

The Feast Day of the Apostle Nathanael

June 11, 2009

GOSPEL: Luke 10:16-21

EPISTLE: Acts 11:19-30

1st Reading For Vespers: 1 Peter 1:3-9

2nd Reading For Vespers: 1 Peter 1:13-19

3rd Reading For Vespers: 1 Peter 2:11-24

Matins Gospel: John 21:15-25

Nathanael was native to the city of Cana (John 21:2), but we know very little of his early life. He is also known as “Bartholomew” (Matthew 10:3, Mark 3:18, Luke 6:14), which is Hebrew for “Son of Tholmei”. Similarly Peter was also known as “Bar-Jonah” (Matthew 16:17) and Joseph was known as “Barnabas” meaning “Son of Encouragement” (Acts 4:36).

There is a story in one of the New Testament Apocryphal writings¹ that indicates that Jesus’ parents may have known Nathanael’s parents. The story also states that Jesus performed miracles as a child, which is refuted by later Church Fathers. Since Jesus’ mother was prominent at the wedding feast at Cana (John 2:1-12), she probably had some relatives there. The future Apostle, Simon the Zealot, was the bridegroom at the wedding feast at Cana², and Mary’s prominence at his wedding suggests that they were related.

Jesus Called Nathanael: “An Israelite in Whom is No Deceit” John 1:43-51

The only real glimpse of Nathanael’s personality from the New Testament comes from his first contact with Jesus at the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry in 27 AD. Nathanael was at least in his early 20’s at this time, making his birth date c. 5 AD. Some of the Twelve had been followers of John the Baptist. When John pointed out Jesus as “the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29, 35-37), they began to follow Jesus. After Jesus called Philip, Philip found Nathanael to tell him that he had found the Messiah. John’s account of this reads:

“Philip found Nathanael and said to him, ‘We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law, and also the prophets, wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.’ And Nathanael said to him, ‘Can anything good come out of Nazareth?’ Philip said to him, ‘Come and see.’ Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said of him, ‘Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!’ Nathanael said to Him, ‘How do You know me?’ Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.’ Nathanael answered and said to Him, ‘Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!’ Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Because I said to you, ‘I saw you under the fig tree,’ do you believe? You will see greater things than these’. And He said to him, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man’” (John 1:45-51).

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¹ Roberts and Donaldson, ed., “The Arabic Gospel of the Infancy of the Savior”, 30, *Apocrypha of the New Testament*, Ante Nicene Fathers, v. 8

² Nickolai Velimirovic, *Prologue From Ochrid*, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, May 10.

John Chrysostom analyzed³ John's Gospel account in detail. He concluded that this account demonstrates that Nathanael was gentle, but not critical, and very exact in his understanding of the Scriptures. He was firm, steady and impartial in his inquiry, and was not sidetracked by vanity. When his questions were satisfied, Nathanael was quick to confess that Philip had indeed found the Messiah.

Chrysostom began to elaborate on this by pointing out that, at this time, Jesus' fame had gone throughout all Syria (Matthew 4:24). "The wonderful thing about Peter and James and Philip was that they believed, not only before the miracles, but they did so being of Galilee, out of which supposedly 'arises no prophet', nor 'can any good thing come'. For the Galileans were somehow of a more boorish and dull disposition than others; but even in this Christ displayed forth His power, by selecting His choicest disciples from a land which was thought to bear no fruit."

"Since Nathanael was an exact man, and one who viewed all things with truth, as Christ also testified and the event showed, Philip with reason referred him to Moses and the Prophets, in order that he might be open to receive Christ".

"Nathanael had studied the writings of the Prophets. He had heard from the Scriptures, that Christ must come from Bethlehem. 'And you, Bethlehem, are by no means the least among the princes of Judah, for out of you shall come a Governor, that shall feed my people Israel.' (Matthew 2:6; Micah 5:2). And so when he heard that Jesus was 'from Nazareth', he was puzzled, and doubted, not finding the announcement of Philip to agree with the prediction of the Prophet. But observe his wisdom and candor even in his doubting. He did not say, 'Philip, you deceive me, and speak falsely, I do not believe you, I will not come; I have learned from the prophets that Christ must come from Bethlehem, therefore this is not that Christ'. He said nothing like this; instead he goes to Him himself. And by not rejecting him who brought the message, he showed the great desire, which he felt for the coming of Christ. For he thought within himself that Philip was probably mistaken about the place."

"And observe his manner of objection, how gentle he has made it. For he did not say, 'Galilee produces no good'; but instead he said, 'Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?' Wherefore Christ said, 'Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile'. There is such a person as a false Israelite; but this is not such a one; for his judgment, Christ said, is impartial, he speaks nothing from favor, or from ill feeling. Nathanael continued to retain the opinion, which he had from the beginning, that He was not 'of Nazareth'".

"How then do the prophets (Matthew 2:23, see also Judges 13:5) call Him a Nazarene? From His being brought up and living there. Jesus avoided saying, 'I am not 'of Nazareth', as Philip has told you, but of Bethlehem', that He may not make the account seem questionable. For someone could have been from Bethlehem and not be the Christ. This issue then He avoided; but He did that which had the most power to bring him over, for He showed that He was present when they were conversing".

"This indicates that Nathanael was a man firm and steady. When Christ had said, 'Behold an Israelite indeed', Nathanael was not made vain by this compliment, he did not run after this open praise, but continued seeking and searching more exactly, and desired to learn something certain. He still inquired as a man, but Jesus answered as God. For He said, 'I have known you from the first'. Jesus did not know him from having followed him closely, but as God. When He saw him by the fig-tree, there was no one present there but only Philip and Nathanael, who said all these things in private".

³ John Chrysostom, Homilies on John 20, 1-3
John Chrysostom, Homilies on John 21, 1

“Having seen him afar off, He said, ‘Behold an Israelite indeed’. Christ spoke these words before Philip arrived to demonstrate his foreknowledge. For this reason also He named the time, the place, and the tree. Because if He had only said, “Before Philip came to you, I saw you,” He might have been suspected of having sent him. But now, by mentioning both the place where he was when addressed by Philip, and the name of the tree, and the time of the conversation, He showed that His foreknowledge was unquestionable”.

“And He did not merely show to him His foreknowledge, but He brought him to a recollection of what they then had said; as, “Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?” And it was most especially on this account that Nathanael received Him, because when he had uttered these words, Jesus did not condemn, but praised and approved him. Therefore he was assured that this was indeed the Christ, both from His foreknowledge, and from His having exactly searched out his sentiments, which only One who could read his mind could do. And besides, Jesus did not blame him, but rather praised him, when Nathanael had seemed to speak against Him. He said then, that Philip had ‘called’ him; but what Philip had said to him or he to Philip, He omitted, leaving it to his own conscience, and not desiring farther to rebuke him”.

“When Nathanael had received an unquestionable proof of His foreknowledge, he hastened to confess Him, showing his caution by his previous delay, and his fairness by his assent afterwards. For, said the Evangelist, ‘He answered and said unto Him, Rabbi, You are the Son of God, You are the King of Israel’. His soul was filled at once with exceeding joy, and he embraced Jesus with the words, ‘You are that expected, that sought-for One’”.

“After Nathanael’s reply, Christ said, ‘Because I said unto you, I saw you under the fig-tree, do you believe you? You shall see greater things than these’”.

“There is a question that arises from this passage. Peter, after so many miracles and such high doctrine confessed that, ‘You are the Son of God’ (Matthew 16:16), and is called ‘blessed’, as having received the revelation from the Father. While Nathanael, though he said the very same thing before seeing or hearing either miracles or doctrine, had no such word addressed to him, but as though he had not said as much as he ought, is brought to things greater still. What can be the reason for this?”

“Peter and Nathanael both spoke the same words, but not both with the same intention. Peter confessed Him to be ‘The Son of God’ but as being Very God of Very God; Nathanael, as being mere man. How so? After these words he said, ‘You are the Son of God’, and, ‘You are the King of Israel’. But the Son of God is not ‘King of Israel’ only, but of the entire world. And what I say is clear from what follows. For Christ added nothing more to Peter, but as though his faith were perfect, said that He would build the Church upon this confession of his. But in the case of Nathanael, He did nothing like this, but the contrary. For as though some large part was lacking in his confession, He added what follows. ‘Verily, I say unto you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the Angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man’”.

“Christ led him up by little and little from the earth, and caused him no longer to imagine Him as merely a man? For One to whom Angels minister, and on whom Angels ascend and descend, how could He be man? For this reason He said, ‘You shall see greater things than these’. And what He means is something of this kind. ‘Does this, Nathanael, seem to you a great matter, and have you for this confessed me to be King of Israel? What then will you say, when you see the Angels ascending and descending upon Me?’ Persuading him by these words to own Him Lord also of the Angels. For on Him as on the King’s own Son, the royal ministers ascended and descended, once at the season of the Crucifixion (Luke 22:43), again at the time of the Resurrection (Matthew 28:2-3, Luke 24:4) and the Ascension (Acts 1:10-11). And before this also, when they ‘came and ministered unto Him’ after His baptism (Matthew 4:11), when they proclaimed the glad tidings of His birth crying, ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth

peace' (Luke 2:14). Also when they came to Mary (Luke 1:26-38), when they came to Joseph (Matthew 1:20, 2:13). But Nathanael had seen none of this at His birth, and everything else was still future.

What then does Nathanael do? To this he makes no reply. And therefore at this point Christ stopped His discourse with him, allowing him to consider in private what had been said.

Chrysostom continued this analysis⁴ by comparing Nathanael's response to Christ to that of the Jewish leaders that opposed Nicodemus. John recorded this exchange as follows. "Therefore many from the crowd, when they heard this saying, said, 'Truly this is the Prophet'. Others said, 'This is the Christ'. But some said, 'Will the Christ come out of Galilee? Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the seed of David and from the town of Bethlehem, where David was?'" (John 7:40-42) "However, we know where this Man is from; but when the Christ comes, no one knows where He is from" (John 7:27). There was a difference of opinion, as might be expected in a confused multitude; for they did not listen attentively to His words, nor for the sake of learning. Therefore Jesus did not answer them.

Nathanael said what he did as being a lover of the truth, and knowing exactly all the ancient histories. But the Jewish leaders looked only to one thing, and that was to remove the opinion that He was the Christ, on which account He revealed nothing to them. By way of contrast, He had praised Nathanael as being 'an Israelite indeed', who had said in a more forcible and striking manner, 'Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?' (John 1:46) But then the Jewish leaders, who said to Nicodemus, 'Search and look, for no prophet is to arise out of Galilee' (John 7:52), said it not seeking to learn, but merely to overturn the opinion concerning Christ.

For they who even contradicted themselves said at one time, 'No man knows whence He comes', and at another, 'From Bethlehem', would clearly, even if they had been informed, have opposed Him. They knew the place of His birth that He was from Bethlehem, because of His dwelling in Nazareth. Were they ignorant of His race also, that He was 'of the house and lineage of David'? How then did they say, 'Does not Christ come of the seed of David?' They wished to conceal even this fact by that question, saying all that they said with malicious intent. Why did they not come to Him and say, 'Since we admire you in other respects, and you bid us believe you according to the Scriptures, tell us how it is that the Scriptures say that Christ must come from Bethlehem, when you are come from Galilee?' But they said nothing of the kind, but all in malice.

Nathanael as a Fisherman: John 21:1-6

Among Jesus' relatives, James and John were fishermen along with their father Zebedee. Due to the type of nets they used, their business required at least two boats and at least a dozen able-bodied men to haul nets. Thus we see Peter and Andrew as partners with James and John Zebedee (Luke 5:10). In addition, Thomas and Nathanael worked with them also (John 21:1-3) and may have been hired hands.

Philip, a native of Bethsaida along with Peter and Andrew, was not a fisherman, but was a close friend of Nathanael (John 1:43-48). Matthias was not a fisherman or a direct relative of Jesus. But due to his being put forward as a candidate to replace Judas (along with Jesus' step brother Joseph, Jr.), he had spent the last three years going everywhere with them as one of the

⁴ John Chrysostom, Homilies on John 51, 2.

Seventy (Acts 1:21-23). Since Matthias was born in Bethlehem (along with Joseph, the Betrothed of the Virgin Mary), he could have been a distant relative of Joseph.

Three types of nets⁵ were referred to in both New and Old Testaments, and these were the common tools of the fishermen like Nathanael. These types of nets had been used for thousands of years and required much different techniques.

The first type, a dragnet (Greek *sagaynay*), is the oldest type. Typical dragnets or seines were up to 1,000 feet long and 25 feet high. It was spread out by boat 100 yards or more from shore and then hauled to shore by a team of 16 men. Sinkers kept the bottom of the net down and floats kept the top on the surface. When the net reached the shore, fish were sorted and catfish were thrown away. This is the type of net referred to in Matthew 13:47-50. This net couldn't be used if the shoreline was rocky or had kelp growing near the shore.

A second type of net is a cast net, also called a bag net (Greek *amphiblestron*). This type is circular, about 25 feet in diameter and has lead weights all around the outer edge. After the net is thrown and sinks to the bottom, it is either retrieved by a system of cords or by a diver. When Peter and Andrew were called (Matthew 4:18), they were using this net, perhaps catching sardines. (When Peter and Andrew left their nets, Matthew 4:20, they left the third type of net: their trammel nets.)

A third type of net is called a trammel net (Greek *diktuon*). This type of net has three layers and was used only at night. It was not useful during the day because the fish could see the weaving and avoid it. Modern synthetic fiber — which is invisible under water — has made trammel nets useful today in the daytime. The trammel net was spread in a crescent shape roughly parallel to the shoreline. The boat that laid the net then quietly maneuvered toward shore between the net and the shore. All of a sudden the fishermen in the boat started making racket by beating the water with oars or stamping on the bottom of the boat. The frightened fish headed for deep water — right into the net and became entangled.

The trammel net was lowered and hauled up perhaps a dozen times during the night. Early in the morning the net was washed and hung up to dry and repaired — and prepared for the next night's work.

Glimpses of Nathanael During the First Year of the Church

Nathanael was known in most written accounts as “Bartholomew”, both in Biblical accounts and non-Biblical accounts. “Bartholomew” (Matthew 10:3, Mark 3:18, Luke 6:14) is Hebrew for “Son of Tholmei”, and may indicate that he was an only son, or that there were no other sons of Tholmei involved in the work of the Church. Nathanael never married, like many of the 12, but instead concentrated on a godly life in evangelizing the regions he traveled to.

In the first year of the Church, the Book of Acts describes several encounters between the Apostles and the religious leaders. In all cases, Peter or John are quoted as being the spokesmen for the Apostles. On Pentecost, Peter was described “standing with the Eleven” (Acts 2:14) in his message to the people who were confused by the events taking place. When Peter and John healed the lame man, the man held onto both Peter and John, but Peter was the one who spoke to

⁵ Mendel Nun, “Cast Your Net upon the Waters”, Biblical Archaeology Review, Nov./Dec. 1993, pp. 46-56.

the people about what had happened (Acts 3:1-12). When Peter and John were arrested for this, it was Peter who spoke in their defense (Acts 4:1-8). When the Twelve were arrested and put in prison, an angel let them out during the night. Summoned before the High Priest and the Sanhedrin, the account reads that Peter *and the other Apostles answered* and said, “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:17-29).

Few details are given in Acts regarding the exact accusations that were brought against the Apostles, or who of the Twelve answered these accusations. Pseudo Clement⁶ records one example where Nathanael responded:

“Then a certain Pharisee, hearing this, chided Philip because he put Jesus on a level with Moses. To whom Bartholomew, answering, boldly declared that we do not only say that Jesus was equal to Moses, but that He was greater than he. Because Moses was indeed a prophet, as Jesus was also, but that Moses was not the Christ, as Jesus was, and therefore He is doubtless greater who is both a prophet and the Christ, than he who is only a prophet”.

Nathanael’s Early Missionary Journeys

Nathanael’s early missionary journeys have not been well documented, and we know considerably more about his later missionary journeys, both when he traveled with the Apostle Philip (of the Twelve) and by himself. The Roman Martyrology states⁷ that during his early missionary journeys, he preached in Egypt for a time, as did some of the other Apostles. From a fragment of the writings of an unknown author⁸ of the late 2nd Century, Pantaenus of Alexandria “became a zealous missionary to the Oriental Ethiopia, and found there the traces of St. Matthias’ labors, and those also of St. Bartholomew. From this mission he (Pantaenus) seems to have returned about A.D. 192”.

Other traditional accounts⁹ state that he traveled throughout Syria and Asia Minor, sometimes with Philip, sometimes alone, then together again. The principle area of Asia Minor that they traveled to, according to these sketchy accounts, was Lydia and Mysia. Lydia is near Ephesus, and they occasionally met the Apostle John, who was also working there. Mysia is at the Northwestern part of Asia Minor near Troas. The Apostle Paul had also been working in this area, but the Spirit had forbidden Paul to preach the Word in Mysia and Troas; instead He had instructed him to go to Macedonia (Acts 16:6-9). The first well-documented part of Nathanael’s missionary journeys occurred in Hierapolis of Asia (near Phrygia). Since this account resulted in the martyrdom of Philip at Hierapolis during the reign of Domitian¹⁰ (81 to 96 AD), there is a considerable span of years (from 31 AD to 81 AD) where little is known of the work of the Apostle Nathanael

⁶ Pseudo-Clement, Recognitions of Clement, I, 59

⁷ Thurston and Attwater, Butler’s Lives of the Saints, Christian Classics, Westminster, MD, 1990, August 24.

⁸ Roberts and Donaldson, ed., “Pantaenus, the Alexandrian Philosopher, Introduction”, Remains of the Second and Third Centuries, Ante Nicene Fathers, v. 8.

⁹ Isaac Lambertsen, The Lives of the Holy Apostles, Holy Apostles Convent Press, Buena Vista, CO, p. 173.

¹⁰ Thurston and Attwater, Butler’s Lives of the Saints, Christian Classics, Westminster, MD, 1990, August 24. Hippolytus, On the Twelve Apostles, Where Each of Them Preached, 5

Nathanael Returns to Jerusalem for the Funeral of the Virgin Mary

Nathanael was busy on his missionary journeys just prior to the time of the death of the Virgin Mary in c. 55 AD. As Mary reached her mid 70's, she was feeling the effects of old age. And it was then that the Archangel Gabriel appeared to her to tell her that her departure was imminent¹¹, and would occur in three days.

Shortly after Gabriel left, the Apostle John was translated in a bright cloud from wherever he was at the time. This was similar to the way the Deacon Philip was translated from the desert road between Jerusalem and Gaza to Azotus (Acts 8:26, 39-40), and as Habakkuk the prophet carried food to Daniel, who was in the lions' den, and quickly returned to Judaea¹². There is some disagreement among the Church Fathers as to whether John was in Ephesus or in some region of Judea. They contend that John did not leave the Virgin Mary alone during her lifetime, unless it was just briefly in the care of her stepson, James, the Lord's brother.

After John arrived¹³, "the rest of the Twelve arrived also from whatever part of the world where they were then preaching the Gospel. All of the Twelve arrived except Thomas. They stood and went in, and greeted the queen mother with the following words: 'Hail, Mary, full of grace! The Lord be with you' (Luke 1:28). And she eagerly rose quickly, and bowed herself, and kissed them, and gave thanks to God. And Peter answered and said to the apostles, 'Let us each, according to what the Holy Spirit announced and commanded us, give full information to the mother of our Lord'. And those who had come likewise agreed to give an account of how they had come. So each of the Twelve gave Mary an account of where they were when they were summoned". Bartholomew said¹⁴,

"I was in the Thebais (possibly Thebes, in Upper Egypt) proclaiming the Word, and behold the Holy Spirit said to me, 'The mother of your Lord is taking her departure; go, then, to greet her in Bethlehem'. And, behold, a cloud of light snatched me up, and brought me to you".

"Then the blessed Mary said to her brethren: 'What is this, that you have all come to Jerusalem?' Peter, answering, said to her: 'We had need to ask this of you. Certainly, as I think, none of us knows why we have come here today with such rapidity. And they all wondered that they were there when they heard these things. The blessed Mary said to them: 'I asked my Son, before He endured the passion, that He and you should be at my death; and He granted me this gift. Whence you may know that my departure will be tomorrow'".

"After Mary's death the next day, the Apostles with great honor laid the body in a tomb on the Mount of Olives, then Thomas was suddenly brought to the Mount of Olives, like the others had been brought earlier. He saw Mary's body going up to heaven, and began to cry out to her. Then the girdle with which the Apostles had encircled her body was thrown down from heaven to the blessed Thomas. And taking it, and giving thanks to God, he came again into the

¹¹ Roberts and Donaldson, "The Book of John Concerning the Falling Asleep of Mary", *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, v.8.

Roberts and Donaldson, "The Passing of Mary", *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, v.8.

¹² Lancelot C. L. Brenton, "Bel and the Dragon 1:33-39", *The Septuagint with Apocrypha*, Hendrickson, Peabody MA, 1990

¹³ Roberts and Donaldson, ed., "The Passing of Mary, First Latin Form", *Apocrypha of the New Testament*, Ante Nicene Fathers, v. 8.

¹⁴ Roberts and Donaldson, "The Book of John Concerning the Falling Asleep of Mary", *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, v.8.

Valley of Jehoshaphat, finding all the Apostles and a great crowd there. Then Thomas said, ‘Where have you laid her body?’ And they pointed out the sepulcher with their finger. And he said, ‘The body is not there’. But they didn’t believe Thomas. Then they went to the sepulcher, which was a new one hollowed out in the rock, and took up the stone; but they did not find the body, and did not know what to say. Then Thomas told them how he was singing mass in India — he still had on his sacerdotal robes. He, not knowing the word of God, had been brought to the Mount of Olives, and saw the body of the blessed Mary going up into heaven, and prayed her to give him a blessing. She heard his prayer, and threw him her girdle, which she had about her. And the Apostles seeing the belt which they had put about her, glorified God, on account of the benediction which the blessed Mary had given him, and because he had seen her body going up into heaven. Then Thomas gave them his benediction, and said, ‘Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!’”

“And the same cloud¹⁵ by which they had been brought carried them back each to his own place. And so also the Apostles quickly returned to where they had at first been, to preach to the people of God”.

Nathanael Travels to India with the Gospel of Matthew

Eusebius wrote¹⁶ that Pantaenus, the head of the Catechetical School in Alexandria¹⁷, had gone to India in the 3rd Century. There he found a copy of the Gospel of Matthew in Hebrew that Nathanael had brought.

“About that time, Pantaenus, a man highly distinguished for his learning, had charge of the school of the faithful in Alexandria. A school of sacred learning, which continues to our day, was established there in ancient times, and as we have been informed, was managed by men of great ability and zeal for divine things. Among these it is reported that Pantaenus was at that time especially conspicuous, as he had been educated in the philosophical system of those called Stoics. They say that he displayed such zeal for the divine Word, that he was appointed as a herald of the Gospel of Christ to the nations in the East, and was sent as far as India. For indeed there were still many evangelists of the Word who sought earnestly to use their inspired zeal, after the examples of the apostles, for the increase and building up of the Divine Word. Pantaenus was one of these, and is said to have gone to India. It is reported that among persons there, who knew of Christ, he found the Gospel according to Matthew, which had anticipated his own arrival. For Bartholomew, one of the apostles, had preached to them, and left with them the writing of Matthew in the Hebrew language, which they had preserved till that time¹⁸. After many good deeds, Pantaenus finally became the head of the school at Alexandria, and expounded the treasures of divine doctrine both orally and in writing”.

¹⁵ Roberts and Donaldson, ed., “The Passing of Mary, First Latin Form”, *Apocrypha of the New Testament*, Ante Nicene Fathers, v. 8.

¹⁶ Eusebius, *Church History*, V, 10

¹⁷ This school dated to the planting of the Church in Alexandria by the Apostles according to Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, I, ii.

¹⁸ This was referred to as one of the treasures of the church on the Nile, according to Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, I, ii.

Jerome concurs¹⁹ with Eusebius

“Pantaenus was a philosopher of the stoic school, according to some old Alexandrian custom, where, from the time of Mark the evangelist the ecclesiastics were always doctors. He was of so great prudence and erudition both in scripture and secular literature that, on the request of the legates of that nation, he was sent to India by Demetrius bishop of Alexandria. There he found that Bartholomew, one of the Twelve Apostles, had preached the advent of the Lord Jesus according to the gospel of Matthew, and on his return to Alexandria he brought this with him written in Hebrew characters. Many of his commentaries on Holy Scripture are indeed extant, but his living voice was of still greater benefit to the churches. He taught in the reigns of the emperor Severus and Antoninus surnamed Caracalla”.

Hippolytus also stated²⁰ that Nathanael brought a copy of the Gospel of Matthew to India. It is also traditional²¹ that Nathanael translated the Gospel of Matthew into some of the languages of India, using the gift of tongues that he had received at Pentecost.

It might be noted that the borders regarding where “India” begins and where “Parthia” ends may be somewhat fuzzy. One account²² of this states:

“Historians declare that India is divided into three parts; and the first is said to end at Ethiopia, and the second at Media, and the third completes the country. And the one portion of it ends in the dark, and the other in the ocean. To this India, then, the holy Bartholomew the Apostle of Christ went, and lived there as one of the pilgrims and the poor”.

Socrates Scholasticus stated²³ that the lots drawn by the Apostles, as they divided up the known world, resulted in Nathanael’s lot being adjacent to that of Thomas. Thomas’ lot was to the East of that of Nathanael.

The Later Missionary Journeys of Nathanael

Nathanael and Philip (of the Twelve) were very close, as we see when Philip first brought Nathanael to Jesus (John 1:44-46). During the part of their missionary journeys, they traveled together, along with Philip’s sister, Mariamne plus others of their followers. After Philip had gone through the cities and regions of Lydia and Asia, they came to Hierapolis of Asia, which was near Phrygia, where the Apostle Paul had been 30 some years earlier (Acts 16:6).

This occurred in the latter part of the 1st Century, where Hierapolis of Asia was devoted to the worship of a huge snake. One account²⁴ of this missionary campaign states that it occurred during the reign of Emperor Trajan, who began his reign in 98 AD. Hippolytus, on the

¹⁹ Jerome and Gennadius, *Lives of Illustrious Men*, II, 36

²⁰ Hippolytus, *On the Twelve Apostles, Where Each One of Them Preached*, 6-7.

²¹ Nickolai Velimirovic, *Prologue From Ochrid*, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, June 11.

²² Roberts and Donaldson, ed., “Martyrdom of the Holy Apostle Bartholomew”, *Apocrypha of the New Testament*, Ante Nicene Fathers, v. 8.

²³ Socrates Scholasticus, *Ecclesiastical History*, I, 19

²⁴ Roberts and Donaldson, ed., “The Acts of Philip, From the 15th Act Until the End”, *Apocrypha of the New Testament*, Ante Nicene Fathers, v. 8

other hand, stated²⁵ that this occurred during the reign of Emperor Domitian, who began his reign in 81 AD.

The account that we have²⁶ occurred toward the end of Philip's missionary journeys, as he was going through the regions of Lydia and Asia. Nathanael, Philip and Mariamne were together in Hierapolis (or Ophioryma) of Asia, teaching people the things of God. This city was called "Ophioryma", which comes from the Greek word *ophis*, meaning snake, and was dedicated to the worship of a huge viper. The local priests had built a temple for the viper, and statues had also been made of the snake.

Mariamne was sitting in the entry of the house of a believer named Stachys, persuading people to come listen to the Apostles. This Stachys was not the Stachys of the Seventy, but had recently gained celebrity status²⁷ in Hierapolis since he had been blind for forty years. Philip and Nathanael healed him and baptized him, and the word spread quickly that blind Stachys had received his sight. Philip and Nathanael counseled the people that came to them to trample under foot the snares of the serpent (Luke 10:19) for his father is the devil, his mother is corruption, destruction is in his mouth and his path is Hades. As a contrast, they told people of the love of Jesus, who is light, and life and Truth. They urged the people who were coming to worship the viper to take hold of Him in love, that He may bring them up out of the pit of the wicked, and having cleansed them, set them blameless, living in truth, in the presence of His Father. All the people gave ear and a great multitude of them fleeing from the enemy were turned to Jesus, and were added to Philip and those about him. And the faithful were the more confirmed in the love of Christ.

"And Nicanora²⁸, the wife of the proconsul and a Hebrew by descent, was lying in bed from various diseases, especially of the eyes, having heard about the Apostles and their teaching, and believed in the Lord. For she had even before this heard about Him; and having called upon His name, she was released from the troubles that afflicted her. And rising up, she went forth out of her house through the side door, carried by her own slaves in a silver litter, and went into the house of Stachys, where the Apostles were".

"And when she came before the gate of the house, Mariamne, the sister of Philip the Apostle, seeing her, spoke to her in Hebrew before Philip and Bartholomew, and all the multitude of those who had believed. Mariamne said that Nicanora had formerly been given as a down payment to the serpent, but that she had now forsaken her father and the temple of that deception. Fleeing from the dwelling place of death, Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, has risen upon her to enlighten her".

"And when Nicanora, standing before the door, heard these things, she took courage before all, crying out, and saying, 'I am a Hebrew, and a daughter of the Hebrews. Speak with me in the language of my fathers. For, having heard the preaching of my fathers, I was immediately cured of the disease and the troubles that encompassed me. I therefore adore the goodness of God who has caused you to come to this city, in order that through you we may receive the knowledge of Him. Nicanora having thus spoken, the Apostle Philip, along with Bartholomew and Mariamne and those with them, prayed for her to God. 'You, who bring the

²⁵ Hippolytus, On the Twelve Apostles, Where Each of Them Preached, 5

²⁶ Roberts and Donaldson, ed., "The Acts of Philip, From the 15th Act Until the End", Apocrypha of the New Testament, Ante Nicene Fathers, v. 8

²⁷ Isaac Lambertsen, The Lives of the Holy Apostles, Holy Apostles Convent Press, Buena Vista, CO, p. 174.

²⁸ Roberts and Donaldson, ed., "The Acts of Philip, From the 15th Act Until the End", Apocrypha of the New Testament, Ante Nicene Fathers, v. 8

dead to life, Christ Jesus the Lord, who have freed us through baptism from the slavery of death, completely deliver also this woman from the error, the enemy. Make her alive in Your life, and perfect her in Your perfection, in order that she may be found in the country of her fathers in freedom, having a portion in Your goodness, O Lord Jesus”.

And all having sent up the Amen along with the Apostle Philip, there came the tyrant, the husband of Nicanora, raging like an unbroken horse. Having laid hold of his wife’s garments, he cried out, saying, ‘Didn’t I leave you in bed? How have you so much strength to come to these magicians? And how have your eyes been cured? Tell me who your physician is or I’ll punish you severely, and have no compassion.

“And Nicanora said to him, ‘O tyrant, get rid of your tyranny, forsake your wickedness. Run away from the brutality of your worthless disposition; flee from the wicked dragon and his lusts; throw away the works of the man-slaying serpent. Renounce the abominable sacrifices of the idols, make for yourself a life chaste and pure. If you were in holiness you could know my Physician, and get His Name. If you wish me to be beside you, prepare yourself to live in chastity and self-restraint, and in fear of the true God, and I shall live with you all my life. Only cleanse yourself from the idols and from all their filth”.

“And when the gloomy tyrant (the proconsul), her husband, heard these words, he seized her by the hair of her head, and dragged her along, kicking her, and saying. ‘It will be better for you to be cut off by the sword, than to commit fornication with these foreign magicians; for I see that you have fallen into the madness of these deceivers. First I shall cut you off by an evil death; and then, I shall put them to a most cruel death’. And having turned, he said to those about him, ‘Bring out for me those impostors of magicians’. And the public executioners ran into the house of Stachys, laid hold of the Apostle Philip, and Bartholomew and Mariamne, dragged them along, and led them to where the proconsul was. And Stachys followed, and all the faithful. Seeing them, the proconsul gnashed his teeth, saying, ‘Torture these deceivers that say that they are worshippers of God, while they are an abomination”.

“And he ordered thongs of rawhide to be brought, and Philip and Bartholomew and Mariamne to be beaten. And after they had been scourged with the thongs, he ordered their feet to be tied, and them to be dragged through the streets of the city as far as the gate of their temple. And a great crowd was assembled, so that scarcely anyone stayed at home; and they all wondered at their patience, as they were being violently and inhumanely dragged along”.

“Having tortured the Apostle Philip and the saints who were with him, the proconsul ordered them to be secured in the temple of the idol of the viper by its priests, until he should decide by what death he should destroy each of them. And many of the crowd believed in the grace of Christ, and were added to the Apostle Philip, and those with him, having renounced the idol of the viper, and were confirmed in the faith being magnified by the endurance of the saints. And all together with their voice glorified God, saying the Amen”. We might note that the “Amen” that they were saying was part of the Liturgy of the Church, even at this early date.

“And when they were locked up in the temple of the viper, along with all the snakes — both Philip, Bartholomew and Mariamne — the priests of the viper assembled in the same place, along with a great crowd, about seven thousand men. And having run to the proconsul, they cried out, saying, ‘Avenge us of the foreigners, and magicians, and corrupters and seducers of men. Ever since they came to us, our city has been filled with every evil deed. And they have also killed the serpents, the sons of our goddess. They have closed down the temple, and the altar has been desolated. And we have not found the wine which had been brought in order that the viper, having drunk of it, might go to sleep. But if you wish to know that they are really magicians, look and see how they wish to bewitch us. They say, ‘Live in chastity and piety, after

believing in God'. The dragons (i.e. the large snakes) have not struck them blind, or even killed them; but even the keepers of our city (the snakes) have been cast down by these men”.

This complaint is strangely similar to the one that was leveled at the Apostle Paul in Philippi.

“But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged *them* into the marketplace to the authorities. And they brought them to the magistrates, and said, ‘These men, being Jews, exceedingly trouble our city; and they teach customs which are not lawful for us, being Romans, to receive or observe.’ Then the multitude rose up together against them; and the magistrates tore off their clothes and commanded *them* to be beaten with rods. And when they had laid many stripes on them, they threw *them* into prison, commanding the jailer to keep them securely. Having received such a charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks” (Acts 16:19-24).

“And the proconsul²⁹, having heard these things, was even more inflamed with rage, and said to the priests, ‘Why need you speak, when they have bewitched my own wife? Since then she has spoken to me with strange words; and praying all the night long, she speaks in a strange tongue with a light shining round her. And groaning aloud, she says, ‘Jesus the true light has come to me’. Having gone forth from my chamber, I wanted to look down through the window and see Jesus, the Light, which she spoke of. And like lightning it came upon me, so that I was almost blinded; and since then I have been afraid of my wife, on account of her luminous Jesus. Tell me, you priests, what I am to do’. And they said to him, ‘O proconsul, we are no longer priests; for ever since you locked them up in the temple, because of their prayers, not only has the temple been shaken from the foundations, but it is also about to collapse”.

“Then the proconsul ordered to bring the Apostles out of the temple, and to bring them up to the tribunal, saying to the public executioner, ‘Strip them, and search thoroughly to try to find their enchantments’. Having therefore first stripped Philip, then Bartholomew, they came also to Mariamne. And dragging her along, they said, ‘Let us strip her naked, that all may see her, how she follows men; for she especially deceives all the women’. And the tyrant said to the priests, ‘Proclaim throughout the whole city that all should come, men and women, that they may see her indecency, that she travels about with these magicians, and no doubt commits adultery with them”.

“While everyone was gathering, he ordered Philip to be crucified, and his ankles to be pierced using iron hooks, and his heels also to be driven through, and to be hanged head downwards, opposite the temple on a certain tree. And they crucified Bartholomew opposite Philip, having nailed his hands on the wall of the gate of the temple”.

“And both of them smiled, seeing each other, both Philip and Bartholomew; for they were as if they were not tortured; for their punishments were prizes and crowns. And when they had stripped Mariamne, the semblance of her body was changed in the presence of all, and there was about her a cloud of fire before all. And they could no longer look on the place where holy Mariamne was, but they all fled from her”.

The hymns of the Church refer to the nakedness of Bartholomew and Philip (when they were crucified) and to the stripping of Mariamne as follows:

²⁹ Roberts and Donaldson, ed., “The Acts of Philip, From the 15th Act Until the End”, Apocrypha of the New Testament, Ante Nicene Fathers, v. 8

“Having woven a robe³⁰ of divine grace, O blessed one, you have clothed those who have been cruelly stripped bare through the malice of the serpent, and have given them the faith to chant, ‘O all-hymned Lord God of our fathers, blessed are You’”.

“While Philip and Bartholomew³¹ were hanging there, the mob set fire to the house of Stachys. As they were doing that, the Apostle John entered the city. At first they took him to be a fellow citizen of the viper, but John spoke to them about their delusion saying, ‘Why do you punish these men because they told you that the serpent is your enemy?’ And when they heard these words from John, they raised their hands against him, saying, ‘We thought you to be a fellow-citizen, but now you have shown yourself that you are their companion’. But when the priests attempted to lay hold of John, their hands were paralyzed”.

“Philip then prayed that Hades would open its mouth, ‘Let the great abyss swallow up these the ungodly, who have been unwilling to receive the word of truth in this city’. And, suddenly the abyss was opened, and the whole place where the proconsul was sitting was swallowed up. Also swallowed up was the whole temple, the dead viper, the priests of the viper and a great crowd, about seven thousand men. And their voices came up from beneath, saying, with weeping, ‘Have mercy upon us, O God of the Apostles, because we now see the judgments of those who have not confessed the crucified One. The cross illumines us and we are being justly scourged because we have unjustly crucified Your Apostles”.

“Not swallowed up were both Stachys and all his house, Nicanora, and fifty other women who had believed with her upon the Lord, and a multitude besides, both of men and women. A hundred virgins also had not been swallowed up because of their chastity, having been sealed with the seal of Christ”.

“Just then there appeared a Cross in the air coming down from above even to the bottom of the abyss, and it was full of light, and had its form like a ladder. And the whole multitude that had gone down from the city into the abyss came up on the ladder of the luminous cross. But there remained below the proconsul, the dead viper, the priests of the viper and a number of other unbelievers³²”.

“And when the multitude had come up, they looked upon Philip hanging head downwards, and lamented with a great lamentation at their lawless action. And they also saw Bartholomew, and Mariamne having her former appearance. And all the unbelieving people silently glorified God in fear and trembling. And all the multitudes cried out, saying, ‘He alone is God, whom these men proclaim. He alone is God, who sent these men for our salvation. Let us therefore truly repent for our great error, because we are by no means worthy of everlasting life. Now we believe, because we have seen great wonders, because we have been brought up from the abyss. And they all fell upon their face, and adored Philip, and entreated him, ‘Do not do another miracle, and again send us away into the abyss’. And they prayed that they might become worthy of Christ”.

The hymns of the Church refer to this abyss as follows:

³⁰ “Ode VII for Matins of the Commemoration of the Return of the Relics of the Holy Apostle Bartholomew, August 25th”, Russian Menaion, St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, TN.

³¹ Roberts and Donaldson, ed., “The Acts of Philip, From the 15th Act Until the End”, Apocrypha of the New Testament, Ante Nicene Fathers, v. 8

³² Isaac Lambertsens, The Lives of the Holy Apostles, Holy Apostles Convent Press, Buena Vista, CO, p. 176.

“With the net of your words³³, O divinely eloquent Apostle, you did draw forth the ends of the world out of the abyss of vainglory and wicked ungodliness, and did bring them with faith to Christ God, Who had given you such grace”.

“Dragging up the nations³⁴ out of the depths of ignorance in godly manner with the net of the Word, you did bring them in with faith; and as a well-spring of spiritual waters you have watered the whole world with grace”.

“Whirled about in the abyss of sin³⁵, I call upon the unfathomable abyss of Your loving-kindness. Lead me up from corruption, O God”.

“With the rod of grace³⁶, O right wondrous one, you did draw men from the abyss of vanity, submitting to the order of the Teacher, Who wholly enlightened your understanding and showed you as an honored Apostle and a divine proclaimer of His unapproachable Divinity, O most blessed Philip”.

“Your elucidation³⁷ of the mysterious has been piously shown to be a ladder of divine teachings whereby we have come to know the Son, Who is consubstantial and united with the Father. You were a golden lamp shining forth the ever-existing Light upon men and thereby manifestly enlightening the whole world with knowledge, O most eminent Philip”.

“Having dried up³⁸ the deadly abyss of the soul-destroying poison of the enemy with your healing hands, you delivered them that are oppressed by grievous sickness. You have been shown to be wholly fiery of breath, O Philip, through the descent and grace of the Paraclete. With the warmth of faith you have restored to life them that were chilled through the winter of godlessness”.

“Beholding the deception³⁹ of the enemy which surrounds and destroys the human race, You took aim and loosed Your sharpened arrows, the Apostles, and laid open the serpent’s mouth of clay, O Savior, healing all that had been harmed by his wounding corruption”.

“Your discourse⁴⁰ was healing for those who had received the deadly venom of the serpent, O Bartholomew. And in accordance with the prophecy, the ground of the impious fell at the proclamation of your all-wise doctrines”.

“And some of the faithful⁴¹ ran up to take Philip down, and take the iron grapnels out of his ankles. But Philip told them to let Bartholomew loose first. While they were doing that,

³³ “First Antiphon for Vespers of the Commemoration of the Apostle Bartholomew, June 11th”, Russian Menaion, St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, TN.

³⁴ “Sedalion for Matins of the Commemoration of the Apostle Bartholomew, June 11th”, Russian Menaion, St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, TN.

³⁵ “Ode VI for Matins of the Commemoration of the Apostle Bartholomew, June 11th”, Russian Menaion, St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, TN.

³⁶ “Litia for Vespers of the Commemoration of the Apostle Philip, November 14th”, Russian Menaion, St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, TN.

³⁷ “Ode III for Matins of the Commemoration of the Apostle Philip, November 14th”, Russian Menaion, St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, TN.

³⁸ “Ode V for Matins of the Commemoration of the Apostle Philip, November 14th”, Russian Menaion, St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, TN.

³⁹ “Ode VI for Matins of the Commemoration of the Apostle Philip, November 14th”, Russian Menaion, St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, TN.

⁴⁰ “Ode V for Matins of the Commemoration of the Return of the Relics of the Holy Apostle Bartholomew, August 25th”, Russian Menaion, St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, TN.

⁴¹ Roberts and Donaldson, ed., “The Acts of Philip, From the 15th Act Until the End”, Apocrypha of the New Testament, Ante Nicene Fathers, v. 8

Philip explained that he was about to depart from his body as a result of hanging there for six days. He asked the people not to grieve for him because he would be with the Lord. He asked them instead to cleave to Christ, and not to forsake Him, for He is our life everlasting”.

“As they brought Bartholomew down, Philip asked that they build a Church in this place and that Nicanora provide for Bartholomew and Mariamne while they are in the city. He instructed Bartholomew to appoint Stachys as Bishop, and gave him instructions on the burial of his body. He also said that a grapevine would grow at the spot where his blood dropped, and that they should use the fruit of that vine as an offering to the Lord”.

“And after three days the plant of the vine sprouted up where the blood of the holy Philip had dropped. And they did all that had been commanded them by him, offering an offering for forty days, praying without ceasing. And they built the church in that place, having appointed Stachys to be Bishop in the church. And Nicanora and all the faithful assembled, and did not cease, all of them, glorifying God on account of the wonders that had happened among them. And the whole city believed in the Name of Jesus. And Bartholomew commanded Stachys to baptize those who believed into the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. And after the forty days, the Savior, having appeared in the form of Philip, said to Bartholomew and Mariamne, ‘My beloved brethren, do you wish to rest in the rest of God? Paradise has been opened to me, and I have entered into the glory of Jesus. Go away to the place appointed for you; for the plant that has been set apart and planted in this city shall bear excellent fruit’. Having therefore greeted the brethren, and prayed for each of them, they departed from the city of Ophioryma, the Hierapolis of Asia. Bartholomew and Mariamne then departed to continue their separate missionary journeys while Stachys and those with him remained, maintaining the church in Christ Jesus our Lord”.

The hymns of the Church refer to the martyrdom of Philip as follows:

“Having forsaken earthly things⁴², you followed after Christ, signed with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and sent by Him to the Gentiles which were perishing, to turn men to the light of the knowledge of God, O Apostle Philip. And having completed the struggles of your divine suffering and diverse torments, you did commit your soul to Christ”.

“Having finished⁴³ the struggle with a cross of suffering, you were fittingly arrayed in crowns of victory, O Philip”.

“Aspiring to the sufferings⁴⁴ of the Savior, you set the falsehood of idolatry at naught, O glorious Philip. You appeared to the world pouring forth heavenly wonders upon all, having become an Apostle to the Gentiles, O most blessed one”.

The Martyrdom of Nathanael

The issue that Nathanael addressed at his martyrdom was an exposure of the work of demons among men. This issue is as prevalent today among people who worship false gods as it

⁴² “Litia for Vespers of the Commemoration of the Apostle Philip, November 14th”, Russian Menaion, St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, TN.

⁴³ “Aposticha for Vespers of the Commemoration of the Apostle Philip, November 14th”, Russian Menaion, St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, TN.

⁴⁴ “Ode III for Matins of the Commemoration of the Apostle Philip, November 14th”, Russian Menaion, St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, TN.

was in c. 90 AD when Nathanael traveled to Armenia⁴⁵. Some writers⁴⁶ referred to this area as part of India.

When he arrived, he took up his quarters in the temple of Astaruth, and lived there as one of the pilgrims and the poor. In this temple, there was an idol called Astaruth, which was supposed to heal the infirm, but rather injured them all more. And the people were in entire ignorance of the true God; and from want of knowledge, they all fled for refuge to the false god. And this god brought upon the people troubles, infirmities, damage, violence, and much affliction. And when any one sacrificed to him, the demon behind the idol (see Deuteronomy 32:17) retired and appeared to give a cure to the person in trouble; and the foolish people, seeing this, believed in him. But the demons retired, not because they wished to cure men, but in order to assail them more, and to have them altogether in their power. Thinking that they were cured bodily, those that sacrificed to them were the more diseased in soul”.

“While the Apostle Bartholomew stayed there, Astaruth gave no response, and was not able to cure. And when the temple was full of sick persons, who sacrificed to him daily, Astaruth could give no response; and sick persons who had come from far countries were lying there. When none of the idols was able to give a response, they were compelled to go to another city, where there was a temple of idols, where their great and most eminent god was called Becher. While sacrificing there, they demanded why their God Astaruth had not responded to them. And the demon Becher answered them, ‘From the day and hour that the true God sent his Apostle Bartholomew into the regions here, your God Astaruth is held fast by chains of fire, and can no longer either speak or breathe’. They said to him, ‘And who is this Bartholomew?’ He answered, ‘He is the friend of the Almighty God, and has just come into these parts, that he may take away all the worship of the idols in the name of his God’. And the servants of the Greeks said to him, ‘Tell us what he is like, that we may be able to find him’”.

“And the demon answered, ‘He has black hair, a shaggy head, a fair skin, large eyes, beautiful nostrils, his ears hidden by the hair of his head, with a yellow beard, a few gray hairs. He is of middle height, clothed with a white under cloak bordered with purple, and upon his shoulders a very white cloak. He has worn his clothes twenty-six years, but neither are they dirty, nor have they grown old. Seven times a day he bends the knee to the Lord, and seven times a night he prays to God. His voice is like the sonnet of a strong trumpet. There go along with him angels of God, who allow him neither to be weary, nor to hunger, nor to thirst; his face, and his soul, and his heart are always glad and rejoicing; he foresees everything, he knows and speaks every tongue of every nation. And now, as soon as you ask me, and I answer you about him, behold, he knows. For the angels of the Lord tell him. And if you wish to seek him, if he is willing, he will appear to you; but if he shall not be willing, you will not be able to find him. I entreat you, therefore, if you shall find him, entreat him not to come here, lest his angels do to me as they have done to my brother Astaruth”.

The hymns of the Church address this conflict between Light and darkness as follows:

“Jesus our God, the Sun of Righteousness⁴⁷, sent you to the fullness of the world like a ray of light, O all glorious one, mightily dispelling the gloom of

⁴⁵ Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, June 11.

⁴⁶ Roberts and Donaldson, ed., “Martyrdom of the Holy and Glorious Apostle Bartholomew”, Apocrypha of the New Testament, Ante Nicene Fathers, v. 8

⁴⁷ “Eight Stichera for Vespers of the Commemoration of the Apostle Bartholomew, June 11th”, Russian Menaion, St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, TN.

ungodliness and illumining all who sit in the darkness of ignorance. You have made them heirs of the Light, O divinely wise Bartholomew”.

“Ascending to the summit⁴⁸ of the virtues, O you who are most rich as an Apostle of Christ, you were enriched with the cloven tongue of fire breathed forth by the Spirit, and you burned up the tinder of impiety and ignorance. You were truly shown to be a God-bearing ember afire with the radiance of the divine Spirit, O all-praised Bartholomew, consuming the chaff of falsehood and enlightening the hearts of those who hymn you in faith”.

“And when the demon⁴⁹ had said this, he held his peace. And they returned, and set to work to look into every face of the pilgrims and poor men, and for two days they could find him no where. And it came to pass, that one who was a demoniac set to work to cry out, ‘Apostle of the Lord, Bartholomew, your prayers are burning me up’. Then the Apostle said to him, ‘Hold your peace, and come out of him’. And that very hour, the man who had suffered from the demon for many years was set free. And Polymius, the king of that country, happened to be standing opposite the Apostle; and he had a daughter a demoniac, that is to say, a lunatic. And he sent messengers to the Apostle, saying, ‘My daughter is grievously torn; I implore you, therefore, as you have delivered him who suffered for many years, so also to order my daughter to be set free’. And the Apostle rose up, and went with them. And he saw the king’s daughter bound with chains, for she used to tear in pieces all her limbs; and if any one came near her, she used to bite, and no one dared to come near her. The servants said to Nathanael, ‘Who is it that dares to touch her?’ The Apostle answered them, ‘Loose her, and let her go’. They said to him again, ‘We have her in our power when she is bound with all our force, and do you bid us loose her?’ The Apostle said to them, ‘Behold, I keep her enemy bound, and are you even now afraid of her? Go and loose her; and when she has partaken of food, let her rest, and early tomorrow bring her to me’. And they went and did as the Apostle had commanded them; and thereafter the demon was not able to come near her”.

“Then the king loaded camels with gold and silver, precious stones, pearls, and clothing, and sought to see the Apostle; and having made many efforts, and not found him, he brought everything back to his palace”.

“As the following day was dawning, the Apostle appeared alone with the king in his bed-chamber, and said to him, ‘Why did you seek me all day yesterday with gold and silver, and precious stones, pearls, and raiment? For these gifts those persons long for who seek earthly things; but I seek nothing earthly. Wherefore I wish to teach you that the Son of God condescended to be born as a man out of a virgin’s womb”.

“King Polymius listened gladly as Nathanael explained the whole dispensation of the things of God. Nathanael began by explaining how the Son of God was born as a man out of a virgin’s womb. He was conceived in the womb of the virgin; He took to Himself her who was always a virgin, having within herself Him who made the heaven and the earth, the sea, and all that there is. He, like mankind, took to Himself a beginning in time, He who has a beginning neither of times nor days; but He Himself made every beginning, and everything created, whether in things visible or invisible. When she was shut up in her chamber, the Archangel Gabriel appeared to her, ‘Fear not, Mary; for you have found favor in the sight of the Lord, and

⁴⁸ “Ode II for Matins of the Commemoration of the Apostle Bartholomew, June 11th”, Russian Menaion, St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, TN.

⁴⁹ Roberts and Donaldson, ed., “Martyrdom of the Holy and Glorious Apostle Bartholomew”, Apocrypha of the New Testament, Ante Nicene Fathers, v. 8

you shall conceive' (Luke 1:30-31). And she cast off fear, and stood up, and said, 'How shall this be to me, since I know not man?' The angel answered her, 'The Holy Spirit shall come upon you, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow you; wherefore that holy thing which is born of you shall be called Son of God'" (Luke 1:34-35).

"After the Son of God was born of the virgin, having become perfect man, after His baptism He fasted forty days. The tempter then came to tempt Him with earthly things saying, 'If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become loaves'. And He answered, 'Not on bread alone shall man live, but by every word of God' (Matthew 4:2-4). Thus the devil, who through eating had conquered the first man, was conquered through the fasting of the second man. By his wicked craft, he conquered through the eating of the tree by which man was deceived, and was expelled from paradise, and kept paradise shut. Thereafter this Son of the virgin conquered all the craft of the devil. And his craft was such, that when he saw the Son of the virgin fasting forty days, he knew in truth that He was the true God. The devil himself, when he saw that after the forty days He was hungry, was deceived into thinking that He was not God, and said to Him, 'Why have you been hungry? Tell these stones to become loaves, and eat'. And the Lord answered him, 'Listen, devil; although you may lord it over man, because he has not kept the commandment of God, I have fulfilled the righteousness of God and shall destroy your power, so that you shall no longer lord it over man'"

"And when he saw himself conquered, he took Jesus to an exceeding high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and said, 'All these will I give you, if you will fall down and worship me'. The Lord said to him, 'Get you behind me, Satan; for it is written, you shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve' (Matthew 4:8-10)"

"And there was a third temptation for the Lord; for he took Him up to the pinnacle of the temple, and said, 'If you are the Son of God, cast yourself down'. The Lord said to him, 'You shall not tempt the Lord your God' (Matthew 4:5-7). And the devil disappeared. And he that once conquered Adam, the son of the virgin earth, was thrice conquered by Christ, the Son of the Virgin Mary"

"Nathanael concluded by saying that the Lord had sent His Apostles out into the whole world that He might redeem His people from the deception of the devil; and I am one of these. 'On this account we do not seek gold and silver, but rather despise them, because we labor to be rich in that place where the kingdom of Him alone endures for ever, where neither trouble, nor grief, nor groaning, nor death, has place. There is eternal blessedness, and ineffable joy, and everlasting exultation, and perpetual repose'"

The hymns of the Church celebrate Nathanael's understanding and teaching about the Incarnation:

"You revealed⁵⁰ to the world the great mystery of the Incarnation, which is infinite and beyond all understanding, O Bartholomew, and which, though ineffable, is accessible and credible to the faithful alone. Rolling like a stone in pure manner, O all-holy Bartholomew, you did mightily overturn the foundation of falsehood. And shown to be an insuperable foundation for the Church, you preserve it unshaken".

⁵⁰ "Ode VI for Matins of the Commemoration of the Apostle Bartholomew, June 11th", Russian Menaion, St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, TN.

“As a result of all this⁵¹, the demon sitting in your temple, who makes responses to you, is kept in chains through the angel of the Lord who has sent me. If you shall be baptized, and wish to be enlightened, I will make Him visible, so that you can learn from what great evils you have been redeemed. At the same time you will hear from him by what means he injures all those who are lying sick in the temple. The devil, himself, causes the men to be sick and again to be healed. He does this in order that they may the more believe in the idols, and in order that he may have greater place in their souls that they may say to the stone ‘You are our god’. But that demon who dwells in the idol is held in subjection, conquered by me, and is able to give no response to those who sacrifice and pray there. And if you wish to prove that it is so, I will order him to return into the idol, and I will make him confess with his own mouth that he is bound, and able to give no response’. The king said to him, ‘Tomorrow, at the first hour of the day, the priests are ready to sacrifice in the temple, and I shall come there, and shall be able to see this wonderful work’”.

“And it came to pass on the following day, as they were sacrificing, the devil began to cry out, ‘Refrain, you wretched ones, from sacrificing to me, lest you suffer worse for my sake. Because I am bound in fiery chains, and kept in subjection by an angel of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, whom the Jews crucified. For, being afraid of him, they condemned him to death. And he put to death Death, himself, our king, and he bound our prince in chains of fire. And on the third day, having conquered death and the devil, rose in glory, and gave the sign of the cross to his apostles, and sent them out into the four quarters of the world. And one of them is here now, who has bound me, and keeps me in subjection. I implore you, therefore, supplicate him on my account that he may set me free to go into other habitations’”.

“Then the Apostle answered, ‘Confess, unclean demon, who is it that has injured all those that are lying here from heavy diseases?’ The demon answered, ‘The devil, our ruler, he who is bound, sends us against men, that, having first injured their bodies, we may thus also make an assault upon their souls when they sacrifice to us. For then we have complete power over them, when they believe in us and sacrifice to us. And when, on account of the mischief done to them, we retire, we appear curing them, and are worshipped by them as gods; but in truth we are demons, and the servants of him who was crucified have bound us. For from that day on which the Apostle Bartholomew came I am punished, kept bound in chains of fire. And for this reason I confess, because he has commanded me’”.

“The Apostle said to him, ‘Why do you not save all that have come to you?’ The demon said to him, ‘When we injure their bodies, unless we first injure their souls, we do not let their bodies go’. The Apostle said to him, ‘And how do you injure their souls?’ The demon answered him, ‘When they believe that we are gods, and sacrifice to us, God withdraws from those who sacrifice, and we do not take away the sufferings of their bodies, but retire into their souls’”.

The hymns of the Church commemorate Nathanael’s victory over the deception of the demons behind the idols as follows:

“Protected by the Cross⁵² of the Lord, O most excellent Bartholomew, you set at naught the savagery of the demons, and by your preaching you did dispel their soul-destroying deception. Christ showed you forth as a light to the world, divine effulgence of glory, O God-pleasing Bartholomew. For you have

⁵¹ Roberts and Donaldson, ed., “Martyrdom of the Holy and Glorious Apostle Bartholomew”, Apocrypha of the New Testament, Ante Nicene Fathers, v. 8

⁵² “Ode IV for Matins of the Commemoration of the Apostle Bartholomew, June 11th”, Russian Menaion, St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, TN.

enlightened all creation with divine knowledge, O most blessed one. Like a most excellent steed, the chariot of the Word, you roiled the pagan seas. With faith you consumed the uttermost parts of bitter ungodliness”.

“Then the Apostle said to the people, ‘Behold, the god whom you thought to cure you, does more mischief to your souls and bodies. Hear now your Maker who dwells in the heavens, and do not believe in lifeless stones. And if you wish that I should pray for you, and that all these may receive health, take down this idol, and break it to pieces. And when you have done this, I will sanctify this temple in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; and having baptized all of you who are in it in the baptism of the Lord, and sanctified you, I will save all”.

“Then the king gave orders, and all the people brought ropes and crowbars, and were not at all able to take down the idol. Then the Apostle said to them, ‘Unfasten the ropes. And when they had unfastened them, he cast out the demon dwelling in it. And the demon arose at the word of the Apostle, and lifted the idols up from their foundations and dropped them; and in that same hour all the idols that were in that place were broken to pieces. Then all cried out with one voice, saying, ‘He alone is God Almighty whom Bartholomew proclaims”’.

“And when all responded to the Amen, suddenly there appeared an angel of the Lord, shining brighter than the sun, with four other angels. The first angel said, ‘Thus says the Lord who has sent me, as you have all been purified from all your infirmity, so also this temple shall be purified from all uncleanness, and from the demons dwelling in it. When I make the sign of the cross, so you also, with your finger, seal your faces, and these evil things will flee from you. Then he made visible the demon, who dwelt in the temple, and his hands were bound with fiery chains, and he was firmly restrained. And the angel of the Lord said to him, ‘As the Apostle has commanded, I let you go; go where voice of man is not heard, and be there until the great day of judgment. And when he let him go, he flew away, groaning and weeping, and disappeared. And the angel of the Lord went up into heaven in the sight of all”.

“Then the king, the queen, and their two sons, with all his people, and with all the multitude of the city, and every city round about, wherever his kingdom ruled, were saved, and were baptized in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. And the king laid aside his diadem, and followed Bartholomew the Apostle of Christ”.

Other traditional sources⁵³ state that ten neighboring cities received baptism at that time, following the example of their king.

The hymns of the Church commemorate the blossoming of the Church in Armenia as follows:

“The desert⁵⁴, the barren Church of the nations, blossomed forth like a lily, O Lord, at Your coming; and therein has my heart been established. Like rain from heaven, you have watered the whole world, which had grown dry under the darkness of ungodliness, O all-wise and right wondrous seer of God. You put forth a stream of the drink of salvation, O most honored Bartholomew, and you brought forth manifold fruit of salvation for the nations, O right wondrous one. With the salt of grace you brought an end to the putrefaction of idolatry, O most wise one, delighting the hearts of those who honor you with the sweet discourse of faith”.

⁵³ Isaac Lambertsen, *The Lives of the Holy Apostles*, Holy Apostles Convent Press, Buena Vista, CO, p. 178.

⁵⁴ “Katavasia for Matins of the Commemoration of the Apostle Bartholomew, June 11th”, *Russian Menaion*, St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, TN.

John Cassian addressed demonstrations of power by classifying healing into three different classes⁵⁵. The wondrous works done by Nathanael fall into Cassian's "First Class", while the healings done by the demons fall into Cassian's "Third Class".

"The **first** is indeed for the sake of healing when the grace of signs accompanies certain elect and righteous men on account of the merits of their holiness. For example, the Lord said, 'Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out devils. Freely you have received, freely give'" (Matthew 10:8).

The **second** is for edification of the Church and proceeds from either the faith of those who bring the sick or from those who are to be cured. "The virtue of health proceeds even from sinners and men unworthy of it. Of whom the Savior says, 'Many shall say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your Name, and in Your Name cast out devils, and in Your Name done many mighty works? And then I will confess to them, I never knew you. Depart from Me, you workers of iniquity' (Matthew 7:21-23). If the faith of those who bring the sick or if the faith of the sick is wanting, it prevents those on whom the gifts of healing are conferred from receiving the healing.

"The **third** (class) of healing is a fraud that is copied by the deceit and contrivance of devils. When a man who is enslaved to evident sins is regarded as a saint and a servant of God out of admiration for his miracles, men may be persuaded to copy his sins. Thus an opening is made for finding fault with the Church and the sanctity of the Faith may be brought into disgrace. Or else he who believes that he possesses the gift of healing may be puffed up by pride of heart and so fall more grievously. When the "healers" who have no merits of holiness or any spiritual fruits, they (the devils) pretend that by their merits they are disturbed and made to flee from the bodies they have possessed.

"After these things⁵⁶, the unbelievers of the Greeks came together to Astreges the king, who was the elder brother of the king who had been baptized, and said to him. 'O king, your brother Polymius has become disciple to a certain magician, who has taken down our temples, and broken our gods to pieces'. And while they were thus speaking and weeping, some others came from the cities round about, both priests and people; and they set about weeping and making accusations before the king. Then King Astreges in a rage sent a thousand armed men along with those priests, in order that, wherever they should find the Apostle, they might bring him to him bound. And when they had done so, and found him, and brought him, he said to him, 'Are you he who has perverted my brother from the gods?' To whom the Apostle answered, 'I have not perverted him, but have converted him to God'. The king said to him, 'Are you he who caused our gods to be broken in pieces?' The Apostle said to him, 'I gave power to the demons, who were in them, and they broke in pieces the dumb and senseless idols, that all men might believe in God Almighty, who dwells in the heavens'. The king said to him, 'As you have made my brother deny his gods, and believe in your God, so I also will make you reject your God and believe in my gods. The Apostle said to him, 'I have bound and kept in subjection the god which your brother worshipped, and at my order the idols were broken in pieces. If you also are able to do the same to my God, you can persuade me also to sacrifice to your gods. But if you can do nothing to my God, and I break all your gods in pieces; then you need to believe in my God".

⁵⁵ John Cassian, *Conferences*, XV, i

⁵⁶ Roberts and Donaldson, ed., "Martyrdom of the Holy and Glorious Apostle Bartholomew", *Apocrypha of the New Testament*, Ante Nicene Fathers, v. 8

“And when he had thus spoken, the king was informed that his God Baldad and all the other idols had fallen down, and were broken in pieces. Then the king rent the purple in which he was clothed, and ordered the holy Apostle Bartholomew to be beaten with rods”.

After this beating⁵⁷ they scourged Nathanael, and crucified him, head downward. On the Cross, Nathanael did not cease to proclaim the Word of God, encouraging the faithful to remain steadfast in the Faith, and exhorting the unbelieving to know the Truth and turn from the darkness of demons to the Light of Christ. King Astreges could not stand to listen to this, and had Nathanael skinned alive. Nathanael still did not remain silent, but continued to teach everyone about God, offering up glorification to Him. Finally king Astreges had Nathanael beheaded while still on the Cross. This occurred in about the year 90 AD, meaning that Nathanael was at least 85 years old when he died. Thus Nathanael had the dubious distinction among the Apostles of having been crucified twice.

The Roman Martyrology states⁵⁸ that the location of Nathanael’s martyrdom was Albanopolis (modern Derbent), which is on the West Coast of the Caspian Sea. Other sources state⁵⁹ that the location was about 100 miles farther South at Albanus (modern Baku), also on the West Coast of the Caspian Sea.

“And innumerable multitudes⁶⁰ came from all the cities, who had believed in him along with king Polymius; and they took up the remains of the Apostle with singing of praise and with all glory, and they laid them in the royal tomb, and glorified God. Tradition states⁶¹ that Nathanael was buried in a leaden coffin, and that numerous miracles were done over the Apostle’s grave, especially healing of the sick.

In the 6th Century, Nathanael’s relics were moved during the Persian Conquests from the shore of the Caspian Sea to near the Black Sea. There the Persians threw Nathanael’s relics, along with the relics of several other saints, into the Black Sea. By God’s providence, Nathanael’s coffin floated, and was carried by the waves to the island of Lipari (off the coast of Sicily). Bishop Agathon of Lipari was warned by a revelation in a dream, and was expecting Nathanael’s coffin. Agathon buried Nathanael below the floor of his Church.

The hymns of the Church commemorates the movement of the relics of Nathanael as follows:

“Your paths were revealed⁶² in the sea, O Apostle, and shown to be beyond the understanding of men. Cast into the sea in a casket, you made your way to the West, O most renowned Bartholomew. With your wondrous ascents you purified the water, and arrived at the island of Lipari, pouring forth myrrh, O glorious one, and healing incurable diseases. And you became for the faithful in that place a savior and a refuge, a deliverer and intercessor before the King and Savior of all”.

⁵⁷ Isaac Lambertsen, The Lives of the Holy Apostles, Holy Apostles Convent Press, Buena Vista, CO, p. 178.

⁵⁸ Thurston and Attwater, Butler’s Lives of the Saints, Christian Classics, Westminster, MD, 1990, August 24.

⁵⁹ Isaac Lambertsen, The Lives of the Holy Apostles, Holy Apostles Convent Press, Buena Vista, CO, p. 179.

⁶⁰ Roberts and Donaldson, ed., “Martyrdom of the Holy and Glorious Apostle Bartholomew”, Apocrypha of the New Testament, Ante Nicene Fathers, v. 8

⁶¹ Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, June 11, August 25.

⁶² “Stichera for Vespers of the Commemoration of the Return of the Relics of the Holy Apostle Bartholomew, August 25th”, Russian Menaion, St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, TN.

“In a manner transcending mind⁶³ and thought, you learned the things that are great, discovering the hypostatic Wisdom. Making the ends of the earth wise with divine teachings, you showed the wisdom of the Greeks to be foolish. Though your lifeless body was encoffined, you traversed the sea, obedient to the commands of God, O Apostle. Like the sun, you passed from East to West, illumining it”.

“Traversing the unfathomable depths⁶⁴, borne on the crests of the waves of the sea, with the divine martyrs, O Apostle Bartholomew. You arrived at the island of Lipari, pouring forth abundant life upon a man many days dead”.

“You did have your path⁶⁵ in the sea (Psalm 77:19) and did make your way through the waters, O blessed Apostle. And your steps were perceived therein through the Spirit, as David foretold”.

“Those consumed with envy⁶⁶, driving you like the sun toward the West, O passion-bearer, set you afloat on the sea. And a wonder most great was beheld in you, who, in awesome manner, sailed the depths of the sea in a wondrous voyage O Bartholomew, Apostle of the Lord”.

“You were shown⁶⁷ to be a mountain which lets divine sweetness fall, O right laudable one. After your death, you did set your path in the sea, sailing under divine power, undrowned by its depths O valiant athlete, but being up borne thereby”.

“And it came to pass⁶⁸ on the thirtieth day after the Apostle was buried, that the king Astreges was overpowered by a demon and miserably strangled. And all the priests were strangled by demons, and perished on account of their rising against the Apostle, and thus died by an evil fate. And there was great fear and trembling, and all came to the Lord, and were baptized by the presbyters who had been ordained by the holy Apostle Bartholomew. And according to the commandment of the Apostle, all the clergy of the people made King Polymius bishop; and in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ he received the grace of healing, and began to do signs. And he remained in the bishopric twenty years; and having prospered in all things, and governed the church well, and guided it in right opinions, he fell asleep in peace, and went to the Lord”.

⁶³ “Ode I for Matins of the Commemoration of the Return of the Relics of the Holy Apostle Bartholomew, August 25th”, Russian Menaion, St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, TN.

⁶⁴ “Ode V for Matins of the Commemoration of the Return of the Relics of the Holy Apostle Bartholomew, August 25th”, Russian Menaion, St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, TN.

⁶⁵ “Ode VI for Matins of the Commemoration of the Return of the Relics of the Holy Apostle Bartholomew, August 25th”, Russian Menaion, St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, TN.

⁶⁶ “Kontakion for Matins of the Commemoration of the Return of the Relics of the Holy Apostle Bartholomew, August 25th”, Russian Menaion, St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, TN.

⁶⁷ “Ode VIII for Matins of the Commemoration of the Return of the Relics of the Holy Apostle Bartholomew, August 25th”, Russian Menaion, St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, TN.

⁶⁸ Roberts and Donaldson, ed., “Martyrdom of the Holy and Glorious Apostle Bartholomew”, Apocrypha of the New Testament, Ante Nicene Fathers, v. 8