

# THE CRUCIFIXION OF THE SELF IN SAINT ISAAC OF NINEVEH AND DADISHO QATRAYA

Revd Dr Nevsky Everett

Chaplain of the Anglican Church of the Resurrection, Bucharest  
Independent researcher

<https://doi.org/10.47433/tv.xcixn1-4.38>

## Abstract

*This paper explores the crucifixion of the self and the relationship between the cross and divine love in the writings of Saint Isaac of Nineveh (also known as Saint Isaac the Syrian) and his contemporary, Dadisho Qatraya. These common themes reveal a particular theological emphasis that arose in the flourishing intellectual environment of the region of Beth Qatraye, along the coast of the Persian Gulf, in the seventh century. This is the region in which Saint Isaac was born and educated before he was made Bishop of Nineveh. The shared intellectual heritage of these writers can be traced back to the spread of a reformist monastic movement developed by Abraham of Kashkar (d. 588) that reinvigorated monastic life in Beth Qatraye.*

**Keywords:** Saint Isaac the Syrian; Dadisho Qatraya; Divine Love; Crucifixion of the Self; Monasticism.

## Introduction

Saint Isaac grew up on the coast of the Persian Gulf, in the region known in Syriac as Beth Qatraye. His own texts reveal little about his life, but he uses the imagery of pearls and pearl-fishing, clearly evoking his early life<sup>1</sup>: “Naked the swimmer dives into the sea in order to find a pearl. Naked the wise monk will go through the creation in order to find the pearl of Jesus Christ himself.”<sup>2</sup>

Saint Isaac often compares prayer with pearl fishing.

---

<sup>1</sup> For a history of pearl-fishing in the Persian Gulf from ancient to medieval times, see Robin Donkin, *Beyond Price: Pearls and Pearl-fishing: Origins to the Age of Discoveries*, American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia PA, 1998, pp. 80-83, 105.