



That We May Be His Temples'—Ss Ignatius the God-bearer & Aphrahat the Persian

... „There are two Saints I will mention today—St Ignatius the God-bearer and the Venerable Aphrahat the Persian—though I should like to have the time to discuss Ss Sulpicius Severus, Gildas the Wise, and Andrei Rublev as well. Today is the feast of the translation of St Ignatius's relics, and not the primary feast of the Saint himself, so I don't mind as much giving him a very brief reference. First of all, aside from his zeal for martyrdom, the two most memorable things to me about his life concern the meaning of his epithet:

He was called God-bearer because in his childhood, according to tradition, he was taken into the hands of Jesus Christ Himself. But also because he became so used to feeding his heart with the memory of the sweet name of Jesus Christ, that this deep spiritual seal with sensitive images was stamped on this bodily organ and when, after his martyr's death, when his heart was cut asunder, the name of Jesus Christ was seen alphabetically represented in it. (Bulgakov, [Menaion](#))

Second, St Ignatius is of course remembered today primarily for his writings. Here is a small excerpt from his 'Epistle to the Ephesians', 15 (*The Apostolic Fathers*, 2nd ed., trans. J.B. Lightfoot and J.R. Harmer, ed. and rev. Michael W. Holmes [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1996], p. 91):

15. It is better to be silent and be real, than to talk and not be real. It is good to teach, if one does what one says. Now there is one such teacher, who 'spoke and it happened'; indeed, even the things which he has done in silence are worthy of the Father. (2) The one who truly possesses the word of Jesus is also able to hear his silence, that he may be perfect, that he may act through what he says and be known through his silence. (3) Nothing is hidden from the Lord, even our secrets are close to him. Therefore let us do everything with the knowledge that he dwells in us, in order that we may be his temples, and he may be in us as our God—as, in fact, he really is, as will be made clear in our sight by the love which we justly have for him.

The second Saint I wish to mention is the Venerable Aphrahat of Persia, who, according to Sebastian Brock, is sometimes called 'the Persian Sage' (*The Syriac Fathers on Prayer and the Spiritual Life*, ed. and trans. Sebastian Brock [Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian, 1987], p. 2; ...

The Monk Aphraates, by descent a Persian, having come to believe in Christ, disavowed his illustrious lineage and departed his pagan countrymen by going to Edessa, and then to Antioch, where by his holy life he attracted many and preached them the Word of God. He died in the year 370.

But again, St Aphrahat's writings are what led me to him. Here is a passage from his 'Demonstration IV, On Prayer':

Why, my beloved, did our Saviour teach us saying: 'Pray to your Father in secret, with the door shut'? I will show you, as far as I am capable. He said 'Pray to your Father with the door closed'. Our Lord's words thus tell us 'pray in secret in your heart, and shut the door'. What is the door He says we must shut, if not your mouth? For here is the temple in which Christ dwells, just as the Apostle said: You are the temple of the Lord for Him to enter into your inner person, into this house, to cleanse it from everything that is unclean, while the door—that is to say, your mouth—is closed. If this were not the case, how would you understand the passage? Suppose you happened to be in the desert where there was no house and no door, would you be able to pray in secret? Or if you happened to be on top of a mountain, would you not be able to pray? (Brock, p. 14)

Although I am sadly unable to read Georgian, I believe that the 3rd Father, besides St Ephraim and St Isaac in the '3 Syrian Fathers' icon above, is likely to be the Venerable Aphrahat (who was translated into Georgian, apparently [Brock, p. 4]). It was painted by Lasha Kintsurashvili.

Source: <http://logismoitouaaron.blogspot.com/2009/02/that-we-may-be-his-templess-ignatius.html>