Marganitha or Pearl : the truth of the faith. (AD 1298)

Abdisho bar Brikha (d. AD 1318)

SermonIndex.net / Church Fathers

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Introduction

A TRANSLATION OF

THE JEWEL,
Written by Mar Abd Yeshua, Nestorian Metropolitan of Nisibis and Armenia, A.D. 1298. In the strength of our Lord Jesus Christ we begin to write the book called Marghianeetha, (lit. "The Jewel,") on the truth of Christianity. Written by the undeserving Abd Yeshua, Metropolitan of Nisibis and Armenia. O Lord, help us. Amen. [Preamble.] O God the Cause of all things, the Enlightener of all men, the Giver of life and existence to all beings corporeal and incorporeal, the Vast Ocean of every blessing, the Unfathomable Depth of every knowledge, the Righteous One whose Nature is all-merciful, the Lover of mankind, and the Eternal Spring of all goodness.----Thy Godhead is worthy of all praise and honour, and to Thy Greatness it is fit that unceasing thanks should be offered for Thy wonderful providence towards the world above and the world beneath, and for the abundance of Thy mercies towards Thy heavenly and earthly creatures. With the humility of a servant we implore Thy Eternity, and with earnest longing we beseech Thy Unspeakable Love, to select us as unsullied and chosen vessels for Thy hidden Treasury, and to make us abodes |381 of beauty and purity for the inhabitation of Thy Trinity : that by Thy help we may be drawn up out of the drowning sea of this material world, and be lifted up to the holy of holies, the place of Thy divine mysteries, and be transformed into That Likeness which is above all likeness; and that through the rays of Thy Everlasting Light we may shine forth for ever, being eternal, and live and be confirmed far beyond the reach of all error of mind or of body, and become the companions of those who are near to Thee in spirit and in act, and be happy both here and there for ever and ever. Amen.

The chief of our community and the father of our people, after having been graciously pleased to approve of my book entitled "the Paradise of Eden," written by me in varied versification, directed me to write another in proof of the truth and certainty of the Christian faith, for the perusal and study of his disciples, and for the benefit of all the lovers of Christ under his sway, as it will be an evidence of his own zeal and renown to those who shall come after. As an obedient servant I obeyed his profitable injunction, and wrote this small book, small in size and brief, but precious in its subject matter. Hence I have called it "The Jewel" of the truth of Christianity; and herein I have briefly treated of the origin, roots,

plants and branches of the teaching of the Church, and have divided it into five parts, each part subdivided into chapters. And now I conjure, and most humbly and earnestly beseech, every lover of God into whose hands this book may fall, or who may read it, copy it, or hear it, that, for the love of Christ, he will not censure me for whatsoever I have written, but on the contrary pray for me, inasmuch as I have spent much labour therein, although as regards myself I am very weak and unworthy. Let every one follow herein whatever approves itself to his own mind; and may God make them and us meet for blessedness, and enable both to attain the truth. |382

PART I.

OF GOD. CHAPTER I. -- That there is a God, and that the world is created, made, and temporal. S. Paul the heavenly apostle, the treasury of the Holy Ghost, and the spiritual philosopher, has, through the Spirit, laid an admirable foundation for Theology, by his saying, that men "should seek God, and feel after Him, and find Him out from His creation." Inasmuch as the artificer is known by his work, and the maker through the thing made. That the world is made, and created, and had a beginning in time we know from this:---- This world is compounded, framed, and disposed, as a whole, and in all its parts; and every thing that is compounded, framed, and disposed, must have a com-pounder, framer, and disposer. That it is compound is proved from its whole being made up of many parts, and from all its bodies being made up of matter and kinds, and from the visible and invisible movers therein. But the most certain witness of its being framed is man, who is a small world in himself, and in whose formation all creation is brought together, as one of the sages has said : "Man is an epitome of the whole world, and of the whole frame of creation."

Now that the world is disposed is clear from the wonderful order of the heavens, the planets, the elements, with all their productive powers, generating plants, trees, mines, and the members of beasts and of men, the astonishing order of which surpasses the wisdom and knowledge of all created beings. |383 In the same way the ancient philosophers concluded that every motion must have a mover, until they arrived at Him Who is not moved, Who is the Cause of all, and of Whom they predicated that He must be good, wise, and almighty. Good, inasmuch as He created the world without a cause [i.e. of His own motion]; wise, because of the admirable order and frame displayed in the universe; almighty, because He overcame the things which are naturally destructive of each other, and brought them together in one agreement. Further, this world is made up of quality and quantity, as respects its bodies and spirits, and of different dimensions and extensions, of which the mind can inquire, why they were not less or more, higher or lower than they are. And when it would know a cause for the appropriated designs, resemblances, and dimensions, of all and of each, and for their existence and continuance as they are, it can find no other than the will and intelligence of the Creator, who created and disposed them after His own will, and as He knew would be best and most fit. The artificer must of necessity exist before the work, in order that it may be proved of him that he is really the maker of that which did not exist before, and that he made it. This truth, then, being confirmed, it results that the

world is made, and had a beginning in time, and is not eternal. It also results that it has a Maker, Who is good, wise, eternal, strong, and possessed of a will.

CHAPTER II. -- That God is one and not many.

That the Maker of this world is one and not many may be proved thus:----It is impossible that many can possess one, perfect, unchangeable, self-consentaneous will; because they must either be co-equal in substance, and in every thing appertaining thereto, which would destroy plurality by the non-existence of distinction, or anything distinguishing, just as it is inconsistent to conceive of the existence of two blacknesses, alike in every respect, and not distinguishable, and having but one and the same substance :----or they must be distinct from |384 each other in substance, and in what appertains thereto; when they would be contrary the one to the other, and destructive the one of the other. But existence could not exist between two opposing makers, nor could a perfect work proceed from them.----Or they must be alike in substance, and distinct in what appertains thereto, each one having an appropriate quality by which he is distinguishable from his associates; when they would all be compounded of the things in which they are alike, and of those in which they are distinguishable. But every compound thing is made, and must have a maker and compounder; hence results the truth of that declaration: "The Lord our God is One God; and though there be gods many and lords many, to us there is but one God."

CHAPTER III. -- That God is Eternal.

Everything that exists must be either eternal or temporal; and everything temporal has a cause and maker, and time and maker must be pre-existent to it. But that the cause of all things is without a cause, and that the Maker of all things has no maker, every right and unprejudiced mind is assured of, because it is natural to it so to judge. It results, then, that the Self-existent is the Creator, and the Eternal, anterior to time, because He Himself created time. For time is a reckoning of the motions of bodies, and as we have already proved that He is the Creator of these, therefore He is eternal, and without beginning. Now that which has no beginning, can be reachable by no end, and must possess of these two opposite extremes whatsoever is the most high and the most glorious, as truth, light, and life, and must be the Best, the Wisest, the Almighty.

CHAPTER IV. -- That God is incomprehensible.

Every thing comprehensible is comprehended either by the senses, or by the mind; and that which is comprehended by |385 the senses must be either a body or an accident. But the adorable God is not a body; for every body is compound, and every body occupies space, and every body has limits, all which is opposed to the Self-existent. Nor is He an accident; for an accident cannot exist alone, but requires a substance wherein to exist. All that is comprehended by the mind, the mind must either stretch to the ends of its length and breadth, (which are parts of its limits distinguishing it from what it is not,) in order that it may in reality comprehend it; but hereby the thing is at once limited, and extension and dimension are foreign to the nature of the Self-existent:----or the mind does not stretch to its end, or to the boundaries which limit it; but this is not comprehension. Hence the Divine Nature is incomprehensible, it being impossible for the mind to comprehend aught of the knowledge of the Self-existent, except that He does exist.

It is said of a certain great philosopher, that he always used this prayer: ”O Thou cause of the motion of my soul, grant me to know that subtle essence which moves me, what it is, and what it is like. But not even that subtle essence wherewith I am endowed, and whereby I am capable of knowing, can comprehend what Thou art, and how Thou art. This only it can know, that Thou dost exist.” Now, when we say [of God] that He is invisible, incomprehensible, impassible, and immutable, we do not describe what He is, but what He is not.

CHAPTER V. -- Of the Trinity.

Everything that exists must be either a material body whose existence is the subject of accidents and changes, and is acted upon by whatever is opposed to it; or not a body, and consequently not the subject of any of these things. Now, we have already proved, that God, (glory be to His incomprehensibility,) is not a body, and therefore is not subject to anything pertaining to materiality, from which He is infinitely removed. Whatever is immaterial, and not subject to anything appertaining to matter, the traditions of the ancients call Mind. |386 And whatever is exclusive of matter, and of what appertains thereto, must be knowing, and must know himself, because himself is ever present and known to him, and he is not dependent on anything but himself. And whatever knows himself must be living. Therefore God is Wise and Living. Now, he who is wise is wise because of his wisdom; and he who is living is living because he has life. This is the mystery of the Trinity, which the Church confesses of the Adorable Essence: The Mind, Wisdom, and Life, Three co-essential proprieties in One, and One who is glorified in three proprieties. [The Church] has called the Mind, Father and Begetter, because He is the Cause of all, and First. [She] has called the Son, Wisdom and Begotten, because He is begotten of the Mind, and by Him everything was made and created. [She] has called Life the Holy Ghost, and Proceeding, because there is no other Holy Ghost but He. He who is Holy is unchangeable, according to the expositions of received expositors; and this is that which is declared by John the Divine, the son of Zebedee: "In the beginning was the Word;" and, "the Light is the life of man."

Now, as the reasonable soul has a three-fold energy, mind, word, and life, and is one and not three; even so should we conceive of the Three in One, and One in Three. The sun also, which is one in its disk, radiance, and heat, is another simile adduced by the second Theologus Paul, the chosen vessel: "He is the brightness of His glory, and the Express Image of His Person;" and, again: "Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God." Further, every thing that exists is either an accident or a substance. But the Self-existent can in no wise be susceptible of accidents. Therefore these three proprieties must be essential, and are on this account called persons, and not accidental powers, and do not cause any change or plurality in the essence of the Self-existent; for He is the Mind, the Same He is the Wisdom, the Same He is the Life, Who ever begat without cessation, and puts forth [makes to proceed] without distance [i.e. without removal from Himself.] These things [cessation and distance] are infinitely removed from Him, and appertain to bodies. |387

Now, there is no real likeness between created natures and the Nature of the Self-existent, and a simile does not in every thing resemble that which is compared by it; for then the simile and that which is compared by it would be the thing itself, and we [who have just instituted several comparisons] should not be unlike the man who attempts to compare a thing by the self-same thing. The mystery of the Trinity is expressed in the words of the Old Testament: ”Let us make man in our own image, after our likeness; ”the occurrence of the letter noon three times in this sentence is an indication of the Trinity. The ”Holy” thrice repeated in the seraphic hymn, as mentioned by Isaiah, joined with one ”Lord,” attests Three Persons in One Essence. The words of David, also, are of the same import: ”By the Word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth;” and many other like references. Let the heathen, then, and Jews who rail at the truth of the Catholic Church, on account of her faith in the Trinity, be confounded and put to shame. Here endeth the first part. |388

PART II.

ON THE CREATION.

CHAPTER I. -- On the Creation of the Universe.

He to Whom time was before He wrought, and subsequently began to work, must have wrought either by compulsion, or through necessity, or from a motive of goodness. But God did not create the world of compulsion, because there was no other God beside Him, nor any other Essence to compel Him to act. Neither of necessity, because His Essence is perfect, and in nothing wanting, and He is the Giver of all perfection, and is Himself imperfect in nothing, either in His Essence, or in what appertains thereto. It justly results, then, that He created the world of His goodness and love, He being essentially the origin of all good and bounteous things.

First He created the Angels, the heavens, and the four elements, the light, and the planets. After that trees and plants; then the different classes of animals, with their various species. And when He had adorned the universe with every good thing, and made it like the chamber of a bridegroom, and a wonderful paradise, on the sixth day, after the heavens and the earth with all their hosts were finished, He created the first Adam, the father of the human race, "in the Image of God created He him," according to the testimony of the blessed Moses, the first-born of the Prophets, and the first of the scribes. And he was called an image [of God] for three reasons : First, on account of the reasonable soul with which he was endowed, and which |389 is a likeness of the Divine Image in a twofold respect, first, in its spirituality, subtilty, and incorporeality; and, again, because in his mind, word, and life, man is an emblem of the Trinity. Secondly, on account of his power over all, [Gen. i. 26,] his sovereignty, and his free will. Thirdly, because from him God intended to take a temple for His union [thereto], and to be worshipped of all with it for ever and ever.

CHAPTER II. -- On Man's First Sin.

After God had thus created man a reasonable image, a wonderful temple, and a bond of the universe, in short, a small world existing in the great world, He took from him a rib and made therewith woman, and placed them in the delectable paradise of Eden which He had prepared for them, and commanded them that they might eat of all the trees in paradise, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil they were not to eat. And He further decreed, that in the day they should eat thereof they should die the death. Now, hereby God declared the freedom of man's will; for, had they not been free to act, He would have wronged them in punishing their transgression of the command; whereas, if they were really free agents, He justly condemned them, inasmuch as with wicked intent, and in their own self-sufficiency, they trampled upon and despised the Divine command, in order that they might become gods, and be released from obedience to their Creator, after the advice of the devil who deceived them. Because of this, they became debtors to death, and fell under subjection to the devil, and were shorn of their glory, and put on shame, and were removed from the companionship of angels, and became mourners in a land of curses.

Their children also, because they walked in the selfsame way of transgression, bound more tightly the yoke of the devil, and of death, on their necks, and these forgat their Creator, and walked after their own hearts' lust, and the desires of their own minds, and nourished iniquity, and strengthened rebellion,----"who, being past feeling, gave themselves over unto |390 lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. On this account justice woke up, and led Noah and his family into the ark, which the Long-suffering had ordered to be made in the hope of their repentance. And every mortal was destroyed by the flood, and the earth was cleansed from their wickedness. And thus after two thousand years, more or less, that barbarous dispensation was brought to an end.

CHAPTER III. -- On the Divine Laws and Ordinances, and of the Prophets.

When Noah went forth from the ark, God gave him ordinances adapted to the infancy of human nature; but, gradually, as his race increased, they forgat these, and some of them deemed it right to worship the images of those whom they revered, whilst others joined in a ruinous confederacy, and made a vain counsel that they would build a tower and a place wherein to rebel against God; so that in case of another flood being sent in His anger, it might serve them as a place of refuge; or in case of His commanding any thing contrary to

their will, they might thereby ascend and war against heaven. And after that God had confounded their tongues, and scattered them to the four winds of heaven, because of this, they added idolatry to their wickedness, and sacrificed their sons and their daughters to devils, and served the creature more than the Creator. God then chose our father Abraham, from whose seed He purposed to take to Himself an everlasting temple, gave him the covenant of circumcision, and entered into a compact with him, and in him began the way of the fear of God called Hebrew. After this, through successive generations, God raised up of his family good and righteous persons, who laboured in vain to make men return unto the Lord. Then Moses, the head of the Prophets, was chosen, and to him were given written laws and ordinances, such as were not vouchsafed to the three dispensations which preceded him.

And in him began the Jewish dispensation, which like a child who has not yet attained to perfect knowledge, was taught to read in the old law, which enjoined that |391 good should be done towards relations, and towards the good, and evil to evil doers and enemies. It moreover represented God after the similitude of man, with bodily members, as dwelling at Jerusalem, as abiding on Mount Sion and among the congregation of Israel. It makes no mention of hell, or of the kingdom of heaven; but it threatens the transgressors of its laws with corporal punishments, such as submission to enemies, the being scattered among the heathen, with drought, famine, poverty, and barrenness; whilst, on the other hand, the good are rewarded with earthly and temporal rewards. All the Prophets who succeeded Moses followed and confirmed this way, and for it they submitted to every species of trial and persecution.

CHAPTER IV. -- Prophecies concerning Christ.

All the holy Prophets prophesied of Christ, Who was to bring salvation to the world, and to create all things new. And, in order not to lengthen our discourse, we shall adduce the witness of six of the greatest among them. In the first place Israel, the father of the Prophets declared : "The sceptre," that is, a king, "shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver," that is, a Prophet, "from between his feet, until He shall come Whose it is, and Him shall the nations wait for;" together with the remaining portion of the chapter. Moses says : "the Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a great prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto Him shall ye hearken .... and whosoever will not hearken to that Prophet shall be cut off from among his people." The deliverance of Israel, moreover, out of the hand of Pharaoh, was a type of the redemption of all from under the power of the chief of this world. The manna, also, prefigured the mystery of our Lord's Body; the water from the rock, the drinking of His Blood; and the brazen serpent, the life-giving Cross.

David likewise fully prophesied of Christ in the Psalm, "Why do the heathen rage?" and in that beginning with "O |392 Lord our God, how glorious is Thy Name in all the earth!" and in that, "My heart is inditing of a good matter;" as also in the Psalm, "The Lord said unto my Lord, sit Thou on My right hand." Isaiah prophesies : "Behold a Virgin shall conceive, and bring forth a Child, and they shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us, and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Prince of Peace, the Everlasting Father." And, again: "He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him;" to the end of the chapter. Zechariah says: "Fear not, O daughter of Sion, behold thy King cometh unto thee, lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass."

Daniel, after having fixed the period of the seventy weeks which were to precede His appearance, writes : "Messiah shall be cut off, and shall have nothing; and the holy city shall be destroyed, and the sacrifice and oblation shall cease." And, again : "I beheld till the thrones were placed, and the Ancient of Days did sit; and I saw one like the Son of Man come with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days; and there was given to Him dominion and kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him; for His dominion

shall not pass away; and His kingdom shall not be destroyed." Here endeth the Second Part. |393

PART III.

ON THE CHRISTIAN DISPENSATION. CHAPTER I. -- On the advent of Christ, and of His union [of the divine with the human nature.]

Justice is an universal benefit, since whatsoever man would have others do to him, justice demands that he should do to them; and whatsoever he would not have men do to him, let him not do the same to them. This is the Law and the Prophets, as saith the Saviour. But as the prophets could not hereby reduce to perfect order the lives of men, and bring them to a knowledge of the truth by causing them to forego idols and follow the divine commands, in order that they might be saved, there remained no other way for the renewal of our nature, and for the reformation of our lives, but that God should appear in the world. Like a sovereign, who having sent many messengers to dispense the affairs of his kingdom, and to put in order those whom he would reconcile, if these should be overcome because of their weakness, and be unable to effect any thing, he goes in person to put those of that country in order. But since God is invisible, and because were it possible for Him to appear to the created as He is, all men would be destroyed by the effulgence of His brightness;

therefore He took to Himself a man for His habitation, and made him His temple, and the place of His abiding, and thus united an offspring of mortal nature to His Divinity, in an everlasting, indissoluble union, and made it a co-partaker of His sovereignty, authority, and dominion.----That is, the Divine Essence enlightened the human nature by its union therewith, as the pure and faultless jewel is enlightened |394 by the rays of the sun falling upon it, causing the nature of that which is enlightened to be like the nature of that which enlightened it, and causing the sight to be affected by the rays and brightness pertaining to the nature of that which received, as it is by the nature of that which communicated, the light, no change whatever taking place in the agent by his action on that which was acted upon. And, again, just as speech hidden in the soul is united to written discourse by the consent of the mind, and is transmitted from one spot to another without itself moving, from its place,----so the Word of the Father united with the man of us, through the mind, and came into this our world, without, in His self-existence, leaving the Father :----"The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. A devout and pious man laboured for many years in prayer to God, that He would disclose to him the meaning of this declaration. A voice from heaven was at length vouchsafed to him, saying :

" Ascribe to the flesh the word 'became,' and to the 'Word" ascribe 'dwelt among us.' " Such was the answer.

CHAPTER II. -- On the life and actions of Christ.

When the angel saluted the Blessed Virgin, saying: ”the Lord be with thee; blessed art thou among women;” God the Word, beyond all doubt, united Himself at that moment with that which He formed simultaneously, and without human seed, in the womb of the Holy Virgin, and to which He gave the name of the ”Highest;” at whose birth, also, He wrought miracles, and diffused joy over the whole world, and endued It with perfect wisdom, grace and stature. And when He had attained the age of thirty years, in the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar, and the three hundred and forty-first of Alexander, He presented Himself to the baptism of John. Not that His purity needed a baptism of water; but in order that He might become a pattern and example to us in every thing. He was baptized, and He commanded that we should be baptized. He fasted, and directed us to fast. He prayed and taught us to pray. He humbled Himself, and instructed us to be humble. He was |395 lowly in the exercise of every virtue, and enjoined us to be lowly.----”Whosoever shall do and teach these things, shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”

And after having wrought signs and wonders in the land of Judah, such as, the healing of the sick, the raising of the dead, the opening of the blind eyes, the making the lame to walk, casting out devils, and revealing hidden mysteries, He drew near to the time when He was to pay the debt of the first Adam’s transgression, and to cancel the writing of condemnation against his race, and to reveal, by an example, the mystery of the general resurrection. He suffered, and was crucified under Pontius Pilate, He died, and was buried, and rose again on the third day, as it is written. After His resurrection, He appeared to His disciples through many signs during the space of forty days, saying unto them : ”All power is given unto Me in heaven and on earth. As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you. Go and disciple all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and, behold, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.” ”And He brought them out to Bethany, and lifted up His hands and blessed them; and, as He blessed them, He separated from them, and ascended up to heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. Then the disciples went forth and preached in every place, the Lord helping them, and confirming their words by the miracles

which they wrought." This is the origin of Christianity; its truth we shall establish in the following chapter.

CHAPTER III. -- On the truth of Christianity.

Christianity is the belief in One Divine Essence, in Three Persons, and the confession of Christ as has already been explained, and the belief in a resurrection of the dead, and a judgment to come, and a new and eternal life, all which articles of faith are spiritual and unworldly. For the rational soul has a threefold power, lust, anger, and discriminating judgment, from |396 the excess or the want of a due proportion of which, evil acts and follies proceed, and from the harmony of which proceed virtues. Our Gospel, however, inculcates with regard to each of these what is superior to nature. Thus, with regard to lust, Christ saith : "Whosoever shall look upon a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery already in his heart." Again: "Be ye like the birds of heaven, and like the flowers of the field." And, again : "Take no thought for the morrow." Of anger, He saith : "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, and do good to them that despitefully use you." Of discriminating judgment; that the kingdom of God is life everlasting, and everlasting life is a knowledge of the truth :----"This is eternal life, to know Thee the Only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." What exalted doctrine is this! and what truth can be superior to this, or more certain?

The truth of Christianity is indicated by this also, that like philosophy, it is divided into theory and practice. The end of its theory is truth, as we have already shown, and shall yet further show; and the end of its practice is virtue, as we proved by what we said of the powers of the soul, in regard of which it demands purity of thought, and the sanctification of the spirit, and enjoins good to be done to evil-doers, the love of our enemies, and that we should bless those who curse us. The truth of the Christian religion is still further established by the credibility of those who preached it,----who preached and wrote of Christ,----men, who without exercising any compulsion, and without holding out any lure, were received by people of various tongues, by kings, sages, and philosophers; for whosoever abandons the religion of his forefathers, and follows him who calls him to embrace another, must do so either from fear, or because of the allurement held out to him, or he is led by the supernatural signs and wonders by which it is attested. But the blessed Apostles had neither weapons nor soldiery to terrify any; neither had they possessions or riches wherewith to allure; it results, then, that the world bowed to listen to them on account of

the supernatural signs and wonders which they wrought. But God does not work miracles by the hands of false men, lest they should cause His servants to err, and corrupt the work of His hands. The Apostles, therefore, were true |397 and not false men; and if they were true, those things which we confess of Christ, and which we have received from their preaching and writings, the Christian Church holds to be true, because those who delivered them were true.

CHAPTER IV. -- On the different Sects.

When the light of Christ's brightness, shed abroad by these preachers, had scattered the darkness of error from the face of the world, idolatry ceased, and the worship of pictures and molten images passed away, and the earth was cleansed from the abomination of sacrifices and unclean rites, and the inhabitants of the world learned goodness, holiness, humility, and gentleness, and the earth was full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. This filled Satan with envy and rage, and he forthwith proceeded to act towards us as he had acted towards Adam; so that after the Apostles, and their disciples, and their immediate successors, had slept, Christians rose up against each other, and divisions and controversies sprung up among them, and heresies without number increased in the Church of Christ, until they went so far as to compass each other's destruction, and regarded each other as infidels deserving of death. How many false doctrines were rife, and how many crimes were perpetrated in those days, we learn from the histories of Mar Eusebius. On account of these things, the Oecumenical Council of the 318 was convened, by order of the good and CHRIST-loving Emperor and Saint Constantine, in the year of Alexander 636, and by the power of the Spirit, and by proofs adduced from the Holy Scriptures, they decreed, interpreted, enlightened, disclosed, manifested, and confirmed, the orthodox faith; and by strong argument, and with words of sound doctrine, they condemned all the heresiarchs, excommunicated and cut them off from the body of Christ, as being diseased members not susceptible of cure. And thus the Catholic Church, was purified from every stain of vain worship and false doctrine, and all the world, from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, was of one mind, and of one Church. |398

About one hundred years after this a dispute arose between Cyril Patriarch of Alexandria, and Mar Nestorius Patriarch of Byzantium, respecting the Incarnate Word. In the confession of the Trinity all Christians agree, for all receive the Nicene Creed, which creed confesses that the Trinity is co-equal in essence, dignity, power and will; and all confess of Christ that He is perfect God and perfect Man, being fully persuaded thereof by the declarations of the Gospels, of Saint Paul, and of the 318 Fathers. The dispute which now arose respected the manner of the Union, and the words used to express it. Cyril maintained that we ought to call the Virgin "Mother of God," and wrote twelve Sentences excommunicating

all who should, in any way, draw a distinction between the divinity and humanity of Christ after the union. Nestorius replied to these Sentences, and showed that they were erroneous, and with respect to the appellation "Mother of God," he argued that it did not exist either in the writings of the Prophets or Apostles. The Prophets prophesied of Christ to come, and the Apostles preached of that same Christ, predicted by the Prophets as coming into the world, that this was He Who was born of Mary. Now, were we to use the expression "Mother of Man' only, we should be like Paul of Samosata, and Photinus of Galatia, who said of our Lord that He was but a mere man like one of the prophets, and on this account they were excommunicated;

so if we use the bare expression "Mother of God," we become like Simon and Menander, who say that God did not take a body from Mary; but that His life and actions were in appearance only and not real, and on that account they also were excommunicated. But we call the Virgin "Mother of Christ," the name used by Prophets and Apostles, and which denotes the union generally. Cyril, in the Sentences which he drew up, and in which he excommunicated all who shall distinguish between the divinity and humanity of Christ, virtually excommunicates the Holy Scriptures, since the Apostles and Prophets do distinguish between the natures of the Person respecting Whom the dispute is, and from these the holy Fathers learnt to confess of Christ, that He is perfect God and perfect Man, the Likeness of God and the likeness of a servant, the Son of David and the Son of the Highest, flesh and Word. |399

From this time commenced the division of the Church; some followed Nestorius, whilst others went after Cyril, both parties mutually anathematizing each other; from which resulted sects, and the slaughter, exile, imprisonment, and persecution of the Fathers, such as had never been before, as is fully recorded in the histories of Irenaeus, Bishop of Tyre. After this, tumult and discord went on increasing until the zealous and Christ-loving Marcian undertook to convene the great Council of the 632 in the town of Chalcedon, and commanded that both parties should be examined and judged, and that whosoever did not follow the truth and faith as declared by this Council should be expelled the Church, in order that the Church might be united in one perfect agreement. This Council confirmed the confession, that there are two natures in Christ, distinct in the attributes of each, and also two wills, and anathematized all who should speak of mixture, which destroys the two natures. But because in Greek there is no difference between the meaning of the word Person and Parsopa, they confessed but one Person in Christ. And when the party of Cyril was not satisfied with the expression "two Natures," and the party of Nestorius with the expression "one Person," an imperial edict was issued declaring all who did not consent to this doctrine degraded from their dignity. Some were made to submit through compulsion; but the remainder maintained their own opinions.

Christianity thus became divided into three sects : the first confessing One Nature and One Person in Christ, which doctrine is held by the Copts, Egyptians, and Abyssinians, after the tradition of Cyril their Patriarch; and this is called the Jacobite sect, from a certain

Syrian doctor called Jacob, who laboured zealously to spread the doctrines of Cyril among the Syrians and Armenians. The second sect are those who confess the doctrine of two natures and one Person in Christ, and these are called "Melchites," because it was imposed forcibly by the king. This is the doctrine which is received by the Romans called Franks, and by the Constantinopolitans who are Greeks, and by all the people of the West, such as the Russians, Alani, Circassians, Assaï, [?] Georgians, and their neighbours. But the Franks differ from the rest of these in maintaining that the Holy |400 Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son, and in their use of unleavened bread in the Lord's Supper. These two sects accepted the appellation "Mother of God;" but the Jacobites have added to the canon : "Holy God," &c. "Who wast crucified for us."

The third sect which confesses two Natures and two Persons in Christ is called the sect of the Nestorians. As to the Easterns, however, because they never changed their faith, but kept it as they received it from the Apostles, they were unjustly styled "Nestorians," since Nestorius was not their Patriarch, neither did they understand his language; but when they heard that he taught the doctrine of the two Natures and two Persons, one Son of God, one Christ, and that he confessed the orthodox faith, they bore witness to him, because they themselves held the same faith. Nestorius, then, followed them, and not they him, and that more especially in the matter of the appellation "Mother of Christ." Therefore when called upon to excommunicate him, they refused, maintaining that their excommunication of Nestorius would be equivalent to their excommunication of the Sacred Scriptures and the holy Apostles, from which they received what they professed, and for which we are censured together with Nestorius, as shall appear in the following chapter.

CHAPTER V. -- Refutation of the foregoing Creeds.

After having carefully distinguished the above Creeds, we shall now briefly refute two of them. First: If it is right to believe that there is but one nature and one Person in Christ after the union, either the human nature and person are destroyed through the union;----here is destruction, not salvation. Or, the Divine Nature and Person are destroyed;----a monstrous profanity. Or, the two natures and two persons were mingled and confounded together;----behold hence a corruption! neither divinity nor humanity any longer existing. Mar Yohanan bar Pinkhâyé adduced the name |401 of Christ, written with black and red ink, by way of illustrating this confused union which the Jacobites believe, and the union of adherence which we believe; thus, CHRIST, behold corruption! behold confusion! Is it red ink? It is not. Is it black ink? It is not. Now look at this CHRIST behold beauty! behold light! Is it black ink? It is. Is it red ink? It is.

Secondly: The Divine Nature and Person, before and after the union, is an eternal, uncompounded Spirit. But the human nature and person is a temporal and compound body. Now, if the union destroys the attributes which distinguish the natures and persons in Christ, either the one or the other of these becomes a nonentity, or they become a thing which is neither God nor man. But if the union does not destroy the attributes which distinguish the natures and persons in Christ; then Christ must exist in two natures and two persons, which united in the Parsopa of the Filiation. Thirdly, the Gospel declares, that the infant Christ ”increased in stature, and in wisdom, and in favour with God and man.” And the Apostle Peter says : ”Jesus, a Man of God, approved among you by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you.” And, again, S. Paul, the master-builder of the Church testifies, that ”there is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus.” These three quotations most clearly affirm of Christ, after the union, that He existed in two natures and two persons, and whosoever shall dispute these testimonies is far removed from all truth.

CHAPTER VI. -- On the title ”Mother of God.”

First: If the Virgin is the ”Mother of God,” and we understand by the word ”God,” Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; then she brought forth the Trinity, and not the one only Son. Secondly : If the Virgin is the ”Mother of God,” and if He whom she brought forth suffered, died, and was buried, as the |402 four Evangelists testify, either ye hold that He died in reality, (and he who really dies has no power whatever to revivify others or himself, but must remain in death for ever,) and thus ye declare false the saying that He rose again : Or, ye hold that He died in appearance only, and in the same way rose again, (in which case He could not have arisen in reality, seeing that He did not die in reality;) then the hope of the resurrection is vain, since hereby the saying that ”He hath raised us up with Christ” is made void.

Thirdly : If Mary is the ”Mother of God,” and Peter testifieth of Him whom she brought forth, saying: ”Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God;” then, according to you, she is not the Mother of Christ, but the mother of His Father, and Christ is her grandson, not her Son, and she is the mother of His Father. Where, then, is the mother of Christ?

CHAPTER VII. -- Of four Persons.

First. If by our confession of Two Persons in Christ there result four Persons in the Trinity; then, by your confession of two natures in Christ there must equally result two natures in the Deity. Secondly. If the Trinity, as is admitted by all, is eternal and uncompounded, and the human person temporal and compound, how can this, in any way, be considered as a fourth person to That? Thirdly. If we maintained two Sons in Christ, this charge might justly be brought against us; because the Father and the Spirit, with these two Sons, would make four persons. But seeing that we confess but one Son, one Christ, one Parsopa, we have no fear of being guilty of blasphemy.

CHAPTER VIII. -- Of the Church.

The term ”Church” imports a congregation, and an assembly met together to unite in acts of celebration. It is a model of |403 things above; for as the nine orders which minister to the Most High are divided into three degrees, just so the Church. The Patriarchs, Metropolitans, and Bishops, occupy the place of the Cherubim, Seraphim, and Thrones; the Archdeacons, Deans, and Presbyters, the place of the Dominions, Virtues, and Powers; the Deacons, Subdeacons, and Readers, the place of the Principalities, Archangels, and Angels. The name ”Church,” as we have said, has this signification; for Christ does not call material foundations and stones ”a Church,” but the congregation which believes in Him. The nave and the altar are called the Church metaphorically, just as the people of a city are called by the name of the city, as when it is said: ”all the city went out to meet Jesus.” And just as the city itself is often called by the name of the city, as when it is said; ”He entered into the city.” |404

PART IV.

OF THE CHURCH SACRAMENTS.

CHAPTER I. -- On the number of the Church Sacraments.

The Sacraments of the Church, according to the Divine Scriptures, are seven in number; 1. The Priesthood, which is the ministry of all the other Sacraments. 2. Holy Baptism. 3. The Oil of Unction. 4. The Oblation of the Body and Blood of Christ. 5. Absolution. 6. The Holy Leaven. 7. The sign of the life-giving Cross. These are necessary because of the wants of man in this carnal world. In order for a man to be, and to exist in the world, he must be born of a carnal mother through a carnal father, though the figure and perfection of man come from the Father of Lights. In like manner, in order to belong to a world of immortality, it is requisite to be born of the spiritual womb of baptism, through the spiritual father, the priest, notwithstanding that form and perfection are imparted by the Holy Ghost, and by the power of The Highest.

Further, it is requisite for every one belonging to this world to sustain his temporal life by temporal food, and earthly drink. So, in like manner, spiritual meat and divine drink are a means to him who is baptized for sustaining his eternal life in God. Again, as every one who is in the body, through the changes of the times, and bad living, is subject to sickness and disease, and is in need of physicians who will restore him to his former health if he follow their injunctions; so the man of God, through the effects of sin, and immoral living, falls into the |405 disorders of iniquity, and receives health from the priests of the Church, the spiritual physicians, if he orders himself after their directions. The Oil of Unction is used in the birth which is by baptism, and the Holy Leaven is used in the spiritual food of the Body of Christ. The Sign of the life-giving Cross is that by which Christians are ever kept, and by it all the other Sacraments are sealed and perfected.

But some Christians who possess not the Leaven reckon Marriage, according to Christ's ordinance, (whereby in the place of a mortal deceased another is raised up,) the seventh Sacrament. Should any from without inquire what constitutes the holiness and sacramental nature of each of these Seven Sacraments, we reply that these three things sanctify them : First, a true priest, who has attained the priesthood rightly, according to the requirements of the Church. Secondly, the word and command of the Lord of Sacraments, whereby He ordained each of them. Thirdly, right intention and confirmed faith on the part of those

who partake of them, believing that the effect of the Sacraments takes place by a heavenly power. We shall now treat briefly of each of the Sacraments separately.

CHAPTER II. -- Of the Priesthood.

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. It is divided into imperfect, as was 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 S. Peter, in the town of Caesarea Philippi: "To thee I give the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatsoever thou shalt bind on 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. Feed My sheep. Feed My sheep." Its ornament and perfection from Christ's breathing |406 on the Apostles when He said : "Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whosesoever sins ye remit, they are remitted; and whosesoever sins ye retain, they are retained."

The old Priesthood was one of generation, was not irrespective of family, and did not depend upon the will of those who succeeded to it. But the new Priesthood handed down from the Apostles, and imparted in the Church through the laying on of hands, is committed to those who are deemed worthy of it after examination had of their life and conversation.-- --"Let these be first proved, and then let them minister being found blameless." Therefore the perfection of this and the imperfection of that Priesthood is evident, since we know that very many wicked children are begotten to righteous fathers, as Cain, Ham, and the children of Lot, of Moses, Eli, and others; and good children are begotten of wicked fathers, as Melchizedek, [?] Abraham, and others. Moreover, the former Priesthood was conferred by material oil; but this latter by the immaterial unction of the Spirit, through the laying on of hands.

As to the matter of the rules whereby he who desires the priesthood is to be tried, whether he be worthy or not, let him who wishes to know this attend to the words of S. Paul, the tongue of the Spirit : "If a man desire the presbyterate he desireth a good work. A Presbyter, then, must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre, but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the Church of God?) not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without;

lest he fall into reproach, and the snare of the devil. Likewise must the deacons be grave, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. And let these," that is, all the degrees of the priesthood, " be first proved, and then let them use the office of a minister being found blameless." |407

CHAPTER III. -- Of Baptism.

Baptism is the immersion in and the washing with water, and of this there are five kinds : 1. The washing off of the filth of the body, as is commonly done by all men. 2. The legal washings, whereby it was believed that purity towards God from all carnal uncleanness was attained. 3. Those of the traditions of the elders, such as "the washing of cups, and pots, brazen vessels, and tables," and as "when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not." 4. The baptism of John, whereby he preached only repentance and the forgiveness of sins. 5. The baptism of our Saviour, which is received, through the Holy Spirit, for the gift of adoption, for the resurrection from the dead, and for everlasting life; which is "the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ." For as the circumcision of the flesh was given for a sign denoting those who were of the family of Israel of old according to the flesh; so the baptism of Christ is a sign of spiritual relationship to the new Israel, viz., those who are the called, and the children of God. "Those who received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God."

The matter of Baptism is pure water. "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." The form, baptism "in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost," according to the words of the Saviour. There is also a Sixth Baptism, that of blood, as our Lord has noticed: "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened until it is accomplished." Also a Seventh Baptism, of tears, after the saying of the Fathers. These two are allied to the Fifth, which is an emblem of death and the resurrection.

CHAPTER IV. -- Of the Oil of Unction.

The Oil of Unction is an apostolical tradition, and there is |408 still kept up in the Church of God a succession of that which was consecrated by the Apostles. The end of its use we learn from its own physical properties, and from the sacred Scriptures. The Bible instructs us that, according to the Law, such as were set apart for the typical priesthood, or for earthly sovereignty, were anointed with the oil of unction. And in like manner with us: such as are separated to the kingdom of heaven and to the true priesthood, must be anointed with this same manifoldly symbolical unction, in order that they may be truly anointed ones and brethren of Christ, Who by His union with God is truly and supernaturally anointed. "Therefore hath the Lord Thy God anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows." He is the Anointer and the Anointed : the Anointer by His Divinity, and the Anointed by His humanity.

As to the natural properties of oil, we know that the most eminent artists, after having completed a picture with all its rich colouring, anoint it with oil, in order that it may not easily be injured, or receive damage when brought into contact with other objects. In like manner, those who are drawn after the Likeness of the Heavenly King are for the same reason anointed, lest they should receive damage from the chances of the world and from the opposition of the devil. The matter of the Oil of Unction is pure olive oil. The form the apostolical benediction.

CHAPTER V. -- Of the Oblation.

The Oblation is a service offered up by those below to those above, through material elements, in hope of the forgiveness of sins and of an answer to prayer. The old oblations consisted of irrational animals and of the blood of bodies, but with us the Only-begotten of God, Who took upon Him the form of a servant, He offered His own body a sacrifice to His Father for the life of the world, and hence He is called by John, "The Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world. And again it is said of Him, that "His blood is the new testament, shed for many for the remission of sins. And again : "So God |409 loved the world that He gave His Only-begotten Son," Who was offered up to His Father a living, rational sacrifice for all mankind, thereby reconciling the world to Himself, and bringing salvation to angels and to men. Now, seeing that it was impossible that His identical sacrifice upon the cross for the salvation of all could be showed forth, in every place, throughout all ages, and to all men, just as it was, without any alteration, He beheld with an eye of mercy, and in wisdom and compassion thus ordained: "In that night in which He was betrayed for the life of the world, He took bread into His holy, pure, and immaculate hands, blessed, brake, and gave it to His disciples, saying : This is My body which is broken for the sins of the world.

And also of the cup, He gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying: This is My Blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. Take and eat all of you of this bread, and drink of this cup, and do this, whenever ye shall meet together, in remembrance of Me. Through this divine institution the bread is changed into His Holy Body, and the wine into His Precious Blood, and they impart, to all who receive them in faith and without doubting, the forgiveness of sins, purification, enlightenment, pardon, the great hope of the resurrection from the dead, the inheritance of heaven, and the new life. Whenever we approach these Sacraments we meet with Christ Himself, and His very Self we take into our hands and kiss, and thereby we are joined to and with Christ, His holy Body mixing with our bodies, and His pure Blood mingling with our blood, and by faith we know Him that is in heaven and Him that is in the Church, to be but one Body.

The matter of this Sacrament Christ ordained to be of wheat and wine, as being most fit to represent body and blood. The form He conveys through His life-giving word, and by the descent of the Holy Ghost.

CHAPTER VI. -- Of the Holy Leaven.

The holy and blessed Apostles, Thomas and Bartholomew of the Twelve, and Adi and Mari of the Seventy, who discipled the |410 East, committed to all the Eastern Churches a Holy Leaven, to be kept for the perfecting of the administration of the Sacrament of our Lord's Body until His coming again. And should any Christians dispute the fact of the above-mentioned Apostles having committed to those of the East this Leaven, on the ground that Peter, the head of the Apostles, and his companions did not commit it to the Westerns, and should object to us on this wise: "If it be as you say, then one of these two consequences must result: either the Apostles did not agree in their mode of discipling, which is impossible, or this tradition of yours is false." We reply: The Easterns from the day of their discipleship up to this day have kept their faith as a sacred deposit, and have observed, without change, the Apostolical Canons; and notwithstanding all the persecutions which they have suffered from many kings, and their subjection to the severe yoke of a foreign power, they have never altered their creed nor changed their canons. Such as are well versed in such matters know full well the labour and care required on the part of Christians to observe these canons, and more especially to preserve this Leaven, in a difficult country, where there is no Christian sovereign to support them, nor any commander to back them, and where they are continually persecuted, vexed, and troubled. Had this Leaven not been of apostolical transmission they would not, most assuredly, have endured all these afflictions and trials to keep it together with the orthodox faith.

Then, as to their argument drawn from Peter and the great Apostles who discipled the west, we have this to oppose to them, ---- that those Apostles did transmit the same to the Westerns, but that with their alteration of the faith, the canons also were corrupted, through the influence of heretical rulers. And, in proof of this statement, we urge that if they all held the traditions of the Apostles, the Franks would not offer an unleavened, and the Romans [Greeks] a leavened oblation; since the Apostles did not transmit it in two different ways. Therefore the Westerns have changed the faith and the canons, and not the Easterns. |411

CHAPTER VII. -- Of Absolution and Repentance.

The human race is frail, and easily inclined to evil, and it is hardly possible that all should not be tried with spiritual diseases; and on this account the healing priesthood was given to heal freely.----"Whosesoever sins ye remit, they are remitted." "The whole have no need of a physician; but such as are variously sick." And, again : "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners unto repentance." The parables of the Prodigal Son, of the Hundred Sheep, and of the Two Debtors, were moreover intended to raise the hope of sinners, and to open to them the gate of repentance which leads to heaven and imparts heavenly happiness. To the same end serve the case of Peter after his denial of Christ, and of Paul after his persecution, and the woman who was a sinner, the Publican, and the Thief upon the cross. Hence it behoves believers when, through the infirmity of their human nature, which all cannot keep upright, they are overcome of sin, to seek the Christian Dispensary, and to open their diseases to the spiritual Physicians, that by absolution and penance they may obtain the cure of their souls, and afterwards go and partake of the Lord's Feast in purity, agreeably with the injunction of the eminent doctor, who writes thus: "Our Lord has committed the medicine of repentance to learned physicians, the priests of the Church. Whomsoever, therefore, Satan has cast into the disease of sin, let him come and show his wounds to the disciples of the Wise Physician, who will heal him with spiritual medicine." These things will most assuredly result if they are done in faith, and not after a worldly manner, for "whatsoever is not of faith is sin." Just as some, for lucre's sake, have made of this sacred thing a merchandize, and a source of temporal profit. |412

CHAPTER VIII. -- Of Matrimony and of Virginity.

Marriage after the ordinance of Christ, and entered into for the sake of the care and labour of a wife about the house, and for the bringing up of children in the fear of God, without idleness or murmuring, and in order that the eye may not wander towards that which belongs to others,----this is called in Scripture a holy estate :---- ”Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled.” Paul makes it the mystery of things far above this world :----” This is a great mystery, but I speak of Christ and His Church.” Hence divorce is unlawful except for the cause of adultery. For adultery of the soul, which is divisible into three kinds : sorcery, denial of the faith, and murder. Or of the body :----” Whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery; and whosoever shall many her that is divorced committeth adultery.”

With regard to Virginity, the steward of God’s house saith : ”I have no commandment of the Lord;” for the commandment of the Lord enjoins matrimony. But should any one desire to keep his virginity, and to follow, in this respect, the example of the Baptist, of the Saviour, of Elijah, and of Paul, it is allowable for him so to do, agreeably with the permission, and not after the command of God. Not, moreover, because he counts marriage an unholy and contemptible thing, but on account of what it entails, such as the being obliged to mix with the multitude, to have and to hold converse with them, and to reside in towns and villages, from all of which difficulties arise, which ofttimes make the yoke of marriage heavy by increasing one’s cares, and thus the soul’s advancement is hindered through its manifold connection with the world. Notwithstanding this, however, he who makes a vow of virginity, and does not become like a spiritual angel in theory and in practice, is inferior to a lax married man; for ”no man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life.” Here endeth the Fourth Part. |413

PART V.

ON THE THEORY OF THOSE THINGS WHICH PREFIGURE THE WORLD TO COME.

CHAPTER I. -- Of worshipping towards the East.

The custom of worshipping toward the East is the subject of an apostolical canon, and is founded upon that saying of our Blessed Lord : ”As the lightning cometh forth from the east and shineth towards the west, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be.” And because ”of that day and of that hour knoweth no man, neither the angels ”of heaven, it becometh us ever to be on the watch, with our faces turned towards the promise of His coming. This custom is therefore profitable in two ways; first, because it stirs up the remembrance of the end, and of the judgment to come, which is a preservative against evil; and, secondly, because it brings to mind our old place from which we were driven out on account of our sins, viz. Paradise, which is situated in the East, and thereby we are led to lay hold on repentance.

It is written in the Commentaries of Mar Ephraim, that the angel Gabriel appeared to the Virgin from the East, and that when he said unto her, ”Hail, thou highly favoured!” she worshipped at his salutation towards the East. And when our Lord ascended up to heaven, His face was turned toward the west, in the same way in which He will come at the Resurrection. The disciples who were before Him, and looking at Him ascending, worshipped Him towards the East, and the angels said unto them : ”This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come, in like manner, as ye have seen |414 Him go into heaven.” And the early commentators have added that on the first day the seven essences were created in silence, and afterwards the voice went forth, ”Let there be light.” The angels, who knew not that they had a Creator, when they heard the voice, concluded that if an effect followed it the Speaker must be their Creator, and the Creator of all. ”And there was light,” instantaneously. Then all of them worshipped towards that part from whence the light sprang forth, which was the East; and this is what Job the blessed says : ”When I created the morning star, all My angels worshipped Me.” [Syriac Version.]

CHAPTER II. -- On the Worship of the Lord's Cross.

We worship Christ's humanity because of the Godhead in Him; so, through the Cross, we worship God our Saviour. The "Cross " is the name of Christ, being equivalent to our saying the "killed," the "worshipped," and does not rightly designate wood, silver, or brass. Now the great foundation of Christianity is the confession that through the Cross renewal and universal salvation were obtained for all, and that Cross which we use is the same sign of our Lord as is to appear in the heavens before His coming, as He Himself has foretold. When, therefore, we look upon this emblem of our salvation, we conceive as though we were beholding our Saviour outstretched upon it for the remission of our sins, and for the renewal of all creation. Hence we offer a fervent and eucharistic worship, not to the fashioned matter of the Cross; but to Him whom we figure as upon it, and above all to God, who gave His Son to be a Cross [i.e. crucified] for us, through whose crucifixion He wrought out renewal and redemption for us, and through Whom He gives to such as are worthy everlasting life in the kingdom of heaven. "For if, while we were yet enemies, we were |415 reconciled unto God by His Son; how much more shall we be saved through His life."

By this sign the Apostles wrought miracles, and the laying on of hands for the Priesthood, and all the other Sacraments of the Church are perfected thereby. These things, handed down from the Apostles, and confirmed by all those who succeeded them, declare that "the preaching of the Cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God." CHAPTER III. -- Of the holy First Day of the Week, and of the Festivals commemorative of our Lord.

The observance of the First day of the Week is also the matter of an Apostolical Canon, it being the great day on which our Saviour rose from the dead, and by His resurrection made all created beings to rejoice by giving them, in His own Person, a most certain proof of the general resurrection and of everlasting life. For as the First-born of men arose on the first day of the week, so shall all the race of Adam arise on that same day,----a day which shall be the commencement of an endless world,----of that world which shall not begin with a beginning, but which is to appear. Surely it becomes us to hallow the day on which such great events transpired, and, seeing that at the resurrection all worldly labours shall cease,

and all shall return to the worship of God, and be engaged in the contemplation of His unutterable mysteries; hence the Apostles ordained, that on the first day of the week Christians should suspend all worldly occupations, and engage in prayer to God, in reading the Holy Scriptures, and in meditating on the life of Christ. And they enjoined more especially the study of the Prophetical books, which are, as it were, the foundation and introduction to the truth of the life and actions of Christ, Who came to fulfil the prophecies and not to destroy; (for He who cometh to perfect that which was imperfect, though in some things he substituteth perfection for imperfection, how can such a one be deemed a looser or destroyer?

"Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify" that |416 the Father hath sent Me. Hence the Apostles enjoined that the Prophets should be read first, and after these the Gospel which is their fulfilment and seal. And this ordinance we observe every Sunday in remembrance of the resurrection to come, when all shall be rewarded according to their works, that hereby we may be led to eschew evil and to do good.

In like manner, and with the same design, the Church celebrates year by year the life and actions of our blessed Lord, lest, from not being commemorated, those benefits which are given to us through the advent of Christ should be withheld from us, and should finally be lost to us in the darkness of error.

CHAPTER IV. -- Of Friday.

This used to be called the sixth day until the sun set upon it at the crucifixion of our Saviour, and darkness prevailed over all creation on account of the temerity of the Jews; and hence it is called arobta [the setting of the sun]. Creation, we say, put on the garment of mourning and affliction because of the enormity of the first sin, and because of the sins of all, for which He died Who had committed no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth. The sun was hid from the heavens, the earth shook and quaked, the veil of the temple was rent, and the rocks were riven, and no carnivorous animals or birds of prey ate meat on that day, or went near to any carcasses, in reverence to the holy corpse of the Saviour which was outstretched upon the wood, as we understand from the comments of Mar Ephrem. Hence the Apostles made a Canon, that Christians should not eat meat on this day, neither on Wednesday, on which latter day the Jews took counsel together to kill the Saviour, and agreed upon the price of the innocent blood with Judas Iscariot. On this account Wednesday is included in the same Canon. And, in truth, Friday ought to be a day of mourning with all, because on it, for the transgression of the first Adam, the sentence of death was passed upon all our race, and we were driven |417 from Paradise into a land of curses. On this same day the flood took place, in the time of Noah, and destroyed all mankind; and thereon also Satan warred with the First-Born of men, viz. on the last of the forty days, as he did on the day of the Passion.

CHAPTER V. -- Of Fasting, Prayer, and Almsgiving.

The foundation of the virtues of true godliness with such as believe in the resurrection, and exercise themselves therein in hope of the world to come, consists of these three, Fasting, Prayer, and Mercy, wrought with the end enjoined in the Gospel, and not from any other motive. As one of our sages has said : "Fasting is superior to all passiveness, and Prayer superior to all other action; but Mercy is the being like God." Now Fasting is of two kinds: outward, from food; and inward, from evil. It tends to induce the rich to show mercy to others, for by tasting the bitterness of hunger and thirst themselves, they are made to feel what the poor experience. It moreover tends to sanctify the senses, purify the thoughts, and to make us resemble the angels. Prayer is not only the key of the Lord's treasury, but a spiritual converse, as one of the fathers has said : "My son, when thou art engaged in prayer, thou dost speak with God; and when thou readest the Scriptures, God speaketh with thee."

Mercy doth not only make us resemble God, Whom there is none like, but it is also a medium for the exercise of wisdom on the part of the followers of Christ, Who, through the needy, sends forward to heaven those things which we love and esteem, and declares that in them we shall have joy and exultation without end : "Lay not up to yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up unto yourselves treasures in heaven, . . . for where your treasure is there will your heart be also." There is a passage in the life of Saint Thomas the Apostle, which beautifully illustrates this Scripture. Having undertaken to |418 build a magnificent palace for the Emperor of India, and received vast sums for this purpose, which he distributed among the poor, when asked about it, he replied that he had built the palace in heaven : and the fact was confirmed by the testimony of a deceased brother of the Emperor, who was restored to life through the prayers of the Apostle. By the exercise of mercy men are made worthy of receiving Angels unawares; and to Cornelius it was said : "Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God." The Prophets and Apostles moreover testify that this is the only way by which the rich can attain unto God.

CHAPTER VI. -- Of the Girdle.

The girding of Christians at the time of prayer, though it betokens a preparedness for service, and a ready appearance before the Lord, after the manner of those who stand in the presence of the kings of the earth; yet it is nevertheless the subject of a Divine command both in the Old and New Testaments. In the Old Testament the girdle was ordered to be worn by the Priests, the sons of Levi, with the other parts of their vestment; and in the New Testament we read: "Let your loins be girt about, and your lamps burning, and be like those servants waiting for their Lord's coming." The blessed John the Baptist had his loins girt about with a leathern girdle; and it is said of S. Paul in the Acts, that the Prophet Agabus took the girdle from off his waist, and girded himself therewith. Now there is a threefold object in the use of the girdle: First, he who binds up his loins bears the sign of worship and ministry, and intimates that he is a worshipper and minister in the kingdom. Secondly, as it was enjoined by our Lord, it betokens a wakeful mind, pure intention, and the being in wait for Him, Who is to return from the feast, and to conduct all with Him thither. Thirdly, it is an emblem of death : "another shall gird thee, and lead thee where thou wouldest not." Those who set out on a journey generally gird up their |419 loins; and so it becometh us mortals and wayfarers, whose days, in spite of ourselves, have been brought forward on the road which leadeth above, to make ready a viaticum which shall be useful to us in the other world, viz. a right theory of the orthodox faith, and the practice of good works. The use of the girdle teaches us these things.

CHAPTER VII. -- Of the Resurrection, the Judgment to come, and Everlasting Life.

He who commenceth a work must have a design therein, and when this is attained he ceases working, and maketh an end of his work, otherwise his labour is vain and unprofitable. Now God, who is all-wise, did not create His creation in vain, and without a design; but, as we have already shown, He created it in consummate wisdom, and with an exalted purpose, to be the study of His rational creatures, and for the perfection of His Likeness in them. And when the time decreed in His wisdom shall arrive, He will bring this world to an end; for every beginning is the beginning of an end, and, contrarily, every end is the end of a beginning. On this subject a certain godly man has said : "When the tenth circle shall be made up from among men, then shall the end be, and the cutting off of time shall come, and shall not fail. On that day the sun shall set and shall not rise again, and the stars shall fall

from heaven, and all this world shall become a chaos of darkness, and all the motions of the elements shall cease. Then shall the sign of the Son of God, the shining Cross, appear in the heavens with power and great glory, accompanied with the awful sounds of the trumpets of angels. Thus shall Christ, the King of kings, appear like the lightning which cometh from the east, and shineth towards the west.

His glorious appearance shall shake all the ends of the heavens, and all the foundations of the earth, and He shall then cry out with His life-giving voice : Let the resurrection and the renewal be. This is the |420 last trumpet, at the sound of which the wind of revivification shall blow and enter into those who shall be alive, and shall divest them of their grossness, and suddenly, as in the twinkling of an eye, they shall be changed into the likeness of Angels. And it shall likewise enter into the dead, and these also shall rise up incorruptible. Then shall the righteous ascend up into the kingdom of heaven, and shall enter with their Lord into the chamber of the Bridegroom above, and with unspeakable joy shall exult in the visions and revelations which through His light shall shine in upon them. This is true happiness. But, as to the wicked, they shall remain upon the earth in darkness in which none can walk, and shall be consumed with the fire of remorse for those things which they have committed, and because they bartered everlasting bliss for temporal and deceptive enjoyments, and a real possession for the dung of earth. This is the true hell, whose fire is not quenched, and whose worm dieth not.

But as to those who are deceived, and who fancy that everlasting life consists of something corporeal, such as eating, and drinking, and marriage, things which appertain to mortals, our Saviour reproves such when He says : "In the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the Angels of God in heaven." Eating and drinking are profitable for the body, because by replacing the humours which go out thence they preserve the person from decay. And marriage, likewise, by raising up one for the one who dies, keeps up the species until the number decreed in the Everlasting Purpose is made up. Then as these two effects will cease, the causes also by which they existed must necessarily cease. Moreover all carnal blessings serve for the warding off of pain; but, as we have before observed, when man exceeds in the use of them they turn into evils. As, for example, meat and drink : one realizes the blessings of these after the pain experienced from hunger and thirst; but used inordinately and greedily, they bring pain and disease, if not death. And so with all the good things of this world; but with spiritual blessings it is not so, for the more one desires and partakes of these, he ever desireth more, as is seen in the case of those who seek after knowledge, science, and wisdom.

But, now, should any doubtingly inquire how bodies can rise |421 again which have been destroyed, and which have mingled with the dust, which have been eaten of wild beasts, or consumed by fire, or drowned in water? we reply : Should a piece of iron be broken into impalpable powder, and be mixed with dust and sand, the hidden power of a magnet will at once separate the atoms from the dust and sand, and from whatever other heterogeneous bodies with which they may have been mixed; and if such virtue resides in the magnet, how

much more possible is it for the power of the Creator, in His wisdom, to separate, bring together, and remodel the bodies of men at the resurrection!

Or, again: if a skilful and ingenious mechanic should form a figure from many materials, and should conceal each of these separate materials in a particular part of his house, no one knowing the place where they are hidden but himself; if asked to construct that figure, could he not at once, and without hesitation, bring forth every part from its separate hiding place, and put all the different parts together in their proper order without any mistake? How much more easy must a like work be to Him Who is the Only Wise, the Almighty! Our bodies, through corruption, return at last to the four elements of which they were composed; the skill whereby these parts were put together in our likeness is hidden with God, and when it pleaseth Him, He can restore each part to its place, in its separate shape and quantity, so as to make it conformable to that figure, the lineaments of which are hidden with Him. Then shall every human body arise, just as it was, "in the stature of the fulness of Christ." As to the final rewards and punishments, these shall be distributed according to the deserts of each, in perfect justice : "the wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal."

"Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen." Here endeth, by the help of God, the book called Marghianeetha, on the truth of Christianity, written by the undeserving Abd Yeshua, Metropolitan of Nisibis and Armenia. To our God be glory and thanksgiving for ever. Amen. |422 This useful book was written in the month of September, in the year of Alexander 1609, in the blessed city of Khlât, in the Church of the blessed Nestorians; and to God be praise, honour, thanks, and worship, for ever. Amen. Written by the frail hands of the author for the benefit of his own soul, and for the profit of all who may possess it. May the Lord endue all such with wisdom. Amen.

[Footnotes moved to the end and numbered] 1. Note to the online text: in the printed text, this is printed in black with a red outline. I can find no way to represent this in HTML. 2. * This is a quotation from the service appointed in the Khudhra, to be read on the first day of the commemoration of the Fast of the Ninevites. 3. * The Syriac sleewa, signifies literally the "crucified," and is in the same verbal passive form as kteela, zgheedha, "killed," "worshipped," adduced by the author in the text. 4. * There is a reference here to the nine orders of Angels, who are said to minister in the Church above. See Part III., Chapter viii. Note to the online text: the author is given as Mar Abd-Yeshua in Badger, but in the best modern bibliography of Syriac literature, Sebastian Brock, A brief outline of Syriac literature, Series: Moran Etho 9, Kottayam (1997), p.80, the author's name is given as 'Abdisho' bar Brika. The subtitle of the work is 'The truth of the faith.' This short but influential exposition of East Syrian theology was written in 1298.

Source. English translation: an out-of-copyright translation as transcribed, or commissioned and given to the public domain, by Roger Pearse for his collection ***Early Church Fathers – Additional Texts*** (tertullian.org/fathers). SermonIndex has only divided it into chapters and short sections; the wording is the translator's own. Footnotes are left out, and Greek or Latin words, square brackets and any transcription error are as the source prints them. No Greek or Latin text is shown beside it yet, and no modern English version has been made.

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