



The Holy Apostolic Catholic Assyrian Church of the East

The Titles of the Virgin Mary the mother of Christ
in the Liturgy of the Church of the East:

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The meaning of the name of the Virgin Mary:

In the Aramaic language the name ‘Mariam’ is derived from the root ‘Rama, Ram’ which means; high, exalted, dignified, and elevated. In the following anthem the writer compares the Virgin Mary with heaven and, says as we expect from Heaven, so she is high and exalted.

“O, Reader, do not blame me, for calling her The Heaven; and, as I expect (*anticipate*) from Heaven, (*for She is the*) virtuous, high and exalted one. Our Lord who was hidden in Heaven, for six thousand years, and mankind was not saved, till she became unto Him a dwelling place (*a seccon heaven*).” ¹

Saint Ephrem also writes about the greatness and the exaltation of the name of the Virgin Mary. He makes it clear that Mary is exalted simply because of her Son Jesus Christ.

“Blessed are you also Mary, whose name.
Is great and exalted because of your Child.” ²

It was by prophecy that the Holy Mother was called Mary because she was exalted by her Son. It is written in the flowing anthem:

“Praise (cheerfulnee) unto you O Splendid womb; for you have prepared (all) happiness for the entire race of mortals; for the King Christ has shone forth unto us from you in wonder (*marvel*): when the head of the angels was proclaiming unto you the gospel, which was filled with tranquility. Peace unto you, O blessed among the women; for by you Eve and her children are blessed; for behold she was cursed from the beginning. Mary the blessed mother; by prophecy you were thus named, because you were exalted by your Son. Unto this hope they were awaiting; the Righteous prophets in their ages; through the mystery of their proverbs; they called Him by The Names of Wonder. David called him: the Son of Wonder.

¹ (Khudra (prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. the Commemoration of the Saint Mary Mother of Christ. V. 1, P. 609)

² (Ephrem the Syrian hymns, translated and introduced by Kathleen E. McVey. Paulist press, New York. Mahwah. Hymn on the Nativity, Hymn 25, 14. P 203)

The son of Amos called Him: Wonder, Councilor, and The Almighty (Father), and The Savior of the world; Son of The Highest (*exalted*) sublime is your annunciation; glorified is Your conception: marvelous is Your birth; exalted is the Lamb (*offspring*) which shone from you; for the depth and height which were angered have been reconciled with us; Reconciled unto us by The Father who has sent Him unto human race: glory be unto Him •”³

The Titles of the Virgin Mary in the Liturgy of the Church of the East:

In the liturgy of the Church of the East, Virgin Mary is called by many different names. The fathers of the Church derived all these names of the Virgin Mary from the prophecies, symbols and types recorded in the Old Testament. These names represent the Theological position and the authentic teachings of the Church of the East regarding the Virgin Mary. The Church fathers strongly believe that the liturgy is the record of the public expression of the faith and the doctrine of the Church. Thus, the Church prays what the Church believes in. The following are some of the many names and titles in the liturgy of the Church of the East by which Virgin Mary is called.

Virgin Mary is called the ‘Earth’ the mother of the second Adam:

Blessed Mary is called the new Eve and her son Jesus Christ is called the new Adam. It is recorded in the Bible that God took a rib from the right side of Adam and from it created Eve, the first mother of mankind. After the same manner, God took the human body of His only begotten Son Jesus Christ, the second Adam, from the earth of the womb of the Virgin Mary and was born of her for our Salvation. Thus, the Church fathers based on this Biblical teaching, confess that the Virgin Mary is the mother of the Second Adam as the earth is the mother of the first Adam. And as the earth gave birth to Adam out of wedlock “without marriage or the help of human seed” so too the Virgin Mary gave birth to the second Adam, ‘Jesus Christ’ without marriage (without the help of

³ (Khudra (Prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. Volume 1 Anthems of the tone of the aid , P. 28)

human seed). The Divine command which signaled the Earth and gave birth to Adam; the same Command formed His Image the New Adam within the womb of the Virgin Mary. In the following prayer the Church prays:

“Mary is the mother of the Second Adam; not of his being; like the earth she gave birth without marriage. The command which beckoned the Earth and gave birth to Adam; the same bound His Image within her womb like Adam.” ⁴

Saint Ephrem in his Hymn on the Nativity also compares the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ from the Virgin Mary to the birth of Adam born from the Virgin Earth. Thus, for Ephrem the birth of first Adam from the Virgin Earth prefigures the birth of Jesus from the Virgin Mary.

“Teach me my Lord, how and why.

From a virgin womb it was fitting for you to shine forth for us.

Was He a type of splendid Adam (taken)

From the virgin earth that had not been worked until he was formed” ⁵

Daughter of Abraham:

It is recorded in the Bible that Abram longed to see the day of the Lord. He saw it mysteriously and rejoiced. *“Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad.”* (John 8:56) In the following Hymn Virgin Mary is called the daughter of Abraham who is carrying the Son of Abraham.

⁴ (Khudra (prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. the Commemoration of Saint Mary Mother of Christ. V. 1, P. 603)

⁵ (Ephrem the Syrian hymns, translated and introduced by Kathleen E. McVey. Paulist press, New York. Mahwah. Hymn on the Nativity, Hymn 2.12, P.78)

“This is the Daughter of Abraham; Abraham saw her mysteriously; while carrying the Son of Abraham; who became the Lord of Abraham.”⁶

In the following anthem the Holy Church paryes; all generations, Jews and gentiles, will give glory to the Virgin Mary the daughter of Abraham. And that is simply because she has begotten in her womb the Son of God.

“All generations, the Gentile and Gentiles, equally offer blessings to the Virgin Daughter of Abraham, Mary the Blessed Mother; As declared in the promises, The Begetter of the Son of God; the manger and the swaddling clothe ministered unto His birth, the star and the Magi, together with the Shepherd, offered worship unto Him; gold, frankincense and myrrh; this was wise to be offered unto The King which came forth;”⁷

The following anthem is noticeably clear that the birth of Jesus Christ, the savior of Mankind, from the Virgin Mary, the daughter of Abraham, is the fulfilment of the promise of God to Abraham.

“God declared and promised unto Abraham from the beginning; that by your seed shall all the sinful nations be blessed; that they are dead in their sin; and, lost in error that HE is the One who gathers them and heals their wounds; as the Prophet saw before all ages; that He shall take our pain and will bury our affliction; and, because of this we cry out saying: Glory be to The Son of the LORD of all.”⁸

Again the following anthem clearly confirms the birth of Jesus from the Virgin Mary is the fulfillment and the completion of God’s promise to Abraham.

“From the beginning the Blessed Lord has declared and promised unto Abraham, His righteous servant; that from you and your seed, the nations will be blessed; and has fulfilled and completed that which He has promised; by the glorious Son of His Beloved; who has

⁶ (Khudra (prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. the Commemoration of the Saint Mary Mother of Christ. V. 1, P. 609)

⁷ (Khudra (prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. the Commemoration of the Saint Mary Mother of Christ. V. 1, P. 606)

⁸ (Khudra (Prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. Volume 1 Ssecond Sunday of Advent, P. 143)

been revealed by mercies unto our race; henceforth we confess and glorify unto the blessed LORD, that by His abundant mercies He hath reconciled us with His Father.”⁹

Daughter of David:

We learn from the teachings of the Church Fathers that; by the disobedience of Eve the mother of Mankind, all women were cursed, and by the obedience of the second Eve, the Virgin Mary, the daughter of David all women were blessed. The following Anthem confirms the genealogy of the Virgin Mary from the household of David.

“All the Nations are giving blessings to your virginity, daughter of David. By you all women, who were cursed from the beginning, are blessed. And, by your Son, Life came forth unto the whole of the mortal race. Glory to The One who has magnified you, and upon us His mercies.”¹⁰

Saint Ephrem, in his commentary on Tatian’s Diatessaron, derives his teaching regarding the descent (genealogy) of the Virgin Mary from the house of David from the prophecies of the Old Testament and the writings of the New Testament.

“If Mary had been from another tribe, it would have been a lie [to have said], *from the house of David*. For the angel said, *The Lord will give him the throne of his father, David*. (Luke 1:32) He is the son of Mary, however, and not the son of Joseph. He did not appear in the body from any other lineage, except from David. For [the prophet] said, *There will come forth a shoot from the stock of Jesse, and a scion (Implant) will blossom from his root*. (Isaiah 11:1) Zachariah also testified [to this] when he said, *He has raised up for us a horn of Salvation in the house of David, his son*. (Luke 1:69) In like manner also the apostle said, *Our Lord Jesus Christ came from Mary, from the seed of the house of David*. (a citation from the apocryphal third letter of Saint Paul to Corinthians 3 Cor.5) written about 190-206 AD.) He wrote to Timothy as well, remember Jesus Christ, he who rose from the dead, he who came

⁹ (Khudra (Prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. Volume 1 Second Sunday of Advent, P. 144)

¹⁰(Khudra (prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. the Commemoration of the Saint Mary Mother of Christ. V. 1, P. 603)

from the seed of the house of David. (Timothy 2:8) In the Letter of the Romans he said, it was promised beforehand in the Holy Scriptures, concerning his Son, who appeared in the flesh from the seed of the house of David. (Romans 1:2-3)”¹¹

Isaac of Serugh clearly says, the Son of God, God the Word, came down from heaven and clothed Himself with a human body formed by the power of the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary, the daughter of David.

“Let me take up the gifts of mixed voices and bring them into presence of the ‘Radiance - clothed One’ who became human from the daughter of David.”¹²

Again, Jacob of Serugh confirms the descent of Jesus Christ from the household of King David through His mother the Virgin Mary, daughter of David.

“On this day let David, your father, touch his chords.
And with his harp let him sing about your nativity because it has appeared openly.”¹³

Daughter of Eve:

In the writings of the Eastern fathers, Virgin Mary has always been referred to as the daughter of Eve. This Virgin Mary, the daughter of Eve, gave birth to an aged infant who will redeem Eve and the entire human race from the curse of the breaking the Commandment of God. Jacob of Serugh, by calling baby Jesus an aged infant is stressing the eternal existence of Christ as the Divine Son of God and His humanity which at the end of time was born from the Virgin Mary.

“There I shall narrate to Eve regarding your birth,
‘Your daughter has given birth to an aged infant who will redeem you.’”¹⁴

¹¹ (Saint Ephrem’s commentary on Tatian’s Diatessaron, Carmel McCarthy. Published by Oxford University press on behalf of the University of Manchester, 1993. Pp. 54-55.1.26)

¹² (Jacob of Serugh, *Selct Festal Homilies*, translated from Syriac and introduced by Thomas Kollamparampil, CMI, with a foreward by Sebastian P. Brock, Center for Indian and Inter-religious studies (CIIS), Rome, and Dharmaram Publications (DP), Bangalore 1997, P. 46)

¹³ (Jacob of Serugh, *Selct Festal Homilies*, translated from Syriac and introduced by Thomas Kollamparampil, CMI, with a foreward by Sebastian P. Brock, Center for Indian and Inter-religious studies (CIIS), Rome, and Dharmaram Publications (DP), Bangalore 1997, P. 87)

¹⁴ (Jacob of Serugh, *Selct Festal Homilies*, translated from Syriac and introduced by Thomas Kollamparampil, CMI, with a foreward by Sebastian P. Brock, Center for Indian and Inter-religious studies (CIIS), Rome, and Dharmaram Publications (DP), Bangalore 1997, P. 156)

Jacob of Serugh in his writings is continuously calling Virgin Mary the daughter of Eve the mother of Mankind:

“Let Eve, whom the great serpent had smitten in Eden, rejoice,
Because the Son of her daughter has stood up and crushed up the Asp that had mocked her.
(Gen. 3:15)” ¹⁵

The following anthem confirms that the fathers of the Church in one accord refer to the Virgin Mary the daughter of Eve.

“Because of Eve, our race has trespassed in the Land of Eden, by breaking of the Commandment (*of God*). And, again and again, because of the Daughter of Eve, we have been set free from the curse of the wicked-one and death which has reigned upon us. And, because of her is born (*He who is*) the One Who will save us from the mouth of these (Satan, sin and death). And, for this reason, behold, we will always celebrate the Day of her Commemoration. So she will ask and beseech on our behalf from the One to Whom she had given birth; that in the time of affliction He will answer us, and grant unto us, peace and tranquility, bodily health, and the forgiveness of (*trespasses*) sins. May the prayer of Mary become for us a high-wall, and a place of refuge at all times.” ¹⁶

In the Garden of Eden, Eve the mother of Mankind listened to the suggestion of Satan. As a result of it she was stripped of the cloth of glory. Thus, she and her posterity fell under the curse of beaking the Commandment of God and were condemned to death. Eve who has become a debter to sin was not able to pay the debt. Her daughter vergin Mary came, paied off the debt of her mother and tore up the bill which was handed on to her mother. Saint Ephrem in Hymn 18 on Blessed Mary 24 says:

“In Eden Eve became a debtor and the debt by which
Her posterity in their generation were doomed to death
Was written in capital letters. The serpent, that wicked

¹⁵ (Jacob of Serugh, Selct Festal Homilies, translated from Syriac and introduced by Thomas Kollamparampil, CMI, with a foreward by Sebastian P. Brock, Center for Indian and Inter-religious studies (CIIS), Rome, and Dharmaram Publications (DP), Bangalore 1997, P. 127)

¹⁶ (Khudra (Prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. Volume 1, The tone of the aid P. 178)

Scribe, wrote it out, signed and sealed it with the seal of
His deceit. Eve was a debtor to sin. But for Mary the debt
Was reserved so that the daughter might pay her mother's
Debt and tear up the handwriting that had handed on her
Mother's tears a legacy to future generations Since
Mary was the virgin inviolate – prefigured by the
Blessed land of Eden before it was furrowed and racked
there blossomed from her bosom the Tree of Life.....”¹⁷

Holy and blessed Virgin Mary:

In the following Hymn the Virgin Mary is called the Holy and blessed Virgin.

“Blessed are you, O holy and blessed virgin Mary, the oppressed ones who take refuge in
your prayers are saved; And, now we, also, take refuge in you, for your prayers will give
response to our petitions from the rich treasure of your Beloved Son; and, that He is our
pride, in both Heaven and upon Earth.”¹⁸

Mother of Christ:

Fathers of the Church of the East have preferred to call Virgin Mary the mother
of Christ instead of calling her the mother of God. For the fathers of the Church
the word Christ signifies both the Divinity and the Humanity of Jesus Christ in
one person. Thus, the Son of Mary and the Son of God are not two sons but one
Son, Jesus Christ. In the following Hymn Virgin Mary is called the begetter
(mother) of Christ.

“Shone to us from Mary the begetter of Christ, the hope of the whole world. The manger
first carried Him, and now the Cherubim and Seraphim celebrate Him. And from the breast
He nursed. Behold giving life to the whole world. The shepherds are rejoicing. The Magi

¹⁷ (Text: see Palmer, op. cit.) Message of the Fathers of the Church, the Church by Thomas Halton, Michael
Glazier, Wilmington, Delaware. 1986, P 210)

¹⁸ (Khudra (prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. the Commemoration of the Saint Mary Mother of Christ.
V. 1, P. 604)

are offering presents. The angels unceasingly with the voice of thanksgiving are saying: 'glory to God in the Highest, and upon earth peace, and a good hope to mankind.'" ¹⁹

Mother of Jesus our Savior:

It is necessary to know that each one of these names of Jesus points to one of His characteristics. Some of these names signify to His humanity, some to His Divinity and some others to the person of the unity of His Divinity and Humanity. In the following prayer blessed mother is called the mother of Jesus our Savior.

"Mary the Holy Virgin, the Mother of Jesus our Savior, supplicate and beseech mercy from the Son who has shone forth from your womb, to take away from us by His grace the times filled with afflictions; and desire for us peace and tranquility, and by your prayers may The Church and her children be kept from the Evil-one; and, on The Great Day in which His greatness is revealed may we be made worthy with you to delight in the chamber of Light." ²⁰

Mother of the Lord:

The title Lord is only used in relationship to God. Addressing Jesus Christ as Lord is an affirmation of His Divinity. It was Elizabeth the mother of John the Baptist, who for the first time referred to Virgin Mary as the mother of the Lord. It is written: "*but why I am so favored, that the mother of my Lord should visit me?*" (Luke 1:43) Saint Paul in his first epistle to Corinthians also calls Jesus Christ the Lord. It is written:

"Yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live". ²¹

¹⁹ (Khudra (prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. the Commemoration of the Saint Mary Mother of Christ. V. 1, P. 601)

²⁰ (Khudra (prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. the Commemoration of the Saint Mary Mother of Christ. V. 1, P. 601)

²¹ (1 Corinthian 8:6)

The writer of the following prayer declares; that he has strongly believed in the truthfulness that the Virgin Mary is the mother of the Lord in purity. Again, the author confirms the title of the mother of the Lord by addressing Virgin Mary a ‘lady and the Mother of his Lord’.

“Why am I stretching out my words? These I have already spoken, and again, I say them; I have wandered far from Her commemoration; and to relate Her story; I am not worthy• I have believed, O my Lord, in truthfulness, that She is Your begetter in purity, as I am proclaiming with a loud voice; that She is The Lady of all the Virgins • If Gabriel worshiped unto her, and in fear gave to her peace; cursed is the mouth which praises her not; and the tongue which does not magnify her • O, Lady and the Mother of my Lord, in prayer from your pure mouth, beseech the forgiveness of trespasses, to the ones who will sing this anthem • And unto me, the feeble one, and unto the whole congregation, who gather in all the Church, and put aside for you three feasts, beseech forgiveness, together with remission of sin; and, unto your Son glory at all times.” ²²

In the folloing anthem on the day of the commemoration of the Virgin Mary, worshipers offer the petitions to God through the mediation of the Virgin Mary the mother of the Lord.

“The Commemoration of the Virgin, the Mother of our Lord, we celebrate that by her prayers, the request of our needs will be granted.” ²³

In the Nicene Constantinople Creed, the Church confesses saying:

“And we believe in one Lord Jesus Christ the Only Begotten Son of God, the first-born of all the creatures.” ²⁴

In the Nicene Constantinople Creed, the Church confesses Jesus Christ as the Lord by whom all things are created. Thus, the using of the Title ‘Lord’ in reference to Jesus Christ confirms His Divine Nature. In the Old Testament the

²² (Khudra (prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. the Commemoration of the Saint Mary Mother of Christ. V. 1, Pp. 611-612)

²³(Khudra (Prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. Volume 1 The Tone of the aid, P. 141)

²⁴ (The Liturgy of the Church of the East. Printed and published by the Reverend Joseph E.Y De Kelaita, 1928, 15-16.)

title 'Lord' is used only in allusion to God. Theodore of Mopsuestia in His commentary on the Creed says:

“When he says: "one Lord by whom are all things" he alludes to God the Word who is a true Son consubstantial with His Father. He called Him rightly Lord in order to make us understand that He is from the Divine nature of God the Father. (John 1:1- 4)” The one who is truly God is also truly Lord, and the one who is truly Lord is also truly God, and the one who is not truly God is not truly Lord. It is written: “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one” (Deuteronomy 6: 4)”²⁵

The Virgin Mary immediately after the encounter with the angel Gabriel visited Elizabeth. It was in this meeting that Elizabeth has called Mary the mother of the Lord. Jacob of Serugh says:

“Who would grant to me that my Lord would come to me with His Mother?
And the Son of the mighty one would visit the son of the feeble in his house?”²⁶

Mother of the image:

God created Adam and Eve in His own image and likeness and placed them in paradise. By listening to the wicked advice of Satan they, Adam, and Eve, blemished their pure image. God the creator out of His Mercy, once again, in the womb of the Virgin Mary has renewed His tarnished image. Thus, it is fair that we name the Virgin Mary the mother of the image. Mar Narsai says:

“The image which had been tarnished with the filth of iniquity He willed to renew.
And He molded it in the Spirit and plated it with spiritual gold.
In soul and body, mortals sinned and succumbed to sin;
And He freed them by one man in body and soul.
With this intend, He took a man (born) of a woman
And armed him with the Spirit so that he might redeem his race from the strong one.
And therefore, it is right that we name this pure one

²⁵ (Theodore of Mopsuestia, commentary on the Creed.)

²⁶ (Jacob of Serugh, *Select Festal Homilies*, translated from Syriac and introduced by Thomas Kollamparampil, CMI, with a foreword by Sebastian P. Brock, Center for Indian and Inter-religious studies (CIIS), Rome, and Dharmaram Publications (DP), Bangalore 1997, P. 64)

The mother of the image in whom there is shown forth the image of the hidden.” (Divine Nature). ²⁷

Ewe ‘sheep’:

Fathers of the Church have likened Virgin Mary to a sheep carrying the Cub of the Lion ‘Jesus Christ’ in her womb and rearing Him without fear.

“Who has seen the ewe carrying the Cub of the Lion, and rearing ‘bearing’ Him without fear? Mary became the ewe; and Christ the Cub of the Lion, and bore Him without fear, Glory be unto You, O our Lord, glory unto You O Son of God, for honoring Mary, Your begetter.” ²⁸

Longed for Paradise and the communion table:

In the following Hymn the fathers of the Church referred to Virgin Mary as ‘the blessed field and the Longed-for Paradise’. They also linked the Virgin Mary to the Holy Eucharist by calling her ‘the glorified communion table and the rich and overflowing source’.

“The blessed field and the longed-for paradise, the glorified communion table, and the rich and overflowing source, became The Blessed Mary; and she called mankind and angels to be delighted in the birth of the Fruit which flowered (i.e., sprang forth) from her womb.” ²⁹

The Field:

Virgin Mary is compared to the Corn field. However, there is a difference between a field that produces corn and the Virgin Mary. A field of corn

²⁷ (Narsai’s Metrical Homilies on the Nativity, Epiphany, Passion, Resurrection and Ascension of the Lord. Edited and translated by: Fredrick G. Mcleod, S.J. P.41) (Narsai metrical Homilies P. 67)

²⁸ (Khudra (prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. the Commemoration of the Saint Mary Mother of Christ. V. 1, P. 606)

²⁹ (Khudra (prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. the Commemoration of the Saint Mary Mother of Christ. V. 1, P. 606)

produces corn with the help of seeds, the Virgin Mary though conceived and gave birth to the Bread of Life without a seed and a sower.

“The Field that gives a heap of corn and pile without any sower,
A young girl who remains in the state of birth - giving without any partner.” ³⁰

Ever Virgin:

All the Apostolic Churches recognize the Blessed Mary as the ‘ever Virgin’. This means Virgin Mary has preserved the seal of her Virginité before and after giving birth to the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ. The Fathers of the Church of the East being in harmony with the rest of the fathers of the universal Church in the following Hymn refer to the blessed Mother, The Ever Virgin.

“I request from Your grace; to lift my mind and my thoughts above; O You who gives unceasingly; fill me with aid by her prayer. The defiled mouth and tongue are not worthy to relate her Exalted Story to the Lord and Savior of the world. Who knows how to praise The Mother; who has seen The Virgin child with whom the Name of Virginité ages (becomes old); who has a Son without marriage; this is The Wonder which cannot be expressed by words (i.e.: beyond words)?” ³¹

Again, in the following anthem the Holy Mother is called the Perpetual Virgin.

“The Perpetual Virgin, O Mary, beseech your Son that He may bestow His tranquility upon this temple in which is celebrated the day of your commemoration; and rest upon it the right-hand of His mercies, as upon the House of Abraham, that all who are afflicted and suffering; may they take all aids (*helps*) from it.” ³²

³⁰ (Jacob of Serugh, Select Festal Homilies, translated from Syriac and introduced by Thomas Kollamparampil, CMI, with a foreword by Sebastian P. Brock, Center for Indian and Inter-religious studies (CIIS), Rome, and Dharmaram Publications (DP), Bangalore 1997, P. 114)

³¹ (Khudra (prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. the Commemoration of the Saint Mary Mother of Christ. V. 1, P. 608)

³² (Khudra (Prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. Volume, The Tone of the aid P. 186)

The ever Virginity of the Virgin Mary is clearly seen in the following Hymn of Ephrem the Syriac. In this Hymn Ephrem sees the name of virginity growing old with the Virgin Mary.

“Blessed are you, virgin, with whom
The comely name of virginity grows old,
In your branches chastity built a nest.
May your womb be a nest for her dwelling place.
May the power of mercy preserve your temple.
May the voice of the Mighty One restrain your enemy
That you may be a good incentive for onlookers forever and ever.”³³

The birth of the first - born Son, Jesus Christ, did not destroy the Virginal seal of His Mother ever Virgin Mary. After the same manner our Lord Jesus Christ, was born from the mystery of baptism and the grave on the day of Resurrection as the first fruit of our race. Thus, our Lord has made all those who are born in the Sacrament of the Holy Baptism the first fruits. It is written: *“For there is neither older nor younger in the womb of baptism, since we are all the first-born in the faith.”* (Hebrews 12:23)

There are many images of the eternal virginity of the blessed mother in both the Old and the New Testament. The liberation of Daniel from the sealed pit by the power of God prefigures the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the sealed tomb. After the same manner the fathers of the Church believed the sealed tomb of Jesus Christ denotes the ever virginity of Mary. As the Risen Jesus came out of the sealed tomb without destroying it, thus Baby Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary without destroying the seal of her Virginity. The same idea applies to the Resurrection of Lazarus from among the dead. So the seal of the tomb witnessed in favor of the seal of Virginity of Mary. Saint Ephrem says:

“[The fact] that they sealed the tomb, (Matt.27:66) was in [the Lord’s] favor and to their disadvantage, as in [the case] of both Daniel and Lazarus. (Daniel 6:18, John 11:38) [In the

³³ (Ephrem the Syrian hymns, translated and introduced by Kathleen E. McVey. Paulist press, New York. Mahwah. Hymn on the Virginity Hymn 24.1, Pp. 365-366)

case] of Daniel, when [the king and his companions] saw their seal on the pit, they knew what power had liberated him who was in the pit. [In the case of Lazarus], when [his adversaries] saw their seal which was on the door of the tomb, it became clear to them that this was a power for which everything was easy. He took the body out from the tomb, although it was sealed, and the seal of the tomb witnessed in favor of the seal [of virginity] of the womb that had born him. For it was when the virginity [of his mother] was sealed that the Son emerged alive from within her, for he was the First –Born in every way.”³⁴

Saint Ephrem compares the birth of Jesus from the Virgin Mary without the assistance of the human seed to the birth of Eve from the side of Adam without intercourse. Accordingly, Ephrem believes that the same God who begot Adam without intercourse from the virgin Earth also formed the second Adam, our Lord Jesus Christ in the womb of the Virgin Mary with intercourse.

“(Mary gave birth without (the assistance of) a man. Just as in the beginning Eve was born of Adam without intercourse, so too (in the case of) Joseph and Mary, his virgin and spouse. Eve gave birth to the murderer (Gen. 4:1), but Mary gave birth to the Life-Giver. The former gave birth to him who shed the blood of his brother, but the latter to him whose blood was shed by his brothers. The former saw him who was trembling and fleeing (Gen 4:10-14) because of the curse of the earth, the latter (saw) him who bore the curse and nailed it on his cross. (Col. 2:14) The virgin’s conception teaches that he, who begot Adam without intercourse from the virgin earth, also fashioned the second Adam without intercourse in (to) the virgin’s womb. Whereas the First (Adam) returned back into the womb of his mother, (it was) by means of the second (Adam), who did not return back into the womb of his mother, that the former, who had been buried in the womb of his mother, was brought back (from it).³⁵

Even though there is no comparison to the Virgin Mary, yet the Fathers of the Church compared her to the Earth. From the virgin Earth the first Adam was born and, by means of death has returned unto his mother Earth. From the Virgin Mary the Lord of Adam, Jesus Christ, was born and, He by His resurrection has raised all the children of Adam.

“If I call her ‘earth’ I will be considered a foolish-one unto her; I know that she has no one like unto her; and there is no comparison to her in the whole world. From the earth Adam

³⁴ (Saint Ephrem’s commentary on Tatian’s Diatessaron, Carmel McCarthy. Published by Oxford University press on behalf of the University of Manchester, 1993 p. 327. XXI.21)

³⁵ (Saint Ephrem’s Commentary on Tatian’s Diatessaron: an English translation of Chester Beatty Syriac MS 709 with Introduction and notes, Carmel McCarthy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993, Pp. 60-61, 2)

was born, and unto earth he has returned; and from Mary, the Lord of Adam, in His love He became a Son of Adam. Adam, who was from the earth died, and his entire race with him was lost; but the Son of Adam who was born of Mary; exalted/raised all the earthly-ones.”³⁶

The Church Fathers without hesitation have confessed that the Divinity of Jesus Christ is born from God the Father without a heavenly mother and His Humanity is born of the Virgin Mary without an earthly father. Thus, in the writings of the Church fathers Mary is referred to as the mother of the second Adam, Jesus Christ, (not the mother of His Divine Essence). Mar Narsai like the rest of the Church fathers likens the Virgin Mary to the Earth which gave birth to the first Adam without intercourse. He believes that the same Divine command which caused the virgin earth to conceive and give birth to the second Adam without intercourse, has also fashioned the second Adam, Jesus Christ in the womb of the Virgin Mary without intercourse.

“Because of Mary- concerning whom she bore- there has been a dispute;
And for this reason, I have uncovered the veil by distinguishing my words.
The (Dive) Essence does not have a mother of flesh, O heretics!
Why do you stir up the limpidity of truth with the dregs of your iniquity?
(It is) not to a new existence (that) has come the One hidden from the universe!
The Almighty is not limited within a womb!
Mary is the Mother of the second Adam, not of the (Divine) Essence;
And like the earth, she has also given birth without intercourse.
That (Divine) command, which gave a sign to the earth and it bore Adam,
Depicted an image within her limbs in the likeness of Adam.
The sentence of Judgment whereby Adam was condemned (God) has willed to [abrogate];
And from the guilty, He made one guiltless, and (this one) made Adam to be [guiltless]”³⁷

Again, in the following verses Narsai compares the first Adam to the second Adam and the Virgin Mary to Eve. By the obedience to the plan of Satan Adam was condemned and along with him all human race. In the contrary the second Adam by his disobedience to the temptations of Satan has gained victory. The disobedience of the first Adam brought curse to the earth and death to mankind.

³⁶ (Khudra (prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. The Commemoration of the Saint Mary Mother of Christ. V. 1, P. 608)

³⁷ (Narsai's Metrical Homilies on the Nativity, Epiphany, Passion, Resurrection and Ascension of the Lord. Edited and translated by: Fredrick G. McLeod, S.J. P.41) (Narsai metrical Homilies, Pp. 65-67)

By the obedience of the second Adam God has reconciled the world to Himself and abolished death. The same thing applies to Mary and Eve. In the ears of Eve, Satan sowed death; and in the ears of the Virgin Mary, angel Gabriel pronounced the good news of the Savior of Mankind.

“By desire for fruit, the First (Adam) was condemned and condemned his children;
And by constancy (in the face of temptation) the second Adam gained victory.
By Mary, He abrogated that word (spoken) in the ears of Eve;
There, death; and here, a life that gives life to the universe.
In the ears of Eve, the rebel sowed the bitterness of death;
And in the ears of Mary, a vigilant one proclaimed a hymn of thanksgiving.
In the prison of birth pangs, He confined Eve;
And by (His) blessings to Mary, He set aside (His) rebuke.
Because of Adam, He cursed the earth so that it would bring forth thorns;
And by the Son of Adam, He cultivated it with peace so that it might give (forth) glory.” ³⁸

It is recorded in the Holy Bible that God created man in His image and likeness. Unfortunately, the first Adam by his disobedience has destroyed the image of God. Henceforth God planned to restore His destroyed image through the obedience of the second Adam. Thus, at the end of time God the word came down from heaven, put on the human body which is formed by the power of the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary and be born as the second Adam. Mar Narsai says:

“His (good) pleasure descended unto (one) whom He fashioned in fitting love.
And He depicted on the tablet of Adam’s body, a second Adam.
In the same (same) order as Adam, He depicted a (second) Adam with the color of (His Divine) will,
And renewed Adam and his offspring through (this) Son of Adam.
The second Adam came forth from the woman as from the earth;
And he is entirely like that First (Adam) whom the earth bore.
In body and soul, the Second Adam is equal with the (First) Adam;
But in authority, he is the Lord of Adam and his offspring.
He is equal in nature, but greater in honor than all those who have come to be;
And the witness is the vigilant one, who announced his conception and called him Lord).

³⁸ (Narsai’s Metrical Homilies on the Nativity, Epiphany, Passion, Resurrection and Ascension of the Lord. Edited and translated by: Fredrick G. McLeod, S.J. P.41) (Narsai metrical Homilies, P. 67)

In many ways the second Adam is greater than Adam;
And the rank that he attained (can) not be compared with that of (other creatures). ³⁹

Garden of Eden:

In the following anthem Fathers of the Church have compared the Virgin Mary to the garden of Eden from which four rivers came forth and irrigated four corners of the world. However, the source which flew from the Garden of Eden was not able to save humanity from death. In the opposite to that the source (Jesus Christ) that came forth from the Virgin Mary was proclaimed by four Evangelists to the four corners of the world and gave Salvation to mankind.

“If I will liken her to a garden, from which four rivers flow to the four-corners, as there are in the world. The Source which had come forth from the garden; did not save humankind from death; and the Tree of Life planted within her, no man knew where it was. From Mary came forth The Source, and was proclaimed by four mouths, and all the earth was watered by it; and gave glory unto His Name.” ⁴⁰

Tree of Wonder:

Fathers of the Church have compared Virgin Mary to the tree of wonder who carries the fruit of wonder. It is written:

“This is The Tree of Wonder; who carries The Fruit of Wonder; and the whole world and its inhabitants is held in awe by it;” ⁴¹

The tree that provided a ram to Father Abraham in order to be sacrificed in behalf of Isaac prefigures the Virgin Mary who conceived in her womb a Lamb

³⁹ (Narsai's Metrical Homilies on the Nativity, Epiphany, Passion, Resurrection and Ascension of the Lord. Edited and translated by: Fredrick G. McLeod, S.J., II Homily Epiphany, Pp.73-75)

⁴⁰ (Khudra (prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. the Commemoration of the Saint Mary Mother of Christ. V. 1, Pp. 608-609)

⁴¹ (Khudra (prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. the Commemoration of the Saint Mary Mother of Christ. V. 1, P. 609)

of God (Jesus) who would be sacrificed in behalf of the sins of the world. Jacob of Serugh says:

“That tree which provides the ram on the mountain of Isaac is the young girl who conceived the fruit in her womb without marital union.”⁴²

Ark of flesh:

In the following anthem the Virgin Mary is likened to the Ark of the flesh in which Jesus the Noah of righteousness rested.

“This is The Ark of the flesh; in which rested Noah of truth ‘Righteousness’; and gave to our nature freedom from the flood of the adversary.”⁴³

Tabernacle of flesh:

In Aramaic language the word tabernacle means ‘Mishkan Zawna’ a temporarily dwelling place. The Israelites wandered in the wilderness for 40 years before their entrance into the Promised Land. In wilderness they constructed a portable place of worship called Tabernacle. Before the death and Resurrection of Christ God did not dwell in the hearts of people. He (God) used to dwell in a designated and consecrated Holy Places called tabernacle or Mishkan Zawna in Aramic. Saint Ephrem in his Hymn on the Virginity likens the womb of the Virgin Mary to a temporal Tabernacle in which Emanuel dwelled for nine months.

“Joseph and also John honored,
Your mother’s womb as a symbol,

⁴² (Jacob of Serugh, *Selct Festal Homilies*, translated from Syriac and introduced by Thomas Kollamparampil, CMI, with a foreward by Sebastian P. Brock, Center for Indian and Inter-religious studies (CIIS), Rome, and Dharmaram Publications (DP), Bangalore 1997, P. 116)

⁴³ (Khudra (prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. the Commemoration of the Saint Mary Mother of Christ. V. 1, P. 609)

It is the symbol of the tabernacle, the Temporal Tabernacle,
In which Emanuel was dwelling.
Both of them persist in admonishing us
Not to belittle God in His temples.”⁴⁴

Calling Virgin Mary, the temple of God’s dwelling is not something extraordinary to the fathers of the Church. We come accros such a title in many writings of the church fathers especially in the liturgical anthems, anthem hymns and prayers. In the following anthem the fathers of the Church are calling Virgin Mary the Temple of His dwelling place.

“On this day of the commemoration of the Virgin Mary the mother of Christ, the Angels of Heaven in joy singing ‘glory’ unto The One Who is pleased by His grace to make her the temple of His dwelling place; and the creation delights on the day of her feast. Appeased by His mercies, wars and all strife and disputes; blessed is the Lord who adorned her with all beauty and made her the port for all afflicted ones.”⁴⁵

The Lord choose Virgin Matry to be the dwelling place for His hiddenness. Yet in the following anthem the fathers of the Church have gone further and been more specific by calling Virgin Mary the elegant Temple of His Godhead.

“The glorified day of the commemoration of Mary the mother of Christ. Behold angles and mankind celebrate it in the height and in the depth; By songs of the Spirit; for the Lord choose her and made her the dwelling place for His Hiddenness. And the elegant (*comely, proper, fair, beautified*) temple for His Godhead; the Radiant Splendor, (Brilliance) of the Immortal Father. Who had willed and was revealed in our humanity; in her were fulfilled the Mysteries and figures which the righteous men have prefigured; about the birth of Emmanuel; shown for us from the House of David; and, from the blessed Mary: Christ in

⁴⁴ (Ephrem the Syrian hymns, translated and introduced by Kathleen E. McVey. Paulist press, New York. Mahwah. Hymn on the Virginity Hymn 25.11, P. 373)

⁴⁵ (Khudra (prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. the Commemoration of the Saint Mary Mother of Christ. V. 1, Pp. 606. 607)

His Godhead is born of God; and in His humanity is born of Mary: The Eternal Being and man; have mercy upon us.”⁴⁶

In the following anthem worshipers of the Church bless Mary for being made worthy to celebrate the temple of God the Word.

“The chief of the angelic hosts, Gabriel was sent to the blessed among women, the Holy Virgin; As he was in fear (awe) without ceasing, gave her good news, saying • Peace be unto you O, Woman, filled with grace; peace be unto you O Mother of the Savior of Creation; Peace be unto your Son, Who is honored by Cherubim and Seraphim; Peace be unto your Son; who is worshiped by Maji and Shepherds; Peace be unto you for being made worthy to celebrate the temple of the Word; Peace be to you, for you have become the Port for all the Prophets; Peace be to you who had given birth without marriage, as Isaiah hath said • Peace be to the Star which is brighter than the sun; Peace be to you O, Font who had received the Dew from the Highest; Peace be to lives which came forth from (rooted) Eve; Peace be to you for from you will come forth Christ the King (*hallelujah*).”⁴⁷

In the following anthem fathers of the Church are calling Virgin Mary the temple of flesh. They are giving blessings unto her because within her, rests physically, The Son of The King.

“Blessed are you, O physical-vessel carrying the Wealth hidden in you, The Life for mortals; Blessed are you, O temple of flesh, that within you rests, physically, The Son of The King; Blessed are you, O port that in you rests The Course of the ancient righteous-one; Blessed are you, O Mary, that in you is fulfilled The Word which Isaiah hath said; ‘behold a virgin shall conceive and gave birth to a son, and His Name shall be called Emmanuel, which is translated, God is with us; then blessed be unto you and unto us hope, and unto Him glory!”⁴⁸

Palace of flesh:

⁴⁶ (Khudra (Prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. Volume 1 the Tone of the aid P. 37)

⁴⁷ (Khudra (prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. Volume 1, The first Sunday of Advent, P. 131)

⁴⁸ (Khudra (Prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. Volume 1 the Tone of the aid P. 104)

At the end of time God, the Word Himself, out of His love for Mankind, came down from heaven, and fashioned a dwelling place ‘Mishkan Zawna’ in the palace of flesh, the womb of the Virgin Mary and eternally dwelled in it. Mar Narsai says:

“And at the fullness (of time), His love dwelt in us and reconciled the universe.
He did not send unto us (one) of the spiritual ones who are active in his behalf.
The word who is from Him He sent, and He called us to His knowledge.
The Word of the Father went forth from the Father in the same order that reason
Which is hidden in the soul both goes forth and (yet) stays without departing.
He went forth from on high and came to the depth (below) in His (good) pleasure
And fashioned a dwelling place in the palace of flesh in the good pleasure of His love.” ⁴⁹

Jacob of Serugh in the following Hymn calls Mary with many different names. He calls her, the young girl, dove, female stag, cloud, chariot, tabernacle, and the palace of flesh.

“The young girl carried the Lord of the flock and ascended to see
the sterile ewe in whom a lamb had appeared after a long time.
The dove flew with powerful features and reached Judea
To see and to be gladdened with the chick of old eagle.
The female stag came carrying along the young stag.
The calf resounded so that the household of the Levites should exalt in Judea.
The cloud, Mary, full of compassion burst forth and ascended
To go to water the thirsty land in which a fruit had come up.
The king sat on the chariot full of strength
To go out to visit the house of his servants in diligence.
She proceeded on foot; the tabernacle ascended with the majesty in it
In order to visit the ambassador, the son of the poor, in his house.
Virginity stood up that it might be raised to the house of the old woman.
So that in youthfulness as well as in seniority wonder might increase.
She, the palace of flesh, walked and ascended, and the King was in it;

⁴⁹ (Narsai’s Metrical Homilies on the Nativity, Epiphany, Passion, Resurrection and Ascension of the Lord. Edited and translated by: Fredrick G. McLeod, S.J., II Homily Epiphany, Pp.41-43)

And stood at the door of the servant who shook, while still in his mother.”⁵⁰

The Rock out of which the rivers in wilderness sprang:

The fathers of the church saw the rock in the wilderness out of which rivers of water sprang as a type of the Virgin Mary who gave birth Jesus Christ out of His mouth flew the living water.

“This is The Unbroken Rock, and from which came forth the Source ‘of water’; and the Nations which were blind in mind, enriched them with all knowledge.”⁵¹

The burning Bush:

The burning bush (*Exodus 3:2-3*) which was glowing in fire, yet its leaves were not burning represented the Virgin Mary. The fire in the bush was symbolizing the Flame of God the Word which resided for a period of nine months in the virginal womb of the blessed Mary.

“This is the Bush of Wonder in which The Flame dwells, and in three and six months, dwelt (i.e.: abode within) in her; The Burning Fire. Within Her womb she carried The Fire; within her body, she, was the dwelling place; and within her soul, The Spirit hovered, and all in all (she) was Heaven.”⁵²

God the Word dwelt in the womb of the Virgin Mary to purify and sanctify the place of the birth pangs and the curses of breaking the commandment of God. The flame of fire which was not burning the bush was prefiguring the living

⁵⁰ (Jacob of Serugh, *Select Festal Homilies*, translated from Syriac and introduced by Thomas Kollamparampil, CMI, with a foreword by Sebastian P. Brock, Center for Indian and Inter-religious studies (CIIS), Rome, and Dharmaram Publications (DP), Bangalore 1997, P. 63)

⁵¹ (Khudra (prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. the Commemoration of the Saint Mary Mother of Christ. V. 1, P. 609)

⁵² (Khudra (prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. the Commemoration of the Saint Mary Mother of Christ. V. 1, P. 609)

fire, the Holy Spirit, which was to come at the end of time, and will moisten the womb of the virgin, and clothing it like the fire that enclosed the bush.

“He dwelt in the womb and cleansed it and sanctified the place of the birth pangs and the curses. (Gen. 3:16) The flame which Moses saw was moistening the bush (Exodus 3:2-3) and distilling the fat lest it be inflamed. The likeness of the refined Gold, could be seen in the bush, entering into the fire but without being consumed. This happened so that it might make known that living fire, which was to come at the end, watering and moistening the womb of the virgin, and clothing it like the fire that [enveloped] the bush.”⁵³

Heaven:

Before incarnation God the Word was hidden in heaven for the period of six thousand years. At the end of time God the Word out of His love came down from heaven and dwelled in the heaven of the flesh, the womb of the Virgin Mary.

“O, Reader, do not blame me, for calling her The Heaven; and, as I expect (anticipate) from Heaven, (for She is the) virtuous, high and exalted one. Our Lord who was hidden in Heaven, for six thousand years, and mankind was not saved, till she became unto Him a dwelling place.”⁵⁴

Saint Ephrem in his Hymn on faith compares the Virgin Mary to many different things. First, he compares her to the Church. He says as the risen Jesus in His Divinity is present in the Church so was, He present in the womb of the Virgin Mary. Thus, Mary for nine months became an earthly heaven and a church and carried within her Jesus Christ. Secondly, in the same Hymn, Ephrem is relating the Virgin Mary who is carrying within her the Son of God to the cloud which carried and embraced Him as He was ascending into heaven.

“There was Mary whom I saw therein,

⁵³ (Saint Ephrem’s commentary on Tatian’s Diatessaron, Carmel McCarthy. Published by Oxford University press on behalf of the University of Manchester, 1993 p. 53.1.25)

⁵⁴ (Khudra (prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. the Commemoration of the Saint Mary Mother of Christ. V. 1, P. 609)

The pure conception, there was the Church,
And the Son within her; a likeness of that cloud
Which carried him, symbol of heaven
From whence streams forth his glorious radiance.”⁵⁵

Jacob of Serugh is calling the pure womb of the Virgin Mary the heaven of flesh in which God the Word dwelled for nine months prior to His birth.

“They sanctify and on above they seek His concealed being, but He dwells in the womb, the heaven of flesh that came into being on the earth.” ⁵⁶

The Staff of Aaron:

In the following anthem the fathers of the Church likened the Ever Virginity of Mary to the Staff of Aaron, the Rock with water and the Rod of David. In obedience to the commandment of God all the rods of the leaders of the tribe of Israel were placed before God in the Ark of Covenant. From among all the rods placed in the temple the rod of Aaron, representing the tribe of Levi, sprouted, budded, blossomed, and produced ripe almonds. The staff of Aaron was neither planted in the earth nor irrigated yet by the power of the almighty God sprouted and produced Almonds. Thus, the Staff of Aaron prefigures the conception of the Virgin Mary and bringing forth a Son without the assistance of the human seed. This applies to both the Rock with water and the Rod of David. In the following anthem the Holy Church prays in this manner:

“The Staff of Aaron gives witness to her that she has a Son and no husband; and Moses, by his rod confesses to her, and The Rock with the Water gives witness to her. The Staff of Aaron bore The Almond Flower, while it was placed into The Ark (of the Covenant), even

⁵⁵ (Ephrem, Hymn on faith 81, 4. quoted from Saint Ephrem Ecumenical Research Institute (Seeri) Baker hill, Kottayam -685001, Kerala, India P. 26)

⁵⁶ (Jacob of Serugh, Select Festal Homilies, translated from Syriac and introduced by Thomas Kollamparampil, CMI, with a foreword by Sebastian P. Brock, Center for Indian and Inter-religious studies (CIIS), Rome, and Dharmaram Publications (DP), Bangalore 1997, P. 62)

though it was not planted into the earth; it stayed for a time, and it withered. The Womb of Mary which gave birth, was revealed through the Rod of David; and it extended over all nations; and was stronger than iron; by it all nations were ruled, and under it were brought all the ends of the earth; and, by it were yoked-together, (bound) our necks and unto Him glorify all tongues.”⁵⁷

Jacob of Serugh also recalls the Rod of Aaron which sprouted and produced Almond without being planted in the earth. Thus, he likens the birth of Jesus from the Virgin Mary outside wedlock, as Isaiah has prophesied, to the Rod of Aaron.

“A plant has shot up from that thirsty earth, Mary, (Is 53: 63)
Which was not sown or planted, just as you proclaimed in your prophecy.”⁵⁸

Jacob of Serugh further emphasizes the ever Virginity of the blessed Mother by saying:

“Today, let the affair of marital union desist by remaining pure and give place to the virgin who gives birth without marital union so that by her infant the children of marital union shall be blessed.”⁵⁹

The fleece of Gideon:

It is recorded in the book of Judges (6:33-40) that Gideon demands God’s assurance of victory through two tests. In the first test Gideon puts a fleece garment on the ground and asks God to miraculously cause dew to only collect on the garment, not on the rest of the ground. In the second test, Gideon converses the test- now he asks for fleece to be dry and the ground to be

⁵⁷ (Khudra (prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. the Commemoration of the Saint Mary Mother of Christ. P. 609)

⁵⁸ (Jacob of Serugh, *Select Festal Homilies*, translated from Syriac and introduced by Thomas Kollamparampil, CMI, with a foreword by Sebastian P. Brock, Center for Indian and Inter-religious studies (CIIS), Rome, and Dharmaram Publications (DP), Bangalore 1997, P. 120)

⁵⁹ (Jacob of Serugh, *Select Festal Homilies*, translated from Syriac and introduced by Thomas Kollamparampil, CMI, with a foreword by Sebastian P. Brock, Center for Indian and Inter-religious studies (CIIS), Rome, and Dharmaram Publications (DP), Bangalore 1997, P. 135)

covered with dew. In the following Anthem, the fathers of the Church likened the ever Virginity of Mary to the fleece of Gideon.

“This is The Fleece not of wool, The Holy Spirit dwelt in her, like that fleece of Gideon which received the rain; for Gideon had placed fleece on the threshing floor and tempted God by saying to God, the people of the world, thus said. ‘If this night rain falls upon this place and if we find this fleece dried which we place here’. ‘I will believe that there is still redemption by the hands of this Israelite;’ and, as He said when He spoke in times past; thus, too, He speaks as in other times. If there is dryness on all in this section, and this fleece which I place here, will squeeze or come forth water from it. All earth was dry round about, and the fleece which I have placed here, wrings out water from it. All the earth was dry, and the fleece wrings out sediment; this is Mary who is more virtuous than fleece. As the fleece was dry, thus was Mary pure; and never was seduced by lust and was not wet by sin. And, as the fleece received rain, while the earth was dry, thus dwelt in Mary the Spirit that sanctifies all.”⁶⁰

Jacob of Serugh as the rest of the fathers of the Church believes that the dew in the fleece of Gideon prefigures the descending of the Holy Spirit like a rain in upon the dry womb of the Virgin Mary.

“The dew that Gideon found in the bowl when he prayed,
Depicted the symbol of him who came down upon the fleece like rain.”⁶¹

Cloud:

Jacob of Serugh likens Mary to a cloud that entered Egypt carrying the Lord in her arms.

⁶⁰ (Khudra (prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. the Commemoration of the Saint Mary Mother of Christ. V. 1, Pp. 609-610)

⁶¹ (Jacob of Serugh, Select Festal Homilies, translated from Syriac and introduced by Thomas Kollamparampil, CMI, with a foreward by Sebastian P. Brock, Center for Indian and Inter-religious studies (CIIS), Rome, and Dharmaram Publications (DP), Bangalore 1997, Nativity III (FH III) P. 115)

“Mary is the comely cloud that entered into Egypt Who carried the Lord in her arms to visit the place.”⁶²

The Door of the Lord:

The fathers of the Church strongly believed the door of the Lord which Ezekiel prophesied is prefiguring the ever Virginity of Mary. As through the door of the Lord only the Lord Himself goes in and out thus from the Virginal womb of the Holy Mother only the Lord Jesus Christ was born.

“This is the Door of the Lord, through which The Lord goes in and out; it will not be trodden under the foot of mankind as was said by The Prophet Ezekiel.”⁶³

Jacob of Serugh also believes that the closed door of the Lord which the Prophet Ezekiel has prophesied (Ez. 44:2) is undoubtedly a type of the ever Virginity of Mary. It also emphasizes the fact that Virgin Mary gave birth only to one son our Lord Jesus Christ.

“That closed door of which Ezekiel has spoken,
Is the virgin whose virginity seal is preserved.”⁶⁴

Woman and Virgin:

Jesus as a perfect man suffered and died on the Cross. His body was laid in a grave and a big stone was laid on the door of the grave and sealed so the holy apostles will not come and steal Him (His Body). On the Sunday of the holy Resurrection the stone was removed from the door of His tomb not for the sake of helping the risen Lord to get out of it but rather to make it easier for others to

⁶² (Jacob of Serugh, *Select Festal Homilies*, translated from Syriac and introduced by Thomas Kollamparampil, CMI, with a foreword by Sebastian P. Brock, Center for Indian and Inter-religious studies (CIIS), Rome, and Dharmaram Publications (DP), Bangalore 1997, *Nativity III* (FH III) 100, P. 115)

⁶³ (Khudra (prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. the Commemoration of the Saint Mary Mother of Christ. V. 1, P. 609)

⁶⁴ (Jacob of Serugh, *Select Festal Homilies*, translated from Syriac and introduced by Thomas Kollamparampil, CMI, with a foreword by Sebastian P. Brock, Center for Indian and Inter-religious studies (CIIS), Rome, and Dharmaram Publications (DP), Bangalore 1997, *Nativity III* (FH III) 100, P. 115)

witness the empty tomb. On the same day of the holy resurrection the resurrected Jesus also entered the upper room through the closed doors. All these Biblical references confirm that Mary conceived, not according to custom; and after the birth of Jesus, her Virginity was not destroyed. Esho Dadd Says:

“This, she saw the stone taken away from the sepulcher; not that He might get out was the stone taken away; for He did not need this; for behold! It was previously thus; while He was mortal and substantial, He comes out from the virgin doors, without their being loosened, and passes through hands without being caught; and with solid feet walks upon the fluid substance of the water; and after He was risen, He entered through closed doors, But the stone was taken away to signify that He had risen; for if the grave had not been guarded, being closed and sealed, it would not have been believed that He had risen. Nevertheless, He rose at the cockcrowing, the grave being both closed and sealed; and afterwards, for a sign that He had risen, an Angle came down from heaven, as Matthew said, his countenance being like lightening, and his raiment (white) as snow; and he rolled the stone from the door and sat upon it; and he announced to the women about the Resurrection of our Lord.”⁶⁵

Regarding the ever Virginity of Mary, fathers of the Church believe as the Lord entered heaven without cutting it, and as the sweat comes out of the body without cutting it, and as water is taken up by the roots of the trees into the leaves without any channels after the same manner the Lord was born from the Virgin Mary without destroying her Virginity. Saint Shleemon (Solomon) of Basra says:

“As according the manner in which our Lord entered heaven without cleaving it, some say that He went in as He did through the closed doors; and as He came forth from the Vitgin womb, and Mary’s virginity returned to its former state; and like the sweat from the body; and as water is taken up by the roots of the olives and other trees, and reaches in the twinkling of an eye the leaves, as if through certain ducts, without holes on channels being pierced in them. Thus, by an infinite an ineffable mirachl our Lord entered into heaven without cleaving it. And if the bodies of us who are accustomed to drink water and wine pour

⁶⁵ (The Commentaries of Isho dad of Merv, Bishop of Hadatha (c.850 A.D.) in Syriac and English, V.1, P. 279, ed. and tr. Margaret Dunlop Gibson, intro. James Rendel Harris (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1911)

out sweat without our flesh being rent or our skin pierced, how very much easier is it for the Divine power to go in through closed doors and within the firmament of heaven without rending or cleaving it?”⁶⁶

Saint John Chrysostome just as Solomon of Basrah believes that Jesus was born from his mother’s womb with out destroying her Virginity, after the same manner He came out of the closed tomb without removing the stone laid on the entrance of the grave. So, His birth did not destroy the seal of His mother’s virginity. Nor did His rising from the dead break the seals placed on the entrance of the sepulcher.

“How can I recount for you these hidden realities of proclaim what goes beyond a word or concept? How can I lay open before you the mystery of the Lord’s Resurrection, the saving sign of His Cross and of His three days’ death? For each event that happened to our savior is an outward sign of the mystery of our redemption. Just as Christ was born from his mother’s inviolate virginal womb, so too He rose again from the closed tomb. As He, the only begotten Son of God was made the firstborn of His mother, so to, by His Resurrection, He became the first born from the dead. His birth did not break the seal of His mother’s virginal integrity. Nor did His rising from the dead break the seals on the sepulcher. And so, just as I cannot fully express His going forth from the tomb.”⁶⁷

We have never heard of a woman who is at the same time a woman and a virgin. Nevertheless, Virgin Mary was a woman “mother” and a Virgin at the same time. The following anthem says:

⁶⁶ (Mar Shleemon, Metropolitan of Basra, Book of the Bee, the Syriac text Edited from the Manuscript in London, Oxford, and Munich. With an English Translation by Ernest A. William Budge, M.A. Oxford, at the Clarendon press, 1886. Pp. 101-102)

⁶⁷ (Saint John Chrysostome, Homily on Holy Saturday 10. Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture John 11-21 Edited by Joel C. Elowsky, General Editor, Tomas C. Oden, Inter Varsity Press, Downers Grove, Illinois Pp. 336-337)

“This is a woman who is not like other woman, for there is no woman whose name is virgin; this is called a woman, and in circulate she is a virgin. She is both at once a woman and in truth a Virgin.”⁶⁸

In the following doctrinal Hymn, fathers of the Church have believed that the blessed Mary is at once a mother and a Virgin. She is Jesus’ Mother alone, and His sister with all. She is also His betrothed one with the humble women. She conceived and gave birth to a child not according to the custom. And after giving birth to the Holy One; she has remained a Virgin.

“Blessed is The Fruit which has shone forth from you O, Blessed One. Your Mother, O, our Lord, no man knows how to call upon her. If we call her a Virgin, her Son stands; the married one, no man has known her; and, if Your mother does not comprehend You, who is capable? • For she is Your mother, alone, and your sister with all; she became unto You a mother and a sister, she is also Your betrothed one with the modest women; behold with everything you have adorned the beauty of Your mother; Because she was Your betrothed one before time has come; she also conceived, not according to custom; after You had come, O Holy One; and, she has remained Virgin, for she had given birth to You in a Holy manner.”⁶⁹

The following anthem is rich with symbolisms, types and titles related to the Virgin Mary. These types are: The Begetter of Jesus our King, Ephratha, The pure Virgin Mary, The damsel who carrying the Cub of the lion. The Tree in which the ram was caught to liberate Isaac the son of Abraham from being sacrificed.

“On the day of the commemoration of the holy St. Mary, we sing glory; and give blessing unto her; because from her pure womb shone for us the Savior and The Liberator of the children of Adam, from the slavery of corruption, death and Satan. Let us in love honor her

⁶⁸ (Khudra (prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. the Commemoration of the Saint Mary Mother of Christ. V. 1, P. 610)

⁶⁹ (Khudra (prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. the Commemoration of the Saint Mary Mother of Christ. V. 1, P. 612)

commemoration, to beseech her glorified Son, to have pity on us, by His grace; and to deliver us from conflicts, hunger, and death. O Nations give a great blessing of praise to the begetter of Jesus our King, Blessed are you Ephratha, the mother of kings that from you came forth the Lord of Crowns. Blessed are you, O Mary that women and the virgin's daughters of chiefs envy you, blessed are you, O Mary, that your name is highly exalted because of your Son. Blessed are you, O pure Virgin Mary, that from you has shown forth The One who beautifies (knits) crowns. Blessed are you, the damsel who was carrying the Cub of the lion of which James, wrote. Blessed are you, O Virgin, that within you is marked the tree (i.e. the bush in which the ram was caught to liberate the son of Abraham) which is the type of Isaac. Blessed are you, of whom they were jealous, that Isaiah testified to your lineage in his revelations. Blessed are you, blessed are you O blessed one, by whom the disobedient curse of Eve is removed from all women. Blessed are you, Mary that your Son sits upon the chariot filled with wonder. Blessed art thou, the pious one, filled with hope; all generations give blessings to you. Blessed are you, Mary the mother of Jesus, for in you rested the fulfillment of the prophecies. And, blessed; and blessed, will be said at every hour. How great is the blessing which has been prepared for you? Your prayer is a high-wall unto us, and it will keep us from the wicked one and his hosts, and will cast away from us all afflictions, and will make peace in the world, forever and ever.”⁷⁰

Mar Elia, one of the fathers of the Church of the East in the following prayer addresses Virgin Mary as: The second heaven, the Ever Virgin, Rational East, Heavenly Sheep, The Paradise longed for, Temple of Temples, Rational Bush, Oyster, The Temple (*Shrine*) of Holy Spirit; Handmaiden of the Godhead, Mother of His manhood, Pure Virgin and Mother of the Son of David.

“Unto you, O great and eternal Light (*repeat*) and the illumination of the Hidden and encircled Sun; Whom from the rational sphere, the second heaven, the Ever Virgin shone in a bright manner, and from the womb sealed by the holy virgins, has shone in the four corners of world like the sun. Who has chosen her in the evening of the day of the world, from the human species, and from the female ranks? And, from among the modest women, and from

⁷⁰ (Khudra (prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. the Commemoration of the Saint Mary Mother of Christ. V. 1, P. 604-605)

the kind of virgins which made Mary filled with grace, from the Rational East, which has shown to us The Son of Righteousness. The Holy of Holies dwelling place, and the lady of the Holy Place, the Heavenly Sheep from whom The Heavenly Shepherd wore the cloth of the sheep. The Paradise longed for, from the iteration to the Second Adam. The Temple of Temples of the Highest; in whom dwelt the Highest One willingly. The Rational Bush with flame which spoke eloquently; but was not consumed; The Pure Oyster which conceived from the drop of the Divine Rain; and reared The Pearl of great Brightness; The Dwelling Place of the flesh, was made worthy to celebrate within Her the Most Noble Heavenly King. The Glorified Bedchamber in which God the Word was betrothed to our mortal race. The Paten of the Divine Things. The Temple (*Shrine*) of the Holy Spirit; the Handmaiden of the Godhead, the Mother of His manhood, the Pure Virgin who has purified the Virgins. With whom aged the name of Virgins, Mary has benefitted from the overflowing graces; blessed among women the Mother of the Son of David, who has united The Word, personally.”⁷¹

In the following prayer, Mar Shalitta addresses the blessed Mary as a blessed vine, chariot for Your glory, Stream of holiness, storehouse of chastity, temple of fire, mansion of life and crown of the Church:

“O You who are the Mighty One by Your deeds; and, Exalted by His wonders (distinctive)

which You have sanctified (separated) this day for the nature of man; and, in the desired bunch which had been taken from the blessed vine of the faithful Abraham, we kneel, worship and beseech, and ask as by the effects of Your grace, that the holy virgin Mary, who was chosen, and by the descent of Your Power, was consecrated from which You have born, and she became the chariot for Your glory, and the cloud for the shadow of Your delights; and, the source of purity and the stream of holiness, and the seal of virginity; and, the treasury and storehouse of chastity; and, the temple of fire, and the mansion of life, and censer filled with good-will, and, the crown of the Church of the Holy of holies; and the beauty of orthodoxy of true faith; thus, O our Lord and God, pass and bring to an end scourging rods (*whips*); and, disturbing violence (*bring to an end*), grant unto us chaste lives

⁷¹ (Khudra (prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. the Commemoration of the Saint Mary Mother of Christ. V. 1, P. 604-605)

filled with peace, and an abundance in blessings; and gather by Your grace, the scattered ones of flock. While our face is pure and our thoughts are sanctified, and our beauty is victorious, our lamps are kindled, may we go forth in Your Way; and, to mix with the congregation which glorifies You in Your grace and mercy. O You who did create light in Thy loving-kindness and did order darkness in Your mercies, and gave light to Your creation, by Your wisdom and knowledge and Godhead, which cannot be comprehended by spiritual nor earthly beings, O Lord of all of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit forever: Amen.”⁷²

Mary, Virgin, and mother:

Mary simultaneously is a mother and a Virgin. She is a mother because she gave birth to Jesus Christ in the flesh. And she is a Virgin because her Virginity was preserved even after giving birth to the Son of God in the flesh. Thus, Virgin Mary is the only woman ever who has a son and is a virgin. And Jesus Christ is the only Son of God who has been born of the Virgin Mary. Briefly Mary gave birth to a son (The only begotten Son of God) and yet her virginity was preserved. Jacob of Serugh says:

“The virgin gave birth and fulfilled everything that had been written,
And anyone who again wants to prophesy sets division.
Only one woman gave birth to the One and there is no other virgin mother.
There is also no other Only-Begotten but our Lord.”⁷³

In the History of the world nobody has ever seen or heard a virgin without a marital union is conceiving and giving birth to a Son. The perpetual virginity of the blessed Mary confirms the Divinity of the Son who is born from her. And His birth from a woman affirms His Humanity. Thus, the mysterious Child born of Mary is a perfect Man and a perfect God. Jesus Christ in His Divinity is born

⁷² (Khudra (prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. the Commemoration of the Saint Mary Mother of Christ. V. 1, P. 626-627)

⁷³ (Jacob of Serugh, Select Festal Homilies, translated from Syriac and introduced by Thomas Kollamparampil, CMI, with a foreword by Sebastian P. Brock, Center for Indian and Inter-religious studies (CIIS), Rome, and Dharmaram Publications (DP), Bangalore 1997, P. 119)

of God without beginning and in His humanity is born of the Virgin Mary at the end of time. Saint Jacob of Serugh says:

“Now she is a virgin and what shall I say about her babe?
This marvel of child terrifies me because it is inexplicable.
Behold, from Eve until this daughter of the Hebrews,
Virginity and milk in the same body have not been seen.
Because she is virgin it seems to me that He is God
But because He is corporeal, I think again that maybe He is human.
The whole way of this child is outside (my experience)
And it disturbs me, and how I should speak about Him, I do not know.
When I saw how His conception was without marital union,
I perceived Him; His nativity too is exalted beyond explanation.
A virgin is His mother but who is His father if He is an earthly one?
Whose Son should I call Him and who is His father? I do not know.”⁷⁴

Again, in the following hymn Jacob of Serugh emphasizes the perpetual Virginity of Mary by saying:

“The Fruit that had come into being without marital union bewildered them,
Since the womb of the mother which was sealed and preserved in virginity.”⁷⁵

The Kings Castle:

Virgin Mary has been constantly compared to the virgin Eve. Eve in her Virginity covered herself with leaves however Virgin Mary clothed herself with the garment of glory. At the end of time the Holy Mother in her Virginity became a Castle of flesh for the King of Kings and the Holy of Holies for the High Priest our Lord Jesus Christ. Saint Ephrem says:

⁷⁴(Jacob of Serugh, *Select Festal Homilies*, translated from Syriac and introduced by Thomas Kollamparampil, CMI, with a foreward by Sebastian P. Brock, Center for Indian and Inter-religious studies (CIIS), Rome, and Dharmaram Publications (DP), Bangalore 1997, P. 103)

⁷⁵ (Jacob of Serugh, *Select Festal Homilies*, translated from Syriac and introduced by Thomas Kollamparampil, CMI, with a foreward by Sebastian P. Brock, Center for Indian and Inter-religious studies (CIIS), Rome, and Dharmaram Publications (DP), Bangalore 1997, P. 106)

“In her virginity Eve put on
Leaves of shame. Your mother put on,
In her virginity, the garment of glory
That suffices for all, I gave
The small mantel of the body to the One who covers all.
“Blessed is the woman in whose heart
And mind You are. She is the King’s castle
For You, the King’s Son, and the Holy of Holies
For You, the High Priest. She has neither the anxiety
Nor the toil of household and husband.”⁷⁶

Mary is called the innocent Eve:

Eve by listening to the advice of the serpent (Satan) became the sinful Eve, however Virgin Mary by being obedient to the Words of God became the innocent Eve. Saint Ephrem the Syraic says:

“The Gracious One who coaxed me to speak the blessings
That His mouth announced.....
..... Opened (my) mouth
Not to investigate but to confess
That One who sprang forth from Mary to portray by her
The childlike daughters of Eve, the innocent Eve.
I shall sing for your advent the blessings of chaste women
That I may be worthy of association with you.”⁷⁷

Mary the type of the Church:

The fathers of the Church described the motherhood of the Church in relationship to the Virgin Mary the mother of Christ. In many writings of the Church fathers, Mary and the Church are sharing the same titles. The

⁷⁶ (Ephrem the Syrian hymns, translated and introduced by Kathleen E. McVey. Paulist press, New York. Mahwah. Hymn on the Nativity, Hymn 17.5, Pp. 154-155)

⁷⁷ (Ephrem the Syrian hymns, translated and introduced by Kathleen E. McVey. Paulist press, New York. Mahwah. Hymn on the Virginity, Hymn 26. 1, P. 377)

relationship of Mary and the Church is established on the doctrine of the second Eve. It is recorded in the Sacred Scriptures that the first Eve, the mother of mankind was born from the side of the first Adam, and the second Eve, Virgin Mary “the holy Church” the Mother of all the believers, was born from the side of the second Adam, Jesus Christ. Thus Eve, as a mother of all the children of Adam, is a type of the Church who begets and gives birth to all the faithful believers in eternal life. Saint Ephrem in his Hymn on crucifix makes Mary the type of the Church. He says Mary who first saw the risen Jesus is a type of the Church which will be the first to see the signs of the second coming of Jesus Christ from heaven.

“Mary who saw him,
is a type of the Church, which first
is to see the signs of his coming.”⁷⁸

Saint Ephrem in his Hymn on faith compares Virgin Mary to many different things. First, he compares her to the Church. He says as the risen Jesus in His Divinity is present in the Church so was, He present in His Divinity present in the womb of the Virgin Mary. Holy Mother for nine months became a church and carried within her womb Jesus Christ. Secondly, in the same Hymn, Ephrem is relating Virgin Mary who is carrying within her womb the Son of God to the cloud which carried and embraced Him as He was ascending into heaven.

“There was Mary whom I saw therein,
The pure conception, there was the Church,
And the Son within her; a likeness of that cloud
Which carried him, symbol of heaven
From whence streams forth his glorious radiance.”⁷⁹

The birth of Jesus from the Virgin Mary is the fulfilment of the prophecy of the Old Testament. It is written: “*The Lord will raise up a prophet for you, not any*

⁷⁸ (Geevarghese Panicker, the Church in the Syriac Tradition. SEERI, Baker Hill, Kottayam - 686 001, Kerala, India P. 24, Crucifix 4, 17)
(Saint Ephrem, Hymn on Crucifix 4, 17, quoted from Saint Ephrem Ecumenical Research Institute (Seeri) Baker hill, Kottayam -685001, Kerala, India P 24)

⁷⁹ (Ephrem, Hymn on faith 81, 4. quoted from Saint Ephrem Ecumenical Research Institute (Seeri) Baker hill, Kottayam -685001, Kerala, India P. 26)

ordinary one, but one like me, (Deut. 18:15). Everything that Moses did during his earthly ministry, for example: feeding the people of Israel with Manna in the wilderness, walking in the red sea, were types of those things which Jesus would do in the future. Jesus fed thousands of the hungry people in the wilderness and He too walked on the sea. Moses liberated his people from the oppression of Pharaoh. After the same manner Jesus liberated the Church from Circumcision. Moses entrusted his people to Joshua, son of Nun and Jesus entrusted Mary, His Church, to John the beloved disciple. Saint Ephrem in his commentary on the New Testament likens Mary to the Church:

“When they were satisfied, therefore, they saw that he had fed them in the wilderness, as did Moses through prayer, and they cried out saying, this is the prophet concerning whom it was said that he would come into the world. (John 6:14) They were repeating that [would] of Moses, The Lord will raise up a prophet for you, not any ordinary one, but one like me, (Deut. 18:15) who will feed you bread in the desert. Like me, he walked on the sea, (Matthew 14:25-31) and appeared in the cloud. (Matthew 17:5) he freed his Church from circumcision, and established John, who was a virgin, in place of Joshua, son of Nun. He confided (revealed) Mary, his Church, to him, (John 19:25-27) as Moses [confided] his flock to Joshua, (Deut. 31:7-8) so that this [word], like me might be fulfilled.”⁸⁰

Both, the Eastern and western fathers of the universal Church have recognized the Virgin Mary as a type of the Virgin Church. And the espousal of the Virgin Mary to Joseph the righteous prefigured the espousal of the Church to Jesus Christ the heavenly Bride Groom. The Virgin Mary conceived and gave birth to the only begotten Son of God by the power of the Holy Spirit. After the same manner the virgin Church, by the power of the Holy Spirit, conceives and gives birth to her spiritual sons and daughters from the womb of the Baptism. Saint Ambrose says:

“And, therefore, he who had undertaken to prove the incorrupt mystery of the incarnation thought it fruitless to pursue evidence of Mary’s virginity, lest he be seen as a defender of the Virgin rather than an advocate of the mystery. Surely, when he taught that Joseph was righteous, he adequately declared that he could not violate the temple of the Holy Spirit, the mother of the Lord, the womb of the mystery. We have learned the lineage of the Truth. We have learned its counsel. Let us learn its mystery. Fittingly is she espoused, but virgin,

⁸⁰ Saint Ephrem’s commentary on Tatian’s Diatessaron, Carmel McCarthy. Published by Oxford University press on behalf of the University of Manchester, 1993 p. 192.12.5)

because she prefigures the church which is undefiled (Ephesians 5:27) yet wed. A virgin conceived us of the Spirit, a Virgin brings us forth without travail. And thus perhaps Mary, wed to one, was filled by another, because also the separate churches are indeed filled by the Spirit and by grace and yet are joined to the appearance of a temporal priest”⁸¹

The Church is the mystical body of Christ. Saint Paul says: “*As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ.... Now you are Christ's body, and individually parts of it.*” (1 Corinthians 12:12, 27) Thus Christ Himself represents the whole congregation of believers. He is the head of the church and sons and daughters of the Church are members of His mystical body. Therefore, Mary who gave birth to Jesus Christ (the Church) is necessarily the mother of the Church.

“He calls (Christ) here the whole assembly of believers, because from Him we have received the communion of the Spirit about the hope of the Resurrection; and He is our Head, and we are all members of Him. Now by the broad illustration of various members of one body, some of whom are smaller, and some more honorable, he showed and taught, and admonished, that although there are among you those whose gifts are superior, that they should not despise those whose gifts are small; because ye also need the use of the gifts that these have, even if they are thought to be small.”⁸²

The Virgin Church was espoused to the heavenly Bride Groom Jesus Christ by John the Baptist on the Jordan River. Again, the Virgin Church that gives birth to her children in Baptism by the power of the Holy Spirit is likened to the Virgin Mary who gave birth to a Son by the power of the Holy Spirit. Jacob of Serugh says:

“Let the virgin Church who is betrothed to you rejoice in you, my Lord,
When she sings to you knew praise with an exalted voice.”⁸³

It was on the First Sunday of the Holy Resurrection that the risen Jesus purposely showed Himself to a woman, Mary Magdalene. By doing so He

⁸¹ (Ambrose: Exposition of the Gospel of Luke 2:6-7) (EHG36) Ancient Christian commentary on Scripture New Testament Volume III, Luke, Edited by Arthur A. Just Jr. General Editor, Thomas C. Oden, Inter Varsity press, Downers Grove, Illinois, 1953, Page 14)

⁸² (*The Commentaries of Isho dad of Merv, Bishop of Hadatha (c.850 A.D.) in Syriac and English*, V.1, P. 38, ed. and tr. Margaret Dunlop Gibson, intro. James Rendel Harris (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1911)

⁸³ (Jacob of Serugh, *Select Festal Homilies*, translated from Syriac and introduced by Thomas Kollamparampil, CMI, with a foreward by Sebastian P. Brock, Center for Indian and Inter-religious studies (CIIS), Rome, and Dharmaram Publications (DP), Bangalore 1997, P. 127)

taught His followers a mystery concerning His Church and His mother. On the day of His birth in the flesh, His mother, the Virgin Mary was the first to receive Him. And on the day of His glorious resurrection, the risen Lord was pleased to show Himself first to a woman. Thus, in the beginning and in the end of His earthly ministry, the name of his mother is mentioned. Mary is likened to the church who first embraced the gospel of salvation proclaimed to her by angel Gabriel. And like the church, she was the first to bring the good news of the resurrection of the Lord to Simon peter. Thus, it is fitting to call the church itself ‘Mary’ because it is appropriate for Mary to have two names. Saint Ephrem in the Memre of the Holy week compares Mary to the Church. Though there is an undeniable ‘fusion’ of the Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalene. There is possibility that the cause of the fusion is the name of the Virgin Mary with Mary Magdalene. It is believed that the name Mary is used as a functional title to imply Virgin, Mother and Spouse.

“He drew Mary Magdalene
To come and see his Resurrection.
And why was it first to a woman
That he showed his resurrection, and not to men.
Here he showed us a mystery
Concerning his church and his mother,
At the beginning of his coming to the earth
A virgin was first to receive him.
And at his raising up from the grave
To a woman he showed his resurrection.
In the beginning and in his fulfilment
The name of his mother cries out and is present.
Mary received him by conception
And saw an angle before her.
And Mary received him in life
And saw angles at his grave.
Again, Mary is like the church,
The Virgin, who was born the first fruits by the Gospel
In the place of the church, Mary saw him.
Blessed be he who gladdened the Church and Mary.
Let us call the church itself ‘Mary’
For it befits her to have two names.

For to Simon, the Foundation,
Mary was first to run,
And like the church, brought him the good news
That our Lord had risen and was raised up.
Fittingly did she come to Simon,
And bring him the good news that the son was risen,
For he was the Rock and foundation
of the church of the Gentiles, the elect. (ef Lamy 1, 531-3)
And again, little later:
But Mary type of the church
Looked into the sepulcher (Lamy 1, 535)”⁸⁴

Again, saint Ephrem in his hymn on Nativity sees the Church as a virgin mother typified by Mary as foretold by Isaiah:

“Blessed art thou, O church, in whom rejoices
Even Isaiah in his prophecy:
‘Behold, a virgin will conceive and bring forth
A child’ whose name is a great mystery.
O for the explanation that was revealed in the Church!
Two names, which were joined together and become one.
Emmanuel, El is with you always,
Who joins you with His members?”⁸⁵

And a little later saint Ephrem says:

“But Mary type of the church
Looked into the sepulcher.” (Lamy 1, 535)⁸⁶

The feasts and Commemorations of the Virgin Mary are celebrated with a great solemnity in the Church on earth and in the Church in heaven. Thus, on the day of the Commemoration of the Virgin Mary, believers on earth unite their voices with the voice of angels and saints in heaven. From the following anthems we

⁸⁴(Ephrem, Memre of the Holy week, (ef Lamy 1, 531-3. quoted from Saint Ephrem Ecumenical Research Institute (Seeri) Baker hill, Kottayam -685001, Kerala, India P. 25)

⁸⁵ (Ephrem the Syrian hymns, translated and introduced by Kathleen E. McVey. Paulist press, New York. Mahwah. Hymn on Nativity, Hymn 25. 5, P. 201)

⁸⁶ (Ephrem Hymn on Nativity 25, 5. quoted from Saint Ephrem Ecumenical Research Institute (Seeri) Baker hill, Kottayam -685001, Kerala, India P. 26)

experience the degree and the level of joy with which the commemorations of the Virgin Mary are celebrated. “Behold the Church thunders and celebrates in glory on the day of the Commemoration of the Virgin Mary. And, The Angels rejoice and all mankind delights on the day of the Commemoration of the Virgin Mary.”

Sons and daughters of the Church always offer their petitions to God on behalf of the Holy Church through the intercession of the Virgin Mary the mother of Christ. In the following anthem the sons and daughters of the Church on the day of the Commemoration of the Virgin Mary are beseeching the Holy Mother to intercede on behalf of the whole world as well as on behalf of the holy Church. The writer of this anthem by saying: “And when into the clouds, you are gloriously elevated;” gives a hint to the ascension of the Virgin Mary into heaven.

“The blessed mother who has brought rest to the distressed world from the oppression of the adversary; beseech your Son to spread forth (open-wide) His wings upon the inhabited world which the wicked-one has disturbed because we have sinned; and to remove from it conflict, and wars; and, desire for it (the world), peace, tranquility and perfect love • So that the kings of the Earth, and the rulers; may quietly and in piety govern the affairs of our nation; and that the priests and people in the true (orthodox) faith may present to Your Son, the gifts of glory; and when into the clouds, you are gloriously elevated; and unto His way, at the end, among the saints • like a mother, beseech on our behalf; and, like a Lady, request on our behalf so that we may find mercy in the Presence of Your Son, glory be unto HIM!”⁸⁷

⁸⁷ (Khudra (Prayer book) published in Mar Narsai press, Thrissur, Kerala 1960. Volume1, The Tone of the aid, P. 24)