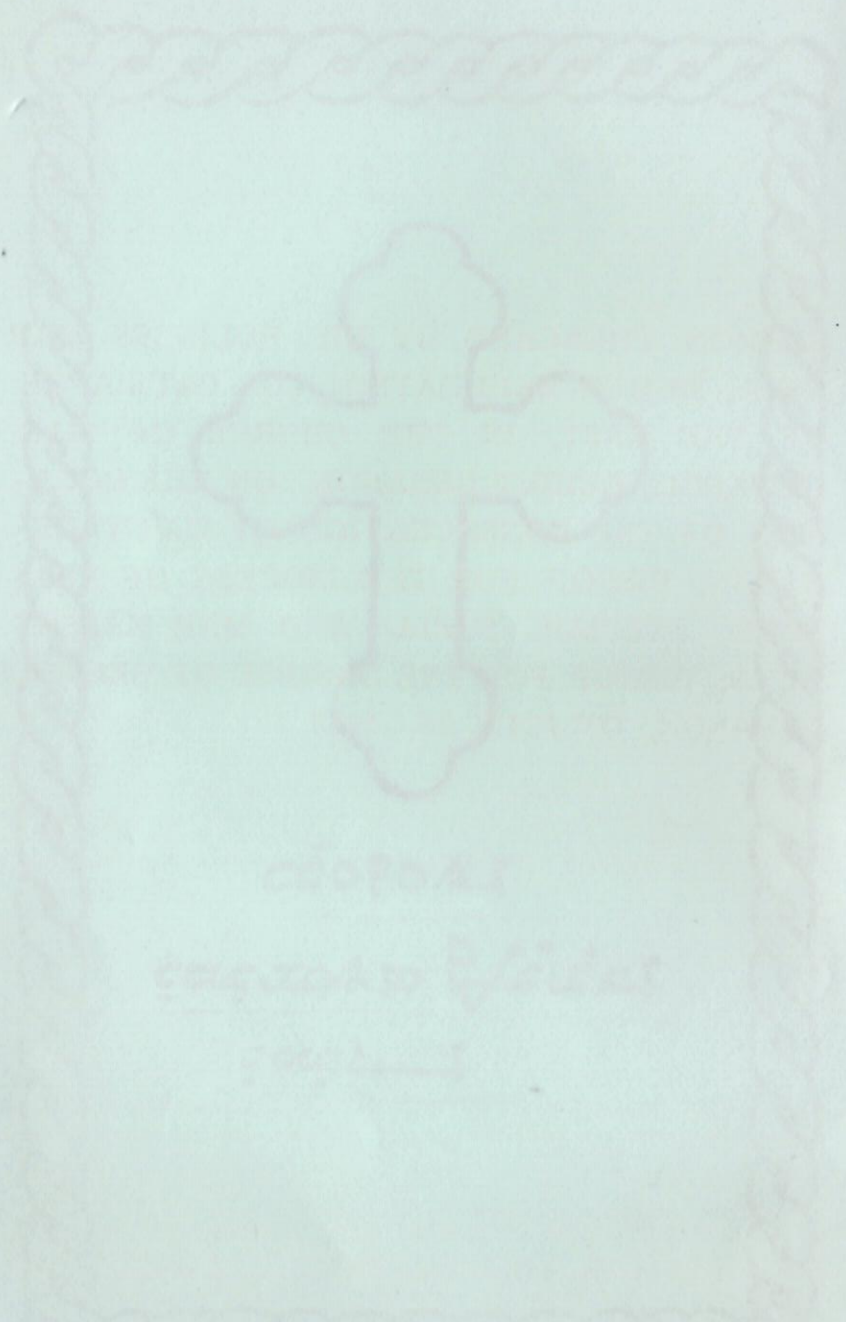




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SERMON PREACHED BY HIS HOLINESS MAR  
ESHAI SHIMUN XXIII, CATHOLICOS PATRIARCH  
OF THE EAST, IN THE CHURCH OF MAR  
GEWARGIS, BEIRUT LEBANON, ON THE OCCA-  
SION OF THE CONSECRATION OF MAR YAUK-  
HANAN, BISHOP FOR THE DIOCESE OF KHA-  
BOUR, JEZIRAH, SYRIA, AND MAR NARSAY  
ELYAS, BISHOP FOR THE DIOCESE OF BEIRUT,  
LEBANON, ON JULY 28, 1968.



BY ORDER OF HIS HOLINESS

✠ Mar Eshai Shimun XXIII

Catholicos Patriarch of the East.

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Christ said, "Do not think that I have come to loose (repudiate) the law and the prophets, I have not come to loose but to fulfill (St. Matt: 5: 17) The Messianic faith as we see from the Gospel itself is not separate from the Old Testament but rather a completion and perfection of that faith. It was so decreed by God's dispensation that this His wonderful act for the salvation of man should take place in the land of the Middle East. He was moreover to choose a special family from Ur d'kaldaye (Ur of the Chaldeas), namely, the family of Auraham whom He used as His instrument in the fulfilment of this His providence.

And, so, we witness all this marvellous despen-sation of God enfolding in its systematic order and culminating with the advent of Our Lord and God Eshoo M'Shikha who in the flesh is born from a virgin from the seed of Auraham and from the house of Dawid, as had been fore-told by the prophets. The events of history which are beyond the comprehension of man, have reduced Christianity in its cradle, namely the Middle East to a minority status, while in the West it has become the universally accepted religion. Whether the form of Christianity which to-day we witness in the West, with its myraid of sects, alien philosophies and moralities can really be identified with the teaching of Maran Eshoo M'Shikha, remains for honest theologian and historian to record.

But the fact is that because of this mysterious turn in the events of history, sight is lost of the fact that Christianity is not an Occidental but an Oriental religion. That it is not Greek or Latin but Semitic, that it was revealed in the land of Semites and to Semitic prophets. That it was not on the River Tibre nor the river Thames that the prophet Khazziel saw his vision, and the prophet Daniel foretold the suffering of the Messiah at the ✕



That all the prophets and the apostles were Semites, so was Malkisdiaq, the Royal Priest who was symbolic of Christ, and that all these men spoke and wrote in the Aramaic language; yea, so did Christ himself.

The Syriac or the Aramaic language was not only the universal language of the prophets of the Middle East in the time of Christ, all through Palestine, Egypt, Syria, Mesopotamia and throughout the Persian Empire; but it was also a language of theology, culture and science. Indeed, Mar Tomotheus I Patriarch of the Church of the East during the early part of the IX century, is fully justified in exclaiming exuberantly in one of his epistles, saying, "O how rich is our Syriac language!" It would indeed be the greatest of tragedies if this our Aramaic or Syriac tongue were to be lost. The language in which God himself spoke when He called our Father Adam whom He fashioned from "Adamtha" (earth) saying—  
 "ܐܕܡ ܐܕܡܐ" (Adam where)

ing" "אדם לא ידע" (Adam where art thou)!" It is therefore, the sacred duty of all the different churches of the Middle East who still speak this language or use it in their daily prayers and their liturgies, to unite together in making a concerted effort not only to perpetuate this tongue but also to make it a living language as it was during the many centuries of our Christian history.

It is these undeniable facts of history that made it possible for our Syriac or Assyrian speaking people - the term being interchangeable - to appreciate and embrace the faith of the Messiah in a manner which was not possible for other races to whom it was completely alien and, there-

During the last visit to our flock in Lebanon, we were presented with a copy of the liturgy of Qudasha (Qurbana) by His Eminence, the Metropolitan of Beirut, Mar Aghnateos Zeada, and on p. 23 of this book we found the following theological profession, to quote: - - - - -

logical profession, to quote: -

which means, "Praise be to you O Lord who didn't shine forth from her (virgin Mary) and became man, and you possess two natures and two wills in one Qnuma (hypostasis)."

Mar Bawai the great, one of the fathers of the Church of the East, who lived in the VI century. says thus . . . "Nor (in that case) does his humanity possess a free will, but by compulsion it is tied to the divine will by a natural unity. If that is so, then why did He say, not as I will but as Thou will (Matt. 26: 39). The will of the Holy Trinity is one. But the body by its very nature loves life, and it does not want to die. Furthermore, if the humanity in Him did not possess, a free will, then what is the meaning of the saying, "that He obeyed and was justified" . . . The humanity of Our Lord, continues Bawai, possesses a complete free will so that it



ness. It is therefore, said that He obeyed unto death: even the death of the cross (Ephesians 2: 8) therefore, God which was in Him, on account of this humanity, and righteousness and obedience which has no likeness exalted Him greatly."

#### FAITH AND DOCTRINE:

The theology of the Church of the East is strictly based on the Bible and has remained unchanged throughout the centuries of the Messianic faith. Christ said, "examine the Scriptures; in them you trust that you have eternal life, it is they that testify concerning me" (St. John 5: 39).

This doctrine has been briefly but fully stated by Mar Bawai the great in the following hymn of praise, and likewise by Mar Adishau Metropolitan of Suwa (Nisibin) and Armenia, a thirteenth century father of this Church, in his book of Marganitha:

"One is Christ the Son of God, worshipped by all in two natures; in His Godhead begotten of the Father without beginning before all time; in His humanity born of Mary in the fullness of time, in a body united, neither His Godhead is of the mother, nor His humanity of the nature of the Father. The natures are preserved in their Qnumas in one person of one Sonship. And as the Godhead is three substances in one nature, likewise the Sonship of the Son is in two natures, one person, so the Holy Church has learned to profess in the Lord who is the Christ."

Mar Adishau speaking on the great mystery of incarnation says: First, if the virgin Mary is the "Begetter of God" and the name God, we know

Secondly, if the virgin Mary is the "Begetter of God," and He who she brought forth suffered, died and was buried, as the four evangelists testify, either you hold that he died in reality; (and he who really died has no power whatever to revivify others or himself, but must remain in death for ever) and thus you declare false the saying that He rose again: or else you hold that He died by hallucination, and in the same rose again, (in which case He could not have risen in reality), seeing that He did not die in reality, then the hope of the resurrection is vain, since hereby the saying that "He has raised us up with Christ" is made void.

Thirdly, if the virgin Mary is the "Begetter of God" and Peter testified of Him who she brought forth, saying: "Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God," then according to your statement she is not the begetter of Christ, but the Begetter of His Father, and Christ is her grandson, and she is the mother of His Father. Who then is the mother of Christ?" (Marganitha pp. 41-42).

We know that there were three great schools of thought when the turbulence of the Christian theological history was set in full motion, namely, the School of Alexandria which represented the Greek thought and its theology was based on Platonic philosophy; and on the other hand the sister schools of Antioch and Urhai (now called Urfa) which represented Semitic thought and, therefore, their theology was strictly based on the Holy Scriptures, the theology of the two latter schools stressed the fact that Christ was both God and man, and opposed any philosophy which was likely to misrepresent or affect this complete and inseparable unity of the two natures in Christ, namely, human and divine.

APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION (the meaning of the priesthood).

The completion and perfection of which Christ



occasion, has been briefly but fully summed up by Mar Audishau in the book of "Marganitha" where he says: "The priesthood is the ministry of mediation between God and man in those things which impart forgiveness of sins, convey blessings, and put away wrath<sup>2</sup>. It is divided into imperfect, as with that of the law; and perfect, as is that of the Church.

The foundation of the priesthood in the Church is laid on that declaration of the Lord of the Priesthood to St. Peter, in the region of Caesaria Philippi: "To thee I shall give the keys<sup>3</sup> of the kingdom of heaven; whatsoever thou shalt bind on the earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven."

Its superstructure comes from that other injunction; "Feed My Lambs<sup>4</sup>. Feed My Sheep. Feed My Ewes."

Its completion and perfection from that He breathed<sup>5</sup> on them saying: "Receive ye the Holy Spirit; if you forgive a man his sins, they are forgiven to him; and if you withhold forgiveness of a man's sins, they shall be held."

It is into this priesthood of apostolic order, referred to in the Aramaic, as the order of allanutha, viz. episcopacy, of the Church, that these two men, namely, bishop Mar Yaukhanan Araham, and bishop Mar Narsay Elyas, have been consecrated into according to the rule of the apostolic order which has been perpetuated in the Holy Apostolic and Catholic Church of the East in unbroken succession from the apostles, nay, from Maran Eshoo M'Shikha himself who laid His Holy hands on them and gave them the power of the Holy Spirit.

The focal point of this service of consecration is the invocation of the Holy Spirit; the Spirit the "Paraclete" which proceeds from the Father and which Christ had promised to send upon His

Paraclete to be with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive because it has not seen him and does not know him, but you know him because he abides with you and is in you . . . But the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit whom my Father will send in my name will teach you everything, and will remind you of everything which I tell you (St. John 14:16, 17-26). But when the Paraclete comes, whom I will send you from my Father, the Spirit of truth which proceeds from my father, he will testify concerning me (St. John 15:26).

This promise was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. It is through the power of this Holy Spirit that we have consecrated these two men repeating upon them the following prayers of invocation which has been used in His Church throughout the centuries: "O Good God and merciful King who is rich in His mercy and overflowing in His compassion. Thou O Lord who by Thy unspeakable grace has placed me an intermediary of Thy divine gifts in Thy Holy Church, that I may in Thy Name give the gift of service of the Spirit to the ministers of Thy Holy Sacraments. And, O my Lord, in accordance with the apostolic tradition which has been perpetuated among us by the laying on of hands according to the ritual of the Church, we bring before Thee this Thy servant that he may be a chosen bishop in Thy Holy Church in the city of . . . And we all pray for him that the grace of the Holy Spirit may come upon him for the service of the ministry unto which he has been called by the grace and mercy of Thy only begotten. Unto Thee, Unto Him, and unto the Holy Spirit, we render praise, honour, thanksgiving and worship . . . And Thou even now make Thy face shine on this Thy servant, and elect him among Thy chosen ones by the anointment of the Holy Spirit, so that he may be unto Thee a perfect priest who will emulate the true Highpriest who gave himself for us, and confirm him by the act of the Holy Spirit unto the ministry to which now he



Thou, O God Father of truth, Holy and glorious, enable him to feed Thy flock with a true heart, and that his tongue may proclaim the truth, and that he may be a light to those who sit in darkness, and a teacher to boys and children. And Thou, O My Lord endue him with power from on high, that he may bind and loosen on earth and in heaven, and that through the laying on of his hands the sick may be cured, and that wonders may be performed by him in Thy Holy Name to the glory of Thy glorious Godhead, and through the power of Thy gift he may ordain priests, deacons, hupadyaqne (Subdeacons) Qaruya (Readers) and Mshamshayatha (Deaconesse) for the service of Thy Holy Church.

#### THE DUTY OF A BISHOP:

The awesome duty of the order of episcopacy has been defined by the Lord of priesthood himself in the injunction of the feeding of His lambs, His sheep and His ewes. It is the care for the souls of men which is the greatest duty that God has ever given to man and also the most challenging. A bishop is to be father and teacher of his spiritual flock. He is the shepherd of the rational sheep of Christ. He is to be an example to them all in his conduct and his faith. He is to feed them on green pastures of faith and sacraments, which is the path that Our Lord himself has set for His Church to follow, and whereby, we are assured of attaining the joy and perfection which

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1. Marganitha, by Mar Audishau, Metropolitan of Suwa (Nisibin) and Armenia, translated into English by Mar Eshai Shimun XXIII, and published by Mar Timotheus Press, Erankulam, Kerala State, India.
  2. Numbers 16: 17-26 v. 9, 27.
  3. Jude 11; Numbers 16: 46 end; Acts 5: 1-16; Matt. 16: 19, 18; John 20: 23.
  4. John 21: 15-17.
  5. John 20: 22, 23.

man can only find through Him who alone is perfect.

He is to proclaim his faith in Jesus Christ the Son of God and if necessary to give his life for that faith. A bishop is also in a special way a father in Christ to the clergy under his jurisdiction; he is the administrator in all matters pertaining to the canonical law of the Church. He is to deal with his spiritual children with love and kindness, yet, at the same time, he is to administer justice to those who stray from the paths of faith and morality as dictated by the Holy Scriptures and promulgated by His Holy Church.

#### THE DUTY OF THE CLERGY AND THE LAITY:

By the same token, the clergy and the laity alike, by virtue of their baptism into the Body of Christ, who is the Head, the Highpriest and the Lord of the Church; in which priesthood they all share according to the measure granted them by the power of the Holy Spirit through His Church, to fulfill their respective duties according to the doctrine and the canons of the Church and, thereby encourage and support their bishop in all his undertakings to the glory of God and the welfare of His Holy Church.

These are the sacred and demanding duties of a bishop and his flock alike, and let us all pray that Rukha Qaddisha (the Holy Spirit) by whose grace and power we have to-day consecrated these two men, may be with them and guide them to the end of their earthly career.

#### — FOUNDATION AND HISTORY OF THE CHURCH OF THE EAST:

Since our sermon has been primarily concerned with the faith and sacraments of the Church, as is appropriate in a case as this, we have omit-



ted the history of the Church to the end of our sermon; for indeed any organization whether religious or secular without some knowledge of its history would be incomplete and dubious to the student or the hearer of its story.

Prior to His glorious and mighty resurrection when Jesus gave the command to His disciples to teach the faith to all peoples and to baptize them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, He had given them another command saying:

"But above all go to the sheep which are lost from the house of Israel." These "lost sheep," were the ten tribes that were led into exile by Sargon King of Assyria in the year 722 B. C. and by Nukhanaser, King of Babylon, in the year 597 B. C.

These Jews of dispersion had in the time of Christ grown into influential and opulent communities in Babylon and throughout the Persian Empire. Their influence, however, was not only in this area alone but was felt in the total structure of the Jewish religion and history. The Babylonian "Talmud" often referred to as the Jewish post Christian Bible was written in Babylon in the Eastern Aramaic, used to this day by the Church of the East. Its importance in the Jewish religious education was so great in succeeding centuries that it often occupied a more central place than the Bible itself.

Thus, the foundation already laid, immediately after the resurrection St. Thomas the Apostle reminded St. Peter and the other apostles of a promise made by Our Lord to Ogar, King of Urhai; the Aramaic speaking kingdom in north west of Mesopotamia, located at the foothills of the mountains of Kurdistan. And so, Mar Addai, proceeded without delay to the city of Urhai,

healed the king of his incurable malady, which was also promised by Christ, and preached the gospel to the dwellers of that city. Thus the city of Urhai received the nomenclature "the blessed city, the believing city."

Mar Addai or Taddai, as he has also been called, was soon followed by Mar Tooma (St. Thomas) the apostle who preached for many years in Babylon, before according to the command of Christ who appeared to Him in a vision, went to South India. And he (Mar Tooma) was followed by Bar Tulmay (St. Bartholomew) and finally by Mar Shimun Keepa (St. Simon Peter) himself, who wrote his Catholic Epistle from Babylon. The city of Arbil in Iraq, also shares the honour with Seleucia-Ctesiphon and Urhai in its early conversion to the Messianic faith.

Indeed, the spread of the Messianic faith throughout the Persian Empire was so rapid that M'Shikha Skha, a Church of the East historian, of the fifth century, says that by the year 90 A. D. there were already nineteen episcopal sees, under the see of Babylon, all the way from Syria to the Caspian Sea, located in the present day Iran.

Likewise, did all the other apostles, as witnessed by the statement made in the "Acts of the Apostles" by the missionary of the West, St. Paul himself, who says that he laboured in Syria, Arabia, and elsewhere in the Middle East some eighteen years before going to Athens and Rome.

In addition to all these facts, one of the earliest and best known of Church historians, namely, Eusebius of Caesaria who wrote his now universally known ecclesiastical history in the fourth century. This history which Eusebius wrote in the Aramaic was during the fifth century translated into Greek and Armenian and in recent



times into several other languages.

Eusebius writing about the final destruction and devastation of Jerusalem by the Romans in the year 132 A. D. says, "That not only the Jews of the Mosaic faith but also the Christian Jews were expelled from Jerusalem, and the latter settled in the city of Halab (Ellepo) in Syria, thus uniting the Apostolic See of Jerusalem of Mar Patros (St. Peter) and Mar Yacob (St. James) known as the brother of Our Lord, with that of Babylon, or what has usually been referred to 'the See of Seleucis-Ctesiphon, the twin capital city of the Persian Empire.' Among these Christian Jews were also the relatives of Our Lord, and hence two names appear in the Table of Apostolic Succession of the Church of the East, namely, Mar Abris the relative of the virgin Mary, and Mar Jacob, relative of Mar Yosip (St. Joseph) the carpenter, in the year 90 and 172 A. D. respectively.

This mass exodus is also confirmed by the Jewish history of this period which speaks of the great number of Jews, escaping the Roman cruelties unleashed under Emperor Hadrian, who fled and settled in Babylon.

#### MISSIONARY ENTERPRISE AND SCHOLASTIC INSTITUTIONS:

But the achievements of the Church of the East were not only in its appreciation of the true meaning of the Holy Scriptures which were written in the Aramaic language; the language spoken by Jesus and His Apostles as well as by the Assyrian people who constituted the nucleus of the membership of this church; nor in its ever glorious and unequalled missionary enterprise, of which says the Encyclopaedia Britannica: . . .

"Their campaign was one of deliberate conquest, and one of the greatest ever planned by Christian missionaries. Their activity may well be said

to have covered the continent of Asia." John Stuart the author of the 'Nestorian Missionary Enterprise' speaking of these same missionaries, says, "The amazing thing is not where they went, but rather where did they not go." Marco Polo, the Italian adventurer, and the first Western Christian to go to China and other countries of the Far East in the thirteenth century, speaks of four big churches of this church in Tibet, that roof of the world where no other Christian missions have ever gone.

Together with these achievements and of equal importance was the progress made by the Church of the East in the field of science and learning. Labourt, the learned French Roman Catholic writer, in his book 'Le Chritéanisme dans L'empere Perse' (pages 294-301) speaking of its famous institutions of learning, namely, the colleges of Urhai and N'siwin (Nisibin), founded in the third and fifth century respectively, calls the latter a University. Dr. E. R. Hayes, a priest of the Church of England who has written a history of these two famous schools, in a letter which he wrote to us says: "Here is the story of the first Christian university, if not the first of all universities."

All branches of science were taught in the University of Nisibin including, rhetoric, philosophy and medicine. As to their exegetical superiority, we quote the following statement from the "Studies in the History of Religions" By David Gordon Lyon<sup>1</sup>. Speaking about the School of Nisibin, says, Lyon: "In its instructions the Bible had the central place, in its faculty the Professors of Biblical exegesis held the first rank. Sound principles of interpretation prevailed, and critical opinions were freely uttered which would not have been tolerated in our seminaries a generation ago and many of them are not tolerated now."



Indeed the difference in the rational interpretation of the Christian faith existing between the Church of the East and the Church of the West, during this period and in succeeding centuries of the Christian era, may well be summed up in the following two instances.

In the eighth century during the Patriarchate of Mar Timotheus I who was himself a man of profound learning, Eyo (Job) of Urhai, Dean of the famous School of Medicine in Baghdad, in his encyclopaedia of knowledge, writes on the "elemental origin of the universe and the bodies comprising it," which of course means the atom, and his opinions are tolerated and respected by the authorities of the Church of the East.

In the seventeenth century, on the other hand, during the papacy of Urban VIII when Galileo formulated his now universally recognized theory on the solar system, he was threatened with excommunication and torture by the Inquisition.

These facts we have presented without any bias or prejudice but rather as facts of history, without which man could not find or correct his errors and thereby achieve the progress which we witness in our own generation; a progress indeed in which the University of Nisibin could justly claim an important share, for it was the scholars of the Church of the East who translated all the sciences into the Arabic language, and the Arabs in turn, gave that knowledge to Europe through their centers of learning in Spain, and thereby illuminated Europe which was immersed in the Dark Ages.

Indeed, names such as Ibn Iskhag (Bar Iskhag), Bukhtishau, Gauriel, and many other Assyrian scholars of the Church of the East, illuminate the intellectual Islamic history of this period.

It was these men who under the command of the enlightened Khalifs, translated the philosophy and scientific knowledge from Aramaic and Greek into the Arabic language and, thereby contributed immeasurably to the golden age of the scientific knowledge and progress of Islam.

The intensity and importance of this contribution may be gauged from the following letter written by Patriarch Mar Tomotheus I in answer to some pertinent inquiry addressed to him by Mar Sargis Bishop and Metropolitan of Elam . . . "We would that we did not have at a time like this, says the Patriarch, to correspond with Your Venerableness but rather on a more leisurely occasion, with sober reasoning and the opportunity to examine to the subject more carefully.

The reason for this lack of time is that we have been commanded by our victorious Sovereign to join him in the land of the Romans (Asia Minor) and, therefore, are unable to deal with matters that demand our immediate attention. We, therefore, left on June 7, of this year of 183 (Hajira) and proceeded on our journey to our victorious Sovereign.

He commanded that we go to him with royal honour and expence and gifts, and a choice between official (Royal) or our own private transportation. We decided to travel by Royal Transportation."

The Patriarch, thus having responded to the questions of the Metropolitan concerning a Greek philosopher that had recently come to their attention, continues: . . . "Let Your Venerableness

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1. The History of Religions, edited by David Gordon Lyon, and George Foot Moore, published by Macmillian Co, New York, p. 266.



know that I believe that the title of this book is strange and unknown even to the Greeks. While we were translating the book of the Topiques from Syriac into the Arabic language and there were with us also some men together with the Patriarch of the Makaye (Melkites) but they also recognized its title with difficulty."

It was this same Patriarch, Mar Tomotheus I, who had the famous three days theological debate with Khalif Mahdi III in the year 781 A.D. in the city of Baghdad which constitutes the only debate of its kind between the head of a great Christian Church and Khalif of Islam. Both men were of profound learning and discussed freely the attributes of their respective faiths. The Patriarch recorded this famous debate in Syriac daily on his return to his residence consisting of a book of some one hundred pages which has also been translated into English.

## CONCLUSION:

Politics have always played a dominant part in the history of all religions, and Christianity has been no exception from the days of Constantine to this day. This fact has profoundly influenced not only the racial and national divisions which have been the hallmark of the Christian religion throughout the centuries but has also been a deciding factor in the forming of the various theological opinions and interpretations that have split the Christian Church into numerous factions and sects existing in our own generation.

These facts are true not only of the Byzantine era but also of the reformation which took place in Europe. The very history and character of the reformation speaks for itself. It was not a reformation of repentance or conversion, it was not concerned with the transformation of the souls of men. There was no universally accepted theory of reformation nor a reformer but

rather several theories based on individual national aspirations and several reformers working hand in hand with the ruling monarch or prince. The real struggle was not for the souls of men but for the wealth of Europe which was practically wholly controlled by the Church. It is, therefore, with profound joy that we observe the general awakening of the various Christian Churches and denominations to the tragic situation that has existed for so long in the one body of Christ, and for the unity of which He so fervently prayed for to His Holy Father, saying:

"So that they may be one just as we are one."  
 "אֵלֶּיךָ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵיהֶם"

In this connection we have especially in mind the action recently taken by the great ecumenical Council of the Roman Catholic Church, and so enthusiastically responded to by all the ancient apostolic and the more modern churches. We wish to welcome and to express our appreciation for the presence with us this morning of the representatives of that great church together with the representatives of all the other churches and those belonging to religions other than Christianity.

It is our earnest prayer, and for which we ask not only this congregation but also all those who believe in the unity of the One Body of Christ, to join us in beseeching God that He may in His grace and mercy hasten the day for the unity of all those who profess in Christ as their Lord and their God, on the basis of the Holy Scriptures, which constitute the foundation of His One Holy Apostolic and Catholic Church.

Furthermore, recognizing the fact that the Son of God came into the world not only to give peace to those who believe in Him alone but to all mankind - "and on earth peace and good hope for



men," we should therefore pray that His peace may be bestowed to all men and nations irrespective of race or religion. In this context let us especially pray for this historic land of Lebanon by whose kindness and courtesy we have to day performed this holy apostolic sacrament in this city of Beirut. We pray especially for the divine guidance for the President of the Republic of Lebanon and all those working with him for the peace and prosperity of this land.

We, likewise pray for the Arab Republic of Syria, from whose territory so many of our children in Christ, both clergy and laity, Assyrians from the Khabour region are present with us on this holy occasion, that God may grant to that historic land peace and prosperity.

All that we have said would indeed be incomplete were we not to express our deep appreciation for all the kindness which has been shown over the period of years by the Greek Orthodox Church toward the clergy and members of the Church of the East in Beirut, especially in the person of His Grace Matran Elia Karam whom we have known personally and whose friendship we have valued.

In conclusion, we invoke God's blessing upon all those present here this morning, the inhabitants of this land, and all mankind, amen.