

Iraqi Christians, even harder times ahead

Chad Groening – OneNewsNow

An organization dedicated to persecuted Christians worldwide believes life for believers in Iraq will only get worse now that American combat troops are being pulled out of the country.

In last Tuesday night's speech, President Obama formally ended the U.S. combat role in Iraq after seven years of fighting, declaring firmly: "It's time to turn the page." But Dr. Carl Moeller, president and CEO of Open Doors USA, believes the decision to yank the combat troops was premature.

"I believe that we're turning this country over to a government that is in chaos – it is in transition at best," states Moeller. "It hasn't yet settled on a firm form of government. We have just basically said,

'Please don't disturb us as you collapse.'"

The Open Doors leader is concerned that a much-reduced U.S. presence will not bode well for the tiny Christian population in the Muslim-dominated country.

"We have very clear indicators from the ground that the Christian community in Iraq is suffering greatly by increased violence between factions of Islam," Moeller shares. "I've spoken at length with refugees all around the region [who are] saying it's an unreported disaster – the extinction of the Christian community in Iraq."

Moeller believes the persecution of Christians is going to accelerate as a result of the U.S. military pulling out.

THE SYNOD FOR THE MIDDLE EAST

"communion and witness."

Catholic Church leaders, anticipating the Synod of Bishops for the Middle East, view it as an opportunity to call attention to the problems facing Christians in the region.

The synod, to be held at the Vatican Oct. 10-24, will focus on "communion and witness."

Chaldean Archbishop Louis Sako of Kirkuk, Iraq, who had asked the pope in January 2008 to convene such a synod, said the meeting "is an opportunity to revise the whole situation for Christians in the Middle East."

He said it is a pastoral and practical synod, and not a dogmatic one.



Archbishop Sako stressed that because there are so many crucial issues to tackle -- liturgical reform; formation of clergy and other religious; dialogue among the churches; and particularly the political status of Christians -- he hopes this synod will be highly productive.

Chaldean Auxiliary Bishop Shlemon Warduni of

Baghdad said the synod represents "a big grace for the Middle East."

"We need it because our faithful are leaving their countries," he told Catholic News Service. "If we have peace and security, our people would not leave."



The Middle East has many Catholic rites, and there is some division among them, Bishop Warduni said, "but like the first Christians, we must have one spirit and one heart, as when the Holy Spirit descended upon them."

For those participating in the synod, he said, the Holy Spirit "will guide us to do what we must do for ecumenism and dialogue with other religions." "We ask the Lord to give us the wisdom to guide each of us, so we can arrive at some solutions that will be good for the glory of the Lord, the good of the church and the good of the faithful," Bishop Warduni said.

Catholic News Service

Bishop Andreas Abouna

By the Right Reverend Alan Hopes

Auxiliary Bishop of Westminster

Death of Bishop Andreas Abouna who was the Auxiliary Bishop of Baghdad and one-time Chaplain to the Catholic Chaldean Church, here in London. He was born on 23 March 1943 in the northern Iraqi village of Bedar. He entered the seminary at age 14 and was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Baghdad on 5 June 1966. He served in parishes in Basra and Baghdad.

Bishop Abouna was secretary to Patriarch Raphael I Bidawid from 1989 to 1991 when he was appointed to the Chaldean Catholic Mission in London. The community celebrated Mass in St Anne's Church, Laxton Place and more recently at Holy Family Church, West Acton. He served the Catholic Chaldean community for eleven years. During his time in London he obtained a Licentiate in Moral Theology at Heythrop in 1993.

On 6 November 2002 it was announced that he was to be an Auxiliary to Patriarch Bidawid with the titular see of Zenobias. The Patriarch was too ill to ordain him Bishop and he was therefore ordained in Rome on 6 January 2003 by His Holiness Pope John Paul II. This Ordination had an unexpected link with England. The new Bishop's apostolic line of succession can be traced through the Polish Episcopate to Henry Stuart,



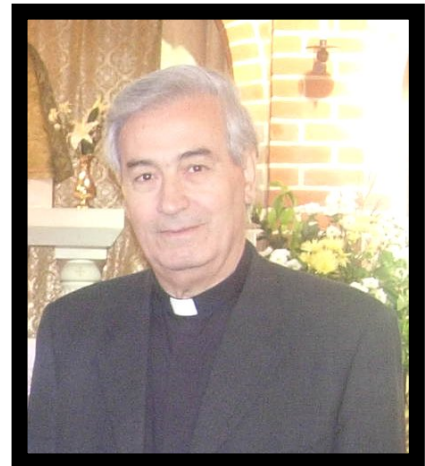
The Cardinal of York, younger brother of Bonnie Prince Charlie. The new Bishop was later translated to the titular see of Hirta in September 2004.

Shortly after the Bishop's return to Iraq, Saddam Hussein was overthrown, and Baghdad became a hotbed of extreme violence.

Bishop Abouna led his people through the difficult times that followed. Bomb attacks on churches and threats of violence against non-Muslims led many to leave the city, but the Bishop remained. He was given special responsibility for young people and, despite increasing health problems; he continued to hold youth events when possible. He was respected tremendously by the priests of Baghdad for the concern he had for them.

When conditions became unsafe, Bishop Abouna was persuaded to move to the north of the country together with most of the church administration. Described by Archbishop Sako of Kirkuk as "a very good and humble man, very open-minded, he really took care of each one of his priests, and he always worked for the unity of the Church. I hope he can pray for us from heaven."

Two months ago he underwent kidney surgery and appeared to have recovered but had a relapse and died on 27 July, aged sixty-seven years. He had



been a Priest for 44 years and a Bishop for seven years.

The present Chaldean Patriarch, Emmanuel III Delly, presided at Bishop Abouna's funeral in St. Joseph's Cathedral in Ankawa, near Erbil in the Kurdish area of northern Iraq. He will be deeply missed by the priests and people of Iraq and especially by the Catholic Chaldean community in this country who were looking forward to his annual visit for his summer holiday

Bishop Abouna was a man who could smile even in the most difficult of circumstances, deeply spiritual and he did all he could assure the priests and seminarians that there was a future for the Catholic Church in Iraq. He told them: "This was not the first time Christians in the ancient land of Mesopotamia have suffered. Despite all the difficulties of the past, Christians somehow remained in our country." May he rest in peace. 1/08/2010

A divine soul in the land of fires

By: Robert Ewan

Bishop Andraos Abouna, auxiliary Catholic Bishop of Baghdad

Bishop Andraos Abouna was born on 23rd March 1943 in the village of Bedare, on the outskirts of the northern Iraqi town of Zakho. Born into a disciplined Christian family of four brothers and four sisters, since his tender years, his faith in Christ guided his footsteps towards priesthood.

At the age of 14 he left his village and headed for Mosul, a city famous for its plethora of churches and monasteries. He enrolled at its renowned seminary of St Peter, where generations of seminarians have come to study.

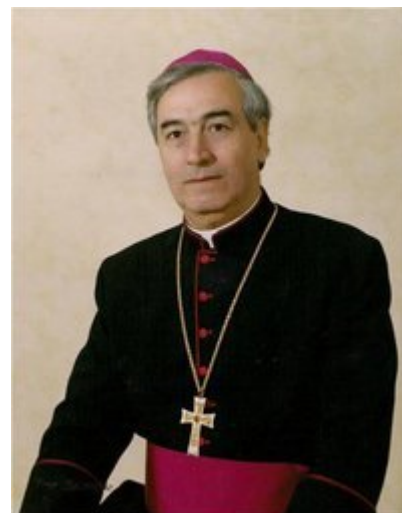
He studied diligently, immersed in the world of religion and Christian solicitude. After completing his studies he was ordained priest on 5th June 1966. A year later he was appointed parish priest for the diocese of Basra in southern Iraq. This was the time when Iraq was witnessing severe political turmoil. The simmering resentments towards Christians were growing amidst the rise of nationalistic fervour, this was further compounded in 1967, after the six-day war with Israel which resulted in the crushing defeat of the Arab armies.

In these difficult and enduring times the young priest had to tread carefully to protect his small flock. He was instrumental in initiating dialogue between Christians and Moslems. In 1971 he was

appointed parish priest of St Joseph church in Baghdad. He served his community for 20 years, he also taught religious studies at the Rahibaat Al Taqaduma girls school run by French Catholic nuns, and was regarded as one of student's favourite teacher. His precocious talents were noticed by the Chaldean Patriarch the late Raphael Bidaweed and he selected him as his personal secretary and assistant in 1989.

Throughout the 1980's, the Iraqi Catholic community in the UK gradually increased mainly due to the pernicious Iran-Iraq war, the majority of graduate academics and their families opted not to go back to the furnace of war. The community, without an effective priest and a parish of their own, were scattered and would attend various Catholic churches for mass and any other special events. Against this backdrop, Father Abouna was appointed parish priest for the Chaldean and Syriac Catholic mission in England in 1991. A position he accepted with some alacrity. He would hold mass every Sunday at the St. Anne's R.C Church in London (Laxton Place). He revived several parish activities, such as newsletter, family gatherings.

He managed to blend very easily with his new community. The shepherd gathered his lost sheep and eventually the community emerged from its



languidness and found their sense of identity.

During this period, Iraq was emerging from its apocalyptic destruction as a result of the second Gulf war. Additionally; the United Nations imposed economic and financial sanctions on Iraq which lasted thirteen years. The gracious father felt the pain and the unmerited ordeals of the innocent Iraqi people both Christian and Moslems. With his stout heart bearing the burden of the Iraqi people he was fully and unequivocally committed to lifting of the sanctions. Naturally, the Iraqi Catholic community felt the anguish of their brethren in Iraq and Father Abouna was instrumental in nourishing his exhausted congregation and, with his kind words and deeds, he gave them peace in their turmoil.

On 22 November 2002 he was elevated to the position of Auxiliary Bishop of Baghdad

and personal secretary to the current head of Chaldean church patriarch Emmanuel III Delly.

On 6 January 2003, the feast of epiphany, he was personally consecrated by the late Pope John Paul II with eleven other new bishops. Shortly afterward, he returned to Baghdad to help shepherd a community of some 700,000 Iraqi Chaldean Catholics who found themselves at ground zero of a war that was looming in the horizon.

Within weeks of taking office, the allied invasion of Iraq commenced and Saddam Hussein was ousted. Since the invasion, a wave of unprecedented cross-sect terror was ignited with the main groups of Sunni and Shia in a frantic race to exterminate each other. These groups also viewed the American led invasion as a Christian crusade, and Iraqi Christians as its supporters and collaborators. As Iraq continued to lose all

semblances of peace and order the persecution of Christians continued in its ferocity. He worked assiduously to help his people to deal with bomb attacks on churches, kidnapping and the indiscriminate killing. The mass exodus of Christians from Baghdad created severe shortages in priests and deacons, Bishop Abbouna stayed defiantly in Baghdad and conducted regular mass at the church of Our Lady of Assumption in the, once eloquent, Al Mansour district of Baghdad.

The bishop's health started deteriorating since 2008 as a result of kidney complications. He underwent intensive treatment in London and Baghdad.

Despite his ill health he took charge of the Catholic youth pastoral care, holding events and talks when the security situation permitted.

In May 2010, Bishop Abouna underwent a complicated kidney surgery and he seemed to have recovered and was looking forward to meet the Pope in Rome in September and then to his favourite retreat place of London.

On Sunday 25 of July, he had a relapse and was admitted to a hospital in Erbil where he died on Tuesday morning 27 of July 2010.

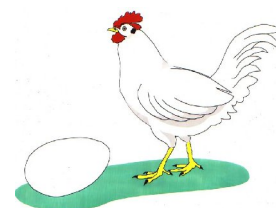


“a very good and humble man, very open-minded, he really took care of each one of his priests, and he always worked for the unity of the Church. I hope he can pray for us from heaven.”
Archbishop Sako of Kirkuk

ARAMAIC PARABLES

T. Robert Ewan

- When the ropes are cut the timber will scatter
- A mountain does not meet a mountain a man meets a man
- Go to the one that makes you cry not the one that makes you laugh
- A dog's tail was put in slaughterhouse for forty days yet it did not straighten
- Walls have ears
- A bend plant will never be straightened
- The attire of a man is in his brain and not in his cloths
- He who does not eat onions his mouth will not smell
- He who digs a well for his friend will fall in it
- All the dirt that the chicken digs will fall on her head
- He who slaps you on your right cheek give him your left cheek
- After grief there is joy
- You cannot see the bottle in your eye yet you can see the mote in your friend's eye
- A dog will not hunt if he is forced to do so
- An egg of today is better than a chicken of tomorrow



Early Christians in Mesopotamia (21)

By Farid Oufi

St Ephram of Edessa (303 – 373) wrote some of the very first Christian hymns ever composed. He took his melodies and rhythms from Gnostic songs composed by the Edessian heretic Bardaisan. He says that their “sweet rhythms still beguiled the hearts of men”, in other words that they were still popular and everyone in Edessa knew the tunes. Ephram merely added new words and orthodox sentiments of his own. (Pope Benedict XV proclaimed him a saint and doctor of the Church in 1920.) (Dictionary of Saints – p 115)

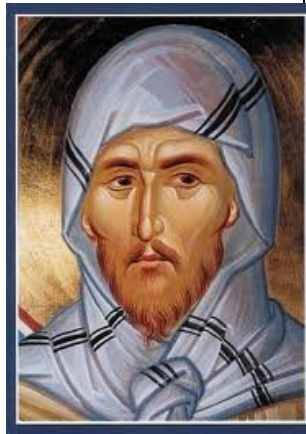


St Ephram was known to have targeted some of his poems and writings against the evils of the Nisibin town folks who lacked true moral values even among the clergy.

St Ephram gave his people the true nature of Christ, the savior, as the father figure of Mesopotamia. He says that the seizure of Nisibin gave the Church an opportunity to admit its identity and to complete its message amidst the people through prayers, fasting and alms giving.

History tells us that St Ephram's fame rests on his writings, above all on his metrical homilies, to be read aloud and his hymns for singing. The latter in particular were designed for popular use and were didactic in character, often directed against various false doctrines then current.

St Ephram was a native of Mesopotamia and originally Aramaic. He was entrusted with the task to supervise the Edessa school of theology. He was considered the master of the Syriac language. He wrote commentaries on a considerable number of books of the Bible.



St Ephram's work is elevated in style, “flowery” in expression, and full of imagery; even as a theologian he wrote as a poet. He has always been regarded as a great teacher in the Syrian churches and many of his works were early translated into Greek, Armenian and Latin. Some English hymns are translated from St Ephram's Syriac. Ephram's description of Nisibin's calamity at the hands of King Shabur of Persia is famous in religious literature.

In 350, the Persian army attached Nisibin, a Christian town, where St Ephram lived, in the course of the 30-year war between the Roman and Persian powers. The town was under siege by flooding all areas round its walls. It was “floating on water just like Noah's ship on the flood”, as Ephram described it in one of his famous hymns. The siege continued until one part

of the town's wall could not resist the pressure anymore. That part of the wall collapsed and the Persian army entered into Nisibin with their elephants and horses. They found strong resistance from the people of the town and could not move inside. The Persian king Shabur who was leading his army halted his attacks until the next day which fell on Saturday hoping to complete his triumph. When Shabur brought his army forward to start a fresh attack he was surprised to see that the collapsed wall was reconstructed during the night and was named the Wall of Easter Sunday, standing behind it the town folks in challenging mood and strength. Shabur lost his courage and left the battle undone on the same day.

St Ephram gave all his intellectual power to the church through patriotic, emotional hymns in religious terms, saying the three-day siege of the town resembled the three days of suffering before Easter day – the town rose on the third day as Christ did from death.

St Ephram drew parallels between the siege of Nisibin and that of Noah's flood and that of the three day passion of Jesus Christ. He did all in the form of hymns. In other hymns he reflected the effects of chaos and wars amidst the town folks, and how honest moral was lost even among the clergy. He criticized the people of Nisibin for their selfishness, stinginess and untiring performing of magic

and magical, especially the women who left church services to visit their fortune tellers. But he also took pride in the majestic town of Nisibin which stood high in telling the truth of the Redeemer in Mesopotamia. In his hymns, he looked at the church as a messenger of redemption from sin and evil and that nothing happens except as God desires. He is the guide for the human being through all events to goodness which He manages according to His design and justice; even calamities God uses them so that people turn to the right path – to kneel to Him only and live upright with love and simplicity. (Al-Qethara, a Chaldean Church Mission bulletin (London) July-August 2001)

Nisibin, a town in Upper Mesopotamia and a seat of bishops, remained influential in the development, and spreading out, of theological thoughts as well as in popularizing the monasticism.

The main Church's theological school was established in Nisibin in 320 by Mar Ycoub al-Nisibini and later was given to St Ephram to guide and administer. It was to rival that of Edessa. Some 800 students came to study and return to service the Church before it was closed by the Persians.

Nisibin also witnessed the foundation of the first monastery in the Church of the East by Mar Augine in the 4th century.

Augine came from Egypt where he equainted himself with the life of Egyptian monks with some 70 followers. They lived in a

cave until Augine was able to build a monastery.

Under the spiritual guidance of Mar Augine, some 350 monks were trained and eventually spread out to join other monasteries in the region. Mar Augine died in 393 and was buried in his monastery.

Nisibin saw a decline in monasticism after the 486 Synod of Patriarch Aqaq when celibacy of the clergy including monks was abolished. But monasticism was soon revived by Ibrahiem al-Kashkari who studied in Nisibin and became a monk. Al-Kashkari built his own monastery also in Nisibin and reformed the pattern of life among monks.

Many followed his own methods of spiritual life, and established monasteries elsewhere in the region. One source says that there were some 60 monasteries in Mesopotamia just before the Mongols invaded the land in the 13th century.

St Ephram left Nisibin when its school was taken over by the Persians and went to al-Raha (Diyarbakir of today) where he established a school on a similar pattern of that which he ran for some time in Nisibin. Ephram's school did not survive long as it was closed in 489. Nisibin's school reopened to resume its glorious days as it was governed by laws and regulations that strengthened its educational programmes. It became a university before it was closed again for good in the 8th century due to socio-political conditions in the region.

St Ephram has always regarded as a holy man of the Church for his tremendous achievements in theological fields. His journey of faith ended in Edessa where he died in 373.

St Justin Martyr of Nablus, Palestine, had a pupil called Titian (149-222) who was an inspiring theology and writer during Christological debate in the second half of the 3rd century.

The Church of the East used for centuries Titian's Diatessaron, a harmony of the Gospels, instead of the four separate ones. (The History of Christianity – p 108)

In the time of Titian, Bar Desam was another Christian scholar and writer in the Syriac language who was prominent in Edessa.

Edessa's king Ebjar IX was baptized and became Christian



around the year 180 by the hands of Bar Desam.

In the 7th century, Isaac the Syrian, who is known as Isaac of Nineveh or Isaac the Syrian was widely read by Greeks and Russians who were unaware that he belonged to a church not in communion with their own. This is a striking example of the way in which inner spiritual unity can continue to exist despite an outward separation. (The Oxford History of Christianity – p 145

(to be followed)

Church of the East: The Feminist Challenges (2)

By Fr Habib Jajou

Women according to Iraqi Civil Law

The very first Iraqi civil law was introduced in 1953; it covered both the Islamic laws and part of European laws. The law was unfair towards women, and contradicted their human rights with regards the granting custody of children.

Civil law number 153, which was issued in 1958, was also unfair despite some reforms in the original law:

- (1) Some part permitted polygamy.
- (2) It forced women to be confined to house work only.
- (3) It gave husbands the ultimate right to terminate a marriage.
- (4) Part No. 25, allowed the husband to cease financial helps if the wife left home without her husband's prior permission or refusing to travel with him.
- (5) The Prosecution law numbered 111 in 1969 permitted execution without prosecution and provided immunity to adulterous women's killer.
- (6) Moreover, number 41 allows a man to discipline his wife. Women were kept away from judicial jobs.¹ All these disadvantages points had a negative impact on women.

Today, women need these laws to be annulled. New Laws must align with current united nation laws in respecting women. Also, to amend biased laws against women covering:

- (1) inheritance, (2) custody of children, (3) marriage welfare, (3) divorce or separation, (4) cancelling execution for women, (5) preventing mental and psychological torture in prisons, (6) establishing equality, (7) allowing top jobs for women, (8) cancelling polygamy, (9) preventing physical punishment, (10) providing protection, (11) encouraging women to take a vital social part, as well as (12) political and vocational, (13)

¹ Auji, A., 'Laws aggrieved Iraqi woman rights' in <http://www.mesopotamia4374.com/adad2/alkawaneen.htm> (accessed 3 June 2005)

educating society to utilise traditions in serving and rebuilding the society.



**THREE CHALDEANIAN WOMEN GENERATIONS
LAVED TOGETHER IN BAGHDAD (between 1900 and
1990)**

As for Christians, the civil welfare court specialises in personal welfare cases according to certain laws concerning Christians in marriages, separation and divorce cases. The concerned church court must be consulted about certain regulations that should be applied in such cases. Civil welfare law no 188 for non-Muslims must be applied. Court of Cassation (Supreme Court) has the right to appeal against orders issued by courts. All these issues focus upon feminist and the liberation theology's principles.

Women under the Islamic Law

Islam is a 'masculine' religion.² *Qur'an* confirms, women as a biological and social human being; it also mentions some of them as religious person and as historical personality such as: Mary, Eve, and Sarah³. Virgin Mary is considered and described several times with a great deal of respect as a significant and great personality. Woman in the Muslim society do not fulfil their place in the society as the human rights desire, in the Islamic rules she is counted as half a human being⁴, her present is to serve the man and to obey him and to produce children. In *Qur'an* several verses state clearly that in court, each man, as a witness, is equal to two women, gives the right to the man to hit the woman and to have more than

² Seferta, J., *The Church and Islam in Britain*, black friars' publications, London, 2006, p. 28.

³ 'Women in Qur'an' in <http://www.balagh.com/woman/shaksi/q00y9l3a.htm> (accessed 27 August 2005)

⁴ Qur'an, 'The Women', Almadeena Almonawara, Saudi Arabian Kingdom, 1992, p.78.

one wife⁵. *Qur'an* encourages the veil and allows the man to marry a second and third wife, at the same time.⁶ Islamic law is a delicate challenge to the Church. It causes misusing and presents continuous arguments, about women and their social life. In what way is the Iraqi Church able to deal with this matte and what is the possible solution?

Women under the Eastern Church Laws

How far did the Eastern Church manage to integrate its laws, up till now? And in what way or manner it's been diverged from other religions, especially Islam?

Eastern Church laws were affected by different resources: ancient habits of Mesopotamian nations, biblical Scriptures, and recently Western Church Laws. Unfortunately our information is only between the 5th and 14th centuries. Women's affairs under church law have concentrated on matters such as marriage, inheritance and their residence along with religious people such as priests, and monks. Law was confirmed on St. Paul's recommendations; he affirmed the man's authority. This was consolidated by Old Testament evidence where Adam was created before Eve, and as a result woman came after man in most laws.

Church Laws between the 5th and 6th centuries rejected multiple marriages or marrying with a stepmother, aunt, granddaughter or sister. But it allowed separation in case of adultery. It was not allowed for a woman to get married in the 7th century unless she got approval from her parents, and it did not allow marriage with Pagan people. During the 4th century, and through *Aphraates* writing concerns regarding dedication, started to show apparent signs.

What was the situation when the church was flourishing between 8th and 9th, centuries? The Church started encouraging men and women to marry foreigners. This decision was to support love, acquaintance and opening the doors for other nations to spread Christianity. The Law allowed separation in case of one partner may deny God, or commit murder or adultery. A woman had the right to seek separation if her

husband denied God, killed someone or believed in magic. But the Law was biased towards men when they committed adultery. The Christian situation regressed between the 10th and 11th, centuries with matters related to the opining towards other Nations.⁷ The Church did not allow marriage with girls from outside the Eastern Church community. The Law was also biased towards man regarding inheritance matters.



The bad situation in Iraq in the 14th century caused the church to be stretched in matters related to women accused of adultery, but the Laws stood beside them when they refused to marry; moreover, they had rights regarding inheritance.⁸ Between 14th century and the last one in 1995, the church did not set up any synod.

To sum up, the church depended on monks to run the institutions until 19th century when the first seminary was established. As a consequence, this affected badly the church's position regarding women. At the same time, the church was not able to avoid Islamic law. Islamic law is implemented on Christians and other religions alike. Despite that, women have achieved a better level in issues related to marriage, inheritance and residence.

(to be followed)

⁵ Qur'an, 'The Women', p. 77.

⁶ 'Women in Islam' in <http://www.light-of-life.com/arb/areveal/R5405AT9.htm#fine> (accessed 28 August 2005)

⁷ Habbi, J., 'Women in the canons of The Eastern Church' 55.

⁸ Habbi, J., 'Women in the canons of The Eastern Church' 45.

TIMOTHY I

THE GREATEST PATRIARCH OF ALL

Dr. Joseph Seferta

The 8th and 9th centuries in Mesopotamia (Iraq) witnessed a remarkable Arab renaissance in which the Christians played a key role as teachers, physicians, scientists, administrators and translators. They were the pioneers in translating the classical Greek works of Plato, Aristotle and others into Aramaic (Syriac/Chaldean) first and then Arabic, since the Arab Muslims knew neither Greek nor Syriac. Also, by the middle of the 8th century, Baghdad became the capital of the Abbasid Empire.



When elected Patriarch, Timothy's first act was to move his see from Seleucia-Ctesiphon to Baghdad itself because he sensed the importance of the capital. Timothy acquired a reputation for launching audacious debates with the Abbasid caliphs concerning doctrinal issues, particularly the Holy Trinity. All of the five caliphs during Timothy's long rule—spread over 42 years—admired his intelligence, courage and wisdom, and showed him great respect.

By associating with caliphs and other Muslim leaders and debating religious issues with them, Timothy pioneered the first official Christian-Muslim dialogue in history. His intention was not only to answer the philosophical and theological challenges posed by Islam and the Qur'an, but also to strengthen his Christian flock in their faith, as well as to facilitate peaceful coexistence between the two religious communities. He was a talented administrator and one who showed a keen interest in missionary activity.

As for Timothy being a distinguished scholar, this is attested to by the 200 or so letters he wrote to his friends and colleagues, of which 59 have survived and are preserved in the monastery at Alqosh in Northern Iraq. In these letters, the patriarch

deals with philosophical, theological, legal and pastoral matters rather expertly. A number of them have been translated into various languages from the original Syriac. His most important letter contains his famous doctrinal debate with Caliph al-Mahdi, of which an English version can be found in the Mingana Collection at the University of Birmingham, England.

Timothy also wrote books on theology, church history and canon law, plus a commentary on the theology of St. Gregory of Nazianzus (d. 389). Only a couple of these works, plus a few of his poems and hymns are extant, however. Due to his fluency in the Greek language, Timothy was asked by Caliph Harun al-Rashid to put some of Aristotle's works into Arabic, which Timothy had already translated into Syriac.

Thus we have a most remarkable patriarch shining like a bright star in the golden age of the Church of the East in particular, and of Syriac Christianity in general. No wonder he is usually referred to as "Timothy the Great" and may well rank as the greatest patriarch in the history of the Church of the East (with its Chaldean and Assyrian branches).



It was during this era that two great Christian figures arose: Patriarch Timothy I (d. 823) who, in my opinion and that of many, is the greatest patriarch in the history of the Church of the East, and Hunain Ibn Ishaq (d.873) who was the greatest of all Christian translators. This was also the age of a well-organised, dynamic and missionary Church of the East, which saw the establishment of bishoprics outside of Mesopotamia and Persia, i.e., in Damascus, Jerusalem, Alexandria, Cyprus, the Gulf countries and India.

Independent Iraq under the Monarchy 1921-1958⁽²⁾



Accessed from Dr Suha Rassam's book (Christianity in Iraq/Chap. 6)

All Christian communities, except the Assyrians, paid their loyalty to the king and organised celebrations in his honour. The Chaldeans, Syrian Catholics and Syrian Orthodox Christians proclaimed their loyalty to the Iraqi government, emphasising that they claimed no temporal power for themselves.

When the provisional constitution of Iraq provided for representatives in the chamber of deputies, the Syro-Chaldean hierarchy opposed it, maintaining that they sought no special rights and that they trusted the goodwill of their Muslim brethren that they would be treated as equal citizens to the Muslims.

What happened to the Christians, whether Armenians, Syrian Orthodox or Syrian Catholics, during the last few decades of Ottoman rule was still vivid in their memory. The massacres of these communities were partly attributed to Western European policies and their failure to stand by their promises to them. One of the Iraqi newspapers warned: **'Not to forget the fate of the Armenians and the Assyrians who put their trust in Christian powers and were practically exterminated in the process'**⁹.

Although foreign intervention may have protected minorities on certain occasions and provided education at a time when this was not provided by the state, in the end it led to tragedies and complicated relations between the Christians and the Muslims. The Christians were seen as collaborators with the Europeans and equated with their policies. Such associations continue to have their detrimental effects until later times¹⁰.

⁹From John Joseph's book 'Muslim-Christian relations and inter-Christian rivalries in the Middle East' p115. He refers to 'The current history magazine' November 1924 p243, al-Najm 8 January 1936, P134-39.

¹⁰ A short story may better demonstrate this issue: While on holiday in Greece with a dear Muslim family, my ten years old son was told by the son of the Muslim friend who was of similar age 'Why don't you come and live in your own country? My son told us the story and asked which his country is truly? We were certain that these comments did not come from his parents, as we were certain of their sincerity and friendship and in considering us equal citizens of Iraq and not some



The minister of interior, Muzahim al-Amin al-Pachachi, addressed a group of various religious and ethnic minorities in Mosul promising that they would be treated with equality and that. **'our non-Muslim fellow countrymen are partners with us without distinction or privilege as regards religion or sect'**¹¹. He addressed the Chaldean patriarch to continue to give the help and support that he had already given to the Iraqi government and to influence the Vatican in its satisfaction with the policy that the Iraqi government was following. He warned that certain groups endeavoured to destroy the country's unity at the time when Iraq was entering a new era and was about to be freed from British influence. He exhorted the leaders present during the meeting to work as brothers in unity. Both the Christian leaders and the Vatican apostolic delegation in Iraq expressed their satisfaction with the policy Iraq was pursuing and their readiness to abide by this plea.

Churches of all denominations that paid their respect to the king continued to flourish under the Monarchy. By this time the largest community was that in communion with the Roman Catholic Church, namely the Chaldean and the Syrian Catholic Churches. Next in size was the Syrian Orthodox Church then the Church of the East or the 'Assyrian Church of the East' the Armenian Churches. There was also a small Protestant, Latin, and Greek communities.

foreigners that should one day return to their country 'The West'. The comment presumably came from some ignorant or prejudiced teacher in school.

¹¹ From John Joseph's book 'Christian -Muslim relations and inter-Christian rivalries in the Middle East' page 116.

MEDITATION

Holy Gospel of Jesus Christ according to Saint Matthew

11:20-24.

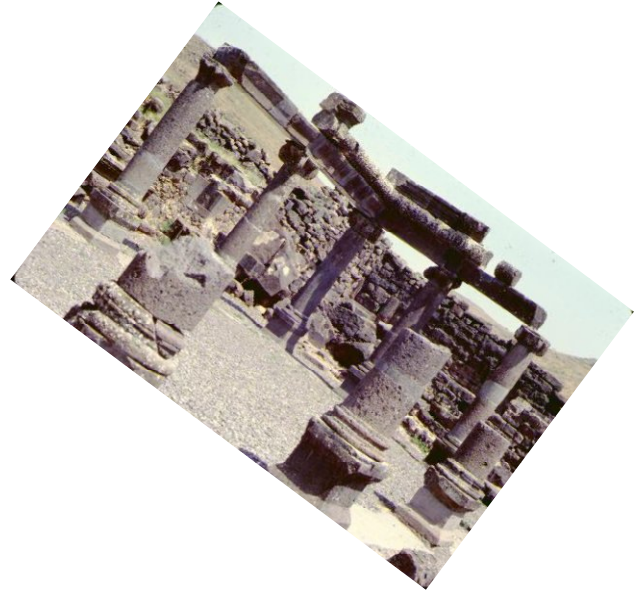
Then he began to reproach the towns where most of his mighty deeds had been done, since they had not repented. Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty deeds done in your midst had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would long ago have repented in sackcloth and ashes. But I tell you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon on the

day of judgment than for you. And as for you, Capernaum: 'Will you be exalted to heaven? You will go down to the netherworld.' For if the mighty deeds done in your midst had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I tell you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom on the day of judgment than for you."

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Commentary of Saint Isaac the Syrian (7th Century), monk near Mosul, Spiritual discourses, 1st series, no.72

"Jesus began to reproach the towns where most of his mighty deeds had been done, since they had not repented"



Repentance after baptism has been given to us as an added grace. For repentance is like a second birth coming from God. What we received in earnest through baptism we receive as a complete gift through repentance. Repentance is the door of compassion, open to those who seek it. By this door we enter into divine compassion but outside it we do not find compassion. «For all have sinned,» Holy Scripture says, «and all are freely justified by his grace» (Rom 3,23-24). Repentance is a second grace. It comes to birth in the heart from faith and fear. Fear is the fatherly crook that guides us until we reach the spiritual paradise. When we arrive then it leaves us and goes away.

FROM THE ARCHIEVE



The late Chaldean Patriarch Emmanuel Toma (+1947) in 1903/IRAQ

A DOCTOR'S PRAYER

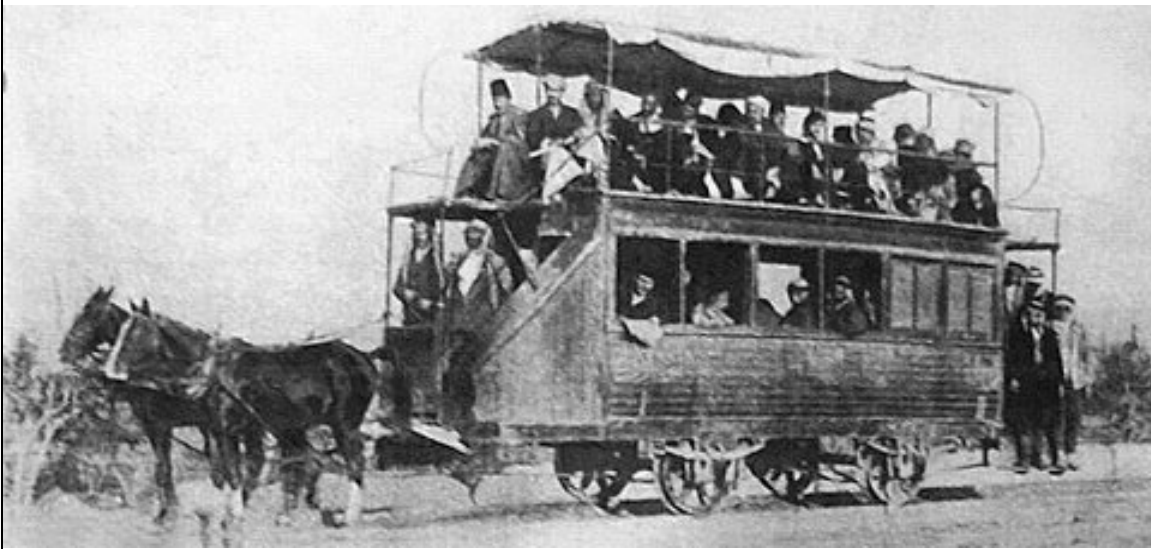
By Ibin Maimoon, an Andalusian doctor (1135-1204AD)

Compiled and translated by Robert Ewan



Fill my soul with the love of my profession,
The love for all mankind.
Do not let the drive for profit or my devotion for glory
Affect the performance of my profession.
It is possible that the enemies of justice, love and humanity, can
deceive and distract me with ease from my noble duty of doing
well for your sons.
Strengthen the vigour of my heart, so that I will always be ready
to serve the poor and the rich, friend or foe, good or evil.
Purify my conscience when I am near the sickbed of my patients.
Let my patients trust me and my skills, and follow my guidance and advice.
When faced with the criticism of the ignorant and their ridicule, let me love my profession.
Be my safe protecting shield from them.
Grant me my God, forgiveness and patience from my argumentative and stubborn patients.
Let me be moderate in everything, except for my hunger and love for knowledge.
Distant from me the thoughts that I know everything and can cure everything.
Give me strength, the will and the opportunity to expand my horizon.
Today, make me able to discover through my science the things that never occurred to me yesterday.
The human thinking will always strive, for more for knowledge is endless.

Kari Transport system in Baghdad 1915



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