

# THE SAINT FROM KOODED

**D. Babu Paul, Bar Eto Briro**

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# THE SAINT FROM KOODED

Dr D Babu Paul, Bar Eto Briro

Published on the occasion of the Tricentennial Dukrono  
Celebrations of Mar Baselios Yeldo, Catholicos of the East  
who entered eternal rest at Mar Thoma Cheria Pally,  
Kothamangalam in 1685

# THE SAINT FROM KOODED

By

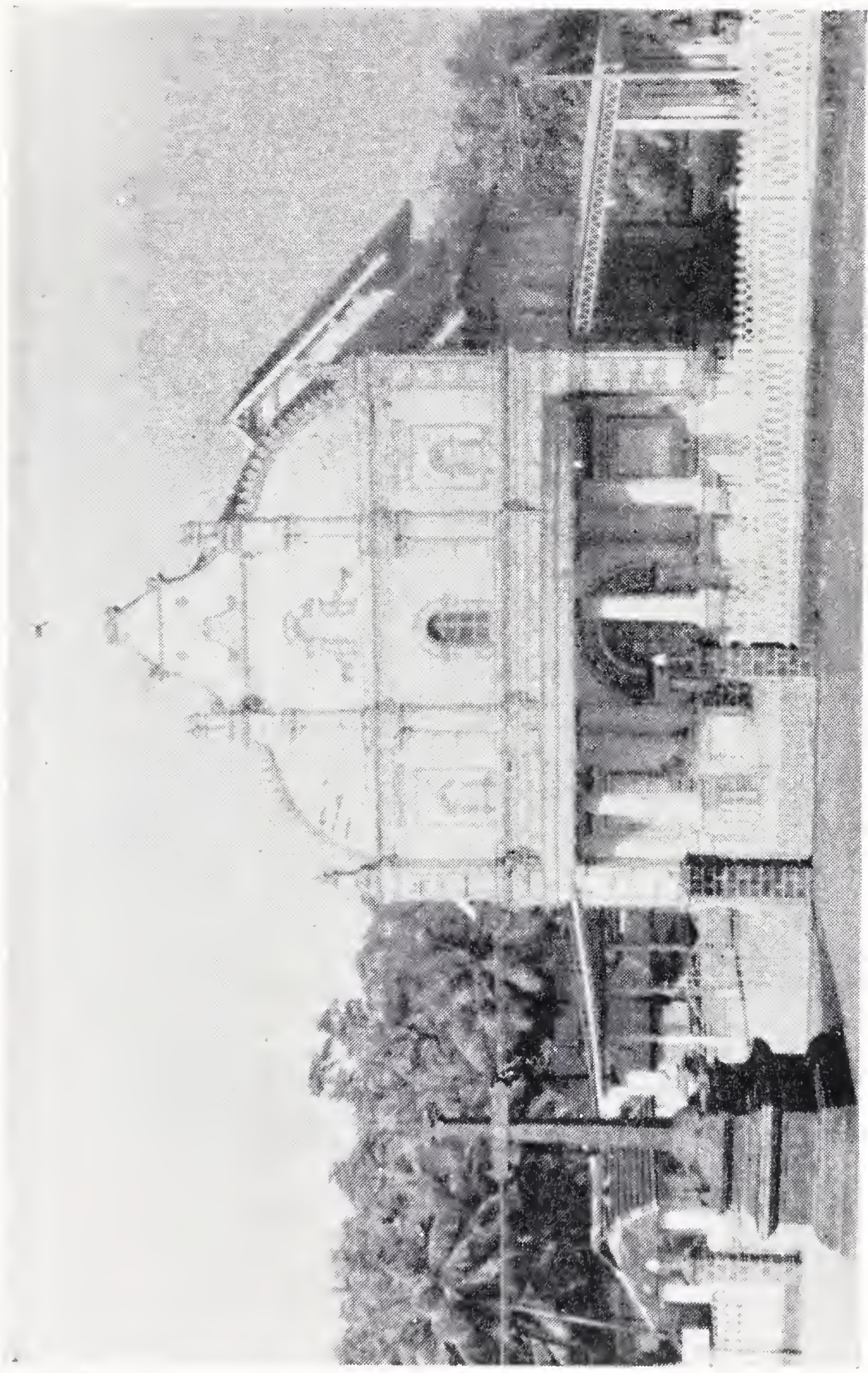
Dr D Babu Paul, Bar Eto Briro

Printed at Print India, Ernakulam.  
Published by Marthoman Cheria Pally  
Kothamangalam

Copies 2000

Price Rs. 10.00

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ST. THOMAS CHURCH (MAR THOMA CHERIA PALLY) KOTHAMANGALAM



**Dedicated**  
**to**  
**the Sacred Memory**  
**of**  
**ST BASELIOS YELDO**

## PREFACE

It is with profound joy that I write this. When the Marthoma Cheria Pally requested me to write a book of this nature I was happy because I have, since my childhood, been a worshipper at the tomb of Mar Yeldo. I have knelt there in prayer and in thanksgiving. I have always come away from the premises of the Cheria Pally with a sense of spiritual strength. Apart from this I have other reasons, personal in nature, to feel attached to the Cheria Pally. The Thekkilakattu family which produced priests for this church through generations is closely related to me through my paternal grandmother. My father, Corepiscopo P.A. Paulose, Korooso Dasroro, now 82, began his Syriac education at the age of 12 at the feet of Malpono Ittyerah Maracheril Vicar of this church, before moving on to become the disciple of the Late Mar Augen Malpono Itteyrah. He was a man of great knowledge and erudition and was noted for his progressive views in the first half of this century. For all these reasons I deem it a blessing to have been called upon to attempt this work. I am indebted to the Parish.

I had two limitations in writing this book. The first was dearth of time. I worked through silent nights on the shores of the Arabian Sea, but the time at my disposal was less than three weeks. The second limitation was the dearth of authentic material to draw from in respect of the life and work of Mar Yeldo. North Travancore is



agog with stories of miracles wrought through the intercession of Mar Yeldo, but most of these are legendary or close to being apocryphal. I was therefore constrained to omit many stories so as not to detract from the credibility of this work. All the same, despite the limitations, I have, I hope, succeeded in pointing to the value of the Saint's intercession.

I am honoured by the fact that His Excellency Mr. P. Ramachandran, Governor of Kerala, will be releasing this book for circulation.

I am grateful to my Private Secretary Mr. P.J. George, my Personal Assistant Ms. Ambika Kunjamma and my stenographer Mr. N.K. Venugopala Bhat for helping me in their spare time.

I have made use of various material, published and unpublished, in writing this book. For want of time, and since this is a work for the layman, I have not indicated the sources/authority for any statement.

One last word. This book does not claim to contain the official view of my Church on any controversial statement made in it. This is especially true of the second chapter which is the expression of my conclusions as a humble student of history

Harbour House,  
Willingdon Island,  
Cochin, India.

**D. Babu Paul**  
Bar Eto Brito.

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## CHAPTER I

# THE SYRIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH – AN INTRODUCTION

“The Syrian Church in India.....is the remnant of a once great and glorious Church, which extended its sway from Antioch on the shores of the Mediterranean right across Asia to India and China.....its importance for Christendom as a whole remains very great, both because of the beauty and antiquity of its prayers and its rites, and because it is the one surviving link with the ancient Aramaic Church, which was the Mother Church of all Christendom.”

– Fr. Bede Griffiths.

THE CHURCH is the mystical body of our Lord Jesus Christ. He did not found a church; He founded *the* church. The church was one in the apostolic times.

There was no organisation then as now, but there was oneness and fellowship.

After the conversion of Emperor Constantine the Church left its underground existence and ultimately in the Council of Nice (A.D. 325) it built around itself an organisational framework. Within two hundred years, however it had split following the council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451). From the western church, which had remained as one unit in the post-Chalcedon days, the Greater Orthodox churches broke away marking the second major breaking up of Christendom. Then came Luther and Henry VIII and the proliferation of Reformed Churches.

Although the Church was not yet an administrative entity in the apostolic times it had its Patriarch, bishops, presbyters and deacons. St. Peter, the chief of the apostles, was the Patriarch and the other apostles and those whom they so appointed were the bishops.

St. Peter established his throne at Antioch in A.D. 37. He has had his successors in the Patriarchs of Antioch. Moran Mar Ignatius Zakka is the 122nd Peter.

The Syrian Orthodox Church was the original church established in Jerusalem and grafted in Antioch by the Arameans and other gentile converts. Its litur-

gical heritage and theological and missionary record are unique. It is rich in all the best traditions of the undivided church of the first five centuries. Antioch was the centre of Christianity in Asia. It was at one time presiding over a flourishing church with 107 archbishoprics extending as far as China. Voobus, a Protestant scholar, has reviewed and recorded the story of this eastward expansion of Christianity. Fr. Bede Griffiths says :

“In the course of time the Syrian church with its liturgy in Syriac spread all over the East from Syria to Mesopotamia and Persia and even to China and India,..... with all its wealth of liturgical, doctrinal and spiritual life. the Syrian church possessed a spirit of missionary enterprise which carried it right across Asia to China and India and made it at one time the most widely extended church in Christendom.”

The monasteries of the church were at one time famous both for the number of monks and for their contribution to the life of the church. It is recorded that in the fifth century the church had 600,000 monks. There was a time when there were 90,000 monks in the 300 monasteries in the mountains of Edessa, 12,000 in St. Mathew's near Mosul and 6,300 in St. Basu's near Homs.

Among these monasteries perhaps the most signi-

significant was St. Mark's in Jerusalem. That is where our Lord had His last Supper, the house of John Mark; that is where the Holy Quorbono was established; that is where Jesus appeared to the disciples after the Resurrection; and that is where His mother and disciples waited in prayer between Ascension and Pentecost. Later on that Upper Room was consecrated as a church dedicated to the Mother of God. A Syriac inscription of the sixth century discovered there in 1940 says: "This is the house of Mary, mother of John also called Mark. The apostles consecrated it as a church after the name of Mother the God-bearer. It was rebuilt in 73 A.D. after King Titus destroyed Jerusalem."

The Syrian church produced many scholars. Bardaisan, Mar Aprem, Mar Balail, Mar Yacoub of Srug, Bar Ebraya and Bar Saleebi are but a few of them. It is interesting to note that some of the western thoughts of later centuries had already been anticipated in their writings. "Man is a small world", said Harder. This concept of man being an epitome of the world was discussed by Mar Ahodemeh, Catholicos of the East, in the sixth century. Some of Galileo's theories of Astronomy were treated in the book "The Cause of all Causes" in the tenth century. Even Nietzche's theory of the superman was discussed in that work.

The later historical experience of the Syrian Church has been similar to that of its Master as His Holiness

Moran Mar Ignatius Zakka put it beautifully in his speech at Cochin during the apostolic visit in 1982, of repeated crucifixions and resurrections. The Patriarchate had to be shifted from place to place because of persecution. The survival of the church to this day is indeed a miracle, a work of God.

The Biblical heritage of this church is significant too. In 404 one Daniel translated the Bible into Armenian. In the seventh century the Syrian fathers translated the Bible into Arabic under orders of Patriarch John II, in response to a request by the Prince of Jessera, Abi Waqqos El Ansari. In 1221 John Joseph, a Syrian priest from Taflis translated it into Persian and in this century Corespiscopo Mathen Konat, the Malankara Malpan then, translated it into Malayalam. The accuracy of these translations can be guessed from an incident related to the Arabic translation. The Prince of Jessera wanted every reference to the Godhead of Christ, His baptism and crucifixion to be omitted from the Arabic version. John II said: "Even if all the arrows of your army were to pierce me I will not omit a single letter from the Gospel of my Lord." The Prince finally gave up and said, "Go and write what you know." It is worth recalling in this context that the most ancient manuscript of the Gospel available today is in Syriac, copied by one Yacoub in Edessa in A.D. 411. Another indication of the Syrian church's efforts in this direction in the past is the fact that among the pre-seventh century manu-

scripts there are only ten in Greek and twentytwo in Latin while there are fiftyfive in Syriac.

Nestor had an impact on this church for a while. He belonged to this church and had many influential sympathisers among its hierarchy. The church however condemned him and declared that the Lord who was born eternally from the Father, He Himself was born in the flesh from the Blessed Lady the Virgin and the Virgin was therefore Theotokos. The church also accepted the expression, "union of two natures". St.Cyril said that the eastern concept of the union of two natures is the same as the Oneness of the two natures and the same as saying that the incarnate God is one in nature.

The Council of Chalcedon (451) was a turning point in the history of the church. From then onwards the church lost its royal patronage. After the death of Theodosius II in 450, Pulcheria and Marcian came to power. They were hostile to Mar Dioscorus and arranged Chalcedon at the instance of Pope Leo. The Tome of Leo was accepted as basis of doctrine. The position of our church on this is as follows: the Tome of Leo is contrary to the Nicene creed, Chalcedon in fact confirmed the teaching of Nestor who had maintained that the one who was crucified was merely a man. Our view is that while Ephesus maintained one nature for Christ



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Chalcedon saw two natures and the Chalcedon rejected the doctrine concerning the suffering and crucifixion of one of the Holy Trinity. Of course, it must be said in fairness that Chalcedon accepted the expression Theotokos

The Syrian Orthodox Church rejected Chalcedon right from the beginning. Patriarch Maximus resigned on this score in 455. Chalcedonian Patriarch Martyr was replaced by Peter II in 468, also on this account. Those who were separated by Chalcedon were described as Melkites – followers of the King – and Bar Ebraya calls them Melkite Syrians.

There was another Council at Constantinople in A.D. 476 chaired by Peter II of Antioch and Timotheos II of Alexandria. It condemned Chalcedon and the emperor – Basilicus – issued as an edict the declaration signed by 700 bishops under the Patriarchs of Antioch and Alexandria. There was another Council in A.D. 482 followed an year later by the Henoticon of Zeno, which also opposed the Chalcedon formula. In 488 Flavian succeeded Peter II. The Council of Constantinople held in 508 when Flavian was still Patriarch reaffirmed the anti-Chalcedonian stand. Flavian later inclined towards the Chalcedonian view and was ousted by the Council of Sidon (512) to be succeeded by St. Severios the Great. Six years later the church was persecuted by

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Emperor Justinian and Severios had to flee to Egypt. Justinian appointed one Paul as Patriarch, but the Antiocheans ridiculed him as Paul the Jewish ! There were two more pretenders during the life of Severios who passed away on February 8, 538 to receive his heavenly crown. He is remembered by the Syrian church in every Holy Quorbono as the one who taught that Mary was the Mother of God.

In a way all this talk of the dichotomy between our church and Chalcedon is a matter of semantics. Emperor Justinian himself maintained the expression "Theopaschites," the suffering God. What is more significant, Pope John II approved of this statement of Justinian. Similarly, Theodore, Theodoret and Hiba, whom Chalcedon upheld, were condemned by Justinian in an edict, also signed by some Chalcedonian Patriarchs. Pope Vigilius too appears to have agreed with these views. The Constantinople Council of 553 which was presided over by Eutyches of Constantinople and was accepted by Vigilius of Rome declared: "He who separates God the Word who made miracles from Christ who suffered... (who) does not say that our Lord Christ the word is with Christ who was born of a woman, or...the miracles are His and He Himself suffered in manhood willingly is anathematized." The Syrian Orthodox theologians and historians see this declaration as a stab at Chalcedon and a triumph for the Syrian Orthodox position.

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To rescue this persecuted church God raised St. Yacoub Bourdana. He was ordained Metropolitan of Edessa in 543 by Patriarch Theodosius of Alexandria. Bourdana was also declared Ecumenical Metropolitan authorised to look after the persecuted orthodox churches in Afro-Asia. His is a record : he consecrated two Patriarchs (Sergis, 543-550 and Paul II after Sergis died), one Catholicos of the East (Ahodemeh), twenty-seven bishops and 100,000 priests. No wonder the church itself came to be known, among its foes, after his name as the Jacobite church. That is not a name officially accepted by the church but in India many of the faithful in their innocence and ignorance "proudly" call themselves Jacobites.

The doctrine of the Syrian Orthodox Church about the Incarnation is as follows. "The unique Son and Word of God, who is the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, descended from heaven to the womb of Virgin Mary and was incarnate and made man of her by the Holy Spirit and born from her after nine months in an indescribable way while she remained Virgin for ever. The union of Godhead with manhood took place at the first moment when the Virgin conceived. That is, neither was Godhead in existence in the womb before manhood nor manhood before Godhead. Thus the incarnate Word of God has one compound nature without confusion, mixture or change. Since this Child is real God and real and perfect man His mother was

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Theotokos or Godbearer”.

On the mystery of Redemption the church teaches as follows : “The incarnate Son and Word of God was really crucified and He suffered and died in manhood by the separation of His soul from His body and He was buried in the tomb, whereas his Godhead was separated neither from His soul nor from His body, while he was on the cross or in the tomb. On the third day He rose from the dead.”

Fr. Bede Griffiths says : “The chief characteristic of the Syrian Church is its sense of awe and wonder before the divine Mystery. The Syrian liturgy is dominated by the scene in the vision of the prophet Isaiah, when he saw the Lord on a high and lofty throne in the temple in Jerusalem, and heard the angels crying, ‘holy, holy, holy’ before him. In every Syrian church there is a ‘veil’ drawn across the sanctuary, representing the veil in the temple of Jerusalem, and the sanctuary itself is held to be the ‘holy of holies’, the place where God himself appears in the New Covenant with his people. This scene is recalled at the beginning and the end of every office of prayer and the sense of wonder and mystery which inspires it fills the whole liturgy. Together with this sense of awe in the presence of the holiness of God is a profound sense of human sin. As the prophet was led to cry out, ‘Woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell among a people of

unclean lips', so the Syrian liturgy is filled with this sense of human sin and unworthiness and one of the principal themes of the liturgy is that of 'repentance.' But this sense of sin and the need for repentance is accompanied by, or rather is actually an expression of, the awareness of God's infinite love and mercy, which comes down to man's need and raises him to share in His own infinite glory. Thus there is a wonderful balance of dreadful majesty and loving compassion, of abasement and exaltation.

"It is, no doubt, a result of the 'monophysite' tendency of this liturgy, that there is a tremendous emphasis on the divine nature in Christ, which is nevertheless completely orthodox. Its Trinitarian doctrine, mostly derived from the Greek and even using Greek terms, is very firm and impressive, but its distinctive note is seen in the custom of addressing prayer directly to Christ as 'our God' and not to the Father through 'Jesus Christ our Lord,' as is the normal custom of the liturgy. The emphasis on the divinity of Christ is seen also in the immense veneration paid to Mary as the 'Mother of God', or more literally 'She who brought forth God.' This devotion is very profound and very theological. It is based entirely on a continued meditation on the fact that the person whom Mary brought forth was truly God. This is the source of endless wonder and at the same time of amazing paradox, which is expressed in poetic terms: 'in your

arms you embraced the flames and gave milk to the devouring fire: blessed is he, the infinite, who was born of you.' This deeply Biblical and theological devotion deserves study as an example of how devotion to the Virgin Mary grew up in the Church as a direct consequence of belief in the Incarnation.

“Together with devotion to the Mother of God goes a devotion to the prophets, apostles and martyrs, as members of Mystical Body of Christ, those who proclaimed and those who died for the sake of the Gospel. Here again this cult of the saints needs to be studied in one of its purest forms, as deeply rooted in a Biblical view of life and springing wholly from devotion to the person of Christ and the authentic message of the Gospel. What is most evident throughout the Syrian liturgy is its biblical background. It is as though the liturgy 'sprang from the very same soil as the Old and the New Testaments. The 'saints' of the Old Testament, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Moses and David and the Prophets, and in particular Job and Daniel and three holy men in the furnace of Babylon, are as familiar figures as the apostles and are felt as living witnesses to the mystery of Christ, always alive within the Church. Even more interesting is the constant reference to 'our father Adam and our mother Eve' which takes the mystery of salvation back to the first man and woman, and sees Christ descending to Sheol, the place of the dead, at the resurrection to proclaim the message of

salvation to all the dead and to raise up Adam and Eve. The feeling for the dead as waiting in Sheol for the resurrection at the second coming of Christ is also a theme which takes us back to early Jewish Christian theology, from which the Syrian theology so largely derives, and helps us to see how devotion to the faithful departed grew up spontaneously in the early Church."

Why is the church called Syrian? Some say that it is due to Syriac being the liturgical language, others hold that it is derived from Syria. Neither, to my mind, is the whole truth. The name was perhaps derived from Cyrus of Persia (559-529 B.C.) who, after conquering Babylon in 539 B.C. liberated the Jews and allowed them to return to Judaea. The grateful Jews remembered Cyrus as their liberator and the name became synonymous with the anticipated Redeemer of mankind. We know from the Bible that the disciples of our Lord were called Christians in Antioch, then capital of Syria. To the Jewish converts of Antioch Christ was the new Cyrus, the liberator, they described Christ as the "Cyrus of mankind." Consequent on this the gentile Christians called them "Syrians." It might also have started as a nickname, as the name Christian was, and like it "Syrian" also became established in due course. There is also a view that the term 'Syrian' was used in Syria to distinguish Christian Arameans from the non-Christian ones; 'Aramean' connoted heathens while 'Syrian' connoted Christians. Anyway, the church in Antioch

was known as Syrian Church from very early times. St. Ignatius Noorono mentions it in his epistle to the Romans (107 A.D.).

Aramaic was the language of the Jews for about five centuries before Christ. Even some of their scriptures were written in that language as proved by the Dead Sea Scrolls. It must have been the language in which Gabriel spoke to Mary and the language she taught baby Jesus. The first Liturgy of Christendom — the St. James' liturgy — still preserved by the Syrian Orthodox Church was in Syriac. Syriac was in fact the liturgical language all over the east despite differences of nationality. Even in India priests were well-versed in Syriac. The Armenian church, besides using Syriac, used the Syriac alphabet till Mesrob laid down the Armenian alphabet. Till the 10th century no liturgy was available in any other language except perhaps Greek; it was in A.D. 912 that the Metropolitan of Tigris, an Arab, celebrated Holy Quorbono in Arabic. In India the first Malayalam liturgy came in this century.

The priests in the Syrian church are generally married, but one cannot marry after becoming priest. For that matter even a deacon cannot marry after he becomes a deacon: he must make up his mind when he is a yavuppadeacon. The unmarried priests neither take charge of parishes nor hear the confession of women and the married priests do not become bishops.



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The highest position a married priest can attain is that of Corepiscopo, but a widower can become a bishop or episcopa.

The Syrian Christians are perhaps the only Christians who prostrate during their prayers, except on Sundays and the period between Easter and Pentecost. It is in fact an old Jewish custom; another indication of its apostolic origins.

The Syrian Orthodox Church is spread over all the continents of the world — except, of course, Antartica. The total number is small, only around five million. Of this about two million are in India, where we have nearly 1300 churches. We run a large number of educational, health and social service institutions among which is the Mar Athanasius College of Engineering, the only engineering college run by Christians in India. There are thirteen Metropolitans in India besides the Catholicos; there are also Metropolitans in West Asia, Europe and North and South Americas.

The Church in India is one throbbing with life. His Holiness Moran Mar Ignatius Zakka Iwas, the present Patriarch, referred to this specifically in the farewell bull issued at the end of the apostolic visit in 1982. Every parish has its own Marth Mariam Samajam, (Legion of Mary) and Sunday School — the larger parishes have more than one; in my home parish, Kuruppampadi, there are eighteen — besides spiritual organisations for the students and the youth.

## CHAPTER II

### THE MAPHRIANATE

SINCE MAR BASELIOS YELDO was Maphrian it may be useful to go into the history of the Catholicate/Maphrianate at this stage.

There is a view that the Catholicose of the East was not the same as the Maphrian of Tigris. According to those who hold this view the Catholicate was an institution in the Church outside the sphere of influence of Antioch while the Maphrianate denotes an office under the Patriarch. Let us take a closer look.

The Church in Selucia was known by different names – East Syrian Church, Chaldean Church, Babilonian Church, Assyrian Church and Church of the East.

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To start with there was no single Metropolitan in Persia who was deemed to be the head. The first attempt to evolve an office somewhat on the lines of the Patriarchates was made by a Selucian bishop by name Papa. He was stoutly opposed by many bishops and was finally ousted from office. Papa was succeeded by Simeon who attended the Council of Nicea. Around the beginning of the fifth century Mar Isahac became Metropolitan of Selucia. Mar Isahac faced the same resistance as Mar Papa, but Mar Marootha came to his rescue. Marootha was the Metropolitan of Meefarkin Meefarkat in the Byzantine empire. Marootha obtained letters of approval from the Patriarch of Antioch as well as the Metropolitans of Aleppo, Edessa, Tella and Amid. The Patriarch at that time was Perperius (404-412) and the Metropolitans who gave letters were Acacius (Aleppo), Pekita (Edessa), Eusebius (Tella) and Acacius (Amid). Marootha was almost the Yacoub Bourdana of the fifth century Persia. He managed to bring the Persian persecution to an end, reorganise the Church, restore and renovate places of worship and get Christian prisoners released. Influenced by the commendatory letters of the Patriarch and the Metropolitans the King, Yesdgarg, persuaded the Persian bishops to meet in Synod. Accordingly a Synod was held in Selucia in 410 A.D. It was this Synod which approved the primacy of the Metropolitan of Selucia for the first time and accorded him the titles of Great Metropolitan of All the East and Major Metropolitan of Selucia –

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Stesiphon. It is this Metropolitan who subsequently came to be known as Catholicose of the East. The Catholicose of Selucia was within his jurisdiction invested with all powers normally exercised by the Patriarchs.

On the other hand the office of the Maphrian came into being in the seventh century with the appointment of Marootha as Maphrian in Tigris in 629 A.D. Considerable confusion is prevalent among Indian writers on this score. Many have taken the two Maroothas, separated in time by two centuries, to be the same. Bar Ebraya in the 13th century was the first Maphrian to call himself Catholicose. Maphrian literally means "one who gives fecundity." "Catholicos" was a civil office, meaning an officer with complete authority over his geographical jurisdiction, like the Collector or District Magistrate in India. The title was later adopted in the church.

'Catholicose' was an office in the Persian church, instituted with the approval of Patriarch Perperius, who gave autocephaly to the Persian church. Headquarters : Selucia. 'Maphrian' was an office within the Syrian Orthodox Church. Headquarters : Tigris. The Maphrian did not head an autocephalous church; he was merely deputy to the Patriarch although he had full autonomy within his jurisdiction.

Many in the Indian Orthodox Church proudly consider themselves under the Catholicate of the East. The Catholicate of the East they mean is in fact the Maphrianate of Tigris. It does not refer to the office of the Catholicos – Patriarch of Persia who headed an autocephalous church. Dr. V.C. Samuel, famous Indian Orthodox historian, himself admits this. Marootha was appointed by the Patriarch as Maphrian and not Catholicose. In fact Bar Ebraya does not call Marootha Catholicose. At the same time he refers to the contemporary head of the Nestorian church as Catholicose. Nor does Bar Ebraya say that the Maphrianate of Tigris was the Catholicate of Selucia transplanted.

The Catholicose of Selucia who later called himself Catholicose – Patriarch was in fact in the Chaldean church. He had little to do either with the Syrian Orthodox Church or with the christians in India. Of course there is a view that he had authority over India, China and Mongolia, but this is not universally accepted. The history of the church in India is anyway shrouded in mystery. Bar Ebraya does not mention the Indian church. Nor does Michael Rabo. Of course absence of mention does not prove either that the church in India was under Rome or that it was just a congregation of the faithful with no connection with Antioch or Tigris. In fact Mar Baselios Yeldo would not have been approached by Indians if there was no connection with Tigris. And there are many pieces of evidence to suggest that

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the Church in India had indeed an Antioch connection.

That the church in India was under the throne of Antioch at least from the 4th century is beyond doubt. Fortesque says when the Fathers of Nicea met, on every side were metropolitans ruling over provinces of suffragan bishops and high above all others stood the three great Patriarchs of Rome, Alexandria and Antioch. All Christendom before the Council of Constantinople in 381 was supposed to be subject to one of the three original Patriarchs of Rome, Alexandria and Antioch.

There was at least one Indian student of theology in Edessa in the early days. A Syriac commentary on the translation of an epistle retains a note : "This epistle has been translated from Greek into the Syriac by Mar Komai with the help of Daniel, the Indian Priest." This was in A.D. 425.

Dr. Mingana in "The Early Spread of Christianity in India" points out that the ecclesiastical language of the Indian Church was Syriac. Mackenzie in his "History of Christianity in Travancore" says "the influence which the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch has exercised is considerable." It is admitted that Thomas of Cana was sent by a Catholicose who was an orthodox deputy of the Patriarch of Antioch. Fortesque, again, says, "No Bishop of Edessa ever thought of assuming the tempting

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title of Patriarch of Mesopotamia. Why not ? Because at any rate they themselves were subject to Antioch. Edessa and its provinces, even its outlying mission in Persia, were part of the great Antiochean Patriarchate. It seems true that the faith had been preached in Edessa before its conquest by Spetimus Severus (193-211). As soon as these lands became part of the great Roman Empire their Church entered into closer relations with the great church (Antioch). We hear of one Palut who went up to Antioch to be ordained Bishop. Palut was ordained by Seraphion of Antioch....from this Palut, the bishops of Edessa traced their lines. And so the Patriarch of Antioch counted these East Syrian Churches as part of his Patriarchate too. From Edessa the faith spread to Bisibis and....the Christians of these lands still looked to the great Bishop in Antioch as their chief." There is also evidence that St. John Chrysostom who lived in Antioch in the 4th century has testified to the fact that holy scriptures have been in his time translated into the Indian language while others have recorded that there were some Indian students among the disciples of St. Jerome who flourished at Antioch in the 4th century. Archdale King in his "Eastern Rites of Christendom" refers to a text of the liturgy of St. James (West Syrian) found in Malabar (Kerala) in 6th century.

Dr. Neil says that an Indian priest was sent to Alexandria in 695 for ordination. Day in his "Land of Perumals" says that a Jacobite Bishop had come to

India in 696 as a result of the deputation which waited on the Patriarch of Alexandria. A question may arise here as to why the Indian church turned to Alexandria. Mar Isidoros, a Coptic Bishop who was chronicler of the Alexandria Patriarchate, says, "the Indian Christians were governed by the Patriarchate of Antioch just as the Ethiopians are governed by the Patriarchate of Alexandria. It was therefore their practice to pray to the Patriarch in Syria for Bishops. In conformity with this practice they sent a deputation in this century also (7th century). They could not enter Syria because of some problems. Therefore they went to Abo Simon who was the Patriarch of Alexandria." Collins also says, "Nor can there be really much doubt that from the time, when Jacob Albaradi in the 6th century espoused the cause of the Eutichean Jacobites and enabled them to secure the Sees of Antioch and Alexandria, the Syrian Church in Malabar owned the Jacobite Patriarch, who was the most powerful bishop in the East, and were therefore Euticheans. They are also called after Jacob Albaradi, 'Jacobites'."

Dionysius the Great presented to Claudius Buchanan, one of the early protestant missionaries who came to Kerala, a Bible in 1807. When he presented this to Buchanan he described it as a book considered to have been in Malankara for one thousand years. This book is said to be in the Cambridge University library now. It is a Bible transcribed during the time of Moran Mar



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Michael Rabo (12th century). It contained special Gospel portions for reading on the feasts of the Mother of God and the Gospel readings for the Holy Mass on Saturdays in lent. There are in the notes contained in the book very respectful references to Mar Severios, the famous Patriarch of Antioch. All these would show that this book was not Nestorian because they do not venerate Mar Severios, nor do they call St. Mary Mother of God. Obviously this volume is another evidence of the early links between Antioch and Kerala.

Following Vasco da Gama's there was a second voyage to Calicut in 1501. A Syrian Christian named Joseph joined the Captain of this fleet at Calicut to travel to Lisbon, Rome, Jerusalem, etc. It is recorded that this Joseph told the Captain that his church was under the Patriarch of Antioch. He added, "whoever you the westerners might be we are followers of the true faith because we are from Antioch where the followers of the Christ were first called Christians." This Joseph also had a private audience with the Pope. From the book, "NOVUS ORBIS or the Travels of Joseph the Indian," quoted by Whitehouse and translated by Dr. Kaniyamparambil it is seen that Joseph told the Pope that Apostle Peter ruled the church from Antioch and that he was called to Rome when Simon Magus posed a challenge to the church there, that he appointed his successor before leaving Antioch and that the then Patriarch was the successor of St. Peter.

All these are tell-tale pieces relating to our Antioch connection in the pre-Portuguese days.

Dr. Paulose Gregorios of the Indian Orthodox Church has also gone on record as follows : "The 11th anniversary of His Holiness' enthronement affords me, therefore, the opportunity to publicly pay my humble tribute to the magnanimity and farsightedness of this wise Patriarch who has achieved what many other great men had tried to achieve in the previous half-century and failed. Our Church in India should remain grateful to this noble Patriarch and erect some kind of a memorial both to conserve the memory of the great event of reconciliation in our Church and to honour the name of this great spiritual leader and Supreme Head of our Church. It would be the height of ingratitude and the most deplorable folly on our part if we grieve his heart with any words which seek to dissociate ourselves with the Patriarchate of Antioch. We in India belong to this Patriarchate even if we have our own Catholicos and are autonomous. We have no other source from which to renew our ancient tradition, except the tradition of Antioch, of the Great Syrian Church which once had spread through the length and breadth of Asia, right up to China and Korea."

Now let us trace the history of the Maphrianate in Tigris.

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By sixth century the Syrian Church which took exception to the doctrines propounded at Chalcedon had become sufficiently strong in the Persian empire as to have Bishops of their own. Persia became the asylum of anti-Chalcedonian Christians who were persecuted by the Byzantine emperors. Of course Emperor Justinian tried to win over the non-Chalcedonians but to little avail. He however allowed them to migrate to Egypt and northern Mesopotamia. In 540 A.D. Khusro I, Persian emperor, made military forays into the Roman empire and took away thousands of people as slaves. Most of them were the so-called monophysites. Khurso II continued the attacks and the flow gained in force after 628 A.D. when Khurso was deposed because Christians who were persecuted in the Roman empire for holding anti-Chalcedon views felt that with a substantial number of fellow-believers being already there Persia would be a safer place for them.

In 559 A.D. Mar Ahodemeh was appointed Catholicose or Maphrian in Tigris. He was consecrated by Christopher, the Armenian Catholicose, at the instance of Yacoub Bourdana. Ahodemeh was the Metropolitan of Beth Arbaye prior to his appointment as Maphrian. Beth Arbaye was a province in the Persian empire. Some Roman Catholic historians hold that Ahodemeh was not Metropolitan of the Persian province of Beth

Arbaya but had jurisdiction only over the Arabs occupying the no-man's land next to Beth Arbaya, which was not under either empire. Along with Ahodemeh, Garmai was consecrated Metropolitan of Nineveh and Abbot of St. Mathew's Monastery. Ahodemeh was referred to by some contemporary writers as Metropolitan of the East.

By 615 A.D. Tigris, Nineveh and surrounding areas became centres of Syrian Orthodox Church. Similarly the areas around St. Mathew's also became strong centres of non-Chalcedon Christians. Mosul region, similarly, rejected Chalcedon around this time. There were at least five centres of higher learning in Persia run by the Syrian Orthodox Church in the seventh century.

In 629 A.D., after the decline of the Persian empire, Marootha was appointed by the Patriarch of Antioch as his deputy with the title Major Metropolitan of Persia. Marootha was born in Surzak near Balad. He had his theological education in various centres of learning in the Roman empire. Voobus, in *The Synodicon*, describes Marootha as a very learned man. On return to the Persian empire Marootha became Abbot of St. Mathew's. He was also Rees Dayaroyo in the monastery of Seerin in Selucia.

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There was a synod of Persian bishops prior to Marrootha's consecration. Patriarch Athanasius I sent a delegate, Metropolitan John, to this synod. Mar Christopher, Abbot of St. Mathew's, presided. The synod resolved to request the Patriarch to appoint Marrootha as Maphrian in Tigris. The Patriarch gave his approval when a delegation headed by Mar Christopher waited on him. Returning to Persia, they held another synod which passed 24 canons. This synod also laid down the rules to govern the inter se relations of the Maphrian and the Abbot of St. Mathew's.

At this time there were at least 17 Syrian Orthodox dioceses in Persia. These were Beth Arbaye, Tigris, Singar, Mayalta, Beth Noohadra, Arsoon, Gomalmarga, Bethraman, Bethvasik, Kurma, Jesseera, Bahrein, Sharsool, Hana, Ban Taglib, Peros Shapor and St. Mathews. Of these those in the southern region were under the Maphrian and the rest under the Abbot of St. Mathew's. The abbot also had jurisdiction over Mosul and Nineveh. Marrootha organised new dioceses in Sejestan, Asarbaijan and Herat under the Maphrianate.

We do not know the names of all Metropolitans at the time of Marrootha. The names known are Ahatalla (Marga), Yesdapsa (Sharsul), Daniel (Bethnuhadra), Geevargis (Singar), Gregorios (Bethraman) and Aha (Peros Shapur). At the consecration of Marrootha Chri-

stopher, Ahatalla, Yesdapsa and Aha officiated.

According to Voobus the canons passed by the Synod of 629 laid down the ground-rules regarding the inter se relations of the Maphrian and the Abbot of St. Mathew's. The important among these were the following : the Abbot's name will be mentioned along with the Maphrian's in St. Mathew's, Mosul and Nineveh; the Abbot will be seated to the right of the Maphrian; any disciplinary action against the Metropolitans will be initiated only with the concurrence of the Abbot; when the office of the Maphrian is vacant the Abbot will be in charge; the Maphrian shall not interfere in the Abbot's jurisdiction; without the Abbot's concurrence the Maphrian shall neither ordain bishops nor consecrate Holy Chrism.

It is interesting to note that there was no such clear-cut demarcation or guidelines in the relations between the Maphrian and the Patriarch. After Marootha passed away the local synod elected his successor, Danaha, who was consecrated by Patriarch Theodor in 649 A.D. The synod of Kafartuta did lay down some principles, but the relations were not always cordial.

During the reign of Mar Yuhanon Sleeba I (1075-1106) the Christians were made to flee Tigris. However they could come back and restore the Cathedral in

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Tigris in the days of Maphrian Dionysius (1112-1142). Mar Yuhanon Sleeba who fled to Mosul in 1089 stayed in a church there for the rest of his life. Later Maphrians had their headquarters in Mosul, Bagdad, Karakosh etc. In 1369 St. Mathew's as well as the city of Mosul were razed to the ground by the Mongols. However Mosul became headquarters of the Maphrians again in the 16th century. They were therefore known as Maphrians of Mosul. From about the middle of the 16th century the Maphrians began to take the title Baselios. At least two Maphrians became Patriarchs of Antioch : Ignatius David who lived in the 13th century and Ignatius Geevargis in the 18th century.

By far the most famous Maphrian is Bar Ebraya. His original name was Abdul Faraz al Ben Aron. On being elected Maphrian he chose the name Gregorios Yuhanon. He lived in St. Mathew's, but is believed to have visited Tigris at least once. He was Maphrian from 1264 to 1286. He wrote voluminous books on the history of the Patriarchate and the Maphrianate.

The Roman Catholics tried to consecrate a Maphrian towards the end of the 17th century. They appointed Baselios Isahac as Maphrian, but the people rejected him and he fled to Rome and lived there for nearly three decades until his death.

Gregorios Lazar IV became Maphrian in 1730. Prior to becoming Maphrian he was Abbot of St. Mathew's. His jurisdiction was limited as Mosul, Bartelli, Basika, Semmel and Saho by the Patriarch. Another Maphrian of the 18th century was Baselios Geevargis who was formerly Patriarchal Delegate in Persia. He became Patriarch of Antioch in 1763.

The first Maphrian to call himself Catholicose was Bar Ebraya. The Chaldean Patriarch of Selucia protested against this. To no avail of course, like the protest of many in the Syrian Orthodox and Indian Orthodox Churches when one of the Roman Catholic Bishops in India took the name Baselios

The Maphrianate of Tigris was abolished by the Synod of Dayara Safran in 1860 which was presided over by Patriarch Yacoub II. Interestingly enough it was Yacoub III who revived it first by recognising Mar Baselios Geevargis II of the Kottayam Catholicate and later by consecrating Mar Baselios Augen I. The Kottayam Catholicate established in 1912 was not the continuation of the Maphrianate of Tigris. In the first place what was abolished by a Synod could not have been revived by a Patriarch on his own and Abdulmasih was not even the reigning Patriarch. Moreover if the Kottayam Catholicate established in 1912 was continuation of the Tigris Maphrianate Baselios Geevargis II ought to have been called Geevarghis IV, since Geevarghis II of Tigris Maphrianate died in the 18th



century ! The Tigris Maphrianate was in reality revived by the Synod presided over by Yacoub III at Kottayam in 1964. Augen I was the first Maphrian, of course with the title of Catholicose, after Baselios Behanan passed away in 1959. The present Catholicose of Kottayam calls himself Mathews I; again he ought to be Mathews II if the Maphrians of Tigris are also counted. It is pertinent to note here that the Catholicose under the Throne of Antioch has greater claim for true succession to the Tigris Maphrianate as evidenced by his name Paulose II, Paulose I having been Maphrian in Tigris in the eighth century. The claim of the Kottayam Catholicose to the throne of St. Thomas also raises some questions. There was no throne of St. Thomas in Tigris. If he is successor to the Maphrian of Tigris the Catholicose of Kottayam cannot be on the throne of St. Thomas. If on the other hand he is on the throne of St. Thomas he cannot be successor to the Maphrian of Tigris.

That is only by way of a side-comment. Let me now close this chapter with a list of the Maphrians till date.

1. Mar Ahodemeh	559-577
2. Mar Khameeso	578-609
3. Mar Samuel	614-624
4. Mar Marrotha	629-649
5. Mar Danaha	649-659
6. Bar Easo	669-683
7. Mar Abraham	685-687

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8. Mar David	687-	
9. Mar Yohannan	687-688	
10. Mar Danaha II	688-728	
11. Mar Paulose	728-757	
12. Mar Yohannan II	758-785	
13. Mar Joseph	785-786	
14. Mar Sarbiel	794-810	
15. Mar Simayon	811- ?	
16. Mar Baselios	? -830	
17. Mar Daniel	829-834	
18. Mar Thomas	834-847	
19. Mar Baselios	848-868	
20. Mar Malkeesadek	857-869	Challenger
21. Mar Severios	872-883	
22. Mar Athanasius	887-903	
23. Mar Thomas Stylite	910-911	
24. Mar Danaha III	912-932	
25. Mar Baselios III	936-960	
26. Mar Kuriakose	962-979	
27. Mar Yuhanon III		
Damashen	980-988	
28. Mar Ignatius	991-1016	
29. Mar Athanasius II	1027-1041	
30. Mar Baselios IV	1046-1069	
31. Mar Yuhanon Sleeba I	1075-1106	
32. Mar Dionysius Moosa	1112-1142	
33. Mar Ignatius Lazar	1142-1164	
34. Mar Yuhanon Saroog	1164-1188	

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35. Mar Dionysius	1189-1203	Ordained by the Synod in the East
36. Mar Gregorios Yacoub	1189-1203	Ordained by Patriarch Michael Rabo
37. Mar Ignatius David	1215-1222	Later Patriarch
38. Mar Dionysius Sleebea	1222-1231	
39. Mar Yuhanon Ahron	1232-1253	
40. Mar Ignatius Sleebea	1253-1258	
41. Mar Gregorios Bar Ebraya	1264-1286	
42. Mar Gregorios Bar Souma	1289-1308	
43. Mar Gregorios Mathew	1317-1345	
44. Mar Athanasius Abraham	1364-1379	
45. Mar Gregorios	-1361	Challenger
46. Mar Baselios Bahnan	1404-1412	
47. Mar Diascoros Bahnan	1415-1417	
48. Mar Baselios Bar Souma	1422-1455	
49. Mar Cyril Ouseph Barneesan	-1458	
50. Mar Baselios Azeez	1471-1487	
51. Mar Baselios Noha	1490-1494	
52. Mar Baselios Abraham	1496-1508	
53. Mar Baselios Blias	-1523	
54. Mar Baselios Habeeb	-1528	
55. Mar Baselios Elias	-1533	
56. Mar Baselios Philathose	1576-1579	

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57. Mar Baselios Yeldo	1678-1685	Died at Kothamang- alam, India
58. Mar Baselios Habeeb	1658-1674.	
59. Mar Baselios Geevargis	1684-	
60. Mar Baselios Isahac	1687-1724	
61. Mar Baselios Lazar III	1713-	
Mar Baselios Mathews	1714-1727	
63. Mar Gregorios Lazar IV	1730-1742	
64. Mar Baselios Sakralla	1749-1764	Died at Kandanadu
65. Mar Baselios Geevargis	1760-1763	Later Patriarch
66. Mar Baselios Bishara	-1811	
67. Mar Baselios Yavanan	-1811	
68. Mar Baselios Abd Al Azeez	-1811	
69. Mar Baselios Mathew	-1820	
70. Mar Baselios Elias II	1825-1827	
71. Mar Baselios Bahanan	1852-1859	
72. Mar Baselios Augen I	1964-1975	Abdicated before ex- communi- cation
73. Mar Baselios Paulose II	1975-	

(Note : The Maphrianate which was abolished by the Synod of Dayara Zafran in 1860 under Yacoub II was revived by the Synod of Kottayam in 1964 under Yacoub III. Mar Geevargis II who was a Challenger in India was of course restored to

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grace in 1958 by the Patriarch. Mar Geevargis was a very saintly person. He is the only one among the Challenger Catholicoses of India to have died in happy communion with the Throne of Antioch. However as already explained above he cannot be counted in the line of the Maphrians of Tigris.)

### CHAPTER III

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ST. BASELIOS YELDO was born in a small village called Kooded, later known as Karakosh. This village was located near Mosul in Iraq. The family to which the Saint belonged was known as Hbai. There was a view, believed in India for a long time, that the Saint belonged to Turabdin in Turkey. According to the late Mar Julios Elias of Blessed Memory this is incorrect.

At a very young age the Saint joined Mar Bahnam Monastery near his own village. His contribution to the renovation and reconstruction of the monastery in 1660 when one Geevarghese Ramban was the Abbot is a matter of record. In 1662 he was consecrated Catholicos of the East. Assisted by Fr. John, son of Fr.

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Abdul Jan, he renovated St. Mathew's Monastery and made it headquarters of the Catholicate. This was during the period 1672-73. In 1684 the then Patriarch Moran Mar Abdalmesih I consecrated Holy Chrism in Kurkma Dayara. The Catholicos was also present on the occasion. According to the late Patriarch Moran Mar Ignatius Yacoub III it was on this occasion that the unpleasant situation of the Church in India came to the notice of the Catholicos. Those who hold this view say that that discussion was a consequence of a letter from Mar Thoma II to Patriarch Abdalmesih I in 1682 as well as an Indian Delegation waiting on the Patriarch in Kurkma Dayara which was then the Patriarchal headquarters. Apparently there is some difference of opinion on this. According to the late Patriarch Mar Ignatius Aprem I the request went straight to the Catholicos of the East and the year was 1685. On hearing about the situation of the Church in India he left his Throne after consecrating Mar Dioscoros of Mosul who belonged to the Kurd Island as Catholicos Baselios Geevarghese II. Mar Aprem I has further held that the Catholicos Mar Geevarghese II had received the episcopal ordination also from Mar Baselios Yeldo, in 1678. Before leaving the Catholicate Throne on his missionary journey he informed the Patriarch and all other Metropolitanans in the region. All of them were happy to hear about the courage of St. Baselios Yeldo and admired his willingness to leave the Throne and undertake a hazardous

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journey. He was accompanied on this journey by two Monks, Habialla, son of Sammu of Kooded from Mar Bahnām Monastery and Samma of Mosul from St. Mathew's Monastery beside Sammo, brother of the Catholicos.

In the version given by Mar Yacoub III the names are also different. In his book 'History of the Syrian Church in India' he says: "In the year 1685 he left his native land Iraq by its port Basra accompanied by his brother Jum'a and three monks from the Monasteries of Mar Mathai and Mar Behnam in Iraq by names Jowkath, Mathew and Hidayathallah son of Shemmo from the village Bakdeda (now known as Karakosh) who was then consecrated an Episcopa by Yaldha Bava with the name Ivannios; to be a help to him in the administration of the Church in India. The group headed by Yaldha Bava reached India at the port of Thalassery (Telichery). But, from a letter, dated September 25, 1720 of Metropolitan Mar Thoma IV to H.H. the Patriarch of Antioch; we can understand that from the group of five persons who left Iraq only the Catholicose Yaldha Bava, Episcopa Ivannios and Rabban Mathew reached India."

The Saint and party reached Surat in Gujarat by the middle of 1685. Obviously the Saint and others with him were under the impression that the Portuguese were still wielding power on the west coast. Therefore



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in order to avoid them the party took the land route. Kothamangalam was during those days, as indeed it today is, the gate-way to the high ranges. It was a commercial centre and caravans used to go between Kothamangalam and Tamil Nadu regularly. It was with such a caravan that the party travelled in the last lap of their journey. According to legend they were accosted in the forest by a tiger. The Saint took his cross from the baggage and holding it high asked the tiger to get lost. The tiger retraced his steps and ran away into the forest. That evening they reached Pallivasal near Munnar. There were inns for travellers at Pallivasal. The Saint told his fellow travellers that it would be dangerous to stay in those inns in the night since he expected heavy rains and consequent floods that night which might wash away men and their belongings. Some people who believed him moved higher up the hill but others dismissed the idea lightly and stayed on in the inns. Around mid-night there was heavy rain and sudden rise in the level of water in the river. Those who had discarded the advice of the Saint were washed away. In the morning next day the Saint improvised an altar and offered Holy Quorbono. After Holy Quorbono they resumed their journey and reached Kozhipally near Kothamangalam by afternoon. The Saint and Habialla Rabban parted ways with the fellow travellers and took rest at Kozhipally. When he came to know that they had reached populated areas the Saint decided that it was unwise for both to travel together any further. He

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therefore asked the monk to climb a tree and hide himself while the Saint proceeded on foot for reconnaissance. When he reached the banks of Kothamangalam river he saw a Hindu gentleman who was tending cattle there. Through symbols they communicated and the man told the Saint that there was a Church nearby. The Saint asked him to accompany him to the church. The man expressed his inability to do so since he could not abandon the cattle. The Saint took his walking stick and drew a big circle on the ground. Then he asked the man to take all the cattle into that circle. He waited for some more time to see how the cattle behaved and he found that they were not leaving the boundary of the circle. He realised that Mar Baselios Yeldo was a man of God. The man's sister was at that time in labour pains. He told the Saint about the difficult situation. When the Saint asked for some water with a view to bless it the man thought that he was asking for water to quench his thirst and he tried to climb a coconut tree nearby. The tree began to bend! The man took two tender coconuts from the tree and gave them to the Saint. The Saint blessed one of the tender coconuts and asked the man to rush home and make his sister drink the juice. While the Saint waited at the same spot, after about one hour the man returned with the good news that his sister had given birth to a boy. Greater surprise was in store for him, since the cattle had not moved out of the circle. The man gladly accompanied the Saint to

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the church. While they got into the river to cross it some children who were swimming in the river tried to throw pebbles at the Saint. Somehow instead of throwing pebbles they ended up following the Saint and his companion. When the Saint reached the church the church bells began to toll. People living in the neighbourhood rushed to the church to find out what the commotion was about. The Saint entered the church and sat on the steps of the Madbaha. There was a young deacon who was fluent in Syriac. When he realised that a monk had stayed behind at Kozhipally, he and some members of the congregation set out for that place. They took a kerchief from the Saint for identification. When the monk saw the approaching crowd he was afraid. He thought that they had killed the Saint and were now about to get at him. He therefore refused to come down from the tree. The deacon however offered him the sign of peace and spoke in Syriac. The monk then came down from the tree and went with the people to the Church.

On September 13, the church used to celebrate its foundation day. On the 12th evening the Vicar sought the Saint's permission to hoist the flag. The Saint replied that the festival of the Holy Cross should be celebrated on the 14th and not on the 13th. When it was explained to the Saint that what they were celebrating was not the festival of the Holy Cross but the anniversary

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of the founding of the parish, the Saint permitted them to go ahead but reminded them about the importance of the festival of the Holy Cross. On September 14 the Saint celebrated Holy Quorbano and consecrated Habialla Rabban as a Bishop with the name Mar Ivanios. Three days later he was taken ill. He received the last sacraments on September 17 and passed away at the age of 92 on Saturday, September 19 in the afternoon. As he was sinking the congregation assembled inside the church and were offering prayers. The Saint told them that he was about to die and when his spirit leaves his body there would be a sign on the Cross situated on the western side of the church. The Cross miraculously lit up at the time of the Saint's death. Next morning he was entombed in the Madbaha of the church. Since then the annual festival in the Kothamangalam Cheriya-pally is celebrated for 10 days in September - October (month of Kanni according to Kollam Era.)

The Syrian Orthodox Church does not have an elaborate procedure for canonising saints. By and large the practice is that by popular belief and approval some departed soul gets the status of a saint and later the Holy Synod, the Patriarch or the Malankara Metropolitan authorises dedication of Churches and altars to the saint. St. Gregorios of Parumala, St. Ignatius Elias of Manjanikkara and St. Baselios Yeldo of Kothamangalam are such saints in whose names churches are allowed to be consecrated.

A petition was sent to the Throne of Antioch by the bishops in India including the then Malankara Metropolitan and the Apostolic Delegate praying that apostolic permission may be granted for dedicating altars in the name of Mar Baselios Yeldo. The then Patriarch, Moran Mar Ignatius Elias III, convened a meeting of the Holy Episcopal Synod (the local synod in West Asia) to seek their advice. Mar Severios Aprem who later became the Patriarch of Antioch and All the East succeeding Elias III was appointed as a Commission of Enquiry. His terms of reference were the following :

- (i) The life of Mar Baselios Yeldo and miracles if any during his life time.
- (ii) Miracles after his death.
- (iii) The number of people who celebrate his Dukrono.

Mar Aprem made investigations in Kooded and St. Mathews as well as in Malankara and submitted his report to the synod. The synod recommended to the Patriarch that Mar Baselios Yeldo may be deemed a saint and dedication of altars in his name be authorised. Mar Elias III was planning his apostolic visit to India at that time. The Patriarch therefore felt that it would be in the fitness of things if the declaration was made at Kothamangalam. On arrival at Karachi, then in India and now in Pakistan, and later during the stay in New Delhi Mar Elias III told Mar Julius Elias, Corepiscopo

Skaria Nedumthallil and Malpono Ittyerah Maracheril (later Malankara Malpan) about his intention to make the announcement. Mar Elias III also said that Baselios Yeldo belonged to the area from where Marth Smooni came and that there was a record in the Patriarchate about the Saint's journey to India in the seventeenth century. During his short stay at Kothamangalam Mar Elias III reiterated his intention and promised to return to Kothamangalam to make the declaration. Unfortunately Elias III never returned to Kothamangalam. He passed away at Manjanikkara. Many years later, in September/October 1947 to be more precise, Mar Athanasius Paulose, Malankara Metropolitan, made the formal declaration. Mar Gregorios Geevargis, then his suffragan, was also present. Mar Athanasius asked the people of Malankara to venerate Mar Yeldo as they venerated St. Thomas, the apostle of India.

Every year thousands of people gather there for prayer and thanksgiving. Miracles are wrought by the intercession of Mar Baselios Yeldo. There are many Yeldos in north Travancore area. They are all mostly long-awaited sons of the respective families. I had an interesting experience. I happened to meet in Dehradun a man with extra-sensory perception a few years ago. He was a Hindu from the Himalayan foothills who had not travelled south of Delhi. While in a trance he told me that there was a tomb, about 8-10 miles east of

where I was born, and that the saint entombed there was protecting me like a guardian angel. The obvious reference was to Mar Yeldo because there is no other 'saint's tomb' 8-10 miles east of where I was born.

Mar Ivanios, who was consecrated by Mar Yeldo in 1685, carried on apostolic work for eight years. He died in 1693 and is buried at Mulanthuruthy.

A word about the Cheria Pally may not be out of place here.

The St. Thomas Church at Kothamangalam, popularly known as Mar Thoman Cheria Pally, where the Saint is buried is one of the most prominent parishes in India. It has a membership of about six hundred families. It runs a High School and a major hospital, both named after the saint, and is also the main support behind the Mar Athanasius College Association which runs the only Christian engineering college in India besides one of the largest Arts and Science colleges in the State and a famous residential High School, all named after the late Mar Athanasius Paulose of blessed memory, Defender of Faith, who passed away in 1953; he was Metropolitan of Angamali and Malankara Metropolitan.

The recorded history of Kothamangalam in recent times begins from the 14th century. One Kurian Kuriathu Kattachira was brought by the local chief in 1338 to organise Kothamangalam as a commercial centre for

## THE SAINT FROM KOODED

trade with Tamilnadu. Extensive lands were granted to him. In a hillock within the grant Kurian Kuriathu and his friends Kuriathu Puravathu Nellimattathil, Chummaru Kuruvilla Nedumchalil, and Unnooppu Cheriathu Pothanikkatt established a church. This is the mother church of all churches of Kothamangalam – the Marth Mariam Valia Pally. By the middle of the 15th century some disputes surfaced in the parish. A cross was established in the name of St. Thomas by the local chief and some members of the parish. In 1504 the ruling Archdeacon came to settle the dispute. Accordingly a new parish was carved out, the parish of St. Thomas.

This parish is under the Throne of Antioch. It is governed in temporal matters by its own constitution but its spiritual matters are guided by the Metropolitan of Angamali Diocese who owes allegiance to the Throne of Antioch through the Catholicose of the East under the Patriarch of Antioch and All the East.

May the intercession of the saint  
from Kooded be our forte.

THE END





## BOOKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR

1. ഒരു യാത്രയുടെ ഓർമ്മകൾ  
(Memories of a Journey)
2. ഉത്തരന്ധ്രം ദിശി  
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3. ഗിരി പർവ്വം  
(The Mountain Saga)
4. ക്രെമിൻ-ബെർലിൻ  
(Kremlin-Berlin)
5. ഈ പാറമേൽ  
(Upon This Rock)
6. നിഷ്യാൺ നൊ ഒരോയ്ഓദ  
(Niyasun no Onoyde)
7. Veni Vidi Vici
8. Quest for Unity
9. Splendours of Kerala (Co-author)