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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*).”<sup>1</sup>

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.”<sup>2</sup>

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.

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

<sup>2</sup> (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 •”<sup>3</sup>

### **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 wed lock “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

<sup>3</sup> (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.”<sup>4</sup>

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”<sup>5</sup>

#### 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.

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

<sup>5</sup> (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.”<sup>6</sup>

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;”<sup>7</sup>

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.”<sup>8</sup>

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

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

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

<sup>8</sup> (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.”<sup>9</sup>

### 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.”<sup>10</sup>

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

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

<sup>10</sup>(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 in the Holy Scriptures, concerning his Son, who appeared in the flesh from the seed of the house of David. (Romans 1:2-3) ....”<sup>11</sup>

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.”<sup>12</sup>

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.”<sup>13</sup>

#### **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.’”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> (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)

<sup>12</sup> (Jacob of Serugh, Slect Festal Homilies, translated from Syriac and introduced by Thomas Kollamparmpil, 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)

<sup>13</sup> (Jacob of Serugh, Slect Festal Homilies, translated from Syriac and introduced by Thomas Kollamparmpil, 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)

<sup>14</sup> (Jacob of Serugh, Slect Festal Homilies, translated from Syriac and introduced by Thomas Kollamparmpil, 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)”<sup>15</sup>

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.”<sup>16</sup>

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

<sup>15</sup> (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)

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



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)”<sup>84</sup>

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?”<sup>85</sup>

And a little later saint Ephrem says:

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

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

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<sup>84</sup>(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)

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

<sup>86</sup> (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 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!”<sup>87</sup>

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

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