

# (THE SYNOD OF MAR DADIŠO‘

424 AD)

{43} Again, the Synod of Dadišo‘

The gathering of metropolitans and bishops which took place at Markabta of the Arabs in the days of Bahram, the King of Kings, when Mar Dadišo‘ the catholicos desired to resign from the administration of the catholicate.

(This synod took place) in the fourth year of Bahram, the King of Kings, when the bishops were assembled at Markabta of the Arabs before Mar Dadišo‘, the catholicos, the head and chief of the bishops, and leader of all Christianity in the East: ‘Agapeṭa, bishop of Beit Lapaṭ, Hoša‘, bishop of Nisibis, Zabda, bishop of Prat, Daniyel, bishop of ‘Arbil, ‘Aqbalaha, bishop of Karka dBet Slok, Yazdad, bishop of Rew-‘Ardašir, Milis, bishop of Qardo, ‘Abdišo‘, bishop of Šoštera, Daniyel, bishop of ‘Arzon, Šem‘on, bishop of Hirta of the Arabs, ‘Abraham, bishop of Rima, Yoḥanan, bishop of Nhargor, Narsa, bishop of Karka, Narsa, bishop of Ra[dan]i<sup>62</sup>, Mari, bishop of Kaškar, Baṭa, bishop of Lašom, Yausep, bishop of Ḥarbgelal, Yoḥanan, bishop of ‘Austan dArzon, Milis, bishop of Šoštera<sup>63</sup>, Baršaba, bishop of Marw, Yazdwi, bishop of Haryo, ‘Aprid, bishop of Segistan, Dawid, bishop of ‘Abrašahar, Domaṭ, bishop of Šawita<sup>64</sup> dGorgan, Dawid, bishop of Rai, ‘Adai, bishop of outer ‘Ariwan, Šašar, bishop of Beit Daraye, ‘Aṭiq, bishop of Beit Moksaye, ‘Artašahar, bishop of Armenia, Qiris, bishop of Dasen, Mara, bishop of Beit Bagaš, ‘Aprahaṭ, bishop of Isfahan, ‘Ardaq, bishop of Maškna<sup>65</sup> of Qurad, Yazdwi, bishop of ‘Ištahar, Yoḥanan, bishop of Mazon, and Haṭṭa, bishop of the captivity of Balašpar.

{44} All of these bishops offered a petition to the chief, head, and leader of all the bishops of the East, the venerable of God and holy Mar Dadišo‘ the catholicos. They asked of him that he return to his see and stand at the head of the church of God, ruling and leading the flock of Christ in all the lands of the East, which had been committed to him by Christ in the high priesthood which he had received, as (it had been committed) to the head of the apostles, Peter. “With the agreement and permission of the saints, confessors, chief bishops, and teachers in their deeds, and those who were tested and the martyrs in their sufferings, crowned in witness to their Lord, Christ, this gift of the patriarchate has been given to and confirmed for this blessed see in the cathedral church of Koke, and you, Mar Catholicos, have been entrusted with (it). You have been confirmed in it the father, head, and leader over all Christianity in the East, and it has gone out and has been transmitted from your see to all sees of bishops, not only in this realm, but to those beyond it. Lo, it flows and is transmitted without interruption, and the commands of fearful kings and the scourgings and tortures of mighty rulers have not been able to inhibit its flow.”

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<sup>62</sup> Lit., “Rai,” but see subsequently “Dawid, bishop of Rai.”

<sup>63</sup> But see above on ‘Abdišo‘.

<sup>64</sup> But see below on “Haṭṭa, bishop of the captivity of Blašpar.” Here ܠܘܬܐܘܪܐܝܢܐ might more probably read

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<sup>65</sup> Lit., the “tent”.

After these things which were said by us bishops, the illustrious confessor, our father and head, the leader of all the East, then opened his mouth and said to all our council, “The execrable among us do not allow that there should be a leader over them, those who so many times have been excommunicated and removed from the council of our lords and holy fathers, Mar 'Išhaq and Mar Yahbalaha the catholicoi and the bishops with them, some of whom have departed from this world. And you who are now here in council yourselves know the wickedness of these execrable men: Baṭi of Hormizd-'Ardašir, Baršabta of Šuš, Zabida of Zabe, Qaisa of Qona, Šarbil of Dasqarta dMalka, 'Abnir of Kaškar, Šlemon of Nuhadra, Bar Ḥaile of Taḥal, Bar Yakwi of Balašpar, Parbukt, who is from 'Ardašir-Koreh, and Yazidbozid of Darbgarad, along with the rest of their colleagues. You yourselves know them, that after they were excommunicated and removed and were stripped of every title of the priesthood, and were also alienated by decree from the Holy Mysteries, they went and sought refuge among outsiders who were rulers. The insolent like them also associated with them, some of whom had been suspended, and some excommunicated by us. They troubled the minds of faithful men and led them astray, saying, ‘We who are innocent have been excommunicated and have been removed from the title of the priesthood, but this has been wrongfully done to us by Mar 'Išhaq, and Mar Yahbalaha, {45} and the bishops with them. Because we ourselves know that we are not guilty, we have not accepted the excommunication and removal which they brought into being against us, nor the bonds which they placed upon us that we might not approach the Mysteries or communicate with Christians.’

“Because of their wickedness I composed and sent to their dioceses writs of judgment against them. When they saw the writs they said, ‘We do not accept the judgment of Dadišo’, for he did not receive<sup>66</sup>the catholicate; but a certain man who called himself a bishop consecrated him and irregularly titled him “catholicos”.’ They further said, ‘In writing he certified to the Magians, “I am not the head of the Christians, and I do not make bishops, presbyters, and deacons.” Also he affirmed that he venerated fire and water. He has forsaken all observances of Christianity, wallowing in much fornication and enriching himself with much money through usury. The churches and monasteries are despoiled by him, and he performs ordination for a large bribe. He cheats many men by the bribes<sup>67</sup>which he takes and the unjust judgments which he makes. He is a man who is false in all his ways. Since temporal instruction has not come near him and he does not know how to read books, he is stupid and ignorant, and this persecution which is happening to Christians at this time is due to his own incitement.’ They said these things to Christians, and many were indiscriminately carried away after them. Those who were hearers, even more than those who were communicators and conveyers of these evils, were assiduous to proclaim them to their brothers and to cause them to stumble on our account — not as though they had heard them from the excommunicated, but as though they themselves were witnesses of us in these evil things they repeated concerning us.

“They even spoke evil words and harsh accusations about us to pagans and rulers in the first year, delivering me to bonds and to bitter scourgings. And because the greater part of Christians were scandalized through me at the instigation of the excommunicated, there was no comforter for me in the sicknesses and pains which came upon me due to the severity of the scourgings and the afflictions of the harsh bonds. For this reason persecutions have taken place and the Magians have gained the ascendancy through the destruction of churches and monasteries. Many have apostatized and left our broth-

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<sup>66</sup>ܡܕܢܐ for ܡܕܢܐ.

<sup>67</sup>ܕܡܢܐ for ܕܡܢܐ.

erhood, and a few have born witness (as martyrs), but many have fled and hidden themselves.

“Even now the excommunicated take delight in the destruction of Christianity that they may establish their own evil will, for they do not credit the edict which justly went out against them from the Spirit, the Paraclete, through the chief shepherds of the church. Thus their wickedness has been strengthened, for it pleases them to continue in the trackless waste of sin. Wishing their pathways to be {46} always free for destruction, they are not willing to have a head or leader to restrain them from the course of the pathways of their wickedness. How I have been allowed to escape, like a bird from the snare of the fowler, through the intervention of a faithful emissary, all of you know. Why do you now tax my wretched soul, which has been wearied without measure by the multitude of troubles which have befallen it? Because of your small ‘honor’ I have endured great disgrace and measureless affliction. Leave me to weep bitterly over the ruin of the church and over the fall and destruction of her children.”

He said these things while his eyes overflowed with tears and he wept in sadness, and he caused all the bishops to weep.

Then ‘Agapeṭa the bishop stood up and petitioned the chief and head of the bishops, the leader of all the East, to allow him to speak in his presence and also to read the letters of command which were sent from time to time from the leaders of the West to our early fathers, and finally, those which were in the days of Mar ‘Iṣḥaq and Mar Yahbalaha the catholicoi. Mar Dadišo‘ the catholicos gave permission to ‘Agapeṭa the bishop, and he read the letters.

Then he began to speak in sequence about the previous disorders from which persecution had sprung up against the churches — especially by way of the insolent and disobedient bishops upon whom mighty censure had come from the holy and illustrious high priest, the faithful Mar Papa the catholicos, because of their disgraceful conduct at the time when they went to Mar Milis and to the excellent bishops like him and troubled their mind. On account of their simplicity these men<sup>68</sup> were carried away unawares in vain zeal after them. Some of those who were headstrong became accusers and some of them witnesses, and Mar Milis and the excellent like him received the testimonies of the insolent as judges, and though they had no authority as judges, they rendered Mar Papa null and void. Also, when Mar Papa saw that justice had deserted the council — that injustice prospered among the excellent as well as the unjust and that truth had departed from the headstrong and elect alike — seeing the Gospel placed in the midst while there was no just judgment between him and the council, he became enraged with a great passion. He struck the Gospel, and said to it, “Speak! Speak, Gospel!”, as if (to say), “Why are you placed as judge in the midst and have observed truth departing from honest and corrupt bishops alike, but you are silent, not giving a just judgment?” But because he did not approach the Gospel with fear and prudence and did not place his hand upon it as a man seeking refuge, {47} Mar Papa immediately received the affliction of judgment in his body. Then the bishops even more believed all the charges and accusations of injustice, oppression, and perfidy which the insolent bishops had written against Mar Papa, against whom, like a man who is (truly) an evil-doer, they composed a narrative in many copies<sup>69</sup> and rushed it off to many places.

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<sup>68</sup> I.e., Mar Milis and the excellent bishops.

<sup>69</sup> ܠܥܢܢܐ for ܥܢܢܐ

Subsequently, when this was reported to our western fathers, and through exact inquiry the fraud of the insolent was revealed, their wickedness exposed, and they were excommunicated, and all those headstrong bishops had been removed from the titles of their ranks, both those who made accusation and those who bore witness, they forgave<sup>70</sup> the excellent bishops who were in the council which was conducted against Mar Papa, for some of them had (already) departed from the world with a good testimony, and others had left this life with a virtuous name. (They forgave) as well such as were (still) living, not because of their mode of life, but also because it was known that they were very rustic and simple, and for this reason those who were corrupt had all the more been enabled to lead them astray, in order that those insolent men might be enabled to perfect the intention of their wickedness on a man, the patriarch, by (identifying themselves with) the excellent reputation of those blessed ones. The fear they had — that perhaps he would dismiss them from their ranks — came upon them from our western fathers, for they were excommunicated, removed, and cast out without mercy. The (western) fathers loosed and annulled what had been done against Mar Papa, and because of his glorious manners and his glowing zeal in the fear of God — for more than all who preceded him he had conducted himself diligently, and in return he was avenged upon the council which his disciples had convoked against him though they had no authority — the fathers commanded: “Mar Papa shall be proclaimed at the head of all in the ‘Book of the Living,’ and all who preceded him shall be proclaimed after him. Also, Mar Šem‘on, who was placed in Mar Papa’s stead at the time of the corruption of rulership, shall become archdeacon to Mar Papa, for we know that he is an excellent and godly man and was carried away to this thing by force in the council. He shall serve before him in love and the fear of God. And when Mar Papa goes to his Lord in his passage from this world, Mar Šem‘on will be permitted by us to occupy the see of Mar Papa and to hold the patriarchal leadership.

“Hereafter, as it is with us<sup>71</sup>, disciples shall not be allowed to exalt themselves over their teacher or to become his judges, for permission has not been given them by Christ their Lord. According to the just laws which God the Creator established in human nature, children are not allowed to deprive their fathers of their property, but fathers have the rule over children; nor may servants deprive their masters of their freedom, but masters have the rule over servants. Wives are not {48} allowed to deprive their husbands of headship over them, but wives should be subject to husbands, and husbands should bear rule over their wives, since wives are commanded to love, be subject to, and obey their husbands, but husbands are only commanded to love their wives, not to be subject to them. Wherever men have inclined to the obedience of their wives they have brought punishment upon themselves, for they do not observe the limitations and laws which God has established in nature.

“In the holy church all perfection ought to be especially fulfilled, for as the Father of truth is one, and his Son, Christ the Savior, is one, and his living Spirit, the Paraclete, is one, so his faithful steward, Simon bar Jonah, who was surnamed ‘Kepa’, is one, whom he promised, ‘Upon this rock I will build my church,’ and again, ‘To you I will give the keys of the kingdom of heaven.’<sup>72</sup> It was not said by Christ to all the disciples, ‘Upon you I will build’ and ‘I will give you’, and although the gift of priesthood was bestowed upon all the apostles, yet one headship, which is a spiritual fatherhood, was not for all. Instead, as it is with one true God, (so it is) with one faithful steward, who should be head, leader,

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<sup>70</sup> ܐܘܪܘܫܝܡܝܢܐ for ܐܘܪܘܫܝܡܝܢܐ.

<sup>71</sup> I.e., with the western fathers.

<sup>72</sup> Mt. 16:18-19.

and administrator of his brothers. These laws and limitations are observed in the church with us.

“If there is one of the bishops who thinks that violence has been done to him by his ruler, let him tell of the violence which was done to him in his presence, in the council which takes place before him once a year, like a submissive disciple. If it also appears to all the bishops that violence has been done, let them offer a petition on behalf of their brother, like children to their father, that he treat his son without compulsion, for this is the reason they decreed that there should be councils each year for the resolution of difficulties which arise among us. Hereafter in the region of the East too, at the patriarchal see which is established at the city of Seleucia in the cathedral of Koke, the bishops are also not allowed to act against their head and chief, for they have no authority to become judges over him; and they should know that they have no authority to stretch out the hand to anything not given them by God or by men.”

These things were established by our fathers of old in the West and were sent in writings to our fathers of old in the East, their writings being properly confirmed by (the authority of) the “Word of God”, and invoking the curse of the laws upon those who transgress them.

Also, in the days of Mar 'Ishaq the catholicos — who was a godly man and worked mighty miracles and wondrous signs, through whom the primacy of the high priesthood, which had ceased for twenty-two years, was re-established over the Christian people, and who, through the great freedom of speech which God had given him with the king, raised up the horn of the church by the restoration of the primacy — troublesome men {49} and agitators, (who had become) corrupt in their evil deeds, who at the time were called bishops, ventured to raise up a faction against Mar 'Ishaq the catholicos. They wrote chapters of censures and powerful accusations against him, scandalizing the simple and troubling the minds of the childlike. They complained against him to the king as well, sending unjust reports to the king that, if possible, they might trouble his mind and he might cast Mar 'Ishaq into prison.

This too was reported to the fathers in the West, and with letters, and with their agreement, and with the command of the Christian kingdom as well, Mar Maruta the bishop was sent to Yazdgard, the King of Kings, and he came and appeared before him with the great honoraria which he brought with him. Then, by the command of Yazdgard, the King of Kings, a council of bishops took place, and Mar Maruta, through diligent examination, shut up the insolent under judgment and re-arranged all those things which had been brought into confusion through the disobedient bishops.

Again, in the days of Mar Yahbalaha the catholicos the same things were done by the insolent and proud, when, with the help of notable Christian men and with the protection of outsiders, they usurped for themselves the rank of the episcopate. Because of their dishonorable deeds and the vain opinion which they held about themselves they were not persuaded to be subject to the primacy of Mar Yahbalaha, and they troubled and scandalized many, bringing about schisms and divisions in the church.

Through an ambassador of peace these things were made known to our western fathers and they presented this matter to their kingdom, and on their behalf, and with their agreement, they sent a diligent person who was worthy of this mission<sup>73</sup>. He was trustworthy in the rulings he established and in the judgment which he carried out against

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<sup>73</sup> 𐌹𐌸 𐌹𐌶𐌹𐌸 𐌹𐌸 𐌹𐌶𐌹𐌸 for 𐌹𐌸 𐌹𐌶𐌹𐌸.



which and because of which you underwent the peril of various contests. Do not turn your face from it at this time and leave it in the hand of the ravenous wolves, the excommunicated and annulled, but pour out mercy upon all the flocks of your sheep. Let the retribution of harsh judgment be reserved for the execrable alone, and let them be cast out without mercy — not only from the title of the priesthood, but from the title and chaste religious garb. Let them be rejected like pagans from all concord and unity with Christians. {51} Let their excommunication, dismissal, and annulment be proclaimed in all the churches of Christ. If they show penance, when it pleases your fatherhood let them be received as laymen, and grant them participation in the Mysteries with the faithful laymen.

“We have confirmed — and (now) confirm — the divine commands and paternal laws which have been sent from time to time to this region of the East in which we live. They decreed that ‘His children may not deprive one who is a father of his property, and one who is a head or director may not be subjected to accusation by those who are lower than he, and no one who is lower than he may have authority over him who rules over all’. Our western fathers decreed that ‘Henceforth bishops are not allowed to make a council against their head, nor to write a bill of accusation or complaint. Instead, if there is violence done to them and they do not receive relief in a council before him, let them make an appeal before his fellow patriarchs, that by their examination there might be a determination between him and them.’ But since this has been tried so many times — for those who have appealed against the catholicos have always been found in the wrong and have received the punishment of their offense by excommunication and deposition, having been defrocked and stripped of the title of their ranks and of the wearing of their raiment — we now determine by the ‘Word of God’ that easterners are not allowed to make an appeal — even before the western patriarchs — against their patriarch. Instead, every contention which is unresolved before him shall be reserved to the presence of the judgment seat of Christ. And we have determined and confirmed this statute, which is indissoluble and irrevocable, for we have sealed it with the Holy Trinity: by the ‘Word of the Trinity’ no one is allowed to convene a council against the catholicos or cause disputes, schisms, or divisions, or to write bills of accusation and complaint against him as they did against those of old, or to send copies of written summaries to the dioceses as they sent out against Mar Papa, or to insinuate himself into houses for his wicked tale-bearing. For no reason should anyone think or say that the catholicos of the East may be judged by those who are under him, or by a patriarch like himself; but he shall render judgment upon all who are under him, and his judgment shall be reserved to Christ, who chose him, raised (him) up and placed him at the head of his church, for so it pleased his eternal Lordship that his own all-governing Lordship should be entrusted to and honored in the primacy of his church.

“Henceforth, anyone who is beneath the catholicos is a disciple and subject, and is debtor and liable to the catholicos. He shall cheerfully agree to every judgment which issues from him. All of us bishops and all {52} who come after us confirm while afar and approve while nearby everything which your fatherhood does, as well as all the fathers who come after you and hold your see.”

And the bishops added, saying, “As the Lord lives and as your soul lives, our father, we will not loose our hands from your feet or rise from the earth until you answer (with) ‘peace’ to this our council and to the entire church.”

Our holy father, Mar Dadišo‘ the catholicos, again opened his mouth and said, “I beg you, do not add grief upon grief to me in that you have fallen upon your faces on the earth. Rise up on your feet, for I (shall) do as you have asked. Aside from those who have been excommunicated and have ceased from the title of their priesthood because of

their unpardonable lawlessness — those who were first and those later ones who (joined) with them, upon whom your holiness has also passed sentence — we loose and forgive the rest who were carried off in ignorance and foolish zeal, and we remove from our mind any disagreements which existed between us and them. We pardon them through your prayers and through the grace of the Spirit, the merciful and absolving Advocate of his church for ever.”

And the bishops said, “Amen.”

When the bishops rose they again said, “These things which we have decreed with your agreement, our father, if in our days or after us anyone ventures to transgress against any of them, he shall be cast out without mercy and alienated from every title of the priesthood as the execrable of old and those later in our days have been cast out and removed. If there is anyone who for whatever reason intercedes on their behalf, they shall make known to him what injuries, damages, persecutions, and afflictions took place in the church because of the insolent, haughty, and proud who rose up against the primacy. If after these things he who intercedes (on their behalf) is not persuaded, he too, like them, shall be cast out without mercy from every title of priesthood. Neither we, nor those who come after us, have authority — by the living Word of the Trinity — to loose or annul these things which we decree, confirm, and sign in this book.”

These are the bishops whose names are written above in the rolls which they composed and sealed above and signed below — except for the bishops who came after us and ratified and agreed to whatever the earlier ones had done, and except for the other bishops who were assigned the judgment of Mar Dadišo‘ {53} the catholicos in the council. They<sup>76</sup> came, sealed, and signed at the end of all the writings, or their names<sup>77</sup> are designated within the writings.

The Synod of Mar Dadišo‘ the catholicos is ended.

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<sup>76</sup> I.e., the bishops who came later.

<sup>77</sup> I.e., the bishops who were censured by the Patriarch.