

FROM  
THE BOOK OF  
**MARGANITHA**  
(THE PEARL)  
ON THE TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY

Written by Mar Odisho of Suwa and Armenia, in the year A.D. 1292

*Translated by the Late Mar Eshai Shimun XXIII*

**On Fasting, Prayer, and  
Almsgiving**

*Continued*

tends to sanctify the senses purify the thoughts, and to make us resemble the angels. Prayer is not only the key of the LORD'S treasury, but a spiritual converse, as one of the fathers has said: 'My son, when you are engaged in prayer, you speak with God; and when you read the Scriptures, God speaks with you.'

Mercy doth not only make us resemble God, Whom there is none like, but it is also a medium for the exercise of wisdom on the part of those who are of the household of Jesus, Who, through the needy, sends forward to heaven those things which we love and esteem, and thereby ascertaining that in them we shall have joy and exultation without end: 'Do not lay up for yourselves treasures (Matt. 6.19-20) buried in the ground, where rust and decay destroy, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.... for where your treasure is, there also is your heart.' There is passage in the annals of Saint Thomas the Apostle, which beautifully illustrates this Scripture. Having undertaken to build an unequalled palace for the king of the Indians, and received vast sums for this purpose, which he distributed among the poor, when asked about it, he replied that he had built the palace in heaven: and the fact was confirmed by the testimony of a

deceased brother of the king, who was restored to life through the prayers of the Apostle. By the exercise of mercy some men were made worthy of receiving Angels unawares (*Heb. 13.2. Gen. 18.1-6, 19.1-3*); as it was said to Cornelius, "Your prayers and your alms (*Acts 10.4*) have come up for a memorial before GOD." The prophets and Apostles moreover testify that this is the only way by which the rich can attain unto GOD.

**On the Girdle**

The girding at the time of prayer for Christians, though it indicates a preparedness for service, and a ready appearance before the Lord, after the manner of those who stand in the presence of the kings of the earth; yet it is nevertheless a Divine command given both in the Old and New Testaments. In the Old Testament the girdle was ordered to be worn by the Priests (*Ex. 28.39-40*) the sons of Levi, with the other parts of their vestments, and in the New Testament we read: "Let your girdle (*Luke 12.35-36*) be fastened and your lamps burning; and be like those servants waiting for their Lord's coming." The blessed John the Baptist also had his loins girt about with a leathern (*Matt. 3.4*) girdle; and it is said of Paul in the Acts that the Prophet Aghabus took Paul's leather girdle (*Acts 21.11*) and bound himself therewith. Thus our use of the girdle is of threefold meaning; First, in that it is indicative and symbolic of the office of the servants

and ministers of the kingdom. Secondly, it is indicative of our Lord's injunction, and it betokens a wakeful mind, pure intention, and the being in wait for Him, Who is to return from the feast, and conduct all with Him there. Thirdly, it is also indicative of death: "Another will tie (*John 21.18*) up your girdle and take you where you do not wish to go." Those who set out on a journey fasten their girdles; and so it becometh us who are wayfarers and not permanent dwellers, whose days no matter how much we may dislike it, have been directed forward on the road which leadeth above. Let us, therefore, make ready a provision which shall be useful to us in the other world, namely, a right theory of the orthodox faith, and the practice of good works. The use of the girdle teaches us these things.

**On the Resurrection, the  
Judgment to Come, and  
Everlasting Life**

He who commenceth a work must have a design therein, and when this is attained he ceases working and maketh an end of his work, otherwise his labour is fortuitous and in vain. But God, who is all-wise, did not create His creation fortuitously and without a purposeful plan, but, as we have already shown, He created it in consummate wisdom, and exalted purpose, with a reasoning mind and perfect image. And when the time decreed in His wisdom shall arrive, He will bring this world to an end; for

every beginning is the beginning of the end, and contrarily, every end is the end of the beginning. On this subject a certain godly man has said: "When the tenth circle\* shall be made up from among men then shall the end be, and the cutting off (of life or time) shall come, and shall not fail." On that day (*Matt. 24-29, Mark 13.24-27*) the sun shall set and shall not rise again, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and all this world shall become a chaos of darkness, and all motions of the elements shall cease. Then shall the sign (*Matt. 24.30*) of the Son of God, the Cross of Light, appear in the heavens with power and great glory, accompanied with the awful sounds of the trumpets (*I Cor. 1.15-52*) of Angels. Thus shall Christ, the King of kings appear like the lightning which flashes from the east and is seen even in the west. His glorious appearance shall shake all the end of the heavens, and all the foundations of the earth, and He shall then cry out with His life-giving voice: Let the resurrection and the renewal be. This is the last trumpet, (*Matt. 24.27*) at the sound of which the air of revivification shall blow and enter into those who shall be alive, and shall divest them of their corporal denseness and suddenly, as in the twinkling (*I Cor. 15.51*) of an eye, they shall be changed into the likeness of Angels. And it shall likewise enter into the dead, and these also shall rise up incorruptible. (*Matt. 25.10-34*) Then shall the righteous ascend (*Matt. 25.30-41*) up into the kingdom of heaven, and shall center with their Lord into the chamber of the Bridegroom above and there they shall exult in His light with unspeakable, ecstatic joy of spiritual contemplations and revelations which will be diffused upon them. This is true happiness. But as to the wicked (*Matt. 25.30-41*) they shall remain upon the earth in darkness in which none can walk, and shall be consumed with the fire of Remorse for those things which they have committed, and because they bartered everlasting bliss for temporal and deceptive enjoyments, and a real possession for the dung of

earth. This is the true hell, whose fire will not quench, and whose worm will not die. But as to those who are in error and who think that everlasting life consists of something corporeal, such as eating, and drinking, our Saviour reproves such when He says: "In the resurrection (*Matt. 28-30*) they do not take wives, nor are women given in marriage to men, but are as the Angels of God in heaven." Eating and drinking are needed for the body, because by replacing the humours which go out thence they preserve the person from decay. And marriage, likewise, by replacing one who is dead by a new born, keeps up the species until the number decreed in the Everlasting Purpose is made up. Then as these two effects will cease, namely, deterioration and death, the causes also by which they existed must necessarily cease. Because all carnal pleasures serve as an escape from the aforesaid sufferings; for when man exceeds in the use of them they turn into evils. As, for example, meat and drink: one realizes the blessings of these after the pain experienced from hunger and thirst; but used inordinately and greedily, they bring pain and disease, if not death. In like manner with all the pleasure of this world, but not so with the spiritual pleasures, the more one desires and partakes of these, he desires still more, as is seen in the case of those who seek after knowledge, science, and wisdom. But, now, should a doubting mind inquire how bodies can rise again which have been destroyed, and which have mingled with the dust which have been eaten by wild beasts, or consumed by fire, or drowned in water? we reply: Should a piece of iron be broken into impalpable powder, and be mixed with dust and sand, the hidden power of a magnet will at once separate the atoms from the dust and sand, and from whatever other heterogenous bodies with which they may have been mixed; and if such virtue resides in the magnet, how much more possible is it for the power of the Creator, in His wisdom, to separate, bring together, and remodel the bodies of men at the resurrection!

Or, again: if a skilful and ingenious mechanic should form a figure from many materials, and should conceal each of these separate materials in a particular part of his house, no one knowing the place where they are hidden but himself, or how they are to be put together; if asked to construct that figure, could he not at once, and without hesitation, bring forth every part from its separate hiding place, and put all the different parts together in their proper order without any mistake? How much more easy must a like work be to Him Who is the Only Wise and Almighty! Our bodies, through this normal process of corruption, will return at last to the four elements of which they were composed; the skill whereby these parts were put together in our likeness is hidden with God, and when it pleases Him, He can restore each part to its place, in its separate shape and quantity, so as to make it conformable to that figure, the lineaments of which are hidden with Him. Then shall every human body arise, just as it was, "in the likeness of the stature (*Eph. 4.13*) of the fullness of Christ." As to the final rewards and punishments these shall be distributed according to the deserts of each, in perfect justice: "the wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal (*Matt. 25.46*).

***"Now to Him who is able by power to do for us more than any one else, and to do for us more than we ask or think according to His mighty power that works in us, to Him be glory in His Church by Jesus Christ, throughout all ages, world without end, Amen.***

Here endeth, by the help of our Lord and our God this book of Marganeetha, *on the truth of Christianity*, written by Mar Odishoo Bishop and Metropolitan of Suwa (*Nisibin*) and Armenia, in the year one thousand six hundred and three to the blessed Greeks. (1292 A.D.) And to our lord praise and thanksgiving for ever and ever, Amen.