

## **Patriarch Mar Dinkha: A Tainted Legacy**

**May 25, 2015**

If a new [Assyria](#) was to be reborn, which I hope to be the case sometime in the future, then [Assyrians](#) must find a way to shake away the rooted religious mentality and blind devotion to the church. Assyrians must devote their lives to Assyria, stop worshipping individuals instead of God and seek truth and liberty of the mind and soul in the way we act and react to events affecting our people. Blind devotion to individuals has repeatedly led to disasters in history, with very few exceptions.

We must mature and learn how to accept facts, no matter how unpleasant or repulsive that they might be and learn how to argue with each other in a civil way and base our arguments on facts. German poet, novelist and dramatist Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe writes: "It is easier to perceive error than to find truth, for the former lies on the surface and is easily seen, while the latter lies in the depth, where few are willing to search for it." We must seek the truth and learn how to appreciate it, because chances are that it would benefit us.

There should be no power on earth that should silence the truth. We are free people living in the land of the free. We no longer should give in to those who use fear to suppress a debate. It is a sign of weakness when we try to discredit and attack those who present the truth without trying first to investigate the facts presented to us. Loyalty should always be appreciated, but to be blindly loyal is dim-witted.

Few weeks ago, a post on Facebook portrayed Mar Dinkha, the departed patriarch of the Assyrian Church of the East, as a saint. It is incomprehensible how those few could make such an association since many of us know that such defy the common definition of a saint. I tried to argue that such could not be the case based on facts and based on the definition of a saint. While I was expecting an argument which was supposed to be a pool of thoughts that would merge intellectually in reaching a conclusion, a barrage of personal attacks from selected few ensued. Of course that band of fighters did not address my points rather took their cheap shots on this person with intent to humiliate and to send a message to anyone else who dared to express a different opinion than the claimed sainthood of the departed patriarch.

It is stated that the worst thing people could do during an argument is base their conversation on what they feel personally. I maintained my focus on the issue; however, those few continued their insults. I decided that it was best to leave the stage at that point and make my point here.

Here are some facts, which must be considered regarding Mar Dinkha's service as a bishop of Iran and then as a patriarch:

### **Misleading and Lying**

On several occasions, Mar Dinkha stated that he and the church do not get involved in politics and that they would leave that to "our politicians," as he put it.

**FACT:** Mar Dinkha was a close friend with Sargis Aghajan, who is a high ranking member of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), a Kurdish political oppressive organization that has been oppressing the Assyrians on many levels. Aghajan was directed by the Kurdish leadership to establish a new Assyrian political party to participate in the upcoming Iraqi and KRG elections. That new party (The People's Council or in Arabic al-Majlis al-Sha'bi) was created to challenge the popular Assyrian Democratic Movement (ADM), which had the support of the majority of the Assyrians in Iraq in previous elections. Mar Dinkha visited northern Iraq a couple of times and repeatedly praised Aghajan. On October 17, 2006, Mar Dinkha bestowed two medals on Aghajan. The first medal in the degree of

"The Successful Engineer" is the first ever presented by the church. The second medal was the "Patriarchate Medal." The patriarch's devotion to Aghajan was expressed on many occasions. For example, on June 28, 2009, the patriarch officially opened the new Church hall in Turlock. In his speech, he praised Aghajan again and thanked him for instituting the unified compound name [Chaldean Syriac Assyrian](#) in the KRG constitution and that raised many eyebrows knowing the patriarch's claims of defending the Assyrian name.

This was clearly an endorsement by Mar Dinkha for Aghajan and his political movement, which proves that Mar Dinkha contradicted himself, did not keep his word and lied to his people by interfering in political matters by repeatedly endorsing Aghajan in public statements. Few argued that other patriarchs bestowed medals on Aghajan as well, however, the other patriarchs never bragged about being an "Assyrian or Atouraya" as he did while in Chicago.

### **True Servants of God must be humble**

We are told that those who represent God on earth must be humble and we are also asked not to seek earthly fame or treasures. The Bible declares: "But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble." James 4:6.

FACT: Mar Dinkha had picked a very close and selective group of tribal clergymen/laymen to help him run his affairs. This group worked vigorously to glorify the patriarch through lavish birthday parties and anniversaries. Furthermore, the city of Chicago was approached in that same line and on July 15, 2007 a section of Ashland Avenue in Chicago was renamed "His Holiness Mar Dinkha IV Boulevard" as a thank you for his service to his church. A big celebration took place in this occasion and the patriarch headed the happy festivities. This action does not reflect humbleness rather egotism. The patriarch should have made it clear to his secretary/close friends/clergymen that he was against any such idea and even if things were all set without his knowledge (hard to believe), he should have not participated in the celebration. He should have done all that is in his power to undo such action or perhaps implement the renaming of the street after his passing. Glorifying clergymen in this manner while they are alive is tacky, cheap and unholy and Mar Dinkha should know well that God opposes the non-humble.

### **Breaking the Church of the East Canon Laws (Sunhados)**

Mar Dinkha broke the Sunhados (The Canon Laws of the Church of the East) on several occasions. It is unfortunate that many Assyrians attend church sermons weekly, but they do not know the laws of the church. Not being familiar with the laws put the people in a position that they fail to pass good judgment on what happens in the church.

Here is a list of examples showing how Mar Dinkha broke his own church Canon Law, while a bishop of Iran.

- A) Between September 6 and 13, 1973, six bishops from the Church of the East, including Mar Dinkha, met in the prominent Roman Catholic monastery of Christ the King, in Beirut, Lebanon. These bishops decided to humiliate the then officially retired [Patriarch Mar Eashai Shimun](#) and deprive him of his dignity and honor because he had chosen to live out his retirement years with a wife. The Synod of Mar Dadisho of A.D. 424 of the Church of the East declares: **"... 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 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.**" Mar Dinkha broke the church laws by meeting in a council in Beirut which was convened against his patriarch.

- B) Mar Dinkha and the other five bishops broke the Canon Law by accusing the patriarch of wrongdoing because of his marriage. The fact is that Mar Shimun had resigned his ecclesiastical office already in January 1973 (letter to all Assyrian churches worldwide), his resignation was final and effective July 1973 and he married in August 1973 while a retired cleric. These facts must be known to people. Most importantly, there is no law in the *Sunhados* or the Canon Law of the Church of the East, which prohibits the marriage of bishops or patriarchs; it was rather a custom. For a matter of fact, patriarchs of the Church of the East have married before and for over one century and lawfully as instituted by the Third Canon of the Synod of Mar Aqaq of A.D. 486.
- C) On May 30, 1975, Mar Aprim Khamis arrived to the United States presumably to report to Patriarch Mar Shimun and explain the reason why he was there. Of course, this was one of the suggestions of the bishops (including Mar Dinkha) in their May 27 letter to send Mar Aprim to the United States to take the burden from the tired Patriarch Mar Shimun. However, instead of heading to San Jose, California, to report to his Patriarch, Mar Aprim remained in Chicago to take charge in a questionable campaign against the Patriarch. Mar Shimun sent a letter in which he indicated that he was surprised to see the bishop in the United States without his knowledge. The patriarch informed Mar Aprim in addition that under the Canon Law: ***“A bishop or a metropolitan cannot enter or administer in the diocese of any other bishop or metropolitan and that it was only the patriarch who has such authority.”*** Now, since the United States was in reality the diocese of the patriarch at the time (the United States and Canada did not have a bishop), Mar Aprim had no authority to enter and administer in that domain unless with the consent of the patriarch. The patriarch ordered Mar Aprim to return to his diocese in Basra, Iraq. The bishop was deprived of all his episcopal orders and was stripped of all his priestly orders. Mar Aprim ignored the orders of the patriarch and the campaign against the head of the Church started from Chicago. With all this, things got out of hand and they did not come to rest until the patriarch was [assassinated](#) on November 6, 1975, before the scheduled Synodical Council of November 19, 1975, was to take place and set everything clear.

## **Bias Actions**

Emotional people tend to refuse to listen to facts. This has a negative impact on society. When we do not understand, we tend to allow the mistakes to continue. No one would deny that such is not in our best interest. All our people in Northern Iraq (Occupied Assyria) and many around the world know that Mar Dinkha for example visited northern Iraq on a couple of occasions; however, he refused to visit any of [the 35 Assyrian \(Syriac\) teaching schools](#). While many are so proud that our students study all subjects in our mother language and the schools have a great and positive impact on our children, still, Mar Dinkha refused to visit any of these schools or bless them. His bias stand is because these schools were built through the efforts of Assyrian Aid Society (AAS), with donations from our people around the world and some subsidies from the KRG (as part of its constitution, and yes we know it is bias towards our Assyrian people). Mar Dinkha showed clear bias since the AAS was created by the ADM. What is the guilt of thousands of students that an Assyrian patriarch refuses to visit them at school? Many argue, and rightly so, that Mar Dinkha was ordered by the Kurdish leadership not to visit the schools.

## **Being with his oppressed and targeted followers**

Since the Gulf War of 1991 and subsequent wars in Iraq and Syria, hundreds of thousands of Assyrians have become refugees or Internally Displaced. The pathetic situation has continued until today. Whereas many expected to see the patriarch with his followers in those harsh years, Mar Dinkha remained in his comfortable place in Chicago. He did visit once some refugees in Amman , Jordan, but it was a convenient thing to do as he was in the region for another reason. He remained

the only patriarch who resided in the West while the rest of the patriarchs of the Syriac speaking churches reside in the Middle East with their suffering people. Worth mentioning that on November 4, 2008, Mar Dinkha broke grounds in Arbil for the new ACOE Patriarchate building; however, the See remained in Chicago until he passed away.

## Final Thoughts

Assyrians are going through one of the hardest, most dangerous and [critical periods](#) of their history. It is of utmost importance that we understand what goes around us, because educated people tend to make good decisions. On the other hand, history has proven time and again that uneducated and naïve people repeat the mistakes of the past and are therefore misled to obscurity and ambiguity. Those educated among us must not give in to the pressures of the naïve and emotionally driven. We must put great efforts to educate the misled and naïve among us. It is hard to shake the decades of darkness, but we just cannot lay down and give up. The new [Assyria](#) relies on her educated souls and the devotees in order to guide her to the shores of safety and prosperity and we must find ways to open our arms to truth because only in it is our resurrection.

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## Related Information

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