

was called back to Mesopotamia by his successor. He returned to Iraq in 1882. The following pages will convince the readers that it is not a schism created in 1882 by Elia Mellus.

In pages 63 – 67 a separate section is given under the caption “Other Eastern Churches in India”. As a matter of fact several details connected with these churches are discussed in the early pages. Such chronological treatment is not clear enough for ordinary readers.

Syro Malabar Church is the largest eastern denomination in India today. But since they have been discussed in connection with early events, there is only brief mention in page 64 of this book. In some stages in history it is difficult to separate these Churches. The events prior to the Synod of Diamper of June 1599 is a common history.

I am grateful to Dr. Nikolai Seleznyov of Moscow who wrote an apt Foreword to this book. He was with me in Moscow in November 2006 when I made a visit to the Assyrian Church in Moscow. He was also present when I gave a lecture on the history of our Church in the University of Moscow. He has already published some books about our Church in the Russian language. He was present at the airport in Moscow on my arrival as well as on my departure.

My gratitude goes to Fr. Michael Vallavanthra M.A., Manager of Mar Narsai Press, Thrissur who showed keen interest in publishing this book. May I express thanks to all who assisted me in the publication of this book.

Mar Aprem

Thrissur 30 November 2007

Foreword

The history of Christianity in India has attracted the attention of many scholars, and an interested reader could find numerous books on the subject, classic as well as recently published ones. The book, for which I am honoured to write this foreword, is however quite a special one. Modern research methods in historical studies require a space between the scholar and his subject matter, the distance still being kept even when the scholar finally masters what he or she is treating.

Students are taught today that the mastery of their material can only be achieved if they keep critical and analytical minds. Yet, when they touch on the matter of history, they soon find out that it lives its own life. Moving traditions and fascinating legends, along with reliable facts, form a milieu in which different people are seen to act, and interpret one another's action differently. Critical analysis here is often insufficient. One needs a guide who, while being a good scholar, is still deeply involved in what has happened. someone who can both teach history and tell eye-opening stories. The author of the present book is such a well-educated and experienced guide.

Mar Aprem, Metropolitan of India, represents the Church of the East. the historical centre of which, Seleucia-Ctesiphon and later Baghdad, is in Mesopotamia. Suffering heavily today from the war in Iraq, the Church has had a glorious history, having been widely spread all over the East. During its history, the Church of the East was often persecuted, and hosts of martyrs, together with other saints of this Church, became its glorious heavenly counterpart. The history of the Church of the East in India was also very complicated and full of difficulties. It is noteworthy that Dr. Mar Aprem represents that part of Indian Christianity which keeps to the faith and traditions of the earliest stage of the history of Indian Christianity. Hence we see a special attention being paid by the author to that period when the Christian tradition in India had not yet experienced any significant dogmatic or cultural shifts and divisions.

The history of the Church of the East in India is clearly divisible into three main phases: from the Apostolic preaching of St. Thomas to the arrival of the Portuguese; from the time of the divisions caused by the newcomers and their moving the original tradition to the time when it could openly reappear; and then from the time when this reappearing original tradition could find a definite place among many others, starting during the previous period, up to our own times. These three phases are seen in Mar Aprem's book, though his treatment is more detailed, and his division results in seven chapters.

The more detailed division is very helpful since it lets the reader see other important events which every historian would recognise as crucial. These are, for example, the testimonies of Cosmas Indicopleustes, a fellow-traveller and spiritual follower of Mar Aba who was to become an outstanding Catholicos of the Church of the East: then the oath taken at Coonen Cross by Syrian Christians nevermore to be under the imposed control of Catholics, - though that oath, taken at Mattanchery, Cochin in 1653, was later broken: and the arrival of Mar Abimalek Timotheos, whose role in the Renaissance of the Church of the East in India is really important.

It is worth mentioning that the final chapter of the book is entitled "The Schism and Unity". To conclude with the unity which was achieved within the Indian part of the Church of the East sounds really optimistic. It should also be noted that historical accounts, reached at first hand, are of special interest. The final part of the book, concerning the events to which the author was an eye-witness, is therefore specially useful for students.

Summing up, I would say that it is good news to see this book finally published, even though it is just a part of Dr. Mar Aprem's dissertation submitted for the D. Th. degree obtained by him quite a long time ago. Hopefully the readers of this amazingly prolific author will have the entire text published as well.

Nikolai N. Seleznyov, MTh, PhD
Institute for Oriental and Classical Studies
Russian State University for the Humanities
Moscow, 24 August 2007 A.D.

Lecture 1

Arrival of St. Thomas to the Arrival of Cosmas From 52 to 520 A.D..

In 52 A.D.. St Thomas arrived in Cranganore, South India and established 7 churches namely Cranganore, Kollam, Palur, Cotecayal (Parur), Niranam, Cocomangalam and Chayal.

There are no historical records dating back to the first century. But the tradition is so strong that many historians believe in the tradition of the arrival of St. Thomas in India.

Rabban Pattu is a famous song composed many years later after the arrival of St. Thomas. It says that Thomas the Apostle coming from Arabia landed in Maliankara in A.D. 50 in the month of *Dhanu* (December or January). After a short stay he went to Mylapuram and proceeded to China. Coming back to Mylapuram port he sailed to Maliankara, being invited by the King of Tiruvanchikulam (Cranganore area). There he founded 7 churches, baptized 3000 pagans and 40 Jews. In A.D. 59 he was called back to Mailapuram by King Cheran who imprisoned the Apostle because he gave money to the poor instead of building a Palace for the King.

After a stay of two and a half years in Mylapore St. Thomas returned to Malabar via Malayattur and visited old places staying in each place for a year. In A.D. 69 Apostle left Malabar and went to the Tamil land. On 3rd July 72 Hindus going to do sacrifice in Kali temple wanted St. Thomas to take part in their worship. St. Thomas destroyed their temple by the sign of the Cross. The Hindus in their fury pierced him with a lance and killed him.

The Song narrates the miracles performed by the Apostles.

He brought back to life 19 dead, drove the devil out of 260 persons, cured 230 lepers, gave sight to 250 blind persons, gave to 220 paralytics the use of their limbs, speech to 20 dumb and restored to health 250 persons given up as hopeless by physicians. In all he converted 17,550 persons of whom 6,850 were Brahmins, 2800 Kshatriyas, 3,750 Vysas and 4,250 Sudras.²

Indian Church History Lectures

**Most. Rev. Dr. Mar Aprem Metropolitan
B.D., M. Th, S.T.M., D. Th., Ph.D.**

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