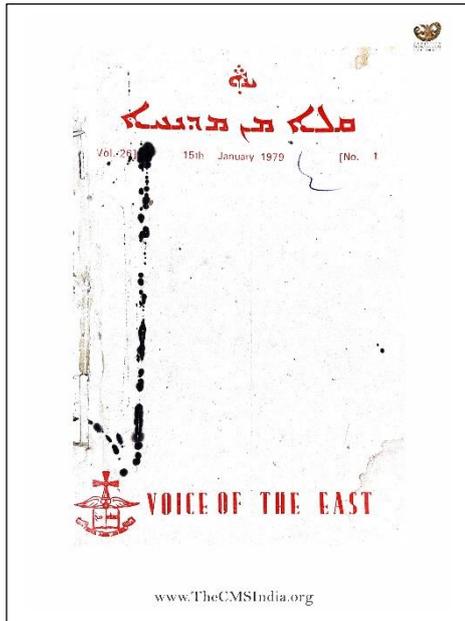


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# VOICE OF THE EAST

Vol. 26 { 1979 February 15 } Book 2

## EDITORIAL

### International year of the child-1979

On December 21, 1976 the General Assembly of the United Nations passed a resolution declaring 1979 the International Year of the Child.

On November 20th, 1959, the General Assembly, with representatives of 78 countries, adopted the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, which had been drafted and redrafted twice since 1950.

In ten carefully worded principles, the Declaration affirms that all children are entitled:

- \* to affection, love, and understanding
- \* to adequate nutrition and medical care
- \* to free education
- \* to all opportunity for play and recreation
- \* to a name and nationality
- \* to special care, if handicapped
- \* to be among the first to receive relief in times of disaster
- \* to learn to be useful members of society and to develop individual abilities
- \* to be brought up in a spirit of peace and universal brotherhood
- \* to enjoy these rights, regardless of race, colour, sex, religion, national or social origin.

Voice of the East urges all over readers to focus our attention on the child during this year of observation internationally. Let Churches and organizations join hands (to observe it in a fitting manner.

— Editor

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Book Review

## **COUNCIL OF EPHEBUS (431 A D.)**

( BY MAR APREM METROPOLITAN )

(Rev. P. L. Francis)

While most of the Churches recognise the Council of Ephesus of 431 as the accredited third Council of Christendom, Mar Aprem Metropolitan of the Church of the East in India, the author of this book "Council of Ephesus 431" has proved in his unbiased discription of facts that this council can only be called "a robber synod." Strange to say, though many have recognised this fact, they have not yet dared to admit it or proclaim the victim of this council Mar Nestorius, Patriarch of constantinople, as a saint and condemn Cyril the Patriarch of Alexandria who engineered this arch villainy.

There are even now Churches and people whose ideas about Nestorius are wrong, but attribute untrue meaning to his theological terms. The author has cleared these wrong notions and proved that Mar Nestorius is the champion who supported the Nicene Creed and that he insisted to uphold it; for this reason the Church of the East honour him as one of the true Fathers of the Church.

Hitherto this theological and historical subject was dealt with only in Syriac by Nestorian Fathers and in the English language by worthy people of other Churches. Therefore the Church of the East is indeed indebted to His Grace Mar Aprem in presenting this treatise to the Christian world to read with patience and understand the actual facts and truth involved.

Mar Aprem describes in Chapter I about the background of this Council explaining how the Christology of

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Alexandria and that of Antioch opposed each other. While the former advocates the word Theotoks (Mother of God) the latter insists that the "divine Logos did not experience a human birth:". Also the principal actors of the tragic Drama of this Council are introduced. Cyril the Patriarch of Alexandria was a learned man from the Monastery of Nitria in the Egyptian desert. Coming out of the monastery he had proved himself as a man of violence supported by his former brother monks. Nestorius who came from a monastery in Antioch was chosen by the Emperor Theodisus II as the Patriarch of the prestigious seat of Constantinople where Emperor had his capital. Nestorius was chosen for his piety, learning and powerful sermons. Cyril now the Patriarch of Alexandria had coveted this post and so considered Nestorius as a rival with hatred and was on the look out to overthrow him. Some are of opinion that the over enthusiasm of Nestorius to suppress heresies gave an opportunity to Cyril.

Chapter II gives a brief description of the Nestorian Controversy. It revolved around the word Theotokos (mother of God) advocated by Cyril. Nestorius explained that as God is not born, virgin Mary cannot be called as the mother of God. She is not a Goddess. The Nicene creed should be followed. The Antiochean Christology is the same. But his rivals interpreted that the denial of using the word Theotokos is as the denial of the divinity of Jesus. Now Cyril saw his opportunity to humiliate the School of Antioch and advance his own Christology. His followers in Constantinople exaggerated the charges against Nestorius. Cyril was well versed in ecclesiastical politics. The unruly and illiterate monks backed him everywhere. Also Cyril had secret influence among the ladies of the Court of the Emperor. The gold of Egypt paved for him a smooth path. The Pope too had considered Nestorius as a rival

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and he joined hands with Cyril against Nestorius. Cyril was to act as a representation of the pope merely to get his support. The Pope was trying to assert his own supremacy. But John the Patriarch of Antioch and the Emperor sided with Nestorius.

The 3rd Chapter describes about the rival Synods at Ephesus. The Emperor had convened it in Ephesus in 431 to end the controversy. It was crowded with inferior clergy and the illiterate monks brought by Cyril. As a self appointed Judge he summoned the council and as he was sure of the majority in his favour in the absence of the delegates from Antioch and other places he succeeded in condemning Nestorius as a heretic-Nestorius was not present, nor his friends-Later John of Antioch conducted a rival council against Cyril in Ephesus condemning Cyril-Thus the split spread as a controversy between Cyril and John. The 4th Chapter speaks how the Emperor intervened to end this controversy. He set aside councils of both parties and had the leaders arrested. Later the friends of Cyril employed greater activity to get the favour of the emperor in which he was successful. Cyril was also greatly supported by the ladies of the Court of the Emperor led by Pulcheria his sister Nestorius felt sad and preferred to return to his former Monastery to seek peace and solitude avoiding the ecclesiastic politics and heretical controversy followed by Cyril and others. "Cyril had put every engine in motion to obtain a victory over orthodoxy" supported by the gold of Egypt. In 433 some sort of compromise was achieved between Cyril and John. Cyril had to subscribe to the formula of two natures of Christ while he was contending for one nature only. This shows that "he was more led by personal antagonism than by theological conviction."

(Contd.)

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## NESTORIAN THEOLOGY

In a previous book we have examined the historical documents relating to the Chaldean Syrian Church in India. In the present book we shall consider the theology of that church as contained in its books and worship. Moreover, such a study will help us to determine some of the historical ambiguities we have noted in the previous book.

As we have seen in our discussion, the Chaldean community in Trichur underwent a change of allegiance resulting in the restoration of its pre-Portuguese, Pre-Sulaqa period.<sup>1</sup> Let us examine the theology of this Church from the books that are in use in this church in the last and in the present century.

Eastern churches generally have not formulated their faith in detailed doctrinal or confessional statements. Such detailed statements are a characteristic of the western churches. This does not, however, mean that the eastern churches have no clear understanding of their faith. They are expressed not so much in statements as in the liturgy, practices and tradition of the church. So our source for an understanding of the faith of the church and the liturgical books is the tradition of the church as given expression in its liturgy and practices.

In our study of the faith and doctrine of the Chaldean Syrian Church, the most important is Christology since it has been the bone of contention in the Nestorian controversy. Since the Trichur Church accepts Nestorius as a saint and his Christological position as sound doctrine it is important for us to see in detail the Christology of this church and to examine the prayer books such as Khudra, Gezza, Kashkul, Kdam Wad Wather, etc. in the following pages.

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In addition to Christology, Mariology and saints are also discussed here. Mariology is undoubtedly connected with Christology. We cannot understand the place of Mary in the Christian Theology apart from the understanding of Christology, since Mary is the mother of Christ.<sup>5</sup> The question of the veneration of saints and prayers to them and for them are also discussed.

The other theological issues such as the Trinity are also discussed here though it does not differ from general Trinitarian position. Because, we cannot understand Christology without understanding the doctrine of Trinity. Moreover, the doctrine of Trinity caused the schism of Arius earlier than Nestorius. Chaldean Syrian Church accepts the first two ecumenical councils of Nicea (A. D. 325) and Constantinople (A. D. 381)

The remaining section deals with the teachings of the church on the understanding of Mission. Worship, practices and Sacraments have been dealt with in a separate book.

In the study of the faith of this church one is confronted with a serious handicap that is the absence of outstanding theologians among the Nestorians during the recent centuries. George Percy Badger, an Anglican priest, visiting the Nestorians in Kurdistan in the middle of the 19th century refers to the ignorance of the members of this church regarding "the particular points on which they differ from other Christians, and fewer still are to be found who can give a reason from the faith which they profess". The situation has not changed very much. Even today we come across the faithful as well as the clergy in this church who do not know much about their own

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doctrines and are not aware of the meanings of the Syriac prayers which they repeat every morning and evening. Nevertheless Badger is full of praise for the practice of rituals. He writes:<sup>2</sup>

Had the Christian faith as professed by the Nestorians been devoid of the outward symbolism of solemn rites, stated and ever-recurring commemorations, appointed seasons of public humiliation and religious festivity, a recognized priesthood consecrated to the especial service of the altar with a solemnity of inauguration calculated to affect and to impress the minds of the people with a due regard for their sacerdotal function and in the discharge of their sacred office keeping up a constant remembrance of the claims of GOD upon the obedience and worship of His intelligent creatures, in all probability they would have mixed with the infidels among whom they dwelt, and have long ceased to exist as a body of professing Christians.

The lack of a recognized formula of creed is also lamented by Badger. It is true even today, except perhaps a small book of doctrines compiled by Mar Abimalek Thimotheus Metropolitan in A.D. 1914 which serves at present as a small Handbook of Doctrines and is called *Messianic Teachings*. The comment made by Badger before this book was compiled is worth quoting. He writes:

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## NEWS

### **Bangalore**

Holy Qurbana was held in Bangalore parish on Sunday 4th February 1979.

### **Cochin 15th anniversary**

The Mar Sliva Church Cochin celebrated its 15th anniversary of the dedication of the Church on 4th February. Mar Aprem celebrated Holy Qurbana. There was a tea party after the service.

### **Gospel meetings at Ernakulam**

Mar Aprem presided over the first three days of the Feb: 1-4 gospel meetings in Ernakulam in which various Christian Churches participated. Dr. Akbar Haqq, the well known Indian evangelist was the main speaker.

### **Parish Festivals**

Mar Addai Sleekha parish, Paravattani, Mar Thoma Sleekha parish, pattikad and Mar Yokhannan Mamdhana parish, East Fort celebrated their parish festivals in the third and fourth week of January.

### **Clergy Conference**

The annual conference of all clergy of the Church of the East in India was held on 23rd January at Mar Poulouse Church, Ancheri. Mar Aprem read a paper "Parish & Evangelism."

### **Condolence**

We are sorry to hear of the sad demise of Deacon Yuash Kelaita of Turlock, California. He was a great friend of the Voice of the East. He was 85. We pray may his soul rest in peace.

### **Subscription**

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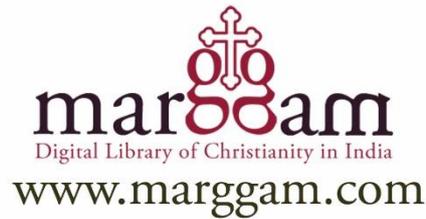
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