prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. the Commemoration of Saint Mary Mother of Christ. V. 1, P. 610)

¹⁰³ (Khudra (prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. the Commemoration of the Saint Mary Mother of Christ. V. 1, P. 609)

¹⁰⁴ (Ephrem the Syrian hymns, translated and introduced by Kathleen E. McVey. Paulist press, New York. Mahwah. Hymn on the Nativity, Hymn 25, 14. P 203)

with tranquility. Peace unto you, O blessed among the women; for by you Eve and her children are blessed; for behold she was cursed from the beginning. Mary the blessed mother; by prophecy you were thus named, because you were exalted by your Son. Unto this hope they were awaiting; the Righteous prophets in their ages; through the mystery of their proverbs; they called Him by The Names of Wonder. David called him: the Son of Wonder. The son of Amos called Him: Wonder, Councilor, and The Almighty (Father), and The Savior of the world; Son of The Highest (*exalted*) sublime is your annunciation; glorified is Your conception: marvelous is Your birth; exalted is the Lamb (*offspring*) which shone from you; for the depth and height which were angered have been reconciled with us; Reconciled unto us by The Father who has sent Him unto human race: glory be unto Him •”¹⁰⁵

Mary the type of the Church:

The fathers of the Church described the motherhood of the Church in relationship to the Virgin Mary the mother of Christ. In many writings of the Church fathers, Mary and the Church are sharing the same titles. The relationship of Mary and the Church is established on the doctrine of the second Eve. It is recorded in the Sacred Scriptures that the first Eve, the mother of mankind was born from the side of the first Adam, and the second Eve, Virgin Mary “the holy Church” the Mother of all the believers, was born from the side of the second Adam, Jesus Christ. Thus Eve, as a mother of all the children of Adam, is a type of the Church who begets and gives birth to all the faithful believers in eternal life. Saint Ephrem in his Hymn on crucifix makes Mary the type of the Church. He says Mary who first saw the risen Jesus is a type of the Church which will be the first to see the signs of the second coming of Jesus Christ from heaven.

“Mary who saw him,
is a type of the Church, which first

¹⁰⁵ (Khudra (Prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. Volume 1 Anthems of the tone of the aid , P. 28)

is to see the signs of his coming.”¹⁰⁶

Saint Ephrem in his Hymn on faith compares Virgin Mary to many different things. First, he compares her to the Church. He says as the risen Jesus in His Divinity is present in the Church so was, He present in His Divinity present in the womb of the Virgin Mary. Holy Mother for nine months became a church and carried within her womb Jesus Christ. Secondly, in the same Hymn, Ephrem is relating Virgin Mary who is carrying within her womb the Son of God to the cloud which carried and embraced Him as He was ascending into heaven.

“There was Mary whom I saw therein,
The pure conception, there was the Church,
And the Son within her; a likeness of that cloud
Which carried him, symbol of heaven
From whence streams forth his glorious radiance.”¹⁰⁷

The birth of Jesus from the Virgin Mary is the fulfilment of the prophecy of the Old Testament. It is written: “*The Lord will raise up a prophet for you, not any ordinary one, but one like me, (Deut. 18:15)*. Everything that Moses did during his earthly ministry, for example: feeding the people of Israel with Manna in the wilderness, walking in the red sea, were types of those things which Jesus would do in the future. Jesus fed thousands of the hungry people in the wilderness and He too walked on the sea. Moses liberated his people from the oppression of Pharaoh. After the same manner Jesus liberated the Church from Circumcision. Moses entrusted his people to Joshua, son of Nun and Jesus entrusted Mary, His Church, to John the beloved disciple. Saint Ephrem in his commentary on the New Testament likens Mary to the Church:

“When they were satisfied, therefore, they saw that he had fed them in the wilderness, as did Moses through prayer, and they cried out saying, this is the prophet concerning whom it was

¹⁰⁶ (Geevarghese Panicker, the Church in the Syriac Tradition. SEERI, Baker Hill, Kottayam - 686 001, Kerala, India P. 24, Crucifix 4, 17)
(Saint Ephrem, Hymn on Crucifix 4, 17, quoted from Saint Ephrem Ecumenical Research Institute (Seeri) Baker hill, Kottayam -685001, Kerala, India P 24)

¹⁰⁷ (Ephrem, Hymn on faith 81, 4. quoted from Saint Ephrem Ecumenical Research Institute (Seeri) Baker hill, Kottayam -685001, Kerala, India P. 26)

said that he would come into the world. (John 6:14) They were repeating that [would] of Moses, The Lord will raise up a prophet for you, not any ordinary one, but one like me, (Deut. 18:15) who will feed you bread in the desert. Like me, he walked on the sea, (Matthew 14:25-31) and appeared in the cloud. (Matthew 17:5) he freed his Church from circumcision, and established John, who was a virgin, in place of Joshua, son of Nun. He confided (revealed) Mary, his Church, to him, (John 19:25-27) as Moses [confided] his flock to Joshua, (Deut. 31:7-8) so that this [word], like me might be fulfilled.”¹⁰⁸

Both, the Eastern and western fathers of the universal Church have recognized the Virgin Mary as a type of the Virgin Church. And the espousal of the Virgin Mary to Joseph the righteous prefigured the espousal of the Church to Jesus Christ the heavenly Bride Groom. The Virgin Mary conceived and gave birth to the only begotten Son of God by the power of the Holy Spirit. After the same manner the virgin Church, by the power of the Holy Spirit, conceives and gives birth to her spiritual sons and daughters from the womb of the Baptism. Saint Ambrose says:

“And, therefore, he who had undertaken to prove the incorrupt mystery of the incarnation thought it fruitless to pursue evidence of Mary’s virginity, lest he be seen as a defender of the Virgin rather than an advocate of the mystery. Surely, when he taught that Joseph was righteous, he adequately declared that he could not violate the temple of the Holy Spirit, the mother of the Lord, the womb of the mystery. We have learned the lineage of the Truth. We have learned its counsel. Let us learn its mystery. Fittingly is she espoused, but virgin, because she prefigures the church which is undefiled (Ephesians 5:27) yet wed. A virgin conceived us of the Spirit, a Virgin brings us forth without travail. And thus perhaps Mary, wed to one, was filled by another, because also the separate churches are indeed filled by the Spirit and by grace and yet are joined to the appearance of a temporal priest”¹⁰⁹

The Church is the mystical body of Christ. Saint Paul says: “*As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ.... Now you are Christ's body, and individually parts of it.*” (1 Corinthians 12:12, 27) Thus Christ Himself represents the whole

¹⁰⁸ Saint Ephrem’s commentary on Tatian’s Diatessaron, Carmel McCarthy. Published by Oxford University press on behalf of the University of Manchester, 1993 p. 192.12.5)

¹⁰⁹ (Ambrose: Exposition of the Gospel of Luke 2:6-7) (EHG36) Ancient Christian commentary on Scripture New Testament Volume III, Luke, Edited by Arthur A. Just Jr. General Editor, Thomas C. Oden, Inter Varsity press, Downers Grove, Illinois, 1953, Page 14)

congregation of believers. He is the head of the church and sons and daughters of the Church are members of His mystical body. Therefore, Mary who gave birth to Jesus Christ (the Church) is necessarily the mother of the Church.

“He calls (Christ) here the whole assembly of believers, because from Him we have received the communion of the Spirit about the hope of the Resurrection; and He is our Head, and we are all members of Him. Now by the broad illustration of various members of one body, some of whom are smaller, and some more honorable, he showed and taught, and admonished, that although there are among you those whose gifts are superior, that they should not despise those whose gifts are small; because ye also need the use of the gifts that these have, even if they are thought to be small.”¹¹⁰

The Virgin Church was espoused to the heavenly Bride Groom Jesus Christ by John the Baptist on the Jordan River. Again, the Virgin Church that gives birth to her children in Baptism by the power of the Holy Spirit is likened to the Virgin Mary who gave birth to a Son by the power of the Holy Spirit. Jacob of Serugh says:

“Let the virgin Church who is betrothed to you rejoice in you, my Lord,
When she sings to you knew praise with an exalted voice.”¹¹¹

It was on the First Sunday of the Holy Resurrection that the risen Jesus purposely showed Himself to a woman, Mary Magdalene. By doing so He taught His followers a mystery concerning His Church and His mother. On the day of His birth in the flesh, His mother, the Virgin Mary was the first to receive Him. And on the day of His glorious resurrection, the risen Lord was pleased to show Himself first to a woman. Thus, in the beginning and in the end of His earthly ministry, the name of his mother is mentioned. Mary is likened to the church who first embraced the gospel of salvation proclaimed to her by angel Gabriel. And like the church, she was the first to bring the good news of the resurrection of the Lord to Simon peter. Thus, it is fitting to call the church itself ‘Mary’ because it is appropriate for Mary to have two names. Saint

¹¹⁰ (*The Commentaries of Isho dad of Merv, Bishop of Hadatha (c.850 A.D.) in Syriac and English*, V.1, P. 38, ed. and tr. Margaret Dunlop Gibson, intro. James Rendel Harris (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1911)

¹¹¹ (Jacob of Serugh, *Selected Festal Homilies*, translated from Syriac and introduced by Thomas Kollampampil, CMI, with a foreword by Sebastian P. Brock, Center for Indian and Inter-religious studies (CIIS), Rome, and Dharmaram Publications (DP), Bangalore 1997, P. 127)

Ephrem in the Memre of the Holy week compares Mary to the Church. Though there is an undeniable 'fusion' of the Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalene. There is possibility that the cause of the fusion is the name of the Virgin Mary with Mary Magdalene. It is believed that the name Mary is used as a functional title to imply Virgin, Mother and Spouse.

“He drew Mary Magdalene
To come and see his Resurrection.
And why was it first to a woman
That he showed his resurrection, and not to men.
Here he showed us a mystery
Concerning his church and his mother,
At the beginning of his coming to the earth
A virgin was first to receive him.
And at his raising up from the grave
To a woman he showed his resurrection.
In the beginning and in his fulfilment
The name of his mother cries out and is present.
Mary received him by conception
And saw an angle before her.
And Mary received him in life
And saw angles at his grave.
Again, Mary is like the church,
The Virgin, who was born the first fruits by the Gospel
In the place of the church, Mary saw him.
Blessed be he who gladdened the Church and Mary.
Let us call the church itself 'Mary'
For it befits her to have two names.
For to Simon, the Foundation,
Mary was first to run,
And like the church, brought him the good news
That our Lord had risen and was raised up.
Fittingly did she come to Simon
And bring him the good news that the son was risen,
For he was the Rock and foundation
of the church of the Gentiles, the elect. (ef Lamy 1, 531-3)
And again, little later:
But Mary type of the church

Looked into the sepulcher (Lamy 1, 535)”¹¹²

Again, saint Ephrem in his hymn on Nativity sees the Church as a virgin mother typified by Mary as foretold by Isaiah:

“Blessed art thou, O church, in whom rejoices
Even Isaiah in his prophecy:
‘Behold, a virgin will conceive and bring forth
A child’ whose name is a great mystery.
O for the explanation that was revealed in the Church!
Two names, which were joined together and become one.
Emmanuel, El is with you always,
Who joins you with His members?”¹¹³

And a little later saint Ephrem says:

“But Mary type of the church
Looked into the sepulcher.” (Lamy 1, 535)¹¹⁴

The feasts and Commemorations of the Virgin Mary are celebrated with a great solemnity in the Church on earth and in the Church in heaven. Thus, on the day of the Commemoration of the Virgin Mary, believers on earth unite their voices with the voice of angels and saints in heaven. From the following anthems we experience the degree and the level of joy with which the commemorations of the Virgin Mary are celebrated. “Behold the Church thunders and celebrates in glory on the day of the Commemoration of the Virgin Mary. And, The Angels rejoice and all mankind delights on the day of the Commemoration of the Virgin Mary.”

¹¹²(Ephrem, Memre of the Holy week, (ef Lamy 1, 531-3. quoted from Saint Ephrem Ecumenical Research Institute (Seeri) Baker hill, Kottayam -685001, Kerala, India P. 25)

¹¹³ (Ephrem the Syrian hymns, translated and introduced by Kathleen E. McVey. Paulist press, New York. Mahwah. Hymn on Nativity, Hymn 25. 5, P. 201)

¹¹⁴ (Ephrem Hymn on Nativity 25, 5. quoted from Saint Ephrem Ecumenical Research Institute (Seeri) Baker hill, Kottayam -685001, Kerala, India P. 26)

Sons and daughters of the Church always offer their petitions to God on behalf of the Holy Church through the intercession of the Virgin Mary the mother of Christ. In the following anthem the sons and daughters of the Church on the day of the Commemoration of the Virgin Mary are beseeching the Holy Mother to intercede on behalf of the the whole world as well as on behalf of the holy Church. The writer of this anthem by saying: “And when into the clouds, you are gloriously elevated;” gives a hint to the ascension of the Virgin Mary into heaven.

“The blessed mother who has brought rest to the distressed world from the oppression of the adversary; beseech your Son to spread forth (open-wide) His wings upon the inhabited world which the wicked-one has disturbed because we have sinned; and to remove from it conflict, and wars; and, desire for it (the world), peace, tranquility and perfect love • So that the kings of the Earth, and the rulers; may quietly and in piety govern the affairs of our nation; and that the priests and people in the true (orthodox) faith may present to Your Son, the gifts of glory; and when into the clouds, you are gloriously elevated; and unto His way, at the end, among the saints • like a mother, beseech on our behalf; and, like a Lady, request on our behalf so that we may find mercy in the Presence of Your Son, glory be unto HIM!”¹¹⁵

The Birth of the Church from the side of Christ:

The birth of Eve, the mother of mankind from the side of the first Adam, (Gen. 2:21-22) is a type of the birth of the Church on the Cross, from the pierced side of the second Adam, Jesus Christ. Saint Ephrem, in his commentary on the Diatessaron, commenting on John 19:34 says:

“There came forth blood and water, which is the Church, and it is built on him, just as (in the case of) Adam, whose wife was taken from his side. Adam’s rib is his wife, and the blood of our Lord is his Church. From Adam’s rib there was death, but from our Lord’s rib, life. The olive tree (symbolizes) the mystery of Christ, from which springs forth milk, water and oil, milk for the children, water for the youths and oil for the sick. The olive tree gave water and blood through its death, (just as) the Messiah gave these through his death.”¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ (Khudra (Prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. Volume1, The Tone of the aid, P. 24)

¹¹⁶ (Saint Ephrem’s commentary on Tatian’s Diatessaron, Carmel McCarthy. Published by Oxford University press on behalf of the University of Manchester, 1993 XXL, 11, 323)

Jacob of Serugh a Syrian Orthodox poet of the 6th century compares the second Adam, Jesus Christ to the first Adam. He asserts the sleeping of Adam in paradise and the birth of Eve from his side is a type of the sleeping of Jesus (the second Adam) on the Cross and the birth of the Church from His side.

“The bridegroom’s side has been pierced and
From it the bride has come forth,
Fulfilling the type provided by Adam and Eve
For, from the beginning God knew and depicted
Adam and Eve in the likeness of the image
of his only begotten.
He slept on the Cross as Adam has slept his sleep,
His side was pierced and from it there came
Forth the daughter of light.”¹¹⁷

Robert Murray agrees with the Syriac fathers, especially with Saint Ephrem who, in his commentary on the marriage at Cana of galilee, says; the birth of Eve from the side of Adam, is a type of the birth of the second Eve, the Church, from the side of the second Adam, Jesus Christ.

“In Ephrem’s comment on the marriage at Cana, Christ is presented as the heavenly Bridegroom, ready for his marriage, typified by the earthly bridegroom of Cana. Christ’s espousal at His baptism, the anticipatory symbol of His death, were fulfilled on Calvary, when the Church was born from His side, the second Eve from the second Adam. ‘There came forth blood and water, which is his Church, and it is built on Him; like Adam for his wife was taken from his side. The rib of Adam was his wife and the blood of our Lord, his Church.’”¹¹⁸

The two births mentioned above namely the (virgin) birth of Eve from the side of Adam and the (virgin) birth of the Church from the side of Christ opened the mind of the fathers of the Church to relate the birth of Eve and the birth of the Church to the (virgin) birth of Christ from the blessed Mary. Sebastian P. Brock says:

¹¹⁷ (P. bedjan, *homiliae Selectae Mar Jacob Sarugensis* (Paris lipzing: 1905 -10) III, 299-300. Quoted from, S.P. Brock. “The mysteries” 463.)

¹¹⁸ (R. Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*. Cambridge University Press 1975, Pp.137-138)

“Since the birth of Eve from Adam’s side and the birth of the Church from Christ’s side are both virgin births, this in turn allows the introduction of yet a further strand into the typological spider’s web, namely Christ’s own birth from Mary.”¹¹⁹

Mary and the Eucharist:

It is recorded in the very beginning of the Old Testament that the earth was formless. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters (Genesis 1:1-2). It is also recorded that God created everything in heaven and on earth by the power of the Holy Spirit. The same Holy Spirit that hovered upon the waters also hovered upon the Virgin Mary and formed the Temple of God the Word in her womb. “*How this shall be done to me,*” asked the blessed Virgin. “*Because I know not a man?*” (Luke 1:34) The archangel Gabriel answered, “*The Holy Spirit shall come upon you, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow you*” (Luke 1:32). The following anthem proclaims, as soon as the angle gave the salutation of peace to the Virgin Mary, the Holy Spirit hovered in her womb and simultaneously the Son of the King dwelt within her.

“The man of fire descended and came down; from among the ranks of the fiery; wearing the garment of the blazing flame of fire; Opening the Highest he came down to the depths; carrying a letter in His peace • The Ambassador came down from among the Ranks of the Fiery, and came and stood in the world in the House of the Father; and saw a Virgin who is desired and adorned in purity; and shooting three seals on the Gate of the Temple • And, by the peace which he gave to her, the Holy Spirit hovered in her womb; the confirmed and sealed Palace; and within her the Son of the King dwelt; and the seal of her virginity witnesses that her conception and giving birth wonders all!• The Forming Sign which forms all infants has the power to bring into existence from things present or from nothing; Blessed

¹¹⁹(P. bedjan, homiliae Selectae Mar Jacob Sarugensis (paris lipzing: 1905 -10) III, 299-300. Quoted from, S.P. Brock. “The mysteries” 463.)

are you, O Mary, for the new Son which shines forth from you; that the splendor of His light dims the sun in the heavens; *hallelujah!*”¹²⁰

Saint John of Damascus says the same Holy Spirit which hovered upon the formless earth and upon the womb of the Virgin Mary, hovers upon the bread and wine placed on the altar and makes them the real body and blood of Christ.

“And through the invocation the overshadowing power of the Holy Ghost becomes a rainfall for this new cultivation. For Just as all things whatsoever God made, He made by the operation of the Holy Spirit that these things are done which surpass nature and cannot be discerned (recognized) by faith alone. “How this shall be done to me,” asked the blessed Virgin. “Because I know not a man?” The archangel Gabriel answered, “The Holy Spirit shall come upon you, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow you.” And now you ask how the bread becomes the body of Christ and the wine and water the blood of Christ. And I tell you that the Holy Ghost comes down and works these things which are beyond description and understanding.”¹²¹

The fathers of the Church have recognized the formation work of the Holy Spirit in the Sacramental theology of the Church and especially in the Sacrament of Baptism and Eucharist. In the Sacrament of the Holy Baptism the celebrant priest invites the Holy Spirit to come down from heaven and hover upon the water in the fond of baptism, consecrate them and make them a spiritual womb from which the candidates of baptism to be born again from water and Spirit.

“There come, O MY LORD, the same Spirit on this water also, so that it may receive might for the help and salvation of those who are baptized therein.”¹²²

¹²⁰ (Khudra (Prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. Volume 1, first Sunday of Advent, P. 132)

¹²¹ (John of Damascus: Orthodox Faith 4:13, FC37:357, Ancient Christian commentary on Scripture New Testament Volume III, Luke, Edited by Arthur A. Just Jr. General Editor, Thomas C. Oden, Inter Varsity press, Downers Grove, Illinois, 1953, page 19)

¹²² (The iturgy of the Holy Apostles Adai and Mari, Urmiae. Typis Missions Archiepiscoopi Cantuariensis, MDCCCXC.1893, P.76)

The same doctrine applies to the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. The celebrant priest invites the Holy Spirit to come down from heaven and rests upon the bread and wine and make them the true body and blood of Christ.

“And May Your Holy Spirit, o my Lord come and rest upon this offering of Your servants. May He bless it and hallow it, and may it be for us, O my Lord, for the pardon of debts, the forgiveness of sins, the great hope of resurrection from the dead, and for new life in the Kingdom of Heaven with all who have been well-pleasing before You. And for all this great and marvelous dispensation towards us we will give thanks to You and praise You without ceasing in Your church, which is saved by the Precious Blood of Your Christ - with unclosed mouth and open face,”¹²³

According to the law of nature a child immediately after his birth is nurtured with his mother’s milk. Then as soon as he grows up, is weaned from milk and is nurtured with the solid food. Moses applied this process of nurturing the people of Israel in the wilderness. Moses nurtured the people of Israel in the beginning of their formation as the people of God with milk. Then when they were grown up in the knowledge of God they were nurtured with the perfect nourishment, solid food, the bread. So, the Law denotes milk and Jesus Christ denotes bread. It was the forerunner, John the Baptist, who weaned the people of the world from sucking milk and introduced them to the living bread that came down from heaven, Jesus Christ. Jacob of Serugh says:

“Moses made to gush out from the cloud of Sinai the fountain of milk, the nurse of little children, so that the world might suck and grow up in the knowledge which would make it (*the world*) arrive to rise up to the nourishment of the perfect. For, John weaned the world from milk, and showed forth and set before it the true bread, Christ, manifesting Him who said: *I am the bread* appropriate for the full stature of man. The law, that is to say, is the milk, but *I am the bread*, that is to say, be weaned from the milk of children and come and live by the bread, the food of the strong.”¹²⁴

¹²³ (The Liturgy of the Holy Apostles Adai and Mari, Urmia. Typis Missions Archiepiscopii Cantuariensis, MDCCCXC.1893, P.26)

¹²⁴(Jacob of Serugh, Select Festal Homilies, translated from Syriac and introduced by Thomas Kollampampil, CMI, with a foreward by Sebastian P. Brock, Center for Indian and Inter-religious studies (CIIS), Rome, and Dharmaram Publications (DP), Bangalore 1997, Pp.189-190)

In Aramaic language the name Bethlehem (Beth-lakhma) signifies the house of bread. So, Jesus Christ, the bread of life was born in the house of bread, Bethlehem Ephrathah (town of bread) and was placed in the manger. Therefore, the bread of life is the body of Christ that will nurture all the generations of the world without it ever failing. Jacob of Serugh says:

“The name of Ephrathah had been called ‘house of bread’,
Because the bread of life descended from the height and dwelt in its abode.
Behold, Bethlehem, the new bread, for the hungry of the earth,
The nourishment in the manger for the peoples who have gone astray like animals.
The town of bread which gave the bread, corresponding to its name,
For peoples and generations will eat from it, without it ever failing”¹²⁵

King David was not permitted to eat the holy bread simply because he was not a ministerial priest. Saint Ephrem states, before King David was persecuted, he was not allowed to approach and eat the holy bread. But after he was persecuted by Saul, he was authorized to partake of it and save his life from death caused by starvation. After the same manner, our Lord Jesus Christ, after He was persecuted, He shared his Body and Blood among\with all those who believe in him.

“Our Lord put forward the clear example of David, who was not accused either over this, (1 Samuel 21:1-7) as he was over something else. (2 Samuel 12:7-15) it was not permissible, he said, for David to eat (the holy bread) since he was not a priest. However, he was a priest because he was a temple of the Spirit. Because they did not yet understand this, he openly proved them wrong with regard to their own (position): The priests were defiling the Sabbath in the temple, and they were not guilty of sin. (Matthew 12:5) Another element is depicted for us there. Before David was persecuted, he was not permitted to approach the holy things. But after he was persecuted, he partook of them with authority. So too, in the case of our Lord. After he was persecuted, he shared his body among his disciples, and his blood among those who believed in him.”¹²⁶

¹²⁵ (Jacob of Serugh, *Select Festal Homilies*, translated from Syriac and introduced by Thomas Kollamparampil, CMI, with a foreward by Sebastian P. Brock, Center for Indian and Inter-religious studies (CIIS), Rome, and Dharmaram Publications (DP), Bangalore 1997, P. 117)

¹²⁶ (Saint Ephrem’s commentary on Tatian’s Diatessaron, Carmel McCarthy. Published by Oxford University press on behalf of the University of Manchester, 1993 p106, 24)

In accordance with the Sacramental teaching of the Church, the body which is sitting at the right hand of God in heaven and the one placed on the altar are in truth one and the same body of the risen Lord. The body which ascended into heaven is the same body which was born from the Virgin Mary. Therefore, the Body which is placed on the altar is in truth the one which was born from the Virgin Mary. The angel answered and said to her, “*The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.*” (Luke 1:35) Based on the announcement of angel Gabriel to Mary, the body which was born of the Virgin Mary has become the bread of life and the spiritual nourishment for all those who believe in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This Biblical teaching is clearly reflected in the celebration of the holy Eucharist. The celebrant priest invokes (invites) the Holy Spirit to come down from heaven and rest upon the Bread and Wine and make them the real Body and Blood of Christ. It is written:

“And May Your Holy Spirit, o my Lord come and rest upon this offering of Your servants. May He bless it and hallow it, and may it be for us, O my Lord, for the pardon of debts, the forgiveness of sins, the great hope of resurrection from the dead, and for new life in the Kingdom of Heaven with all who have been well-pleasing before You. And for all this great and marvelous dispensation towards us we will give thanks to You and praise You without ceasing in Your church, which is saved by the Precious Blood of Your Christ - with unclosed mouth and open face,”¹²⁷

The same body which was formed by the hovering of the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary, was born and finally suffered and died on the Cross. This same body becomes the bread of life in the celebration of the holy Eucharist. Saint Ephrem says:

“(His) body, of its nature, suffered with his soul which was capable of suffering, for the soul experiences suffering. Therefore, his humanity suffered because of his body, and it experienced sufferings because of the soul. *The spirit will come, and his power will cover.* (Luke 1:35) This same body has become the bread of life and nourishment for the faithful. The spirit will come, together with the power of the most high: for the one to be born of you

¹²⁷ (The Liturgy of the Holy Apostles Adai and Mari, Urmiae. Typis Missions Archiepiscopii Cantuariensis, MDCCCXC.1893, P.26)

will indeed be called Son of God. (Scripture) says of the body that it was born of (woman).”¹²⁸

The Lord God created man and then He took the man He created and put him in the Garden of Eden. It is written: *And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”* (Genesis 2: 15-17) In accordance with the Holy Bible, Adam did not die simultaneously after eating from the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil but rather he received a pledge of his death. He was stripped of the garment of glory, cast out of the presence of God, and hunted by death. The fruit of the *tree of the knowledge of good and evil* is a type of the body and Blood of the Eucharis. The altar upon which the Bread and wine are placed is the antitype of paradise where the tree of life is planted. The curse of breaking the Commandment of God in paradise is ones and for all washed away by the precious blood of the Lord shed on the Cross, and in the hope of the resurrection and eternal life after death, we wait for His second coming from heaven. (Romans 8:23-25). Saint Ephrem says:

“Let us also say that, if Adam died because of sin, it was fitting that he who removed sin would assume death too. Just as it was said to Adam, the day on which you eat of it you will die, (Gen.2:17) he did not die however on the day when he ate it, (instead) received a pledge of his death through his being stripped of his glory, chased from Paradise and hunted daily by (the prospect of) death, so too, in like manner, with regard to life in Christ, we eat his body instead of the fruit of the tree, and we have his altar in place of the garden of Eden. The curse is washed away by his innocent blood, and in the hope of the resurrection we await the life that is to come. (Romans 8:23-25) Already we walk in a new life, for these (the body of Christ and his altar) are the pledges of it for us.”¹²⁹

¹²⁸ (Saint Ephrem’s commentary on Tatian’s Diatessaron, Carmel McCarthy. Published by Oxford University press on behalf of the University of Manchester, 1993 p.318, XXI. 3)

¹²⁹ (Saint Ephrem’s commentary on Tatian’s Diatessaron, Carmel McCarthy. Published by Oxford University press on behalf of the University of Manchester, 1993 p. 329. XXI, 25)

Again, Saint Ephrem in the following Hymn affirms that the same body of Christ which was born of the Virgin Mary became the true bread of life to bring to life our mortality.

“Glory to the Heavenly One who mingled.

His salt with our mind, His milk with our souls.

His body became bread to revive our mortality.

Thanks be to the Rich One who paid the debt in place of us all,

Something He did not borrow, but He signed and became indebted for us again.”¹³⁰

Saint Ephrem in the flowing hymn on the Nativity of our Lord is using many images and symbols related to the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. These images represent either the Blood or the Body of Christ. The bowl and the cup of salvation represent the chalice of the Blood of Christ. A cluster signifies the grapes from which the wine of the celebration of the Eucharist is made. The season of winter deprives the trees from giving fruits. In the wintertime, by the power of the Holy Spirit, a branch sprang forth for us from the sterile vine. The barren vine signifies the birth of Jesus Christ from the Virgin Mary who will become the medicine of life to all those who receive Him in faith. A sheaf represents the grains of pure wheat from which the bread of the Eucharist is made.

“Indeed, He came bearing us to the bowl.

From which plentitude will pour upon our hunger.

The early - maturing cluster is this day.

In which the cup of salvation was hidden.

The first - born feast day is this day.

That is first to conquer all feast days.

In winter that robs the branches of fruit,

The Fruit sprang forth for us from the barren vine.

In the frost that stripped all the trees

¹³⁰ (Ephrem the Syrian hymns, translated and introduced by Kathleen E. McVey. Paulist press, New York. Mahwah. Hymn on the Nativity, Hymn 03. P. 85)

A Shoot budded for us from the house of Jesse.
In January (Conun - December - January) when seed hides in the earth,
The Staff of life sprang up from the womb.
In April (Nisan) when the seed springs up into the air,
The Sheaf propagated itself in the earth.
In Sheol Death mowed it down and consumed it,
But the Medicine of Life hidden in it burst through.”¹³¹

The rubric of the knitting of the Eucharistic bread of the Church of the East commands that the flower from which the dough of the Eucharistic bread is made should be a product of the pure wheat flower. And the wine should be made from the red grapes. Therefore, the bread and wine mentioned in Saint Ephrem’s hymns signify the Body and Blood of Christ which was broken for our Salvation. Thus, for Saint Ephrem the miracles of multiplying the bread in the wilderness and the miracle of changing water into wine prefigure the miraculous change of the bread and wine during the Eucharistic celebration into the real Body and Blood of Christ. It is required to receive the Body and blood of Christ in a discerning manner as the medicine of life. Saint Ephrem says:

“The one true Ear (of wheat) gave bread,
Heavenly bread without limit.
The bread that the first-born broke in the desert
Was consumed and passed away, although He multiplied it greatly.
Once again, He has broken new bread.
That ages and generations will not consume.
They consumed the seven loaves of bread that He broke,
And they finished also the five loaves of bread that He multiplied.
The one loaf of bread that He broke conquered the creation.
For however much it is divided it multiplies all more.
Again, a great deal of wine filled the water jugs.
It was poured out and consumed although there had been a great deal.

¹³¹ (Ephrem the Syrian hymns, translated and introduced by Kathleen E. McVey. Paulist press, New York. Mahwah. Hymn on the Nativity, Hymn 04. Pp. 91-925)

Although small was the drink of the cup that He gave
Very great was its power infinite.
In the cup that accepts all wines,
The mystery remains the same.
The one loaf of bread He broke cannot be confined,
And the one cup that He mingled cannot be limited.
The grain of wheat that was sown, after three days.
Came up and filled the storehouse of life.
The bread is spiritual like its giver.
It revives spiritual ones in a spiritual manner.
But the one who takes it in bodily manner.
Takes it indiscreetly and uselessly.
Let the mind take the bread of the compassionate One.
In a discerning manner as the medicine of life.”¹³²

Again, Saint Ephrem in the following hymn endorses the doctrine that confesses the connection of Mary to the Eucharist. He believes in the process of incarnation the Voice of God became the body of Christ and the exalted Word of God became the flesh of Christ. Thus, the recipients of the Eucharist see Him with their eyes, touch Him with their hands and eat Him with their mouths.

“Glory to that Voice that became a body,
And to the lofty Word that became flesh.
Ears even heard Him, eyes saw Him,
Hands even touched Him; the mouth ate Him.”¹³³

Looking at the Eucharistic bread and wine, Saint Ephrem, by his carnal eyes sees the outward image of the Son of God and by his spiritual eyes sees His

¹³² (Ephrem the Syrian hymns, translated and introduced by Kathleen E. McVey. Paulist press, New York. Mahwah. Hymn on the Nativity, Hymn 04. Pp. 96-97)

¹³³(Ephrem the Syrian hymns, translated and introduced by Kathleen E. McVey. Paulist press, New York. Mahwah. Hymn on the Nativity, Hymn 04. P. 100)

hidden image. Furthermore, Saint Ephrem in the revealed image sees Adam (man) but in the hidden image sees God the Father (Divinity). Thus, Ephrem sees two Qnomeh in one person of Jesus Christ. In the same manner, the fathers of the Church looking at the consecrated bread and wine placed on the altar, see both images, the outward image which is bread made of wheat and wine made of grapes, and the inner (hidden) image which is the divinity of Christ. Thus, as in Christology so in the Eucharistic theology there are two Qnomeh in one Person of Jesus Christ. So, Christ will dwell hiddenly in all those who receive Him wisely in Communion.

“When I see Your outward image.
Before my eyes, Your hidden image
Is portrayed in my mind. In Your revealed image
I saw Adam, but in the hidden one.
I saw Your Father who is united with You.
Have you shown your beauty in two images?
To me alone? Let bread and the mind!
Portray You. Dwell in bread
And in those who eat it. In hidden and revealed (from)
Let your Church see you as (does) the one who bore You.
Whoever hates your bread (is like) a near one
Who cherishes Your image? In bread and body
The former and the latter have seen You.
Instead, Child, Your bread is for more honorable
Saw your body, but they do not see!
Your living bread. The distant ones rejoiced.
Their portion surpassed that of the near ones.
“Behold Your image is portrayed with the blood of the grapes.
Upon the bread and portrayed upon the heart
By the finger of love with the pigments
Of faith. Blessed is the one who made.

Graven images pass away by His image.”¹³⁴

Ephrem says the Magi who came from the East worshiped the Fire (baby Jesus) who in the Eucharist gave His Body as a bread of life for those who receive Him in faith. The coal of Isaiah that sanctifies the lips is a type of the consecrated Body of Christ which sanctifies the body of the believers.

“Instead of the foolish fire that eats its own body itself,
The magi worshipped the Fire Who gave His body to those who eat.
The coal drew near to sanctify unclean lips.
Blessed is He Who has mixed His fire with us!”¹³⁵

Joseph and Mary as faithful followers of the Law of Moses when the time came for the purification rites as it is required by the Law of Moses, took Jesus to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. It is written in the Law, “Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord”, and to offer a sacrifice as it is prescribed in the Law of the Lord: “a pair of doves or two young pigeons.” As soon as they entered the Temple Simon the righteous took Jesus upon his hands and as a priest offered Him as a living Sacrifice to God the Father. Saint Ephrem says:

“Blessed is the priest (Simeon Luke 2:22-35) who in the sanctuary.
Offers to the Father the Father’s Child,
The fruit plucked from tree,
Although He is entirely from majesty,
Blessed are the consecrated hands that offer Him.
And his lips wearied with kissing Him.
The Spirit in the Temple longed to exalt Him,
And when he was crucified, it tore (the veil) and went out.”¹³⁶

¹³⁴ (Ephrem the Syrian hymns, translated and introduced by Kathleen E. McVey. Paulist press, New York. Mahwah. Hymn on the Nativity, Hymn 16. Pp. 149-150)

¹³⁵ (Ephrem the Syrian hymns, translated and introduced by Kathleen E. McVey. Paulist press, New York. Mahwah. Hymn on the Nativity, Hymn 22. Pp. 181- 182)

¹³⁶ (Ephrem the Syrian Hymns, Hymn on the nativity, Hymn 25. Pp.203- 204)

Comparing the body of Christ, the consecrated bread to the fruit of the tree saint Ephrem says:

“For His death is like a root inside the earth.
His resurrection like the summit in heaven,
His words (extend) in every direction like branches,
And like His fruit (is) His body for those who eat it.”¹³⁷

In the liturgy of the Church the Eucharist is referred to as a medicine of life. By means of incarnation God the Word put on the human body and became the medicine and bread of life to all those who receive Him in faith. Thus, those who receive the bread of life in faith, their sins are forgiven, and their spiritual hunger is satisfied. Saint Ephrem says:

“The Medicine of Life diffused Himself to them both.
He put on a body and was offered to them both.
The mortal tasted Him and lived by Him.
The devourer who are Him was destroyed.”¹³⁸

Fathers of the Church clearly connect the Body and Blood of the Lord on the altar to the mystery of incarnation. They have confessed that the medicine of life namely the Body and Blood of Christ which is distributed to believers is the same Word of God which came down from heaven and became man. The following anthem says:

“Behold within the church is distributed. The medicine of life which came down from heaven. And it is hidden mysteriously in Bread and wine. Hence, extend your hands o

¹³⁷ (Ephrem the Syrian hymns, translated and introduced by Kathleen E. McVey. Paulist press, New York. Mahwah. Hymn on the Nativity, Hymn 26. P. 207)

¹³⁸ (Ephrem the Syrian hymns, translated and introduced by Kathleen E. McVey. Paulist press, New York. Mahwah. Hymn on the Nativity, Hymn 26. 9, P. 208)

mortals. That by their sins an abod they hold in hades. And take and be purified and gain life and govern with Christ. And cry out and say Halleluya.”¹³⁹

The same human body of Jesus which was born of the Virgin Mary in the Sacrament of the holy Eucharist becomes the Medicine of life to the children of Adam. The flowing anthems say:

“Mary, you who have given birth to the Medicine of Life for the Children of Adam, may we find mercy on the Day of Resurrection.”¹⁴⁰

Again, the following anthem refers to the Virgin Mary as the one who gave birth to the medicine of life.

“Mary who gave birth to the medicine of life to the children of Adam; by your petition we take refuge. And in the hope of the prayers of Saint John: we will conquer the evil one and his hosts. By the prayers of the prophets, apostles and Martyrs; and the fathers and doctors. And by the prayer of our holy father; and confessors Saint George. And the great power of the Cross: and the hallowing of the Church. We beceech Christ: to bestow Marcy and kindness upon our souls.”¹⁴¹

Speaking about the Body and blood of Jesus, Saint Ephrem uses the analogy of grains of wheat and grapes. A grain of wheat before becoming the flower from which bread is made encounters a lot of crushing and grinding in the mail. Yet a grain by its sufferings gives life to those who torment it. This also applies to the grapes from which the wine is made. Thus, in the process of making wine, grapes also encounter a lot of suffering from the hands of those who crush, press, and squeeze them. The ordinary bread satisfies the hanger, and the ordinary wine gives joy to those who drink it. After the same manner, the Body

¹³⁹ (Khudra (Prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. Volume 111, The fourth Sunday of Summer, P. 312)

¹⁴⁰ (Khudra (Prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. Volume 1 The tone of the Aid, P. 194)

¹⁴¹ (Khudra (Prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. Volume 1, P. 20)

of Christ natures the spiritual life of those who eat it in faith and His Blood washes their sins. Saint Ephrem says:

“And who will tell the suffering of the grain of wheat?
Indeed, how many scourgings and afflictions it encounters!
By its torments it gives life to its tormentors.
The food of its crusher also abuses the cluster of grapes.
By its blood (the foot’s) filth is washed away, with its must it sweetens him.
And if it ages with him, it makes him merry with its wine.
When a fruit is eaten, by means of its suffering its taste
Pours out in the mouth. This is a symbol of that Fruit.
That brings to life His eaters when His body is eaten.”¹⁴²

The Son of the Virgin Mary, our Lord Jesus Christ became the living bread and the new cup of wine. Those who eat His Body without doubt will live by it forever. And likewise, those who drink the cup of His Blood without suspicion their sins are washed away. Saint Ephrem warns us not to go too deep in the investigation of the nature of the substance of His body and Blood, so that we may not die in the process of our investigation.

“Our Lord has become our living bread,
And we shall delight in our new cup.
Come, let us then eat it without investigation,
And without scrutiny let us drink his cup.
Who disdains blessings and fruits?
And sits down to investigate their nature?
And a human being needs to live. Come let us live and not die.
In the depth of investigation.”¹⁴³

¹⁴² (Ephrem the Syrian hymns, translated and introduced by Kathleen E. McVey. Paulist press, New York. Mahwah. Hymn on the Virginity, Hymn 11. 10. Pp. 308-309)

¹⁴³ (Ephrem the Syrian hymns, translated and introduced by Kathleen E. McVey. Paulist press, New York. Mahwah. Hymn on the Virginity, Hymn 16. 5. P. 330)

Talking about the bread of the Eucharist saint Ephrem gives blessings to Martha who served Jesus Christ in her house. In the following hymn Ephrem is referring to Jesus Christ as a store house who freely gave His body as the living bread to mankind.

“Blessed are you, Martha, who without fear
Served the One feared by all.
You nourished the storehouse who freely gives.
Living bread to humankind.”¹⁴⁴

Jesus Christ gave His body as the bread of life to humanity who was hungry to be redeemed from the curse of the breaking of the commandment of God. Saint Ephrem gives blessings to those who are made worthy to eat the bread of life.

“The beautiful staff that grew among the ugly tares.
Gave the bread of life without toil to the hungry.
He released the curse that held Him captive in Adam.
To eat by sweat the bread of pains and thorns.
Blessed is he who eats from His blessed bread.”¹⁴⁵

The priest who celebrates the Sacrament of the holy Eucharist holds the Body of Christ in his hands and offers it as a living sacrifice to God on behalf of the sins of people.

“The former priests desired your beauty but did not see (it)
The middle priests hated your beauty and displeased you.
The priests of the churches grasp you in their hands,
The bread of life that came down and was mingled with the senses.”¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁴ (Ephrem the Syrian hymns, translated and introduced by Kathleen E. McVey. Paulist press, New York. Mahwah. Hymn on the Virginity, Hymn 26. 2. P. 377)

¹⁴⁵ (Ephrem the Syrian hymns, translated and introduced by Kathleen E. McVey. Paulist press, New York. Mahwah. Hymn on the Virginity, Hymn 31. 14. P. 401)

¹⁴⁶ (Ephrem the Syrian hymns, translated and introduced by Kathleen E. McVey. Paulist press, New York. Mahwah. Hymn on the Virginity, Hymn 35. 12. P. 419)

In the Liturgy of the Church of the East Mary is called the Communion table or the holy altar upon which the Body of Christ is consecrated and offered to God as a living sacrifice on behalf of the sins of the world.

“The blessed field and the longed-for paradise, the glorified communion table, and the rich and overflowing source, became The Blessed Mary; and she called mankind and angels to be delighted in the birth of the Fruit which flowered (i.e., sprang forth) from her womb.”¹⁴⁷

In the liturgy of Mar Addai and Mar Mari the celebrant priest calls the celebration of the holy Eucharist the Commemoration of the Virgin Mary. Thus, celebrant priest recites the following anthem saying:

“Upon the Holy Altar is the commemoration of the Virgin Mary, mother of Christ.”¹⁴⁸

In the following anthem Mary is contrasted with earth. The cursed earth brought forth thorns and thistles. On the other hand, God made to sprout from the Virgin Mary, the pure garden, the heavenly bread.

“He who instead of thorns and thistles which the earth has brought forth for us by the sentence of the head of our race; made to sprout for us from the Pure Garden the Heavenly Bread, Satisfier of our hunger by the Son from Mary, we beseech You.”¹⁴⁹

Saint Ephrem in the following Hymn speaks about the Divinity and Humanity of Jesus. Jesus, as the Creator of the heaven and Earth, gave cattle and sheep to people. On the other hand, He required sacrifices as one destitute. In the wedding feast, in Cana of Galilee Jesus as the creator turned water into wine and as poor man, He drank some of it. This miracle of turning water into wine signifies the turning of wine into His precious blood in the celebration of the

¹⁴⁷ (Khudra (prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. the Commemoration of the Saint Mary Mother of Christ. V. 1, P. 606)

¹⁴⁸ (The Liturgy of the Church of the East. Printed and published by the Reverend Joseph E.Y De Kelaita, 1928, p 11)

¹⁴⁹ (Khudra (prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. the Commemoration of the Saint Mary Mother of Christ. V. 1, P. 620)

Holy Eucharist. In the Eucharist He mixes His own wine and gives it as a drink to worshipers. Saint Ephrem says:

“He gave cattle and sheep as Creator,
But, on the other hand, He sought sacrifices as one deprived.
He made water into wine as Maker,
But, on the other hand, He drank some of it as a poor man.
From His own He mixed it at the wedding feast,
His (own) wine He mixed and gave (it) to drink where He was invited;”¹⁵⁰

In the following anthem fathers of the Church refer to the Son born from the Virgin Mary as the wheat which sprouted from her without seed. According to the teaching of the Church of the East the bread of the Eucharist is made from the pure wheat flower. So, the word wheat represents the Eucharistic bread. In other words, the following hymn says the bread of the Eucharist is born from the Virgin Mary.

“Glory be to He who has sent the Angel unto Mary, and proclaimed to her about the conception of Jesus our Savior: (response) New things humankind has heard; through the conception of the daughter of humankind; because forth from the daughter of humankind has sprouted the wheat without seed; and buried within her mortal being; the yeast of life, “behold,” said the angel, “you shall conceive and give birth;” When had this happened? And was this ever heard; those virgins gave birth to infants without seed? • It was said, ‘The Power of the Highest shall rest upon you,’ in order to portray the image of man, upon the tablet of your members; and shall spring-forth from your womb; The Shoot of Wonder: for this is simply clear to His wisdom, as He has made Adam; and from his rib created Eve, (He) can create within you an infant without seed. • The damsel saw the Man, was true in his promises and she began to reveal to him the truth of her thoughts. If she has received the seed and falls within her hearing: ‘behold I am the handmaiden of the LORD:’ let it be

¹⁵⁰ (Ephrem the Syrian hymns, translated and introduced by Kathleen E. McVey. Paulist press, New York. Mahwah. Hymn on the Nativity, Hymn 4. Pp. 103-104)

fulfilled in action the good news of your words and will rest within my members, the image of the race of Adam.”¹⁵¹

The Lord’s Brethren:

The Virgin Mary is called “*espoused to Joseph*” (*Mat 1:18*). Then it is recorded that Joseph had planned to divorce her privately (quietly) (1:19). Then again it is recorded that she is the wife of St Joseph. In accordance with the teachings of the Holy Bible, all engaged couples are named husband and wife; by way of an example, Rachel is called the wife of Jacob, before the performance of the marriage ceremony, it is recorded: “. . .*and Jacob said to Laban, give to me my wife, for my days are fulfilled that I may go in unto her...*” (*Gen 29:21*) The Virgin Mother Mary is also recorded in the Holy Bible as the wife of Joseph, even before the marriage ceremony. Within the Orthodox and The Apostolic Church, The Righteous Spouse Joseph is always referred to as the “*betrothed*” thus to confirm the ever Virginity of the blessed Mary, even after the birth of Jesus Christ. The birth of Jesus Christ from the Virgin Mary manifests His divinity, whereas His birth of a woman manifests His humanity! As previously noted, it was St Joseph who had the command of God and took Mary to his home. He never did, as her righteous spouse, participate in the consummation of conjugal acts; for it is written: “. . . *before they came together, she was found with Child of The Holy Spirit.*” (*Matt 1:18b*)

Now let us consider this, is there a man so barbaric, so ruthless, and or without care, who would take a virgin woman pregnant by the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit, conceiving the Savior of humankind and then, engaging in a relationship which would destroy her purity/virginity? The Holy Bible confirms that the Virgin Mary conceived by the Power of the Holy Spirit; Joseph had no physical relationship, nor he participated in the conception and birth of Jesus Christ. The pious and virtuous relationship between St Joseph and the Virgin Mary was preserved and kept in purity, even after the birth of Jesus

¹⁵¹(Khudra (Prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. Volume the third Sunday of Advent, P. 157)

the Christ. Regrettably, there are few non-orthodox Christian sects or denominations who do not understand that The Virgin Mary conceived, as a virgin, and that she gave birth as a virgin, and remains a perpetual virgin. Sadly, these religious sects will publicly declare to all, their opposition to the dogmatic declaration of the perpetual virginity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, for they teach that Joseph took her as a regular wife and brought forth children. This teaching is not in harmony with the Apostolic Tradition that steadily teaches the perpetual virginity of the holy mother. Thus, this heretical teaching was never accepted in the Holy Church.

They build their heretical argument upon those verses recorded in the gospel of Matthew saying: “... *is not this the carpenter’s son? is not his mother called ‘Mary,’ and his brethren, James and Joses and Simon and Judas, and His sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then, hath The Man all these things?*” (Matt 13:54–56) Let us take another look into The Holy Book, “... *is this not the Carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, Joses, and of Judas and Simon? And are not His sisters here with us? And they were offended at Him . . .*” (Mark 6:1-4)

In accordance to St Mark the Evangelist these are not the children of St Mary and St Joseph, but the sons of Alphaeus, it is written: “... *and Andrew and Philip and Bartholomew, and Matthew and Thomas, and James the son of Alpheus, and Thaddeus and Simon the Canaanite . . .*” (Mk 3:18) St Luke in his gospel agrees with St. Mark the Evangelist, for he writes that these are the sons of Alphaeus; “... *Matthew and Thomas, James the son of Alpheus, and Simon called Zealot. . .*” in addition to that, St Mark records the name of the mother of those persons who are called “... *the brothers of the Lord*” It is written: “...*There were also women looking afar off among whom was Mary Magadala and Mary the Mother of James the Less, and of Joses, and Salome . . .*” (Mark 15:40)

In the tradition of the Church of the East those individuals who were mentioned in the gospels as brothers and sisters of Christ were sons of Saint Joseph from another woman before the Virgin Mary. Thus, it is believed that Saint Joseph was a widower at the time of his engagement to the blessed Mary. In one of the Anthems written in the book of Gaza (The Treasure) (a prayer book) these words

are recited from the moth of Saint Joseph: “Do you know that I had taken a wife and I have four sons from her.”¹⁵²

The name of Mary is mentioned too often in the Bible. For example, Mary the Virgin, Mary the wife of Joseph, Mary the mother of Cleopha and of Joseph, and the wife of Peter the mother of Mark. One of these Maries believed to be the wife of Joseph, the betrothed of the Virgin, by whom he begot James and Jose, and Simon and Judah and their sisters. Esho Dadd says:

*“But in the evening before the Sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, came Mary Magdaletha, and another Mary, etc. This, that in the evening of the Sabbath etc. Ought to be read thus, according to science, in the Sabbath then when it was evening, when the first day of the week was dawning. Now the other Mary was the wife of Joseph, the betrothed of the Virgin, by whom he begot James and Jose, and Simon and Judah and their sisters; for there is a mention of Mary often in the Gospel, Mary the Virgin, Mary the other wife of Joseph, Mary the mother of Cleopha and of Joseph, Mary the mother of Mark, who was the wife of peter, according as the doctors of the school hand down.”*¹⁵³

The western fathers believe those individuals who were mentioned in the Bible as brothers and sisters of Jesus were either step-brothers, children of Joseph by a former wife (cf. *Protoevangelium of James*) or first cousins of Jesus, children of Mary’s relative Elizabeth and sibling of John the Baptist.¹⁵⁴

In the western tradition there is another interpretation of those individuals who are called in the Bible brothers and sisters of Christ. St. Hieronymus who lived in the year 383 AD, says those individuals who were mentioned in the gospels as brothers and sisters of Christ were relatives or cousins of

¹⁵² (The book of Gaza (The Treasure), commemoration of Saint Mary the virgin, second seating)

¹⁵³ (*The Commentaries of Isho dad of Merv, Bishop of Hadatha (c.850 A.D.) in Syriac and English*, ed. and tr. Margaret Dunlop Gibson, intro. James Rendel Harris (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1911, V.1, P. 116)

¹⁵⁴ "Brothers of Jesus". Biblical Training. Spokane, WA. Retrieved 2016-08-31. “ Jerome, "The Perpetual Virginity of Blessed Mary - Against Helvidius", in Schaff, Philip; Wace, Henry; Knight, Kevin (eds.), *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series*, 6, Translated by W.H. Fremantle, G. Lewis and W.G. Martley, Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co. – via New Advent.)

Christ. In the Hebrew tradition the word brother is used to signify a relative or a cousin. For Example, Lot is called the brother of Abraham (Genesis 14:16) yet Lot was not the brother of Abraham but rather the son of Haran Abraham's brother which means Lot was a nephew of Abraham. The Bible calls the Israelites as brothers of Moses. It is written: "*And it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens: and he spied an Egyptian smiting a Hebrew, one of his brethren.*" (Ex. 2:11) Again it is written: "*Whereas thou hast searched all my stuff, what hast thou found of all thy household stuff? Set it here before my brethren and thy brethren that they may judge betwixt us both.*" (Gen. 31:37) Therefore this tradition strongly confirms that those individuals who were called brothers and sister of Christ were not biological sons and daughters of Joseph and Mary and they were not blood brothers and sisters of Christ they were His cousins.

Therefore, learning from the preceding verses we can readily note that the cousins within the pages of the Holy Bible are considered as brothers and sisters. In the Holy Apostolic Catholic Church of the East, first cousins are not permitted to be united in marriage for they are considered brothers and sisters. So, these are not blood brothers and sisters of our Lord Jesus Christ they are, in fact, His cousins, etc.

Now, let us look at this passage of Sacred Scriptures and see what St Matthew says: "*. . . and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name JESUS...*" (Matt 1:25) This is often misinterpreted to convey the idea that after the birth of Jesus, St Joseph took the Virgin Mary and began his marital relations, accordingly. We must understand that the word "*till*" does not imply, necessarily, that a change of behavior has occurred. We read: "*. . . Then he sent out a raven, which kept going to and fro until the waters had dried up from the earth. He also sent out from himself a dove, to see if the waters had receded from the face of the ground.*" (Gen 8:6-7) We ask, 'Who can prove that following the water drying-up earth that the raven returned to the Ark?' Again, let us read, "*. . . Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and*

will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you.” (Gen 28:15) Again, beloved, is it possible that God abandoned Jacob after he had fulfilled all the promises made to him? No! (The same word and conveying a point in time, and nothing has changed, he continued his relationship!)

Again, in the Psalms of David we read: “. . . The LORD said to my Lord, *“Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.” (Palm 110:1)* This truth does not convey the idea that God abandoned His Son, following the placement of the enemies of God under His Feet. There are those who would foolishly interpret this passage of Divine Truth to mean that God had abandoned Him. Our Father in Heaven has not/does not abandon Jesus the Christ! He was with Him in the womb of the Virgin Mother, He was with Him while He walked on the face of the earth, He was with Him in the trial before Pilate, He was with Him on The Cross, He was with Him in death. God the Father, never, ever abandoned our Lord! Let us again read from the Holy Book, *“Therefore Michal, the daughter of Saul had no child, till the day of her death” (II Samuel 6:23)* Does this mean that Michal had given birth to children following her death? No, of course not! This passage merely states that she (Michal) was lived a childless life, with nothing changing! We can also apply this same prepositional phrase, in the case of St. Mary the Perpetual Virgin and with the Pious Righteous Spouse St Joseph; nothing changed. They had no children neither before nor after Christ was born. There are some, who, teach that the blessed Mary after she gave birth to the Lord had cohabited with Joseph, and brought forth children according to the Law of Nature. Such people have built their teaching on the following Words: *“And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name Jesus.” (Matthew 1:25)* Isho ‘dad of Mrv says:

“And he took his wife and knew her not, until. This word, until sometimes fixes a limit, like this, that the people did not take up their tents until Miriam entered; (num. 12:15, Gen. 49:10) and it is understood that after she entered, they took them up; and like this. That the scepter shall not cease from Judah, etc., and it is understood that after He came it ceased. 1 King 19:8) and he went, it is said, in the strength of that foot, until [he came] to the mount, he rested, etc. Sometimes it is put indefinitely. A raven went out, it is said, and returned not until the waters abated, for if return during the Deluge, how much less afterwards? And to

*Jacob, I will not forsake these, until I have performed that which I said unto thee; (Genesis 28:1) not that He would desert him afterwards; and of Michal it is said, she had no child until she died. (2 Samuel 6:2) If she had no child while she lived, how would she have one after her death? ” And behold, it is said, I am with, until. (Matt 28:2) would He then desert them afterwards? And the Christ shall reign, until His enemies shall be put [Under His feet]. (1 Cor.16:2) And the heavens, it is said, must receive Him, until the fulfillment of the times; (Acts 3:21) then afterwards will He be estranged from His kingdom or removed from the heavens? Therefore these expressions are used instead of without end; and this, until she brought forth her first born Son; for it was not decorous (correct), that anything human should touch the womb in which He had consecrated a temple of the Trinity; and the fears of Joseph were not allayed so that he should allow anything carnal, but it was rather due to the remembrance of that word, It is from the Holy Spirit, and on account of the glorious things that had been administered.”*¹⁵⁵

Sant Matthew the Evangelist is using the word until “*He, Joseph did not know her until she gave birth to her first-born son.*” not to make readers of his gospel suspect that after she gave birth to her son Joseph knew her as a wife. But rather to inform people that before and after birth Virgin Mary was wholly untouched by man. The word ‘until’ is used without reference to specific time.

“And when Joseph had taken her, “he had no relations with her until she had born a son.” Matthew has here used the word until not that you should suspect that afterward Joseph did know her but to inform you that before the birth the Virgin was wholly untouched by man. But why then, it may be said, has he used the word until? Because it is common in Scripture that this expression is used without reference to specific, limited times. Here are three examples. First, in the narrative of the ark it was said that “the raven did not return until earth was dried up” yet the raven did not return even after that limited time. Second, when discussing God, the Scripture says, “You are from everlasting to everlasting,” but there is no implication here that that some limit is being fixed rather the opposite. Third, when preaching the gospel beforehand and saying, “In his days righteousness flourish, and peace abound, until the moon be no more!” It is not thereby setting a temporal limit to this beautiful part of creation. So then here likewise, it uses the word until to make certain what was before the birth, but as to what follows, it leaves some further inference to be made. So, it is necessary to learn what Matthew teaches: that the Virgin was untouchable by man until the birth. But the rest is left for you to perceive, both as

¹⁵⁵ *(The Commentaries of Isho dad of Mero, Bishop of Hadatha (c.850 A.D.) in Syriac and English, ed. and tr. Margaret Dunlop Gibson, intro. James Rendel Harris (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1911, V.1, PP. 14-15)*

a consequence of the previous narrative and what was later acknowledged: that not even after having become a mother and having been counted worthy of a new sort of travail and a childbearing so strange, could that righteous man ever have permitted himself to have sexual relations with her.”¹⁵⁶

All that which had accompanied the Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, namely the forthcoming of the Shepherds of the field, the Magi from a far country, The Angelic Hosts from Heaven Above, etc. All these events came to substantiate her role as The Mother of The Redeemer of humankind. Saint Josepha’s desire was to learn more of her and that of her role in the salvific message and the Divine truths. St Joseph the pious spouse, till his demise, fulfilled his role as a guardian of the Holy family and specially the Holy One of God.

The First-Born Son

The phrase “*Her first born*” (Luke 2: 6-7) does not mean that the virgin gave birth to other children after Jesus, and consequently, she was not ever virgin. This expression “*the first born*” is, however, an appellation usually given to the first child whether he had brothers after him or not. This is the concept conveyed in the Holy Book where the commandment instituted that the first born be the redeemer, and he was not expected to have had other brothers to be confirmed as the first born. It goes without saying that had Jesus had brethren he would have handed his mother over to them and would not have entrusted her to John, the disciple he loved (John 19:25-27).

Many are the connotations of the phrase “the first born” used as a descriptive term of Jesus. He is the first born of the heavenly Father, the first born of Mary, and the first born of the departed.... Etc. Saint Ephrem says:

¹⁵⁶ (Chrisostom, the gospel of Matthew, Homily5,3. Ancient Christian commentary on Scripture. New Testament, 1a. Matthew 1-13, Edited by Manlio Simonetti, General Editor Thomas C. Oben Inter Varsity Press, Downers Grove, Illinois Pp. 19-20)

“Glory to Him who became earthly although heavenly by His nature! By His love he became first-born to Mary although He is First-born of Divinity.”¹⁵⁷

Regarding that Jesus Christ is first-born from the dead, Esho Dadd says:

“Now, (the words) It dwelleth, is instead of, In Him competition is established, and remains, and persists; for Christ is said to be the Head of the Body of the Church, and the first -born from the dead, and the head of all principalities and powers,”¹⁵⁸

Jesus Christ is called the first born in five ways. In His Divinity, Jesus is the first and the only begotten Son of God. In the creed we confess Jesus Christ is the first born of all created. “*We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of all things visible and invisible; and in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Only-begotten, the First-born of all created, begotten of His Father before all worlds and not made,*”¹⁵⁹

Our Lord Jesus Christ in His humanity is the first born from the Virgin Mary. He is also the first born from among the dead on the Sunday of the holy Resurrection. Esho Dadd says:

“Now the first born whom He brings to the creation is the Manhood of our Lord, whether as from Mary, or from the Resurrection; for *first -born* is also spoken of in five ways, as we have expounded in Matthew. And we say, that if He is the only begotten in His Divinity, He is also *the first-born* in his Humanity. How can a body from Adam and any other of the creatures be able to become *the first-born* of all creatures? And we say, as Jacob was able to become the first -born after Esau; and as Jacob bought the birthright of Esau, thus also our redeemer who by His blood reconciled all to all, etc.; and He is before all, and all in Him consists, and (He is) In the likeness of God in authority and in honor, etc. Adam also was called the likeness because angles....”¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁷ (Ephrem the Syrian hymns, translated and introduced by Kathleen E. McVey. Paulist press, New York. Mahwah. Hymn on the Nativity, Hymn 23, P. 189)

¹⁵⁸ (*The Commentaries of Isho dad of Merv, Bishop of Hadatha (c.850 A.D.) in Syriac and English*, V.II, P. 81, ed. and tr. Margaret Dunlop Gibson, intro. James Rendel Harris (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1911)

¹⁵⁹ (The liturgy of the Church of the East. Printed by Reverend Joseph E. Y De Kelaita, 1928, PP 15-16.)

¹⁶⁰ (*The Commentaries of Isho dad of Merv, Bishop of Hadatha (c.850 A.D.) in Syriac and English*, V.II, P. 105, ed. and tr. Margaret Dunlop Gibson, intro. James Rendel Harris (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1911)

Those who do not understand nor grasp the truth of the Apostolic teachings of the Church of the East regarding the brothers of Christ believe that the expression “. . . *the First born* . . .” often is understood to mean that when Saint Mary gave birth to Jesus Christ, her first born Son, that others would follow, Him. “*The first-born,*” in the Semitic tongues, means the one who opened the womb. The firstborn will always be the firstborn, whether others are born after him, or not. In accordance with the Apostolic Tradition of the Church of the East, these brothers of Jesus Christ mentioned in the Holy Bible, are the sons of Joseph the Righteous Spouse. The Church of the East believes Joseph was a widower, and these individuals are the children of that union. However, within the Western Tradition, these are the cousins or blood relatives by one degree. Let us read in The Holy Book, “. . . *and he brought back all the goods, and also brought again his brother Lot, together with his goods, and the women also, and the people.*” (Gen 14:16), also The Book proclaims, that Lot is not the brother of Abraham, but rather his nephew, the son of his brother. It is written: “. . . *these are the generations of Terah, Terah begot Abram, Nahor, and Haran, and Haran begot Lot*” (Gen 11:27) And, again, Abraham calls Lot his brother, for certain “. . . *and Abram said unto Lot, ‘let there be no strife, I pray you, between me and you, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen, for we are brethren,*” (Gen 13:8) It is here we note that Abraham addresses to the hearer (readers) that the words are, “brother” not nephew, nor cousins, but simply “my flesh, blood and bone.” Laban also calls Jacob his brother, Laban is really the brother of Jacob’s mother, Rebecca. He is in all truth the uncle, not his brother. It is written: “. . . *Laban said to Jacob, because thou art my brother, shouldest thou serve me for naught? Tell me what my wage should be?*” (Gen 29:15) St Luke records for us these words: “. . . *and she brought forth her firstborn Son and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in the manger, for there was no room for them in the Inn.*” (Luke 2:7) Here Jesus is called the first born, not because there were other sons and daughters born of Saint Mary the Blessed Virgin and The Pious Spouse Saint Joseph; but, because Jesus our Lord was born by the Power of the Holy Spirit of the Blessed Virgin Mother, and after Him, many brothers were born from the font of The Holy Baptism, by the Power of the same Holy Spirit; for it is written: “. . . *For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate, to be conformed to the Image of His Son that he might be the First-born among many brethren,*” (Romans 8:29) St Paul

records further: “... *Who is the Image of the invisible God, the Firstborn of every creature...?*” (Col 1:15) Saint Ephraim says:

“The virgin gave birth to her first born, but the signs of her virginity remained. He begot us too through baptism and made us first born (children) by his gift. For there is neither older nor younger in the womb of baptism, since we are all first - born in faith. For it is about us that (scripture) is fulfilled, every first- born that opens the womb is holy unto the Lord. While we are (still) corrupt in (our) sins, baptism conceives us, and when we are sanctified from evil it gives birth to us from its inner depths.”¹⁶¹

Jesus Christ is the first from among the dead. St Paul who referred to Jesus Christ as the Firstborn from among the dead, and that He would be followed by many of His brothers and sisters who will be raised from the dead. The Bible says: “*He is the head of the Body, The Church, who is the beginning, the Firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the preeminence.*” (Col 1:18) Jesus calls all those who do the will of our worshipful God in Heaven, ‘brothers, and sisters.’ It is written: “. . . *behold my mother and my brethren, for whosoever shall do the will of My Father, which is in Heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother*” (Matthew 12:49–50)

In the Lord’s Prayer, we all, together, equally, say: “*Our Father who art in Heaven, hallowed be Your Name*” We address our almighty God, as our Father. In His Divine Nature God, the Father has only one Son our Lord Jesus, but by adoption we are all His children. Therefore, by adoption all baptized individuals become brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ, not by divine nature. Again had our Lord Jesus real flesh and blood (biological) brothers and sisters, He would not have entrusted The Blessed Mother St Mary to St John to take care of her following His death on the Cross.

Jesus on the Cross entrusted His Mother to John. It is written: “. . . *when Jesus saw His mother, and the disciple standing by, whom He loved, He said to His mother, ‘woman, behold your Son,’ and then He said to His disciple, ‘behold Your mother,’ and from that time forth he took her to his home.*” (John 19:26–28)

¹⁶¹(Saint Ephrem's Commentary on Tatian's Diatessaron: an English translation of Chester Beatty Syriac MS 709, ed. Carmel McCarthy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993, P. 64.8.)

Therefore, Jesus had no brothers and sisters who would take care of Mary after His death otherwise He would not have entrusted her to John. Saint Ephrem says:

“[The evangelist] defined [the nature of] this necessary, and showed us concerning its limit, that it was until, He lived with her chastely until she gave birth to her First – Born, [should it be deduced] from this therefore that he did not live with her chastely after she had given birth, since it is indicated until? But until is not the [end] limit. For he said, The Lord said to my Lord, sit on my right, until I put your enemies under your feet. (Ps. 110:1) Therefore, when his enemies were put beneath his feet, did he stand up? Another [interpretation] of He lived with her chastely [follows]. Is not marriage pure, according to the testimony of the apostle, [the fruit of] their womb is pure? (Hebrews 13:4) But, if one were to say, “See, the brothers of our Lord are named in the gospel,” [I would reply], “Because our Lord entrusted his mother Mary to John, (John 19:27) it is clear that these are not her sons, nor is [Joseph] her husband.” For how he could who said, honor your father and your mother, (Mark 10:19) have separated Mary from her sons, and entrusted her to John [instead]?”¹⁶²

By means of these words, Jesus Christ while He was suffering on the Cross entrusted all of us (the Christian believers) as sons and daughters to His mother, and she in turn becomes our very own mother from that very hour. Thus, we become brothers and sisters of one another in Christ and brothers and sister of Christ Himself. It was under the foot of the Holy Cross, that we were born as brothers and sisters of Christ.

The sectarian church teaches that when The Ever-Blessed Virgin Mary had given birth to the Only begotten Son of God, her role ends, and she returns to the normal status as the rest of humankind; but we in the Apostolic Church confess, always, that she is highly regarded among woman, and is always the respected and honored mother of our Lord in the flesh. It is written: “... *Behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.*” (Luke 1:48b)

There were people who have believed that after Virgin Mary gave birth to the only begotten Son of God, has shared life with Joseph and, as normal husband and wife brought forth children. The fathers of the Church believe, it is impossible for the Virgin Mary who for a period of nine months carried the

¹⁶² (Saint Ephrem’s commentary on Tatian’s Diatessaron, Carmel McCarthy. Published by Oxford University press on behalf of the University of Manchester, 1993, page 65, II, 11)

only begotten Son of God in her womb, which she would think of uniting with a mortal man and bring forth children. Saint Ephrem says:

“Because there are those who dare to say that Mary [cohabited] with Joseph after she bore the Redeemer, [we reply], “How would it have been possible for her who was the home of indwelling of the Spirit, whom the divine power overshadowed, (Luke 1:35) that she be joined to a mortal being, and give birth filled with birth pangs, in the image of the primitive curse? (Gen. 3:16) If Mary was blessed of women, (Luke 1:42) she would have been exempt from the curse from the beginning, and from the bearing of children in birth pangs and curses. It would be impossible therefore to call one who gave birth with these birth pangs blessed. If the animals in the ark were restrained because of Noah, it was fitting that the Prophetess in whom Emmanuel dwelt should not turn to marriage. Noah’s animals [were restrained] of necessity, but she however through her own [free] will, just as she gave birth purely, so also she remained holy.”¹⁶³

Isho ‘dad of Merve says, those who were in the gospel called brothers of the Lord (Matt 13:55) were his relatives, that is his cousins from his Mother’s side.

“This now there stood by the Cross His Mother, and His Mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Joseph, and the mother of James and of Jose and of Simeon and of Judah. She was called the sister of the Blessed One, because of her great love to her.”¹⁶⁴

Jesus entrusted His Mother to John, the Beloved Disciple.

We learn from the writings of the New Testament that the blessed Mary, as a merciful mother, followed the footprints of her Son Jesus Christ, starting from Jerusalem to Golgotha where Jesus was crucified. At the bottom of the Cross, the holy Mother saw her Son suffering and dying. Thus, under the feet of the Cross the prophecy of Simeon was fulfilled in her. It is written: “*Yea, a sword shall pierce through your own soul also,*” (Luke 2:35) At the time Jesus Christ was suffering and dying on the Cross, saw his beloved mother and John the beloved disciple standing at the foot of the Cross. He gave His Mother to John

¹⁶³ (Saint Ephrem’s commentary on Tatian’s Diatessaron, Carmel McCarthy. Published by Oxford University press on behalf of the University of Manchester, 1993 p. 63.II.6)

¹⁶⁴ (*The Commentaries of Isho dad of Merv, Bishop of Hadatha (c.850 A.D.) in Syriac and English*, V.1, P.278. ed. and tr. Margaret Dunlop Gibson, intro. James Rendel Harris (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1911)

and John to His Mother. In other words, He entrusted the care of His Mother to John. Since then, the Virgin Mary as the first disciple of the Lord engaged herself in pious fasting, prayer and, worshipping the Almighty God till the day of her departure. Theodore of Mopsuestia says:

“Meanwhile, standing near the Cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother’s sister, and another Mary. And John was there as well. While Jesus was on the Cross and saw them standing there, that is, his mother and John, he said to her, (19:26) Here is your Son, he said to him, (19:27) Here is your mother, showing with these words his great love for him and that he considered John as his other self since Jesus wanted him to take his place with His mother. And so, John, moved by these words, immediately received her, and she remained with him. It would seem that the Lord loved John for many reasons and with good cause; indeed, he alone among all the disciples remained with him after these tribulations.”¹⁶⁵

While Jesus was suffering on the Cross He was concerned about the care of His mother. Thus, He entrusted the mother whom He loved so dearly to His beloved disciple. On the Cross Jesus repaid all His mother had done for Him, the debt of His upbringing. Jesus by His crucifixion repaid in full the debt of the breaking of the Commandment on behalf of mankind as well. Saint Ephrem says:

“Blessed are you, O woman, whose Lord and son.
Entrusted you to one fashioned in his image.
The Son of your womb did not wrong your love,
But to the son of His bosom, He entrusted you.
Upon your bosom you caressed Him when He was small,
And upon His bosom He also caressed him,
So that when he was crucified, He repaid all you had advanced to Him,
The debt of His upbringing.
For, the Crucified repaid debts.
Even yours was repaid by Him.”¹⁶⁶

Saint Luke the Evangelist in the Acts of the holy Apostles says: “*The Virgin Mary continued with one accord in prayer and supplications with the holy*

¹⁶⁵ (Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, trans. Marco Conti, ed. Joel E. Elowsky (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2010, P 157)

¹⁶⁶ (Ephrem the Syrian hymns, translated and introduced by Kathleen E. McVey. Paulist press, New York. Mahwah. Hymn on the Virginitly, Hymn 25. 2, 3. P. 370)

Apostles and the disciples of the Lord.” (Luke 1:14) It is also recorded that the most blessed Mother was with the holy Apostles on the day of Pentecost in the upper room, waiting for the promise of the Lord, where they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.

“As for the committal of Mary to John the son of Zabedee by our Lord, He said to her, ‘woman, behold thy son;’ and to John He said, ‘Behold thy mother,’ and from that hour he took her into his house and ministered unto her. Mary lived twelve years after our Lord’s Asscension: the sum of the years which she lived in the world was fifty-eight years, but others say sixty -one years. She was not burid on earth, but the angles carried her to paradise, and angles bore her bier. On the day of her death all the apostles were gathered together, and they prayed over her and were blessed by her. Thomas was in India, and an angle took him up and brought him, and he found the angles carrying her bier through the air; and they brought it nigh to Thomas, and he also prayed and was blessed by her.”¹⁶⁷

The Mystery of Incarnation:

It is recorded in the gospel of Saint John that God the Word came down from heaven and clothed himself with the human body. Thus, the purpose of incarnation was so that what was hidden, and intangible (the divinity) might be visible and touchable through that which can be tangible (humanity). Saint Ephrem says:

“Thus, the Word came and clothed itself with flesh, so that what cannot be grasped (the divinity) might be grasped through that which can be grasped (humanity), and that, through that which cannot be grasped, the flesh would raise itself up against those who grasp it (*possibly reference to the demonic forces or powers of Satan which wage war against the flesh*). For it was fitting that our Lord be the heaven of all good things, unto whom (people) might be gathered, the end of all mysteries, towards whom they would hasten from everywhere, and the treasure of all the parables, so that everyone, lifted (as though) on wings, might rest in him alone.”¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁷ (Mar Shleemon, Metropolitan of Basra, Book of the Bee, the Syriac text Edited from the Manuscript in London, Oxford, and Munich. With an English Translation by Ernest A. William Budge, M.A. Oxford, at the Clarendos press, 1886. Pp. 97-98)

¹⁶⁸ (Saint Ephrem’s commentary on Tatian’s Diatessaron, Carmel McCarthy. Published by Oxford University press on behalf of the University of Manchester, 1993 Pp. 39-40)

The mystery of incarnation took place according to the plan of God. Thus, at the end of time, God the Word out of His love for mankind humbled Himself and took a form of a slave by clothing Himself with a human body.

“The divinity exalted above all was not ashamed.
To see His Son clothed in a body and baptized in the water.”¹⁶⁹

Again, Saint Ephrem says: “The Lord came to be baptized because he was clothed with the guilty Adam.”¹⁷⁰

Jesus Christ is confessed by the Church of the East fathers as the perfect God and the perfect man. Two natures in one person. His divinity is clothed with His humanity. Thus, His humanity is visible, but His divinity is invisible. Saint Ephrem says:

“He (the Lord) was believed by means of what was visible, as also in the case of what was hidden; for he is God, too, in hidden manner, and a human person in a visible manner, seeing that, because of his humanity which was external it was evident that he was a human person, and because of his greatness which was internal it was believed that he was God.”¹⁷¹

Saint Mark the Evangelist preached the gospel of Salvation to the Romans and Mathew to the Hebrews. The Hebrew on the one hand were suspicious about the divinity of Jesus, and the Romans on the other hand were doubtful about the Humanity of Jesus. However, Mark by saying: "*But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.*" (Mark 13:32) is teaching them that Jesus Christ was not only a true God, but also a true Man. His intention was to teach the Jews on the one hand that our

¹⁶⁹ (Jacob of Serugh, *Selct Festal Homilies*, translated from Syriac and introduced by Thomas Kollampampil, CMI, with a foreward by Sebastian P. Brock, Center for Indian and Inter-religious studies (CIIS), Rome, and Dharmaram Publications (DP), Bangalore 1997, P. 184)

¹⁷⁰ (Ephrem's commentary on Tatian's Diatessaron, Carmel McCarthy. Published by Oxford University press on behalf of the University of Manchester, 1993, page 83, IV, Ib)

¹⁷¹ (Saint Ephrem's commentary on Tatian's Diatessaron, Carmel McCarthy. Published by Oxford University press on behalf of the University of Manchester, 1993 p. 104.V, 19)

Lord is God; and to teach the Romans on the other hand that the Lord is Man. Esho Dadd says:

“And we must know that Mark alone said, nor the Son knows, while Matthew does not say it; for because Matthew on the one hand preached his Gospel to the Hebrews, but Mark to the other hand to the Romans; the Hebrew on the one hand were doubting about the divinity of our Lord, and the Romans on the other hand were doubting about the Humanity, because of the bad seed that Simon had sown among them, that is to say, imaginations and fantasies about the manhood of our Lord; therefore Mark added this of neither the Son, but the Father, teaching them that He was not only God, but also true Man; for the Jews on the one hand needed to be taught that our Lord was God; and the Romans on the other hand needed to be taught that He was Man.”¹⁷²

Jesus Christ is a perfect man and a perfect God. He is great as God and He is small as man. As God He is in heaven in the bosom of His father and as man He is with us. Jacob of Serugh writing in this regard says:

“You, my Lord, have both greatness as well as smallness,
Because you are both God and man and the whole of you is with everyone.
With your Father, on account of Him, you are like Him,
And with us, on account of us, again you are like us.”¹⁷³

An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “*Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is born in her is from the Holy Spirit.*” (Matthew 1:20) The angel by saying “*that which is born in her not that which is born from her*” is talking about the formation of the man who within the womb of the Virgin Mary was separated from her before His birth. Esho Dadd says:

¹⁷² (*The Commentaries of Isho dad of Merv, Bishop of Hadatha (c.850 A.D.) in Syriac and English*, V.1, P 95. ed. and tr. Margaret Dunlop Gibson, intro. James Rendel Harris (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1911)

¹⁷³ (Jacob of Serugh, *Selct Festal Homilies*, translated from Syriac and introduced by Thomas Kollampampil, CMI, with a foreward by Sebastian P. Brock, Center for Indian and Inter-religious studies (CIIS), Rome, and Dharmaram Publications (DP), Bangalore 1997, P. 205)

“But the Diatessaron says that that which is born in her, that which the Holy Spirit, the ineffable and infinite Word; the birth that is in her, he calls the assumption and formation of the man, who within the womb was separated from her, even though he was not born.”¹⁷⁴

It is recorded in the gospel of John “*The word became flesh and dwelt among us.*” (John 1:14) It is understood by the Church fathers that in the process of incantation the Divine nature of God the word did not change into the human nature. But rather the Word of God clothed Himself with the human body formed in the womb of the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit. Saint Ephrem says:

“After having completed the account concerning the Word, under what form, up to what point and for what motive it lowered itself, the (evangelist) said elsewhere, *the word itself became a body and dwelt among us.* (John 1:14) Now, all that you hear after the completion of the account of this Word, you should not understand it in relation to the Word merely in itself, but to the Word that clothed itself with a body. Consequently, these are mixed accounts, they are divine in their entirety, and they are also human, apart from the (Word) which is the first and the beginning of everything.”¹⁷⁵

Jacob of Serugh along with the rest of the Church fathers, speaking about incarnation believe that the nature of the Divine Word of God did not change into human nature put rather took upon itself a human body. Jacob of Serugh says:

“My word will enfold His story and I will offer (it) to the Word who came and became flesh but was not changed.”¹⁷⁶

Jesus Christ was perfect before and after incarnation. This means when we say, ‘the Word of God became man’ we do not mean that the Word of God changed

¹⁷⁴ (*The Commentaries of Isho dad of Mero, Bishop of Hadatha (c.850 A.D.) in Syriac and English*, V.1, P. 14. ed. and tr. Margaret Dunlop Gibson, intro. James Rendel Harris (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1911)

¹⁷⁵ (Saint Ephrem’s commentary on Tatian’s Diatessaron, Carmel McCarthy. Published by Oxford University press on behalf of the University of Manchester, 1993 p. 44)

¹⁷⁶ (Jacob of Serugh, *Selct Festal Homilies*, translated from Syriac and introduced by Thomas Kollampampil, CMI, with a foreward by Sebastian P. Brock, Center for Indian and Inter-religious studies (CIIS), Rome, and Dharmaram Publications (DP), Bangalore 1997, P. 47)

his divine nature into a human nature. On the day of Jesus baptism in the Jordan River God the father acknowledged Jesus' divine Sonship.

“He was perfect before He descended as well as after the descent, And the Father had the confidence to acknowledge His Son.”¹⁷⁷

The Word of God through the human body which He assumed lived among us. The evangelist by saying He lived among us not near us is clearly showing the purpose of incarnation. So, He (God the Word) clothed Himself with human body to liberate mankind from the oppression of Satan, Sin, and death. Saint Ephrem says:

“The word became flesh and lived among us that is the Word of God, through the flesh which he assumed, lived among us. He did not say, “near us” but among us, to show clearly that it was for our sake that he clothed himself with our flesh, in accordance with what he said, My flesh is food.”¹⁷⁸

God the Word came down from heaven, became man and dwelled among us while not changing His nature nor departing from His father. Jacob of Serugh says:

“He manifested himself from the Father and Mary was illuminated from His fullness. The flash of light descended but did not cut off His root from His emissary. He dwelt in the pure woman while remaining glorious in the bosom of His Father. He had entered into the womb, but heaven was filled with His glory. Shone forth in the young girl but his light was bright over the chariot. In the womb is His conception but the wings of the watchers are set on fire from Him. He is totally in Mary and he is fully in His Father and He is in all. He stirs the Cherubs, He is clothed with the members (of the body), and He is found with all.”¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁷ (Jacob of Serugh, *Selected Festal Homilies*, translated from Syriac and introduced by Thomas Kollampampil, CMI, with a foreword by Sebastian P. Brock, Center for Indian and Inter-religious studies (CIIS), Rome, and Dharmaram Publications (DP), Bangalore 1997, P. 185)

¹⁷⁸ (Saint Ephrem's commentary on Tatian's Diatessaron, Carmel McCarthy. Published by Oxford University press on behalf of the University of Manchester, 1993, page 78, III, 9)

¹⁷⁹ (Jacob of Serugh, *Selected Festal Homilies*, translated from Syriac and introduced by Thomas Kollampampil, CMI, with a foreword by Sebastian P. Brock, Center for Indian and Inter-religious studies (CIIS), Rome, and Dharmaram Publications (DP), Bangalore 1997, P. 61)

Again, Jacob of Seugh says:

“The Lord of the watchers indicated to the watchers to prepare (the way) before Him,
So that He should descend and dwell while not departing from His Father.”¹⁸⁰

Regarding the theology of incarnation, it is believed that the Divine Word of God cannot be confined in a certain place. He is omnipresent. He is in heaven and at the same time in the womb of the Virgin Mary. Since God, the Word is Divine is not subject to suffering and death. Jacob of Serugh says:

“Exalted is your Word even above death, wherever it is,
Because it is alive with you and the depths of Sheol do not confine it.
Your Word, O Lord, is not confined, subject to destruction,
For it resembles you because regions do not confine you.
You remained upon the throne, but the womb of Mary was filled by you.
In heaven is your dwelling but on earth (is) your birth.”¹⁸¹

As soon as the incarnation took place God the Word eternally united Himself with the humanity of Jesus formed by the power of the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary. Against Arianism the Church confesses there was no time that the humanity of Jesus was without His divinity and His divinity without His humanity. He is both God and Man.

“You, My Lord, have both greatness as well as smallness,
Because You are both God and Man and the whole of You is with everyone.
With your father, on account of Him, You are like Him,
And with us, on account of us, again you are like us.”¹⁸²

¹⁸⁰ (Jacob of Serugh, *Selected Festal Homilies*, translated from Syriac and introduced by Thomas Kollamparampil, CMI, with a foreword by Sebastian P. Brock, Center for Indian and Inter-religious studies (CIIS), Rome, and Dharmaram Publications (DP), Bangalore 1997, P. 48)

¹⁸¹ (Jacob of Serugh, *Selected Festal Homilies*, Translated from Syriac and introduced by Thomas Kollamparampil, CMI, with a foreword by Sebastian P. Brock, Center for Indian and Inter-religious studies (CIIS), Rome, and Dharmaram Publications (DP), Bangalore 1997, P. 331)

¹⁸² (Jacob of Serugh, *Selected Festal Homilies*, translated from Syriac and introduced by Thomas Kollamparampil, CMI, with a foreword by Sebastian P. Brock, Center for Indian and Inter-religious studies (CIIS), Rome, and Dharmaram Publications (DP), Bangalore 1997,) P. 205)

In the the incarnation process, His Divinity and His humanity did not destroy their properties. The properties of His Divinity were preserved as well as those of His humanity. Jesus Christ as eternal Word of God gave the law to Moses on Mount Sinai along with His father. As a perfect man he approached circumcision on the eighth day of His birth so that people will not deny His humanity. And by the power of His Divinity, He performed many miracles that a man cannot do them. Jacob of Serugh says:

“He gave the law to Moses on Mount (Sinai) together with His Father.
And He brought the offering so that He might show that was not a strength.
He came to circumcision so that no one might deny His Humanity.
And He brought the offering so that He might show that He was not a stranger.
Together with His sender he had commanded the waters and they caused winged creatures to swarm, And by the turtle dove that He created, His own sign was offered.”¹⁸³

It is recorded in the first verse of the Holy Bible. “*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*” (Genesis 1:1) So God the creator is eternal, which means He has no beginning and no end. However, at the end of time, God the Word for the sake of our salvation became man and was born of the Virgin Mary. Talking about God the Word becoming Man (incarnated) Jacob of Serugh like Saint Ephrem and other Church fathers is using the expression ‘clothed Himself’ with a human body which plainly means became Man.

“It is a wonder to narrate, while being God, He became human.
And the Lord of (all) times came to the time of birth.
The Flame - clothed One who clothed himself with a body from the daughter of David.
The concealed in His sender, who came to become manifest in the body that He assumed.”¹⁸⁴

The mystery of the incarnation of God the Word brought about a significant change in the quality of the relationship of God with man and vice versa.

¹⁸³ (Jacob of Serugh, *Selct Festal Homilies*, translated from Syriac and introduced by Thomas Kollampampil, CMI, with a foreward by Sebastian P. Brock, Center for Indian and Inter-religious studies (CIIS), Rome, and Dharmaram Publications (DP), Bangalore 1997, P. 142)

¹⁸⁴ (Jacob of Serugh, *Selct Festal Homilies*, translated from Syriac and introduced by Thomas Kollampampil, CMI, with a foreward by Sebastian P. Brock, Center for Indian and Inter-religious studies (CIIS), Rome, and Dharmaram Publications (DP), Bangalore 1997, P. 141)

Before incarnation, God was far away from mankind, however after incarnation, God, in the person of Emanuel (God with us) united Himself with mankind. As a result of incarnation people began to understand God better, to see God in the person of Jesus, to touch God in His human body, have fellowship with Him and finally to proclaim Him to others. Jacob of Serugh says:

“With regard to your being God, the discourse about you is beyond (the power of) the speaker,
But because you are human, behold, men speak about you every day.”¹⁸⁵

God created Adam and Eve in His image and likeness and placed them in the Garden of Eden. Both Adam and Eve were naked, but they were not ashamed of being naked. After breaking the commandment of God, Adam and Eve realized that they are naked. So, Eve made for Adam a garment which was covered with the blemishes of breaking the commandment of God. As a result of breaking the commandment Adam and Eve were cast out of the Garden of Eden. In the womb of the Virgin Mary the Holy Spirit knitted a glorious garment (Human body of Jesus) for Adam. On the Cross Jesus clothed the repentant thief with the adorned garment and promised him entrance into paradise in the place of Adam. Saint Ephrem says:

“Adam had been naked and fair,
But his diligent wife
Labored and made for him.
A garment covered with stains.
The Garden, seeing him thus vile,
Drove him forth.
Through Mary Adam had
Another robe,
Which adorned the thief,
And when he became resplendent at Christ’s promise,

¹⁸⁵(Jacob of Serugh, *Select Festal Homilies*, translated from Syriac and introduced by Thomas Kollamparampil, CMI, with a foreword by Sebastian P. Brock, Center for Indian and Inter-religious studies (CIIS), Rome, and Dharmaram Publications (DP), Bangalore 1997, P. 110)

The Garden, looking one,
Embraced him in Adam's place.”¹⁸⁶

Philoxinus as the rest of the Eastern fathers of the Church believes that Jesus Christ in His divinity is born of God the father and in His humanity, He is born of the Virgin Mary. Speaking about the Incarnation, Philoxinus believes that the “Word became flesh” does not signify change in the divine nature. Fathers of the Church believe the Divine Word of God clothed Himself with the Human body.

“The eternal generation of the Son is often spoken of in Philoxenus' writings especially in connection with His temporal generation from the Virgin. In the letter to the Monks, we read: “And He, whose generation from the Father is without beginning, was brought forth with a beginning in His generation from the Virgin. And in the letter to Zeno: “She (the Virgin) did not bring Him forth spiritually since (the Word) has His Spiritual generation from the Father, and He did not become (man) as, He was begotten by the Father, according to the order of the (divine) nature and of the essential generation.” ¹⁸⁷

According to the teachings of the Church fathers the mystery of incarnation took place for the following reasons. One. God the Word in the end of time out of His love for the Salvation of the work of His hand voluntarily came down from heaven and clothed Himself with human body and was born of the Virgin Mary. Second. The divine nature for the sake of covering the Brightness of His Majesty, fashioned an excellent garment within the womb of the Holy Virgin; and in it He was seen for the renewal of the whole of creation, which He had established by His Sign. Third. God the Word by clothing Himself with the human body revealed unto us, His Power and His Godhead.

“O Christ who in the end of time has pleased (*in His love*), by His wisdom, descended from the Height of His Majesty, that He may renew and save the image of Adam who had been corrupted by error, we beseech You• O Christ who for the covering of the Brightness of His Majesty, fashioned an excellent garment within the womb of the Holy Virgin; and in it He

¹⁸⁶ (Ephrem the Syrian hymns, translated and introduced by Kathleen E. McVey. Paulist press, New York. Mahwah. Hymn on Paradise, Hymn IV. 5, P. 99)

¹⁸⁷ (Three letters of Philoxenus, Bishop of Mabboch (485-519) by Arthur Adolphe Vaschalde, Roma Tipographia Della R. Accademia Del Lincei. Proprieta Del. V. Salviducci, 1902 P. 73-.74)

was seen for the renewal of the whole of creation, which He had established by His Sign, we beseech You •”¹⁸⁸

In the following anthem the Church prays as follows:

“Let us confess and worship, the One Being who is hidden, and without beginning, that at the end of time, HE is revealed unto us, His Power and His Godhead, through our body; through Him, He has made known unto us the glorified Persons of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Because of His great and abundant love, HE has loved us. He has saved us by His Son. He has raised us with Him, to rule in His Kingdom, which will not pass away; and He will fulfill His promise which He had given (*promised*) to us; blessed is the One who has renewed us and has reconciled us by HIS Good News and have mercy upon us.”¹⁸⁹

The divine nature of God cannot be comprehended and measured by the created ones. At the end of time the God the Word, took and cleaved to (*upon*) Himself human nature without change; and was born of the holy virgin in a holy manner. Thus, the Son who was born of the Virgin Mary is Jesus Christ, the Power, and the Wisdom of God. Through the mystery of incarnation and the earthly ministry of Jesus God became closer to the work of His hands and finally reconciled them to himself. In the following prayer fathers of the Church have summarized the mystery of incarnation.

“and in the time when our wickedness gained strength (*became stronger*); and, in the age, when our humanity trespassed (*the commandments of our God*); and, in the moment our venture to dare to do wrong, seized the sinful pains, spreading the foul odor of our sores over our entire being; and, the prophetic medicines are unable to heal us; and, the bridle of scriptural commandments stood in awe from being unable to bind our wounds; and, not again by the judicial sentence, our SETHIC (*human*) wickedness, You made worthy to deliver up for our destruction; and not by the scorch of severe punishment, the backsliding of our Sodomitic wickedness, treated with contempt to destroy us; but rather by Your eternal compassion and by Your Fatherly protection, and by the compassion of Your transforming humanity, from the difficulties and the sliding away of our propensity toward sin; He, (*Jesus Christ's human nature*) did not receive (*these properties*); and, from Your eternal and unspeakable graces, (*He was*) mercifully constrained; You have been sent into the world without changing places

¹⁸⁸ (Khudra (prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. the Commemoration of the Saint Mary Mother of Christ. V. 1, P 623-624)

¹⁸⁹ (Khudra (Prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. Volume 1 the third Sunday of Advent, P. 155)

from the presence where Your glory dwells in the Hidden province of Your greatness, You have celebrated without changing Your place; and, from the Throne of Your Heights of rulership of Your Kingdom, You have rushed out unknowingly; And, in the holy tent of the blessed Abrahamic Race; and, the delighted temple (*shrine*) from the famous lineage of David; for the redemption and renewal of all You have dwelt, thus to say, You have incarnated (*taken human enfleshment*); And, the finest garment for the concealment of Your Divine Brightness; and, Your eternal dwelling place You have knit; and, from the pure womb of Eternal Virgin, You have shone forth; from Her, beyond the natural conception, and without destroying the seal of her virginity, she has given birth; and, like the roots from the thirsting earth, You have sprouted; she who became the port for the prophecies and the resting place for the visions; And, the goal and signs for those who reveal the hidden things; And, the mansion for the revelations; And, the second Heaven, and the Holy of the Holies, for the unspeakable mysteries; And, the known Sinai, and the spiritual ark adorned with Divine beauty; she who is filled with grace, and the receiver of the Holy Spirit, Blessed among Woman, and upon her alone, descended the Power of the lover of humankind; She is made worthy of the blessings of all generations; and the One whose Name is Powerful and Holy, (He) made miraculous things; Our Victorious Lady, Mary the Highest; and, the Exalted One, who is the source of all blessings; the Temple of the Temple of God the Word; and the glorified dwelling place of the image of His Being; the Begetter of the Savior who is Christ the Lord, in the City of David, in Bethlehem Ephratha;”¹⁹⁰

Mary the Mother of Christ:

Fathers of the Church of the East have always been more comfortable with addressing Mary as the mother of Christ than the mother of God. With respect to the name “*Mother of God*,” their argument is, such a title does not exist in the writings of the Prophets nor of the holy Apostles. Isaiah prophesied about the birth of Christ from the Virgin Mary, and the Apostles preached about the birth of Christ. They believed that He who was born of Mary is both God and Man. Since the Son unto whom Mary gave birth is a perfect Man and a perfect God, therefore they did not call Mary the “*Mother of Man*” nor the “*Mother of God*” but rather the “*Mother of Christ*”, the same name used by prophets and

¹⁹⁰(Khudra (prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. the Commemoration of the Saint Mary Mother of Christ. V. 1, Pp. 621-622)

Apostles, and which denotes to the person of the unity, God and Man united in one person. Mar Odisho Metropolitan of Suwa (Nisibin) and Arminia says:

“Cyril maintained that we ought to call the Virgin “Mother of God,” and wrote twelve treaties excommunicating all who should, in any way, draw a distinction between the divinity and the humanity of Christ after the Union. Nestorius replied to these Sentences, and showed that they were erroneous, and with respect to the appellation “Mother of God,” he argued that it did not exist either in the writings of the Prophets or the Apostles. The Prophets prophesied of Christ to come, and the Apostles preached of the same Christ, predicted by the Prophets as coming into the world, that this was He who was born of Mary and they showed that He is both God and Man. Now, were we to use the expression “Mother of Man” only, we should be like Paul of Samosata, and Phontinus of Galatia, who said of our Lord that He was but a mere man like one of the prophets and on this account they were excommunicated; so if we use the bare expression “Mother of God” we become like Simon and Menander, who says that God did not take a body from Mary; but that His dispensation (life and action) were hallucinatory and not real, and on that account they also were excommunicated. But we call the Virgin “Mother of Christ”, the name used by prophets and Apostles, and which denotes to the Union generally.”¹⁹¹

In the following anthem fathers of the Church refer to the Virgin Mary as the begetter of Christ who is the power and the wisdom of God.

“He who cannot be comprehended and measured by the created ones. by our humanity He did His dispensation, because The Divine Nature took and cleaved to (upon) Himself human nature without change; the holy virgin gave birth to Christ the Power and the Wisdom of God, in a holy manner; to this, as we worship, we all confess The One Son; Who is the Savior of The World.”¹⁹²

Jesus Christ is called by many different names. He was called Jesus by the angel of the Lord. “*You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus.*” (Luke 1:31) Jesus means the Savior, because he will save mankind from Sin. This name therefore refers not to his nature but to his Ministry and mission on earth. It is written: “*She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their*

¹⁹¹(Mar Odisho Metropolitan of Suwa (Nisibin) and Arminia, The Book of Marganitha (The Pearl) on the truth of Christianity. Translated from the Aramaic original by His Holiness Mar Eshai Shimun XXIII Catholicos Patriarch of the East 1965 PP 33-35)

¹⁹² (Khudra (prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. The third Sunday of Advent. V. 1, P. 154)

sins.” (Matthew 1:21) Saint Ephrem in his commentary on Diatessaron explains in detail the meaning of the name Jesus.

“The words “in the sixth month’ are reckoned in relation to Elizabeth’s pregnancy. “The angle was sent to a virgin,” and he said to her, “Behold, in your virginity you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus.” He was speaking about him who was to appear in the body. He did not say to her, “that name which is called Jesus,” but “you shall call his name,” This shows that this name is of the economy, which is through the body, since Jesus in Hebrew means “Savior.” For the angle said, “You shall call his name Jesus,” that is, Savior, “for he shall save his people from sins.” This name therefore refers not to his nature but to his deeds.”¹⁹³

Jesus is also called Christ (Mshikha in Aramaic) which means the anointed one. So the name Christ is the name of the person of the unity of God and Man in one person. In other words, Jesus’ humanity was anointed by the Holy Spirit. So, God is the anointer and Christ is the anointed. Esho Dad says:

“The book of the generation of Jesus the Christ. Jesus is a name; by adoption from human nature, but according to the meaning, the translation of His name is, the Savior God; but the Christ is a name of honor; that is to say, of unity; God the anointer, and man the anointed.”¹⁹⁴

The Son that the Virgin Mary gave birth is also called Immanuel which is interpreted “God with us”. The person of Immanuel is defined in the holy Church as two Qnomeh, the divine and the human in one person of Sonship. In His divinity Jesus Christ is eternally born of God the Father and in His humanity, He is born of the Virgin Mary at the end of time in the person of Immanuel. The following anthem summarizes the teaching of the Church regarding the mystery of incarnation of God the Word.

“O Lord of all while you are in the form of God, Out of Your love, You took upon Yourself a form of a servant. Thought it is not robbery to be equal with God. And you did not make

¹⁹³ (*Saint Ephrem's Commentary on Tatian's Diatessaron: an English translation of Chester Beatty Syriac MS 709 with Introduction and notes*, Carmel McCarthy, Published by Oxford University press on behalf of the University of Manchester, 1993, p. 52.1. 25)

¹⁹⁴ (*The Commentaries of Isho dad of Merv, Bishop of Hadatha (c.850 A.D.) in Syriac and English*, V.1, P 7. Ed. and tr. Margaret Dunlop Gibson, intro. James Rendel Harris (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1911)

Your Humanity falacious (Untrue). Yet in both natures intruth you are one Son without division. Above you are born of the Father without a mother. And below You are born of a mother without a father. Thus, the prophets went forward and proclaimed. And thus, also preached the apostles. And thus the fathers taught in the Church. By their petitions and faith O, God keep us and have mercy upon us.”¹⁹⁵

The Church of the East believes in the one triune God: Father, Son and the Holy Spirit, One Divine Nature in three persons of the Holy Trinity, and three persons in one Divine nature. Mar Narsai says:

“There was hidden the mystery of the Son and the Spirit with our redemption. And by our renewal, the universe has learned of the Trinity. Through us, the spiritual ones have received the one confession: That the Divinity (is) three persons (but) one Nature.”¹⁹⁶

The Church, furthermore, believes and confesses the only begotten Son of God, God the Word, at the end of time, was incarnated for us men and for our Salvation and became Man and was born of the Virgin Mary. Thus the Church proclaims two natures, God and Man in one single person of (Sonship) of Jesus Christ. And the Virgin Mary is addressed the Mother of Christ who is a perfect God and a perfect Man. Since the one born of the Virgin Mary is a perfect God and a perfect Man, Virgin Mary was never addressed the mother of an ordinary Man. And the Son of God and the Son of Mary is one and the same Son not two Sons. The Synod of Mar Ezekiel, 576 of the Church of the East stresses the Christological position of two natures in one Son.

“He (God the Word) took for himself, inseparably, a perfect temple for the dwelling-place of His Godhead from the holy Virgin Mary, and was conceived and born from her by the Power of the Most High, Christ incarnated to be Acknowledged and confessed in two natures. God and

¹⁹⁵ (Khudra (prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. the Commemoration of the Saint Mary Mother of Christ. V. 1, P 177-178)

¹⁹⁶(Narsai's Metrical Homilies on the Nativity, Epiphany, Passion, Resurrection and Ascension of the Lord. Edited and translated by: Fredrick G. Mcleod, S.J. P.41)

Man; one Son, by whom the oldness of our nature was made new.”¹⁹⁷

This is the reason in the following anthem Virgin Mary is called the mother of Christ in His Humanity.

“By the prayer of Your beggeter: O Christ the Lord of our race. Pacify the world from end to the end. Stabilise Your Church by Your loving kindness. Within which the commemoration of Mary the mother of your Humanity is celebrated. The miraculouse Son, the blessed fruit have marcy upon us.”¹⁹⁸

We have already said, the holy Church from the very beginning has addressed the Virgin Mary as the Mother of Christ instead of the Mother of God. The reason the fathers of the Church resigned from addressing blessed Mary as the “*Mother of God*” is because the name ‘*God*’ signifies the Holy Trinity. Thus, there might be some unversed people who would think, Mary is in truth the mother of the Holy Trinity and that is not what the Bible teaches. The Church believes that, only the second person of the Holy Trinity, God the Word, came down from heaven, clothed Himself with the human body, which was formed by the power of the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary and was born from her. However, by calling The Virgin Mary the mother of Christ does not mean the Church of the East is denying the divinity of Christ or disrespecting the Virgin Mary. As a matter of fact, the Church of the East has always revered the Virgin Mary. Mar Odisho Metropolitan of Suwa (Nisibin) and Arminia in the book of the pearl says:

“First: “IF the Virgin is the “begetter of God” and the name “God”, we know denotes Father, Son and Holy Spirit” then she brought forth the Trinity, and not the only Son.”

Second: If the Virgin is the “begetter of God” and He whom she brought forth suffered, died, and was buried, as the four Evangelist testify, either you hold that He in reality; (and he who really dies has no power whatever to revivify others or himself, but must remain in death for ever;) and thus you declare again: false the saying that He rose again:

Thirdly: If Mary is the “Begetter of God”, and Peter testifies of Him whom, she brought forth, saying: Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God:’ the according to your

¹⁹⁷ (SO, 113/372, the Synod of Mar Ezekiel, 576.)

¹⁹⁸ (Khudra (prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. Tishbookhta.” V. III the Tone of the Aid P. 42)

statement she is not the begetter of Christ, but the begetter of the Father, and Christ is her grandson, not her son, and she is the Mother of the Father who then is the Mother of Christ.”¹⁹⁹

Elias of Jerusalem who lived in the 9th century, regarding the veneration the Church of the East has for the Virgin Mary, says:

“That Nestorians deny Mary ought to be called ‘Mother Of God’ is not denying the Divinity of Christ, nor the Descent of the Divine Word who is the same as the King Of ages, into the holy Mother of Christ. The Nestorians Refuse Mary to be called Mother of God, because the Exalted and the glorious name ‘God’ signifies the Trinity of persons, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. On the contrary, the name ‘Christ’ probably Connotes the Son only, not the Father and the Son and The Holy Spirit. Hence, if we call Mary Mother of God We may appear as attributing generation and birth to the Father, and to the Son and the Holy Spirit. If on the Other hand we call Mary Mother of Christ who is God of Ages, we affirm the Son alone to have been this not of Course to deny Christ.”²⁰⁰

In the year 1911 the Catholicos Patriarch of the Assyrian Church of the East discussed with the members of the Holy Synod the most delicate issues related to the Christology of the Church and how should the Virgin Mary be properly addressed. Then, immediately in an official letter, the Holy Father sends the position of the Church regarding the Virgin Mary to the Anglican Church saying:

“Mother of Christ concerning the blessed Saint Mary, we Confess that she is the Mother of Jesus Christ, our Lord And our God. In that, from commencement of the Conception of humanity of our Lord, God the Word, the

¹⁹⁹ (Mar Odisho Metropolitan of Suwa (Nisibin) and Arminia, The Book of Marganitha (The Pearl) on the truth of Christianity. Translated from the Aramaic original by His Holiness Mar Eshai Shimun XXIII Catholicos Patriarch of the East 1965 PP 41-42)

²⁰⁰ (JUGIF, Theologia Dogmatica, vol. 5. 68-69; PODIPARA, Mariology of the East, 21)

Second 'qnumah' of the Holy Trinity, was united
Therewith, and became one Son, one person, to all Eternity.”²⁰¹

In the month of November of the year 1994, the late Mar Dinkha IV Catholicos Patriarch of the Assyrian Church of the East and the late Pope Saint John Paul II the Pope of the Catholic Church signed The Common Christological Declaration. This declaration states that in the Assyrian Church the Virgin Mary is addressed as the “Mother of Christ our Lord and God”. However, Catholics address the Virgin Mary mother of God. The Christological declaration acknowledges the legitimacy and the appropriateness of both expressions of the same faith.

“The humanity to which the Blessed Virgin Mary gave Birth always was that of the Son of God himself. That is The reason why the Assyrian Church of the East is Praying to the Virgin Mary as “the Mother of Christ our God and Savior.” In the light of this same faith the Catholic tradition addresses the Virgin Mary as “the Mother of God” and also as the “the mother of Christ.” We Both recognize the legitimacy and rightness of these Expressions of the same faith and we both respect the Preference of each Church in her liturgical life and Piety.”²⁰²

In the year 576 the fathers of the Church of the East convened in a Holy Synod under the spiritual headship of Mar Ezekiel Catholicos Patriarch. They sanctioned that at the end of time, God the Word came down from heaven, dwelled in the temple that was formed in the womb of the Virgin Mary and was born by the power of the Holy Spirit. Thus the one who was born of the Virgin Mary was acknowledged and confessed, two natures, God and Man in one Son, Jesus Christ and Mary was called the Mother of Christ. It is written:

²⁰¹ (WIGRAM, Intercommunion, 10.)

²⁰² (AASh, 87 (1995) 680.)

“He took for himself, inseparably, a perfect temple for
The dwelling-place of His Godhead from the holy Virgin
Mary, and was conceived and born from her by the
Power of the Most High-Christ incarnated to be
Acknowledged and confessed in two natures, God and
Man: one Son, by whom the oldness of our nature was
Made new.”²⁰³

Jesus has always been acknowledged as a perfect man and a perfect God. He is a perfect Man because He was born as a whole Man, body and soul. And He is a perfect God because His humanity became the temple of God the Word the creator of whole world. Jesus also is called the Son of a woman simply because He took His humanity from a woman. In His humanity He is equal to us in everything except for sin. But in His Divinity, He is equal to God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. Narsai says:

“Mary is equal to (other) females because of her fashioning.
Her offspring, on the other hand, is greater than all the offsprings of the [daughters of Eve]
Her offspring is like to (other) corporeal beings in body and soul,
But holier and more glorious than corporeal beings because of his fashioning.
His nature is like that of his mother from whom he exists,
But he is more exalted than she because is not from seed (that he has acquired) [this (bodily) structure.
He is entirely a man because of the wholeness of (his) body and soul;
He is also God because he became the dwelling place of the God of the universe.
He is the son of a woman because from her is the nature of his (bodily) structure,
But he is the son of the (Divine) Essence because he is equal to this by the power [of his Assumer].
In body and soul, he is like to his corporeal brothers;
But in authority, he is equal with the Word, the Offspring of the Father.
In (his) conception and birth and bodily sufferings, he is man entirely,

²⁰³ (SO, 113/ 372)

But in the glorious things that he has received and in inherited, he is the God of the [universe].”²⁰⁴

Jacob of Serugh is in full agreement with the rest of the Church of the East fathers regarding the doctrine of Christology. Speaking about the Sonship of Jesus Christ he says: Jesus is the Son of God, the Son of Man, the Son of Mary and the Son of the Most High. By calling Jesus the Son of Man and the Son of Mary His humanity is emphasized. However, by calling Him the Son of God and the Son of the most High, His Divinity is emphasized. Jesus as God has a heavenly father and does not have a heavenly mother, as the Son of Man has an earthly mother but does not have an earthly father. At the end of time God the Word came down from heaven and choose from among all the virgins a mother for Himself.

“You are the Son of God, You are the Son of Man and You are Son of Mary
You are the Son of the Most High and among the beings below you are incomprehensible.
You came from the height, shone out from the depth, you came from the Father.
You acquire for yourself a mother, you became a babe, and who can investigate you?
Hidden is your fire, revealed is your appearance, exalted is your revelation.
Let mouths tremble and do not dare to investigate you.”²⁰⁵

In the theology of the Church of the East, Jesus Christ is confessed, two distinct natures in one person of Sonship. The Church by confessing two natures in Jesus Christ does not imply that she believes in two distinct persons. In the contrary the Holy Church has always been teaching, the Son of God and the Son of Mary are not two sons or two distinct persons but, rather they are one and the same Son (person). Meanwhile the Church confesses two distinct natures in Jesus Christ because one is spiritual and the other is corporeal, one is passible and the other is impassible, one is The Word of God and the other is a

²⁰⁴ (Narsai's Metrical Homilies on the Nativity, Epiphany, Passion, Resurrection and Ascension of the Lord. Edited and translated by: Fredrick G. Mcleod, S.J. P.65)

²⁰⁵(Jacob of Serugh, Selct Festal Homilies, translated from Syriac and introduced by Thomas Kollampampil, CMI, with a foreward by Sebastian P. Brock, Center for Indian and Inter-religious studies (CIIS), Rome, and Dharmaram Publications (DP), Bangalore 1997, Pp. 332-333)

human body. In the liturgy we worship the divinity and humanity of our Lord without division. Narsai says:

“It (is) not a division of Son and son (that) my thoughts have conceived.

Let the heretics not find fault with the distinction of my words!

Two natures I have said which are distinct from one another.

(It is) not two persons (that) I am introducing as the faithless (do).

As one, I know the Word of the Father and the Body who is from us,

When I worship the spiritual One in the corporeal.

One confession without dividing my mind offers

And I kiss the garment of the King because of the King.

The natures I have distinguished because of the passion and the glories;

One are the passible and the impassible, the Word and the Body!”²⁰⁶

The divinity of Jesus is revealed to mankind by means of His human body. And the only reason Jesus Christ is omnipotent (all powerful) is because He in His divinity is equal to God the father and God the Holy Spirit. Jacob of Serugh says:

“Here, He is revealed, because of the body He has taken from you,
For aforetime He is mighty because He is equal to His Father.”²⁰⁷

The Church of the East in her liturgical books and worship services gives the Virgin Mary her due honor and respect. Yet the Holy Church has never exalted Mary above the three persons of the Holy Trinity or has made her equal to any one of them. Saint Paul says: “*There is one God and one mediator between Man and God the Man Jesus Christ.*” (1 Timothy 2:5-6) The liturgical books of the Church of the East are the most authentic sources of the teachings of the Church

²⁰⁶ (Narsai’s Metrical Homilies on the Nativity, Epiphany, Passion, Resurrection and Ascension of the Lord. Edited and translated by: Fredrick G. Mcleod, S.J. P.65)

²⁰⁷ (Jacob of Serugh, Selct Festal Homilies, translated from Syriac and introduced by Thomas Kollampampil, CMI, with a foreward by Sebastian P. Brock, Center for Indian and Inter-religious studies (CIIS), Rome, and Dharmaram Publications (DP), Bangalore 1997, P. 153)

regarding the Virgin Mary. Since the law of faith is the law of prayer, the sons and daughters of the Church pray what they believe in it. In the follow anthem Mary is called the Mother of Christ who is a perfect Man and a perfect God:

“Which is The Mind, Word, and Hearing, sufficient to comprehend the unmeasured Sea of Your mercifulness, O Lord; Who is from Eternity; before all creation, as The God! Beyond time, IS born The Word from The Father; At the end of time clothed perfectly (with) in Body and Soul from the Mother who had begotten Him; And the seal of her virginity was not corrupted (broken); for this reason, “the begetter of Christ” she is so named; and because He also was not changed, when He willed to be revealed in our humanity; Yea, O the depth of the richness and wisdom of God! The womb of Eve, was devoured by the curse; that in pain she will give birth to sons; her womb (*the womb of the Mary*) became unto her the fount which gives life; for unto Emmanuel without seed, she conceived and gave birth, that our mortal race from corruption was released and freed; Unto HIM we all glorify, saying: The uncomprehend, O Lord of all, Glory be unto You.”²⁰⁸

On the day Jesus Christ was born in the flesh, the ranks of angles celebrated unto the honor of the pure Mary; from whom Christ the King was born. It was not the nature of the one worshiped by all that was born of Mary; as He was born from His Begetter from eternity. In His divinity He was born of His Father. And in His humanity born of Mary. The following anthem proclaims Virgin Mary as the the handmaiden of God the Word and the mother of the temple of God the Word.

“Unto the Temple of God, the Word in great glory, Mary celebrated within her womb; she became unto Him the mother and handmaiden; unto Jesus the Savior of all; for this reason, all the creation; rejoices on the day of her feast; they are invited to (*unto*) the bridal chamber of Light; unto unceasing pleasure; we all, together with all generations; give her desired blessings. Glory unto Him who has chosen her; to be the dwelling place to His glorified Image.”²⁰⁹

²⁰⁸ (Khudra (prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. The first Sunday of Advent V. 1, Pp. 132-133)

²⁰⁹ (Khudra (prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. V. 1, P. 37)

Saint Ephrem also proclaims that; the Virgin Mary is indeed the servant of the divinity of her Son and the mother of His humanity. Jesus Christ in His divinity is the Lord of Mary and in His humanity, He is the son of Mary.

“My poor presence, (Luke 1:26) he made me immediately
A free woman and a servant; for I am servant
Of your divinity, but I am also mother
Of your humanity, (my) Lord and (my) son.
Suddenly a handmaiden has become a daughter of the King
By You, Son of the King. Behold, the lowly one (is)
In the House of David because of You!
O Son of David, behold, the daughter of the earth
Has reached heaven by the Heavenly One.”²¹⁰

Virgin Mary immediately recognized that there is something special about her Son. While He was only an infant, she worshiped Him as God. She spoke and prayed to Him as to the Lord. Jacob of Serugh says:

“Mary marveled and became alarmed, stood beside her child.
Her pains have fled and without suffering she adored her son.
She folded her hands and fell down before Him to pray.
She opened her mouth and with lullabies sang to her son:
“Son of the falsely accused woman, permit your mother to speak to you.
O Lord of His mother, bid your handmaid to talk with you.”²¹¹

It is recorded in the Holy Bible that the promised Messiah will come from the house of King David. Jesus is called the Son of David. “*This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham.*” (Matthew 1:1) King David is calling his son in the flesh (Jesus) his Lord. “*The Lord said to my Lord.*” (Matthew 22:44) Yes indeed, Jesus Christ is the son of King David in the flesh and He is the Lord of David in His Divinity.

“David cried out in the spirit, “The Lord said to my Lord.”

²¹⁰ (Ephrem the Syrian hymns, translated and introduced by Kathleen E. McVey. Paulist press, New York. Mahwah. Hymn on Nativity, Hymn 4. P. 109)

²¹¹ (Jacob of Serugh, Selct Festal Homilies, translated from Syriac and introduced by Thomas Kollampampil, CMI, with a foreward by Sebastian P. Brock, Center for Indian and Inter-religious studies (CIIS), Rome, and Dharmaram Publications (DP), Bangalore 1997, P. 84)

The king of the people is the servant of our King;
Lord and son He was to him.
Therefore, high is His nature, and inclined is His compassion.
Lord and son He was to him: Lord because of His nature,
And son because of His compassion.”²¹²

Esho Dadd also agrees with Ephrem that Jesus Christ is the Son of David in the flesh and the Lord of David in His Divinity.

“When the Lord asked the Jews, what say ye about the Christ? Whose Son is He? And they replied, the Son of David. And our Lord answered them, how can He be his Son, for the Lord said unto my Lord, etc. (Ps. 148) why was their mouth shut? They ought to have answered that he is called Lord, as Eleazar calls Abraham “My Lord,” and Elisha Elia, etc. Those who talked impiously that our Lord did not take manhood, were henceforth armed, saying, behold! He also said to the Jews that He is not the Son of David; and the erring ones did not understand that our Lord did not say according to the abrogation of His humanity, how is he his Son? But to shew, that He was not only a man, according to their supposition, but also God, and He was not concealing that He was man; but was teaching, that in His humanity He was the son of David, but in His divinity (He was) David’s Lord....,”²¹³

In the flowing anthem Virgin Mary is called the Temple of the Holy Spirit, the handmaiden of the Godhead and the mother of His manhood.

“The Temple (*Shrine*) of the Holy Spirit; the Handmaiden of the Godhead, the Mother of His manhood,”²¹⁴

Saint Ephrem in his Hymn on the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ is speaking clearly about the two natures in Jesus Christ. He says the father of Jesus’ Divine nature is in heaven and the mother of His human nature is on earth.

“How humble You are! How powerful You are!

²¹² (Ephrem the Syrian hymns, translated and introduced by Kathleen E. McVey. Paulist press, New York. Mahwah. Hymn on Virginitly, Hymn 10.19,11. P. 305)

²¹³ (Mar Odisho Metropolitan of Suwa (Nisibin) and Arminia, The Book of Marganitha (The Pearl) on the truth of Christianity. Translated from the Aramaic original by His Holiness Mar Eshai Shimun XXIII Catholicos Patriarch of the East 1965 P. 88)

²¹⁴ (Khudra (prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. the Commemoration of the Saint Mary Mother of Christ. V. 1, P. 616-617)

O Infant, Your judgment is powerful!
Your Love is sweet! who is able
To stand against You? Your Father (is) in heaven
And Your mother on earth. Who is able to speak about You?
If anyone seeks Your hidden nature
Behold it is in heaven in the great womb
Of Divinity. And if anyone seeks
Your revealed body, behold it rests and looks out
From the small womb of Mary!”²¹⁵

The teaching of Jacob of Serugh regarding the two natures of Jesus Christ in one person is not different from that of the fathers of the Church of the east. He confesses Jesus Christ, in His Divinity is the Son of Majesty and in His Humanity is the Son of Mary. Yet He is not two persons but one single redeemer of mankind the Lord Jesus Christ. His hidden divinity was revealed in His humanity. Jesus’ humanity is not a fantasy, it is real.

“One (alone) is the Christ, the true Son, perfect and wondrous,
Begotten from the Father, hidden from the watchers, adored by men.
From the (divine) essence and from humanity, single is the only-begotten.
Son of the majesty and son of Mary, a single redeemer.
From the exalted One and from the daughter of David, a single Lord of all
from the fiery beings and from the corporeal ones, a single powerful One.
Hidden in His (divine) being, revealed in His humanity, and who can search into Him?
Hidden in His (divine) nature and real in His body, wonder in all things.”²¹⁶

Jesus Christ calls Himself the Son of Man and not a Man even though in His humanity, He is a perfect Man body and soul. And in His divinity, He is a perfect God. As man He is corporeal and as God, He is spiritual. Jesus, by saying He is the Son of Man, indicates that He has no earthly father, like the

²¹⁵ (Ephrem the Syrian hymns, translated and introduced by Kathleen E. McVey. Paulist press, New York. Mahwah. Hymn on Nativity, Hymn 13. Pp. 137-138)

²¹⁶ (Jacob of Serugh, Selct Festal Homilies, translated from Syriac and introduced by Thomas Kollampampil, CMI, with a foreward by Sebastian P. Brock, Center for Indian and Inter-religious studies (CIIS), Rome, and Dharmaram Publications (DP), Bangalore 1997, P. 79)

rest of people, but rather He is the Son of the first Man, that is to say, the son of Adam, the father of Mankind. Esho Dadd says:

“This then, that He calls Himself the Son of Man, and not a Man although He was a man according to the flesh, and God according to the Spirit, and (He) does not (say) “whom do you think I am?”; first, to bridle the chained mouths of Marcion and Manes, who brought upon our Lord an imagination and a hallucination and a flash and a figure; second, because the name of man was spoken of one who was born of seed like other men; but He says the Son of Man, to indicate that He had in truth no personal father in His manhood, like the rest, but was Son of the first Man, that is to say, of Adam the father of the whole community. He does not even call Himself the Son of David, because David was included in the community; so, then our Lord was the Son of the community, and from the community, and for the community, He was deified, etc.”²¹⁷

While Jesus Christ was living among us on Earth, sometimes spoke from the person of Godhead like this “I and My Father are one,” Sometimes He spoke from the person of His Humanity like this, “why do ye seek to kill Me?” But some other times from the person of Unity, like this, “*I ascend into My Father, and your Father; and My God and your God.*” Jesus, by referring to God as My father and your father, He is saying, God is the father of mankind through adaption, but He is His father by Nature. And when He says, My God and your God, He is talking as a perfect Man. Yeas the heavenly Father is the God of Jesus humanity in the same way He is the God of the rest of mankind. Esho Dadd says:

“I ascend into My Father, and your Father; and My God and your God.” This word is an Atlantic Ocean; and in another place we have expounded (it). But shortly, all this was a custom of our Savior, that He sometimes speaks from the person of His Godhead, like this, I and My Father are one, etc., and sometimes from the person of His Humanity. Like this, why do ye seek to kill Me? A man who has spoken truly with you. But sometimes from the person of Unity, as in the present case; for He distinguishes the natures and Persons in this, My Father and My God, and confines them to the unity of a Person, by means of the conjunction of both names to one something. For this is the definition of Unity; conjunction in one person of two natures and individualities, which give names and deeds to one another, natures and

²¹⁷ (Mar Odisho Metropolitan of Suwa (Nisibin) and Arminia, *The Book of Marganitha (The Pearl) on the truth of Christianity*. Translated from the Aramaic original by His Holiness Mar Eshai Shimun XXIII Catholicos Patriarch of the East 1965 Pp. 64-65)

persons being preserved without mixture and confusion. See an example of Unity. God is not the God of the Word either by grace or any other way.”²¹⁸

Nestorius, commenting on “*I ascend into My Father, and your Father; and My God and your God.*” Says; God is the Father of Jesus by Divine nature and the Father of people by the Grace of the adoption of sons. And by saying: “*My God and your God.*” Jesus in His humanity is calling the heavenly Father His God by Grace, and on the other hand He is God to others by nature. Nonetheless Jesus Christ is one person, one Lord, one Christ, and one Son in both of them. Esho Dadd says:

“Mar Nestorius says He is God, and Father at the same time and God; but father to Me on the one hand by nature, to you on the other hand by Grace; but God, to me on the one hand by Grace, to you on the other hand by nature, nevertheless one person and one Lord and one Christ, and one Son in both of them.”²¹⁹

The gifts which the Magi presented to the Baby Jesus say a lot about His human and Divine Natures. “*They offered him gifts, gold for his humanity, myrrh for his death, and frankincense for his divinity* (Mtt.2:11). Another commentary says, the Magi offered Him gold because He is the King of Kings, and frankincense because He is God in His Divinity, and myrrh because as a Man He is going to be embalmed after His suffering and death on the Cross. Saint Ephrem says:

“*They (The Magi) opened their treasures and offered him gifts, gold for his humanity, myrrh for his death, and frankincense for his divinity* (Mtt.2:11). Another (explanation) is gold, as for a king, frankincense, as for God, and myrrh for one to be embalmed. Or another (is) gold, because worship of gold comes back to its Lord, and myrrh and frankincense, because these disclose the physician who was to heal Adam’s fracture. He, who revealed to the (Magi) that they should not go back to Herod (Mtt.2:12), (also) revealed to (Joseph and Mary) that they

²¹⁸ (*The Commentaries of Isho dad of Merv, Bishop of Hadatha (c.850 A.D.) in Syriac and English, V.1, P 284. Ed. and tr. Margaret Dunlop Gibson, intro. James Rendel Harris (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1911)*)

²¹⁹ (*The Commentaries of Isho dad of Merv, Bishop of Hadatha (c.850 A.D.) in Syriac and English, V.1, P 284. Ed. and tr. Margaret Dunlop Gibson, intro. James Rendel Harris (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1911)*)

should leave, for in their departure they would be fulfilling two (prophecies), Out of Egypt I have called my Son (Hos.11:1), and, Rachel is weeping; this too fulfils what Jeremiah the prophet spoke, (Jer.31:15) cum ceteris.”²²⁰

All creatures in heaven and on earth shall obey our Lord Jesus Christ. It is written: “‘as surely as I live,’ says the Lord, ‘every knee will bow before me; every tongue will acknowledge God.’” (Romans 14:11) His human nature testifies that He is an earthly being. But His Lordship declares that He is divine. As an earthly being He has a human body and soul. And he is heavenly because he has become a Temple for God the creator. Mar Narsai says:

“His conception is exalted because it has no connection with human seed;
And his birth is glorified because heavenly beings were its heralds.
He alone has received and inherited the name of Lordship,
So that heavenly and earthly beings might obey him.
His nature testifies that He is an adamite from earthly beings;
But the name of his authority cries out and proclaims that he is divine.
He is earthly because of (his) human body and soul,
And he is heavenly because he has become the dwelling place for the God of the [universe].”
²²¹

Mar Bawai the great in the following Tishbookhta “Praise” (*Khudra (prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. The first Sunday of Advent. V. 1, P. 134*): confesses Jesus Christ the Son of God is one person. He is worshiped in the Church in two natures; the divine and human. In His divinity begotten of God the Father, without beginning and, in His Manhood, born of Mary, in the end of time, in a united body. Neither His divinity was of the nature of His earthly Mother, nor His Humanity of the nature of His heavenly Father. The two natures are well-maintained in their qnume (real existenc), in One Person of One Sonship.

“Blessed is the Compassionate One, Who in His loving kindness has supplied our life in Prophecy • With the eye of The Spirit, Isaiah saw the Wondrous Child of The Virginity; For

²²⁰ (Saint Ephrem’s commentary on Tatian’s Diatessaron, Carmel McCarthy. Published by Oxford University press on behalf of the University of Manchester, 1993, page 65, II, 25)

²²¹ (Narsai’s Metrical Homilies on the Nativity, Epiphany, Passion, Resurrection and Ascension of the Lord. Edited and translated by: Fredrick G. Mcleod, S.J. P. 75)

Mary without union bore Emmanuel, the Son of God • From her the Holy Spirit fashioned, His Body which was united, as it is written • That it might be an adorable Habitation and Temple • For the Brightness of The Father in One Sonship • And at the beginning of His marvelous conception, united it with Him, in one honor • That He might fulfill in Him all things that were His for the salvation of the world, as it is pleased to Him • In the day of His annunciation (*or nativity*) the watchful Ones glorified Him • with their Hallelujahs in the heights above • And also the earthly ones offered Him worship • with their offerings in one honor • One is Christ, the Son of God, worshiped by all in two natures • In His Godhead begotten of the Father, without beginning above time • in His Manhood, born of Mary, in the end of time, in a united body • neither His Godhead was of the nature of the Mother, nor His Manhood of the nature of the Father • The Natures are preserved in their quome, in One Person of One Sonship • And as The Godhead IS: Three quome, One essence • Likewise, the Sonship of the Son • IS in two natures One Person • So the Holy Church hath learned • To confess the Son who is Christ • We worship, O my Lord, Thy Godhead, and Thy Manhood without division • (*say this verse three times*) One is the Power, One is the Majesty, One the Will, and One the Glory, • Father, Son and the Holy Spirit, forever and ever • Amen and Amen.”

God the word the second person of the Holy Trinity who is equal in everything with God the Father came down from heaven and clothed Himself with the human body taken from the womb of the Virgin Mary and became a Man. He shared His greatness with man and He took a share of human weakness. It has been said He became Man so that a Man might become divine. Virgin Mary conceived and gave birth to the Son of God in her virginity. Sain Eprem in the following hymn 18, 11 says: Mary was made the mother of God and at the same time servant and work of His wisdom.

“Awake, O my harp, your strings, in praise of
Mary the Virgin. Lift up your voice and sing the generation,
Utterly marvelous, of this Virgin, David’s daughter,
Who has brought forth life to the world.
The lover with admiration marvels at her, while the
Curious enquirer is covered with shame and his ear is
Stopped up lest he should dare to pry into the Mother
Who brought forth in virginity inviolate....
In Mary’s womb He who from eternity is equal to the

Father became an infant. He gave us a share in His own Greatness and He Himself took a share in our weakness. He was made mortal along with us so that, by infusing His life into us, we might die no more....

Mary is the garden upon which the rain of blessings Descended from the Father. From that rain she herself Sprinkled the face of Adam. Thereupon he returned to life And arose from the sepulcher he who had been buried In hell by his enemies.

Lo, a virgin is become a mother, preserving virginity With its seals broken She is made God's mother and is At the same time a servant, and the work of his wisdom. The Virgin who gave birth to the only begotten has Nurtured God and Man, has become mother of the Hidden little one, who was born perfect of the Father and Is made an infant in her womb."²²²

The blessing which is said on the child and his mother as a child is reached forty days of age, blessed Mary is called the mother of Christ our God.

“And you the mother of the child have been stirred by the hidden man that in heart by good works: and may proceed from your back sons and daughters: who please God by their pious deeds: and may you be satisfied with (privileges) good things of the Lord. And may you and your son be kept from all harms by the prayers of the virgin who is clothed with brightness, the second heaven, Saint Mary the begetter of Christ our God: and by the prayers of all the saints: now and always and forever and ever amen.”²²³

In the following Anthem our Lord Jesus Christ is called God. Thus, Mary the Ever Virgin gave birth to a Son (Christ) who is indeed a true God.

²²² (Message of the Fathers of the Church, The Church by Thomas Halton, Michael Glazier, Wilmington, Delaware. 1986, Pp 202, 203)

²²³ (The rite (order) for the priests of the Church of the East. Reverend Joseph Qalaita, page 203. 1928)

“Stretch out O lord of all the right hand of your mercifulness upon us at all times: And by the Cross of your brightness may our congregation who worships your Lordship be blessed. And keep away from us the treacherous one. Who threatens us at all times. O who is good from eternity: Christ our God have mercy upon us.”²²⁴

The holy Church confesses two natures in Jesus Christ. The Divine and the Human nature in one person. In His divinity Jesus Christ is born of God the father before time. However, in His Humanity He is born of the Virgin Mary at the end of time. As soon as God the father, saw the Virgin Mary the most appropriate Virgin to become the mother of His only begotten Son, He sent His Son, the Son of His Being to dwell within her. At that moment the Holy Spirit descended and hovered upon Mary, and she was conceived. According to the law of nature she carried the Son of the most high for nine month in her womb, and then she gave birth to the savior of humankind.

“Let us all diligently honor the day of the commemoration of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The Father who is pleased in her, sent His Son, the Son of His Being to dwell within her. The Spirit descended and celebrated and hovered upon her. She carried the One who is the most blessed of all for nine months in her womb. She gave birth to Light, and Life to humankind, by His rays the creations were enlightened, and because of her, all the curses toward Eve were loosened, and they ceased; behold, all ranks of angels sang, ‘glory to God in the highest,’ and together with them, we also, in one accord, equally, say ‘Glory be unto Him.’”²²⁵

Mary Reares her Son Jesus

Virgin Mary as a loving kind Mother reared her Son in accordance to the Law of God prescribed in the Old Testament. As a faithful follower of the Mosaic Law, Virgin Mary kept all the Commandments of God. On the eight day of

²²⁴ (Khudra (prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. V. III, second Tone, P. 42)

²²⁵ (Khudra (prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. Commemoration of of the Saint Mary Mother of Christ. V. 1, Pp. 603-604)

Jesus' birth she took her Son to the temple in order to be circumcised and to offer sacrifices on his behalf. Narsai says:

“The infant for whose sake the sword was unleashed escaped
And came to public (manifestation) according to the declaration of prophecy.
Mary made satisfaction for her conception to the One who forms infants
And offered a sacrifice according to the law to the One who opens wombs.
She signed him with the seal of the household of Abraham on his limbs,
In order that there might be confirmed the great covenant that the (gentles were expecting).
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Every year for the feast of Passover the blessed mother went up to Jerusalem (Luke 2:41). When Jesus was twelve years old Mary and Joseph took him to the temple where all men were required annually to appear before the Lord God. (Deut. 16:16). She protected her Son from the outside danger. She cherished Him and taught Him the Hebrew language and the Jewish culture. The following Hymn is going to learn about the great love the blessed Mother had for her Son.

“Mary has benefitted from the overflowing graces; blessed among women the Mother of the Son of David, Who has united The Word, personally. O handmaiden of The Son of God, in whom He knitted to Himself the garment of His humanity; that from her in the end of time, was born in His humanity; and upon the cradle of her holy knees, His childhood was reared. And upon the throne of her motherly arms, as upon the chariot of fire, you have celebrated; and, from the Holy Source of the graceful breasts the milk of your upbringing you have nursed. And, before the adorned modesty in the age of childhood, you had stammering lips and crawling. All those, which belong to the weaknesses, on behalf of the Salvation for all of mankind, humbly you have bourn.”²²⁷

²²⁶ (Narsai's Metrical Homilies on the Nativity, Epiphany, Passion, Resurrection and Ascension of the Lord. Edited and translated by: Fredrick G. Mcleod, S.J. P.61)

²²⁷ (Khudra (prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. the Commemoration of the Saint Mary Mother of Christ. V. 1, P. 617)

In accordance to the natural law a mother has to carry her fetus (child) for Nine months in her womb. Thus, the Virgin Mary carried Our Savior for nine months in her womb. She nursed Him with her motherly milk, by which the fetus is nurtured while he is still in the womb of his mother. After giving birth to her Son, while the heavenly beings were shaking with fear and trembling to look upon His glowing face; but the holy Mother carried Him, with love, embracing and kissing Him. The following anthem is speaking about the love the holy mother showed to her Son Jesus Christ.

“In the manger I laid Him; like something simple; His brilliant splendor intimidated the seraphim, His Childhood calmness ruled the world; in the manger He reclined like a child; The Creations were celebrating His honor. The Cherubim are carrying His chariot in the circle of fire. They are shaking with fear and trembling to gaze upon His flame; The Heavenly Orders stands in trembling; but, the virgin carries Him, with love, embracing and kissing Him. Nine months in her womb, the virgin carried Our Savior. Nursing Him with nurturing milk, by which the fetus is nurtured in the womb; the rough/crude shepherds came crying aloud, came to the virgin (to the place) where the King is born. Unto Him, we are bound to confess, worship and glorify, Hallelujah.”²²⁸

Regarding the rearing of the Lord Jesus Christ by His Mother Mary, Jacob of Serugh says.

“(Mary’s) knees have escorted Him, arms have carried Him, a bosom embraced Him. And on account of all these there is wonder and bewilderment to those who discern.”²²⁹

By the power of the Holy spirit Virgin Mary was able to bear in her womb the Son of God. Everything Mary gave to her Son were provided by her Son. She gave Him milk and food from what He Himself had created. Jesus Christ as the perfect God, maker of heaven and earth and everything in them, provided milk to the Virgin Mary and as the perfect Man, He sucked the milk given to Him by His mother. Mary was able to carry her Son on her arms because He lessened

²²⁸ (Khudra (prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. the Commemoration of the Saint Mary Mother of Christ. V. 1, P. 604)

²²⁹ (Jacob of Serugh, Select Festal Homilies, Translated from Syriac and introduced by Thomas Kollampampil, CMI, with a foreword by Sebastian P. Brock, Center for Indian and Inter-religious studies (CIIS), Rome, and Dharmaram Publications (DP), Bangalore 1997, Nativity III (FH III) P. 95)

His weight, and as a merciful mother, Mary was able to embrace Him in her bosom, because He made Himself a little Baby. So, as God He gave Mary milk and as Man, He was given milk by His mother. Saint Ephrem says:

“By power from Him Mary’s womb became able
To bear One who bears all.
From the great treasury of all creation
Mary gave to Him everything that she gave.
She gave Him milk from what He made exist.
She gave Him food from what He had created.
He gave milk to Mary as God.
In turn, He was given suck by her as human.
Her arms carried Him, for He lightened His weight,
And her bosom embraced Him, for He made Himself small.
Who would be able to measure his grandeur?”²³⁰

The Falling Asleep (dormation) of the Blessed Virgin “The Assumption of the Virgin Mary”

In the liturgical calendar of the Roman Catholic Church, August 15th is celebrated as the commemoration of the Assumption of the ever Virgin Mary body and soul into Heaven. In the year 1950 Pius XII proclaims the doctrine of Assumption of the Virgin Mary into heaven. *“By the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, of the Blessed Apostles Peter and Paul, and by our own authority, we pronounce, declare, and define it to be a divinely revealed dogma: that the Immaculate Mother of God, the ever-Virgin Mary, having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory. Amen!”* His Holiness Mar Ignatius Zakka I was in an article *“The Holy Virgin Mary in the Syrian Orthodox Church”* Says: *“Her Assumption in the flesh and soul was not instituted by the Syrian Church as a doctrine. The Virgin’s Assumption is a confessional patristic tradition.”* According to the Orthodox tradition, the Virgin Mother passed into life eternal through natural death; and

²³⁰ (Ephrem the Syrian hymns, translated and introduced by Kathleen E. McVey. Paulist press, New York. Mahwah. Hymn on Nativity, Hymn 4. P. 102)

that on the third day her Son Jesus Christ received her in heaven, bodily as a ransom for the universal resurrection. Thus, her tomb was found empty on the third day. It is written:

“O my mother, I am about to make thee to depart unto Paradise, until I come at the last day, wherein I shall dissolve the heavens, and shall make the earth to pass away, and wherein I shall bestow good things upon my chosen ones and inflict punishment upon the wicked. On that day will I make thee to ascend unto Me in My Kingdom.... And came to pass that when my Lady Mary heard these things, she laid her hands upon her breast and delivered her soul unto her Son; and straightway He took it up with Him unto the mansions of Light. Now our Lady Mary departed from this temporary life in the three hundred and forty second year of Alexander. She was fourteen years old when she was frightened by the appearance of the angel, and she was with Christ for thirty and three years, and she lived five years after the crucifixion, which years are in all 52. Then they wrapped in linen the body of Mary for burial, and laid her upon a bier, and they began to sing the service of hymns of the Holy Spirit, even as the Spirit taught them; and the sound of their voices was like unto the voices of the angels who were teaching them. And they took Mary to carry her and to bury her in the cave of the mount of Olives, and a multitude of women from Bethlehem and from Jerusalem were following in her train, and were wishing to see where they were going to lay her, so that they might go and pray there. And her Son carried her, by the might of His Spirit, to Paradise, and He set her in the glorious place therein. And our Lord took the blessed woman with Him, and He made her to ascend with Him in a chariot into heaven, and He made to go up with her so that they might pay her honor, the righteous Patriarchs, and the Prophets, and the Apostles. And our Lord Himself heartened her, and said unto her, ‘come, Mother, come and see the things, which are beyond speech. Come and enter into the Jerusalem which is in heaven, the city of God.....And then our Lord made her who gave Him birth to pass through the gate through which none had as yet passed, and He showed her there the Kingdom of heaven, and the things which are hidden, and the things which are secret, and the things which are not revealed, and the pleasures which are hidden in the Kingdom, which can neither be spoken by the mouth nor pronounced by the tongue. And she saw the mansions of splendor, and the chambers which were decorated, the delight whereof hath never entered into the heart of man to imagine. And she saw there that which the eye of man cannot look upon, and that which man is not able either to describe the like thereof, or to make it manifest. And our Lord revealed and showed her all the delights which come after the Resurrection. And after these things it came to pass that our Lord took His Mother and brought her back unto the Paradise of Eden, and He made her to die again until the day of the vivification. And sweet-smelling accents and odors breathed forth from the place, and she was left there until the day wherein He will make her to ascend into the Kingdom which He had already shown her. Now when the Jews, the enemies of the truth, saw that the triumphs of the holy woman Mary had become noised abroad everywhere (now they were

thinking that her body was still lying in that cave), they said, “We have not injured her by the fire; let us, now, weave another plot.” And it came to pass that when it was night, about three hundred mighty men gathered themselves together, and they went with swords, and with lanterns, and they went into the cave; and they saw that the cave was filled with light like that of the sun, and with a smell like unto that of sweet scent. And they saw the garments in which our Lady Mary had been swathed lying in the midst of the cave, but there was no body in them; and when they saw this they were astonished, and they marveled, and they gave glory unto God in voluntarily. And many of them said, “In very truth this Jesus, the Son of Mary, is the Christ for whom “creation waiteth. He knoweth what we were wishing to do unto the body of her who gave Him birth; but He hath not left it for us to make a mockery of, and hath delivered it out of our hands. To Him belongs victory forever, and to us belongs shame of face for all generations.” Now many of them believed upon Jesus Christ, but some of them were wishing to burn the garments of Mary in the fire, and there was division and contention among them; but the company of those who believed was stronger than that of those who did not believe, so those who believed took the garments and carried them into Jerusalem, and multitudes of sick folk were healed thereby.”²³¹

The fathers of the Church of the East have always believed that the blessed Mary died a neutral death as her Son Jesus Christ did in His humanity. And annually on August 15th the holy Church celebrates the commemoration of her falling asleep. In the following Litany the Holy Church calls the departure of the Virgin Mary falling asleep.

“O Christ who at the end of the struggle of the Blessed one, sent forth angels to reveal the fulfillment (completion) of her desire, and told her to go toward Bethlehem to cease from labors (relax, or to be at peace), we beseech You • O Christ who awakened the Twelve, to promise to celebrate the commemoration of the departure of His Holy begetter, each one of them in the brilliance of the cloud of the land of his calling, we beseech You • O Christ, who for the honor of the peaceful rest of the Virgin Mary, send forth angels from the heights above; and, celebrating in her presence with all majesty and praise, worthy to the holy body

²³¹ (Philotheus, the deacon of the country of the East. The History of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the History of the Likeness of Christ which the Jews of Tiberias made to mock at. The Syriac texts edited with English translation by E.A. Wallis Budge, M.A., and Litt. D. D. Lit., English translations London Luzac and Co. 1899. Pp.112- 133)

of His begetter, we beseech You • O Christ, who honored the falling asleep (the departure) of His blessed begetter in Heaven and upon Earth, we beseech You .”²³²

According to the Apostolic Tradition of the Church of the East, all the Apostles were present at the time of her falling asleep. They celebrated her life and laid her holy body in the Garden of Gethsemane, outside Jerusalem, and the angels of God carried the Holy Soul of the Blessed Mother into Paradise. She slept in peace at the age of 70 in the year 56 A.D. Mar Shleemon of Basra one of the fathers of the Church of the East however regarding the dormation and assumption of the Virgin Mary into heaven says:

“As for the committal of Mary to John the son of Zabedee by our Lord, He said to her, ‘woman, behold thy son;’ and to John He said, ‘Behold thy mother,’ and from that hour he took her into his house and ministered unto her. Mary lived twelve years after our Lord’s Asscenion: the sum of the years which she lived in the world was fifty-eight years, but others say sixty -one years. She was not burid on earth, but the angles carried her to paradise, and angles bore her bier. On the day of her death all the apostles were gathered together, and they prayed over her and were blessed by her. Thomas was in India, and an angle took him up and brought him, and he found the angles carrying her bier through the air; and they brought it nigh to Thomas, and he also prayed and was blessed by her.”²³³

The author of the History of the Blessed Virgin Mary believes she lived 52 years and then she slept in peace. It is written:

“Now our lady departed from this temporary life in the three hundred and forty–second year of Alexander. She was fourteen years old when she was frightened by the appearance of the angel, and she was with Christ for thirty and three years, and she lived five years after the crucifixion, which years are in all fifty–two.”²³⁴

²³² (Khudra (prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. the Commemoration of the Saint Mary Mother of Christ. V. 1, P. 624)

²³³ (Mar Shleemon, Metropolitan of Basra, Book of the Bee, the Syriac text Edited from the Manuscript in London, Oxford, and Munich. With an English Translation by Ernest A. William Budge, M.A. Oxford, at the Clarendos press, 1886. Pp. 97-98)

²³⁴ (“Philotheus, the deacon of the country of the East.” (The History of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the History of the Likeness of Christ which the Jews of Tiberias made to mock at. The Syriac texts edited with English translation by E.A. Wallis Budge, M.A., and Litt. D. D. Lit., English translations London Luzac and Co. 1899. Pp.117-118)

Out of all the virgins Jesus was pleased with the Virgin Mary to become His earthly Mother. Virgin Mary as a merciful mother ministered to her Son in love. It is recorded that those who have served Jesus will be where Jesus is. *“If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.”* (John 12:26) Thus it is believed that the Virgin Mary on the day of her falling asleep entered into the Paradise. And in the place where Eve the mother of Mankind surrendered to the advice of the evil one there Mary glorified God. Saint Ephrem says:

“I am about to enter into His living Paradise,
And in the place in which Eve succumbed, I shall glorify Him.
For of all created women, He was most pleased with me,
(And) He willed that I should be mother to Him.
And it pleased Him that He should be a child of me.
Bethlehem thanks You that she was found worthy to give birth to You.”²³⁵

In the following Hymn Saint Ephrem is speaking through the mouth of the Virgin Mary saying; the son whom she gave birth to, carried her into heaven.

“The babe that I carry has carried me.”
Said Mary. “He bent down His pinions
And took and put me between His wings
And soared into the air. He promised me,
‘The height and the depth will be your son’s’”²³⁶

From the following prayer we understand that the soul of the Virgin Mary is already dwelling in heaven. For that very reason we confidently beseech our Lord Jesus Christ by His grace to grant us along with His mother a portion and fellowship in His heavenly Kingdom.

²³⁵ (Ephrem the Syrian hymns, translated and introduced by Kathleen E. McVey. Paulist press, New York. Mahwah. Hymn on Nativity, Hymn 2. P. 77)

²³⁶ (Ephrem the Syrian hymns, translated and introduced by Kathleen E. McVey. Paulist press, New York. Mahwah. Hymn on Nativity, Hymn 17. Pp. 152-154)

“Armour us o our Lord and our God by the invincible and unconquerabl armour; by the prayers of your blessed mother, make for us, and along with her a portion and fellowship in your bridal chamber. O, Lord of all, forever.”²³⁷

The Possibility of the Virgin’s Ascension into Heaven

According to the tradition of some Apostolic Churches, the Virgin Mary ascended into heaven. The question posed is: was paradise the abode of her soul just like all the righteous and pious? Or did she ascend to heaven soul and body? The argument of some Apostolic Churches regarding the assention of the Virgin Mary to heaven in her glorified body is that her “assention to heaven is not something irrelevant to the Spirit of the Holy Book nor to the tolerant Christian confessional truths. If “Enoch walked with God and he was not, for God took him” (Gen. 5:24) and Elijah, the prophet ascended to heaven in a chariot of fire (2 Kings 2:11) wouldn’t the Virgin Mary, who bore the Lord nine months in her womb, gave birth to him and nurured Him, rather be considered as worthy to have her body kept without corruption and to have it transformed into a spiritual one; and to ascend to heaven in soul and flesh to enjoy being with her beloved son Lord Jesus Christ?” St. Jacob of Serugh, the doctor (521+) said in his Memre in Syriac on the death of the Virgin Mary,

“When the virgin was on her death bed, Angels, the righteous, prophets and fathers descended on her from high upon the order of God. The twelve Apostles and Evangelists came...they buried her in a rocky cave. Glory prevailed in heaven and on earth when the angels beheld her soul ascending and flying towards abodes of lights”. The book ascribed to Dionysius the Areopagyte, the bishop of Athens (+95) relates that” upon the dormition of Mary, all the Apostles gathered together so quickly coming from the Four Corners of Earth, where they were preaching the word. They arrived in Jerusalem, the Residence

²³⁷ (Khudra (prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. V. 1, Wednesday Evening prayer. P 38)

City of blessed Mary, and then Jesus came with His angels. Jesus received her soul and handed it to Michael, the Archangel.

On the next day the Apostles laid the body in a grave and guarded the grave waiting for the appearance of the Lord. Jesus appeared once more and transferred her holy body to heaven on a cloud. Up there, her body was united to her soul to enjoy her everlasting joy.”

Immaculate Conception:

The teaching of the Church of the East regarding Virgin Mary is built on the Divine Words of God recorded in the Sacred Scriptures, and on the Apostolic Tradition. Thus, in regard to the doctrine of the immaculate conception of the blessed Mary the fathers of the Church of the East have not developed any new teaching outside what is written in the Holy Bible and Apostolic Tradition. Based on the teachings of the Holy Bible blessed Mary was born according to the natural law from a father and a mother. Blessed Mary was called full of grace because she lived her entire life in holiness according to the commandments of God. She knew her place in the plan of salvation. As a normal human being, blessed Mary has a human body which always has a tendency towards sin. So even though she is pure and has never committed sin in her life, yet she knew, as a human being she is in need of a Savior. The Virgin Mary has said of herself *“And my spirit has rejoiced in God my savior. “For he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For he that is mighty has done to me great things”* (Luke 1:47-49). (Luke 1:28-42)

Mary is equal to all women because of her creation. Her son Jesus Christ in His humanity is like to other physical beings in body and soul. Yet, as a human being He is greater than all the children of Eve because of His miraculous conception. As all born children Jesus received His human nature from His mother. Thus His human nature is like that of His beggetter. Yet, He is higher than she because He was not conceived by the power of the human seed. Mar Narsai says:

“Mary is equal to (other) females because of her fashioning.
Her offspring, on the other hand, is greater than all the offsprings of the [daughters of Eve]
Her offspring is like to (other) corporeal beings in body and soul,
But holier and more glorious than corporeal beings because of his fashioning.
His nature is like that of his mother from whom he exists,
But he is more exalted than she because is not from seed (that he has acquired) [this (bodily)
structure. ”²³⁸

The divine Word of God dwelt in the pure womb of the Virgin Mary in a corporeal way. On the other hand, He dwells in the minds of believers in a spiritual manner. Mary His mother abstained from sexual union and kept her body and soul pure from the day she was born till her departure from this temporal life. Saint Ephrem says:

“The Holy One dwelt in the womb in a bodily manner,
And behold, He dwells in the mind in a spiritual manner,
Mary who conceived Him hated sexual union.
The soul in which He dwells will not commit adultery.
When Mary perceived Him, she forsook her bridegroom.”²³⁹

The holy Church has not developed a detailed and explicit teaching about the immaculate conception of the Holy Mother yet implicitly we can discover numerous hints in the liturgical writings of the Church which clearly signify the position of the Church regarding the immaculate conception. The words of the following prayer say a lot about the immaculate conception of the Virgin Mary.

“O eyes, how modest are you, O pupil how pure are you, that sees the sun of Angels; and to gaze upon Him is never satisfied • O ear which did not hear a man and his words, and from the Chief of the Angels you have heard, ‘Peace’ which women have not heard • O Venerable and Humble Lips which did not speak a word with a husband, and kissed only The Flesh of the Word • O mouth filled with purity, and the tongue filled with calmness which did not engage in gossip or tale bearing; but, in glory and thanksgiving • O pure, holy and

²³⁸ (Narsai’s Metrical Homilies on the Nativity, Epiphany, Passion, Resurrection and Ascension of the Lord. Edited and translated by Fredrick G. Mcleod, S.J. P.65)

²³⁹ Behold, He dwells in chaste women if they have perceived Him.” (Ephrem the Syrian hymns, translated and introduced by Kathleen E. McVey. Paulist press, New York. Mahwah. Hymn on Nativity, Hymn 4. P. 99)

modest hands which carried The Lord of the Universe; O fleshly knees and spiritual eyes, also the cherubim envied them through the length of days (*i.e.: she who laid Him upon her knees and gazed upon His Countenance*) • Who will not praise her childhood; who will not glorify her youth, who will not submit to her honorable ladyship; who will not submit his soul willingly and freely to her • Her childhood was inviolable; and her youth without impurity; in her old-age she gained all aids and health •”²⁴⁰

The fact that Jesus Christ chose Virgin Mary from among all the virgins and adorned her and sanctified her to become a dwelling place of His divinity confirms the purity of the Virgin Mary. In the following litany the Church prays to Christ saying:

“O Christ who has chosen the pure Virgin the daughter of mortals and adorned her; and sanctified her by the descending of the Holy Spirit which had rested within her members, we beseech You.”²⁴¹

Mar Narsai believes it is appropriate to name the Virgin Mary, the mother of Christ the pure one (the immaculate).

“The image which had been tarnished with the filth of iniquity He willed to renew.
And He molded it in the Spirit and plated it with spiritual gold.
In soul and body, mortals sinned and succumbed to sin.
And He freed them by one man in body and soul.
With this intend, He took a man (born) of a woman
And armed him with the Spirit so that he might redeem his race from the strong one.
And therefore, it is right that we name this pure one
The mother of the image in whom there is shown forth the image of the hidden.” (Divine Nature)²⁴²

In the following anthem the Church fathers address Virgin Mary the ‘Most Holy and pure Mary’. By the fact that the fathers of the Church are using the

²⁴⁰ (Khudra (prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. the Commemoration of the Saint Mary Mother of Christ. V. 1, Pp. 610-611)

²⁴¹(Khudra (prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. the Commemoration of the Saint Mary Mother of Christ. V. 1, P. 624)

²⁴² (Narsai’s Metrical Homilies on the Nativity, Epiphany, Passion, Resurrection and Ascension of the Lord. Edited and translated by: Fredrick G. Mcleod, S.J. P.41) (Narsai metrical Homilies P. 67)

words such as ‘the most holy and pure’ are somehow confirming the teaching of the Immaculate Conception. It was merely because of her purity that she was chosen to become the Mother of the King of kings.

“Blessings be unto you O, daughter of David, O, Most Holy and pure Virgin; for you have, by your purity, become the Mother of the King of kings; and by you, the revelations are sealed, for the prophesy which was foretelling, by parable of the mystery of His coming; and, because of this a desired blessing is given unto you by all generations, for you have become the resting port as an example to the righteous ones; and, blessed is the Father who has sent His Son, and saved our race from error.”²⁴³

Again, in the following anthem, we are recognizing that the fathers of the church are repetitively using those words which directly describe the immaculate status of the Virgin Mary. It is believed that Mary was consecrated by the descending of the Holy Spirit before the divine Word of God came down from heaven and dwelled within her womb.

“Unto You, O You who are the Mighty One by Your deeds; and, Exalted by wonders which You have separated this day for the nature of man; and, in the desired bunch which had been taken from the blessed vine of the faithful Abraham, we kneel, worship and beseech, and ask as by the effects of Your grace, that the holy virgin Mary, who was chosen, and by the descent of Your Power, was consecrated (*the one from which You have born*), and she became the chariot for Your glory, and the cloud for the shadow of Your delights; and, the source of purity and the stream of holiness, and the seal of virginity; and, the treasury and storehouse of chastity; and, the temple of fire, and the mansion of life, and censer filled with good-will, and, the crown of the Church of the Holy of holies; and the beauty of orthodoxy of the true faith;”²⁴⁴

We have discovered many evidences and evidence in the writings of Philoxenus Bihop of Mabbogh which clearly indicate that he (Philoxenus) believed in the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. The adjectives he has used to address blessed Mary, for example, “Mary the pure Virgin” are

²⁴³ (Khudra (Prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. Volume 1 The Tone of the Aid, P. 167)

²⁴⁴ (Khudra (prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. the Commemoration of the Saint Mary Mother of Christ. V. 1, Pp. 626-627)

confirming the above theory. These same words and idioms are found also in the writings of the Fathers of the Church of the east.

“That Philoxenus in the immaculate conception of the blessed Virgin is very probable, not only because it was a common doctrine in the Syriac Church in his time, but also on account of the allusions to it which we find in his writings. He calls Mary, the pure Virgin, in the letter to the Monks: He (the Word) came down and dwelt in the pure Virgin who was sanctified by God the Spirit, and He became man of her without change, in everything like unto us except sin. He also acknowledges in an explicit manner her Virginité *ante Partum et in partu*. Thus, in the letter to monks of Teleds. He says: Therefore, He (Christ) is also above death naturally. Because His Incarnation took place in a holy manner without intercourse, without the concupiscence of sin and death. And again, in the same letter: “Also all those who are born, are not born in a virginal manner; He (Christ) on the contrary, was born of the Virgin who, in His birth, preserved the signs of her Virginité.”²⁴⁵

Therefore, the Virgin Mary the mother of Christ was first sanctified by her Son, filled with grace the Holy Spirit then, the head of the heavenly angles was sent to proclaim to her the manner of her miraculouse conception. Thus, the angle of God declared to her that, in her virginité she will conceive and gave birth to the wonderful, counselor, and Savior of the world. This is the reason the entire human race is bound to give blessing to her virginité, while saying, blessed are you, who has been made worthy to become the Mother and Handmaiden unto our Lord. The following anthem says:

“O holy virgin, by whom our defiled race, through the deceit of Eve; is sanctified; beseech with us unto your Sanctifier, to sanctify us; and in the shadow of your prayers, keep our lives • Spread wide the wings of His compassion upon our wretchedness; save us at all times, from all harm • O mother of our Lifegiver, O, the handmaiden of our Creator; become unto us the high wall, and the place of refuge, at all times”²⁴⁶

Mary is crushing the head of the serpent

It is believed that the prophecy of the Old Testament which says:

“The LORD God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, “Cursed are

²⁴⁵ (Three letters of Philoxenus, Bishop of Mabboch (485-519) by Arthur Adolphe Vaschalde, Roma Tipographia Della R. Accademia Del Lincei. Proprieta Del. V. Salviducci, 1902 Pp.70 -71)

²⁴⁶ (Khudra (Prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. Volume 1 The Tone of the Aid, P. 32)

you above all livestock and all wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.” (Genesis 3:14-15) is fulfilled in the Virgin Mary who crushed under her feet (the serpent) which had struck Eve in her heel. Saint Ephrem says:

“Because justice had driven the serpent against the heel, grace raised up the heel by means of the Cross, so that it might be superior to the serpent, as though dominion. This is what is shown by what follows after this, *and all the Power of the enemy*, which was trodden under foot by the Cross. *And, Behold I am giving you dominion to trample upon serpents and scorpions* because (the Lord) has removed the error which was reigning through the serpent. (This was) so that the truth of him who gave dominion over the serpents to be trodden under foot might reign, that is, over their counsels. For Mary’s foot crushed (the serpent) which had struck Eve in her heel.”²⁴⁷

However, Jacob of Serugh believes that Jesus the Son of the daughter (Mary) of the first Eve crushed the head of the serpent that had deceived her.

“Let Eve, whom the great serpent had smitten in Eden, rejoice,
Because the Son of her daughter has stood up and crushed up the Asp that had mocked her.”²⁴⁸

The Virgin Mary’s role of Intercession

The Blessed Mother takes upon herself the role of an intercessor or mediator between God and man. Believers receive grace from Christ through/from the prayers of the Holy Virgin. God the Father is pleased with the petitions which has been offered unto Him through the intercessions of the Virgin Mary. From the very beginning of the establishment of the Holy Church till now, many believers offer their petitions to the almighty God through the mediation of the

²⁴⁷ (Saint Ephrem’s Commentary on Tatian’s Diatessaron: an English translation of Chester Beatty Syriac MS 709 with Introduction and notes, Carmel McCarthy, Published by Oxford University press on behalf of the University of Manchester, 1993, p. 172.X. 13)

²⁴⁸ (Jacob of Serugh, *Selected Festal Homilies*, translated from Syriac and introduced by Thomas Kollamparampil, CMI, with a foreword by Sebastian P. Brock, Center for Indian and Inter-religious studies (CIIS), Rome, and Dharmaram Publications (DP), Bangalore 1997, P. 127)

Virgin Mary. In the following anthem the Holy Church on behalf of her sons and daughters prays to the Lord through the mediation of the Virgin Mary.

“Mary the Holy Virgin, the Mother of Jesus our Savior, supplicate and beseech mercy from the Son who has shone forth from your womb, to take away from us by His grace the times filled with affliction; and desire for us peace and tranquility, and by your prayer may the Church and her children be kept from the Evil-one; and, on the Great Day in which His greatness is revealed may we be made worthy with you to delight in the chamber of Light.”²⁴⁹

By parying to the Virgin Mary, the sons and daughters of the holy Church are inviting Mary to pray with them to the Son who shone from her womb. So Mary is not the ultimate end of our prayers but rather through the mediation of her we offer our petitions to Jesus Christ who is the source of all the blessings.

“Mary the holy Virgin; the mother of our Savior; beseech with us unto Christ; for Him to bestow tranquility amongst us; and to protect us from all harms; in the nights and the day.”²⁵⁰

It was our Lord Jesus Christ Himself who gave His Mother Virgin Mary the intercessory role in order to intercede on behalf of the sons and daughters of the Church. The Holy Church in the following anthem says:

“O Christ who established Mary His begetter to intercede on behalf of all believers; and, to pray and beseech of Him for all the sheep of His flock: we beseech You.”²⁵¹

Gradually Virgin Mary became like the port of peace for those believers who regularly took refuge in her prayers. Jesus Christ is always pleased with the prayers offered to Him through His mother and will answer them. It is written in the following anthem:

²⁴⁹ (Khudra (prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. the Commemoration of the Saint Mary Mother of Christ. V. 1, P. 601)

²⁵⁰ (Khudra, published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. Volume 1 The Tone of the Aid, P. 90)

²⁵¹ (Khudra (prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. the Commemoration of the Saint Mary Mother of Christ. V. 1, P. 616)

“Blessed are you, O Mary, the holy virgin and blessed mother; that you were made worthy to become for mortals the port of peace and tranquility, to hold refuge in your prayers, and their petitions will be answered; and the wicked-one and death shall not rule upon them.”²⁵²

The following anthem asserts that the prayers of the Virgin Mary are becoming a high wall and a place of refuge for the believers who take refuge in her name and ask from Christ the forgiveness of sin:

“The prayer of Your begetter, O our Savior Christ the King, may become a high-wall and a place of refuge, that the assembly of believers may hold refuge in her great name; and ask from You forgiveness; Glory be unto You, O our Lord, glory unto You O Son of God, for making Mary Your begetter, victorious.”²⁵³

It is recorded in the gospel of Saint John the evangelist that our Lord Jesus Christ along with His Mother Virgin Mary and three of His disciples attended a wedding feast at Cane of galilee (John 2:1-4). When the Virgin Mary realized that there is a shortage of wine, she immediately interceded in behalf of the wedded couple. Thus, the holy mother took the problem of the bride and goom and offered it to her Son Jesus Christ. Jesus accepted the petition of His Mother. He performed His first mirachle by changing water into the best kind of wine. The miracle of changing water into wine is confirming the teaching that blessed Mother never stoped and will never stope becoming a mediator between the sons and daughters of the Church and her son Jesus Christ. Saint Ephrem says:

“There was a wedding feast in Cana. When our Lord came there, his mother said to him, *there is no wine here, He said to her, what is that to me and to you, woman?* My hour has not yet com, this means, “Shall I impose myself on them? Rather, let them perceive themselves that the wine has run short, and let them all ask to drink.” (He said this) so that his gift might increase in their eyes. She had constrained him urgently, so on account of this he instructed her. An alternative (interpretation) of my hour has not yet come is that it could refer to the hour of his death. Since they were intoxicated, perhaps he might have escaped from

²⁵² (Khudra (prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. the Commemoration of the Saint Mary Mother of Christ. V. 1, P. 606)

²⁵³ (Khudra (prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. the Commemoration of the Saint Mary Mother of Christ. V. 1, P. 606)

suffering, if he had forced his gift upon them. But as yet this was (only) the beginning of this Gospel.”²⁵⁴

The death of the Virgin Mary won many souls to the Lord through miracles wrought by means of her relics. Thus, the wonderful deeds formed by the remnants of the blessed body of the Virgin Mary gained her after death further exaltation than that which she had when she was living on earth. The Lord immediately responded to the petitions of all the believers who have mentioned her name, and who took refuge in her prayers. Philotheus says:

“And many believed upon our Lord by reason of the death of Mary, and through the mighty deeds which were wrought by means of her holy body. And our Lord made her a name after her death which was greater than that which she had when she was alive; and every man who made mention of her name, and who took refuge in her prayers, received everything for which he asked.”²⁵⁵

Through the mediation of the Virgin Mary, the Holy Church prays for peace and tranquility in the whole world. The Holy Church also prays for the reconciliation of priests with Kings. The following anthem says:

“By the prayer of Your begetter, O our Lord Jesus; reconcile the whole world which is troubled and disturbed in its sins; and cease from off the earth wars and strife; and reconcile priests with kings; that they may in harmony and love celebrate the commemoration of your begetter all the days of their life.”²⁵⁶

The sons and daughters of every single local church through the intercession of the Virgin Mary pray to God regularly for the welfare and protection of the

²⁵⁴ (Saint Ephrem’s commentary on Tatian’s Diatessaron, Carmel McCarthy. Published by Oxford University press on behalf of the University of Manchester, 1993 p. 95, V.1)

²⁵⁵ (Philotheus, the deacon of the country of the East. The History of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the History of the Likeness of Christ which the Jews of Tiberias made to mock at. The Syriac texts edited with English translation by E.A. Wallis Budge, M.A., Litt. D. D. Lit., English translations London Luzac and Co. 1899. P.134)

²⁵⁶ (Khudra (Prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. Volume 1 The Tone of the Aid, P. 14)

universal Church and to be made worthy of compassion on the day of judgement. The following anthem confirms the above-mentioned teaching:

“Mary the holy virgin, beseech, make request, supplicate for the Church and her children that by your prayers they may be kept from all harm, to be made worthy of mercies and compassion on that day of judgement.”²⁵⁷

In the following anthem the community of believers, through the mediation of the Virgin Mary ask the Lord to fulfil the promise which He had made to Peter regarding the protection of the Church

“The Temple of the Holy Spirit, the holy virgin, modest Mary, beseech Christ to fulfill His promise which He had made to the Church; that which He had promised Peter the firstborn of our confession.”²⁵⁸

In the following anthem the sons and daughters of the Church are asking Virgin Mary to beseech her Son in behalf of the whole world which Satan has troubled because and to remove from it conflict, and wars; and, wish for it, peace, tranquility and perfect love.

“The blessed mother who has brought rest to the distressed world from the oppression of the adversary; beseech your Son to spread forth (open-wide) His wings upon the inhabited world which the wicked-one has disturbed because we have sinned; and to remove from it conflict, and wars; and, desire for it (the world), peace, tranquility and perfect love • So that the kings of the Earth, and the rulers; may quietly and in piety govern the affairs of our nation; and that the priests and people in the true (orthodox) faith may present to Your Son, the gifts of glory; and when into the clouds, you are gloriously elevated; and unto His way, at the end, among the saints • like a mother, beseech on our behalf; and, like a Lady, request on our behalf so that we may find mercy in the Presence of Your Son, glory be unto HIM!”²⁵⁹

²⁵⁷(Khudra (Prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. Volume 1 The Tone of the Aid, P. 95)

²⁵⁸ (Khudra (Prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. Volume 1 The Tone of the Aid, P. 115)

²⁵⁹ (Khudra (Prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. Volume 1 The Tone of the Aid, P. 24)

Worship Due to God

The Holy Bible, the teachings and the liturgy of the Church of the East does not authorize the sons and daughters of the Church to worship any created being except the almighty God the creator of all. It is written: “*That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,*” (Philippians 2:10) Therefore the Blessed Virgin Mary was never worshiped in the Church of the East after the same manner the Almighty God has been worshipped. Blessed Mary, Angels, Prophets and the rest of the Saints are honored and revered by believers not worshipped. However the holy Church teaches the believers that they can offer their prayers of petition to God through the mediation of the Saints. It should be known to all that the saints are not the subject of the veneration and the ultimate end of the prayers of the Church. Isho dad of Merve says:

“And wishing to show that He who was born was immeasurably greater than His Mother, he answers this word to Mary, ‘and the spear shall pass through thine own soul also, that the thoughts of the hearts of many may be revealed, ‘that is to say, Thou shalt know accurately also thyself that thou art much too weak to know exactly the greatness of this [man] and to understand truly who He is, and how great is His glory, ...’”²⁶⁰

Jacob of Serugh also confirms the eternity of the divine nature of the Son born of the Virgin Mary. Thus Jesus Christ in His divinity, was in the bosom of His Father, before incarnation while He was creating the world.

“Simeon says: ‘He is Almighty for eternity, and it is easy for Him; And He is more exalted than you; you shall learn from Him how He is. Eve, your mother, is immensely younger than He For He is the one who governs all times and their ordering. Behold, by the hands of your Son the creation came into existence long before,

²⁶⁰ (*The Commentaries of Isho dad of Merv, Bishop of Hadatha (c.850 A.D.) in Syriac and English*, ed. and tr. Margaret Dunlop Gibson, intro. James Rendel Harris (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1911, V.1, P. 1

And He was with His Father when He was making the walls of the universe.”²⁶¹

Jesus Christ, as the second person of the Holy Trinity, God the Word, formed His Mother Virgin Mary in the womb of her mother before He was born of her as a man. Jesus Christ as a perfect God is the creator of His mother and as a perfect man is the son of His Mother. Therefore, Mary and all the believers should worship Jesus Christ as God and the Virgin Mary should be honored as the Mother of Christ. Jacob of Serugh says:

“This is the Child who fashioned His mother in the womb of her mother
Yet He was fashioned physically and became born of her.
He produced milk and set breasts in the pure body
And again, He sucked from the tender milk that He made.
He fashioned His mother in the image of His Father when He created her
And finally He came and was formed in her and became born from her.
Yesterday He made her and today He came to birth from her,
For He is older as well as younger than His mother, and it is uninvestigable.
He the only - begotten, was before Adam and after Mary.
He is beyond all times and within all times because it pleased Him.”²⁶²

According to Saint Ephrem the subject of worship of the sons and daughters of the Church is not Saints in heaven but the living God. As a matter of fact in the following hymn on the Nativity of our Lord Saint Ephrem says even the Virgin Mary should worship her Son Jesus Christ as her God and Savior.

“Let His mother worship Him; let her offer Him a crown.
For Solomon’s mother made him king and crowned him
He apostatized and lost his crown in battle.

²⁶¹ (Jacob of Serugh, *Selected Festal Homilies*, translated from Syriac and introduced by Thomas Kollamparampil, CMI, with a foreword by Sebastian P. Brock, Center for Indian and Inter-religious studies (CIIS), Rome, and Dharmaram Publications (DP), Bangalore 1997, P. 152)

²⁶² (Jacob of Serugh, *Selected Festal Homilies*, translated from Syriac and introduced by Thomas Kollamparampil, CMI, with a foreword by Sebastian P. Brock, Center for Indian and Inter-religious studies (CIIS), Rome, and Dharmaram Publications (DP), Bangalore 1997, P. 123)

Behold the Son of David who glorified and crowned the house of David! For you have greatly magnified his throne,”²⁶³

The fathers of the Church of the East have always been very careful not to guide the sons and daughters of the Church to replace God with the Virgin Mary and other Saints in their worship services. The words of the following anthem were cautiously chosen by its writer. The writer says: “all generations, Jews and gentiles equally offer blessings to Mary but the Magi, and the Shepherds, offered worship unto baby Jesus.” So, it is fair to offer blessings to the Virgin Mary and worship to Jesus Christ. it is written:

“All generations, the Gentile and Gentiles, equally offer blessings to the Virgin Daughter of Abraham, Mary the Blessed Mother; As declared in the promises, The Begetter of the Son of God; the manger and the swaddling clothe ministered unto His birth, the star and the Magi, together with the Shepherds, offered worship unto Him (Jesus); gold, frankincense and myrrh; this was wise to be offered unto The King which came forth;”²⁶⁴

Again in the following anthem we clearly see that the fathers of the Church are bidding the followers of the Church to give blessing unto the Virgin Mary. Mary is blessed simply because from her pure womb was born for us the Savior of the children of Adam, from the slavery of corruption, death and Satan.

“On the day of the commemoration of the holy St Mary, we sing glory; and give blessing unto her; from the pure womb shone for us the Savior and The Liberator of the children of Adam, from the slavery of corruption, death and Satan. Let us in love honor her commemoration, to beseech her glorified Son, to pity us, by His grace; and to deliver us from conflicts, hunger, and death. The great blessings of praise the nations gave to the begetter of Jesus our King, blessed are you Ephratha, the mother of kings that from you came forth the Lord of Crowns. Blessed are you, O Mary that women and the virgin daughters envy you, blessed be unto you, O Mary, that your name is highly exalted because of your Son. Blessed are you, O pure Virgin Mary, that from you has forth shown The One who beautifies crowns. Blessed are you, the damsel who is carrying the Cub of the lion of which James, wrote. Blessed are you, O Virgin, that within you is marked the tree (*i.e. the bush in which the ram*

²⁶³ (Ephrem the Syrian hymns, translated and introduced by Kathleen E. McVey. Paulist press, New York. Mahwah. Hymn on Nativity, Hymn 2. P. 77)

²⁶⁴ (Khudra (prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. the Commemoration of the Saint Mary Mother of Christ. V. 1, P. 606)

was caught to liberate the son of Abraham) which is the type of Isaac. Blessed are you, of whom they were jealous, that Isaiah testified to your lineage in his revelation. Blessed are you, O blessed one, by whom the disobedient curse of Eve is removed from all women. Blessed are you, Mary that your Son sits upon the chariot filled with wonder. Blessed are you, the pious one, filled with hope; all generations give blessings to you. Blessed are you, Mary the mother of Jesus, for in you rests the fulfillment of the prophecies. And, blessed; and blessed, will be said at every hour. How great is the blessing which has been prepared for you. Your prayers are a high-wall unto us, and they will keep us from the wicked one and his hosts, and, cast away from us all affliction, and will make peace in the world, forever and ever.”²⁶⁵

Virgin Mary the mother of Christ has always been revered in the Church. Because she was chosen by God to be conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and gave birth to her Son Jesus Christ. The writer of the following prayer is openly proclaiming that Virgin Mary is indeed the lady of all virgins. Furthermore, he has verified that angel Gabriel has worshiped unto the Virgin Mary, and in fear gave to her peace. Then having all that said, he curses the mouth which praises her not; and the tongue which does not magnify her. It is written:

“Why am I stretching out my words? These I have already spoken, and again, I say them; I have wandered far from Her commemoration; and to relate Her story; I am not worthy • I have believed, O my Lord, in truthfulness, that She is Your begetter in purity, as I am proclaiming with a loud voice; that She is The Lady of all the Virgins • If Gabriel worshiped unto her, and in fear gave to her peace; cursed is the mouth which praises her not; and the tongue which does not magnify her • O, Lady and the Mother of my Lord, in prayer from your pure mouth, beseech the forgiveness of trespasses, to the ones who will sing this anthem • And unto me, the feeble one, and unto the whole congregation, who gather in all the Church, and put aside for you three feasts, beseech forgiveness, together with remission of sin; and, unto your Son glory at all times.”²⁶⁶

The holy Church has always taught her sons and daughters to worship the one and only God who created the heaven and the Earth. This God is known as the

²⁶⁵ (Khudra (prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. the Commemoration of the Saint Mary Mother of Christ. V. 1, Pp. 604-605)

²⁶⁶ (Khudra (prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. the Commemoration of the Saint Mary Mother of Christ. V. 1, Pp. 611-612)

triune God, Father Son, and the Holy Spirit. These three persons of the Holy Trinity are equal in power, honor, worship, and authority. As three Divine persons of the Holy Trinity, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are equally worshipped in the Church. It is written:

“So, they will believe in Christ who is the Son of God. And you will be delivered from the work of slavery. And will worship Him and His Father. And will praise the Spirit of His Godhead. Because while we are praising the Father, we also praise His Son along with Him. And while we are worshipping His Son, we are worshipping the Father along with Him. And while we are confessing the Spirit, we are confessing the Father and the Son as well. Because we are saved by the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. To baptize those who believe in order to live forever.”²⁶⁷

The Holy Church teaches worshipping creations with God or in the place of God is a great sin. We learn from the Sacred Scriptures that everything created being are bound to worship their Creator. So they should not be worshipped like their Creator. It is written:

“It is not right to worship creations neither instead of the Creator and nor with the creator. Because everything which are created are worshipers of their Creator. And they should not be worshipped like their Creator. But the one who came unto us, is God and the Son of God by Nature. Even though His Godhead was mixed (united) with our humanity so that our humanity will renew by the help of His Godhead. And because of that we are bound rightfully to worship Him. Because He is worshipped with His Father. And we will not worship creations those which were created for sake of worshipping the Creator. This is the Just and true God.”²⁶⁸

Mary is keeping everything in her heart:

It is recorded in the Sacred Scriptures that “*But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.*” (Luke 2:19) These things which Mary kept in her heart are: the leaping of John the Baptist in the womb of his mother.

²⁶⁷ (Anolent Syriac Documents related to the Earliest Establishment of Christianity in Edessa and the Neighbouring Countries, from the year after our Lord's Ascension to the beginning of the fourth century. Discovered, Edited, translated, and annotated by the late W. Cureton, D.D, F.R. S, with preface by W. Wright, Ph. D, LL.D. Amsterdam, Oriental Press, 1967. P. 37 the teaching of Simon Peter)

²⁶⁸ (Anolent Syriac Documents related to the Earliest Establishment of Christianity in Edessa and the Neighbouring Countries, from the year after our Lord's Ascension to the beginning of the fourth century. Discovered, Edited, translated, and annotated by the late W. Cureton, D.D, F.R. S, with preface by W. Wright, Ph. D, LL.D. Amsterdam, Oriental Press, 1967. P. 37-38 the teaching of Simon Peter)

“And entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth. And it happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary that the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.” (Luke 1:40-41) The revelation of angel Gabriel to Joseph in regard to the miraculous conception of Mary without the help of the human seed. *“An angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.”* (Matthew 1:20) The announcement of angel Gabriel to Zachariah regarding the Conception and the birth of John the Baptist. *“But the angel said to him: “Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John.”* (Luke 1:13) and the annunciation of angel Gabriel about her conception with the Son of God without the help of the human seed. Maintaining her virginity even after giving birth to Jesus Christ. The coming of the shepherds. *“So, they (Shepherds) hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child,”* (Luke 2:16) and the coming of the Magi from East. *“Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.”* (Matthew 2:1-2) Isho dad of Merv, Bishop of Hadatha says:

“This Mary kept all these words, etc., that is to say, the leaping of the babe in the womb, the revelation to Joseph, the prophecies to Zachariah and Elizabeth, the Annunciation of the Angle to herself, the conception without union; the birth without pangs, and without destruction of virginity; the coming of the shepherds and of the Magi, etc., which she compared with one another, and marveled at, and considered how a great and new dispensation was being administered.”²⁶⁹

²⁶⁹ (The Commentaries of Isho dad of Merv, Bishop of Hadatha (c.850 A.D.) in Syriac and English, ed. and tr. Margaret Dunlop Gibson, intro. James Rendel Harris (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1911, V.1, P. 158)

Mary and Salvation

The obedience of the Virgin Mary to the divine will of God, revealed to her by angle Gabriel opened the gate of forgiveness and Salvation to Mankind. Thus the entire race of mankind is bound to offer blessing to the Virgin Mary because she celebrated in her womb the Liberator of the sons of Adam and gave birth in her virginity to the hope and salvation of the world from the oppression of Satan, death and sin. Mary is revered because she gave birth, to Christ who by His death and resurrection has released the power of death. The prophecy of Isaah concerning the conception of a Virgin who will conceive and give birth to Emmanuel has come to fulfillment. Thus, her pure womb has become the source of all aids to mankind. The following anthem says:

“In the glorified feast of (her) the commemoration; of The Virgin Mary the daughter of David: let us cry out together with the celestial ones; and knit The Crown of Praises; and glorify while saying • Blessed are you O woman, bearing The Wonder; blessed are you who had given birth to the hope and salvation to/of our souls; blessed are you for in you, The Words of The Prophets are fulfilled; Blessed are you who has celebrated The Liberator of the sons of Adam • Blessed is The Holy Father, for making you the dwelling place of His Hiddenness; Blessed is His Beloved Son, Who has willed in His love, and dwelt within you; blessed is your womb which has become unto us the source of all aids • Blessed are you for forth from you shone The Light which cannot be measured; blessed are you for you have given birth, to The One Who loosens the bondage of mortality; blessed are you all in all (Mary); and blessed is The Fruit which shone forth from you, and blessed is the assembly (or congregation) which celebrates you on this day; beseech from your Son, to make us worthy to enter the chamber of His Kingdom; and, we confess and worship the Father, Son, and to the Holy Spirit: Hallelujah!”²⁷⁰

The divine Word of God was pleased to descend from heaven, choose Virgin Mary from among all the virgins and dwelled in her womb. Thus, Christ loved His mother and made her the source of His aids in the world. The following anthem says:

²⁷⁰ (Khudra (Prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. Volume 1 The Tone of the Aid, P. 9)

“Blessed is The Word from the Father; who has been pleased and descended; And, He has elected (chosen) a virgin from amongst us; And, He has honored her in His love. And made her the source of His aids; in the holy Church; upon the four corners (*of the Earth*) we will celebrate the day of her commemoration.”²⁷¹

Mary is the port of Prophecies

From the very beginning of the world, God has continuously through prophets revealed His plan to mankind. It is recorded in the Sacred Scriptures that the minute Adam fell in paradise by suredering to the suggestion of Satan, God planned to save him. Thus, since then, propets began to prophecy about the conception and birth of the Savior of the world Jesus Christ who would come from the house of David. He was conceived and born miracoulously from Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit. The following anthem says all the prophecies of the prophets of old regarding the birth of the Savioire were fullfided in the port of Virgin Mary.

“All the Holy Prophets came forth and prophesied about the glorious splendor from the Father. Which (*The glorious splendor*) came down in His Love and put on our body, for the salvation of all. For Moses had first prophesied, saying thus: ‘that a prophet like myself shall the Lord raise up unto you.’ You shall listen to him. And the Prophet Isaiah also, proclaimed about His birth when he declares, ‘*behold a virgin shall conceive and give birth to a son of wonder and Emmanuel He shall be called.*’ And Zachariah revealed the purpose of His entrance and indicated His passion. Jonah, in the belly of the great fish, reveals the mystery of His burial and the resurrection. And it was Ezekial who had seen the chariot carrying His glorious splendor and celebrated unto Him. And Daniel in Babylon proclaimed Him. That HE is the One which rules upon all mysteries. Behold, HE has fulfilled in action, by His coming to us; Glory be unto Him.”²⁷²

The following anthem recordes how a from age to age, a prophet after a prophet have prophesied about the birth of the Virgin Mary.

“The Creator has established the milestone of tranquility from age to age; so that humankind will be enabled to walk toward His love. And, He has chosen from among the race of

²⁷¹ (Khudra (Prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. Volume 1 The Tone of the Aid, P. 87)

²⁷² (Khudra (Prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. Volume 1 The fourth Sunday of Advent, P. 165)

humankind, the proclaimers of the Mysteries of His hiddenness; and He has filled them with the wisdom of His Power; to reveal His mysteries to His servants • Moses, Joshua, and Samuel; David, Nathan, and Elijah; and also, Elisha and Isaiah • Hosea, Joel, and Amos; Haggai, Zachariah and Malachi • Jeremiah, with Ezekiel; Daniel and Job the righteous; in the prophecies they have prophesied • and, announced and have proclaimed in Israel the One True God; and behold, He will be confessed from among all humankind, the Glorified Trinity • The hidden Father, The Immortal Son; and The Holy Spirit worshiped by all; revealed His Mysteries to His servants: unto Him be glory from all mouths; glorified, O my Lord, is The Day of your annunciation.”²⁷³

The following anthem proclaims that in the future, God the Father will send down from heaven His only begotten Son, God the Word to come and dwell among us mortals. Thus, by the conception and birth of Jesus Chrst from the Virgin Mary all the prophecies of Old were fulfilled.

“The Prophets of justices, and the proclaimers of righteousness, Hosea, Joel, Amos the righteous ones; and, also Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah; and Nahum, Habakuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zachariah with them; also, Malachai, proclaimed and preached, among Israel the New Glad-tidings • That in the future the Creator will send forth His Son, our Lord Jesus, to come and dwell amongst us mortals; And, He came and has fulfilled their prophecies; to reward and to bestow upon them the new life in the Kingdom of the Highest • Praise and glory to God who has send them; and thanksgiving to The Son who has crowned them; And unto the Holy Spirit, who had given to them wisdom, to Him be glory! •”²⁷⁴

Budge says all the antitypes and prophecies of Old have rested in Virgin Mary. It is written:

“And Gabriel answered and unto her, “The prophets prophesied concerning thee in the spirit, “and concerning thy bringing forth did they speak in their revelations. Moses, the first of the Prophets, depicted the type of thee by means of the rock from which he made water to flow down, and Aroan the priest by means of the rod which he made to blossom; and Jeremiaiah called thee the woman earth; and Gideon surnamed thee the fleece which received the dew from on high; and Daniel taught the mystery of thee by means of the rock which saw and which had hewn from the mountain without hands; and Isaiah spake openly of thee, saying,

²⁷³ (Khudra (Prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. Volume 1 Commemoration of the Virgin Mary, P. 151)

²⁷⁴ (Khudra (Prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. Volume 1 Commemoration of the Virgin Mary, P. 151-152)

‘behold, a virgin shall conceive, and shall bear a son, and his name shall be called Immanuel.’²⁷⁵

On the day of the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ all the, rightouse people shall rejoice because their revelation has been achieved (rewarded). After the same manner all the prophets shall rejoice, because their prophesied revealations have been already fulfilled by action. Fathers of the Church in the following anthem express the joy of the prophets and the rightouse regarding the fulfillment of their predicted revelation.

“All the forerunners of righteous men, who had received promises; about the glorious birth of Christ; shall rejoice on this day, behold their revelation has been fulfilled. Behold, the prophets rejoice for their predicted revelations have been fulfilled: for the words (the cherubim) had proclaimed about His birth have become action. The Apostles also rejoice, for they had seen the hope which the prophets and kings in their age had desired. The Holy Church sings glory to the Father who had sent Him forth. The Nations and the populace raise glory with thanksgiving at His birth. The Maji have carried their offerings from Persia, and came to present them unto Him, also, the angels from the realms of the highest, celebrated and came down; while crying aloud unto Him with their voices. ‘Glory to God in the Highest and peace and tranquility upon earth, and a good hope to mankind.’²⁷⁶

She will always be holy:

The power of the most high came down from heaven and rested upon the Virgin Mary. As the Mother of the Son of God, she was exalted above all the rightouse people. She will always remain holy because the power of will never leave her. Regarding the holiness of the Virgin Mary the following Hymn says:

“The Lord who made the Strong Power to rest in the virgin; and, has sole rank above all righteous-one; and, she had become unto Your humanity, the Mother in Truth; and, forever

²⁷⁵ (The History of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the History of the Likeness of Christ, The Syriac Tecxts Edited with English Transalitions By E. A. Wallis Budge, M. A., LITT. D.D. Lrr., London: Luzac AND Co. 1899, Pp. 23-24)

²⁷⁶ (Khudra (Prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. Volume 1 the fourth Sunday of Advent, P. 166)

and ever Your Power will remain in her; and, He will accompany us in Heaven and upon Earth; at all times we take shelter under her wings; Deliver us, like her, from the ridicule (*mocking*) of the heathen; and raise the head of our orthodox confession; that we may, with her, confess and glorify You; whenever we recall her, and have Mercy upon us.²⁷⁷

In the following anthem Virgin Mary is called the resting place of the two covenants.

“Gabriel the head of the Angels, was announcing the good news to the Virgin, about the glorified birth of Jesus our Savior; in great awe and trembling, (*he*) spoke with her saying • Peace be unto you, O woman filled with wonder; Peace be unto you O Begetter of the Mighty-One and Savior; Peace be unto you for from you will shine the Liberator of all; Peace be unto you for from you will, Hope and Life be born • Peace be unto you, for being made worthy for the abode of the Temple of God the Word; Peace be unto you for being the Resting Place for the two covenants; Peace be unto you for giving birth as the virgin, as Isaiah had Prophesied • Peace be unto you the Splendor which is much brighter than all lights; Peace be to you, O Palace into which the King willed and dwelt within (*thee*); Peace be unto the blessings which are given to us from your womb; Peace be unto you for from you will shine forth the Rejoicer of the creation; *hallelujah*.²⁷⁸

The end

²⁷⁷ (Khudra (Prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. Volume 1 The Tone of the Aid, P. 111)

²⁷⁸ (Khudra (prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. Volume 1 The first Sunday of Advent, P. 131)