

EASTERN THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS IN INDIA

XAVIER KOODAPUZHA (ED)

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*Papers presented at the Symposium of the Eastern
Theological Association of India
(May 18-20, 1998)*

XAVIER KOODAPUZHA (ED)



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PREFACE

OIRSI is very happy to publish in its series the Orientation papers presented at the All India Symposium held at the Spirituality Centre, (18-20, May 1998) Manganam, under the auspices of the Eastern Theological Association of India. This symposium has been generally considered a great achievement of the creative thinking of the theologians of the Eastern Churches of this country. The subjects chosen for their study are those of great contemporary importance.

As a result of the intensive and continuous impact of the thought patterns and categories of the philosophical, cultural, economic, political, social and theological systems of the western world it has become rather difficult for the Churches of Asia to develop their own identity and creative thinking in these fields. The Eastern Theological Association of India has taken it up as a challenge and has been organising seminars and symposia on theological topics at various levels. The symposium held in May 1998 at the Spirituality Centre is one of these important attempts in which scholars from different parts of India took part. The subjects chosen for the study was mainly centred on the uniqueness of and Redemption by Jesus Christ, ecclesial identity, spirituality, inculturation, and liturgy. These are some of the areas where confusion exists at various levels.

Eastern Churches in India are as old as Christianity itself. They are the legitimate heirs of an apostolic tradition starting from one of the twelve Apostles, St. Thomas. They faithfully followed the faith tradition initiated by the apostle which they called "*Thomayude Margam*" i. e. *The Way of Thomas*. Their ecclesial identity consisted in their fidelity to this *Margam*. It included their liturgy, spirituality, discipline, faith, church administration, feasts, fasts etc. They firmly believed that their liturgical tradition is rooted in their apostolic heritage. Those who have made an in depth study of the life style and venerable heritage of the ancient Church of the St. Thomas Christians of India have defined

it as "Indian in culture, Christian in religion and Oriental in worship".

But with the arrival of the Portuguese navigators in India in the sixteenth century and the subsequent western influence and Latin rule over them for nearly three centuries (1599-1896) the indigenous Indian Church was alienated to a great extent from its own roots. The Church which was one was disastrously divided. Their liturgy was mutilated, administrative system changed and conformed to the western pattern and ecclesial identity is distorted to a great extent. At present India is an independent country and there is an increasing awareness of the need to discover their own individuality. In this search those Thomas Christians who are trained after the western pattern turn to other secular sources and religious traditions such as Hinduism seeking patterns of inculturation! Such a slavish attitude can be observed among the clergy and Religious. Their inability to understand and appreciate their own rich heritage has brought them down to this sad plight. As they are alienated from their own roots they do not succeed to discover the riches of their own venerable ecclesial patrimony. Those Thomas Christians who have joined the Religious Orders of the Latin rite and formed after their pattern are causing a lot of harm in the process of the rediscovery and renewal of the ecclesial identity of the Eastern Churches in India. It is in this context the Eastern Theological Association of India has taken up the leadership and are inviting scholars for an in depth study of the issues. The above mentioned symposium is an achievement in this line. We are happy to publish in this series the fruits of the studies made by the scholars.

I am grateful to my co-workers and students of the Seminary and Paurastya Vidyapitham for their co-operation, and good-will. My special thanks to the Brothers of the ORISI under the leadership of its secretary, Dn Scaria Nirappel for their generous co-operation and assistance, Acme Computer Centre for the page setting and the Wigi Printers for its beautiful printing.

Fr. Xavier Koodapuzha

Director of OIRSI and President of the
Eastern Theological Association of India

February 27, 1999

Paurastya Vidyapitham

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THEOLOGICAL DIMENSIONS OF INCULTURATION IN THE INDIAN CONTEXT

- Bishop A.D. Mattam

Inculturation is one of the important challenges the Church is facing today. Wherever the message of the Gospel is encountering a new culture it assumes an added urgency. Inculturation regards the proclamation of the Good News, Catechesis and all aspects of Christian life. While dealing with the subject we shall lay special emphasis on its theological dimensions. As the title indicates special reference shall be made to the Indian Context. At the outset we shall clarify certain terms like culture, theology and the Indian context.

Culture

There are numerous definitions of culture. Perhaps this is so, because it is not possible to give a precise definition of culture, for it is totality of many things. Culture may be summed up as a way of life of a society or community. People live in communities; each community evolves its way of living, which includes its beliefs, laws, manner of thinkings, customs, habits, art, songs, craft etc.... So there is plurality of cultures. A Child which is born into the community grows up in this culture and becomes part of the culture.

Gaudium et Spes, the pastoral constitution of Vatican Council II on the Church in the Modern World says, "The word 'culture' in its general sense indicates all those factors by which man defines and unfolds his manifold spiritual and bodily qualities....It follows that human culture necessarily has a historical and social aspect and that the word 'culture' often takes on a sociological and ethnological sense. It is in this sense that we speak of a plurality of cultures".¹

1. *Gaudium et Spes*, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, Vatican Council II, n. 53.

Theology

According to the well known classical definition given by Anselm, Theology is '*Fides quaerens intellectum*', 'faith seeking understanding'. Faith teaches things about the relationship between God and human beings. Faith imparts knowledge. Revealed truths might be above human comprehension. By reflection and reasoning the intellect tries to understand the teaching of faith and to be illumined by them. Faith gives guidance to reasoning. The task of theology and of theologians is to clarify what faith teaches, to present them in such a way that they can be grasped more easily, and to interpret them. In the light of the illumination and understanding gained the intellect tries to interpret the faith. Theologians are not to sow seeds of confusion and disbelief. They are to be at the service of faith and of the Church.

Indian Context

In several ways India is placed in a special situation. India is a country or sub-continent of many cultures. Cultural pluralism is a significant feature of India. With different tribal religions and world religions like Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism, religious pluralism is another prevailing reality of India. In the socio-economic sphere, poverty, exploitation and injustice are wide-spread. Christianity in India is as old as Christinity itself, having been planted in this country by Apostle Thomas in the first century. Presently there are in India three different ecclesial traditions or Individual Churches, living side by side, which may be termed as ecclesial pluralism. All these factors are to be taken into consideration while dealing with inculturation.

Inculturation

In simple language, inculturation signifies presenting the Gospel and fashioning Christian life in a way adapted to the culture of the people. This policy and process have been followed in the Church from the very beginning. Prior to the Second vatican Council terms like culture adaptation, accommodation, indigenization etc. were used to denote the idea of relating the Gospel to the cultural context of the hearers. The term inculturation is of recent origin. It appeared for the first time in an official document of the Church in 1977 in the "Message to the people of God" issued at the end of the synod of Bishops. Since then it has been used in several official documents. 'Adap-

tation' denotes peripheral and external changes, whereas inculturation has a deeper and radical significance. Inculturation concerns the faith of the Church, not excluding the fundamental teachings, and the whole life of the Church. So it cannot but have serious theological implications, it is a complex and delicate subject.

With these introductory remarks let us consider various aspects of the subject in some detail.

Culture and Religion

Every culture contains elements of religion even a supposed atheistic culture has something of religion or antireligion. As Cardinal Ratzinger points out: "first, we must state that faith itself is culture. There is no such thing as naked faith or mere religion. Simply stated, in so far as faith tells man who he is and how he should begin being human, faith creates culture; faith is itself culture".²

The Church and Cultures

No culture is pure and unadulterated. Almost every culture has come into contact with other cultures and has been influenced by them. In this process of interplay of cultures one culture absorbs elements from other cultures. In the modern world, because of the fast communication media, there is taking place a marked interaction between cultures. It would be correct to say that the mass media has globalized cultures. National and international culture organizations have come in to existence. One could speak of the world of culture, and in several areas materialistic, irreligious and atheistic attitudes are prevailing. This is a new challenge the Church is facing. *Gaudium et Spes* has devoted a whole chapter on the theme of culture. In the post-Conciliar years a wider and deeper understanding of culture in relation to faith has evolved in the Church and a new consciousness of its profound significance for the modern world is gaining ground.

To meet the present day situation, Holy Father, John Paul II instituted a separate pontifical Council for Culture in 1982. A few years later, in 1993 the Council for culture and the Council

2. Cardinal Ratzinger, at the meeting of Doctrinal Commissions of Asia in Hong Kong, March 1993. Cf; CBCI publication, New Delhi, 1993, p.7.

for Dialogue with non-believers were merged into one. In the Apostolic Letter merging the two Councils, the Holy Father recalls the creation of the Council for culture and states "..... convinced that the synthesis between the two Cultures and faith is not just a demand of culture, but also of faith." In 1982 I created the Pontifical Council for Culture with the intention of strengthening the Church's pastoral presence in this specific, vital area, in which the world's destiny is at stake at the approach of the third millennium; at the time, I wanted to promote "dialogue with non-Christian religions and with individuals with groups not claiming any religion, in the common search for a cultural communication with all people of good will".³ When faith encounters cultures or enter into dialogue with cultures, there is bound to be some reaction. An individual, even a community, understands any idea or truth presented, in the context of the culture of the community, the expressions and the symbols they are accustomed to, the pattern of their thought, the level of understanding they have attained. The Gospel message is to be presented to the people in the "language" they can understand, in their idiom with the signs and symbols they know, that is to say, within their cultural context.

In the Encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*, Pope John Paul II says: "As she carries out missionary activity among the nations, the Church encounters different cultures and become involved in the process of inculturation. The need for such involvement has marked the church's pilgrimage through her history, but today it is particularly urgent.....Through inculturation the Church, for her part, becomes a more intelligible sign of what she is, and a more effective instrument of mission".⁴

Inculturation: Significance, Double Dimension

Inculturation is much more than purely external adaptation. By the process of inculturation two things are achieved. Firstly, all the authentic values and good elements of the culture of the people are integrated into Christianity. Secondly, the gospel values are transmitted to the culture, thus purifying the culture. *Redemptoris Missio* says: "The process of the Church's insertion into peoples' cultures is a lengthy one. It is not a matter

3. Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Letter, cf. *Osservatore Romano*, English Weekly, 12 May 1993, n. 19 p.3

4. Pope John Paul II, Encyclical *Redemptoris missio*, 1990, n. 52.

of purely external adaptation, for inculturation means the intimate transformation of authentic cultural values through their insertion in Christianity and the insertion of Christianity in various human cultures. She transmits to them her own values, at the same time taking the good elements that already exist in them and renewing them within".⁵

The post-synodal Apostolic exhortation of Pope John II 'Ecclesia in Africa' specifically spells out these two dimensions of inculturation: Inculturation includes two dimensions: on the one hand 'the intimate transformation of authentic cultural values through their integration in Christianity' and, on the other 'the insertion of Christianity in the various human cultures'.⁶

We could consider these two dimensions as two aspects of evangelisation. The Gospel message is proclaimed to the people and the Gospel is inserted into the culture of the people. In doing so all the good elements of their culture are incorporated into Christianity. At the same time the culture itself evangelised, the culture is purified and perfected and whatever is incompatible with the gospel is rejected.

Incarnation: Theological basis of Inculturation

Incarnation of Jesus Christ is the central teaching of Christian faith and the most fundamental mystery of salvation. The Son of God, Second Person of the Trinity, became man for the salvation of all. In the Nicean-Constantinopolitan Creed we confess: "I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father.....For us men for our salvation he came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man". If any one is to deny this fundamental truth he cannot be counted as a believer in Christ. Christ is not like the mythological *avatars* of other religions. The whole Christian faith, Christianity itself is rejected with the denial of this central doctrine of Incarnation.

The Incarnation is an event of history, that took place in a specific space and time, in a particular culture. The historical circumstances of incarnation are of special significance for all times. "The sublime mystery of the Incarnation of the word took place in history, in clearly defined circumstances of time and

5. Ibid. n. 52

6. Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation, Ecclesia in Africa, 1995, n. 59.

space, amidst a people with its particular culture, a people that God has Chosen and accompanied through the entire history of salvation".⁷ The chosen people of Israel were of Semitic culture and they professed the Judaic religion. Christ was born into the community, in Palestine, and grew up as one among them. The Gospel was announced in the Semitic religio-cultural background. Christ in his teaching, has drawn elements from their religion and culture, their life experience, from the symbols, sayings and signs they were accustomed to, in order to enunciate his message. Thus, in the divine plan of salvation the religion and culture of Israel became a vehicle for the proclamation of the Good News.

As regards the Incarnation there are two aspects that need our special attention:

- a) the eternal truth that it contains, the Word of God becoming man, and
- b) the circumstances of time and space accompanying this mystery.

The historical fact of Incarnation is bound up with a particular country and culture. Pope John Paul II says that the proclamation of the Incarnation as a unique event of history must be the corner-stone of inculturation; it is also the paradigm for inculturation: "the proclamation of the incarnation as a unique and unrepeatable historical fact is the corner-stone of every process of inculturating the faith".⁸ The Holy Father explains, how the historical fact of incarnation is to be the basis of inculturation: "inculturation thus appears as one of the most necessary and vital tasks of evangelization and catecheticsthe paradigm for this task is the incarnation of the Word became flesh (cf. Jn. 1:14), taking on all that is human except sin (Heb. 4:15). The proclamation of Christ to men must follow the same pattern, proposing the revealed message in such a way that every culture may truly appreciate what it is: valid and enriching, contemporary with every age and generation."⁹

By the process of inculturation the Word of God, the Gos-

7. Ibid. n. 60

8. Pope John Paul II, Message to the International Council for Catechetics on 23 Sept. 1993, Osservatore Romano , English Weekly, Oct. 5, 1994, N. 40, p. 4.

9. Ibid. p.4

pel, so to say, incarnates in different cultures. To quote *Redemptoris Missio*, "through inculturation the Church makes the Gospel incarnate in different cultures".¹⁰

Just as "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (Jn. 1:14) so too the Good News, the Word of Jesus Christ proclaimed to the nations, must take root in the life situation of the hearers of the Word. Inculturation is precisely this insertion of the Gospel message into cultures. For the Incarnation of the Son of God, precisely because it was complete and concrete, was also an incarnation in a particular culture'.¹¹

Inculturation Not Ignoring Religio-Cultural Background of Gospel

The Gospel message surpasses all cultures and is meant for the whole of humanity. But the incarnation as an event in history, taking place in specific circumstances of space and time, and the religion and culture of particular importance for peoples and all cultures and all times. We can fully understand the Gospel only against this religio-cultural context. If all such elements are isolated from the Gospel, the meaning and significance of Christ's words and actions become largely unintelligible.

In "*Catechesi Tradendae*" Pope John Paul II emphasises this point. He writes: "On the one hand the Gospel message cannot be purely and simply isolated from the culture in which it was first inserted (the Biblical Word or more concretely the cultural milieu in which Jesus of Nazareth lived).¹² Consequently, in order to find Christ every culture has to establish a link with the concrete history of the incarnation, with the Biblical word that revealed it with the ecclesial tradition that has handed it down to us, with sacramental signs in which it continues to be at work".¹³

Moreover, the specific historical circumstances of the incarnation set certain limits to any authentic inculturation. To quote once again the words of John Paul II: "Therefore, an authentic theology of incarnation must indicate the co-ordination of inculturation, marking the limits beyond which the illusion of 'translating' would be 'betrayal'".¹⁴

10. *Redemptoris Missio*, n. 52

11. *Ecclesia in Africa*, n. 60

12. Pope John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae*, 1976, n. 53

13. Message to ICC, OSS. R. Oct. 5, 1994, p. 4

14. *Ibid.* p. 4

Early Encounters with Cultures - Ecclesial Traditions

Not only the historical circumstances of the incarnation, but the fruits of the encounters of faith with cultures in the early centuries, during the post-Apostolic and Patristic periods are of immense importance. Because the Gospel message and the Apostolic teaching, and its developments are handed down to us through the great Ecclesial Traditions, which took shape as the result of encounters between Gospel and cultures.....In *Catechesi Tradendae* John Paul II, after stating that the Gospel cannot be isolated from the culture in which it was first inserted adds, "...nor without serious loss, from the cultures in which it has already been transmitted by means of an apostolic dialogue which inevitably becomes part of a certain dialogue of cultures".¹⁵

The above point needs perhaps further clarification. The Ecclesial Traditions are the result of long dialogue between the Gospel and cultures that took place in some important cultural areas, where the Church was well established in the early centuries. These Churches were directly or indirectly connected with the Apostles and preserve the Apostolic Tradition.

Secondly, Christ willed the Church to be a living organism. During the centuries of her existence the Church has grown; the meaning of the revealed truth has been better perceived and the Christian faith has developed; the Church herself has better realized the mystery of her existence. In the twentieth century we can not go about creating a new Faith or Church, based on the Christianity of the time of Apostles, ignoring all the developments of the Church, what the Fathers of the Church and the Ecumenical Councils have taught and pronounced.

Specifically, the main Ecclesial Traditions that have come down to us, are six in number, namely, Alexandrian, Antiochian, Armenian, Assyrian or East Syrian, Byzantine (Constantinopolitan) and the Roman. These Traditions emerged roughly by the fifth century, though their definitive forms took shape much later. Among them the East Syrian Tradition that developed in Asia, in the Semitic and Persian background is of special interest for us.

Fidelity to Faith and its Integrity

The incarnation of Jesus Christ is not to be viewed as an isolated event of history. It is intimately connected with the Pas-

15. Cat. Tradendae, n. 53

chal Mystery of Christ's Death and Resurrection. The fulfillment of incarnation is achieved in the glorification of Christ and outpouring of the Spirit on Pentecost. Proclamation of the Gospel means handing down the faith and the apostolic tradition of Church in their entirety.

The Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa* states: "Jesus Christ is the unmistakable proof of God's love for humanity (cf. Rom. 5:8). By his life, his preaching of the Good News to the poor, his passion, Death and Resurrection, he brought about remission of our sins and our reconciliation with God, his Father and thanks to him, our Father too. The Word that the Church proclaims is precisely the Word of God made man, who is himself the subject and object of this Word. The Good News is Jesus Christ".¹⁶

Inculturation does not justify mutilation of the Gospel message or any kind of syncretism. The content of the Gospel remains unchanged, only the mode of its presentation can change. *Catechesi Tradendae* says: "There would be no catechesis if it were the Gospel that had to change when it came into contact with the cultures".¹⁷

Pope Paul VI teaches that while proclaiming the Gospel to peoples of different cultural and social milieu, 'the content of the catholic faith which the Lord entrusted to the Apostles must be neither impaired nor mutilated'.¹⁸ Pope John Paul II repeats the same injunction that inculturation 'must in no way compromise distinctiveness and integrity of the Christian faith'.¹⁹

Inculturation to cover the whole life of the Church

Without compromising the integrity of Christian faith, inculturation should embrace all aspects of Christianity and the whole life of the Church and including theology, liturgy and structures of the Church. Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa* says: ".....inculturation includes the whole life of the Church's life and the structures".²⁰

16. *Ecclesia in Africa*, n. 60

17. *Cat. Tradendae* n. 53

18. Pope Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 1975, n. 65

19. *Redemptoris Missio*, n. 52

20. *Ecclesia in Africa*, n. 62

Two guiding principles

Redemptoris Missio gives two guiding principles for the application of the principle of inculturation: "Inculturation must be guided by two principles: Compatibility with the Gospel and communion with universal Church".²¹ Inculturation should be in solidarity with the universal Church, not breaking away from the communion of Churches.

A Long Process, not left to Experts but to the Community

To quote *Redemptoris Missio*, "Inculturation is a long process which requires discernment and a balanced approach. It is not the prerogative of a few experts, but must involve the whole people, it must come from the experience of the community of the faithful. This kind of process needs to take place gradually, in such a way that it really is an expression of the community's Christian experience. In effect, inculturation must evolve the whole people of God, and not just a few experts, since the people reflect the authentic "*sensus fidei*" which must never be lost sight of....It must be an expression of the community's life, one which must mature within the community itself, and not exclusively the result of erudite research. The safeguarding of traditional values is the work of mature faith".²²

New Encounters and Older Churches

In India there is the Church founded in the 1st century itself, by Apostle Thomas. How and to what extent does the principle of the inculturation apply to the Church of St. Thomas Christians, to the Syro-Malabar Church, as it is presently known. The relevance of inculturation is different to new Christian Communities and centuries old Churches. When the Gospel encounters new people and their culture there is bound to be some response or reaction. Those who accept the gospel message begin to think in terms of the new-found faith and that transforms their life and culture, by a slow process. The response could be different according to the circumstances of time and place. It would not be the same a thousand years ago and in the 20th century. If a people have lived their faith for several generations, a thousand years, in whatever way, that is already a part of their identity

21. *Redemptoris Missio*, n. 54

22. *Ibid.* n. 54

and culture. They do not face in the same way the problem of inculturation. Culture is not something static, but it changes, the symbolisms and practices are changing.

Inculturation is primarily for those who have accepted the faith, that they may live the faith in the context of their culture, in a way more congenial to them. To borrow things from outsiders, even their neighbours, which they are not accustomed to, do not help them to live the Christians, are not to give up their ancient practices and adapt to the way of life of their non-Christian neighbours. But the question would be different if big numbers of non-Christians are newly to embrace the Church, and if they have a different culture in the present generation.

India a land of Many Nations and Many Cultures

The Sub continent of India was never one nation, it was a cluster of nations with different cultures speaking different languages and practising different religions. To say that there is one common culture and cultural identity underlying the intra-cultural differences is a myth. J. M. Mohanthy an eminent philosopher and Educationist delivering a lecture at Culcutta in Aug. 1996 noted that, "intra cultural differences within a so called national culture were very often suppressed and ignored for certain practical purposes including power interests. He described the concept of universal culture as imaginary, that tagging all cultures together was not possible with any yardstick".²³ The tribals, Dalits and the High castes have different cultures. The people of South India, mostly of the Dravidian stock, of castes and religions, are very different from the people of the North in their life-style, habits, customs and religious practises.

What ever is good in these diverse cultures and customs should be retained and could become part of Christian way of life, thus enriching Christianity. Every culture must be transformed and purified in the light of the Gospel message. We shall quote from the Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa*; "Every culture needs to be transformed by the Gospel values in the light of the paschal mystery".²⁴ The Gospel must take root in the life situation of the people" the Good News, the Word Jesus Christ

23. Cf. M.P. Chronicle, 12 August, 1996

24. *Ecclesia in Africa*, n. 61

proclaimed to the nations, must take root in the life-situation of the hearers of the Word".²⁵

The Context of Religious Pluralism: Syncretism and Relativism

In the context of plurality of religion the Church in India is necessarily to enter into dialogue with other faiths. But in this endeavour one has to avoid Syncretism and Relativism which would be against fidelity to Christian faith. Syncretism chooses some parts of Christianity rejecting other parts, and accepts elements from other religions to make a composite religion. David J. Hesselgrave Writes: "When respondents choose parts of the Christian message which appeal to them and, rejecting other parts of the message, incorporate accepted elements in non-Christian religions to make a new whole, the result is syncretism..... Syncretism East or West, is perhaps best understood as a very natural desire on the part of many people to embrace the most appealing aspects of the various religions.....After all, some of the most exclusivistic claims of all religious literature are to be found in the Old and New Testaments. Ultimately, Syncretism is but another form of Christ-rejection".²⁶ Relativism directly or indirectly denies the uniqueness of Christ and redemption through Christ. Christ is not considered as the sole Redeemer and Mediator. Christianity then becomes as one of the many means of salvation. Addressing a group of Indian Bishops in Rome, in 1996, Cardinal Ratzinger stated: "Relativism has thus become the central problem for the faith at the present time.....On the one hand, relativism is a typical offshoot of the Western world and its forms of philosophical thought while, on the other, it is connected with the philosophical and religious intuitions of Asia, especially and surprisingly, with those of the Indian subcontinent".²⁷

It is not possible to create a new form of Christianity, an Indian Christianity, taking at random some passages from the Gospels and adding selected portions from the Vedas and Upanishads and the Buddhist, Jainist scriptures. Such a combination would undermine the integrity of the Gospel. There cannot be a sound theology based on suppositions and hypoth-

25. Ibid. n. 60

26. David j. Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross-culturally*, Allahabad, 1981, p. 113

27. Cardinal Ratzinger, Cf. CBCI publication, New Delhi, 1997, p.5

eses. For example one might argue that had Christ be born in India he would have drawn in his teachings, examples and imageries from the Hindu customs and scriptures. This would amount to the Incarnation taking place without "carefully planning and preparing the salvation of the whole human race".²⁸ If the Incarnation was to take place in India God would have naturally chosen a people, revealed to them the truth of the One God, and prepare the way for his coming as he did with the Israelites.

INCULTURATION OF LITURGY

Importance of Liturgical Traditions

We shall consider some points in particular as regards inculturation of the liturgy. Liturgical traditions of the Church have a pre-eminent place. The document titled *The Roman Liturgy and Inculturation* lays down several principles that are valid for both the West and the East. It speaks about the developement of distinct liturgical traditions and the importance of these traditions for the entire Church: N. 17 reads as follows: "The creation and development of the forms of Christian celebration developed gradually according to local conditions, in the great cultural areas where the Good News was proclaimed. Thus were born distinct liturgical families of the West and of the East. Their rich patrimony preserves faithfully the Christian tradition in its fullness".²⁹

A recent Instruction addressed to the Syro-Malabar Bishops by the Congregation for the Oriental Churches in concurrence with the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith points out certain principles in relation to ancient liturgical traditions, their organic growth and cultural adaptations. A relevant paragraph of the Instruction is as follows: "Receiving and celebrating liturgical worship is at the origin of the right and the duty of transmitting the deposit of faith. The Church and all the liturgical traditions have experienced and are still experiencing certain evolutions and adaptations. The just and praiseworthy concern to adapt liturgical celebrations to present-day living conditions and local culture, whether in the eparchies in the Church's own territory or in mission eparchies, must not lead us to forget

28. *Lumen Gentium*, n. 14

29. *The Roman Liturgy and Inculturation*, Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, 1994, n. 17

the basic principle of the secular life of liturgical worship, that of organic progress (n.6 and Instruction nn. 12, 18, 20). Care will therefore need to be taken, with a discernment based on the continuity of the tradition and the deep understanding of the history and theology of the liturgy, to watch that these adaptations respect those principles fundamental to all Christian liturgies and in particular, the Syro-Oriental liturgy. "In modifying ancient liturgical practice, it must be determined if the element to be introduced is coherent with the contextual meaning in which it is placed. Such a context should be understood beginning with eventual references to Sacred Scripture, interpretations of the Holy Fathers, liturgical reforms previously made, and mystagogical catechesis. Here it must be verified that the new change is homogeneous with the symbolic language, with the images and the style specific to the liturgy of the particular Church. The new element will have its place if, required for serious pastoral reasons, it blends with the celebration without contrast but with coherence, almost as if it had naturally derived from it. In addition, it should be ensured that it is not already present, perhaps in another form, in a different moment of the celebration or in another part of the liturgical corpus of that - Church" (Instruction, n. 20). This discernment is all the more necessary in India, a country whose culture is simultaneously single and multiple and which is at the same time involved in a rapid process of modernisation".³⁰

Bible not to be replaced by other scriptures

The Instruction on Inculturation of the Latin Liturgy speaks about the unique nature of the Word of God in the liturgy which is not to be replaced by non-Christian scriptures, "When the Church proclaims the Word in the liturgy...it is He who speaks when the Sacred Scriptures are read in the Church. For this reason the Word of God is so important in the celebration of the liturgy that the Holy Scripture must not be replaced by any other text, no matter how venerable it may be. Likewise the Bible is the indispensable source of the liturgy's language of its signs, and of its prayer especially in the psalms".³¹

30. Letter to the Syro-Malabar Bishops from the Congregation for the Oriental, 16 March, 1998, II, 4, Doctrinal Orientations.

31. RLI n. 23

The Church to ensure orthodoxy of Worship

The Church has the obligation to see that orthodoxy is maintained in the worship and liturgy corresponds to the faith: "In the liturgy the faith of the Church is expressed in a symbolic and communitarian from The reason for the preceptive character of this legislation is.....to ensure the orthodoxy of worship, liturgy; that is to say, not only to avoid error, but also to pass on the faith in its intergrity so that the " rule of prayer" (*lex Orandi*) of the Church may correspond to "rule of faith" (*lex credendi*)".³²

Substantial Unity to be Preserved

As regards adaptations in the Roman Liturgy Vatican II says that "legitimate variations and adaptations are allowed provided the substantial unity of the Roman Rite is maintained".³³ RLI elaborates this point, "The process of inculturation should maintain the substantial unity of the Roman rite. The work of incarnation does not foresee the creation of new families of rites; inculturation responds to the needs of a particular culture and leads to adaptations which still remain part of the Roman Rite".³⁴

This principle applies also to the Oriental Rites or Churches when inculturation is to be achieved. The post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa* states: "In Practice, without prejudice to traditions proper to either the Latin or Eastern Churches, inculturation of the liturgy, provided it does not change the essential elements, should be carried out so that the faithful can better understand and live liturgical celebrations".³⁵

Syncretism in Liturgy

Concerning liturgical syncretism RLI says: "The liturgy is the expression of faith and Christ life, and so it is necessary to ensure that liturgical inculturation is not marked, even in appearance, by that liturgical inculturation is not marked, even in appearance, by religious syncretism. This would be the case if the places of worship, the liturgical objects and vestments, gestures and postures let it appear as if rites had the same significance in the Christian celebrations as they did before evangelization. The syncretism will still be worse if biblical readings

32. Ibid. n. 32

33. Vat II, Sacrosanctum Concilium, n. 38

34. RLI n. 36

35. *Ecclesia in Africa* n. 64

and chants or the prayers were replaced by texts from other religions, even if these contain undeniable religious and moral value".³⁶

Conclusion

Inculturation of the Gospel message and of Christian way of life is a task that the Church is facing today, especially in regions where evangelization is taking place among new peoples and cultures. It is a very delicate and difficult task. In a country like India where there are peoples of different cultures and faiths, of various socio-religious customs and practices the question is more complex. As a result of mass migration of tribals and villagers to the towns and industrial centers people of different cultural background mix together. So there remains no cultural homogeneity among the population of these areas. The mass media-television, radio and the press-affect the attitude of the people, and traditional cultures and values undergo changes. In these circumstances how is it possible to accommodate to the needs and aspirations of all these people?

The Gospel Message is valid for all times and all peoples. The Message of Christ is to be handed down in its fullness and entirety, without distortion and mutilation. Inculturation does not mean a new Gospel or a new composite religion. Some of the attempts at inculturation in recent years were not along the right lines. There are several official documents of the Holy See giving clear guidelines for a valid approach to this vexed question.

Inculturation requires a long process. It should be the outcome of the faith-experience of the Christian community and cannot be left to some experts, who may often be outsiders to the particular community and culture. Any changes by way of inculturation must be compatible with the Gospel. The local Church cannot live in isolation, it must think and act in union with the Universal Church. The Ecclesial Traditions of the Individual Churches which developed from the early centuries and were nourished by the Fathers of the Church are the common patrimony of all Christians, and must not be set aside in the process of inculturation, but should be enriched.

36. RLI n. 47

TENSION IN THE CHURCH OF GOD WITHIN A SECULAR FRAME

- Rev. Dr. Xavier Koodapuzha

As we are drawing near to the dawn of the third millennium committed Christians all over the world are reflecting on the ways and means to convey the message of the Gospel in a more effective meaningful way. The Vatican Council II which was convened for reconciliation and renewal was a remote preparation. Moreover it rediscovered the authentic ecclesiological principle that the Catholic Church is the communion of the Churches. Such a rediscovery was effectively helpful to save the Church from its unilateral organizational growth after the monarchical pattern. The World Council of Churches had already begun its studies and projects to reduce the gap between the Churches and to bring the gospel of Christ more at home to the modern world. For the last few years preparations have been going among the Churches of Asia for an Asian Synod to reflect more seriously on the ways and means to bring the glad tidings of the Gospel of Christ relevantly to the people of Asia. Christianity has its origin in Asia as the other major religions of the world. In such a context of these collective movements to present Jesus Christ and his Church relevantly it is most opportune to reflect on the nature and structures of the Church. Ecclesiology deals with the nature of the Church while Canon Law deals with its legal frame.

In every society tensions arise in the absence of harmony. The Church is no exception to it. The Vatican II has rightly called the Church the new Israel. A great achievement of this Council is that it has rediscovered the true nature of the Church as a Mystery and People of God. During the course of centuries there were different kinds of secular influences which were not in

harmony with its true nature. The organizational structures, canonical codification and administrative set up of the Church etc. were not exceptions to this influence. But in the Conciliar context of rediscovery of the true nature of the Church the man-made accretions which have been disfiguring the Church are becoming increasingly evident to the enlightened Christian world. Such an ecclesiological awareness has been causing tensions in the Church. In the present context of renewal and reconciliation it is quite relevant to reflect on the true nature of the Church and the background of the juridical set up of the Church in general and the Church in India in particular.

The Vatican II has given us the guideline for the renewal and reconciliation of the Churches. The return to the authentic sources has been the method followed and prescribed by the Vatican Council II. Such a method is the most effective and secure means for the restoration of the unity and renewal of the Churches. In this context the Eastern Churches in India have a particular vocation and special obligation to return to their authentic sources and contribute their legitimate share to the catholicity of the Church which consists in unity manifested through rich diversity. The theologians have to give the pioneering leadership in this process.

In this study we are analyzing the subject under the following perspectives

1. Venerable Heritage of the Church and secular Inroads
2. Canonical and structural Evolution in the West
3. Canonical and structural evolution in the Eastern Roman Empire
4. Indigenous ecclesiology of the St Thomas Christians of India
5. The gradual and consistent Imposition of the Western System over the Eastern Christianity in India and its grave consequences

I. VENERABLE HERITAGE OF THE CHURCH AND SECULAR INROADS

A) The Nature of the Church and the Necessity of the Entire Heritage of the Church

The Catholic Church is the communion of Churches. Hence it needs that her entire heritage which exists in different Churches be preserved in its totality and integrity. It needs her entire heritage which is being preserved in and through the authentic traditions of the different Churches. This heritage is essential for its apostolicity and catholicity. Hence the Vatican Council II teaches:

"This sacred Synod declares that this entire heritage of spirituality and liturgy, of discipline and theology, in their various traditions, belongs to the full catholic and apostolic character of the Church". (UR 17).

This venerable heritage which exists in the different churches is an integral part of the patrimony of the universal Church. As the legitimate heirs of the apostolic heritage the traditions of these Churches are of great importance. At the same time the Church of Christ is one, holy, catholic and apostolic. The first two Ecumenical Councils, Nice (325) and Constantinople I (381), have already defined it. Her unity and catholicity are the two dimensions of the same reality. The unity exists and is being manifested through her rich diversity. But the concept of unity is radically different from uniformity. Unity is internal, dynamic, profound and essential while uniformity is external, artificial and accidental. The catholicity demands unity but not uniformity.

B. Catholicity and the Canonical Discipline

The Churches are united in the same faith, same sacraments and same hierarchical communion. But the profession of the same faith does not mean that they hold the same theology, the common acceptance of the sacraments does not imply the same kind of liturgical celebration of the sacraments and hierarchical communion does not mean the same administrative pattern and set up. In the official Introduction to the CCEO Pope John Paul II writes:

"Fidelity to this sacred patrimony of ecclesiastical discipline brings it about that, among so many and so great vexations and adversities which the Eastern Churches have suffered, whether in antiquity or more recent times, nevertheless the proper countenance of the East is to be observed in its entirety, and this indeed happened to take place not without great benefit to souls" (AAS 66 (1974)245). The clear words of Paul VI of blessed memory delivered in the Sistine Chapel before the first Plenary Assembly of the members of the Commission for the Revision of the Code of Eastern Canon Law echo those of the Second Vatican Council concerning "the greatest fidelity" which decreed that the same disciplinary patrimony be observed by all of the Churches, requiring also that "they take pains to return to the ancestral traditions", if in certain ones "because of circumstances of times or personages they have improperly fallen away from them"¹ (OE 6).

C) Catholicity: Unity in Diversity

The elements of legitimate diversity which exist among the Churches of the Catholic communion are liturgy, spirituality, discipline, theology, traditions theological systems etc. The communitarian and official celebration of the faith is the liturgy of a Church. The interpretation of its faith tradition is theology, the living up of its faith is spirituality and the common principles which safeguards the harmonious unity of the community is its discipline. Therefore the theological, liturgical, spiritual and disciplinary heritage of the different churches have a complimentary role and have to be preserved and promoted by the Churches as an integral part of the common patrimony of the Universal Church. The *Lumen Gentium*, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church of Vatican Council II authoritatively teaches:

"By divine providence it has come about that various Churches established in diverse places by the

1. Pope John Paul II, Introduction to the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, *Sacri Canones*, Introduction, (OIRSI edition, 1992) p. xii).

apostles and their successors have in course of time coalesced into several groups, organically united, which preserving the unity of faith and the unique divine constitution of the universal Church, enjoy their own liturgical usage, and their own theological and spiritual heritage" (LG 23).

Her diversity goes back to her very origin. (UR 14). As a result of the apostolic proclamations different Churches came into existence and their ecclesial life gave expression to their particular traditions. Hence Vatican Council II teaches:

"It is the mind of the Catholic Church that each individual Church or rite retain its traditions whole and entire, while adjusting its way of life to the various needs of time and place". (OE 2).

In these and other conciliar documents the Catholic Church is presented as the communion of individual Churches. These Churches are rooted in the earliest apostolic traditions, which were handed down and authoritatively interpreted by the Fathers.

"For distinguished as they are by their venerable antiquity, they are bright with that tradition which was handed down from the apostles through the fathers, and which forms part of the divinely revealed and undivided heritage of the universal Church" (OE I).

Hence their heritage belongs to the full Catholic and apostolic heritage of the Catholic Church (UR 17). As the legitimate heirs of the divine heritage the venerable tradition these churches form an integral part of the common patrimony of the Universal Church.

D) Secular Inroads into the Church of the Roman Empire

Because of the various vicissitudes of history the Church in the Roman Empire had developed after the monarchical pattern. By the fourth century the Church had become the official religion of the Empire. Such a privileged position paved the way for adopting the secular administrative systems after the secular model. The territorial divisions of the Empire into dioceses and provinces became the official administrative divisions of the Church as well.. The crucial role of the high officials of the

important administrative centres of the Empire reflected also in the administration of the official religion. The titles, privileges and ranking of the officials of the Empire did have their parallels in the Church as well. The Councils began to be convened by the Emperors. Ecclesiastical discipline was equally a concern of the Empire. In short the influence of the secular power became quite decisive in the Church. By the eighth century Papacy itself became a secular power having a separate territory known as the papal States. It marked the beginning of a period of ecclesiastical centralization after the monarchical pattern which continued until the late medieval period. It was with this background the missionaries from the West followed the crusaders to the Middle East and cooperated to build up the Latin Kingdom and Latin Patriarchate.

The same attitude reflected in the policy of the missionaries who followed their colonial masters into the Afro-Asian countries. Such a situation prevailed until the dawn of the twentieth century which witnessed the various independence movements. These countries became politically independent but at the ecclesiastical level they continued the colonial heritage. The tide has turned and now the concept of the equality of the nations is an accepted reality. Similarly the cultural and religious awakening of the Afro-Asian world cannot any more tolerate any kind of inequality and injustice under any pretext. The situation in the West also has radically changed. It is in such a situation that the Vatican Council II was convened by Pope John XXIII who had the courage to declare that it was intended to "shake of the dust of the Empire" from the Church! But the canonical legislations which had been formulated in a period of monarchical centralization still continued their force. Consequently the Vatican Council II felt the need of updating the canonical legislations. Official Commissions were set up and in 1983 the *Codex Juris Canonici* (CIC) was published for the Latin Church and in 1990 the *Codex Canonum Ecclesiarum Orientalium* (CCEO) for the Catholic Oriental Churches. Each individual Church within the Catholic communion is expected to supplement the CCEO with its own Particular Laws which as it is specifically pointed out by Pope John Paul II, should be in harmony with its venerable heritage. It is in this concrete context

we make these brief reflections on the nature of the Church and its canonical structure.

E) Urgency to "shake off the Dust of the Empire"

Pope John XXIII of happy memory told the Christian world that the Second Vatican Council was intended to "shake off the dust of the Empire from the Church. Soon after the Vatican II Pope Paul VI addressed the Catholic Bishops of Italy and reminded the bishops of Italy about the unhealthy situation and the attitude of the people towards the style of episcopal life and exercise of authority:

"What is to be the style of such (episcopal) authority?... It is clear, for example, that in a former day, especially when pastoral authority was associated with secular authority (the staff and sword in the same hand), the characteristics of a bishop were overlordship, external pomp, dignity, at times privilege, arbitrariness, and sumptuousness. In earlier times, these traits did not give scandal; the people liked to see in their bishop a figure of greatness, power, pomp, and majesty. Today it is not and cannot be so. Far from admiring, people are disagreeably surprised and scandalised if a bishop is excessively preoccupied with anachronistic marks of his office., and they remind him of the gospel... a sober and dignified outward way of life is possible and required by the office. But let us thank God that we have put aside so many worldly externals".²

Some of the studies and observations of the consultations held in India are also relevant in this context. The CBCI Commission for Evangelization organised a National Consultation in 1994 to make a serious assessment of the Indian situation and to suggest ways and means to make the message of the gospel more relevant. One of the Resolutions of the National Consultation is as follows:

"Bishops and priests should see their role as pastors and leaders. In this context, imperial titles such as "Excellency", "Eminence", "Grace", "Lord", etc. be dropped".³

2. Pope Paul VI Address to the Italian Bishops on December 6, 1965; AAS 58 (1966), pp. 68-69.
3. Paths of Mission in India Today, Resolution No. 47, Statement of the National Consultation on Mission, 4 - 9 January 1994, p. 19.

Edmund Hill invites the attention of the ecclesiologists to the new modern phenomenon and its contrast with the medieval period. At present the legitimacy of the authority is not denied but the manner of its exercise is objected to. The author observes:

"But critical situations in the past have usually arisen either from rival claims to authority, e.g. the great schism of the west or from denials of the lawfulness of a particular authority, e.g. the reformation; or from an anarchistic denial of the lawfulness of authority in general, e.g. the German Anabaptists of the sixteenth century. The present crisis takes none of these forms; authority is being neither claimed nor denied, but its nature and the manner of its exercise are being critically examined. It has perhaps been too long taken for granted by Catholics that authority is a clear and distinct idea..."⁴

Yves Congar has not failed to bring to the awareness of the Catholics of today how anachronism exists in the Church. Those elements borrowed from the ancient Roman Empire, the Byzantine world and the medieval feudalism still continue to survive in the Church and disfigure it! He points out the evident examples of borrowings and their impact on the ecclesiastical world.

"It became natural to use a vocabulary originating in the Imperial or political sphere in speaking of the realities of Christianity: the Gospel is a 'law'; God is the supreme Emperor of the world, and the angels his ministers; Peter and Paul are the principes (princes) or senatores mundi (high dignitaries of the world)."⁵

The so called document known as the 'Donation of Constantine' was accepted as authentic for many centuries and by some even in the 19th century! By this forged document the titles and paraphernalia of the Imperial court were granted by the 'Christian' Emperor also to Pope Sylvester. The Popes and

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4. Edmund Hill, Authority in the Church, in Clergy Review, London, 1966, p. 619; Cfr also pp. 619- 628
 5. Yves Congar, Power and Poverty in the Church, transl. by Jennifer Nicholson (Geoffrey Chapman, London, 1965, p. 117.

the ecclesiastical dignitaries made use of this document to justify the use of such secular titles, privileges, uniforms, insignia etc. This forged document grants the Lateran Palace, imperial insignia, the diadem, shoulder scarf, the purple cloak, red tunic etc. Like the Emperor the Pope is entitled for his senate and legates.

"Representations, images, myths, were all those of a monarchy on the imperial model. So were also the appendages of prestige. In more than one case, tracing these external signs of sovereignty back through history, we are led beyond Byzantium to the time of the hellenistic monarchy, and it even seems that this derived several of its insignia from Persia".⁶

Medieval European feudalism also has left its vestiges on the Church which were introduced into the Afro-Asian world during their colonial rule. Congar points out some of them:

"It is important for our discussion to recognize that the feudal age has left traces behind it. We can attach what importance we like to them. Dominus carries little weight in 'Dom' So- and-so, and Monsignor is no less inoffensive. Titles such as 'my Lord Bishop' are, or should be, the province of local history societies, together with old titles vested in chapters, which only rarely survive nowadays and are reflected in a few details of costume. Generally speaking, feudalism is a thing of the past. And yet surely there still clings about bishops and the Curia an aura of feudal privilege expressed in dress, insignia, 'retinue', the deference paid to them, all the trappings of heraldry? The economic and social structures of feudalism have disappeared, but some vestiges still remain on the surface, and occasionally titles and privileges still have some real value: but they are mainly external, part and parcel of the nature of man in his physical state".⁷

Congar points out how purely secular and imperial titles are borrowed and still used by the ecclesiastics:

6. Congar op. cit. pp. 120-21.

7. Congar, Ibidem, pp. 122- 23.

"But the Church also borrows terms: after taking over the Byzantine title of 'Eminence' she has in our own time adopted the title of 'Excellency', so that no less honour may be imputed to her bishops than Mussolini allowed his prefects..."⁸

The image of the colonial Christianity introduced and zealously propagated by the missionaries from the Western countries provoked radical reactions from the part of many in Asia. In the colonies the missionaries followed the flag of the colonial masters. M. D. David observes:

"Three of the six major European powers that colonised Asia viz. Portugal, Spain, France were Catholic while the other three viz. Holland, Britain and America were Protestants. Portugal and Spain, the pioneers in geographical discoveries, were granted privileges of patronage (padroado) by the Holy See to evangelise and establish missions and to appoint the clergy and set up Christian congregations. The padroado rights ensured to them exclusive dominion over the Eastern territories; other nations being excluded from sharing their economic gain. Thus commerce and Christianity became inseparable part of Portuguese and Spanish colonial effort".⁹

"It was European brand of Christianity that came to Asia with the colonial powers. Christianity, though Asiatic in its origin, underwent transformation as it absorbed Graeco-Roman culture and made Europe its new home during the decline of the Roman Empire. It became completely Europeanised in its structure and contents and even took over some of the functions of the Roman Empire".¹⁰

F) Reactions from the Missions

Mahatma Gandhi, a profoundly religious minded person and

8. Congar, Ibidem, pp. 126- 27.

9. M.D. David (ed), "The Nature of Western Colonialism- A Handicap to the Growth of Christianity in Asia" in 'Western Colonialism in Asia and Christianity', Himalaya Publishing House" Delhi, Bombay, Nagpur, 1988, p.1.

10. Ibidem, p. 2.

who had his studies among Christians in England, was not at all impressed by the western form of Christianity. For him a religion which is an agent of domination and exploitation cannot come under the category of a religion. He wrote:

"It is not possible to consider the teaching of a religious teacher apart from the lives of its followers. Unfortunately Christianity in India has been inextricably mixed up for the last one hundred and fifty years with the British rule. It appears to us synonymous with materialistic civilisation and imperialistic exploitation by the stronger while races of the weaker races of the world. Its contribution of India has been, therefore, largely of a negative character".¹¹

In the light of his personal experience Mahatma Gandhi believed that the western form of Christianity denied the values of the simplicity of the gospel itself. His statements are not to be taken dogmatically as one who denied the importance of worship or organisation but as the general impression created by the western Christianity on an enlightened man of India!

"I consider Western Christianity in its practical working a negation of Christ's Christianity. I cannot conceive Jesus, if he was living in the flesh in our midst approving of modern Christian organisations, public worship or modern ministry. If Indian Christians will simply cling to the Sermon on the Mount which was delivered not merely to the peaceful disciples but a groaning world, they would not go wrong, and they would find that no religion is false; and that if all live according to their lives and in the fear of God, they would not need to worry about organisations, forms of worship and ministry. The Pharisees had all that, but Jesus would have none of it, for they were using their office as a cloak for hypocrisy and worse. Cooperation with the forces of Good and non-co-operation with the forces of Evil

11. Young India, March 21, 1929, cited in A.T. Hingorani, *The Message of Jesus Christ*, pp.57-58.

are the two things we need for a good and pure life, whether it is called Hindu, Muslim, or Christian".¹²

Here we do not intend to make a detailed critical analysis of the above statement of the Father of the Indian nation. It is clear that the form of Christianity with which came into contact was unable to impress or influence him as a spiritual force!

"When I was youth, I remember a Hindu having become a convert to Christianity. The whole town understood that the initiation took the shape of this well bred Hindu partaking of beef and Brandy in the name of Jesus Christ and discarding his national costume. I learnt in later years that such a convert as so many of my missionary friends put it, came to a life of freedom of a life of bondage, to a life of plenty out of the one of penury. As I wander about through out at the length and breadth of India, I see many Christian Indians almost ashamed of their birth, certainly of their ancestral religion, and of their ancestral dress. The aping of Europeans on the part of Anglo-Indians is bad enough, but the aping of them by Indian converts is a violence done to their country and shall I say, even to their new religion".

"Conversion must not mean denationalisation. Conversion should mean a definite giving up of the evil of the old, adoption of the all the good of the new and a scrupulous avoidance of everything evil in the new. Conversion, therefore, should mean a life of greater dedication to one's own country, greater surrender to God, greater self purification".¹³

The exclusivistic and negative attitude of the European missionaries towards the other religious traditions of India was viewed as a sign of narrow-mindedness and intolerance by S. Radhakrishnan, a philosopher and former President of India. He wrote:

12. Cited from Young India, September 22, 1921, in A. T. Hingorani, *The Message of Jesus Christ* pp. 33-34; M. K. Kuriakose, *History of Christianity in India, Source Materials* (CLS, Madras, 1977) op. cit., p. 323
13. Young India, Aug. 20, 1925, cited in A. T. Hingorani, editor, *The Message of Jesus Christ*, pp. 25-28; M. K. Kuriakose, op. cit. pp. 332-333.

"The Christian missionaries of that day did not recognise anything vital or valuable in the Indian religions. For them the native faiths were a mass of unredeemed darkness and error. They had supreme contempt for the heathen religions and wished to root them out, lock, stalk and barrel. It is a natural tendency of the human mind to suppose that its own god is God of all the earth, while all other gods are 'mumbo jumbo' made with human hands"...

"The Christian missionaries of the second stage the futility of the aggressive propaganda, and did not dismiss the Indian faith a mass of superstition and sink of iniquity, but regarded them as possessing some virtues of their own".¹⁴

Radhakrishnan views Western Christianity as a product of their dogmatism.

"The difference between the Eastern and the Western approaches and attitudes to religion becomes evident when we compare the life of Jesus, and His teachings as recorded in the Gospels, with the Nicene Creed. It is the difference between a type of personality and a set of dogmas, between a way of life and a scheme of metaphysics."¹⁵

"Jesus religion was one of love and sympathy, tolerance and inwardness... There is nothing in common between the simple truths taught by Jesus and the Church militant with its hierarchic constitution and external tests of membership, but the change was inevitable when Christianity went to Rome and took the traditions of Caesar. When the Greek dialecticians and Roman lawyers succeeded to the Jewish divines and the prophets, Christian theology became logical in form and based on law. This spirit was the Jew's but the letter or the dogma was the Greeks', and the policy and the organisation were the Romans'...Roman ideas and

14. East and West in Religion, Cfr. M. K. Kuriakose op. cit. p. 345.

15. M. K. Kuriakose, p.357.

institutions influenced the ecclesiastical organisation".¹⁶

It is in the above mentioned wider context of the Graeco-Roman world the authenticity and uniqueness of the indigenous ecclesiology of the Thomas Christians of India becomes relevant. This Church had its origin and growth outside the Roman Empire and Greek influence. Its existence in this remote region of Asia helped her to preserve and foster her earliest traditions. The jurisdictional and administrative units like diocese, province etc. of the Roman Empire did not exist among them. Similarly they were free from the feudalistic influence of the Medieval Europe as well. Now we have to analyse briefly the nature of the canonical evolution of the Church.

II. CANONICAL AND STRUCTURAL EVOLUTION IN THE WEST

As the purpose of law is to regulate the behavioural pattern of a community for achieving its goal the Canon Law of the Church is to regulate the life of the members of a Church to achieve its goal i.e. the realisation of the reign of God on earth. The canonical structure may be compared also to a shell which is to protect the kernel. The canonical structure of the Church is to protect the true nature of the Church so that it may not deviate from the unique mission entrusted to it by her Divine Founder. But the history of societies teaches us that their life is influenced by the circumstances in which they exist. But such an influence should never deform the true nature of the Church. The Vatican Council II rightly calls the Church a Mystery and the People of God. It cannot be reduced merely to the level of any secular society. The Council takes into account the reality of Israel in its mission. The aspiration for secular power and kingdom made many of them unfaithful to the Messiah.

At the beginning of the Church we come across the Judeo-Hellenic background. The local Christian communities used to assemble for prayer and to celebrate the Eucharist. They maintained unity and communion with other communities by the exchange of letters. Their code of conduct was governed by the Old Testament which was the Record of Promise and the New

16. M K Kuriakose " 357-58.

Testament, its fulfilment. (Cfr. Mt: 17; Mt 16:18-19; Mt 28:18-20; Jn 21: 15-17; Acts 15: 23-29; Mt 18: 15-18; Rom 13:28; I Cor.5-7 Gal.5:13-25; 6:2).

The writings of the Apostolic Fathers provide us the necessary evidences of the earliest Christian discipline. In the African Church Tertullian and Cyprian have used the disciplinary vocabulary like *regula*, *disciplina*, *ordo*, *plebs*, *jus*, *cathedra* etc. The liturgical assemblies used to celebrate their faith in an orderly way. The Didache (c.100 in Syria or Palestine), *Traditio Apostolica* of Hippolytus (c.218 Rome), *Didascalia Apostolorum* (c.,250 or 300 in Syria or Palestine etc. are examples of the earliest disciplinary tradition which developed in the Church. It dealt with many points of pastoral practices and Church discipline such as norms for the election of the bishops, pastoral set up, norms for the clergy , liturgical matters etc. By the end of the fourth century, the bishop of Rome was regularly consulted on ecclesiastical matters. The responses were considered as norms which began to be known as decretals. The Roman Civil Law began to influence the Canon Law.

Disciplinary canons are also attributed to the councils held at various levels (Ancyra - 314; Neocaesarea 314-25; Gangra- 341-42; Antioch 341-42; Nicea 325; Constantinople I -381; Chalcedon -451 etc.) In the Eastern Roman Empire the Synagoge Canonum in 50 titles collected by John Scholastic III (c.570) is generally considered as the first Greek canonical collection.

Church: Under the Imperial Influence

The decline of the Western Roman Empire and survival of the Eastern Roman Emperors led to many cases of imperial intervention in ecclesiastical matters (e. g. Codex Theodosianus (438) books 3, 9, and 16). Emperor Justinian (527-565) exercised a decisive influence on the development of Canon Law by his religious legislation in the *Corpus Juris Civilis*. He supervised the affairs of ecclesiastical administration even in details! Caesaropapism became the administrative style of the Empire. The Justinian Code deals with religious matters including the necessary qualifications for the ecclesiastical officials. He interfered even in doctrinal matters as in the case of the condemnation of the Three Chapters. The imperial laws gradually formed part of the systematic canonical collections and gave shape to a new type of collection known as the Nomocanon.

Similarly the various collections of canons of the different churches took shape in the West. During the Carolingian monarchy we observe many such attempts with the support of the clergy and the imperial authority. In the Testament of 811 of Charlemagne (768-814) there is a list of 21 Metropolitans. In his Capitularies Charlemagne legislated on clerical discipline, liturgical practices, religious instruction and monastic discipline.¹⁷ He sent royal inquisitors to inspect the clergy and the laity on their religious learning and fidelity. About sixteen synods were assembled during his reign and he played an important role in them. It is said that his military campaigns were missionary campaigns as well. After the decline of the Carolingian Empire feudalism emerged as the official system. Ecclesiastical officials became an integral part of the feudal system. Ecclesiastical officials began to enjoy privileges and titles corresponding to their feudal ranks.

Caesaro-papism became the established system of ecclesiastical discipline and administration. With the emergence of the Papal States by the middle of the 8th century and the establishment of the so called Holy Roman Empire under Charlemagne in 800, the struggle between the Church and State became a common phenomenon in the West. The establishment of the Papal State and the Holy Roman Empire were considered as rival claims of power against the Eastern Roman Empire. The developments in the West had their consequences also in the East.

The Caesaro-papist administrative set up of the Roman Empire allowed a decisive role to the Emperors in ecclesiastical matters. Questions regarding the unity and discipline in religious matters were equally matters of political concern for the Emperors. Even in the Ecumenical Councils the Emperors played an important role. During the first millennium all the Ecumenical Councils were convened by the Roman Emperors.¹⁸ We have

17. Neil T.P & R.H. Schmandt, op. cit. p.150

18. Nicea I : 325 Emperor Constantine (306-337)
Constantinople I: 381 Theodosius I (379-95)
Ephesus: 431: Theodosius II (408-450)
Chalcedon (451): Marcian (450-57)
Constantinople II: Justinian (527-565)
Constantinople III: 680 Constantine IV (668-685)
Constantinople IV : 869 Basil (867-886)

already seen the secular titles and privileges borrowed from the Empire by the Church. The so called forged document known as the Donation of Constantine is an eloquent example of the secular aspirations and ambitions of the ecclesiastical officials.

As we have referred to, the medieval Councils unveil to us the intimate alliance between the Empire and its official religion. This privileged position of the Church within the Roman Empire carried with it the marks of the milieu in which it was taking shape. In the West with the emergence of the Papal States a new situation was fast developing. The Popes began to play a key role which led them to take up the leadership of the Christendom which was a politico-religious reality! The role of the papacy in the crusades and other common endeavours made its position unchallengable. The political and religious leadership combined in the same office became a source of attraction even to those who were the least worthy for that sublime office! The canonical structure was moulded within such a politico-religious reality. Claims and counter-claims of authority by the ecclesiastical and civil authorities and the subsequent conflicts were common symptoms of medieval Europe. The ecclesiastical officials began to claim a kind of superiority over the secular rulers. Attempts were also made to find out theological justification to such claims!

The theory of "Two Swords" which began to be used in the ecclesiastical documents gave an official colour to the mentality which was fast developing in the background of the Christendom. The Papal Bull of Pope Boniface VIII dated November 18, 1302 is an explicit proof of this development.

"The gospel teaches us that there are two swords in the Church's power, the spiritual and temporal... The latter is used on behalf of the Church, the former by the Church. The former belongs to the priests, the latter is used by kings and soldiers but according to the will and discretion of the priest. However it is proper that one sword be above the other, that the temporal authority be subject to the spiritual. We ought to admit that the spiritual power surpasses the temporal in dignity and nobility just as spiritual things surpass temporal things. For truly the spiritual power has the right to institute the temporal power

and to judge if it is good. Therefore if the temporal power errs it will be judged by the spiritual, but if a lesser spiritual power errs it will be judged by a superior and if the supreme power errs it can be judged by God alone not by man. For the Apostle says: The spiritual man judges all things but he is judged by no man'. This authority even though given to man and exercised by a man, is not human but rather divine, it was given by God to Peter and it was confirmed to him and to the successors of him whom the Lord confessed to be a rock, when he said to Peter "Whatsoever you shall bind etc." whoever therefore resists this power ordained by God, resists the ordinance of God, unless like a Manichee he imagines that there are two principles-which we judged to be false and heretical since according to Moses, God created heaven and earth in the beginning' not, in the beginnings'. Wherefore we declare, state define and pronounce' that it is altogether necessary for salvation that every human creature be subject to the Roman Pontiff".¹⁹

It is interesting to note that in the early Church of Ireland which remained isolated, in penitential and sacramental matters they did maintain their own legislation and identity. Meanwhile in the West the efforts for centralisation were in full swing with a vision of a unified Christendom. The background had already been set long ago with the Pseudo-Isidorian or False Decretals (847-52) and other collections. During the eleventh century we come across another concerted move under the patronage of Pope Gregory VII (1073-1085) for a revival of the notion of the Christendom under the papacy. The consequences were the power struggle with the kings. The attempts were made by Anselm of Lucca for producing collections. But Gratian, a Camaldolese monk of the University of Bologna, succeeded in providing a synthesis of ecclesiastical law known as *Concordia Discordantium* ((The Harmony of Discordant Canons).

The Popes Alexander III (1159-81) and Innocent III (1198-1216) were proceeding in the same line. Under the direction of

19 H. Denzinger, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, 24-25th edition, (Barcelona 1948, pp.218-20; T.P. Neil & R.H.Schmandt, op.cit., pp.253-5.

Pope Gregory IX (1227-41) about two thousand papal and Conciliar decrees were arranged into five general categories to which Pope Boniface VIII added the sixth book (*Liber sextus*). The same process continued under Pope John XXII (1316-1334) (*Constitutiones Clementinae*) and finally in 1500 John Chapuis edited the above works adding two new ones and gave shape to the *Corpus Juris Canonici* which provided the solid canonical basis till the 20th century.

As we go through the history of Christianity in the West we can observe that the Papacy had become a source of secular attraction and more people began to make claims to the same office. From 1368 to 1417 we come across such a situation which ultimately led to three simultaneous occupants of the same papal throne.²⁰

The sixteenth century inflicted almost a fatal blow to the previous Caesaro-papist set up of Europe. The Council of Trent (1545-1563) provided doctrinal and disciplinary responses to the problems connected with Luther, Zwingli, Calvin and the other leaders of the Reformation. The Church in Europe was practically divided into two camps, Catholic and Protestant. The Counter-Reformation policy of the Roman Catholic Church of the subsequent centuries developed its canonical structures after the monarchical pattern. The Congregation of the Council was established in 1564 to give authoritative interpretations to the decrees. The definition of the Roman Primacy and Papal Infallibility by Vatican I (1869-70) against the challenges posed by Protestantism did not solve the problems! The attempts to co-ordinate the canonical legislations was initiated at the time of Pope Pius X. The arduous work of the Commission under Pietro Gasparri did bear fruit in 1917 with the promulgation of *Codex Juris Canonici* (CIC) on Pentecost May 27, 1917.

The historical data unveil to us the extent to which the ecclesiastical set up, especially its leadership was influenced by secular powers which led to conflicts and compromises. For ex-

20 POPES ANTIPOPPES DURING THE WESTERN SCHISM

Roman Line	Avignon Line	Pisan Line
Urban VI (1378-1389)	Clement VII (1378-94)	Alexander V (1409-1410)
Boniface IX (1389-1404)	Benedict XIII (1394-17)	John XXIII (1410-1415)
Innocent VII (1404-1406)	Gregory XII (1406-1415)	

ample in the history of the papacy we come across the various Concordats which are agreements between the Popes and the secular rulers. We have the following observation by an eminent canonist:

Their secular character although sometimes called in question, indicates that a concession on the part of the secular power was accompanied by a concession of the same nature on the part of the ecclesiastical authority. It is of little significance that these concessions are called privileges or agreements. In actual fact the Church accepted into its own laws, at least for specified regions, norms that could be contrary to the spirit of its own law, *Normae Exorbitantes* as they were then called, as a counterpart to the advantages, at least in fact, granted by secular power.²¹

The concordats were agreements to the mutual advantage of the partners concerned. The consent of the sovereign for convening a council, the approval for the appointment of bishops and the enthronement of the prelates etc. formed part of the concessions. Such agreements led to mutual acceptance of the same legal systems which in several cases leading to the dilution of the uniqueness of the mission and goal of the Church. The Church began to be viewed as a perfect society with its structure parallel to the secular set up of the state. Similarly in the previous canonical formulations of the Roman Empire the secular administrative patterns and categories have had their influence.

Various historical, patristic, liturgical and theological studies have convinced the Christian world of the urgency to disassociate the Church from its secular set up borrowed to a great extent from elsewhere which was responsible for the lack of harmony and unity at various levels. Pope John XXIII of happy memory took the decisive step to convene an Ecumenical Council to "shake off the dust of the Empire" from the Church.

On January 25, 1959 on the solemn occasion of the announcement of the convening of the Vatican Council II Pope John XXIII communicated the decision to establish a Pontifical

21 C. H. Lefebvre, "Canon Law, Influence of the Roman Law", in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 3, p. 51.

Commission to revise the Code of Canon Law. The Commission brought out the revised edition of the Code of Canon Law (CIC) for the Latin Church in 1983. Similarly the Pontifical Commission set up for the revision of the canonical discipline of the Eastern Catholic Churches published the Codex Canonum Ecclesiarum Orientalium (CCEO) in 1990.

III. CANONICAL AND STRUCTURAL EVOLUTION OF THE CHURCHES IN THE EASTERN ROMAN EMPIRE

The canonical collections of the Church is generally divided into Eastern and Western based on the division of the Churches of the Roman Empire into Eastern and Western. Gradually all the non Western Churches began to be called Eastern. It is on this ground that the Assyrian Church of the East and the Thomas Christians of India also began to be classified among the Oriental Churches. As we have seen in the history of the Code of Canons (CIC) of the Latin Church the Eastern Churches within the Roman Empire also enjoyed the privilege of the official religion. Consequently they too were largely influenced by the secular administrative pattern of the Empire. In the Eastern Roman Empire the close ties between the secular rulers and the Church lasted longer even after the destruction of the capture of its capital, Constantinople, in 1453. Submission to the authority of the Christian Emperor was a part of ecclesiastical jurisprudence! The intervention and protection of the Emperor was a felt necessity. The legacy left by the Roman pagan state was accepted by the Church as well!

Apart from the common canonical traditions of the early centuries such as Didache, Apostolic Tradition, Didaskalia of the Apostles, Apostolic Canon, Apostolic Constitutions etc. the Churches began to develop their own collections in the light of their concrete situations. At the beginning of the fourth century after the Edict of Milan the Church gradually became the official religion of the Roman Empire. Subsequently it began to enjoy many privileges. The religious discipline and welfare of the Church became a matter of public concern.

The canonical sources of the Eastern Churches can be classified into three sections.

- A. Ecumenical Councils
- B. Local Synods
- C. Canons of the Holy Fathers

A. Ecumenical Councils

1. Council of Nice

The Edict of Milan of 313 changed the situation and the Church came under the protection of the Emperors. On the other hand the religious controversies also became a matter of imperial concern. The Arian controversy centred on the divinity of Jesus Christ disturbed the peace and harmony and the Emperor Constantine convened the first Ecumenical Council at Nice in 325. Apart from the definition of the Christological doctrine the Council passed twenty disciplinary canons. The date of the celebration of the Easter was fixed. Canons 1, 2, 3, 9, 10, and 17 dealt with the life of the clergy. The civil administrative system of the Empire based on the territorial divisions into "diocese", "province" and "metropolis" was introduced also into the Church. Subsequently the civil cities emerged as centres of ecclesiastical administration. Canon 6 enumerates these important centres.

2. Council of Constantinople I (381)

It was convened by the Roman Emperor Theodosius (379 - 395). It completed the Nicene Creed with the doctrine on the Holy Spirit. The 3rd canon approved the episcopal see of Constantinople as the second see enjoying the "Primacy of Honour" after Rome. It was on the basis of its new emergence as the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire. Such a canon which sanctioned precedence on the basis of political importance was not acceptable to Rome. Rome considered her own primacy on the basis of its Petrine succession and not on any political ground.

3. Council of Ephesus (431)

It was convoked by Emperor Theodosius II (408- 450) to condemn the Christological errors attributed to Nestorius, the Patriarch of Constantinople. It defined that Mary is the

Mother of Jesus Christ and hence the "Mother of God" (Theotokos). Canon 8 acknowledged the administrative autonomy of the Church of Cyprus.

4. Council of Chalcedon (451)

The Emperor Marcian (450- 455) convoked this Council to define the Christological question on the unity of the Person and the two natures of Jesus Christ. The doctrinal authority of the letter of Pope Leo was acknowledged. On the other hand the canon 3 of the Council of Constantinople I which granted the precedence of the episcopal see of Constantinople based on its new political importance was confirmed again by canon 28. Though Pope Leo I objected to such a decision the canon was not dropped.

5. Council of Constantinople II (553)

The Roman Emperor Justinian (527-565) convened this Council in order to condemn the so called "Three Chapters" which consisted of the writings of Theodore of Mopsuestia, Ibas of Edessa and Theodoret of Cyrus. Pope Vigilius was forced to come to Constantinople and subscribe to the condemnation.

6. Council of Constantinople III (680-681)

This Council was convoked by Emperor Constantine IV (668-681) It condemned Monothelitism. As the fifth and sixth Ecumenical Councils did not deal with any disciplinary questions another Council was convened by Emperor Justinian II at Trullo. 102 disciplinary canons were enacted by this Council. According to the eastern tradition this Council is a supplementary one to the fifth and sixth Ecumenical Councils. In the West this Council was not acceptable as it confirmed again the canon 28 of Chalcedon and adopted some other disciplinary decisions which were not in harmony with the practices of the Western Church.

7. Council of Nice II (787)

It was convened by the Empress Irene, the regent of the young Emperor Constantine VI. Iconoclasm was condemned and twenty canons were adopted. It was decided that the approval of the Pope of Rome and the other four Patriarchs

(Alexandria, Constantinople, Antioch and Jerusalem) was necessary for the ecumenicity of the future Councils. It was also specified that the acceptance of the teachings by the people of the Churches is a requirement for its authority.

8. Council of Constantinople IV (869-870).

This Council which was convened by the Emperor Basil condemned Patriarch Photius of Constantinople and passed 27 laws. Another Council was convened in 879-880 in which also the papal legates participated. It annulled the previous Council of 869-870. This Council is not acknowledged by Rome and it considers the previous Council of 869-70 as the eighth Ecumenical Council.

B. Local Synods

The decisions of the local synods as a matter of principle are not universally acceptable. But as sanctioned by canon 2 of the Council of Trullo, some of them because of their special importance are accepted by the other Churches as well. The following are the Councils of this category. Synods of Ancyra (313) 25 Canons; Neocesarea (315-319) 15 Canons; Antioch (341), 25 Canons; Gangra (340-45) 20 Canons; , Laodicea (360), 60 Canons; Sardica (344), 21 Canons and Carthage (419) 133 Canons.

C. Canons of the Holy Fathers

From the sixth century we have got canonical collections which include also the canons of the Holy Fathers which are quoted from their writings. The Fathers authoritatively taught their people how to maintain the orthodoxy not only in matters of faith but also in their Christian witness. The following canons of the Fathers are specifically approved in can. 102 of the Synod of Trullo. The writings of the following Fathers form part of this tradition.

1. Dionysius of Alexandria 2. Gregory Thaumaturgo 3. Peter of Alexandria
4. Athanasius of Alexandria 5. St Basil of Caesarea 6. Gregory of Nyssa 7. Timothy of Alexandria 8. Theophylus of Alexandria 9. Cyril of Alexandria
10. Gregory Nazianzen 11. Amphilochio of Iconio 12. Gennadius of Constantinople 11. Cyprian of Carthage and 12 Tarasius of Constantinople

In the East the collegial structure of ecclesiastical administration survived to a great extent. Hence Synods and Church assemblies continued to play an important and effective role. This kind of Conciliar structure was favoured by Emperors. The local and Ecumenical Councils became a matter of Imperial concern and approval. The decisions of these councils began to be compiled for common reference. Such a compilation called *Syntagma Canonum*, known also as *Corpus Canonum Orientale* was available at the Council of Chalcedon in 451. There were parallel local collections of Antioch, Alexandria, Constantinople, Ethiopia and Armenia. The systematic collections of Amphilochio Johannes Scholastikos who was Patriarch of Constantinople (564-578) are of unique importance. His Collection of Sixty Titles and Collection of Fifty Titles etc. were of great influence. Moreover, Christian Emperors made legislations in religious matters. *Codex Theodosianus* (438), *Codex Justinianus* (534) and their later additions form part of the canonical collections. At the beginning of the 7th century an important work called *Collection Tripartita* (On Persons, Things and Actions) came into existence.

After the destruction of the Eastern Roman Empire by the Turks in 1453 the Byzantine canon law came to a standstill. Orthodox Churches of the Balkan Peninsula continued to be active and Greek collections of canons were published. Some canonists of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy also took leadership in collecting and publishing Byzantine canonical sources. From the eleventh century the name *Nomokanons* (*Nomos*= state law; *kanon*= church law) was given to the Church and state legislation. The rulers of the Orthodox nations used these *Nomokanons* as their official state law. These collections were augmented and adapted by the secular rulers to suit to their needs. There are different collections of *Nomokanons* published by the Churches.

Regarding the canonical collections of the Eastern Catholic Churches which were in communion with Rome, no proper attempt for a common canonical codification was made perhaps until the appointment of the Pontifical Canonical Commission for the revision of the Law of the Eastern Catholic Churches. These Eastern Churches have got their own identity and individuality as they have emerged in entirely different surroundings. It is specifically true regarding those churches

which had their origin and development outside the imperial set up of the Graeco-Roman world. The Churches within the Roman Empire both Eastern and Western shared many things in common as they enjoyed the privileged position of the official religion. On the contrary, outside the Graeco-Roman world, the Church of the Thomas Christians of India, for example, has never enjoyed the privileges of an official religion. As this Church was free from any kind of political interference it could preserve the earliest Christian heritage and administrative set up. It followed an ecclesiastical system which they called "Thomayude Margam" (Law of Thomas) which was not a canonical collection but the sum total of their time-honoured ecclesiastical system. Their close hierarchical alliance with the neighbouring Church of Persia was not a hindrance to maintain their own internal autonomy and ecclesial identity. This set up could maintain their unity until the period of the Latin influence which began in the sixteenth century.

IV. INDIGENOUS ECCLESIOLOGY OF THE THOMAS CHRISTIANS OF INDIA

In this context it is a matter of great importance to have assessment of the indigenous ecclesiology of the St Thomas Christians. As an indigenous Church of apostolic origin in India and which still supplies a major section of the missionary personnel of the same nation the unique heritage of this dynamic Church deserves our special study. There was a period of colonial attitude to despise the native traditions and heritage and to follow the western thought patterns and categories imported by the colonial powers. Similarly during this post-Independence period there has been another superficial approach to disown the native heritage and to create something entirely new. The indigenous heritage of the St Thomas Christians was also viewed by some as foreign! But various studies have proved the indigenous heritage of the Thomas Christians of India is of very special importance not only to India but also to the Catholic Church as a whole.

The ecclesial set up of the Thomas Christians were developed in the particular socio-politico-cultural milieu. It had three levels.

- A. At the local level: Palliyogam
- B. At the community level: Archdiaconate
- C. At the Hierarchical level: Metropolitan and Patriarch

These three levels of their ecclesiastical system manifested their ecclesial communion.

A. At the local level: Palliyogam

Etymologically the Church is the community of those who are called. Their official gathering has an ecclesial significance. At the local level their communitarian dimension was kept alive and aloft by means of their palliyogam. It played a very important role in their ecclesial life.

Palliyogam is the local assembly which consists of the heads of the Christian families and the clergy of the edavaka (parish). This assembly seems to owe its origin to the traditional village assembly of the Dravidians known as Manram which was the responsible and authoritative body at the village level which consisted of the heads of their families. Similarly, the Palliyogam consisting of the heads of families and local clergy used to discuss all matters of common importance and take decisions. They assembled under the leadership of the local parish clergy. All were bound to obey the decisions of this assembly in matters connected with the life and activities of the parish, such as selection and approval of the candidates to priesthood, Christian life of the people, financial administration, punishment for public sinners, reconciliation in times of conflicts etc. which were within the competence of the palliyogam. In matters of common concern and importance the palliyogams of different parishes of the concerned territory used to assemble and as the case might require. This set up of Palliyogam was an effective means to maintain ecclesial communion and solidarity at the local level.

Matters of wider importance were discussed in the General yogam which consisted of representatives of all the parishes. In the General yogam the Archdeacon had a very decisive role. We come across such gatherings before important decisions in the Church. There were gatherings of this kind before and after the "Koonan Cross" Oath. The general gatherings of Athirampuzha and Angamaly decided to send Fr. Joseph Kariattil

and others to Rome for achieving the reconciliation of Mar Dionysius I. The necessary amount was raised by the parishes. Fr. Paulinus of Bartholomeo who was a Carmelite missionary in India, calls it a republican system of government.

The Palliyogam which is a unique ecclesial institution of the Thomas Christians of India with its adequate representation of the clergy and laity at the various levels of their ecclesial life, enabled them to maintain their faith in harmonious unity with a profound sense of common responsibility and solidarity. But such an institution well rooted in venerable antiquity and which effectively expressed their ecclesial life for sixteen centuries came into constant conflict with the Latin jurisdictional structure imposed on them from 1599 up to 1896. In 1653 they made a public protest and a section of the Thomas Christians separated themselves from the Latin jurisdiction.

The members of the assembly enjoyed equality and it was an effective means for maintaining communion and solidarity of the community. The idea of the Church as a community or fellowship was kept alive through the yogam. At the same time the local communities were enjoying a kind of practical autonomy in their parish administration. Palliyogam was their decision making and decisional taking body at the local level. J. Kollaparampil observes:

"Local communities were practically independent from each other. Normally married clergy were in charge of the ecclesiastical ministry. Priests and clerics were ascribed to, and sustained by the local communities. No one functioned as a parish priest; instead, all priests shared in the church services arranged by the most senior among them. The yogam i.e., an assembly of the clergy and all adult members of the community, set policies and made decisions on all matters pertaining to their church, such as administration of the temporalities, infliction of ecclesiastical punishments, etc. Matters of regional interest had to be decided in yogams of representatives from all the churches of the respective regions, while for affairs of a general character representatives from all the churches of Malabar had to meet in a synod".²²

22 Jacob Kollaparampil, *The St Thomas Christians' Revolution in 1653*, Kottayam, 1981, p. 6.

In 1750 Fr. Boniface OCD, a Carmelite missionary, gives a report on the nature and traditional functioning of the palliyogam among the Thomas Christians.

“In every parish (Chaldeo-Malabar) there is an assembly which deals with the ecclesiastical affairs. It consists of the local clergy and laity. They discuss about and decide on matters such as finance, construction works, maintenance of the church, approval of the candidates to Sacred Orders, absolution from ecclesiastical censures etc.

“The bishop does neither confer Sacred Orders nor absolve from ecclesiastical censures without the official request of the community which submit the formal petition to the bishop after assembling in the Church and hearing the request of the candidate to Sacred Orders”.

“In matters of major importance people of the neighbouring parishes are assembled. For very important cases all the parishes of the kingdom are invited while at times all the parishes of the whole diocese.

Such a procedure is very important for the implementation of the decisions. For example, though some people have accepted the dogmatic teachings of the Synod of Diamper, they have not yet accepted its decrees concerning reform on the ground that they were not present for the synod”.²³

Fr. Paulinus of Bartholomeo who was a Carmelite missionary in India calls it a ‘republican’ system of government. After studying the functioning of the ecclesiastical structure of the Thomas Christians he wrote:

“These Christians constitute a kind of Christian civil republic. When the rights of a particular parish are threatened other parishes come together to defend

23 Archiv. of S. Congr. Prop. Fide, Congregazione Particolari, Vol.109 f. 90 Report of Fr. Boniface infant Jesus in 1750; Cfr. X. Koodapuzha, (ed) Oriental Churches Theological Dimensions, Kottayam, 1988, p. 74.

it. The parish priest and elders judge and settle all cases".²⁴

Administrator Thomas Paremmakkal (1787-1799), a great freedom fighter and unquestioned leader of the St Thomas Christians challenged the colonial and autocratic attitude of domination of the western missionaries by pointing out the decisive role of the People of God in the Church. The missionaries claimed that they would not hand over the parish churches to Mar Joseph Kariattil the new Indigenous bishop. Paremmakkal replied as follows:

"What is the reason for uttering these words which you had never uttered before, even though several years have elapsed since you and your companions arrived here? It is no other than this: You strongly suspect that the Malabarians will abandon the missionaries since they now have an archbishop who is of their own community and whom they will also accept. The fraud, therefore, of the missionaries consists in their asking their countrymen to make every effort that they may not be forced to give up the churches. Still, what will those who hear your words think of this? Certainly they will think that the churches of Malabar were built by the predecessors of the missionaries, that the Malabarians are, low castes and outcasts, and that those who are ascribed to the churches cannot do anything without the consent of the missionaries.

But I tell you, do not be of this opinion. It is true that by reason of your deceits and tricks some of the churches of Malabar obey you. Still, neither you nor your predecessors built our churches. Nor has anyone sold to you either us or our churches. If OUR CHURCH ASSEMBLY WANTS TO ACCEPT YOU, IT WILL; IF IT DOES NOT YOU CANNOT MAKE IT DO SO BY FORCE. This inability to make us accept you should

24 Paulinus of Bartholomeo, *Viaggio alle Indie Orientali*, Rome, 1796, pp.136-39); Xavier Koodapuzha, *Oriental Churches Theological Dimensions*, OIRSI, Kottayam, 1988, p.74-75.

stop you from uttering any more proud words to anyone".²⁵

All these documents reveal to us the common awareness of their time-honoured tradition of their collective responsibility of the Thomas Christians. The western clericalism had not become a part of their heritage. Their parish assembly which they called palliyogam, presided over by their clergy, was an authentic expression of their ecclesiological concept of the local Church as the People of God. Generally they had married clergy who formed an integral part of the local community. They held their clergy in high esteem which they never allowed to be degraded into clericalism.

B. At the Community level: Archdiaconate

In the ecclesiastical systems of the St Thomas Christians the position of the Archdeacon was of unique importance. He was the indigenous head of the Christian community known as Jathikku karthavvian, having the title Archdeacon of All India. As the head of the community there could be only one Archdeacon at a time while there was no such limitation in the number of their bishops. The Seleucian Patriarch Timothy (780-826) addressed the Archdeacon of the Thomas Christians as the "Head of the Faithful in India".

The Archdeacon was the chief administrator of the community and the co-ordinator of the various local communities. Between 1576 and 1581 Pope Gregory XIII (1572-85) sent five papal Briefs addressed to the Archdeacon. In these letters the traditional position and responsibility of the Archdeacon is acknowledged. These documents are dated December 21, 1576;²⁵ Nov. 20, 1578;²⁶ March 4, 1580²⁸ and Jan. 20,

25 Paremakkal Thommakathanar, *The Varthamanappusthakam*, (1778-1789), transl. by Placid J. Podipara, Rome, 1971, pp. 265-266.

26 Jesuit Archives, Goa-Mal., Vol. 31, fol. 407 v. ; PTC, p. 97.

27 Giuseppe Beltrami, *La Chiesa Caldea nel Secolo dell'Unione*, Rome, 1933, p. 270; Jan.3, 1579 ; G. Beltrami, *Ibidem* p. 195.

28 G. Beltrami, *Ibidem*, pp. 196-197.

1581.²⁹ These important letters were sent to the Archdeacon while their Metropolitan Mar Abraham was present in Malabar. The Archdeacons were the unquestioned defenders of the Thomayude Margam which was the sum total of their legitimate ecclesial heritage.

A document of the 17th century, recorded by the Italian Carmelite priest Giuseppe Sebestiani OCD, who was an Apostolic Commissary, points out the unique position of the Archdeacon among the Thomas Christians.

"Among the Christians of St. Thomas the position of the Archdeacon is next to the Archbishop. It is a very ancient privileged position which comes down in succession from the same family. It is a great dignity as it is according to the Greek Church. There is no other indigenous dignity neither secular nor religious, greater than the Archdeacon who is considered to be the prince and Head of the St. Thomas Christians".³⁰

This specific role of the indigenous ecclesiastical leader was very helpful for maintaining the unity and ecclesial communion. In the context of the various parishes which belonged to the different kingdoms this indigenous leadership of the Archdeacon was of unique importance in the ecclesiastical as well as secular set up of India. Their bishops following the apostolic tradition dedicated themselves for the spiritual good of the community.

C. At the Hierarchical Level: Metropolitan of All India

The ecclesial communion with the other Churches was maintained by the Thomas Christians through their hierarchical communion with the Seleucians. India was not at all politically united. Hence they were living in different kingdoms under the mutually quarrelling kings. In such a context they did not have the possibility to develop their own full fledged centralized, which was also associated with the apostolic tradition of St

29 Cfr. Archiv. Vat., Brev. Secr. Vol. 51, f. 57, Nov. 24, 1580.

30 Archives of the Congregation of Propaganda Fide, Rome, Scritti riferiti nel Congr., General., Vol. 233, f. 111.

Thomas, must have led them to form part of a common ecclesiastical set-up maintaining their own ecclesial identity and administrative autonomy. The common hierarchical organisation. Their special relation with the neighbouring Church of Persia liturgical heritage which was the celebration of their common faith was the most intimate bond of communion with them. The bishops of the St Thomas Christians were not involved in the administration of the Church. Following the pattern of life of the saints and sages of eastern and Indian tradition they preferred to live as spiritual and ascetic men spending their life in prayer, study, fast and austere ascetic practices. Liturgical celebrations were the most solemn occasions of the public manifestation of the profession of the faith of the community. The bishops presided on the solemn occasions. While analysing the reasons of the revolt against the missionaries J. Kollaparampil observes:

“ As in the secular life, so too in the ecclesiastical, the Christians of St Thomas had a sort of individuality and autonomy. True, the Church of India had a sort of individuality and autonomy. True, the Church of India had been counted as one of the provinces of the Chaldean Church. Yet, as far as the Indian Church was concerned, the Chaldean Patriarch was only a figure-head, functioning as a convenient intermediary in her communion with the other apostolic Churches. From time to time, when the episcopal succession happened to be broken in their Church, the Malabarians used to send delegations to the Chaldean Patriarch with request for bishops. When Patriarch was disposed to grant the request, he usually allowed the delegates themselves to select the candidates from among the Chaldean clergy. The competence of the Chaldean metropolitans and bishops was practically limited to the exercise of the powers of the episcopal order and to a general vigilance in matters canonical and liturgical. For the rest, the central administration of the Malabar Church was effectively organised under the direction of the princely Archdeacon of All-India”.³¹

31 Jacob Kollaparampil, *The St Thomas Christians Revolution in 1653*, Kottayam, 1981, pp. 5-6.

The bishops were spiritual men mostly monks content with the spiritual leadership i.e. liturgical celebrations, conferring of S. Orders, hierarchical communion, teaching of S. Scripture and the Fathers etc.³² Their asceticism was an inspiration to others. Moreover, their abstention from administration helped them to keep us their spiritual leadership. There does not seem to have been a continuous chain of Seleucian bishops coming to India. The Indian Church was practically autonomous.

Their Metropolitan was known by the title 'The Gate of All India' (Metropolita' u tharaa' d'kolla' hendo) In the tenth century according to the treatise of the Law of Christians of Ibin Attib it seems that their Metropolitan was elected by the people in the presence of suffragan bishops. He was expected to get the approbation of the Patriarch. According to the Syriac Codex 22 written in Cranganore, Kerala, in 1301, by a deacon called Zacharias, the Metropolitan of that period was Mar Jacob, "Bishop Metropolitan, Prelate and Ruler of the Holy See of the Apostle Thomas, namely our Ruler of the entire Holy Church of the Christians of India". In 1567 the Chaldean Patriarch Abdiso uses the title Superior of all the Bishops and Metropolitans for the Prelate Mar Abraham of the Thomas Christians. The openness of the Thomas Christians to the Persian Church and other Churches was the result of their awareness of the concept of the communion of Churches. In their canonical tradition they never maintained any kind of sectarian or schismatic attitude. They were not used to any centralized administrative structure of a monarchical pattern at the universal level in the Church. At the same time, the Petrine Primacy of Rome was an integral part of their living tradition.³³

The Church administration of the pre-sixteenth century Church in India did succeed to maintain some of the important elements of the early Christian tradition. As we have already seen the clergy were not involved in the material administration except as members and leaders of the palliyogam which consisted of the local clergy and heads of the Christian families. The local church assemblies played a decisive role in the administration of the Church.

32 Cfr. J. Kollaparampil, op. Cit. p. 6, foot-note No. 7.

33 PPTC, pp. 113; X. Koodapuzha, The faith and Communion of the Indian Church of the Thomas Christians, Kottayam, 1982, pp. 61-112.

This unique system of the life style of the Thomas Christians prompted the foreign missionaries to call their church a kind of Christian republic. Placid J. Podipara writes:

"To decide on matters of local interest, representatives of several churches used to assemble together, while things of a general character were taken up by the assembly of representatives of all the churches. This practice is still continued among the non-Catholic Thomas Christians. The Catholic Thomas Christians owing to Latin influence had to leave it off after the 18th century or a little later. No wonder that Paulinus whom we have quoted termed the (Catholic) Thomas Christians a "Christian Republic" at the end of the 18th century. They were not an integral part of the Seleucian Church just as they were not an output of the same".³⁴

The learning, spirit of renunciation and asceticism of their bishops made them respectable and a source of inspiration for all. Such a spiritual leadership was quite in harmony with the Indian religious sentiments which always hold in high esteem the saints and sages who are renowned for their spirit of prayer, renunciation, contemplation and asceticism. The Thomas Christians cherished their presence as a source of inspiration for their spiritual life and a sure link with the other Churches in matters of faith and communion. Their respect to and solidarity with their local clergy and bishops was not on the basis of their administrative power and influence but on their value based life which was a source of spiritual inspiration to the community. With the arrival of the Portuguese and western missionaries an entirely different concept of bishops and clergy was introduced. They represented a Church with a monarchical organisation. Their bishops were mainly administrators who claimed exclusive jurisdiction over of the diocese. The clergy began to be trained in the seminaries where they were made aware of their 'dignity', 'superiority' over the laity and 'jurisdictional power' and privileges! Three hundred years of Latin rule over the Thomas Christians did to destroy the venerable heritage of the St Thomas

Christians and succeeded to perpetuate the system of western clericalism in India. Though colonialism has disappeared neo-colonialism continues in the Church in India through their faithful followers! The Vatican Council II tries to return to the authentic sources of the Church and revive what is lost. It is in this field the Thomas Christians of India are called by divine providence to contribute their legitimate share to the Universal Catholic Church. The western type of ecclesiastical administration and set up is a major hindrance to project the authentic image of Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God preached by Him!

The decrees of the Synod of Diamper held in Kerala in 1599 under the auspices of the Padroado Goan archbishop Alexes Dom Menezes reveal the monarchical concept of the Church prevalent during the sixteenth century. This Synod marks the beginning of three centuries of the Latin rule over the St Thomas Christians of India. It was during this period of Latin rule that the Thomas Christians were disastrously divided. At present the Thomas Christians are divided into different Churches and communities among whom the Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara Churches are in the Catholic communion.

We have made a brief survey of the Church of the Graeco-Roman world which enjoyed a privileged position as the official religion of the Roman Empire. We have seen that the structural and canonical evolution of the Church was greatly influenced by the politico-religious milieu in which it existed. The close alliance of the Church with the Empire from the fourth century and at a later period with the feudal and monarchical systems did exert great influence on the nature, structure, legislation and administrative pattern of the Church. But history teaches that the thought patterns and categories of the theological and legal systems with their deep roots in the western world cannot go in harmony with the Churches which have developed an identity of their own in an entirely different milieu. The Church of the Thomas Christians of India which existed in the heart of Asia for the last two thousand years is an example of this unique situation. In this context it is important to show how far the venerable heritage and identity of a Church which had its origin and development outside the Graeco-Roman world was brought under the ecclesiastical colonialism of the western powers which

disfigured it. On the other hand we do not ignore the positive contribution from the western world which opened to them a new horizon of universality and catholicity.

V. PROCESS OF THE IMPOSITION OF THE WESTERN SYSTEM OVER THE EASTERN CHRISTIANITY IN INDIA AND ITS GRAVE CONSEQUENCES

We have already made a brief survey of the Church of the Thomas Christians and their indigenous ecclesial heritage. But this heritage came into conflict with the western system which was imposed on them by the Portuguese during the Latin rule. The Latin bishops who ruled over them for nearly three centuries (1599- 1896) represented a highly centralized system of ecclesiastical administration which was developed in the background of the Roman Empire where the Church enjoyed the privileges of the official religion. Until the Vatican Council II the text books of Western ecclesiology carried the title "The Church is Monarchical" (*Ecclesia est Monarchica*). In such a structure the non Roman Churches were viewed not as equals but as parts which should be subordinated and conformed to the central monarchical structure. As the result of such a strange development those Churches which were in communion with the Church of Rome were forced to give up many of their time-honoured venerable heritage. The history of the Thomas Christians of India provides us examples of such an unfortunate development. They came into contact with the Portuguese missionaries in the sixteenth century. From 1599 up to 1896 bishops of the Latin Church ruled over them.

The Latinisation process of the Thomas Christians was a planned, continued and consistent policy of the Padroado and Propaganda authorities. It was extended to their whole ecclesial life i.e. liturgy, discipline, spirituality, clerical and religious formation, theology, administration, sacraments, sacramentals, devotions, church architecture etc. We give here some of the major events in this process of latinization which had been going on from the 16th century onwards.

A. 16TH CENTURY

1. The Thomas Christians had their traditional form of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The Latin missionaries introduced the Latin form of the sacrament of confession including the Latin formula of absolution.³⁵

2. The Thomas Christians used to follow the traditional Indian Gurukula system for clerical formation. It was imparted under the personal guidance of experienced and learned priests known as Malpans approved by the Church. In contrast to the indigenous system the Franciscan missionaries of the Latin rite introduced the western form of seminary formation at Cranganore in 1541 to impart clerical formation to the candidates of the Thomas Christians. This formation was fully according to the Latin tradition.³⁶

3. Following the traditional Indian practice the Thomas Christians used to give great religious importance to fast and abstinence and followed strict vegetarian diet during the days of fasts. They started the Lent on Monday. Contrary to this traditional practice they were morally forced by the Latin missionaries to start the Lent on Ash Wednesday and to eat fish, egg, and drink liquor etc. during this period following the Latin custom!³⁷

4. Mar Joseph, a bishop of the Thomas Christians was imprisoned in a monastery at Goa and was taught to celebrate the Latin liturgy. He was forced to introduce Latin liturgy and its vestments for liturgical celebrations of the Thomas Christians.³⁸

5. The missionaries wanted the Thomas Christians to follow the Latin form of celebration of the sacraments of baptism and

35. Ferroli D. Jesuits in Malabar, Vol. I, Bangalore, 1939, p.153; Hereafter abbreviation FDJM.

36. Podipara P. J. The Thomas Christians, London/ Bombay, 1970, pp. 125- 126; Hereafter abbreviation PPTC; For the details of the Seminary formation see Mundadan A.M. The Thomas Christians 1498- 1552, Bangalore, 1967, pp. 128 - 142; Hereafter abbreviation MTC.

37. Andrews Thazhathu, The Juridical Sources of the Syro-Malabar Church, Kottayam, 1987, pp. 114- 115; Hereafter its abbreviation is: ATJS.

38. ATJS p. 115.

confirmation.³⁹

6. The Thomas Christians were following the ancient eastern tradition of celebrating the Holy Qurbana with leavened bread. But the missionaries wanted them to celebrate with unleavened bread.⁴⁰

7. Similarly the Latin form of the celebration of the sacrament of the Anointing of the sick was introduced by the missionaries among them.⁴¹

8. The First synod of Angamaly in 1583 convened under the influence of the Jesuits with the goal of latinizing the Thomas Christians. In this Synod it was decided to suppress the Eastern tradition of optional celibacy for the clergy and to introduce the Latin practice of making it obligatory.⁴²

9. Goan synods of 1567, 1575, 1585 & 1592 conducted with the intention of bringing the Thomas Christians under the Portuguese King, extending Latin jurisdiction and conforming them to the Latin customs. In the absence of Mar Abraham a decree was passed by the Goan Council as follows.

"For the welfare of the St Thomas Christians who live in Malabar it is convenient that the Diocese should be governed by a Prelate presented by the King of Portugal, and not by the chaldean Patriarch; for otherwise many abuses penetrate amongst them. Or at least the Council should ask His Holiness that the Archbishop of Angamaly, having no suffragan bishops and it being difficult for him to go to Syria owing to the long distance, should be bound to attend the Council of th Province..."⁴³

39. FDJM, Vol. I, p.153.

40. Thekkedathu J., History of Christianity in India, Vol. II, Bangalore, 1982, p.43; PPTC p.130.

41. ATJS, p. 115.

42. Koodapuzha X. Bharathasabhacharithram (Malayalam) ed. 3, 1998; Hereafter abbreviation XKBC; Placid J. Podipara, The Canonical Sources of the Syro-Malabar Church, Kottayam, 1986, p.59; Its abbreviation is hereafter = PPCS; ATJS pp. 130 -131.

43. "ATJS, p. 127; BBPA, I, p. 51, decree 1; PPCS p.70, ATJS pp. 126-129.

10. A Seminary started at Vaipicota in 1581 by the Jesuits with the goal of conforming the Thomas Christians to the Latin customs⁴⁴

11. Mar Abraham, the bishop of the Thomas Christians was asked by the Pope Gregory XIII to take part in the 3rd Goan Council of 1585. In this Council ten canons were passed on the need of the approval of their bishops by the Goan archbishop and to introduce among the Thomas Christians the Latin form of the sacraments. It was also decided to mutilate their liturgical texts, translate into Syriac the Roman Missal, Breviary, Pontifical, Ritual etc. Decisions against the Oriental traditions of optional celibacy and communion in two species. Decisions were taken to introduce the Latin form of seminary formation for the Thomas Christians.⁴⁵

12. Fr. Roz SJ who was delegated by the Goan Council to implement the decisions of the Goan Council published a treatise in which Nestorian errors were traced in their Syriac liturgical books.⁴⁶

13. Mar Joseph and Mar Abraham asked to ordain the seminarians who were not given any clerical formation according to their own ecclesial tradition.⁴⁷

14. The Synod of Diamper was convened by the Goan archbishop Alexis de Menezes with the aim of latinising the Thomas Christians thoroughly. This Synod is invalid due to 1. The lack of authority in the one who convoked it, 2. The absence of intention in the one conducted it, 3. The lack of form in the manner of holding it and 4. The lack of integrity in the text promulgated.⁴⁸

"Furthermore, that Catholic Church is one and the same all over the world, having for its pastor the chief

44. PPTC p.131, XKBC p. 596; Puthiakunnel, The Seminaries of Kerala, (Mal.) Ernakulam, 1968, pp. 10-11.

45. P. J. Podipara, The Thomas.. p.132; ATJS p. 128-29; XKBC pp. 274 - 75.

46. Hausher I., De Erroribus Nestorianorum... by Francis Roz, OC, Vol. XI, No. 40, Rome, 1928) Koodapuzha X., The Faith and Communion of the St Thomas Christians, Kottayam, 1982, pp. 113- 117; Hereafter abbreviation: XKFC.

47. XKBC p. 275.

48. Thaliath J. The Synod of Diamper, Rome, 1958, p. 156: Hereafter JTSD; PPTC pp. 138-140; XKBC pp. 282-329.

Bishop of Rome successor in the chair of the blessed prince of the Apostles, St. Peter, to whom and by him to his successors, our Lord Jesus Christ delivered the full power of ruling and governing his whole Church; for whence it is, that the Roman Church is the head of the whole Church, and the father, master and doctor of all Christians; and the prelate of all in common, and of all priests, bishops, archbishops, primates and patriarchs, of whatsoever church they are; as also the pastor of all emperors, kings, princes and lords: in a word, of all that are Christians, and of all the faithful people. Hence it is, that all that are not under the obedience of the said Roman Bishop, the vicar of Christ upon earth, are out of a state of salvation, and shall be condemned to hell as heretics and schismatics for their disobedience to the commands of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the order that he left in his Church."⁴⁹

The decrees of the synod of Diamper are divided into nine Acts (Accao).⁵⁰

These decrees deal with the entire ecclesiastical system of the Thomas Christians. It was intended to uproot the Thomas Christians from their venerable heritage and conform them to the Latin Church. They are the following. The Nine sections of the following:

1. Introduction and regulations of the synod
2. Profession of Faith
3. Main doctrines of Christians Faith (All these decrees were formulated based on using medieval scholastic theology)
4. Baptism and Confirmation (according to the Oriental tradition these two sacraments were administered together by priests)
5. Eucharist and Holy Mass (Oriental customs, practices and

49. Session II, Chapter XIII, Hough J. Ibidem, p.531.

50. JTSD pp. 219-228

- ceremonies were condemned and Latin practices enforced)
6. Penance and Anointing of the sick (Latin practices enforced)
 7. Holy Orders and Matrimony (The Latin Minor Orders Tonsure, obligatory celibacy etc.) were enforced.
 8. Reformation and Church Administration . Latin administrative system of the parish and diocese and other customs were introduced as such. Many local customs including the celebration of the popular cultural Onam festival were also forbidden!)
 9. Reform of customs (The patronage of the king of Portugal was extended and methods and means were adopted to popularise the decisions of the synod.

B. PERIOD OF LATIN RULE: 1599-1896

It was a period of colonialism which was extended not only in the political field but also in the religious field. Except the bishop the entire clergy and the people were Orientals and Indian while the bishops were Europeans of the Latin rite. The bishops who were the legislators of this period wanted to conform the Thomas Christians to the customs and traditions of the Latin rite. It started with bishop Francis Roz S. J. (1599-1896) who was the first Latin bishop to rule over them.

1. Bishop Roz was convinced of the invalidity of the Synod of Diamper and wanted to introduce a disciplinary system after the Latin pattern. With this end in view he convened a Synod at Angamaly in 1603 and in 1606 published a complete collection of canons known as the Statutes of Bishop Roz (Rozian Statute).⁵¹ It is divided into four books or parts. (Vatican Codex (Ms) Borgia India, 18; PPCS pp. 110-113; The statutes Malayalam title is "Namute Malankara Mar Thoma Slehate Edavakete Kalpanakal").

The Rozian Statute is divided as follows:

Book I: On matters of faith with six chapters

Book II: On sacraments with 16 chapters; the Latin

51. It was on May 16 (Edavam) 1606 with the title "Tukasa d'Mar' Ita Tomayta d'Hendo" (Ordinance for the Thomite Flock of India)".

sacramentary, disciplinary and liturgical system with all their details is prescribed here.

Book III: On the sacraments of Anointing of the sick, Holy Orders and Matrimony. In addition it deals with the Holy Chrism.

Book IV: On clerical life and activities with 15 chapters.

2. Rules for the priests of the indigenous Congregation of St. Thomas the Apostle. It consists of 30 rules. This community was known as "The Recollects of Edapally" but it was suppressed.⁵²

3. Decision of Bishop Britto in 1627 to suppress the indigenous Malpanate system of priestly formation and to introduce the seminary system according to the western tradition.⁵³

4. Decision of archbishop Francis Garcia in 1645 to appoint Vicar General in the place of the archdeacon. It is a grave violation of a venerable tradition of the Thomas Christians.⁵⁴

5. Instruction of the Congregation of Propaganda Fide to destroy gradually the Syriac rite and to latinize the Thomas Christians. As directed by the Congregation the draft of this instruction is prepared by Joseph Sebastiani OCD who was made bishop of the Thomas Christians by Pope Alexander VII (Brief Injuncti nobis dated 17 December 1659). Though he was the titular archbishop of Hierapolis he was granted all the faculties and titles of a resident bishop.⁵⁵

Some of the clauses of the Instruction of the Congregation of Propaganda Fide are the following:

No. 29. "Although it is not pleasing to the sacred Congregation to divert the peoples from their rites, as they are laudable and approved by the Church, nevertheless- since the ignorance of the people of the

52. PPTC, p.150

53. ATJS p.167

54. ATJS p.170, foot not 77; ARSI, Goa-Mal, Vol. 50, f. 112

55. ATJS p. 176.

Serra make them rather exposed to the danger of becoming imbued with the errors of the Syriac books, which currently are concealed by reason of the rite that is observed among them and gives access to the schismatic bishops from Babylon to penetrate there and make them relapse into Nestorianism - taking advantage of the request they themselves make for the masters to teach Latin, you may by all means procure, either as bishop or only as the Commissary Apostolic, to introduce it there and stabilise it, and in that way to introduce them to the Latin.

No. 35. 'If things go well with the Monsignor Archbishop, you shall ask the Jesuit Fathers of Vaipicotta to teach Latin and Syriac in conformity with that what is already said in No. 29; however, in such a way ceding to Latin, Syriac shall disappear gradually'.

No. 38. "You shall see to it that the Cranganore Seminary of the Franciscan Fathers (obs.) is set on its feet again with good and exemplary teachers, so that young men of Malabar could learn Latin there as before".

No. 40. "As Administrator Apostolic you shall be very retentive in conferring Holy Orders..., but with those who shall embrace the Latin rite you shall be more liberal, nay more to allure them you shall dispense them from (canonical) age, provided His Holiness would be pleased to grant you the faculty to ordain them one year early".⁵⁶

A description on the nature of functioning of the traditional system of Palliyogam of the Thomas Christians as reported by a Carmelite missionary Paulinnus of Bartholomeo:

56. Cited by Kollaparampil J. The St Thomas Christians' Revolution in 1653, Kottayam 1981, pp. 229 - 30; APF, SOCG 233, ff. 33v-34; Hereafter abbreviaiton JKTR.

“All the Malabarians form a kind of Christian Republic. All their Churches used to join together to defend any community (Church) that was in any way offended. The Vicar (pastor) and the elders (Muppanmar) judged all cases and compromised all differences. With the knowledge of the bishop or missionary they used to mete out punishment of excommunication (pallikupurathakkal). Those thus excommunicated could not go for confession and Holy Communion, would not be given pax (Kasthuri) during Mass, priests would not enter their houses or Cattam, they had no voice in the community nor could they sit in the Yogam; they could, however, hear Mass and speak with others; before being absolved they had to make a satisfaction for the theft or scandal or offence or sin committed; kneeling at the door of the church on a Sunday or on a feast day they had to ask readmission into the community; then the priests, trustee (Kaikakrs) and the Muppanmar would examine the case, its circumstances as well as the economic condition of the delinquent; the rich would be asked to give to the Church a good amount (codana) of oil, or a silk umbrella or sometehing needed for the divine worship; the poor would be asked to stand at the door of the church carrying a bid wooden cross or a skull, or they would be required to walk on their knees in the church, or to go on a pilgrimage to Malayatttoor; women would be asked carry in their hands a candle or some bones of a dead man. After verifying that the penance imposed was fulfilled, the bishop of the missionary, or the vicar would absolve the penitents by beating them with small bundle of stick at the door of the church in the presence of all.⁵⁷

57 Paulinus of St Bartholomeo, *Il Viaggio...* p. 137; Cited by ATJS, pp. 185-86.

6. The decisions of the Angamaly Yogam dated August 20, 1773: The Apostolic Visitor Lawrence Justiniani OCD agrees to the representatives of 72 Palliyogam to follow the principles of justice in the ecclesiastical administration.⁵⁸
7. The documents of the Propaganda Fide regarding the norms of the Seminary at Verapoly, special supervisory role of the Latin OCD missionaries over the native priests etc. dated 22nd July 1774,⁵⁹ and of 6th August 1774.
8. The Angamaly Padiyola was formally approved by the yogam at Angamaly in February 1787.⁶⁰
9. The constitution *Romani Pontifices* of Pope Pius IX of 6th January 1862 establishing a special section for the Affairs of the Oriental Churches.⁶¹
10. Suppression of Padroado with the document 'Multa Praeclare' of Gregory XVI dated April 24, 1838 and its restoration.⁶²
11. Verapoly Conference of 1862 (12-22nd September) and decisions regarding faith, discipline, matrimonial impediments, administration etc.⁶³
12. Pastoral Letters of Archbishop Baccinelli: Prohibition of books especially Varthamanapusthakam March 12, 1864.⁶⁴

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58. PPCS p.88 foot note No. 11: Report of Lawrence Justiniani, Archives the Sacred Propaganda Congregation, Rome, *Scritti referitti nel Congr.* 1774-75, Vol. 34; *Analecta OCD*, Rome, 1938, p.163, 30.
 59. ATJS p.188 Foot Note 152; APF, *Lettere*, Vol. 190 (a. 1757, ff. 212v - 223; Cf. Ambrosius *Hierarchia* IV, pp. 250-56. ATJS p.191, Foot Note 163; APF *Decreta*, Vol. 6, ff. 318-319; SOCG, vol. 839, ff.214- 228; Cf. Ambrosius, *Hierarchia*, IV, p. 281.
 60. PPTC pp. 175-176; ATJS p. 189.
 61. ATJS p.199 Foot Note No. 6 *Collectanea*, I, pp. 668-672, n. 1223; *Memoria Rerum*, III, 2, Ap. N. XLI, pp. 741-747; *Acta Pius IX*, Pars Prima, III, pp. 402sq.
 62. ATJS p.201, Foot Note No. 16.
 63. ATJS p.209, Foot Note No. 50: Thrippunithura Church Archives, Bishop's Letters, No. 5.
 64. ATJS p.211, Foot Note No. 59: Thrippunithura Church Archives, Bishop's Letters, No. 5.

13. Canonical erection of the Third Order of Discalced Carmelites (TOCD) at Mannanam on 8th December 1855.⁶⁵

14. The traditional indigenous system of priestly formation known as the Malpanate system was suppressed by Baccinelli. In its place four seminaries were started for the Syrians at Elthuruth, Vazhakulam and Mannanam for the Syrians and at Verapoly for the Latins.⁶⁶ The authorisation letter of the parish Yogam for the candidate known as desakkuri was also suppressed by the same bishop.⁶⁷ A common Seminary for the Latins and Orientals under the Carmelites (OCD) was erected at Puthenpally on 15th August 1866. It was decided that only those who are trained in this Seminary will be ordained priests!⁶⁸

15. The Statutes and Decrees of Verapoly by Archbishop Leonard Mellano and attempts for a complete latinisation. It deals with the following topics: 1. Faith, 2. Sacraments 3. Sacramentals 4. Clerical discipline 5. On the laity 6. Administration of temporalities.⁶⁹

16. Erection of the Syro-Malabar Vicariates of Trichur and Kottayam by the document Quod Jampridem of Pope Leo XIII dated May 20, 1887.⁷⁰

17. The Apostolic Constitution Orientalium Dignitas of 1894 Circular appreciating the venerable heritage of the Eastern

65. PPTC p.185; It was first called "Servants of the Immaculate Mother of Mount Carmel" and later "Tertiary Discalced Carmelite Order = TOCD; From 1958 it began to be called "Carmelites of Mary Immaculate" = CMI.

66. ATJS 216, Foot Note No. 90; Nagam Aiya Travancore State Manual, II, 198; Ambrosius, Hierarchia, IV, p. 340.

67. ATJS p. 216, Foot-Note No. 91; Bernard of St Thomas, The Thomas Christians, Vol. II, pp. 264- 265.

68. PPCS p. 105

69. Panathanam Martin, The Canonical Reforms of Leonard Mellano, (Doctoral Thesis- unpublished), Rome, 1976; Latin customs, practices, devotions, discipline, administration, sacramentals, etc. are enforced by these statutes.

70. Vithayathil Varkey, The Origin and Progress of the Syro-Malabar Hierarchy, Kottayam, 1980, pp. 112-113; Koodapuzha XKBC. p.505.

Churches. of Vicar Apostolic A. Medlycott on 15th October 1889 and norms regarding the ministry of priests.⁷¹

18. The Diocesan Synod Changanacherry convoked by the Vicar Apostolic Charles Lavigne. in 1888. Its decisions were against the ecumenical movement known as Jathiakya Sangham under the common leadership of the Jacobites and Catholics. Decisions were given regarding also Fasts, Feasts, customs etc.⁷²

C. UNDER INDIGENOUS PRELATES: 1896-1999

In 1896 the two Vicariates of Trichur and Kottayam were reorganised as the Vicariates of Changanacherry, Trichur and Ernakulam were erected with indigenous Oriental bishops. The people and the clergy fought for centuries to regain their own ecclesial heritage and finally they did succeed to get bishops of their own Church. Subsequently the community entrusted the leadership to their own bishops. But the native bishops trained in the seminaries by the western missionaries after the western pattern faithfully followed up the tradition of their Latin predecessors! With rare exception the clergy and religious too followed the same path of their bishops. As the heads of the local churches the Syro-Malabar bishops became custodians of the Latin traditions which they have inherited from their predecessors. Moreover, they added some more Latin liturgical regulations as their own. They were taken from the *Rituale (Rituals) Romanum* of the Roman Church. The statutes of Bishop Matthew Mackil, the Vicar Apostolic of Kottayam, is a collection of this kind.

I. The "Book of Decrees" published by Mar Matthew Mackil of Changanacherry. It is mainly a compilation of the previous canons and directives introduced by the Latin bishops. Its main sources are the following:

a). The Pastoral Letter on "The Regulations which the Syrian Rite Churches and priests should observe" issued by Leonard Mellano in 1871

71. ATJS p.243.

72. (ed) P.J. Sebastian, Nalagamam of Father Palakunnel, (Malayalam) Changanacherry, 1972, pp. 288-293; XKBC p. 540.

b) The Statutes and Decrees of Verapoly decreed by Mellano in 1879

c) The Regulations published by Msgr. Charles Lavigne, the Vicar Apostolic of Kottayam, in 1871

d) The Pastoral letter of Bishop Lavigne in 1891 regarding Vicars Forane.⁷³

II. The archdioceses of Changanacherry and Ernakulam and the diocese of the Syro-Malabar Church have published statutes. But these statutes have almost faithfully followed the juridical set up which was introduced here during the Latin period.

III. After the erection of the Sacred Congregation for the Oriental Churches in 1917 many directives were given by the same Congregation mainly regarding the restoration and renewal of the Syro-Malabar liturgy.⁷⁴

IV. The Syro-Malabar hierarchy was partially established in 1923.

V. The Syro-Malabar Church was made a Major Archiepiscopal Church on

December 16, 1991. The hierarchical structure is to protect and promote the venerable heritage of the Church of the Thomas Christians. This office becomes meaningful and ecclesial to that extent in which their occupants understand, appreciate and live by this venerable heritage. This brief historical survey in this last section unveils to us the extent to which this Church has been alienated from its own heritage.

CONCLUSION

We have already made a brief ecclesiological and historical survey of the Church in general and the Church in India in particular. The Vatican Council II. has set the norm for the renewal and reconciliation of the Churches. The return to the authentic sources of the Church is prescribed as the norm and method by the Council for achieving this goal. By following

73. ATJS pp. 251-254.

74. Roman Documents on Syro-Malabar Liturgy, Enlarged and up-dated Edition, OIRSI, No. 216, Kottayam, 1999.

this method we have started by clarifying the venerable heritage of the Church and proceeded to the vicissitudes of history where the secular forces seem to have made inroads into its canonical and administrative structures. It was the normal consequences of a situation where the Church had become the official religion of the Roman Empire.

It is in this context the unique importance of the venerable heritage of the Eastern Church of the Thomas Christians of India becomes obvious. As they were free from political interference they succeeded to preserve and foster their earliest Christian heritage which they called the "Thomayude Margam" (Law of Thomas). The life-style which they developed was "Indian in culture, Christian in religion and Oriental in worship. This indigenous ecclesiology could maintain their unity, faith and communion. But the arrival of the Portuguese in the 16th century and the subsequent three centuries of Latin rule over them changed the situation. Their unity is shattered, liturgy mutilated and discipline and spirituality conformed to the Latin pattern.

As we are drawing near to the dawn of the third millennium it is the right and duty of the theologians of this great country to study the authentic sources of the Church and contribute our legitimate share for the renewal and reconciliation of the Churches. The Catholic Church is the communion of Churches which have equal rights and obligations. As the members of an individual Church of apostolic origin with equal rights and obligations the Eastern Theological Association of India has accepted this challenge of the time for the Kingdom of God.

SYOND OF DIAMPER AND THE SUBSEQUENT EVENTS WHICH LED TO THE COONAN CROSS OATH OF 1653

- Rev. Dr. Joseph Perumthottam

The syond of Diamper marked a turning point in the history of the Indo-oriental Church. The Mar Thoma Christians were obliged under severe punishment to have no relation with the Chaldean Patriarch. Gouvea's *Jornada do Arcebispo de Goa*, published in 1606 from Coimbra together with the Acts of the Synod (*Synodo Diocesano*), presented a distorted picture of the Church of the Mar Thoma Christians. It pictured her as had been heretical whom Archbishop Menezis made catholic by means of the synod. For the European readers this work of Gouvea was the main source of information about the Church of India. Consequently several historians simply repeated what Gouvea had written about the orthodoxy of the Thomas Christians. The Thomas Christians were pained at the accusation of heresy. They were also sad about terminating their age-old relation with, the Chaldean Patriarch. They expressed their grievance in a testimony, about which the Chaldean Patriarch Mar Audouin, basing on the memorials contemporary to the synod, reported to Pope Pius IX on 19 March 1876 in the following words:

"The Latin missionaries gathered the synod of Diamper with the aim, as they said, of purifying our Chaldean rite from the Nestorian errors which had been introduced there; and as we did not know the European languages, and as we did not have any defenders who spoke the same, they deceived us, got our signatures, and wrote things which we did not understand, as if we had pledged not to receive a bishop or a prelate, if not Latin".¹

1. ACO[=Archivio Congregazione Orientale], Acta.[1876] 9, f. 259r.

This is supported by letters of Bishop Francis Ros in 1603, and of John Campori and Albert Laerzio in 1604.² The following is the substance of these letters:

1. Not a single canon was discussed or altered, so much so that there was no form of a synod.
2. The participants did not understand the meaning, and they put their signatures as they were persuaded by Fr. Ros.
3. Some decrees were not read publicly and some canons were arbitrarily added by Menezes after the synod.

Thus we see that the Thomas Christians were in general unhappy about the Syond of Diamper. They had the feeling of being deceived, and they reacted. However Menezes wanted to enforce its decrees. He made a futile attempt to get papal approval of the decrees. In the archives of the Oriental Congregation, Rome, we have the following information regarding the matter:

The Syond of Diamper was held under Clement VIII. The historian Raulin says that it was approved by that Pontiff. Until now no act related to that has been found out³. Attempts made to find out an act of approbation of this syond either in the Secretariat of the Briefs or in the Pontifical Vatican Archives have not come out successful until now.⁴

In spite of these facts, an impression was created that the decrees of the synod were approved by the Pope. Under the Latin rule starting from 1599 the synod acquired greater momentum. Its decrees began to influence the ecclesial life-style of the Thomas Christians causing great loss to the oriental identity of their Church. The reaction of the Thomas Christians against the latinizing policy of the missionaries finally reached its climax in the event of the Coonan Cross Oath of 1653.

A. Church subjected to Latinization

The Church of the Mar Thoma Christians was gradually subjected to many-faceted latinization, in the liturgical life, spirituality, theological outlook, disciplinary system, other customs and traditions etc.

ARSI = Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu.

2. ARSI. Goa 15, ff. 155-6, 176-9, 196-200, 209.

3. ACO. Acta [1876] 9, f. 259r.

4. ACO, Caldei [1848-69] 1, Ristretto [Feb. 1865], Cap. 1, Art. 2 2/24.

In 1599 Francis Ros, S.J. was appointed the first Latin prelate to rule over the Mar Thoma Christians. Subsequently on August 4, 1600 the Church was put under the Portuguese *padroado* jurisdiction. Bishop Ros knew well the anti-Diamper feeling of the Christians. So he convoked another diocesan synod⁵ in 1603 with the cooperation of the clergy and the people. That too did not produce the intended result. Then he made a diocesan Statute in 1606⁶ through which he succeeded to reintroduce the previous regulations in a more appealing manner, and thus stabilized the process of latinization.

In the absence of the traditional Syrian Metropolitan as the head of the Church, greater responsibility to safe-guard the oriental identity of the Church against the process of latinization fell on the Archdeacon. He enjoyed traditional powers and autonomy in the ecclesiastical administration which in the changed situation confronted with the Latin approach of jurisdiction. During the initial years of the Latin rule there had been harmony between Bishop Ros and the Archdeacon. Gradually it was lost as Bishop Ros disregarded the traditional privileges and powers of the Archdeacon and the tension even reached a climax, by 1609 when Bishop Ros excommunicated the Archdeacon. The conflict continued with varied intensities.

The Church suffered a great loss at this time. Its traditional head, the *Metropolitan and Gate of All-India* had jurisdiction over the whole of India and its confines. By a decree dated December 3, 1609⁷, the Church was territorially limited. The decree was implemented by Menezes on Dec. 22, 1610 by dividing India into four *padroado* sees of Goa, Cochin, Kodungallore and Mylapore⁸. The Mar Thoma Christians were divided between the sees of Kodungallore and Cochin along with the Latins. This was an act which ignored the Syriac identity of the Church of the Thomas Christians. They could maintain their rite only in the limited area between the rivers Pampa and Bharathapuzha. It arrested the free growth of this Oriental Church. The Church is not yet fully liberated from this confinement.

BPP = Bullarium Patronatus Portugalliae.

5. ARSI, Goa 15, f.155

6. Bibliotheca Vaticana, Fondo Borgiano Indiano, 18. The Malayalam copy of the Statute.

7. BPP, II, 12-13

8. BPP, II, 14-17

In the conflict between Bishop Ros and the Archdeacon, Fr. Stephen Britto, S.J. had criticized the policy of Bishop Ros and sided with the Archdeacon. When Britto succeeded Bishop Ros, the Thomas Christians were very happy and they gave him a warm reception. It showed that they were not just anti-Latin.⁹ The friendship of Britto with the Archdeacon was even criticized by the other Jesuits. But this friendship did not last long. Britto did not like the presence of other Religious, the Dominicans, who had begun mission work among the Thomas Christians at the invitation of the Archdeacon¹⁰. Britto continuously opposed the desire of the Thomas Christians to have other Religious. The decision of the Propaganda Congregation to allow other Religious to work in the Indian mission was not executed in the case of Malabar due to the opposition of the Archbishop. Even the Bull of Pope Urban VIII in 1633, permitting all the Religious to enter Malabar under pain of excommunication to any one who prevented any Religious was a failure¹¹.

There were also other reasons of conflict. The Archbishop could not be at peace with the traditional administrative system of the church assemblies. Another complaint against Britto was that he did not know Syriac. Therefore the Archdeacon expressed his desire to appoint a coadjutor who knew Syriac. His preference was for the Dominicans, who, he thought, would respect their Syriac traditions. Another reason of tension was the opposition of the Archbishop against the Religious congregation of St. Thomas called Recollects. It was meant for those who desired contemplative life in solitude in the model of the East Syrian monasticism. There were also complaints against the seminary training, and it was decided not to send students to the seminary.

The claim of monopoly of Jurisdiction by the Jesuits over the Christians and the resulting rivalry between themselves and the Dominicans often destroyed peace of the Church. The rela-

APF = Archivum Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide.

– Thomas Xtians were basically anti foreign rule at the time of the Dutch later – Oral tradition Orthodox position: methodological position Source (MSS)

9. APF, SOCG 189, ff. 334-339, a report dated February 20, 1625.

10. APF, SOCG 105, ff. 168-9

11. ARSI, Goa 50, f. 102.

tion between Britto and the Thomas Christians may be so summarised: whenever the customs and traditions of the Christians were ignored, and the rights and privileges of their Archdeacon were overlooked, the Christians protested. Archbishop Britto himself knew this well and he asserted once:

“From my long experience I can say that much evil has been caused to this Church whenever the prelate turned against him [Archdeacon]”.¹²

The successor of John Britto was Archbishop Francis Garcia. He was from the very beginning determined to put an end to the traditional system of Church government of the Thomas Christians and to establish that of the Latin instead. But the Archdeacon being the indigenous leader of the Christian community and the champion of safeguarding its Indo-oriental identity, was duty-bound to defend this age-old system of church-government. Consequently, the whole period of Garcia’s rule was a continuous struggle between himself and the Archdeacon, and it ended up in the event of 1653.

In creating such a situation leading to the Coonan Cross Oath, the part played by Francis Garcia is not insignificant. His own predecessor Stephen Britto had already expressed his fear and anxiety of a probable future catastrophe. He wrote to the Jesuit General on Dec. 29, 1639:

“We are very anxious about what might happen in the future when I shall no longer be there by the side of my successor, seeing that he has a harsh temperament”.¹³

Garcia began doing things all alone. There started a flow of mutual accusation between the two. Garcia tried to terminate the Congregation of St. Thomas, the Recollects, by dissuading the new applicants from joining it, by advising the inmates to leave the institution and by rejecting the candidates presented by the superior for tonsure.¹⁴ With regard to other Religious too he followed the policy of his predecessor. The attempt of the bishop of Cochin to implement the instruction of the propaganda congregation and the Brief of the Pope which demanded to al-

12. ARSI, Goa 18, ff. 139-140. Letter of Britto to the General on Jan. 1, 1633.

13. ARSI, Goa 68-I, f. 361v.

14. ARSI, Goa 68, ff. 15-16

low other Religious work in Malabar failed due to the opposition of the king of Portugal and of Garcia. Garcia continued to oppose the promulgation of the papal Brief on the pretexts of the rights and privileges of the Portuguese Padroado.¹⁵

The aspirations and grievances of the Archdeacon and the Christians were well expressed in a petition they submitted to the Viceroy when he visited Cochin. They complained against the harsh rule of the Jesuits and the inadequate clerical formation. They requested for a prelate who knew Syriac, suggesting to appoint a Syrian or a Dominican friar of higher qualities.¹⁶ Here we see that the main concern of the Thomas Christians was proper clerical formation and the preservation of their Syriac Rite; the prelate could be a Syrian or a Dominican friar who would be evidently a Latin. During this meeting the Archdeacon produced before the Viceroy a document signed by Britto which recognized the traditional rights and powers of the Archdeacon, which was another serious concern of the Christians.

Still the situation did not change, and even became worse. Garcia began to call the Thomas Christians schismatics. The baselessness of such an accusation was asserted by the bishop of Cochin in his report to the king, which says:

"Only because the Christians of Malabar was asking for missionaries of other Religious orders..., the Jesuits were calling them schismatics and disobedient, while in truth they were not. He pointed out that by giving an inadequate education the Jesuits were keeping the native priests ignorant and their Church as a province of the blind".¹⁷

The bishop of Cochin made a final attempt by publishing the papal Brief allowing all the Religious orders to work in the missions of India and Japan. Then the Jesuits propagated that the Brief was unauthentic.

In 1647, disregarding the traditional position of the Archdeacon, who is also the ex-officio Vicar General, Garcia appointed a Portuguese priest his Vicar General. During 1648-9 the Archdeacon wrote letters to Rome and to the Oriental Patriarchs¹⁸ in-

15. APF, SOCG 109, ff. 117-127.

16. ARSI, Goa 68, ff. 12-16, 18-21. The Portuguese version of the petition. Cf. J. Kollaparambil, *St. Thomas Christian Revolution*, 73-83.

17. AHEI, LM 25, ff. 118-9. Cf. Kollaparambil, *Revolution*, 87-8.

18. Vincenzo Maria, *II Viaggio all'Indie Orientali*, Roma 1672, 153

forming the situation. The Coptic Patriarch of Alexandria responded by sending Mar Atallah, a Catholic Metropolitan of the Syrian Rite. At Mylapore the Metropolitan was taken under custody by the Jesuits there.

The Thomas Christians believed that Mar Atallah had been sent by the Pope to govern them. They requested Garcia's help to release Mar Atallah promising him that they would continue to recognize him as their true prelate even if Atallah were sent by the Pope. Garcia replied: Even if the Patriarch were sent by the Supreme Pontiff, we cannot grant him to you, for he has not brought the beneplacet of our king.¹⁹ Seeing that Garcia was adamant and considering the Jesuits who imprisoned the Patriarch sent by the Pope as schismatics, the Archdeacon and the leaders wrote to the ecclesiastical and civil authorities of Cochin and the superiors of all the Religious orders informing them of the situation. To the Prior of the Dominicans the Archdeacon wrote:

"You fathers know that on orders from Our Lord Jesus Christ St. Thomas came to these parts, and with zealous works gave origin to this Church. The St. Thomas Christians do not like the way the Society governs this Church now... They do what they want; we too shall do what we want".²⁰

Mar Atallah was not allowed to enter Malabar not because the Jesuit thought that he was a heretic. He was detained in the Jesuit College at Mylapore. The rector of this college wrote to Garcia on Sept. 1, 1652 that he could not find anything in Mar Atallah against the Catholic faith. Still he wanted the Archbishop to see that Mar Atallah might not meet the Mar Thomas Christians.²¹

Archbishop Garcia decided to send Mar Atallah to Goa to be presented to the Inquisitors. As the ship with Mar Atallah on board was approaching Cochin, the Archdeacon with the community assembled at Mattancherry and again made efforts to meet the Patriarch to examine the credentials and to verify the identity, promising the authorities their support to punish

19. APF, SOCG 234, f. 338.

20. ARSI, Goa 50, ff. 83-84.

21. ARSI, Goa 21, f. 23.

him if found guilty.²² Garcia did not yield in spite of the attempts²³ of some Jesuits, the captain of Cochin, the Commissary of the Inquisition and the General of the Fleet to satisfy the request of the Christians. As a last attempt the leaders of the Christians requested the Archbishop to meet the people and to console them. This too failed and the ship set sail for Goa.

Meanwhile a rumour was spread that Mar Atallah was drowned. The disappointed Christians assembled in the church of Our Lady of Life at Mattancherry and resolved with a Solemn Oath²⁴ not to obey Archbishop Garcia or any other prelate from the Society of Jesus and not to admit any Jesuits to their churches. It happened on Jan. 3, 1653, and began to be known as Coonan Cross Oath. The following is a version of the oath:

"Therefore, being so seriously offended, we gathered together in the church of the same place, where, having touched the Holy Gospels before the main altar and the image of the crucifix, we took the oath, never again to admit as our pastor the lord Francis Garcia, or anybody else from the Society (of Jesus), nor to admit these priests from the said Society into Malabar (Serra) or within our Churches, till they made amendments for the injuries and offences with which we have been inflicted by them, both in the violent dismissal of the Patriarch, and in many other things before his arrival".²⁵

The above narration of the oath gives us some hints on the reasons that led the Christians to take such an oath. They 'were the injuries and offences with which the Thomas Christians were inflicted' by the Jesuits. What were the injuries and offences? A letter written by 13 priests and 31 laymen to the captain and governor of Cochin sheds some light on the matter. The relevant part of the letter is given below:

".....We, therefore, called meetings and resolved, he who pays no attention to the order of the Supreme Pontiff and of the Holy Mother Church of Rome is not our prelate, nor shall we obey the said prelate. And with the Fathers of St Paul, enemies of us and of the Holy Mother Church of Rome, we shall have no friendship, nor shall we pay any attention to the Archbishop of

22. APE, SOCG 232. ff. 124v. 133. 137v, 356.

23. APE, SOCG 231, ff. 137-38, 355v

24. APE, SOCG 232, ff. 177, 121, 129v, 133, 138, 142 35-353

25. transl. from a Latin manuscript. APE. SOCG 234. f. 324.

their order, until we shall see the Patriarch with our own eyes.... And we have made an Archbishop by the order and command of the Patriarch, who came by the mandate of the blessed Supreme Pontiff and of the Holy Mother Church of Rome.... And in case the Patriarch cannot be produced, he having been killed by the Fathers of St. Paul, let another person of any of the four Religious Orders come by order of the Supreme Pontiff, one who knows Syriac and can teach us and help us with our offices, but except the Fathers of St Paul whom we do not at all want, because they are enemies of us and of the Holy Mother Church of Rome....For the sake of the Supreme Pontiff and of Holy Mother Church of Rome work hard to get the Patriarch back and to make us live in peace and tranquillity, because we always lived obedient as children of the Holy Mother Church of Rome, and so we desire very much to live as before".²⁶

Thus the Oath was made on the ground that Garcia and the Jesuits disobeyed the orders of the Pope by taking away the prelate whom the Pope, as they believed, had sent to govern them²⁷. It was therefore far from being a gesture of disobedience to the Supreme Pontiff, as has often been accused of by the missionaries, but rather an affirmation of their fidelity to the Holy See.

That the Thomas Christians never intended to disobey the Pope was testified by Garcia himself. Writing to Hyacinth of Vincent, OCD, the Apostolic Commissary, he stated:

"I know also that they never denied obedience to the Supreme Pontiff, at least in the external forum....it is sufficiently clear that they profess that the Armenian (Mar Atallah) was sent by the Supreme Pontiff of Rome, and that everything the arch-deacon did he did in the name of the said Armenian, sent as they say, by the Supreme Pontiff of Rome.Hence at least in the external forum it is needless to work for reducing them to the obedience of the Supreme Pontiff, for so far they have not denied it".²⁸

AHEI = Arquivo Historico do Estado da India, Goa.

26. AHEI, LM 25, ff. 12-1. Cf. Kollaparambil, Revolution, 159-63.

27. ARSI, Goa 68, f. 102.

28. ARSI, Hoa 68, f. 326.

The latter also confirms that the fundamental concern of the Thomas Christians was always their Syriac Rite, and they wanted that their prelate be one who knows this rite and who is able to teach them their rite. They were less concerned about who ruled them, whether a Latin or a Syrian, a foreigner or a native. Even after this critical event they were ready to receive any Latin Religious other than the Jesuits as their prelate, provided he would respect their Syriac patrimony. It was this basic and just desire of the Christians that was continuously disrespected under the *Padroado* rule. The Synod of Udayamperur paved the way for a systematic latinization of the Church of the Thomas Christians, which the *Padroado* prelates effectively implemented. The Thomas Christians, reacted and their antipathy reached a climax in the event of the Coonan Cross Oath.

Ecumenical Implications

The decision taken by the Mar Thoma Christians was the result of a gradual process, at the core of which was a deep affection for the apostolic heritage and an unfailing desire to preserve the oriental identity and the centuries old customs and privileges of their Church. The revolt of January 1653 was a strong public reaction of the Mar Thoma Christians against the latinizing policy of the Portuguese *Padroado* rule.

During the subsequent years, especially during the rule of Mar Chandy Parampil, most of the Christians came under the legitimate authority. A minority adhered to Archdeacon Thomas Parampil who had led the revolt and who became invalidly and illegitimately ordained bishop. The pseudo-bishop began to be called Mar Thoma I. Although the schism formally came into being when he and his chief companion Ittithomman Cathananr were publicly excommunicated, his followers, about 30000 in number, were like the rest of the Christians in everything except that their bishop was not legitimately consecrated and that they did not obey their legitimate prelate.²⁹ Attempts were made during the time of Mar Thoma II for reconciliation.³⁰ But the project failed due to the negative attitude of the Carmelite Joseph Sebastiani.³¹

29. Sathyavedacharithram, Cunemau [1872], 202.

30. APF, SOCG 490, ff. 78-76.

31. APF, CP. 30, ff. 341-344

Further attempts were made by the successors of Mar Thoma II for reunion. One demand of Mar Thoma IV was that the Pope should confirm him as the bishop of Malabar³². The followers of Mar Thoma IV expressed their desire to be governed by the Carmelite Vicar Apostolic together with Mar Thoma IV, and that it should be in conformity with their ancient customs and traditions. Having failed to secure a reply from Rome, Mar Thoma IV entered into contact with the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch. Gradually the separated brothers, under their leaders came into closer relation with the Jacobite prelates of Antioch and finally effected the formation of the Jacobite Church of India.

The synod of Diamper had two basic goals: Latin rule over the Thomas Christians and latinization of their customs and traditions. The reunion attempts did not succeed mainly because the Latin missionaries would not change their policy of latinization and their desire for power and authority. The missionaries could not appreciate and accept the ecclesial traditions of the Thomas Christians which were different from theirs. Perhaps such an attitude is the real stumbling block on the way to ecumenism even today.

Mar Thoma Vidyaniathan, Changanacherry

32. APF, CP. 109, f. 68.

DIMENSIONS AND PERSPECTIVES OF ORIENTAL THEOLOGY

- Rev. Dr. Joseph Kallarangatt

This paper is about the method of doing theology especially in the eastern direction. Its central thrust will be an investigation into the sources, principles and methods of eastern way of christian thinking. There is a distinction between what oriental theology is and what an oriental theological system of thought is.¹ In the classical theology of Latin tradition, it has been expressed by calling theology a habit, a particular kind of disposition which fits human mind to deal successfully and happily with some aspect of reality. Theology is the highest of the habits of mind that a christian man or woman can acquire.² In this paper we deal with the very oriental ethos of christian thinking. We have also made use of certain western theologians either because they have popularized the oriental theology by their deep knowledge in eastern traditions or because they have clarified the eastern method of doing theology.

Syriac Orient, Greek East and Latin West

The idea that the early christian tradition was limited to its Greek and Latin modes of thought is still prevalent. This assumption distorts historical reality and weakns greatly our understanding of the roots of christian theology and spirituality. According to a pattern familiar from many standard handbooks, christian tradition is to be divided historically into the Latin west and the Greek east. Such a dichotomy is both ill-fated and deficient, for it thoroughly disregards the existence of the Syriac ori-

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- 1 Aidan Nichols, op, *The Shape of Catholic Theology* (Edinburgh: 1991),13.
 - 2 Y. Congar, *Theologia est altissimus inter habitus intellectuales acquisitos hominis christiani*, *La foi et la theologie* (Paris: 1962), 192.

ental christian churches which constitute an important stream of christian tradition, quite distinct from the other two familiar streams . Three worlds, three cultures, three visions went to the making of the christian church; the jewish (semitic), the hellenistic and the latin. Each of them produced its own characteristic theology.³ There is the Syriac Orient, the Greek East and the Latin West. "But none of these traditions were isolated from others, for not only do they have common roots in the gospel message, but throughout their existence they have always interacted with one another, directly and indirectly and often in unexpected way".⁴ They are correlated. They share a great deal in common. They go back to the same root. Each tradition also manifests many factors which can still be shared with other traditions. That means that the Syriac Orient has a great deal it can enlighten the Greek east and the Latin west.⁵

The oriental Syriac Christian churches have a unique role since they are representatives of and to some degree direct heirs to , the semitic world out of which christianity sprang.⁶ Although syriac christianity soon came under the very strong influence of Greek speaking christianity, its earliest literature is usually expressed in a manner much more characteristic of the semitic and biblical world out of which it grew. Among the eastern christian churches , the Syriac churches were the most flourishing one. "In the formative period of christianity no other group of churches can prove a more dynamic and creative record of service to gospel and to human culture".⁷

Syriac christianity is Asian christianity. The christianity in India illustrates this reality well. Before the arrival of the Portuguese, christianity was represented here only by Syriac Orient, the native Asian christianity.⁸ "In contrast to the Latin west and Greek east the Syriac Orient represents indigenous asian

3 J. Danielou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity* (London: 1965), i.

4 S. Brock, *The Syriac Fathers on Prayer and the Spiritual Life* (London: 1987), xxxiii.

5 Brock, "Relevance of Syriac Studies", *The Harp*, vol. I (1988), 12.

6 S. Brock, *The Syriac Fathers on Prayer and the Spiritual*, x.

7 R. Murray, "The Characteristics of East Syriac Christianity", in N. C. Garsoian et alii (eds) *East of Byzantine: Syria and Armenia in the Formative Period* (Washington: 1982), 14.

8 S. Brock, "Relevance of Syriac Studies", 10.

christianity, which took very easily root in India and it is blessed with the absence of any association with european colonialism".⁹ Indian christianity was not a colonial type of christianity. The Indian christians, above all, those who belong to the traditions of syriac christianity, portray particularly an Asian mould of christianity with its own uncommon spiritual and cultural heritage, a heritage truly to be proud of. For the Latin west and Greek East the study of Syriac brings an enrichment of an element that is absent from their traditions. It is often enough a new dimension, of christian tradition.¹⁰

The theology that developed outside the Roman empire constitutes the syriac christian heritage.¹¹ The st Thomas christian tradition in India constitutes an essential sector of this heritage. The Church of the Thomas christians produced a style of life which was shaped by the social, cultural, political and religious background of that period. Their liturgical and hierarchical linkage with the church of Seleucia-Ctesiphon was founded on their Thomistic, linguistic, cultural, territorial and commercial similitudes. The neighbouring Church of Persia also shared the same Thomas tradition. The presence of the jewish colonies of traders of spices from the middle east from 10th cent. B.C. and the use of Syriac as the commercial language brought these two churches into closer relation. As it was the custom in the Greco-Roman world the regional groupings of the churches paved the way for the Thomas christian as well for sharing the same liturgical tradition with their neighbouring church of Persia.¹²

Principal Sources and Methods of Oriental Theology

Faith of the Church is in the Faith traditions of the Churches

In general we can say that oriental theology is grounded on the sources of faith namely scriptures, tradition, liturgies, fathers, monasticism, asceticism, mysticism, spiritual writers,

9 Brock, "Relevance of Syriac Studies...", 11

10 Brock, "The Relevance of Syriac Studies", 12.

11 R.C. Bondi, "The Spirituality of the Syriac Speaking Christians", in B. McGinn et alii, (eds), *Christian Spirituality: Origins to the Twelfth Century* (New York: 1988), 152.

12 X. Koodapuzha, *Oriental Churches an Introduction* (Kottayam: 1996), 42.

martyriology, fasting, penance, abstinence, prayer etc. Its basic concern is that faith is to be explained in the light of the faith traditions of the church. Theology comes from prayer, meditation, contemplation, fasting, abstinence and ascetical life.¹³

It is a particularly significant thing that Vatican II has promoted a very strong eastern sense of theology. The Council says: What has already been said about legitimate variety we are pleased to apply to differences in theological expressions of doctrine. In the investigation of revealed truth, east and west have used different methods and approaches in understanding and proclaiming divine things. It is hardly surprising then, if sometimes one tradition has come nearer than the other to an apt appreciation of certain aspects of a revealed mystery or has expressed them in a clearer manner. As a result, these various theological formulations are often to be considered as complementary rather than conflicting. With regard to the authentic theological traditions of the oriental, we must recognize that they are admirably rooted in holy scriptures, fostered and given expression in liturgical life, and nourished by the living tradition of the apostles and by the writings of the fathers and spiritual authors of the east. They are directed toward a right ordering of life, indeed toward a full contemplation of christian truth. ...This entire heritage of spirituality and liturgy, of discipline and theology, in their various traditions, belongs to the full catholic and apostolic character of the church.¹⁴

The conciliar teaching is repeated in the Instruction: The eastern rites trace their origins to the Alexandrian, Antiochene, Armenian, Chaldean and Constantinopolitan traditions. These churches have jealously retained the symbolic biblical theology, explained at great length by the fathers. They preserve the sense of the awesome and inexpressible mystery which surrounds and connotes the celebrative act. In the texts and in their whole spirit, they maintain the sense of liturgy with formulas that are both rich and meaningful as unceasing doxology, as petition for forgiveness and as uninterrupted epiclesis. These churches boast of

13 H.J.D. Drijvers, "East of Antioch; Forces and Structures in the Development of Early Syriac Theology" in his *East of Antioch* (London: 1984), 18.

14 UR 17.

a spirituality drawing directly from sacred scripture and consequently, a theology less subjected to strictly rational categories. For historical and cultural reasons, they have maintained a more direct continuity with the spiritual atmosphere of christian origins, a prerogative that is ever more frequently considered even by the Occident not as a sign of stagnancy and backwardness but of precious fidelity to the sources of salvation.¹⁵ These two historical documents give enough evidence regarding the sources of eastern theology.

Oriental Theology is Scriptural

Early syriac christianity and theology can justly be portrayed as the output of a creative and fecund meditation upon the scripture.¹⁶ The most fundamental tenet of Syriac theology is its biblical rootedness. Theology is the interpretation of Bible for them. Theology was the best means for propagating Bible. Speaking about St Ephrem, Meyendorff says: "An orthodox Nicene Christian living in the midst of doctrinal controversies involving Arianism, Manicheism, Marcionism, as well as the still powerful pagan tradition and judeo-christian polemics, Ephrem is always able to transcend frozen formulas and to maintain that extraordinary biblical freshness that gives the early syriac christian tradition a flavor of true universality. This is particularly true of Ephrem's theology of the incarnation, his sacramental typology and his understanding of ethical issues".¹⁷ The syriac tradition is soaked in the Bible and the syriac writings were full of verbal allusions as well as more direct biblical references.¹⁸

Oriental Theology is Spiritual and Monastic

Every theology is meant for spiritual updating and spiritual renewal. For that theologian should take christian asceticism earnestly. Far from being something esoteric to christianity, asceticism is native, inherent and innate to the gospel and is required of all. Specifically monastic asceticism was generated,

15 Instruction : For Applying the Liturgical Prescriptions of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches (Vatican :1996), 11.

16 The Syriac Fathers..., xxxiii

17 K.E. McVey, Ephrem the Syrian, (New York: 1989), (from the preface).

18 S. Brock, Harp of the Spirit (London: 1975), 17.

in that same process by which living the gospel began to take on ecclesial form in the earliest jewish christian churches. Monasticism was not the creation of medieval bishops. It was of early christian lay people. It gushed forth right away into christian life out of jewish prophetic asceticism which received new focus through the nucleus of Jesus own teaching. Asceticism among the christians was a practical form of living the Gospel. The existence of monastic asceticism is a theological datum which lies close to the very nerve centre of christian origins and growth. One cannot study christianity without taking into account monasticism.¹⁹ In the Indian context we have to take seriously the Ashram movement. In the present encyclical letter, *Fides et Ratio*, Pope John Paul II speaks in high esteem regarding Indian way of thinking and Indian Spirituality. "A great spiritual impulse leads Indian thought to seek an experience which would liberate the spirit from the shackles of time and space and would therefore acquire absolute value. The dynamic of this quest for liberation provides the context for great metaphysical systems. In India particularly it is the duty of christians now to draw from this rich heritage the elements compatible with their faith in order to enrich christian faith".²⁰

In the east there are no orders or congregations created as an answer to the cravings of the church militant, but one eschatological monastic state, dedicated to the other world. The monks express the consciousness of the church and orthodoxy. The cult of icons²¹ is rooted in their piety. "In fact, in the East an intrinsic link exists between liturgical prayer, spiritual tradition and monastic and ascetical life."²² For this reason precisely, a well disciplined and inspired renewal of monastic life could mean true ecclesial flourishing for them as well. Nor should it be thought that this would reduce the competence of the pastoral ministry which in fact will be better highlighted by such a robust spirituality and thus will find once more its ideal place.²³

19 Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology*, (Minnesota: 1992), 6.

20 *Fides et Ratio*, 72.

21 For a detailed understanding of the theology of icons Cf. Joseph Kallarangatt, "East as the Homeland of Iconology and Iconography", CO (1998), 26-41.

22 For details Cf. J. Kallarangatt, "Orientale Lumen: An Evaluation From the Syriac Perspective" CO 16(1995), 169-179.

23 *Orientale Lumen*.

Oriental Theology is Ecclesial

To be a theologian one must share the faith of the Church, the faith of the people of God. A theologian is not an ecclesiastical superman, but is equally bound, with all Christians, by the church's rule of faith. He is dependent on the church, epistemologically. It is necessary to be in touch with the faith of the Church. We can borrow here a useful term from Kant's epistemology and call this the ecclesiological *a priori* in theology. Ecclesial faith precedes, enters into, and organizes the concrete knowledge which theology possesses.²⁴ Christian faith is not a mere faith in the church. It is a faith which in the church and with the church, is focussed on God himself to us through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit. Church is an interpretation of the trinity. The Church is of God, of Christ and of the Spirit. So theology starts from the witness of the church's tradition and is constantly bound to that. The real object of theology is hence not the faith of the church, but the truth of God's revelation of himself to which the church's testimonies of faith witness to.²⁵ Theology is possible only within the communion of the church, on the foundation of the church and in subjection to the standard of the church's living tradition. Theology is so to speak the reflected memory of the church.²⁶

Oriental Theology is Liturgical (*Lex orandi lex credendi*)

In the east there is always a solid concern for worship. It implies that worship conceived broadly is what gives rise to theological reflection rather than the other way around.²⁷ It is the law of worship which founds or establishes the law of belief (*lex orandi lex credendi*) - rather as a foundation establishes a house or as the virtue of justice founds the law. It is not the law which makes the justice possible, not the house which establishes the foundation, not beliefs which enable worship.

Theological thinking in the church should be verifiable in the liturgical texts of the Church. The liturgical texts, writings of the Fathers and that of the spiritual writers constitute the source of theology.²⁸ As a hermeneutic of liturgy, liturgical theology

24 The Shape of Catholic Theology, 16.

25 Kasper, *Theology and Church*, (London: 1989), 8.

26 Kasper, *Theology and Church*, 6

27 Aidan Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology*, 3.

28 A. Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology*, 73.

has several traits; it should show at the outset the relationship between liturgy and living. It must always take into account the whole of life, as it comes to focus in the liturgy.²⁹

Liturgical tradition is not merely one theological source among others, rather it is the original condition within which theological reflection is done, within which the Word of God is appropriately understood. Liturgy is the locus theologicus. It is in the church of which the liturgy is the sustained expression and the life, that the various sources of theology function precisely as sources. For the liturgy has a pre-eminence in the eastern churches. The liturgical heritage in the eastern catholic churches are the basic sources of their ecclesial identity. "The eastern catholic churches, although having been influenced by the weight of western tradition, have maintained in the field of liturgy a more faithful conformity to their true traditions. It is precisely their liturgies, restored to greater authenticity and vitality eliminating that which has altered them, that could be the best starting point for a growth of their specific identity..."³⁰

"In the oriental church the greatest source of the christian faith, besides sacred scripture, is the liturgy. This is also true for the western church, but it is more vital and living in the east. Their liturgy is much more the expression of their life than ours is. And besides that, their liturgy, due to its greatest variety, contains much more of their theology than ours does. The oriental liturgy is a gold-mine...Oriental christianity is much more a life experience than a doctrinal system. We may perhaps miss a logical systematization in their theology but we must stand in wonder before the richness of their prayerful, reverential, often deeply penetrating insights that our rationalistic mind is not able to discover".³¹

"In fact the liturgy is the church itself, for, the church finds her focussing centre through which the whole world is converted to Christ, the crucified, risen, ascended, ever glorious God. In as much as the Church finds in the liturgy the full meaning of her

29 D. R. Newman, "Observations on Method in Liturgical Theology", *Worship* 57(1983), 381.

30 Instruction, 16.

31 A. Mikloshazy, *East Syriac Eucharistic Pneumatology* (Rome: 1968), 8-9.

divine-human character, thus the same happens in each member who finds in the liturgy both his own foundation and his model. The mystery of divine life reveals the mystery of human life".³²

Oriental Theology is Highly Pastoral

Theology in the first millennium in general and oriental theology in particular is pastoral. The conclusion that can be drawn from this is that theology was then regarded as necessarily and intimately a pastoral task, something usually done by servants of the community. The theology we today call patristic was thus a profoundly pastoral theology in its tenor, purpose and execution. This pastoral quality deteriorated soon in the west and theology became focused in medieval universities under the scholastics, who were academicians, not pastors.³³ Thus occurred the split between dogmatic and pastoral. There is no unifying link in modern theological systems. Vatican II has re-introduced this pastoral perspective to a certain extent.

The medieval western theology has lost much of its pastoral traits. Speaking about the western theology and its method Hans Kung Says: Thomas Aquinas, theology, unlike the more contemplative monastic theology of the church fathers and still that of Augustine, is quite essentially a rational university theology, composed by professors in the schools, and proposed basically not for the people and pastoral care, but for students and colleagues in theology. All the works of Aquinas are thoroughly sealed with the scholastic approach to learning. They are all fully composed in Latin, all are very clear, compact, concise, and dense, but impersonal and monotone. Because their approach is consistently analytic with sundry divisions and subdivisions, with edged definitions of concepts, and formal distinctions, with objections and answers with all the means of grammar, dialectic and controversies and with deep theological acumen. There is colossal use of highly developed and often over developed scholastic skill. With this style, Thomas created a new philosophical and theological synthesis for the new time, brilliant, constructed

32 E. R. Hambye, *Dimensions of Eastern Christianity* (Kottayam: 1973), 14.

33 Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology*, 18.

with methodological rigour and academic mastery, of an exceptional unity. He paved the rational basis for theology by highlighting the use of reason in theology. This was his hermeneutical and methodological foundation.³⁴

Oriental Theology Takes an Inclusio Method

The western mind admires basically the logical order. But the ideas and trains of thought of semitic authors are not to be sketched out in categories that go back to Greek philosophical method. The Syriac authors are typically semitic in the way they order their matter. An argument proceeds not by draining topics consecutively but with regular 'inclusio', circling round on itself like a discussion around a circle, step-by-step moving and going deeper.³⁵

Oriental Theology is Symbolic

Oriental theology is basically symbolic. The very nature of symbolism is its didactic character.³⁶ Symbols are to be interpreted. Interpretation is always didactic and this didache is always dynamic. The meaning of a symbol is not restricted. It avoids all kinds of literalism and definitions which are static and blunt in their effect. The most prolific and adequate means by which one can make use of the symbolic language is hymns. The roots of religious poetry in the christian church are above all to be found in Syria and palestine and it was from this area that some of the finest poets of early christianity originated.³⁷ The hymns of the Syriac Fathers make free use of typology, wordplay, paradox, repetition, and metaphor to convey to the listener or reader the richness of the reality hidden in the visible symbols.³⁸ This fundamental notion of theology is centred on his conception of the grand harmony that exists between God and all creation. Symbols and types point both to God's, existence and to his creative activity.³⁹

34 Hans Kung, *Great Christian Thinkers*, (London: 1994), 107

35 R. Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, (Cambridge: 1975), 2

36 R. Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 2.

37 S. Brock, *A Garland of Hymns from the Early Church* (Virgina: 1989), 9.

38 R. C. Bondi, "The Spirituality of the Syriac Speaking Christians", 157.

39 R. Murray, "The Theory of symbolism in Ephrem,s Theology" *PdO* 6-7 (1966-7), 1-20.

Hugo Rahner says: "Whenever the fathers unfold their theology with its veils of imagery, we discover a wealth of symbols and of truths clothed in symbols, which could give new life to our modern dogmatic expressions, perhaps still all too much dominated as they are by apologetics and canon law. The world of imagery found in the symbols of the church which the theology of the first ten centuries has preserved for us could bring about a renovation of our thinking about the church, large areas of which have, from a dogmatic point of view, become sterile".⁴⁰ After a long period of which Rahner's words were all too true, the Second Vatican Council, especially in its approach in ecclesiology and liturgy, has animated advancement in the direction proposed by Rahner and other biblical, patristic and liturgical theologians. There is no better way than to drink from the springs of the past.⁴¹

Oriental Theology is Mystical

For the easterners God is basically a mystery. This mystical approach is the long established method of the East. Contemplation on God is the means for the knowledge of God.⁴² Eastern theology is trinitarian theology. Trinity is the centre of all religious thought, pietical practices, spirituality and all the experiences.⁴³ Scholars say that the works of St Ephrem fall under the section of mysticism rather than theology.⁴⁴ A mystic is far superior to the theologian as he can see the truth by meditation on the texts. "The symbols, figures of speech, allegories, parables, and references to actual historical events are the only means at the disposal of the mystic to express the immense vision of the truth".⁴⁵ "St Ephrem is taken aback by the mystery of God in His inner trinitarian life which cannot be investigated or prayed into by any created intellect. The ontological gap between the

40 H. Rahner, *Symbole der Kirche* (Salzburg: 1964), 8

41 Murray, *Symbols of the Church and Kingdom*, 38

42 N. Nissiotis, "Interpreting Orthodoxy", *ER* 14 (1961), 5.

43 C.M. Lacugna and K. McDonnell, "Theses for a Contemporary Trinitarian Theology", *SJT* 41(1989), 192.

44 John Padijarekutt, "The Present day Relevance of St Ephrem", *The Harp*, Vol II, (June 1990), 62.

45 Padijarekutt, "The Present Day Relevance...", 62.

creator and the creatures is so great that any attempt from the part of the created intellect to understand God through definitions is outrageous and blasphemous in the eyes of St Ephrem. The proper attitude should be one of total submission of ourselves in wonder, faith and love to the unspeakable mystery that is God who has deigned to reveal himself through nature and scriptures. Therefore we may only look for gelyata - revealed things- in order to get a glimpse of God and his wonderful doings for us".⁴⁶ However eastern tradition has never made a sharp distinction between mysticism and theology. There is no christian mysticism without theology, and no theology without mysticism.⁴⁷ The use of symbolic language in poetry as well as paradoxes and allegorical imageries are the most costly tools in the hands of the mystic. Divinization is a favourite theme both in Greek fathers and St Ephrem. Analytic method is not the mode of a mystic. Syriac approach as a whole is a mystical approach.

Oriental Theology is Pneumatocentric

Eastern theology is centred on the mystery of the Holy Spirit. The root of the differences between the East and West lies in the different ways of seeing the relationship between nature and grace. While one may talk of grace, in the east there is no developed theology of created grace, which is an expression which appeared in the west in 1245. In the east the concern is with the gift and charisms of the holy spirit, in theological terms a developed pneumatology.

"In the treasury of the universal church the oriental tradition in particular has much to offer with regard to pneumatology, which could be well integrated into our thought-pattern and theological structure. In this way our theology would become oikumenic, that is universal, and therefore more catholic.. and cannot but be fruitful for the western church".⁴⁸

V. Lossky has highlighted the distinction between the east and west by means of a strong criticism pointing out that the west has no proper pneumatic approach in the whole structure of theology. "The Spirit here (in the west) is reduced to the func-

46 Padinjarekutt, "The Present day Relevance...", 63.

47 V. Lossky, *Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (London: 1973), 9.

48 A. Mikloshazy, *East Syriac Eucharistic...*, 8.

tion of a link between the two other persons and one-sidedly subordinated to the Son in his very existence in contempt of a genuine perichoresis. He thereby looses together with his hypostatic independence the personal fulness of his economic activity. The goal of christian way of life therefore becomes the imitation of Christ, no longer deification by the Spirit. The people of God are subjected to the Body of Christ, charisms are made subordinate to institution, inner freedom to imposed authority, prophetism to juridicism, mysticism to scholasticism, and the laity to the clergy, the universal priesthood to the ministerial hierarchy, and the college of the bishops to the primacy of the pope".⁴⁹

Oriental Theology is Eucharistic

Another principle that unites liturgy and the church is that the eucharist makes the church.⁵⁰ "Liturgical prayer certainly conforms and perfectly expresses the authentic deposit of faith, according to the ancient expression of the Indiculus: *legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi*, commonly synthesized as *lex orandi lex credendi*. The church, therefore understands herself in depth precisely starting from her nature as a celebrating assembly. In this sense it should not be forgotten that, if the church makes the eucharist, the eucharist makes the church to the point of becoming the criterion of conformity for the same right doctrine, as Irenaeus of Lyons reminds us: our thought is in full accord with the Eucharist and Eucharist in its turn confirms our thought".⁵¹ The question can be asked whether there is an ecclesiological presupposition of a eucharist or a eucharistic presupposition of an ecclesiology. If there are ecclesiological presuppositions of the eucharist and there certainly are - these must not be understood as involving a priority of the Church over against eucharist. The church constitutes the eucharist while being constituted by it, Church and Eucharist are interdependent, they correspond each other, they coincide, and are in some sense interchangeable and identical.⁵² Therefore the ecclesiological

49 Lossky, *Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 156-7.

50 For details cf. J. kallarangatt, "The Relation between Church and Liturgy", in G. Kollamparampil and J. Perumthottam, *Bride at the Feet of the Bridegroom* (Changanassery: 1997), 159-178.

51 Instruction, 32.

52 J. Zizioulas, "Ecclesiological Presuppositions of the Holy Eucharist", *Nicolaus* 10 (1982), 340.

presuppositions of the eucharist cannot be instituted outside the eucharist itself.

Oriental Theology is Doxological

Eastern theology is fundamentally doxological. Doxology is the grammar of theology. A rich and prodigiously developed hymnody and euchology constitute probably the most original part of the eastern liturgical celebrations. Multiple influences, predominantly syrian and Hellenic, mutually establish and enrich each other to lead to contemplation of the Christian mystery according to the global vision of the fathers of the Church. "Compiled by numerous authors, especially by monks who throughout the centuries have unceasingly dedicated themselves to prayer, the texts of Divine praise (the liturgy of the Hours) transmit to us as inheritance the very rich and inalienable patrimony of spiritual life".⁵³ Doxologies are not definitions or scientific formulations. Doxology is not merely the language of direct prayer and praise, but all forms of thought, feeling, action and hope directed and offered by believers to the living God. Doxology is therefore not predominately performative and ascriptive lines of thought, speech and action which as they are offered, open up into the living reality of God Himself.⁵⁴ Doxology is at the root of every aspect of christian theology. But since theology has lost this basic trait to a very great extent, it has yet to become doxological. Trinitarian theology is actually the best doxology.⁵⁵ Participation in the liturgy is the best means for doxology. Since liturgy is doxology, it serves to restrain theology from devolving into a theologico-religious science and the limitation of definitions. Doxology opens the door to a limitless perception of the ultimate.⁵⁶ The writings of the Fathers and the ancient christian writers were a mixture of theology, doxology, spirituality, prayer, asceticism etc.

53 Instruction, 97.

54 L. Visher (ed), "The Filioque Clause in Ecumenical Perspective" in *Spirit of God, Spirit of Christ* (London: 1981), 10.

55 C. Lacugna, "Can Liturgy Again Become a Source for Theology", *Studia Liturgica* 19 (1989), 3.

56 Lacugna, "Can Liturgy ...", 2.

Oriental Theology is Rooted in Economy

According to the eastern theological methodology economy is the core of faith ,liturgy and theology. All the liturgical texts of the east are rooted in this principle of the economy of salvation. Economy has a theocentric, christocentric and pneumatocentric aspect. It affects all the branches of theological discipline especially ecclesiology and christology. The creeds, confessions, hymns, baptismal formula etc. are examples to this truth.⁵⁷ Given the link with the fathers, the Councils, the liturgy, this is a theology much soaked in the trinity and economy- Christ and the Spirit.

Oriental Theology is Artistic and Synthetic

Western theology is more identified with science and eastern spirituality with art. There is difference between science and art. Theology is commonly described as the methodical reflection upon and systematic articulation of one's faith in God. In the west, theology is grounded upon the fact of God's particular revelation. Theology steadily assumed an academic function like that of the philosophical and natural sciences. By medieval times the scientific character of theology is an accepted fact. As an academic discipline, theology shares all the scholarly goals of other academic disciplines: it labors for historical exactitude, the conceptual rigour, systematic correlation, and interpretative accuracy. This is the mainline trait of western catholic theology.⁵⁸ The east takes its stand on the fathers and the ecumenical councils. Philosophy and reasoning assist in training theologians and for discussion, not as in latin scholasticism, to elongate doctrine by new conclusions. There is inconsiderable reference to a central magisterium. There is no Denzinger.⁵⁹ Eastern thought is pleased with synthesis than with analysis. Symbolisms perform a great role.

Oriental Theology is Aphophatic not Cataphatic

According to the oriental approach definitions are impossible in theology. When we define theological realities we are

57 For details, cf. Wainwright, *Doxology: The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine and Life* (London: 1982), 157-9.

58 F.S Fiorenza et al (eds), *Systematic Theology: Roman Catholic Perspectives* (Minneapolis: 1991),5.

59 Congar, *Diversity and Communion*, (London, 1984), 71.

putting limits to them.⁶⁰ Theology is the field of paradoxes and symbolisms. It is not the field of scientific calculations. It is the mixture of spirituality, asceticism and mysticism.⁶¹ Theology is the field of synthesis.⁶² Theoretical and purely rational approach is always foreign to syriac theology. As a result there is flexibility and dynamism in theology. God is not only the revealed, but also the apophatic, the silent, the unspeakable, the ineffable God of the Oriental monastic tradition, such a God can never be systematized.⁶³

The eastern tradition is marked by a very lively sense of the impossibility of knowing God. Hence its apophatic character. We find in the west a large number of drastically powerful accounts about the transcendence of God, the reality of which surpasses every creaturely conception or expression, but the use made of concepts and reasoning as a means of knowledge is much more active than in the east. Western scholasticism strikes easterners as being rationalism.⁶⁴

Because the emphasis in Asia has been on religious experience rather than on dogma, many maintain that Christ is better communicated, not on the purely theoretical or verbal level in an orderly presentation of doctrines, but through a shared experience. In Asia the medium of approaching the Divine or Absolute is not speech, but silence. The most effective and credible proclamation of the risen Lord is the unspoken witness of a person who has undergone a deep God-experience and whose life is transformed accordingly.⁶⁵ In Asia words are not enough to express the religiosity. It is the religious experience that transforms one's life which gives credibility to what one says and does.⁶⁶

60 S. Brock, *The Luminous Eye: Placid Lecture Series* (Moovattupuzha: 1985), 2.

61 R. Murray, "The Characteristics of the East Syriac Christianity", in N.C. Garsoian et al (eds), *East of Byzantine: Syria and Armenia in the Formative Period* (Washington: 1982), 5-6.

62 Cf. J. Beggiani, *Early Syriac Theology* (Boston: 1983) x

63 K. Tong, "A Study of Thematic Differences Between Eastern and Western Religious Thought" *JES* 10 (1973) ", 341.

64 Congar, *Diversity and Communion*, 71

65 *Instrumentum Laboris* (of Asian synod), *Losservatore Romano*, 25 feb. 1998, no 47.

66 *Instrumentum Laboris*, 48.

Oriental theology is Optimistic

By the exercise of virtue (asceticism) human freedom co-operates with the gift of God, which is uniquely conveyed in the sacraments. Everything is brightened by easter. Hence there is cosmic optimism. The world is designated to be transformed. There is an intense experience of this in the liturgy, permeated by the mystery of the trinity, by easter, by the presence of the mother of God, and the saints. This is the enigmatic character of the eastern liturgies. One could almost establish an equivalence between church, liturgy and tradition. A number of greek accounts of the church are commentaries on the liturgy or explanations on the church building. The liturgy is the communication of the mystery of the trinity.⁶⁷ It is heaven on earth. At the same time it communicates the reality of the church. The priest celebrating behind the iconostasis indicates the hidden mystery of God. The deacon institutes, as did Christ, communication between the priest and the faithful.

Oriental Theology is Ecumenical

Currently many christian theologians are turning away from an apologetic method in dealing with eastern religions and are engaging instead in the development of a worldwide ecumenical theology.⁶⁸ Western theology has very often become much confessionalistic. What we need today is an ecumenical theology. A theology in which each theology sees the other no longer as an opponent but as a partner, and which is concerned for understanding rather than separation in two directions: inwards, for the sphere of ecumenism within christianity and between the churches; outwards, for the sphere of the world 'ecumene' outside the churches and outside christianity, with its different regions, religions, ideologies and sciences.⁶⁹ Eastern churches have always maintained this ecumenical approach to theology.

67 Congar, *Diversity and Communion*, 72.

68 K. Tony, "A Study of Thematic Differences Between Eastern and Western Religious Thought", *JES* 10 (1973), 338

69 Hans Kung, *Great Christian Thinkers* (London: 1994), 214.

Oriental Theology has a Personalistic Approach

In the trinitarian doctrine the oriental tradition emphasizes person over nature, trinity over unity, whereas latin theology emphasizes nature over the persons, unity over trinity. By these two frameworks generally are referred to us their social and psychological doctrines of the trinity. A theology built entirely around 'theologia' produces a non experiential, non soteriological, non pneumatological metaphysics of the divine nature.

Oriental Theology is Contextual

When we study the history of theology from its very beginning till today, we can note that the theology that has incorporated the cultural heritage into its main line theological stream is that of the Syriac Churches. This tradition has always respected the importance of culture and civilization in the process of theologizing.

Oriental Theology is Highly Eschatological

In the field of theology the difference between east and west is both cultural and theological.⁷⁰ Cardinal Danielou in his *Origins of Western Theology* singles out certain features that make up the typical characteristic of western christian thought as early as the time of Tertullian. They indicate: a convincing interest in history, preoccupation with ethics and a profound admiration for the institution, sometimes to the point of being legalistic about it. St Augustine later on, owing to the crisis facing western civilization in his time, offered a dimension that was bound to create a dichotomy within the western christianity ever since, namely the importance of introspectiveness, of consciousness and the inner man, from which originated the important mystical, romantic and pietistic orientations of the christian west.⁷¹

The east on the other hand seems to have always been pre-occupied with an eschatological, meta-historical outlook that tends to relativise history and its problems.

70 J. Zizioulas, "Ecumenism and the Need for a Vision", *Sobornost* 10(1988), 38.

71 J. Zizioulas, "Ecumenism and the Need for Vision", 38

This has sometimes led to a thwarting of the historical and political concerns or even of missionary activity. But it has also had some positive repercussions. The institution has always been central to eastern tradition but has never been understood purely or basically in historical and legal terms. Authority in the church has always been understood in context of worship, particularly the eucharist, and was thus conditioned by the eschatological approach in two main respects: through pneumatology which makes of the institution an event, and through communion, which makes the authority of the institution constantly dependent on the community to which it belongs. This pre-occupation with eschatology has made it unavoidable to look always for the absolute. Authority is not a matter of juridical power conveyed through a code of law.⁷²

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72 Zizioulas, "Ecumenism and the Need for Vision", 38.

JESUS CHRIST, THE ONLY SAVIOUR: THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS IN THE PLURALISTIC RELIGIOUS CONTEXT OF INDIA

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1. Preliminary Observations

As we prepare ourselves to celebrate the great jubilee of 2000 years of Jesus' birth, reflections on his uniqueness are quite relevant, for a person's birthday invites us to specially recollect his uniqueness. This lies at the level of being (ontological) and of doing (functional). Jesus Christ's uniqueness consists thus in his being personally God's unique Son and in his resultant role as the world's universal mediator of salvation. How and why shall we uphold this faith-claim in the multireligious context of India?

We are well aware that the theme of Christ's uniqueness has become now-a-days a taboo and a scandal for many, including some Christian theologians, because they consider it an obstacle to inter-religious dialogue and harmony of religions. While some in the West deny, explain away or water down Christ's uniqueness, a few Christian theologians in Asia ban the issue in the name of inter-religious dialogue and brand it as a purely western "neocolonialistic" concern. This hostile approach contradicts the very spirit of dialogue, which is supposed to entail openness and readiness to listen to the other. Faith in Jesus as the only saviour is not merely a matter of the West, but of the very core of Christian faith *everywhere*; it has a global appeal and application. The biblical faith in Jesus' divinity and his uniqueness are not products of Western hegemony! The recent document of the International Theological Commission emphatically states that "the New Testament message is not compatible... with

admitting mediations parallel to that of Jesus"¹. Is not Inter-religious dialogue duty bound to dialogue with one's own fellow-faithful before it goes to dialogue with others? Dialogue *ad extra* should be preceded and accompanied by dialogue *ad intra*. This would mean that the Christian advocates of inter-faith dialogue have to be open for an *intra*-faith dialogue. Before listening to the scriptures of the other religions they have to listen to the New Testament and to the Church's official interpretation. They have also to respect the sense of the fellow faithful, at least as much as they respect the religious feelings of the adherents of other religions.

What is here at stake is the basic Christian faith in the triune God and in the Incarnation of the Logos as the *pleroma* of divine revelation and salvation (cf. Hb. 1,1; Eph. 1, 10). Faith in Jesus Christ's unique and universal mediatorship of salvation is not an isolated theme of Christian faith. This is inseparably linked with the confession of his personal identity as the Incarnate Son of God. Any denial of Jesus' uniqueness as the saviour is practically the denial of Christian faith in the incarnation of God the Son, and vice versa. It would be hence a grave and guilty misrepresentation of authentic Christian faith, should a Christian in inter-religious dialogue compromise the unique and universal role of Christ as the mediator of God's salvation. It is *against* Christian faith to reduce Jesus Christ to just *one* of the many religious symbols, mediators, saviours or "incarnations".

Certain clarifications are now in order. The term "unique" is used with regard to Jesus Christ not simply in the commonplace sense of every one of us being unique. Jesus' uniqueness as the saviour, i.e. the mediator of salvation, is a unique uniqueness. In his *being* and *function* Jesus is incomparable, unparalleled and unsurpassable. Another clarification is that by affirming Jesus' uniqueness as the saviour and him as the unique saviour of the world, we do not make any statement regarding the salvation of anyone - Christians or non-Christians: We do *not* say that either all the Non-Christians will be definitely damned, or that all the Christians will be certainly saved. What we do mean is rather that anyone's salvation is made possible ulti-

1. International Theological Commission, *Christianity and the World Religions*, Vatican, 1997, (art. 39), p. 27

mately only *through* Jesus' mediatorship. The salvific role and value of any religion or religious symbol is derived from the salvific mediatorship of Jesus Christ. The theme is thus not concerning the recipients, but the mediator of salvation; not about the question who all will be saved, but as to who mediates salvation. Just as we do not speak of the recipients of salvation, so also we do not discuss about the author or agent of salvation, but its *mediator*. No doubt, it is God who saves. Let it be now clear: in no way do we deny the possibility of salvation of the Non-Christians nor the salvific value and role of other religions and religious symbols. But we do not put them on a par with Jesus Christ, as if he were just one among them.

Another important clarification is that there is a big and crucial difference between the Christian notion of Incarnation of God and the Hindu understanding of the *Avataras*. Christian faith in the Incarnation is that God the Word (the Son of God) appropriates the human nature as his own in such a way that he, the divine person, remains since then God and man, i.e., in two natures, human and divine. On the contrary, in the Hindu *bhakti* (Vaishnavite) tradition, *avatara* is an apparent form assumed by the god Vishnu for the restoration of *dharma* for a particular time, after which he reverts to the original form. He has taken many such forms, even sub-human ones. There is no *real* becoming nor history nor eternal remaining in the assumed form. C. Rajagopalachari, an accepted Hindu scholar, writes in the preface to his second edition (1957) of the *Ramayana*: "The *Ramayana* is not history or biography. It is part of Hindu mythology" ². That the Hindus accept Jesus Christ into their *pantheon* as one of the *avataras*, cannot be hence made an argument for appealing to the Christians to do similarly, by accepting Rama or Krishna as equal to Jesus Christ, i. e., as one of the Incarnations of God. The crucial point is that whereas the notion of *avatara* does and can allow in principle and practice many avataras, the Christian idea of Incarnation cannot of is very nature admit more than one such instance. There can be either a single real Incarnation or many seeming "incarnations" of God. Many real incarnations of God are, however, an absurdity as well as an impossibility, besides a distortion of Christian faith. R. Panikkar who is alleged to have had given the impression that according to him there could be several "incarnations" of

2. *Ramayana*, Bombay, (10th ed) 1974, p.8.

the Logos, clarifies his position and affirms the uniqueness of the incarnation as follows: "The incarnated Logos is Jesus of Nazareth... If there were 'two' incarnations in the Christian sense, the two would be identical and also coincide"³.

If Christians accept the Hindu *avatars* as other instances of Incarnation this would be the distortion not only of the Christian idea of Incarnation but also of the Hindu notion of *avatara*. This equalization involves either the unwarranted reduction of *real* becoming into mere illusion or the undue exaltation of an illusory becoming to reality. In either case one contradicts the original vision and self-understanding of the respective faiths. The same is applicable to Buddhism and Islam. According to original (Hinayana) Buddhism the Buddha was only a human being who got enlightened; he was, however, not considered as an *avatara* nor an Incarnation of God. Similarly, Mohammed is according to Islam the last prophet, yet only a human being, but not the incarnate Son of God. To say that Buddha or Mohammed is an incarnation of God, contradicts the original and authentic self-understanding of Buddhism and Islam respectively! If so, why should the Christians impose upon them concepts rejected by each religious tradition? This article speaks of *Jesus* Christ, and not simply of Christ, precisely to emphasize the personal identity of Jesus and the Christ. This is done against the background of the bad Christology making its rounds in certain theological circles according to which Jesus and Christ are separated, so much so that there can be and there are others who can be equally called the Christ. Jesus is in their eyes merely one of the names and forms of the Christ. This distorted view is sold with the vague and ambiguous statement: Jesus is the Christ, but the Christ is not Jesus. We do agree that we may *distinguish* between Jesus and the Christ, accepting his many dimensions such as the historical, meta-historical, post resurrectional, eschatological, etc. We may thus hold that the Christ is not simply identical with Jesus. But this does not mean that we *separate* the Christ from Jesus or vice versa, for Jesus and the Christ are *personally* one and the same one. We know neither Christs in the plural, nor a Christ with many names, but only a Christ with the single name Jesus. Any formula that does not unambiguously maintain this personal identity is suspect of diluting and

3. "Neither Christomonism nor Christodualism", in : *Jeevadhara* XXIV (July 1994), pp. 336-338, here p. 337.

distorting authentic Christian faith. The recent document of the International Theological Commission states that “The New Testament message is not compatible... with attributing this universal mediation to the eternal Logos in isolation from Jesus”⁴.

There is an essential difference between manifestation and Incarnation of God. God manifests himself in diverse ways, through his creative presence, salvific words, liberating action etc. But in Incarnation he personally enters into history by assuming human nature as his own and eternally remaining so. Hence it is and has to be definitive, irrevocable and unsurpassable.

The advocates of a pluralistic theology of religions would hold that Jesus Christ is just one of the many incarnations of God. They argue that God incarnates himself as often as there are different peoples, cultures and times. Pushed to its extreme logical consequence, such an atomization of history would lead to demanding for every individual a separate Incarnation of God! There would be thus as many incarnations of God as there are human beings on this earth! If one does not accept the basic Christian vision of the *unity* of humanity and history, and the fact of *one* economy of salvation, one would land up in such absurd positions.

2. Uniqueness of Jesus Christ in the New Testament

The New Testament testifies to the uniqueness of Jesus Christ implicitly as well as explicitly.

A powerful testimony of the early Christian confession of Jesus’ divinity is Phil. 2, 10f., where an Old Testament passage originally referring to the worship of God (Is. 45, 23f.) is transferred to Jesus. Against the backdrop of the OT understanding of the text, the words that “every knee should bow at the name of Jesus, and every tongue confess him as Lord”, clearly refer to the Lordship in its original biblical sense of divinity. Further, when Paul writes that it is only by the Holy Spirit that one can confess ‘Jesus is Lord’ (1 Cor. 12,3) and that whoever confesses so, will be saved (Rom. 10, 9), it is also evident that Paul has in mind the theological sense of the term Lord, implying supernatural faith in Jesus’ divinity. Further, it may be noted that to call him “Lord” merely in the secular sense of “Sir”, one does not

4. International Theolog. Commission, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

need a special assistance of the Holy spirit; such a "confession" would also not be salvific.

Another text that testifies to the faith of the early Church in Jesus' true divinity is the christological hymn in the Letter to the Colossians, according to which all things were created by him and for him (Col. 1,16). An indirect confession in Jesus' divinity is Stephen's prayer while dying. As Jesus prayed to the Father, so Stephen prayed to Jesus to receive his spirit and to forgive the sins to his executioners (cf. Acts 7, 59f; Lk 23, 34, 46).

In the New Testament Jesus is explicitly confessed as God in the following texts: Jn 1,1; Jn 20, 28; Rom. 9,5 and Hb. 1,8. The confessions in Jesus as the Son, form and image of God (Gal. 4,4; Rom. 1,3; 8,3. 32; Phil. 2,6; Hb. 1,1; Jn 1,14.18; 3, 16f; I Jn 1,3; 1Jn 4,9f; 2 Cor. 4,4 etc.) are other evidences for the early Christian faith in Jesus' divinity.

An extra-Christian evidence for the early Christian faith in Jesus as God is supplied by the Roman governor Pliny in his Letter to emperor Trajan about 110A.D. There he refers to the Christians as those who were singing hymns to Christ as to God⁵. All this shows that faith in Jesus' divinity was not a later development, many centuries after his death. E. Schillebeeckx has demonstrated that "within two or three years after Jesus' death by execution, what have since come to be known as Christological statements of belief had already crystallized"⁶. It is hence wrong to draw a parallel between the deification of the Buddha in Buddhism and the Christian faith in Jesus' divinity that is based on the selfhominization of God.

What justification did the early Church have to believe in Jesus Christ as God and Son of God? Was this belief merely a creation of something which Jesus himself had never claimed? Gospel studies reveal that Jesus had implicitly made many claims as to his divinity and divine sonship. He has given us an *implied* Christology through his deeds and behaviour⁷. Jesus acted in the

5. Letters of Pliny the Younger, X, 96. cf. J. B. Bauer, *Die Zeit Jesu. Herrscher, Sekten und Parteien*, Stuttgart 1969, p. 40; H. Kung, *On Being a Christian*, London 1977, p. 119.

6. E. Schillebeeckx, *Jesus. An Experiment in Christology* (hereafter, *Jesus*), London 1979, p. 19.

7. For details cf. W. Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, New York 1977, pp 100-104; W. Pannenberg, *Jesus-God and Man*, London 1985, pp. 54ff and p. 191; R.E. Brown, *An Introduction to New Testament Christology*, New York 1994, pp. 68-70

place of God, put himself on a par with God and did things reserved to God alone. Thus we find him forgiving sins outside the usual realm of the temple and consequently provoking the Jewish spectators (cf. Mk. 2, 5-7; Lk 7, 48-49). He placed himself above the Torah and declared that even the meticulous observance of it is inadequate unless complemented by following him (cf. Mk. 10,21). He addressed God with the familiar and intimate word "Abba"⁸, indirectly claiming himself to be the son (Mk 14, 36; cf. Mt. 11, 25-27; Jn 5, 18). Jesus placed himself above Moses and claimed to know the original will of God (Mk 10, 3-9), and linked salvation and eternal life with faith in him and discipleship (cf. Mk 8, 35; 10, 21).

Jesus' claims were validated by God by raising him from the dead. The resurrection did not confer upon him a new status, but rather manifested him to be the Son of God (Cf. Rom. 1, 3f). There was no psychological need and theological reason for the disciples to confess Jesus as God (the Son) merely because he was raised from the dead for they all came from the strict Jewish monotheistic background. Unless Jesus had somehow claimed his divinity and unless this was approved by God's act it would have been impossible for them to confess him as Lord and God or Son of God.

The NT confession of Jesus Christ as Lord, God and Son of God Incarnate, entails that according to the New Testament he is the climax and fullness of divine revelation and salvation (cf. Hb.1, 1f; Eph. 1, 9f). Therefore he is the unique mediator of salvation. In other words, his uniqueness as the Saviour is the logical and theological conclusion from his being the Son of God incarnate. His uniqueness is not dependent on a formal biblical text nor on its interpretation. Whether the texts (such as Acts 4, 12; 1 Tim. 2, 5), referring to his uniqueness be interpreted as ontological or merely as love language, is not the crucial issue to decide his uniqueness. For *even* without such explicit texts the uniqueness of Jesus Christ is self-evident in the New Testament. The issue is whether the Christian faith in Jesus as the Son of God makes a claim to reality or not. This has already been decided in the Council of Nicaea (325) against Arianism. To the question whether Jesus Christ is in himself really God the Son, the Council answers unambiguously that he is "God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God,... one in being with the Father" (ND 7).

8. cf B. Van Iersel, "Son of God" in the New Testament", in: *Concilium* 153 (1982), p. 41; E. Schillebeeckx, Jesus pp. 258 ff.

It is significant that the very classical text speaking of the universal salvific will of God speaks in one breath about the unique and universal mediatorship of Jesus Christ; he is the *one* mediator, who gave himself as a ransom for *all* (1 Tim. 2, 4-6). The text makes it clear that the universal salvific will of God in no way contradicts the unique and universal mediatorship of Jesus Christ rather that the latter corresponds to the former. It is also worthwhile to note that the text speaks of *the man Jesus Christ* and not simply of a Christ. The words in the text that "there is one God, and there is one mediator" planily show us the nature of the mentioned uniqueness: there is one mediator (only) as there is one God (only). There is here absolutely no room for many mediators in the category of Jesus Christ. St Paul affirms again the uniqueness and universality of Jesus clear by stating that God judges all human beings by Christ Jesus (Rom 2, 16). The unique mediatorship of Jesus as the saviour is similarly attested in the apostolic preaching that there is salvation in no other name and in no one else other than in Jesus Christ (Acts 4, 10.12). The same idea is expressed in the synoptics in the hymn of Jubilation (Mt 11, 27; Lk. 10, 21-22). The Johannine Jesus declares similarly: "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (Jn. 14,6). The Johannine concept of the "only begotten Son" (Jn 1, 14. 18; 3, 16.18) expresses the same, implying that Jesus is Son by nature, whereas all the others are "sons" by grace in this son who gives the grace and power to become children of God (cf. Jn. 1, 12).

3 Uniqueness of Christ and Inter-religious Dialogue

It is often argued that the uniqueness of Christ is an obstacle to Christian Dialogue with other religions. Two reasons are alleged in support of this, namely that a) the uniqueness of Jesus Christ implies exclusivism of Salvation and b) it is an expression of triumphalism, superiority and arrogance of the Church and Christianity.

In reply to this objection we may observe the following points. a) The Christian claim of Jesus as the unique Saviour of the world does in no way restrict salvation to a few. On the contrary, the very expression "Saviour of the *world*" contains a *universal* mission. The "exclusivism" implied in the uniqueness of Jesus Christ has nothing to do with the addressees of salvation, but only that the question as to who is the *ultimate* mediator of

salvation. This does not, therefore, deny the salvific role of the other mediators to their respective adherents. b) When we proclaim Jesus as Lord and the only Redeemer, we do not proclaim ourselves, but the one who was vindicated by God Himself (cf. 2 Cor. 4, 5 ; 1 Cor. 1,22; 2 Cor 13,4; Phil 2, 9; Acts 2, 23 f). Further, this confession of Jesus' Lordship is understood as serving the glory of God (phil 2. 11). Affirming a self-evident truth has nothing to do with arrogance or humility. It is only misplaced humility that hides a truth, especially if the truth is about the great deed of God. There is, moreover, no point in calling it arrogance to say that no higher possibility of God's self-revelation is conceivable that His becoming man in Jesus and that no greater salvific deed is possible than that happened in him? The uniqueness claimed by Christian faith is grounded in the acceptance of the finite and the particular by God Himself. As K. Rahner observes, it is the rejection of Jesus' unique and universal significance because of his historical and contingent humanity that can be the expression of a certain pride that is unchristian⁹. As G. Moran points out, it demands a faith that is humble and obedient to acknowledge that "with Jesus Christ, the irreducible, concrete, fleshly word was spoken which expressed all that God wished to say or could say to the world"¹⁰. Once you accept that Jesus is the only one instance of God's self-hominisation, you cannot consistently hold the possibility of a greater salvific deed than that happened in him.

Here it is not a question of arrogance, but of consistency. As we have already mentioned above, to believe in many self-hominisations of God is philosophically absurd and theologically false.

Inter-religious dialogue cannot and does not demand the surrender of all specificity claims, nor for that matter the rejection and denial of the faith identity of the participants. Subhash Anand is right in saying that it is "too naive to suggest that surrendering such claims will free us from arrogance. On the contrary, it can lead to new forms of arrogance: 'we are open and up-to-date, while others are closed and old-fashioned!'"¹¹. Let us also note in this connection that Swami Abhishiktananda, a man

9. Ibid., p.40.

10. G. Moran, *Theology of Revelation*, New York 1966, p. 59.

11. S. Anand, "Universally Unique and Uniquely Universal", in: *Vidyajyoti* 55 (1991), pp. 393-424, here p. 415.

of profound awareness of Hindu spirituality and a pioneer of Hindu - Christian dialogue, wrote in his diary: "There is no doubt that no other divine figure adored by men is as pure as that of Jesus... Jesus is the Face of God towards men and the face of men towards God"¹².

It is true that the Christian claim of Jesus Christ as the one ultimate mediator of salvation will not be palatable to the followers of other religions. It is also true that they would not accept it as authentically Christian. If Jesus is presented as just one among the many mediators. Any attempt at inter-religious dialogues to compromise with the uniqueness of Christ is suspect from both inside and outside Christian faith.

Let us now suppose that we are accepting the typical Hindu view that there are many *avatars* and Jesus is just one of them. What is the advantage of this position over against the traditional position of the Church that Jesus is the only Mediator? The advantage seems to be that the Christians would no longer be accused of arrogance and exclusiveness. Yet there arises a very important existential question: why at all Jesus for the Indians or Asians or for anybody? His role is very well fulfilled by other religious mediators. Why to preach him and follow him, when we have already other teachers and prophets much older than he? The usual answer given to such questions has been always very shallow and limping, namely that the Christians will be saved only through faith in Jesus. One should remember that there are none who are created by God as Christians from the very beginning. People only *become* Christians. The question is therefore not regarding the salvation of the Christians, rather why at all should a person become a Christian, when other mediators are readily available in the country. It is also not clear why at all should one adhere to Christ even *after* becoming a Christian, when there are other saviours of equal value.

While we appreciate the concern of those theologians of inter-religious dialogue to make Christian faith less offensive to the others, we should also remark that this concern has its limits when it affects the very identity of faith. Adapting itself always into something that can be believed, is not the policy of true Christian faith. If it were so, we could have dispensed with many a Christian faith. If it were so, we could have dispensed with many a Christian teaching. There are many things that

12. As cited by s. Anand, *art. cit.*, p. 412.

remain as scandals or stumbling blocks in Christianity, for instance, the doctrines of the Holy Trinity, Incarnation, Cross, Eucharist, Resurrection, etc. and some of the moral teachings (e.g. regarding divorce and family). You have to change a lot to make Christian faith appealing to others. In that case it would be better to give up our faith and accept the other's faith. Perfect harmony and concord will be then achieved, and there will be no need for a dialogue at all!

We should also observe in this connection that the people of other religions in general "do not show much openness, eagerness and interest in dialogue"¹³. The following words of Bede Griffiths who was a pioneer in interreligious dialogue in India for many years are noteworthy: "In all my experience in India in twenty-five years, I have hardly ever found an educated Hindu who is really open to dialogue, who really wanted to understand Christian faith as something 'other' "¹⁴. The reason for this lack of openness is according to him their feeling that "they have the absolute and final truth"¹⁵.

It is true that if inter-religious dialogue or any dialogue to be fruitful the partners have to accept each other as equals. This is based on the conviction that all of us are persons having equal dignity and co-pilgrims on the way to the Beyond¹⁶. The respect for each other's personal dignity and religious commitments however, "does not imply that the doctrines, rituals, etc., of different religions are equal or have exactly the same significance"¹⁷. This vital point is often eclipsed and even denied in discussion about inter-religious dialogue in the name of mutual respect and equality of dignity. Another important principle to be borne in mind is that genuine dialogue is possible only between persons who are committed to their respective religious faiths; hence it is wrong to think that committed statements of one's faith will hinder dialogue¹⁸. Precisely in this context the crucial problem would be how to understand the uniqueness of Jesus Christ as the universal Saviour in the following two situations:

13. J. Kuttianimattathil, *Practice and Theology of Interreligious Dialogue*, Bangalore 1995, p. 120.
14. As cited by J. Kuttianimattathil, *ibid*.
15. As cited in *ibid*
16. Cf. J. Kuttianimattathil, *op. cit*, p. 108
17. *Ibid*
18. *Ibid.*, p. 109.

- a) If there are exactly similar claims of others for their respective saviour figures, and/ or
- b) if others accept Jesus just as one of the saviours, but not as the only universal Saviour.

As regards the first situation (a) we have a certain comparable claims in Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam. In Hinduism we see Krishna, an *Avatara* of Vishnu, telling Arjuna: "Even those who, devoted to other gods, worship them with faith, they in fact worship myself, O Son of Kunti, though not conforming to orthodox rules"¹⁹. If this Gita text is understood in the form of a direct claim of Krishna as the unique saviour of the world, three observations are to be made here. (i) It is incorrect to hold that Hinduism does not have a concept of uniqueness corresponding to what Christianity claims for Jesus Christ. (ii) In that case the non-historical character of the Hindu *Avataras*, however, makes the claim anthropologically weak in its core and relegates it to a mere wish-fulfilment. (iii) If the Christian claim is branded as arrogant and intolerant, the above Hindu position cannot be extolled as modest and tolerant. In the case of Buddhism the unique salvific role is claimed not for the *person* of the Buddha, but for his teaching. Thus to the question of the possibility of salvation (*nirvana*) of those who were not Buddhists, the Buddha is said to have replied that they would attain if they followed the necessary elements of the eight-fold path²⁰. That the Buddah himself was not originally believed to be God Incarnate, but only a human being who got enlightened, and got deified after a development of many centuries (in the Mahayana tradition), Buddhism cannot and does not claim or proclaim him as the unique saviour in the sense as Christianity does with regard to Jesus Christ. Coming to Islam, we have an apparent case of rivalry and conflict in so far as Islam believes that Mohammed is the last and greatest of all the prophets of God (Allah). Yet even in this case

19. *Bhagavad - Gita*, 9,23. This translation from the original Sanskrit is according to Nataraja Guru, *The Bhagavad Gita. A Sublime Hymn of Yoga Composed by the Ancient Seer VYASA*. (With Explanatory Dialogue by Nitya Chaitanya Yati), Delhi 1981. According to the translation of Swami Swarupananda, *Shrimad-Bhagavad-Gita*, Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta 1967, the text reads as follows: "Even those devotees, who endued with Shraddha, worship other gods, they too worship Me alone, o Son of Kunti, (but) by the wrong method".

20. J. Kuttianimattathil, p. 308.

there is a subtle and substantial difference between the Christian claim and the Islamic claim. Whereas Jesus Christ is confessed as God (the Son) Incarnate, Mohammed is not confessed so, but as a human prophet. We may also not superimpose on the non-Christian religious figures, what their own adherents do not hold.

With respect to the case (b) we may note, for instance, that "Hinduism is willing to grant that Jesus Christ is one of the saviours whom God has sent into the world"²¹. This is actually the trend of the mainstream Hinduism. In other words, Hinduism does not claim the role of a unique and universal saviour for anyone, including the Hindu *Avataras*. Hence, as is to be expected, "the most burning question about Jesus in the Hindu context remains.... that of his 'uniqueness' "²². There are two entirely different ways of approaching this issue in the context of inter-religious dialogue. A simplistic and spurious way would be to readily accept and present Jesus as one of the saviours, thus giving up his uniqueness for the sake of a compromise in view of harmony. But a serious and genuine way of encountering the question is to accept Jesus' uniqueness as an essential scandal of Christianity and try to elucidate the reasons for the same. This can be done negatively and positively. Negatively, it invites the partners of dialogue to examine and inquire into the grounds why they do not claim uniqueness to their respective saviour figures or *avatars* in the same terms as Christianity does with regard to Jesus Christ. In case their saviour figure is truly the unique saviour of the world, it would be a disservice to truth and against the principles of genuine dialogue to deny it, when the issue comes as a matter of sharing. A humility opposed to truth is false and out of place here. Presuming that they are not acting out of false humility but out of true and sincere religious conviction, their refusal to make a uniqueness claim to their saviours would mean that they are holding it as a truth within their own faith tradition, i.e., without any compulsion from outside. What could be then the reasons as to why they do not consider their saviour figures as the only saviour?

The answers are various. Some are related to the very nature and mission of the *saviours* while others, to that of *salvation*. Thus it is pointed out that a particular saviour is limited in his nature and has only a specific mission. The limitation of the

21. *Ibid.*, p. 115

22. As cited by J. Kuttianimattathil. *Ibid.*

saviour is attributed to the created or creaturely nature of the person of the saviour if he is merely a man, or in the case of "incarnations", to the creaturely nature of the medium adopted by the Divine. The reason for his not being the unique saviour, there should not be any obstacle to accept someone else who is more perfect to be the unique saviour, unless one denies *a priori* such a possibility from the part of God, in that case it would be dictating terms to Gods rather than being open to his ways. Another answer could be that salvation is always regional and meant for a particular group of a particular time. This would hence demand punctuated interventions of God either coming time and again in the same form or in the form of different saviours. This is actually to presuppose that there are certain times and peoples that need no salvation at all. This contradicts the experienced fact of the universal need of salvation, for all people at all times. A segmentary salvation is no salvation at all. Further, in a world where we experience history as one, the economy of salvation also has to be one. From this it emerges that there is a real need for a saviour who affects every one and effects salvation universally. Who can it be other than God himself, the universally Universal, entering into real history, if he has thus become part of our history, then it is and has to be uniquely unique. To affirm this truth and to share it with others is a service to truth and an act of humble obedience. To resist to accept it simply because of rationalistic considerations would be an act of defiance and arrogance.

Inter-religious dialogue in the above shown sense does not, however, presuppose that the Christians are far more superior and holy than the others. It also does not mean that the other religions and their believers have nothing to offer or contribute to the Christians. We do hold that the Christ mystery in the one economy of salvation has affected the whole world positively, so much so that every religion can enrich us and help us for a better understanding and personalization of Christ and his values.

4. Concluding Remarks

That the early Church firmly upheld the faith in Jesus Christ as the only mediator of salvation is amply testified in the New Testament. This faith is, however, the result of her faith in Jesus' personal status as the incarnate Son of God, and not the conclusion arrived at after comparing other religions and their

saviour figures. It is therefore not right to argue that the New Testament affirmations of Jesus' uniqueness as the mediator of God's salvation for the whole world is to be interpreted in the light of the "narrow" world view according to which the world meant only the then familiar Roman empire or the inhabited world (oikos). Similarly, when the Church officially teaches and when we confess that Jesus is the unique Saviour of the world, this is not simply based on some isolated statements of uniqueness in the New Testament, but on the faith that Jesus is in his person really the Son of God or God the Word. Even if we did not have any formal or explicit statement of Jesus' uniqueness in the New Testament, we will affirm it, for our faith is that he is really God-become-man. Any faith that does not affirm the reality of its content, but denies it or relativizes it as merely "truth" for the believer, is not faith, but a hollow slogan that is incapable of commitment; for genuine faith is response to reality perceived and acknowledged as reality. Further, such a position is a denial of the believer's integrity. There is no Archimedean space for the believer to stand outside of faith and then to judge it as a mere "truth for me". The Christian confession in Jesus Christ as the Son of God or God the Son is a fact claiming statement; it is the confession of a truth valid in itself independent of the believers; the faith in him as the only redeemer in the sense of the one ultimate mediator of salvation for all is its logical and theological corollary.

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ST. EPHREM'S VIEW OF CHRIST AS THE UNIQUE MEDIATOR OF REDEMPTION

- Rev. Dr. Thomas Kalayil CMI

INTRODUCTION

Was the "Christ Event" unique? Could a Christian admit several "Incarnations"? These are questions which would be answered by the Church very strongly in the negative throughout her history. Although these and similar questions might not have been asked so clearly by Christians in the past, the Church had hard times in the first few centuries when Gnosticism proposed other equations to the official doctrine of Incarnation and Redemption. Many of the heresies that threatened true Christian faith in the first centuries could be accommodated within the larger ambit of Gnosticism. As the Fathers of the Church and Apologists stood by the revealed truths of the Christ Event, the Church could stand firm through centuries under the protection of the Divine Saviour. But today we have to doubt whether the Gnosticism of bygone ages is making fresh entries under the guise of eclecticism, religious syncretism and the like. St. Ephrem who met a situation like this and defended the true doctrine of the Church through his preachings and teachings provides a brilliant example of deep devotion to the Word Incarnate. Christ's work of Redemption is put in singular relief through the writings of St. Ephrem. The study of Ephrem's writings will make it clear that Christ is the unique Saviour of man and the material world because He is the Mediator of Creation and Redemption.

Among the writings of St. Ephrem no treatise on soteriology could be found. All the same, it was to be assumed that he had something to say regarding Christ's work of Redemption. A patient study of his writings revealed that he had his own way of looking at the mystery of Redemption. The result of the study set in my dissertation cannot be aptly summarized within a few pages. I attempt only to give the leading ideas.

Biographical Sketch

In this connection a brief sketch of the life of Ephrem will be helpful to contextualize his works and ideas. Setting aside the legendary accounts of his life, we get the following brief sketch: He was born about 306 A.D. in Nisibis (modern Nusaybin) which was in the eastern outskirts of the Roman empire. He became an ascetic. It is certain that he was a deacon. Whether he had received any higher orders cannot be ascertained. He was a gifted poet and a teacher. When Nisibis was besieged by the Persians three times (in 338, 346 and 350) Ephrem encouraged the people to resist. In 363 the Roman emperor Jovian ceded Nisibis to the Persians. There upon Ephrem and many other Christians migrated to Edessa, some hundred miles further west(modern Urfa in South East Turkey) which was in the Roman Empire. It is believed that the Theological School of Edessa was founded after the arrival of Ephrem and his party there and therefore it was called “the School of the Persians”. Ephrem’s works reveal that the main thrust in his teaching career was to safeguard the true Christian faith by defending it from the onslaughts of heretical sects which were many at that time. He died in Edessa in 373, probably on 9th June. Pope Benedict XV declared him a Doctor of the Church on 5th June 1920.

Ephrem’s Literary Output

Ephrem’s literary output is styled “a great ocean”. Three hundred myriads of verses are attributed to Ephrem. Besides, he is said to have composed a thousand sermons. But many of his works have perished. A good number of his works were translated into Greek and Armenian. Ephrem’s works included exegetical, dogmatic, polemical, ascetical, liturgical and other writings. The authorship of some works attributed to Ephrem is doubted by scholars¹.

Most probably Ephrem did not know Greek and his writings are free of Greek philosophical influence. On the other hand, he gets his inspiration and arguments chiefly from the Holy Scrip-

1. Ignatius Ortiz de Urbina, *Patrologia Syriaca*, Rome 1965, pp. 56-83 (Hereafter abbreviated as Psyr).

ture and imbues his writings with the data from the Scripture whenever possible.

Ephrem's enormous literary output and his strenuous efforts to defend orthodoxy rightly won for him the attributes such as "the Pillar of the Church", "the Harp of the Holy Spirit" etc.

Ephrem as a Defender of True Faith

Ephrem's poetic genius facilitated his task of teaching. The circumstances of his life made him a controversialist and a defender of orthodoxy. Ephrem's world was not totally Christian. The chief task for him in his role as teacher of Christian faith seems to have been to safeguard the true faith by refuting the teachings, of the heretical sects. We can identify the Manichaeans, the Marcionites, the followers of Bardaisan (Bardesanes), and the Arians as the adversaries of Ephrem. In Ephrem's writings we can see refutations of Docetism, although we cannot ascertain whether Docetists as a sect confronted Ephrem. An allusion to the begining of Apollinarism is noticed in Ephrem's Hymns on Faith².

The Gnostic Bardaisan had propagated his doctrines through hymns. After his death in 222 his son Harmonius continued to propagate his father's doctrines, and he too composed hymns. Ephrem adopted the same device to refute Bardaisan's doctrines. It is said that Ephrem's hymns were chanted by "the daughters of the Covenant" (Benāt qyāma), a community of consecrated virgins.

The Uniqueness of Ephrem

St. Ephrem is unique among the Fathers of the Church in many respects. First of all, he is the representative of the Syriac Christianity, which not only received the Gospel during the very lifetime of the Apostles, but also preserved and lived that message for centuries in a cultural context extremely close to that in which the Gospel itself originated. (Though "Syriac" commonly denotes a language, in this context I use this as an adjective. I mean the Syriac-using Churches and Writers, even beyond the frontiers of the political "Syria". The commonly used term "Syrian" has a political connotation, and it is plain that the Syriac language was not limited within the confines of the political Syria alone).

2. Psyr, p. 65.

Tradition has it that the first Christian communities in the Syriac speaking regions were Judeo-Christian from whom the gentiles also gradually received the light of the Gospel. So in their traditions we see a real continuity with the old economy of salvation. Ephrem is an important witness to the traditions of such a Christianity in so early a time as the fourth century. Another reason for the uniqueness of Ephrem is that, as mentioned earlier, he is free from Greek Philosophy as well as its patterns of thought. He speaks on the basis of his understanding of the Bible. Hence his views are to be assessed in the light of the Bible.

Ephrem's Method of Expounding

For people who are conversant with the scholastic method of theologizing with abstract philosophical terms and hair-split distinctions, Ephrem may not seem to be a theologian. They may consider him only as a gifted poet with an extra-ordinary skill in using types, symbols and other literary techniques. All agree that a theologian's pursuit is primarily to teach about God. It is evident that, as a teacher of Christian faith, Ephrem was teaching about God. But Ephrem's firm view was that man cannot understand the hidden mysteries of the divine realm. Heretics went astray because of their presumption to investigate the unlimited God with their aid of their limited intellect. Only those things that have been revealed by God can be grasped by man. A close study of Ephrem's writings will show that he has writing with these pre-suppositions in mind. It is a fact that the study of Ephrem's theology is not very easy. He was a poet and a teacher at the same time. He teaches often through hymns. In a place where a philosophical terminology or definition would be used by theologians to explain a doctrinal point, Ephrem makes use of imageries and poetic allusions under which doctrinal points of dogmas are hidden. Another important feature of Ephrem's writings is that he adduces symbols and proto-types from the Old Testament and connects them intimately with the truth in the New Testament in such a way that the transition from the symbol to the reality is very subtle.

With these pre-suppositions in mind, let us try to glean Ephrem's ideas about Christ's work of Redemption, scattered all over his writings.

The Idea of "Redemption"

In Ephrem's extant works we do not see him defining the term "redemption" nor making any division or distinction of its significations. However, Ephrem's remark on the name "Jesus", the name designated from heaven itself, gives us the principal idea regarding the theme of our investigation. In his commentary on Diatessaron we read:

"And it is known that this name is of the economy (rabat baytuta = lit. 'stewardship') through the body. For 'Jesus' is (i.e. signifies) 'saviour' in Hebrew. For he said: You shall call his name 'Jesus', that is (to say), saviour, 'because he will save his people from sins'. Therefore, this name is not (the name) of his nature but of his deeds"³.

So for Ephrem the name 'Jesus' tells the deeds of Jesus in saving his people from sins. In this context we may understand the term 'People' as designating not only the Jewish people, but also the rest of mankind.

Even in the Sacred Scripture we see a variety of terms to explain the mystery we are treating about⁴. It is evident that human terms cannot exhaust the mystery of the works and achievements of Christ. However, we can see that when Ephrem thinks of Christ's activities and their results, the stress is on the fact that Christ repaired the havoc caused by Adam's Fall and that He inaugurated a New Economy of Salvation. Therefore, we may say, that these and the activities connected with them form Christ's work of 'Redemption' according to Ephrem. Ephrem's expressions and modes of presentation vary. We know that etymologically 'redemption' means a 'buying back'. But in our discussion, 'deliverance' and the like are used conventionally and are meant to represent in a general way the different

3. Louis Leloir (ed. & tr.) S. Ephrem. *Commentaire de l'Évangile Concordant*, Texte Syriaque édité et traduit, The Chester Beatty Monographs 8, Dublin 1963, p. 22 (Hereafter abbreviated as Ec Syr).
4. To designate Christ's saving activity the Sacred Scripture uses a number of terms such as 'salvation' 'liberation' 'purchasing' or 'acquisition', 'redemption', 'expiation' and the like. For the treatment of the terminology of redemption in the Sacred Scripture we need only make a reference to the masterly work of S. Lyonnet- L. Sabourin, *Sin, Redemption and Sacrifice, A Biblical and Patristic Study*, Rome 1970.

terms and expressions used by Ephrem to describe Christ's salvific deeds.

A BRIEF SYNOPSIS OF EPHREM'S SOTERIOLOGY

The process of synthesizing Ephrem's manifold ideas gathered from his writings on Christ's work of redemption was not easy. After repeated attempts I could find out the main string on which all the soteriological ideas of Ephrem could be strung. That is the idea of Christ's mediation. Ephrem sees Christ as the Mediator from creation till his eschatological coming when He will hand over the Kingdom to the Father. As it is evident, this soteriology is Pauline on the main lines. But Ephrem has his own ways of presenting the ideas. I have synthesized his soteriological ideas in the following way:

- I. A preamble from the Old Testament: Focussing attention on Christ and His future redemptive role.
- II. The symbolic significations of the different aspects of the earthly life of Christ with reference to the redemption.
- III. The decisive act in the redemptive role of Christ.
- IV. The salvific dimension of Christ's Resurrection and Ascension.
- V. How the world appropriates the redemption worked by Christ.

The limited time allotted to this paper does not permit me to elaborate all these points. Only a summary exposition is possible except in the case of the second point which requires elaboration on account of Ephrem's originality in presenting Christ's "Pre-Cross" activities and experiences.

I. A Preamble from the Old Testament : Focussing attention on Christ and His future redemptive role.

Christ's activities are seen by Ephrem as ranging from creation till the eschatological perfection of everything. Thus Christ is seen as the central figure even from the time of creation. Christ was the mediator of creation. God created the world through Christ⁵. Christ, the Mediator of creation came as the mediator of redemption⁶. Since man using the free will given by

5. R.M. Tonneau, (ed. & tr), *Sancti Ephraem Syri in Genesim et Exodum Commentarii*, *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium* (CSCO) 152-153 / Syr 71-72, Louvain 1955 (abbreviated CS), 1:28

6. E. Beak, (ed. & tr.), *Des Heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Hymnen de Fide*, CSCO 154-155 / syr 73-74, Louvain 1955, 6:7

God chose to go astray from God by sinning and thus caused the necessity of redemption, the Fall Story in the third chapter of the Book of Genesis forms a preamble to the soteriology of Ephrem.

II. The Symbolic Significations of the different aspects of the early life of Christ with reference to the redemption.

According to Ephrem, the very life of Christ on earth—even from the moment of incarnation—was redemptive, although the death on the cross was the decisive redemptive act. Adam-Christ antithetic parallelism proposed by St. Paul has been so much developed by Ephrem. In his view there are several elements in Christ's earthly life that symbolize the counteraction to the evils caused by the First Adam. But Christ's activities were not limited to the above said "repair work" alone. Ephrem sees in Christ's life instances that symbolize the inauguration of a New Economy of Salvation in the place of the Old Testament Economy. This kind of thought is an original contribution of Ephrem to soteriology. the following elaboration may suffice to prove this fact:

1. Christ's role as the Second Adam with reference to the Sin of Adam and of his posterity.

Even in the virgin birth of Christ Ephrem sees a parallelism with Adam's creation:

"The virgin earth had brought forth that Adam, the head of the earth. Today the Virgin has brought forth Adam, the head of heaven."⁷

The Incarnation and Birth of Christ counteracted some evil effects of the Fall of Man. According to Ephrem the salvific deeds of Christ began even when He was in the womb of His mother. Christ inhabited a womb and purified it; He sanctified the aspects of the pains of childbearing and of the curses⁸ Ephrem sees a fourfold birth of Christ and mentions the effects connected with them:

"The Father begot Him and created the creatures through Him. The flesh brought Him forth and

7. E. Beck, (ed. & tr.), *Des Heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Hymnen de Nativitate (Epiphania)*, OSCO 186-187/Syr 82-83, Louvain 1959 (Abbreviated Nat. The first 28 hymns of Nativity are meant by the abbreviation), 1:16

8. Cf. EC Syr 1:25

through Him killed desires.

Baptism brought Him forth so that it might
clean away stains through Him. Sheol brought
Him forth so that its treasures might be dispersed"⁹

Another salvific aspect which Ephrem points out in connection with the nativity of Christ is the destruction of idolatry and nature worship. Error blinded men in such a way that they might adore their fellow creatures such as the Sun, the Moon, Fire, the stars etc. Christ came and gathered all adoration to Himself¹⁰. Man adored also idols made of stone and of gold. The creatures silently prayed that they might be freed from being adored, and their prayer was heard¹¹. Ephrem sees in the offering of gold, incense and myrrh by the Magi a counteraction to idolatry: The gold with which the idols were made is now offered to Christ¹². So also incense and myrrh which were previously used for the cult of idols are now at the service of the Lord¹³. The facts ranging from the Incarnation till the Death of Christ are seen in general by Ephrem as a humiliation which was directed against the pride of Adam which made him to sin. Commenting on the Prologue of St. John Ephrem says:

"The Exalted One humbled Himself from the
exalted height to the lowest estate so that
He might humble the pride which had cast
Adam down from his height"¹⁴.

The fast and temptation of Christ form an antithetic parallel to the temptation of the Protoparents¹⁵. Christ's prayer in the garden of Gathsemane counteracts Adam's disobedience in para-

9. E. Beck, (ed. & tr.), *Des Heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Sermo De Domino Nostro*, CSCO 270-271/Syr 116-117, Louvain 1966 (Abbreviated as SDN), 2

10. Nat 22:15 (CSCO 186/Syr 82, p. 112)

11. Cf. Nat 22:5, 7, 9, 10, 12, 35 (CSCO vol. cft., pp. 110-111, 115)

12. Cf. Nat 22:26, 29 (CSCO, col. cit., pp. 113-114)

13. Cf. Nat 22:27-28 (CSCO, col. cit., p. 114)

14. T.J. Lamy, (ed. & tr.), *Sancti Ephraem Syri Hymni et Sermones*, 4 vols., Mechliniae 1882, 1886, 1889, 1902 (Abbreviated as Lamy), II, 515.

15. E. Beck, (ed. & tr.), *Des Heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Hymnen de Virginitate*, CSCO 223-224/Syr 94-95, Louvain 1962 (Abbreviated as Virg), cf. 12:1.

dise and takes him back there ¹⁶. Christ's sweating in the Garden was a counteraction to the 'sweating' which Adam got as a punishment ¹⁷. In the restoration of the cut off ear of the servant of the High Priest in the garden of Gathsemane Ephrem sees the restoration of man from his fallen state.¹⁸ The silence of Jesus at His trial signify His vicarious undersgoing of the punishment due to man.¹⁹ The scene of the mocking of Christ signifies the removal of the shame from the face of the first parents.²⁰ The tree of the Cross was an instrument to remove the havoc caused by the tree of Paradise.²¹ The elevation of Christ on the Cross as the brazen serpent of Num 21:8 has an effect of curing the wound caused by the serpent in Paradise²². Ephrem says that the piercing of the side of Christ on the Cross was to open the way to Paradise which was blocked by the sword of the Cherubim after the expulsion of Adam and Eve from paradise.²³ Reflecting upon the burial of Christ in a garden Ephrem says that it happened in order to resuscitate Adam who died a hidden death in the garden of Eden.²⁴ The linen cloths that were left behind by Jesus in the sepulchre at His resurrection have also symbolic salvific signification according to Ephrem. The symbolism is taken for the re-entry of Adam into Paradise and the resurrection of bodies.²⁵

16. E. Beck, (ed. & tr.), *Des Heiligen Ephraem des Syrsers Paschahymnen* (De Azymis, De Crucifixione, De Resurrectione), CSCO 248-249/ Syr 108-109, Louvain 1964 (Abbreviated Crucif which designates only the hymns De Crucifixione), 8:2 (Crucif).
17. Cf. Crucif 8:1 (CSCO) 248/Syr 108, p. 72).
18. Louis Leloir (tr.), *Saint Ephrem, Commentaire de 1. Evangile Concordent, version Armenienne*, CSCO 145/Arm (=Scriptores Armeniaci) 2. (Latin translation of the Arme man version), Louvain 1954 (Abbreviated as EC Arm), Cf. 20:13.
19. Cf. Nat 3:18; 18:32 (CSCO 186/Syr 82, pp. 23; 97).
20. Cf. EC Arm 20:17 (CSCO 145/Arm 2, p. 209); Cf. Crucif 5:15 (CSCO 248/Syr 108, p. 63).
21. E. Beck, (ed. & tr.), *Des Heiligen Ephraem des Syrsers Carmina, Nisibena*, CSCO 218-219/Syr 92-93 (Erster Teil: Carmina 1-34, Louvain 1961); CSCO 240-241/Syr 102-103 (Zweiter Teil: the rest of the Carmina, Louvain 1963), Cf. 14:8.
22. Cf. Nat 1:28 (CSCO 186/Syr 82, p.4).
23. Cf. Nat. 8:4 (CSCO 186/Syr 82, p. 59)
24. Cf. Crucif 8:13 (CSCO 248/Syr 108, p. 76)
25. Cf. EC Syr 21:23

2. The Inaguration of a New Economy of Salvation symbolized in some instances of Christ's earthly life.

Commenting on several episodes in the New Testament Ephrem shows how the Old Economy was symbolically abrogated and replaced by the New Economy. Already at a time shortly before the incarnation of Christ Ephrem sees the beginning of Christ's activity of abrogation. Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, was struck dumb during a liturgical ceremony performed by him in the sanctuary according to the regulations of the Old Testament. By this it was manifested that the Old Economy came to an end on account of the (imminent) coming of the one who was to accomplish all the mysteries ²⁶.

At the scene of the presentation of Jesus in the Temple Ephrem sees Christ's encounter with Simeon to take possession of prophecy and priesthood and to give them to another Sim (e) on for the Church ²⁷.

On the occasion of His baptism in the Jordan Jesus receives the perfection of anointing to give it integrally to His disciples. He abrogates the Mosaic Law through His justice and abolishes Ritual Ablutions and Sprinklings through His baptism. He receives Prophecy and Priesthood from John the Baptist who was a prophet and of priestly origin ²⁸

The next point to be discussed is Ephrem's reflection on the cultic sacrifice par excellence of the New Economy of Salvation. Ephrem sees elements that symbolize the abolition of the rituals of the Old Testament and the inauguration of the sacrifice of the New Testament:

"He abolished the sacrifices through
His sacrifice, the libations through
His fume, the (paschal) lambs through His
slaughter, the unleavened bread through
His bread and the bitter herbs through His passion"²⁹

The following quotations from Ephrem's 'Sermon on Our Lord' will be a good conclusion to this section:

26. Cf. EC Syr 1:10

27. Cf. SDN 53 (CSCO 270/Syr 116, p. 50); Cf. also SDN 55 (CSCO, vol. cit., pp. 51-52).

28. Cf. EC Arm 4:2 (CSCO 145/Arm 2, p. 35); Cf. Virg 8:10 (CSCO 223/Syr 94, p. 30); Cf. EC Arm 4:3 (CSCO 145/Arm 2, p. 35).

29. Virg 8:9 (CSCO 223/Syr 94, p. 29)

“So the son plucked from their true trees each gift that was reserved for Him. For, He took (over) baptism from Jordan although John was baptizing even after Him. He took (over) the priesthood from the temple although Annas was (still) functioning as High Priest in it. And He took (over) also prophecy which was transmitted through just men, although Caiphas (still) for a short while plaited a crown with it for our Lord ³⁰. And He took (over) the kingdom from the House of David ³¹, although Herod was (still) remaining there as a substitute” ³².

“This is the One who flew down from the (heavenly), height. and seeing Him all those gifts, which He had given to the former persons, came flying from all places and settled on Him, their bestower. For they gathered themselves from all places to come and be budded in the tree of their nature, because they had been grafted on bitter trees, namely, on wicked kings and priests. therefore they hastened to come to their sweet root”³³.

“When Our Lord took (over) His priesthood from them, He sanctified all the peoples with it. And when He took (over) also His prophecy, He revealed through it His promises to all the generations. And when He put on His crown, He bound the strong one, who had enslaved all, and divided his spoil. These gifts were vain in the fig tree, which, while being itself without fruits, frustrated also victories like this. Therefore that (fig tree) without fruits was cut down so that these gifts might go out and multiply fruits in all the peoples” ³⁴.

30. Cf. Jn 1:49-52

31. i.e., being born of the royal family of David (Cf. EC Arm 4:3=CSCO 145/Arm 2, p. 35)

32. SDN 56 (CSCO 270/Syr 116, p. 52)

33. SDN 57 (CSCO vol. cit, pp. 52-53)

34. SDN 58 (CSCO, vol. cit., p. 53)

From Ephrem's remarks about the two Economies of Salvation one thing to be specially noticed is that he never says that the Old Economy was bad although the vessels carrying its gifts (i.e. offices) were at times unworthy and the gifts themselves were imperfect since they were the shadows of those that had to come.

III. The decisive act in the redemptive role of Christ.

Notwithstanding his appetite to see symbols of redemption in Christ's earthly life, Ephrem has a clear idea about the decisive act in the redemptive role of Christ. He says that it was Christ's death on the Cross that was decisive in redeeming man. Christ's death is seen in three different perspectives, namely, as a vicarious satisfaction, as a sacrifice and as a victory over the powers that, had enslaved mankind since the Fall of the First Adam. The vicarious suffering was a mediation to obtain pardon for the debts of man by undergoing the punishments which man had to undergo otherwise. This may be called "mediation through satisfaction". Christ as Victim and Priest at the same time, atoned for the sins of mankind through His own sacrifice on the Cross, Against the ritual background of the Old Testament, this may be considered as a "mediation through sacrifice". Ephrem says that Christ through His death and resurrection because victorious over the powers that had enslaved man, that is, victory over Satan, Sin and Death. Hence Christ's death on the Cross is a "mediation through victory" in Ephrem's view.

IV. The Salvific Dimensions of Christ's Resurrection and Ascension

Ephrem sees that Christ's Resurrection and Ascension form part of His redeeming role. Christ gave His resurrection as a Pledge to mankind to guarantee the final resurrection. The Ascension of Christ with His resuscitated and glorified body was for the benefit of mankind. He opened a way for the human race to reach heaven. Christ was exalted for the exaltation of man. Christ was exalted as Head and King over the Creation and over the Church. Christ represents the human race in the heavenly court through His exalted body and He intercedes for mankind as High Priest in heaven.

V. How the World appropriates the Redemption worked by Christ

Following St. Paul, Ephrem thinks that both mankind and the material world were affected by the Fall of the Protoparents. Both man and the material world were to be redeemed, and this was done by Christ. Ephrem does not say that all men will be saved on account of Christ's redeeming work. Each man has to appropriate Christ's Redemption for himself. Man should approach Christ and adhere to Him through faith in order to be saved. The Church is the dispenser Christ's Redemption to men through the sacraments. The importance of Baptism and Eucharist is specially mentioned by Ephrem.

Eschatological Redemption

At the Parousia or eschatological coming of Christ, the bodies of the redeemed human beings will be glorified. Ephrem thinks that at this time the entire material universe also will share the Redemption by being renewed. Christ's Mediation for Redemption culminates at the Parousia in the act of His handing over of the Kingdom to the Father. It is clear that Ephrem closely follows St. Paul in depicting the Eschatological Redemption.

EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION

To evaluate Ephrem's soteriological thoughts we have to consider the Patristic thought and the Creeds till the time of Ephrem's death in 373. The theology of redemption was still in its infancy in those early times. The data we get from ancient Christian and 'Judeo-Christian' writings nearer to Ephrem's world and time show that the fact of Redemption was simply asserted and only briefly explained. The letters of St. Ignatius of Antioch (+107), the Epistle of Barnabas (Judeo-Christian writing ca. 103), the Epistle of Polycarp of Smyrna (+ 156) and the writings of Irenaeus (+ca. 202) may be considered in this context. The recapitulation theory of Irenaeus is of some importance. When we compare Ephrem with Irenaeus, we see that Irenaeus' ideas are centred around the theme of 'Recapitulation' whereas Ephrem's thoughts are centered around the view of Christ as the Mediator between God and the Creation to execute the plan of God. He mediates as the New Adam.

The early Creeds up to the time of the Council of Nicea in 325 affirm the *passion, death* and *resurrection* of Christ. A development of the Creed was solemnly and officially made in the Council of Nicea. Regarding Christ's work of Redemption a reason is assigned in the Nicene Creed: *For us men and for our salvation.....*

Now regarding the question whether Ephrem contributed anything new to Soteriology, our answer is in the affirmative in the light of what have been said hitherto. However, we do not know whether Ephrem wrote any treatise on the theology of Redemption. We gather his ideas from his numerous works written in prose and verse. If we are asked to enunciate Ephrem's teachings on Redemption as a theory, we may say "Mediation Theory".

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THE UNIQUENESS OF ISHO MESIHA IN THE INDIGENOUS NAZRANI ASHRAM LIFE

- Rev. Dr. Q. Elias Vadaketh CMI

The charism for ashram life is given to humanity by the Word of God through the humanization of his divine personality. In this paper we investigate the origin of the Nazrani dairautha¹ (monasticism) in the context of Indian Sannyasa. Nazrani dairautha is the realization of an ecclesial charism open to all the faithful - the People of God². When we deal with the radical ascetic life of the Nazrani church we come into contact with the uniqueness of *Isho Mesiha*.³ *Isho Mesiha*, God the Son, committed himself totally to human nature in Mariam, the Nazrani Virgin⁴. In human nature, the Word of God submitted himself totally to God.⁵

1. Paesi Novamente Retrovati et Novo Mondo da Alberico Vesputio Florentino institutato (1508), in Fascimile, Vespucci Reprints, Text and Studies, VI Princeton, London, Oxford, 1916, f. 158ff.; Goes, Damiano De, Cronica da Felicissimo Rei D. Manuel, E. by T.M. Texeria, Coibra, 1926, vol. I. p. 137, 215.; Paulinus, A. St. Barthoolomeo, ocd., Viaggio Alle Indie Orientali, Romae, 1796, p. 80; Fondo Borgiano Indianon. 18, f. 2.; Ferooli, D., s.j., The Jesuits in Malbar, 2 vols., Bangalore, 1939 and 1951, vol.I, p.169.; Archivium Romanum societatis Iesu, Goa-malabar, Vol. 68-1, ff.22-23; The patronage of St. Thomas reminds us the existance of a time old monastery at the tomb of St. Thomas at Mylapore. Quriaqos Eliazh Vadaketh, cmi., Kizhakinte Sakshyam (mal), Denha Services, Kottayam, 1990, pp. 245 ff, 257 ff; pp. 100 ff.; E.R. Hambye, s.j, Dimensions of Eastern Christianity, Kottayam, 1983, p. 64.; MG. 85, 791-812; 1837-1860; A.E. Medlycott. India and the Apostle St. Thomas, London, 1905, p. 96 ff.
2. R. Murray, Symbols of Church and Kingdom, Cambridge University Press, 1975, p. 15.
3. Jn. 14:6.
4. Lk. 1:35; Gal 4:4
5. Phil 2:5-11

This two dimensional *Ihidautha*⁶ or *dairautha* explains the uniqueness of Isho Mesiha. The uniqueness of *Isho Mesiha* is the reason for *sannyasa* in the Nazrani church. But it is only natural that the entire Church and even the whole humanity as such must have the characteristics of *sannyasa*⁷. Hence we consider the following aspects in this study of *sannyasa* in the Nazrani church.

1. The Uniqueness of Isho Mesiha in Divine Humanization
2. The Uniqueness of Isho Mesiha in Human Divinization
3. The Ammanuel Experience
4. Monasticism or Sannyasa
5. Spiritual Integration in Sannyasa
6. Ecclesial Dimension of Sannyasa
7. The *Ihidautha*
8. The 'Aham Brahmasmi' Experience
9. Incarnation, Indigenization, Inculturation
10. Conclusion.

I. The Uniqueness of Isho Mesiha in Divine Humanization⁸

It was God's will to let all completeness dwell in him; and through him to win back all things whether on earth or in heaven, into union with himself making peace with them through his bloodshed on the Cross (Col 1: 19). The uniqueness of this humanization consists in the fact that he was capable of feeling for us in our humiliation; he has been through every trial, fashioned as we are while remaining sinless (Heb 4:15). The Word was made flesh and came to dwell among us (Jn 1:14). In the old Testament the presence of God was manifested through various symbols and diverse experiences (Ex 33:7; 25: 8, 29: 46; 24:16, 40; 34, 35 and Zach 2:13).

The uniqueness of Incarnation consists in the direct presence of God in Isho Mesiha. According to John the Evangelist, Isho said: I have come in my Father's Name⁹ (Jn 5:43). It is the Father who sent Isho. The Father Who has sent me has himself bore witness to me (Jn 5:37) The humanization of Isho was to

6. Uniqueness of Divine Humanization and Human Divinization perfected in Isho Mesiha, see. Jn. 10;10
7. Jn 17:21 ff
8. Jn. 1:1-14, See Jerome Biblical Commentary, s.v. Incarnation
9. Jerome Biblical Commentary, s.v. Only Begotten

give life and give it more abundantly (Jn 10:10). This fulness in life is the will of God, as revealed by the spirit in the epistle to the Hebrews (10:6,7) "I am comming to do thy will, O my God". St. Paul says the same thing in his epistle to Ephesians and Thessalonians; "He has chosen us out in Mesiha making us beforehand to be his adopted children through IshoMesiha" (Eph 1:5). What God asks of you is that you should sanctify yourselves (I Thess 4:3). The purpose of the humanization of Isho was to give life in its fulness to man. God so loved the world that He gave up His only son so that those who believe in him may not perish but have eternal life. Isho has come from heaven. There is one who has come down from heaven, the Son of Man who dwells in heaven (Jn. 3:13). He is above all. In the first epistle of St. John we read: "Our message concerns that Word who is life, what he was from the first, what we have heard about him, what our own eyes have seen of him, what it was that met our gaze and the touch of our hands; yes, life dawned and it is as eye witnesses that we give you news of that life, that eternal life we have seen and heard, we pass on to you. so that you too may share in our fellowship. Our Fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Isho Mesiha" (1Jn. 1:1-4)

Isho is not one among many; but the only begotten Son.¹⁰ No man has ever seen God. But now, His Only Begotten Son, who abides in the bosom of the Father has become our interpreter (Jn 1:18). God so loved the world that He gave up His only Begotten Son, so that those who believe in him may not perish, but have eternal life (Jn 3:16). The reference in the old Testament point out this truth (Pas. 21:21; 24:16; 34:17; Gen 22:2; Am 8:10; zach 12:10; Is 6:26). The uniqueness of Isho Mesiha is not the finding of men. It is the plan of God (*medabranutha*) manifested in history.

According to Hinduism, one of the world religions, incarnations are many ¹¹. Some have limitations, some are complete. Variations depend on the importance and the greatness of the needs. Isho Mesiha came not for a particular need or for many needs. Isho came for the total fulfilment of God's plan¹² and that for eternity. The effects of divine humanization of Isho Mesiha

10. Jerome Biblical Commentary, s.v. Only Begotton

11. Swami Gnananda Saraswati, Vedanta Vignanam, Palakad, Cf. Frank Gaynor, Dictionary of Mysticism, s.v. Aham Brahmasmi.

12. Eph 1:5-12

extend to the time before history, during history and after history. It is eternal. It is unique.

II. The Uniqueness of Human Divinization

God is one. There is only one mediator between God and men. Isho Mesiha who is a man like them gave himself as a ransom for all (1 Tim 2:5). At the appointed time he bore his witness. Why Isho has become mediator is said in a prayer in the Raza Text of the Nazrani Church¹³: "you put on our humanity in order to vivify it by your divinity and have exalted our low state, raised us who are fallen, vivified our mortality, forgiven our debts, justified our sinfulness, enlightened our knowledge and condemned, O Lord God, our enemies and gave victory to the weakness of our frail nature in the overflowing mercies of your grace." Through the human nature assumed by Mesiha, he has effected the divinization of all mankind. But in these days God's way of justification has at last been brought to light; one which was attested by the Law and the Prophets, but stands apart from the Law.¹⁴

God's way of justification through the faith in Isho Mesiha is meant for everybody and sent down upon everybody without distinction (Rom 3:22), provided he has faith. All alike have sinned, all alike are unworthy of God's praise. Justification comes to us as a free gift from his grace through our redemption in Isho Mesiha. God has offered him to us as a means of reconciliation in virtue of faith ransoming us with his blood (Rom 3:23-25; Act 4:6; Heb 2:14; Gal 3:19,20).

Through his human nature Isho submitted himself totally to the divine plan.¹⁵ Through the merit of his total renunciation the divine plan was executed totally and it led to the Lordship of Isho. That is why God has raised him to such a height; given him that name which is greater than any other name, so that everything in heaven and on earth and under the earth must bend the knee before the name of Isho and every tongue must confess Isho Mesiha as the Lord (maria) dwelling in the glory of God the Father (phil 2:9-11).

This Lordship gave him the capacity to sanctify the entire universe¹⁶. The baptismal consecration of Mesiha was so

13. Raza- Syro-Malabar Qurbana, 3rd Gehantha prayer

14. Jerome Biblical Commentary, s.v. The Law

15. Jerome Biblical Commentary, Eph 1:11

16. Jerome Biblical Commentary, Phil 2:9

unique that it has no parallel anywhere or at any time¹⁷. This consecration and offering was so complete which makes it unique in its effect. In accordance with this divine will we have been sanctified by an offering made once for all, the body of Isho Mesiha¹⁸ (Heb 10:10, 12, 14). By a single offering he has completed his work for all time in those whom he sanctifies. He sits for ever at the right hand of God offering for our sins a sacrifice that is never repeated. The ascetic identity of the Syrian Church is derived from this total renunciation and total self-sacrificing offering of Isho Mesiha.

If the indigenous monastic religious culture is rich through the ages old contributions of *rishis* and sages of Bharatha, the Nazrani dairautha (monasticism) finds its unique identity and excellence in the individuality of Isho Mesiha. In the Acts of Thoma, this identity excellence are evident.¹⁹

The asceticism of death experience when lived through baptismal consecration, is not only really a partaking in the life of God, but also in his glory and new life through the resurrection experience²⁰. In divine human communion the body-soul-spirit integration is realized. Man lives in God in a divine milieu.²¹

III. The Ammanuel Experience

The highest stage in divinized humanity is the God-with-us experience. This was the experience of man in Paradise before the fall; this is purity²². Purity is the virtue of virgins as revealed in the apocalypse. The children of the Covenant defuse the perfume of purity. They are the virgins on this earth. They are the ones who witness to the holiness of the Church at all times. Here, we find a spirituality that is not distinct or different from that of the Church²³. The basic reason for this is: In the Only Begotten Son, the Ihidaya, prayer and life were one²⁴. The

17. Jerome Biblical Commentary, Heb 10:10,12,14

18. Jerome Biblical Commentary s.v. Resurrection.

19. Acts of Thomas, See; Robert, op. cit. p.13.

20. Jerome Biblical Commentary s.v. Resurrection.

21. Mar Aprem; On Faith, 18:4,5; 5:1; 42:10; 75:20-23, Hymn on Heaven 52:1; Nisibene Hymn 49:3.

22. Rev 14:3-5.

23. Xavier Koodapuzha (ed.), Oriental Churches Theological Dimensions. OIRSI Publications. 1988, pp 133ff.

24. Martin Thornton, Prayer, Mowbrays, London & Oxford, 1972, pp.98ff.

Ammanuel experience of the Children of the Covenant was similar to the Father experience of Isho²⁵.

In the uniqueness of the baptismal consecration the Children of the Covenant²⁶ were the guardians of the kingdom of God on earth which is similar to guardian angels²⁷. They are the servants of the Holy of holies. They live in the bridal chamber with lighted lamps with their bridegroom. Mesiha the light of the world shines always as the light of the virgins. God is the peace in their hearts and the light for their spirits. They are filled with the Ammanuel experience. Life with Isho Mesiha will manifest purity and maturity. This experience -God-with-us experience is not in the world of ideas or imagination but in the world of reality. This is achieved by the Word of God in the liturgy²⁸.

Having listened to the Word of God during liturgy and having reflected on the Word, the Children of the covenant, the worshipers, reach the peak experience of God²⁹. The intensity of such experience in the Most Holy Virgin Mother is evidenced through the magnificat (Lk 1:46-55).

Mary treasured up all these sayings and reflected on them in her heart (Lk. 2:19). In the syriac foundation and the Nazrani tradition contemplation on the liturgy is the source of Ammanuel experience³⁰. When the soul is deeply immersed in the deepest essence of the spirit, the body reaches a state of ecstasy. Even if the God with us experience becomes intense, the Nazrani Ihidaye and dairaye however, do not fall into the stage of Aham Brahmasmi. On the contrary they, rise more and more to the experience of the kingdom of God³¹.

Now we look into the significance of the words monasticism and sannyasa.

25. Jn. 14:20.

26. R. Murray, Symbols of Church and Kingdom, Cambridge University Press, 1975, p.3.

27. Ibid., p. 14.

28. Vat. 11 S.C. 7, 10-13.

29. Quriagos Elijah, Anuchinthanam, Denha Services, Manganam, Kottayam, 1991, pp. 48ff

30. Ibid. p. 52.

31. Lk. 17:21.

IV. Ashram Life or Sannyasa

Daira - Monastery or Ashram denotes a house and the mode of life of those who dwell therein. Ashramites have integrated the mode of life of Isho Meshia in their baptismal consecration. Baptism is not merely an event; it is the beginning of one's self-realization. These followers of Mesiha who were faithful to their baptismal consecration lead indigenous ashram life in the Indian context ³².

These disciples who were called by Isho Mesiha were ready to leave everything behind to follow him. Disciples have to become witnesses to Isho Mesiha through total sacrifice. The call received is a gift given to partake in the divine life, embracing all the sacrifices it demands. The effort to follow Isho always, in spite of difficulties is asceticism. It is through this asceticism that ashram life or sannyasa becomes a reality ³³. It is an experience like that of the wheat grain that falls into the ground and dies to bring fruit ³⁴. Through this, the image and likeness of God in a person develop to its fullness through asceticism ³⁵. In Isho this fulness was achieved for ever. He is the true likeness of the God. His is the first birth which precedes every act of creation (Col 1:15) and it was God's pleasure to let all completeness dwell in him and through him to win back all things into union with himself making peace with them through his blood shed on the cross³⁶ (Col 1:19).

The first Mesihites of the church had opted the same ascetic mode of life led by the slihe and the disciples of Isho Mesiha³⁷. In course of time, that experience of the followers of Isho Mesiha through ascetical life became the mode of life in the ashrams³⁸. This continued in the Church through ashram life or sannyasa.

32. Placid Podipara, *Religious Life Among the Thomas Christians*, in E.C. Suthner, ed. Wezzachen, Festgabe M. Biederman, Wuzburg 1971, p. 283ff

33. Acts. 2:43:47; 4:32-37.

34. Jn. 12:24.

35. G.A. Maloney, *The Breath of the Mystic*, Dimension Books, Denville, New Jersey, 1974, p.116.

36. Jerome Biblical Commentary, on Col 1:19.

37. Acts. 4:32-37.

38. Quriaqos Elijah, *Syriayile Muthukal (mal)*, Denha Services, Kottayam, 1990, p. 12.

Ashram life has very few structures. Isho stressed the importance of interior life and life witness. He says: "The kingdom of heaven will not given entrance to every man who calls me, master, master; only to the man who does the will of my Father who is in heaven" (Mt. 7:21)³⁹. Witnessing through life was the essence of this life. Isho himself gives testimony to this through his life. He says "Love one another as I have loved you". This commandment of love is the essence of ashram life⁴⁰. Isho proved this in his life. He still loved those who were his own, whom he was loving in the world and he would give them the uttermost proof of his love (Jn. 13:1). The life of love that Isho lived was unique; par excellence. It was universal. This is acceptable to all religions and communities including Hindus.

In India the asceticism of the Hindūs is best expressed in *sannyasa*⁴¹. Total renunciation is part of Hindu *sannyasa* which is a guiding star in the quest for God. The Church always acknowledges these precious values. The word *sannyasa* derives from *sam-ni-asa*. According to the Indian mind *sannyasa* is the total renunciation of the world, its wealth and even the attachment to it. *Sannyasi* is a person who sets apart his life entirely for the people of God. There is spiritual integrity in Indian *sannyasa*.

V. Spiritual Integration in Sannyasa

For the disciples of Isho Mesiha spirituality is the integral experience of meshianic life through *Ruha d' Qudsa* (Holy Spirit). Nazrani monasticism finds its identity in the aforesaid spirituality⁴². Hence we will discuss life in *Ruha d' Qudsa*.

God has endowed man with certain capabilities through which *Ruha d' Qudasa* can work⁴³. These are intuition, conscience and communion. Intuition enables man to see God and understand the Word of God. From the word of God a person develops the ability to judge the good and evil. This ability is conscience. The ability to the identification with the good is communion.

39. Mt. 7:21, Commentary, Aphraat, Demonstrations, 1-23.

40. Vat. 11, P.C. 1; L.G. 44.

41. Emmanuel V., *Indian Christian Sannyasa and Swami Abhishiktananda*, Bangalore, 1981, pp. 14ff.

42. Life in the Holy Spirit is called '*Ruhanutha*' (Spirituality).

43. Human beings are endowed with the spiritual faculties of intuition, conscience, and communion, Cf. Quriaqos Elijah, *Vyakthi Saphalyam*, Denha Services, Kottayam, 1984, pp.

These abilities work through the intellect, mind and emotions. The operation of these faculties is through the brain, the heart and the senses. These mental activities are so complex in which a definitive role is taken by the incarnation of the divine. The Church projects the image of the well integrated humanity effected through the incarnation event. Its excellence is unique. Isho has renounced himself totally to the flesh and the universe. This is incarnation. It is integration. It is a concrete experience of man's relationship with God. This well integrated ruhanutha (Spirituality) is found in the Church. Hence we look into the ecclesial dimension of sannyasa.

VI. The Ecclesial Dimension of Nazrani Ashram Life

Isho who laid the foundation for a well integrated ruhanutha called certain people, chose them and consecrated them (Jn. 17:19; 15:16). The Slihe and those who believed in Isho Mesiha through the words of the slihe (Apostles) were filled with spirit of the good news. They consecrated themselves to a life of renunciation and thus church life became sannyasa for the early Mesihites (Christians)⁴⁴. This consecration was done along with baptism and those who were thus consecrated were called *benai qyama* (sons of the covenant), and *bnath qyama* (daughters of the covenant) in the syrian churches. They lived in dairaye (ashrams). In covenantal ruhanutha (spirituality) these ashrams enriched ecclesial ministry in various ways. The Syrian ashrams through their literary contributions and the resultant cultural resurgence enriched mesihaic civilization⁴⁵. The Nazrani Church adopted the indigenous languages and cultural practices of the believing communities up to the sixteenth century⁴⁶. However, as the Hindus keep Sanskrit as their language of worship the Nazranies keep Aramaic (Syriac) as their liturgical language⁴⁷. The Muslims keep Arabic as their language of worship since their religion was revealed in Arabic. The language spoken by Isho and his disciples was Aramaya Syriac and that is the language of liturgy for the Nazrani Church⁴⁸.

44. Quriaqos Elijah, Kizhakinte Sakshyam, Denha Services, Kottayam, 1990, p. 31ff.

45. R. Murray, Op. cit. pp.279ff.

46. Placid J.P., The Thomas Christians, Darton Longman & Todd, London, 1970, pp. 86ff.

47. Idem, pp. 75ff.

48. Joseph A.J., The Early Liturgy, Darton, Longman and Todd, London, 1980, pp. 203ff, 211ff.

Nazrani ashrams were culturally intergrated with the Indian culture as such. In this relationship the asceticism of Indian sannyasa was well integrated in ashram life through the word of God and the sacred liturgy. In short, the Syrian ashrams translated the Ihidautha of Isho Mesiha into the dairautha and thus made it unique in the Indian church⁴⁹. Those who were consecrated as sons and daughters of the covenant proclaimed the ruhanutha (spirituality) of the entire church. Covenantal spirituality has become ashram spirituality or Nazrani dairautha⁵⁰.

The greatest contribution of sannyasa is its witnessing value; witnessing through a life of total surrender, total renunciation. Nazrani dairautha should join hands with Bharathya sannyasa as witnesses and prophets of human liberation⁵¹. The constant model for this is the Ihidautha in Isho Mesiha. The same is the foundation of syrian dairautha(ashram life).

VII. The Ihidautha

In the ashram life of the orient, especially in that of the syrian tradition, the concreteness of asceticism is similar to that of Bharathiya sannyasa. In syrian dairautha(sannyasa), according to Mar Aprem the most important virtue is sincerity⁵². Sincerity demands complete renunciation of self and material goods in order to reach self realization. But the contemplative aspect of self-realization is the total following of Isho Mesiha without any limitations. Objectively the following of Isho Mesiha goes back to the sliaic tradition. This implies ecclesial continuity. The life of 'Thidaye'- solitary hermits, found in Edessa, Syria, Palestine and Bharath proves it⁵³.

In the teaching of Addai, the life style of the Syrian ashramites is described. In it he says that those who want to follow Isho Mesiha cannot posses anything other than the kingdom

49. J. Aertthayil, *The Spiritual Heritage of the Thomas Christians*, Dharmaram Publications, Bangalore, 1982, pp. 81ff.

50. Ashram started at Manganam, Kottayam; Cf. There were ashramites, When Roz s.j. addressed the Nazranies, *Bibliotheca vaticana*, Fondo Borganio, No. 18. ff. 3-4.

51. Jesu Rajan, *Bede Griffiths and sannyasa*, Asian Trading Corporation, Bangalore, 1989, p. 164ff., Cf, Bede griffiths, *Christian Ashram*, Darton, Longman and Todd, London, 196, pp. 56ff.

52. Mar Aprem, *sannyasa Niyamangal*, No.6, Kizhakinte Sakshyam, Denha services, Kottayam, 1990, p. 204.

53. Dom Mayeul Dreuille, *From east to West*, TPI, Bangalore, pp. 119ff.

of God. They will have to refuse gifts even from king Abgar⁵⁴. In order to experience the kingdom of God, they have accepted poverty as an ornament. Sincerity to the baptismal consecration requires it. Fidelity to the baptismal vows requires one to put on Mesiha and put away all temporary gains. That is why they refuse to marry and they practise virginity, espousing themselves to the heavenly bridegroom, Isho Mesiha. They are the unmarried people who live as sons and daughters of the covenant in the church in ecclesial communion.

Nazranis, especially the Children of the Covenant in syriac tradition were most faithful to Isho Mesiha through good deeds. This faithfulness is the daily witnessing of their baptismal vows. In the life of Mar Aprem we read: Mar Aprem lived his entire life on vegetarian food including pulses. He did not eat bread at all. His drink was water. His skin was stuck to his bones like an earthen pot. His clothes were full of patches and was the colour of dung hill. Small in stature, never hilarious, always expressing compunction of heart, he was free of worries or sorrow and had the gift of tears⁵⁵.

Mar Aprem was a heroic ihidaya and a genius among the ascetics. Rigorous asceticism and penance characterized syrian dairautha, which paved the way to monastic life based on the Holy scripture⁵⁷. The book of Thomas Governors of Marga describes syrian dairautha as begun in the spirit of the Holy scripture. He continues: "The first ashramites were Moses and Elijah. Those who followed them were John the Baptist, Isho Mesiha and his disciples. The life of Moses and Elijah is the counterpart of the life of Isho and his disciples in purity and virginity."⁵⁸

54. G. Chediath (trans.), *Mar Thomayude nadapadikal*, Paurasthya Vidyapitham, vadavathoor, 1984, p. 45, 121.

55. Podipara, *The Thomas Christians*, op.cit, p.82, The modesty of the Thomas Christian women was proverbial. "Their dress consisted of a jacket, that covered the hands and the body to the waist, and a long piece of cloth reaching to the ankles and tied round the waist with a manner peculiar to them alone" (Vincenzo maria di S. Caterina da Siena, 111 *Viaggioalle Indie Orientali*, Roma, 1672, L. 1. C.V.

56. Arthur Voobus, *History of Asceticism in the Syrian Orient*, Vol. 11, Louvain, 1960, p. 101.

57. E.A. Budge (ed.), *Thomas of marga, The Book of Governors*, Syriac Text and Translation, London, 1893, p. XIII.

58. Idem.

In the Church established in Jewish background, the *ihidautha* is based on the unique identity of Isho. According to Jewish tradition asceticism is the heart of faith. The same spirit was continued in the meshianic church and it became the identity of Nazrani dairautha⁵⁹. However, ashram life saturated with asceticism became unique in excellence when it witnessed to total universal love as revealed in Isho and his disciples. The essence of Ihidautha is the fidelity of baptismal vows⁶⁰. Hence the essence of the life of ihidautha is sought in the humanization of Isho Mesiha who is the Ihidaya of God⁶¹.

VIII. The Aham Brahmasmi Experience

Aham Brahmasmi experience is a mystical stage reached by one who has reached the highest degree of asceticism and contemplation according to the spiritual vision of Hinduism⁶².

This usage has appeared in the Upanishads in the eighth century B.C. It is the *manthra* advised by Guru Udalak to his disciple Swedakethu 'Aham Brahmasmi'. Along with this comes another thought: 'Thatuam Asi' meaning: 'That is you'.

In this stage a person sees the world and heaven, their bursting forth into existence and experiences their growth. When contemplating the relationship between the visible and invisible, the intuition provides a spiritual knowledge in which *atman* and *paramatman* are clearly defined⁶³. In the Upanishads we find an untiring urge and quest to reach self-realization through achieving peak experience in ecstatic spiritual joy. 'Truth, wisdom, infinity, Brahman' is the supreme experience to which the gurus lead their disciples. Finding this in oneself is life-realization or *jeevitha-sakshatkara*. For the intuitive vision of God, total detachment from the world of senses is necessary⁶⁴. In such a

59. Varghese Pathikulangara, Mar Thoma Margam, Denha Services, Kottayam, 1989, pp. 33ff. Cf. Jerome, Letter CVII, in Nicene and Post Nicene, Vol. VI, p. 190.

60. Aphrahates, Demonstrations, VI.

61. Jn. 1:14; Cf. Jerome Biblical Commentary, Jn. 1:14.

62. Dictionary of Mysticism, Frank Gaynor (ed.), The Citadel Press, Secaucus, New Jersey, 1973, s.v. Aham Brahmasmi.

63. Idem.

64. S.N. Dasgupta, Hindu Mysticism, Frederick Ungar Publishing Company, New York, 1973, p. 42.

sublime state one's soul becomes one with the indwelling Brahman⁶⁵. When atman and supreme atman are united one realizes aham Brahmasmi stage and proclaims it. The disciple or seeker observes all the directives of pooja and spiritualizes everything worldly. Freedom from all mundane desires is achieved and through that he reaches the highest goal. What we find in the Upanishads is the wisdom gained through intuition within the deepest self by the sages. They dwell in the cave of their hearts and gain supreme knowledge by which they identify atman and paramatman. It is a journey toward faith in one God. The God-experience of the Upanishads is the intuitive vision of God by the soul and not by the exercise of reason and logic. Sannyasis regard intuitive knowledge as the important thing. The Upanishads have contributed greatly to the spiritual growth and resurgence of Bharathya civilization⁶⁶.

When the great *vakya* contributed by the Upanishad is compared to the Ammanuel Experience the latter provides concrete and objective experience of a person. The uniqueness of Isho Mesiha consists in his objective presence as the man-God; the Ammanuel ie. God with-Us.

The one who came down from heaven achieved self-realization in the Abba-experience as revealed through his words: "who has seen me has seen the Father. Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe me for the sake of the works themselves" (Jn 14: 10,11). We have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Isho Mesiha once for all (Heb. 10:10). This is the Medabranutha (plan) of God.

Human witnessing has limitations. Aham Brahmasmi is an intuitive experience, nonetheless it is subjective and it has its own limitations⁶⁷. However, the witnessing of the one who is God-man is perfect. Isho Mesiha who is God Incarnate through his human nature has divinized humanity. There is no parallel to this anywhere anytime in history. This witnessing is objective and unique⁶⁸. The human divinization realized objectively in Isho

65. Mundaka Upanishad 3:1.

66. Mundaka Upanishad 3:1.

67. Awami Gnanand Saraswati, Vedanta Vignanam, Sivananda Ashram, 1984, pp. 355 ff, Cf. Op. cit, pp. 441 ff.

68. Lk 2: 10; 1 Tim 2:4 ff, Jerome Biblical Commentary, 1 Tim 2:4ff.

Mesiha can be experienced subjectively by every believer. This is the 'God-with-us' (Ammanuel) experience⁶⁹. Therefore, in Ammanuel experience of Isho Mesiha, we find the completeness of incarnation which surpasses every other human divine relationship⁷⁰.

IX. Inculturation, Indigenization and Incarnation

The incarnation of Isho Mesiha has reshaped world civilization radically⁷¹. New horizons are formed in the human divine relationship. In the humanization-divinization event, heaven has come down to live on earth. Isho says this when referring to his manifestation: "see, the kingdom of God is within you" (Lk. 17:21). This kingdom, which is Mesiha exists in virtue of love, because the first rule in human race at its very beginning was the rule of love. "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your might" (Dt. 6:5). "You shall not make any vengeance or bear any grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbour as yourself. I am the Lord" (Lev. 19:18). Isho Mesiha, God the Incarnate, made this law of love his life witness. This love is the main stream in the make up of human civilization. In Mathew 5:17 we read: "Think not that I have come to abolish the Law and the Prophets, I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill them". A new commandment I give you, that you love one another (Jn. 13:34). In John seventeen we read: "The glory which thou hast given me, I have given to them that they may be one even as we are one; I in them, and Thou in me; that they may become perfectly one; so that the world may know that thou hast sent me and hast loved them even as thou hast loved me" (Jn. 17:22,23).

He who does not love does not know God; for God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only son into the world so that we may live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his son to be the expiation for our sins (I Jn 4:10).

In short, the incarnation of Isho Mesiha is the incarnation of the love of God.⁷² This love is to become the main stream of our civilization. It was the spirit of God-Ruha-the personified

69. Mt.2:1; Lk 23:47.

70. Jn. 3:31-32.

71. Mt. 2:1; Lk 23:47.

72. 1 Jn. 4:8-16 Cf. Jerome Biblical Commentary.

love of God that gives human nature to Isho Mesiha.⁷³ The Holy Spirit gives love of God which is the source of divinized human culture and civilization. God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us (Rom 5:5). The love referred to here is the total love manifested through Isho Mesiha. God gave the commandments to man on the basis of this love which first appeared in man.⁷⁴ But growth in love in mere human way is always limited. Hence it had to be realized in Isho Mesiha because the fulness of life is in him (Jn 17:13). The divine plan executed through Isho Mesiha is the realisation of God's love in man (Jn. 17:4). Tribulation, expectation, suffering etc are necessary for the realisation of love. This expectation is the strength of mankind for its own liberation. The object of expectation is God's love.

The Bharathya Jain and Budha religions have made decisive contribution to the Indian culture. It is a wealth of spiritual knowledge gained by the sages or rishis of India. This same culture is the culture of the Chaldean Nazranis of Bharatha.⁷⁵

In the Bharathya culture religious experience or intuitive self-realisation is based on human effort. However, in the Nazranis, it is based on divine intervention. The unique excellence of Nazrani culture is the result of the objective self-realization achieved by Isho Mesiha, the Ihidaya of God, by total renunciation of the world and total submission to human conditions. The important element in this culture is the love-experience manifested and given to humanity through the incarnation event of Isho Mesiha⁷⁶. Its excellence is unique. It is the greatest contribution of the Church to Bharathya culture⁷⁷. In its absence a human kingdom may perhaps be built up, but it will not be the realization of the Kingdom of God on earth⁷⁸.

The exhortation of the Church for perfect love is not to be limited to the religious only⁷⁹. When it is opened to all the

73. Rom 5:5 Cf. Jerome Biblical Commentary.

74. Gen. 1:2,27; 2:7, Dt. 6:5, Lev. 19:18, Jer. 31:31, Ezech 36:26,27.

75. Placid J. Podipara, *The Thomas Christians*, Cit. pp. 44ff.

76. Cf. William Robert Miller, *The New Christianity*, A Delta Book, 1966, pp. 96ff.

77. A.M. Mundaden, *Indian Christians Search for Identity and Struggle for Autonomy*, Dharmaram Publications, Bangalore, 1984, pp. 192ff.

78. Jacques maritain, *Integral Humanism*, University of Notre Dame Press, 1973, p.111.

79. Vat. 11, P.C. 1.

faithful, it will be a life of faithfulness to the baptismal vows, that life will be in the spirit of monasticism⁸⁰. This kind of life will have witnessing value in our country and in the world at large. Hence it will be accepted. It will be the medium for inter-faith dialogue⁸¹.

X. Conclusion

The charism for ashram life is a gift, the word of God has given to mankind through divine humanization. In this paper an attempt is made to elucidate the sannyasa of Isho Mesiha.

The total self-giving of Isho Mesiha resulted in the divine humanization and human divinization through incarnation. Nazrani ashram spirit is the spirit of human divinization through asceticism and contemplation. It is a life-witnessing to the divine humanization and human divinization realized in Isho Mesiha; this was achieved through total love and total self-sacrifice for the entire human race.

In Bharathiya culture, predominantly Hindu, experience of God or self-realization is the most important factor in life. In Nazrani culture also God-experience is the *highest* goal. In Hinduism this experience is gained in intuitive knowledge, where as for the Nazrani it is gained by the experience of God in the liturgy.

In the liturgy God-experience is derived through the listening to the Word of God (sravana), contemplation on the Word of God (manana) and effective union in the Word of God (nithidhyasana). Liturgical God-experience is found in baptism and built up in faith.

The covenantal baptismal spirituality was actualized in the Syrian Church through ashrams. In Aramaic Syriac the word 'daira' means ashram. Dairautha means sannyasa or ashram life. The ashramites integrate the meshihaic experience in their life through fidelity to the baptismal vows.

The Syrian Church is a continuation of Isho Mesiha. This is true also of Nazrani tradition. Nazrani Church existed in Bharath in the first century, from the very beginning of Christianity. It is known that the Nazrani Church was well integrated in the Bharathiya culture up to the sixteenth century. This fact is to

80. Quriaqos Elijah vadaketh, Kizhakinte sakshyam, Op. cit; pp.55ff.

81. Quriaqos Elijah, Vyakthisaphalyam (mal), Denha Services, 1984, pp. 188ff.

be considered when we talk about indigenization and inculturation. Nazrani Church was well integrated with the Indian society in every aspect.

The greatest contribution of ashrams is the witnessing value of a life characterized by universal love which enriches and divinizes the kingdom of the world and transforms it into the Kingdom of God.

Isho Mesiha, the Ihidaya of God is the sannyasi par excellence in history. Hence Nazrani ashram life fits in well with the Indian mind, its culture and civilization.

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TRINITARIAN FOUNDATION OF THE CHURCH IN THE EAST SYRIAC TRADITION

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The doctrine of the Holy Trinity is the unshakable foundation of all Christian religious thought, of all piety, of all spiritual life and of all experience. It is the fundamental article of Christian faith and the ontological basis of Christian existence.¹ From the beginning, the revealed truth of the Holy Trinity has been at the very heart of the Church's living faith, principally by means of baptism. The economy of salvation is fundamentally trinitarian. Hence the faith of all Christians rests upon the Trinity. Consequently, a correct understanding of God as Triune is an essential element in every theologizing. The doctrine of the Trinity is the basis which underlies all other theological themes as well as ecclesial and liturgical life.² There is an intrinsic and an interlocking relation between the Trinity and the Church. Trinity is the primordial ontological reality upon which and from which the actual life of the Church springs forth and the theology of the Church develops.³ The Church derives its origin out of the divine love that finds concrete expression in the *ad extra* mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit. That is to say, the Church, is origi-

1. Cfr. V. Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (New York: 1976) 65.
2. For a methodological understanding, Cfr. J. Kallarangatt, "Trinitarian Epistemology in Theology" in G. Karukaparampil (ed), *Tuvaik: Studies in Honour of Rev. Jacob Vellian* (Kottayam: 1995) 147-161; According to Nissiotis, theology is the effort to grasp the 'how' of the trinitarian revelation of the personal God. See his "Some Thoughts on Orthodoxy", *Preparatory Essays: Lambeth Conference 1968* (London: 1968) 368. That is why the Fathers consider theology as the "Contemplation of the Trinity". V. Lossky, *The Mystical Theology*, 67.
3. For details, Cfr. J. Kallarangatt, "The Trinitarian Foundation of an Ecclesiology of Communion" *CO 11* (1990) 3-16.

nated from the divine economy of the Holy Trinity. This economy has a three dimensional actualization process: the planning by the Father, realization through the Son and the completion in the Spirit, yet it is a one wholistic act of God. As a reality revealed in space and time the Church has also three distinct but comprehensive phases of existence parallel to the three phases of the salvation history attributed to the divine Persons.⁴ They are named as: the Church of God (the Father) ie, the pre-existent Church of the OT, the Church of Christ (the Son) ie, the historically established Church upon the apostles and the Church of the Spirit (the Holy Spirit) ie, the Church that is moving towards the *eschata*. Keeping this theological framework, let us have an understanding of the theme based on the East Syriac tradition. The East-Syriac ecclesiology is fundamentally rooted in the economy, ie, on the doctrine of God and the manifestation of that God in the Son and the Spirit. For the development and elaboration of this here we make use of the liturgical prayers as the main source.

1. Church of God the Father (Theo-centric Economy)

a. Role of the Father in the OT Economy

i. *Delineation of the Church by the Father*

In his *Letter to the Ephesians*, St. Paul writes: "Blessed be God the Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him (Christ) before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him" (Eph 1:3-4). In order to accomplish this pre-existent selection and eternal plan of God, and 'to gather together the scattered children of God' into one flock, '*ekklesia* (cfr. Jn 11:52), God called Abram and made him Abraham - the father of a multitude of nations. The definite purpose of the call of Abraham was that "through him all the nations of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen. 12:3). For that God prepared a people - Israel - from the descendants of Abraham in view of the final gathering of all his children into the unity of an

4. It is opportune to remember that the salvation history is 'history'. As such it need not reveal Father, Son and Holy Spirit "equally" at all times and in all places. For details, Cfr. W. Kummel, "*Heilsgeschichte im Neuen Testament?*" J. Gunika (ed) *Neues Testament und Kirche* (Freiburg: 1974) 437-457.

'ekklesia'.⁵ God called them out of Egypt, made a covenant with them on Mount Sinai and asked them to serve Him as the only living and true God. In other words, God established the 'ekklesia' which "He has chosen and set up from the beginning"⁶ on Mount Sinai as the proto-type of the one to come. The Syriac liturgical prayers give ample evidences to this idea of the establishment of the Church on Mount Sinai: "Let us sing praise to the Father, who depicted her (Church) on Mount Sinai".⁷ "O Father, You made Your presence to dwell on Mount Sinai and filled it with the holiness of Your honour".⁸

ii. Church: the Bride of the Father

The Father has not only delineated the picture of the Church on Mount Sinai, but also laid her foundation there. He set up his presence on it and spoke of it as the type of His Church⁹ and finally He accepted her as His Bride.¹⁰ "Blessed are you (Church) because you have become the bride of the Father".¹¹ Though there are different interpretations to this concept, in this context, it can be taken as an indication of the pre-existence of the Church.

iii. Church's Pre-existence: Evidences

The pre-existence of the Church can be elucidated by biblical, liturgical and patristic evidences. In Ps 74:2 we read: "Remember thy congregation ('ekklesia) which thou hast gotten of old, which thou hast redeemed to be the tribe of thy heritage". When we consider the liturgical prayers, we will see, especially

5. Irenaeus uses the term 'ekklesia' only for the people of the New Covenant before its final consummation in the heavenly Jerusalem. Yet the whole of mankind from the beginning of history is related to the Church. Abel, the symbol of the just man murdered unjustly anticipates the harvest of the Church. *Adv. Haer.* IV 34:4.; R. Kereszty, "The Unity of the Church in the Theology of Irenaeus" *Second Century* 4:4 (1984) 209.
6. P. Bedjan (ed), *Breviarium Iuxta Ritum Syrorum Orientalium id est Chaldaeorum*, Vol. III, 435.
7. P. Bedjan, *Breviarium*, Vol. III, 424.
8. P. Bedjan, *Breviarium*, Vol. III, 420.
9. P. Bedjan, *Breviarium*, Vol. III, 400.
10. *Bathe*, IV Sunday of Dedication, *Supplementum Mysteriorum sive Proprium Missarum de Tempore et de Sanctis juxta Ritum Ecclesiae Syro-Malabarensis* (Rome: 1960) 161.
11. P. Bedjan, *Breviarium*, Vol. III, 410.

in the prayers of the season of *Qudash 'Edta*, rather a repeated occurrence of the Ps 74:2 "Remember your Church which you have gotten of old".¹² This expresses clearly the consciousness of the worshipping community that the Church was in the mind of God from the very beginning of creation. However, we sing: "O Lord, in your mercy guard your Church which you have selected and instituted from the outset".¹³ The Syriac Fathers developed this theme rather elaborately. Although they did not say the existence of the Church before the creation, they see in many of the OT events and God's promises to certain persons the pre-figuration of the Church. In one of his *Demonstrations*, Aphrahat writes: "The Church is the authentic fulfilment of the former people (Israel)".¹⁴

Again, in the Pauline Epistles especially in Galatians and Romans,¹⁵ Paul praises the faith of Abraham. Likewise in the *Letter to the Hebrews* we see a list of OT figures who were justified before God through their faith.¹⁶ The author of the Hebrews presents them as models for the Christians in their life. More than that, we have a testimony of Jesus acknowledging the acceptable life of innocent Abel to Zechariah, the son of Barachiah.¹⁷ Basing on these and similar other Scriptural texts and tradition, the Church honours these just men – patriarchs, prophets and certain other figures both men and women as saints and remembers them in the liturgical celebration in a special way.¹⁸ For example, in the Syro-Malabar *Raza Qurbana* text we recite: "Remember all prophets and apostles, martyrs and confessors of this place and of every place".¹⁹ In this context, we can understand better the words of Paul to the gentiles: "you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with

12. P. Bedjan, *Breviarium*, Vol. III, 401, 435 etc.

13. *Onit^h d' Qanke*, IV Sunday of Dedication. *Supplementum*, 160.

14. *Dem. XXIII*, 13, W. Wright, *The Homilies of Aphraates, the Persian Sage*. Edited from Syriac Manuscripts of the *Vth and VIth centuries in the British Museum, with an English translation*, Vol. I (London: 1869) 462.

15. Gal. chap. 3 and Rom. chap 4.

16. Heb 11:1 ff.; Aphrahat, *Dem. I*, 14-16.

17. Mt. 23:35.

18. *Order for the Solemn Raza of the Syro-Malabar Church* (Trivandrum: 1986) 36, 39, 44, 49-50.

19. *Orders for the Solemn Raza*, 39. Cfr. also, Aphrahat, *Dem. XXI*.22.

the saints and members of the household of God built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets” (Eph 2:19-20). In the formation of the *‘ekklesia*, therefore all the just men and women and all the prophets of the OT played a unique role. At the same time, they all belong to this *‘ekklesia*.

b. In the NT Economy

Not only in the OT economy but in the NT economy also, which is mainly centred around the Son of God, we can trace out the specific role of the Father. In the NT economy, though it is the second person of the Trinity who has become man, it is the Father who willed to send the Son to the world in order to save His people. As St. John says: “God so loved the world that He gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”²⁰ Therefore the Church sings to the Father for sending Christ as follows: “On the day of your birth, O Saviour of all angels and men were made equals and by their hymns they shouted out praises to the Father who sent you for our salvation... Blessed is He at whose birth the angels sang glory to the Father who out of His love willed to send His Beloved for the salvation of all creatures”.²¹ Again it is the Father who sends the Spirit on the apostles in order to complete His plan. Thus the role of the Father in the divine economy as well as in the establishment of the Church is specific and at the same time comprehensive.²²

2. Church of Christ (Christo-centric Economy)

In the foundation, formation and bringing up of the Church, Christ the second person of the Trinity had the most active role to play. Because it is in him that God wants to unite everything in heaven and earth. However, it is He who intervened concretely in the history of mankind personally and visibly. Therefore, without Christ there is no Christianity, no Church. The liturgical prayer pictures him as the One who came to complete the building of the Church whose foundation was laid by the Father. “A heaven of peace, whose foundations Father had laid and whom the Son has completed and built...”.²³ Yet, it is through the unfolding of the Christ-event that we see the establishment of the Church in history.

20. Jn. 3:16-17

21. P. Bedjan, *Breviarium*, Vol. I, 101.

22. This is exactly the same idea that we find in LG 2.

23. P. Bedjan, *Breviarium*, Vol. III, 396.

a. The Unfolding of the Church through the Christ-Event

The liturgical prayer speaks richly on the salvific and ecclesial effects of the mystery of the Christ-event. Some of the important milestones in the Christ-event that have ecclesial implications are: incarnation, baptism, establishment of the twelve, death on the cross, resurrection, ascension and sending of the Spirit. Whatever may be the event and the explanations given to it, there are certain fundamental realities that will serve as the basic notions in the understanding of the Church and they are: (1) the Christ-event reveals the divine economy of God, consequently the divinity of God as Father, Son and the Spirit. (2) Christ-event is not a single event. It is a series of many events of the 'one historical event'. It is not an act of the single person Christ but the wholistic act of one Triune God. Nevertheless, it is concretised historically in the second reason, since it is the very particular act of the Son in the Trinity to incarnate and to become a historical reality. (3) The ultimate purpose of this Christ-event is the salvation of humanity. Consequently, each and every event and deed in the whole Christ-event is salvific. (4) The reality of the Church is the tangible expression of this divine activity. Hence the Church is ontologically rooted in the Trinity, manifested along with the unfolding of the salvific plan. (5) Just like the Christ-event is the concretization and visible expression of divine economy of the Triune God the historical Church which is realized through the Christ-event too is the visible sign or expression of the '*ekklesia*' that is included in the whole salvific plan. (6) Just like each event in the Christ-event is salvific, the manifestation of the Church in and through each event is real and conveys its original aim in the plan of God, ie, salvation. (7) Since the Church is rooted in the divine plan of God for salvation, the very meaning of its existence in the world is 'to be the salvation' of all.

When we think of the second phase of this establishment of the Church by Christ, all the events -related to the Christ-event have their own institutive value. Nevertheless, we limit our discussion here mainly on two events: (i) the establishment of the apostolic community and, (ii) Christ's death and resurrection; they will shed some light to the nature and structure of the historical Church. Though the first event we understand that the Church is a historical reality founded on the apostles. By the second event we come to the experience that the Church is a community of the redeemed ones and it is established in the world

as a means of salvation. And this is achieved mainly through the salvific death of Christ on the Cross and His resurrection. All the other salvific events prior to his death, viz, incarnation, baptism, transfiguration etc. are anticipations and pre-figurations of His redemptive death on the Cross. The ultimate purpose of all these events is to establish the *'ekklesia* for the salvation of mankind.

b. Establishment of the Apostolic Community

When we speak of the historical origin and development of the Church through the divine activity of Christ, the most decisive act in the establishment of the Church is the election of the twelve. In addition to this twelve apostles Christ selected seventy-two disciples (Lk 10:1) to impart his message to different parts of the city and neighbouring towns. Both of these elections convey the message that the Church is the continuity and the fulfillment of OT people since they represent the number of the twelve tribes of Israel and the elders among the chosen people during the time of Moses (Num 11:16). Concerning this election and appointment the liturgical prayer says: "At first Jesus chose twelve fishermen according to the twelve number of tribes and then later seventy two as the elders in the days of Moses."²⁴ Before sending them to the four quarters of the world Jesus prepared them both intellectually and spiritually: "Jesus told his disciples through the promise of my Father I am sending to you the Holy Spirit, the consoler so that through him you may be perfected in the great knowledge of the glorious *qnome* of the Trinity, namely, the Father without beginning, the Son equal to Him and the eternal Spirit."²⁵ "The group of the apostles and those who came and believed in Christ, assembled together and they were waiting for the gift. Our Lord granted their request and sent to them the Spirit and wisdom."²⁶ The coming of the Spirit transformed them and were made holy disciples, doctors of faith,²⁷ and true physicians.²⁸ However, the Paraclete, on seeing the group of the apostles filled them with priesthood and granted them heavenly graces, spiritual gifts, and celestial power.²⁹ He

24. P. Bedjan, *Breviarium*, Vol. I, 334; Vol. III, 62.

25. P. Bedjan, *Breviarium*, Vol. III, 64.

26. P. Bedjan, *Breviarium*, Vol. III, 60.

27. P. Bedjan, *Breviarium*, Vol. III, 59.

28. P. Bedjan, *Breviarium*, Vol. III, 60.

29. P. Bedjan, *Breviarium*, Vol. III, 60.

established them as true pillars and bright lamps in the world³⁰ and as incense of reconciliation³¹ in the four quarters of the world. When the apostles became equipped with the Spirit, Christ appointed them as light in his Church.³² He also imparted His authority to them and made one among them as the herald of others. See what the liturgical prayer orates: O Christ, you conferred upon (handed over) your apostles the power of authority in heaven and on earth.³³ "To one, you gave power over the keys of the kingdom".³⁴

Just like he was sent by the Father, He sent the apostles as fishers of men with the net of love. The apostles started to fulfil the mission that was entrusted to them through the ministry of the Word, ie, preaching. Consequently, the scattered children of God began to "gather together" into the fold of their Master. Thus they worked for the establishment of the Church and for its purpose of existence, ie, salvation.

In the world Our Lord Jesus stretched out the net of his love upon all the communities of the earthly beings. And He gave it to the hands of his servants, the apostles. He sent them to the four quarters of the world. They caught from land and from sea living and sensible prey through the vital word of their teaching as the Lord commanded them. Blessed is our Lord Jesus who raised his servants who believed in him and brought the nations back to his fold making them heirs in the celestial dwelling.³⁵

c. Ecclesial Implications of Christ's Death and Resurrection

i. To "Gather Together"

The Christ-event reaches its culmination in the death and resurrection of Jesus. As the fulfillment of the aim of his coming - I do not come to judge the world but to save³⁶ the world - Jesus underwent a death as He himself said: "when I am lifted up from

30. P. Bedjan, *Breviarium*, Vol. III, 61.

31. P. Bedjan, *Breviarium*, Vol. III, 61.

32. P. Bedjan, *Breviarium*, Vol. III, 56.

33. P. Bedjan, *Breviarium*, Vol. III, 67.

34. P. Bedjan, *Breviarium*, Vol. III, 56.

35. P. Bedjan, *Breviarium*, Vol. III, 62.

36. For an understanding of the soteriological aspect of Christ's death, Cfr. J. McIntyre, *The Shape of Soteriology* (edinburgh: 1992).

the earth, I will draw all men to myself" (Jn 12:32). John the evangelist interprets this saying of Jesus as follows: "He said this to show by what death he was to die" (Jn 12:33). With a retrospective vision, the evangelist understood the meaning of Jesus' saying, ie, His death on the cross. The purpose of Jesus' death in His own words is to 'draw all men to himself' (cfr. Jn 12:32). This is very explicitly said in the Gospel of John in the context of the high priest's harsh words but interpreted by the evangelist as a prophecy on the purpose of Jesus' death. In the gospel we read:

Caiaphas, who was high priest that year said to them: "you know nothing at all; you do not understand that it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people and that the whole nation should not perish." He did not say this of his own accord, but being the high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus should die for the nation and not for the nation only, but to *gather into one the children of God* who are scattered abroad.³⁷

If we delve deeper into the words of the evangelist we can see a reality: the emergence of the '*ekklesia*' out of the death of Jesus. That is to say, the ultimate purpose of Jesus' death is to bring together or gather together or draw all men together to himself.³⁸ In other words, to make a 'convocation', an assembly of all men united in Christ, in a word, the '*ekklesia*'. To establish the '*ekklesia*' was the purpose of God's covenant with Noah, call of Abraham, preparation of a people, the message of the prophets and finally the coming of Jesus; that is, to gather all his children into the unity of the Church in Christ.³⁹ And this is what St. Paul says in Eph 1:10 as the ultimate aim of God's plan: "a plan for the fullness of time to unite all things in Him."⁴⁰ It is because,

37. Jn 11:49-53.

38. Aphrahat, *Dem.* XVII, 10.

39. Then, as may be read in the holy Fathers, says Vat. II, all just men from the time of Adam, "from Abel, the just one, to the last of the elect" will be gathered together with the Father in the Universal Church. *LG*, 2. For a detailed understanding of this theme, see Y. Congar, "*Ecclesia ab Abel*" M. Reading (ed), *Abhandlungen über Theologie und Kirche* (Dusseldorf: 1952) 79-108.

40. Here we can notice the unveiling of the "mystery"; the Church itself is this mystery in the sense of the mystery of God's plan which consists in establishing a Church in which all the elect are to be gathered together and be with the Father for eternity.

the power of sin had scattered them (Babel incident) and they were under the slavery of death. Christ out of his love liberated them from the power of sin and death through his death on the cross. By his death he destroyed the power of death and redeemed all the scattered ones and gathered them in Him.⁴¹ The purpose of Christ's death is therefore the redemption or the salvation of the mankind and the 'unity' or the gathering of all - ie, to establish an '*ekklesia*'.

O' Our Redeemer, through your Holy cross the angels and men have become one fold and one Holy Church; behold the heavenly and earthly ones rejoice and behold all creatures cry out Lord of all, praise be to you.⁴²

It is to be noted that the establishment of the '*ekklesia*' is not at all a second thought, or an establishment out of nothing. But it is a re-establishment through the re-creative act of Christ. Imbibing the spirit of Pauline theology, the liturgical prayer says: "Behold, the whole creation has been renewed in Christ who is the head of the new life."⁴³

ii. Gathered Community is a Redeemed Community

The nature of the '*ekklesia*' that was established by Jesus can be deduced from the following words of Jesus: 'I came not to call the righteous, but sinners'⁴⁴ If the Church is the community of the "called ones" and the calling is done by Jesus the redeemer, then the Church is nothing but the sinners who are called and redeemed by Christ. Again, if the Church is a community of the redeemed sinners, the first sinner who is redeemed by Christ is Adam. Hence the Church comprises all human beings - from the first man to the last man. This is an undeniable reality if we accept the truth that Jesus is the 'Saviour' of the world. The Church is therefore a redeemed community; a gathering together of redeemed sinners. This all embracing aspect of Jesus' redemptive act is clearly expressed in the following prayers:

For details, see K. McNamara, "The Mystery of the Church" in *The Church A Theological and Pastoral Commentary on the Constitution on the Church* (Doublin: 1983) 75-89.

41. Aphrahat, *Dem.* XXI, 11.

42. P. Bedjan, *Breviarium*, Vol. II, 407.

43. P. Bedjan, *Breviarium*, Vol. II, 393.

44. Mk 2:17; Mt 9:13; Lk 5:32; 19:10; Mt 18:11 & 1Tim 1:15.

If the Israelites were saved by the mute lamb which was killed in Egypt and if they were saved from the poison of vipers, that shed death, by looking at the serpent which Moses set up, how much more then should be the power of the Cross to make insipid the poison of the deceitful one, in the case of the congregation that adores Jesus, who redeemed us by his death.⁴⁵

when we say Christ established the Church as a redeemed community, that means, she is on the one hand, the community of the redeemed ones and on the other hand, the community that is meant for the salvation or the redemption of all those who wish to be saved.

iii. Unity and Peace: Hallmarks of the Redeemed Community

Although there are many effects of Christ's coming and his death on the Cross, one of the most important effect of the Christ-event is the establishment of unity⁴⁶ and peace.⁴⁷ They are the hallmarks of the new people gathered by Christ through his Cross. The words of St. Paul will elucidate this fact. In Eph 2:14ff he writes: "...he is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility". The unity is meant not only the unity among the human, bodily beings but also between the earthly and heavenly beings. The liturgical prayer speaks about these in the following way:

O' Our Redeemer, bless our community and make your grace dwell in it and give us strength that we the heavenly and earthly choirs may praise you; and that we may all love one another and that we may acquire charity and concord to praise you, as do the spiritual ones united in one will.⁴⁸

iv. Strengthening and Commissioning

"Christ, who by the resurrection of his Holy body appeared many times to his disciples and breathed into them his

45. P. Bedjan, *Breviarium*, Vol. II, 385.

46. Onit^ha d^e Qanke, III Sunday of Dedication, *Supplementum*, 158.

47. Onit^ha d^e Qanke, IV Sunday of Resurrection, *Supplementum*, 98; Onit^ha d^e Raze, I Sunday of Kaitha, *Supplementum*, 125.

48. P. Bedjan, *Breviarium*, Vol. II, 414.

spirit and they received his Holy Spirit, and who gladdened and delighted all by his resurrection"⁴⁹. "Christ, who by the resurrection of his Holy body, sent his disciples to teach all peoples and to baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."⁵⁰ From the above said prayers we get an anticipated experience of Pentecost and the commission - to preach the gospel and to baptize - given to the disciples. Because, as St. John says in 20:19-23, the liturgical prayer speaks of the reception of the Holy Spirit before the Pentecost event,⁵¹ and the commissioning of Jesus, ie, Mt 28:16-19. Though the NT authors differ in their presentation of the time span of the events, the reality is the same: Christ gave the Spirit to his disciples and he commissioned them to fulfil his mission in the world through preaching the gospel and to gather together the scattered children from the four corners of the world in the name of the Holy Trinity. Baptism is a sign or an imprint given to the person in order to acknowledge the truth that he is redeemed and gathered to the assembly of God or the Church of God. This happens through the resurrected Christ. God has made Him as the head of all those who are gathered in him through his message of salvation. "Merciful God, who raised up his beloved one and made him immortal and free from suffering and who in his mercy made him head of his Church and because of his goodness"⁵². The Church rejoices in Him who is the head and gatherer of her like a bride in her bridegroom and a mother with her children.

.. the same became the head (corner stone) of the building; it is the praise of all the kingdoms of the earth. O' our Lord, your resurrection is the beginning of our lives. Praise and riches have come in your Holy houses: behold your Church which extends everywhere, which you acquired through your precious blood, is adorned as a bride and like a mother with her children, rejoices in you.⁵³

In short, the NT economy which is centered around the Christ-event revealed the second phase of the Church as its his-

49. P. Bedjan, *Breviarium*, Vol. II, 393.

50. P. Bedjan, *Breviarium*, Vol. II, 393.

51. P. Bedjan, *Breviarium*, Vol. II, 393.

52. P. Bedjan, *Breviarium*, Vol. II, 339.

53. P. Bedjan, *Breviarium*, Vol. II, 414-415.

torical foundation. In this foundational act, the appointment of the twelve and the death and resurrection of Jesus have decisive importance. Although the Church became a historical reality through the Christ-event, it reaches its fulfilment through the activity of the third divine person, Holy Spirit.

3. Church of the Holy Spirit (Pneumato-centric Economy)

We understand from the scriptures that the Church became a visible community only after the Pentecost. As missioned, empowering other paraclete in history, the Holy Spirit is therefore the theo -societal origin of the Church.⁵⁴

a. The Constitutive Role of the Ruha

Although the spirit was active all through out the salvation history, in a specific way, He became the constitutive principle of the Church⁵⁵ from Pentecost onwards which is considered as the third phase of the Church. By the power of the Holy Spirit, the apostles taught the one perfect faith,⁵⁶ uprooted and destroyed from the earth the error that satan sowed and implanted the knowledge full of life and salvation.⁵⁷ They established Churches,⁵⁸ announced his doctrine in the four quarters⁵⁹ baptized them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.⁶⁰ They led the mankind from the world full of suffering to the harbour of life and of heavenly bliss.⁶¹ In short, through the cenacle experience of the Spirit, Church became a reality with the co-operation of the apostles. In other words, the Spirit constituted the Church foundation which is laid by the Father and instituted by christ with the apostles. Here below are examples to elucidate this truth and the particular role of the Spirit in its third phase. The Paraclete made them true proclaimers of his Holy mysteries,⁶² enlightened and granted them wisdom

54. R. Kress, *The Church Communion Sacrament Communication* (New York: 1985) 34.

55. For contemporary understanding, see J.D. Zizioulas, "Pneumatological Dimension of the Church" *ICR* 1 (1974) 142- 158; M.Richards, "The Spirit and the Church" *The Church of christ* (England: 1982) 20-38; K.McNamara, "The Holy Spirit in the Church" in D. Falangan (ed) *The Evolving Church* (New York: 1966) 18-35.

56. P.Bedjan, *Breviarium*, Vol. III. 57.

57. P.Bedjan, *Breviarium*, Vol. III. 59.

58. P.Bedjan, *Breviarium*, Vol. III. 61.

59. P.Bedjan, *Breviarium*, Vol. III. 67.

60. P.Bedjan, *Breviarium*, Vol. III. 59.

61. P.Bedjan, *Breviarium*, Vol. III. 65.

62. P.Bedjan, *Breviarium*, Vol. III. 76.

and made them perfect,⁶³ enabled them to speak in different languages,⁶⁴ made known to the illiterate fishermen the hidden mysteries,⁶⁵ made them capable teachers,⁶⁶ enriched them with doctrine of the treasures of knowledge,⁶⁷ equipped them with his (Spirit's) power⁶⁸ and strengthened them by Him.⁶⁹

b. Merits of Spirit's Coming

The Liturgical prayer further speaks of the merits of Spirit's coming upon the apostles. Although the immediate recipients of Spirit's gifts were the apostles, the same is continuing in the Church according to the need of the Church in accordance with the will of God. We can enumerate some of those merits in the following way: the Spirit shines forth on the world and because of this, the whole world was filled with grace, the sins of men were forgiven, the needy received good hope, the ignorant people were filled with knowledge, the sick were cured, the dead received the hope of life,⁷⁰ and the darkness of error from the earth expelled.⁷¹ The Holy Spirit giving light to the whole Church is the ultimate reason why the Church believes everywhere the same truth, teaches everywhere one and the same faith, practices everywhere the same morality and love God to the point of martyrdom. The same Holy Spirit is present in every local Church and in the whole Church. The Spirit is the ultimate basis for the identity between the churches founded by the apostles and the churches at the present time.

C. Gifts For the Building up

The Holy Spirit has granted to the apostolic community certain gifts for their sake and for the sake of the Church at large. They are: the gift of language⁷² to teach all the nations, the power to guide the community,⁷³ and the gift of discipleship⁷⁴ to con-

63 P.Bedjan, *Breviarium*, Vol. III. 66,82.

64 P.Bedjan, *Breviarium*, Vol. III. 66.

65 P.Bedjan, *Breviarium*, Vol. III. 74.

66 P.Bedjan, *Breviarium*, Vol. III. 73.

67 P.Bedjan, *Breviarium*, Vol. III. 60.

68 P.Bedjan, *Breviarium*, Vol. III. 59.

69 P.Bedjan, *Breviarium*, Vol. III. 59.

70 P.Bedjan, *Breviarium*, Vol. III. 76.

71 P.Bedjan, *Breviarium*, Vol. III. 64.

72 P.Bedjan, *Breviarium*, Vol. III. 87.

73 P.Bedjan, *Breviarium*, Vol. III. 72.

74 P.Bedjan, *Breviarium*, Vol. III. 72.

tinue the mission of Christ. However, it is the Spirit who granted the priesthood to the apostolic community for the sake of the Church to continue the liberating, healing, and sanctifying functions of Him in the Church.⁷⁵

d. Spirit Leads to the Eschata

One of the important functions of the Spirit in the economy is that, He leads the Church to the eschata. However, the Spirit is He who brings the Church to Christ and Christ to the Church. This may be seen in the earliest Syriac text, *Odes of Solomon*: it is the Spirit who brings the Son to the world⁷⁶ and who empowers the singer to come to the Lord⁷⁷ and to praise him: "As the wind (ruha) moves through the harp and the strings speak, even so speaks the Spirit of the Lord in my members and I speak by his love"⁷⁸ Another important function of the Spirit is that presented in the liturgical prayers is perfecting the beauty of the Church and making her worthy for the bride chamber. This is the eschatological fulfillment of the Church. In other words, it is the Spirit who leads the Church to the final glorification and that is the culmination of the divine economy of God. "King Christ who propagated your glory by his grace and decorated you in all heavenly beauties in the Spirit whom he gave to you. Acknowledge him with his sender."⁷⁹ "Splendid is the bride chamber which the Holy Spirit has interwoven for you."⁸⁰

4. Conclusion

In the previous pages we were analysing the Trinitarian foundation of the Church in the mystery of God's salvific plan. From the exposition and analysis we understood that the mystery of God, the mystery of God's plan of salvation and the mystery of the Church are intrinsically and intimately related. The mystery of the Church is rooted in the other two mysteries. As a mystery rooted in the divine mystery, the Church is revealed along with the revelation of God's eternal plan of salvation and that is through the *ad extra* mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit.

75 P. Bedjan, *Breviarium*, Vol. III. 60.

76 J.H. Charlesworth (ed & tr) *The Odes of Solomon* (Oxford: 1977), Ode 19.

77 Ode 36

78 Ode 6:1-2.

79 P. Bedjan, *Breviarium*, Vol. III, 416, 426, 436.

80 P. Bedjan, *Breviarium*, Vol. III, 406, 410.

Hence, the Church is derived from the divine economy of the Holy Trinity. God is Trinity and the trinitarian God is constitutive of formulating a theology of Church. The unfolding of the mystery of salvation in history is a gradual process. As we understand from the Bible there are three distinctive but comprehensive phases of revelation attributed to the three divine persons. Consequently, we have three phases of history of the One Church too. We have discussed them in terms of the *medabbranutha* (economy) centred around the Father, who is the beginning, Son who is the culmination of salvation history and the Holy Spirit who is its universalization. Although the Church has a pre-existent origin and a preparatory time in the OT period, it is through the Christ-event that it became a reality on earth. Christ through the establishment of the apostolic community and His death on the cross and resurrection built the Church on the foundation laid by the Father. Finally, it is the Holy Spirit who fulfils what the Father had intended and the Son has laboured. As the sanctifying, life-giving, empowering Paraclete, the Spirit keeps the Church always as a source of salvation and calls everyone 'to be in communion' with the Triune God. It is the Spirit who leads the Church to the *eschata*, for final glorification.

THE DIVINE DISPENSATION OF CHRIST IN THE SYRO-MALABAR QURBANA IN THE CONTEXT OF THE UNIVERSAL SALVIFIC WILL OF GOD

- Rev. Dr. Johnson Chittilappilly

The foundation and faith of the Christian religion are epitomized in the mystery of Christ which is otherwise known as the divine dispensation of Christ. It is the sum total of the eternal design of God for the salvation of mankind: God's coming in the flesh which fulfilled all the aspirations and promises; the saving deeds of Christ performed on earth; what the apostles preached and the Church passes on to all generations. As St. Paul himself explains: "Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of our religion: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated in the Spirit, seen by the angels, preached among nations, believed on in the world; taken up in glory" [1 Tim 3:16]. The purpose of this article is to understand the significance of the central theme of the Syro-Malabar Qurbana in the context of the universal salvific will of God. In the order of treatment, the first part deals with the clarification of the concept of the divine dispensation of Christ. Then we shall present the trinitarian economy in the eucharist, the dispensation of Christ, the ecclesial and eucharistic dimensions of the dispensation. In the general conclusion we propose some salient conclusions, drawn from the discussion, which contribute to the liturgical theology of the Syro-Malabar Church.

1. The Significance of the Word *Dispensation*

The word *dispensation*, equivalent to the Syriac *mdabbranuta*¹ and the Greek *oikonomia*, expresses different shades of meaning²: a) guidance, direction, steering, government, administration, stewardship, leadership; b) manner of proceeding, action, course; c) prudence, foresight; d) province, prefecture; e) the divine dispensation, the providence, government or economy of God. The last meaning is often employed of our Lord's entire doings with mankind especially of His incarnation and life on earth. It can also be a way of life, the divine economy of salvation. The divine dispensation of our Lord, especially, means the economy of our Lord, everything that our Lord did when He was on earth, from His birth to His ascension into heaven. The word meaning of dispensation thus demonstrates the importance of dispensation of Christ in the divine economy of salvation of mankind.

2. The Trinitarian Economy

The definitive work of the tri-personal God is so basic to the economy of salvation, that *dispensation* is rightly called the mystery of the Trinity. Although there is an ontological chasm between the eternal, transcendental, hidden divine nature and

1. See R. TONNEAU-R. DEVREESSE, ed. and trans., *Les homelies catechetiques de Theodor de Mospaueste*, *Studie Testi* 145; Citta del Vaticano 1949, 3, 143, 145; W.F. MACOMBER, "The Christology of the Synod of Seleucia-Ctesiphon A. D. 486", *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 24 (1958) 149, Note 1; B.BOTTE, "Oikonomia", *Ephemerides Liturgicae* 94 (1980), 286; B.BOTTE, "Problemes de l'anaphore syrienne des apotres Addai et Mari", *L'Orient Syrien* 10 (1965) 99; M. ARRANZ, "L'economie du salut dans la priere du 'Post-Sanctus' des Anaphores de type Antiochien", in A.M. TRIACCA & A. PISTOIA, eds., *L'economie du salut dans la liturgie*, *Conferences Saints-Serge* 17, *Bibliotheca Ephemerides Liturgicae Subsidia* 25, Roma 1982, 57; E. YARNOLD, trans., *The Awe-Inspiring Rites of Initiation: Baptismal Homilies of the Fourth Century*, London, 1971, 177; T. ELAVANAL, "Some of the Anaphora of the Apostles Mar Addai and Mar Mari", *Christian Orient* 8 (1987) 33.
2. For the detailed study of the word *dispensation* in the Syriac language: cf. J. CHITTILAPPILLY, *Mdabbranuta, The Divine Dispensation of our Lord in the Holy Qurbana of the East Syrian Tradition: a Liturgico-Theological Study*. unpublished doctoral dissertation, PIOS, Rome 1989 [hereafter is quoted as CHITTILAPPILLY, *Mdabbranuta*], 1-5.

created natures, the eucharistic liturgy presents the mystery of oneness of God in threeness in its historical self revelation of the Father through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit.

The creation and sustenance attributed to God the Father, are seen in the liturgy as operations of all three persons. The second *g'hanta* in AM³ praises the adorable name of the Trinity for creation and salvation:

"Worthy of praise.....the blessed Trinity, of the Father, the Son and the Holy spirit, who created the world by His grace and its inhabitants by His mercy and bestowed great grace on mortal men".⁴

The key concept which the liturgy uses to express the self revelation and communication of the triune god is *God the Word*, the hidden off-spring of God's bosom, born of a woman by the power of the Holy Spirit⁵. The action of God the Father, the source and goal of salvation, and of the redemptive work of the Son and the economy of the Spirit reach the Church as God's relationship with the world to save mankind. The anamnestic prayer in AM narrates:

".....that all the inhabitants of the earth may know you, that it is you who are the only God, the Father of truth, and that you have sent our Lord Jesus Christ your Son and your beloved; and he our Lord and our God came and in his life-giving gospel taught us all purity and holiness of the prophets.....and all the children of the holy Catholic Church who have been signed with the living and life-giving seal of baptism"⁶

The Father sends the Son, Who through His economy unites the children of the Church in the Spirit. The relationship of God with the world can be called *grace* and it is celebrated, believed in, witnessed to, in the holy Qurbana. The Pauline Salutation: the grace (*taibuta*) of our Lord, the love (*huba*) of the Father, the communion (*sawtaputa*) of the Spirit which opens and closes the anaphoras, is a trinitarian doxological profession

3. AM= Anaphora of the Apostles Addai and Mari.

4. OR [= *order for the Solemn Raza of the Syro-Malabar Church*, Trivandrum 1986] 45. The English trans. Of texts quoted in this articles is from the *order of the Holy Qurbana* given in the appendix of CHITTILAPPILLY, *Mdabbranuta*.

5. OR, 46-47.

6. OR, 50.

that summarizes the mystery of the economy of salvation⁷. Such praise and thanks offered to the triune God reach its climax in the second, third and forth g'hanta prayers and their subsequent qanone. The usual trinitarian invocation at the end of the prayers either with *Lord of all for ever*, or with *Lord of all, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, for ever* can, therefore, be taken as the liturgical peculiarity to proclaim the trinitarian dispensation.

3. The Divine Dispensation of Christ

The operation of the Only Begotten of God is the mystery of the divine dispensation, the focal point of the divine providence of the Father. It is the central article of faith of the Church: *He who for the sake of us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and became incarnate by the Holy spirit, and became man*⁸.

The occurrence of the word dispensation in the eucharistic liturgy⁹ recognizes the dispensation as the mystery of Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God (Eph 3,4). As the divine mystery it proceeds from the Father, is realized in the fullness of time and returns to its goal in heaven. Therefore the diaconal proclamation in the rite of reconciliation describes it thus:

"....For our sake did the Only Begotten of God receive from men a mortal body with a rational and spiritual soul endowed with immortality. By his life-giving laws and by his holy precepts he led us from error into the knowledge of truth. And after all his dispensation for us, (he) the first fruit of our nature was tempted in the cross rose from the dead and ascended into heaven"¹⁰.

The eucharistic mysteries which our Lord delivered to us express the redemptive mysteries¹¹: "He delivered to us his holy mysteries by which we all remember his mercy towards us", through which He continues the salvific mission to its eschatological fulfilment in the Church.

7. The words *taibuta, huba, sawtaputa*, summarize the salvific actions of the Son, the Father and the Holy Spirit: cf. A. MINGANA, ed. and trans., *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Lord's Prayer and on the Sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist*, Woodbrooke Studies 6, Cambridge, 1933 (hereafter is quoted as THEODORE, *Eucharist*) 98, 104; cf. also CHITTILAPPILLY, *Mdabbranuta*, 275, 280, 291.

8. OR, 38

9. See CHITTILAPPILLY, *Mdabbranuta*, chapter one note 406.

10. OR, 56-57

11. OR, 56.

The son now exercises the redemptive role in the Church, especially in the eucharist, in His capacity as the Lord and high priest seated at the right hand of Father. For the force of redemption came fully into operation only when Jesus was exalted at God's right hand¹². And it is Christ Himself who now carries out the exercise of His dispensation¹³. These are the inseparable elements that constitute the mystery of the saving economy of Christ in the liturgy: the incarnation of the Son of God, the summit of God's revelation in the fullness of time, the entire life of the God-man Jesus Christ, the action of the exalted Lord and high priest in heaven and the work of the Holy Spirit in the Church on earth until her eternal glorification.

The significance of the Church's liturgy is fundamentally the exercise of Christ's dispensation, the priestly action of that high priest in heaven and the redemption accomplished in us now. The Church's liturgical celebrations are therefore divine and salvific¹⁴. They depict God's descent to us and our ascent to Him. The foundation of both is the divine dispensation of Christ who came down from above, lived here on earth, and became the eternal glory of the Father in heaven.

4. The Church, the *locus* of the Divine Dispensation

The Church has the central position in the present age of the dispensation. The Church in its being is the realization of the

12. E. SCHILEBEECKX, *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*, London 1963, 21.

13. The mystery of Christ's dispensation is evident from various titles of Christ used in the Holy Qurbana, namely, *the Only Begotten Son, God the Word, Image of the Father, Splendour of your glory*. While these titles are significant for understanding the mystery of the descent of God and the incarnate life, the titles *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God and First Fruit, Saviour and Giver of life, Shepherd and Teacher, King and Judge, Mediator and Priest*, highlight various dimension of Christ's dispensation and how our Lord worked out our redemption. For a detailed study of these titles: cf. CHITTILAPPILY, *Mdabbranuta*, 282-296.

14. The effects of Christ's divine dispensation is expressed in the Qurbana through the words *salvation, life, truth grace, favour, reconciliation, renewal and restoration, victory, holiness and hope*. These words communicate the things Jesus Christ has done for man, which reach the redeemed community as gifts; cf. CHITTILAPPILY, *Mdabbranuta*, 296-302.

universal salvific will of God in our Lord Jesus Christ, "Who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim 2,4). The Church seen thus is the *locus* of the dispensation where the saving economy is brought about and symbolized.

1. The Church, the Extension of the Dispensation

The Church as the extension of the mystery of Christ's dispensation underlines the fact that she is the *locus* of the trinitarian economy and the continuation of Christ's salvific mission. It is through the apostles, by sending the spirit, that Christ continued this redemptive work. The *turgama* before the gospel narrates:

"He sent the Holy Spirit on his Apostles and made them wise, afterwards he sent them off to the four quarters of the world to preach the gospel" ¹⁵.

The Church continues Christ's economy, especially, through the eucharist. Her eucharistic celebration is based on the institution of the eucharist by the Lord and His command to do it. The example which Christ left to us, reaches us in unbroken succession. And Christ instituted the eucharist to celebrate our salvation by commemorating His mysteries. As the example of Christ continued and as commemorating His saving mysteries, the eucharist becomes the continuation of the salvific economy of Christ. Both these aspects are highlighted in the anamnetic prayer of AM:

"And we also.....have received by tradition the example which is from you.....commemorating and celebrating this great awesome, holy, vivifying and divine mysteries of the passion, the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ"¹⁶.

The eucharist thus is the high point of the life of the Church¹⁷, which constitutes the Church ¹⁸.

2. The Church, the Redeemed Community

The Church, the extension of Christ's dispensation, is already fulfilled and perfected historically, and yet she has not

15. OR, 25

16. OR, 50.

17. Paul VI, *Mysterium Fidei*, Acta Apostolicae Sedis 57 (1967) 754

18. SC 2.

achieved the redemption-in-consummation. She is still in the ongoing process of realization. This double aspect of the Church is seen in her titles: *the Crowned Church, the Bride of Christ, the Heavenly Church*.

a) The Crowned Church, the Bride of Christ

The eucharistic liturgy does not make use of the expression *the Church the bride of Christ*. Nevertheless it refers to the Church as *crowned like a spouse and full of every help and blessing*¹⁹. The Church crowned is a paradigm of a *bride adorned*. It symbolizes the glorification of the Church in her final encounter with the bridegroom, Christ. The love of Christ's bride is expressed as "full of all help and blessing which he has heaped on her which she is to possess eternally"²⁰. Church's journey on earth is like a marriage celebration that leads to the bridal chamber where the wedding banquet takes place. It is an eternal festivity in the bridal chamber of the heavenly kingdom which is anticipated in the eucharist²¹.

b) The Heavenly Church

The Church is often pictured in the liturgy as a model of the heavenly Church which associates her actions here to those above. The concept of the heavenly Church is an outcome of the biblical interpretation that admits the existence of two worlds²²: the one, invisible, immortal, heavenly and perfect; the other visible, mortal, terrestrial and imperfect. The heavenly Church is otherwise known as *Holy city, City of God, New Jerusalem, Heavenly Paradise, Heavenly Kingdom*. It is established by our Lord through His dispensation and He performs there the high priestly service²³.

The eucharistic liturgy describes the heavenly Church as the Kingdom of Heaven that is the household of God with the

19. OR, 14

20. K. McNAMARA, "The Mystery of the Church", in K. McNAMARA, ed., *The Church: a Theological and Pastoral Commentary on the Constitution on the Church*, Dublin 1983, 94

21. OR, 61; cf. also 70.

22. W.F. MACOMBER, "Theological Synthesis of Cyrus of Edessa an East Syrian Theologian of the Mid Sixth Century", OCP 30 (1964) 10.

23. THEODORE, *Eucharist*, 23-24; Cf. also 18-22, 25, 27, 33, 34, 49.

saints²⁴. It constantly invites our minds to be on high ²⁵ where the eternal worship occurs. At times the union of angels and men take place in the liturgy²⁶. Its climax is experienced in the Sanctus, the hymn of the heavenly liturgy.

The Church on earth thus is the image and symbol of the heavenly Church, one perfect and redeemed in Christ. As the image of the heavenly Church, it makes the future realization of the redemption of Christ present on earth. The Church being the type of heaven, her administration, liturgical as well as societal takes heavenly modes²⁷. On earth the life of the Church is a journey of pilgrims to heaven²⁸. This profound celestial eschatological insight is reflected in the Church's symbolic worship towards the east ²⁹ and in the liturgical disposition of the Church³⁰.

3. The Church, the Redemptive Community

a) Flock of Christ and Pilgrim People.

The Church as the flock of Christ is a pastoral symbol which expresses the intimate redemptive relationship of the Church with Christ, the good shepherd. The eucharistic liturgy identifies the Church as the sheep of God's or Christ's flock. It underlines the importance of the sheep as chosen and redeemed by the great passion of Christ³¹. They supplicate for the presence of Christ³². The role of the sheep is depicted in the liturgy as

24. OR, 51

25. OR 43, 44, 48

26. OR, 12-13, 54.

27. J.M. VOSTE, "*Liber Patrum*" *Latine Interpretatus est, Notis illustravit*, Fonti, serie 2, fase. 16, Calsei Diritto Antico 3, S. Congregazion per le Chiese Orientali, Codificazione Canonica Oriental, Roma 1940 (hereafter is quoted as *Liber Patrum*), 7-38.

28. SC 8.

29. E SHIMUN, trans., *The Book of Marganitha (The Pearl) on the Verity of Christianity, Written by Mar Odisho Metropolitan of Suwa (Nisibis) and Armenia, in the Year A.D. 1298*, Ernakulam 1964 (hereafter is quoted as *ABDISO, Marganitha*), V. 1, 64-66

30. A. KHORAICHE, trans., "L' explication de tous les mysteres divins de Yohannan Bar Zo' bi selon le manuscrit Borgianus Syriacus 90", *Euntes Docete* 19 (1966), 422-426.

31. OR, 30-31

32. OR, 34; cf. 69

praising and glorifying God with the angels³³. In the vision of divine dispensation, the symbol of the sheep led by Christ the Shepherd has great significance³⁴. If the Church on earth is essentially a pilgrim community led by Christ towards the heavenly abode, it is the dispensation of Christ that opened the way is to that eternal kingdom, for the entrance of which the sheep are ever longing for and journeying to.

b) People of God

The Church is the new chosen people of God. The characteristic mark of the new people is that they are chosen by God³⁵ and belong to the fold of God or Christ³⁶. The Word *Chosen* introduces the story of the intervention of God in the history of mankind for choosing and forming His own people (1Pt 2, 9-10). The dispensation of Christ is at the basis of the chosen people as they are redeemed by the great passion of Christ³⁷.

The new people are the assembly of believers in the Trinity³⁸, and so they are called the faithful³⁹, the children of the Church who are signed by the seal of holy baptism⁴⁰. In the folk is included all the departed from the community of the Church⁴¹. The idea of the *People of God* is also linked with the liturgical congregation who assemble in the name of Christ⁴². This notion of Christian ecclesia is understood as the final perfection of what the Bible calls *Qahal Yahweh* (the assembly of Yahweh)⁴³. They are called servants and maid servants (Col 4,7; 1Cor 4, 1; Eph

33. OR, 12, 69

34. CHITTILAPPILLY, *Mdabbranuta*, see chapter one note 21, and II, A.

35. OR, 30, 31

36. OR, 34, 40, 69

37. OR, 31

38. OR, 23

39. OR, 26

40. OR, 50

41. OR, 43

42. OR, 43

43. A. STENZEL, "Il servizio divino celebrato della comunità cultuale liturgica adunata in Cristo" in FEINER & M. LOHERE, eds., *Mysterium Salutis*, Brescia 1975, 28-34; L BOUYER, *Life and Liturgy*, London 1978, 23-24.

6,6)⁴⁴. Their bounden duty is to glorify the Lord always ⁴⁵. *Leitourgia*, then, is understood as every service of the new People of God ⁴⁶ who are called out of a nation in order to take up a mission for the nations⁴⁷. The assembled community thus is the sign and image of the ecclesia, the universal Church.

c) Priestly Race and Hierarchy in the Church

The priestly role of the Church is rooted in the high priesthood of Christ. Christ our head and mediator is the high priest who sacrificed Himself and brought us near to God. In this capacity that the community administers Christ's priestly service in the Church⁴⁸, through which she continues His divine economy. The eucharistic institution and entrustment are also the foundation and authority of her priestly ministry, by which she carries on our Lord's salvation once achieved until His eschatological coming. Thus the liturgy extends not only Christ's presence but also action of His priesthood in the world.

These notions clarify that it is the Church as a whole that possesses a priestly character. The ministry of the priest in the Church is a ministry of mediation for all people⁴⁹. The priest's mediation is especially conveyed in the liturgy through the repeated requests for the prayers of the people (*Pray, brothers*) and the intercessory prayers by the celebrant. Karozuta although recited by the deacon, is done for the congregation. This reflects the primitive understanding of the assembly of the faithful as the priestly community.⁵⁰

This does not mean that all the faithful enjoy the same rights in the priestly community. The eucharistic assembly, consisting of an officiating celebrant who is a bishop or priest, the

44. OR, 14, 47, 52, 57, 58, 70

45. OR, 12, 13, 15

46. R. TAFT, *Beyond East and West: Problems in Liturgical understanding*, Washington, D.C., 1984, 113; cf. also P. YOUSIF, "East Syrian Spirituality: Basic Elements and Orientations", in X. KOODAPUZHA, ed., *Oriental Churches: Theological Dimensions*, ORISI 144 (Kottayam 1988) 114.

47. G. LOHFINK, *Jesus and community*, London 1985, 17-29.

48. OR, 7.

49. OR. 7

50. J. A. JUNGSMANN, *The Early liturgy to the Time of Gregory the Great*, London 1960, 17-18

ministering deacons, and the worshiping community, have their specific roles. In these roles the hierarchical structure of the Church is revealed⁵¹. The hierarchical structure reflects a collegial ministry⁵². As the priestly nature of the Church is related to Christ's high priesthood, these roles are also modelled after the celestial liturgy⁵³. The eucharistic assembly, then, expresses the vital being of the Church, its structure, which also forms the basis for the external hierarchical ministry of the Church. All these functions serve one goal, the realization of the salvation of the priestly race which ministers Christ in the eucharistic service.

Continuing Christ's priestly action the Church becomes an extension of His dispensation. The hierarchical ministry which distinguishes the liturgical ecclesia from other private meetings, and the liturgical functions are irreplaceable⁵⁴. Belonging to this eucharistic assembly is not restricted to the liturgical assembly, but extends to the whole local community, the individual Church and to the whole ecclesia and to universe⁵⁵.

5. Eucharist, Celebration of the Divine Dispensation

In the locus of the divine dispensation the eucharist is the centre where the redemptive events of Christ are relived, especially His sacrifice on the Cross. Instituted and entrusted by Christ to the Church, the eucharist realizes the same goal for which Christ became man and fulfilled His divine dispensation.

51. For the hierarchical order: cf. W. De VRIES, "Der "Nestorianismus" Theodors von Mospsuestia in seiner Sakramentenlehre", OCP 7 (1941) 125-145.
52. Cf. C. RENOUX, "Liturgical Ministers at Jerusalem in the Fourth and Faith Centuries", in M. J. O' CONNELL, trans., *Roles in the Liturgical Assembly*, New York 1981, 221-232.
53. For the liturgical roles, in representations of the celestial liturgy; cf. Liber Patrum; R. H. Connolly, ed. and trans., *Anonymi Auctoris Expositio Officiorum Ecclesiae Georgio Arbelensi vulgo Adscripta*, CSCO, scriptores syri, serie 2, tomus 91, Rome 1913, 113-120; ABDISO, Marganitha, III, VIII, 44
54. G. DIX, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, 2nd ed., London 1945 (hereafter is quoted as DIX, shape), 20.
55. H. DENIS, "La communauté eucharistique aujourd'hui", La Maison-Dieu 141 (1980) 37-67.

a) *Raza*, as Euchauistic Mystery of Dispensation

Raza, is one of the venerable appellations by which the eucharistic celebration is known in this tradition. The very eucharistic designation *raza* explicates the Qurbana as the celebration of the mystery of the divine dispensation. The book of the celebration of the Syro-Malabar Qurbana is entitled *Taksa d-Quddasa* in or, though this is understood as meaning the *Order of Raza*. This naming the *Taksa d-Quddasa* and understanding it as order of *Raza* are significant. The word *Quddasa* means the celebration of the whole eucharistic rite⁵⁶. What is celebrated in the eucharist is the mystery of the divine dispensation, *raza*⁵⁷. Hence the understanding of the Qurbana as the *Order of Raza*. With *raza* the content and the internal reality of the eucharist and *Quddasa* its celebration are signified. These epithets can be seen as correlated, reflecting different nuances of the eucharistic celebration of the divine dispensation.

b) Praise- Thanks and Supplication

Praise-thanks is one of the striking features of the entire Qurbana. Starting with the solemn angelic exordium, *Glory to God in the highest*, and concluding with the final blessing, where it sings *praises to Christ in His Church*, the whole liturgy is replete with praise and thanks. To express praise-thanks the Qurbana employs a series of words: *subbaha*, *iqara*, *hullala*, *ramuta*, *tawdita*, *sgdta* and derivatives of *barek*. These verbs are simply juxtaposed in the liturgy as if nothing differentiate them⁵⁸. These words express the basic celebrative attitude of the assembly, who are redeemed and recount the mystery of the divine dispensation.

Supplication or petition is another element of the eucharistic prayers. The characteristics of the liturgical supplication

56. Cf. R. PAYNE SMITH, *Thesaurus Syriacus*, tomus 1-2, OXford 1879-1901, 3500.

57. Out of 49 occurrences of the term *raza* in the Qurbana (including Anaphora of Theodore and Anaphora of Nestorius) 34 times *raza* in the plural is used to denote the eucharistic species. These designations occur especially in the post-anaphera. *Raza*, in the Liturgy of the Word and in the Pre-Anaphera, also suggests the sense of the eucharistic service as a whole. *Raza* in the singular associates the eucharist more with the mystery of Christ. These uses appear conspicuously in the anaphera session.

58. For example, see before *marmita* the slot for ferial days: OR, 8

are that it is essentially ecclesial and eucharistic. The supplication here becomes not only an invariable element of the celebration, but also the most efficacious as it is offered during the celebration of the divine dispensation. Therefore, the eucharistic intercession is the petition par excellence of the Church, a participation in the eternal intercession of the risen Lord⁵⁹. The most important graces entreated in the Qurbana are: 1) redemption of all mankind, 2) eucharistic graces for a worthy celebration, to hear the Word of God, to offer praise and thanks, to accept the sacrifice, for the sanctification of the mysteries, for receiving the eucharistic gifts; and for the eucharistic effects: the pardon of sins, hope of resurrection, and new life in the kingdom; 3) ecclesial graces: for the whole Church, at times for all classes of people, including the liturgical assembly.

c) Eucharistic Sacrifice

Sacrifice, Offering the Oblation

The eucharistic celebration of the Syro-Malabar Church is otherwise known as Qurbana, which means offering, the eucharistic oblation or anaphora⁶⁰. The concept of the sacrifice is expressed in the liturgy by the word *debhata* which means sacrifice, offering in sacrifice, and is often used of the eucharist. These words present the eucharist as the sacrifice of Christ, an offering, and an oblation.

In the pre-anaphoral, the *offering of gifts* depicts the sacrifice of Christ: '*May Christ who was immolated for our salvation.....accept this sacrifice (debhata) from our hands*'⁶¹. The prayer before the sanctuary door brings out that the eucharist is a spiritual sacrifice⁶². In the anaphoral section the response to *Pray, brothers* reflects that what the priest offers through the Qurbana is a sacrifice of Christ⁶³. In the first *kusapa* of AM grace is requested to sanctify the sacrifice (*debhata*)⁶⁴; sacrifice here stands for the oblation. The reference to oblation in the prefatory dialogue: *The Qurbana is offered to God*, has a clear sacrificial mean-

59. M. THURIAN, *The Eucharistic Memorial*, Richmond 1960-61, 24-26.

60. PAYNE SMITH, *Thesaurus*, 3725-3726

61. OR, 37

62. OR, 38

63. OR, 49

64. OR, 41

ing.⁶⁵ As B.D. Spinks remarks that the sacrificial vocabulary here is a theological summary of the whole eucharistic prayer and action.⁶⁶

So, the word Qurbana generally signifies the eucharistic oblation. The oblation which we offer on the altar represents the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross.

i. Sacrifice, a Memorial celebration

The ritual anamnesis of the eucharistic sacrifice is grounded in Christ's command at the Last Supper: "Do this in my memory". In the fourth g'hanta of A.M. we have a vivid understanding of anamnesis:

"And we also, my Lord, your weak, frail and miserable servants who are gathered in your name, and who stand before you at this time and have received by tradition the example which is from you, rejoicing and glorifying, making commemoration (*ma'hdinan*) and celebrating this great awesome, vivifying and divine mystery of the passion, the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ"⁶⁷.

The anamnestic verb *ma'hdinan* used here with the praise-verbs has a strong commemorating significance⁶⁸. E.C. Ratcliff admits no idea of oblation, whether of bread and wine or of the body and blood of Christ, in the anamnesis of AM⁶⁹. B. Botte reads the sacrificial idea in reference to the passion and death of Christ⁷⁰. It is true that what is commemorated in the eucharist is the mys-

65. BOUYER, *Eucharist: Theology and Spirituality of the Eucharistic Prayer*, London 1968, 305.

66. B.D. SPINKS, "Eucharistic Offering in the Easy Syrian Anaphora," OCP 50 (1984) 351,358

67. OR, 50

68. R. J. LEDOGAR, *Acknowledgment: Praise -Verbs in the Early Greek Anaphora*, Roma 1968, 36

69. E.C. RATCLIFF, "The Original Form of the Anaphora of Addai and Mari: a Suggestion", *Journal of Theological Studies*, 30 (1928-29) 30

70. B. BOTTE, "L' anaphore chaldeenne de Apotres", OCP 15 (1949), 275; cf. B.D. SPINKS, "The Cleansed Leper's Thankoffering before the Lord: Edward Craddock Ratcliff and the Pattern of the Early Anaphora", in B.D. SPINKS, ed., *The Sacrifice of Prias: Studies on the Themes of Thanksgiving and Redemption in the Central Prayers of the Eucharistic and Baptismal Liturgies in Honour of Arthur Hubert Courtauld*, BELS 19, Rome 1981, 177.

tery of the divine dispensation of Christ; yet it is not without sacrificial content. For here we have a primitive understanding of the eucharistic anamnesis:

"But it was quickly understood -before the end of the apostolic age itself-that His sacrifice was something which began with His humanity and which has its eternal continuation in heaven.....Calvary has here become only the final moment, the climax of the offering of a sacrifice whose opening is at Bethlehem, and whose *acceptance* is in the resurrection and ascension and in what follows beyond the veil in heaven. Even St.Paul, despite his insistence in 1Cor. XI. that by the eucharist 'you proclaim the Lord's death', reveals by his next words'till He come' that the first generation of Christians saw more in the scope of the eucharistic *anamnesis* than simply 'sacrifice of the death of the Christ'⁷¹.

The celebration of the eucharist is therefore a memorial of Christ's sacrifice in the totality of His saving work, His entire divine dispensation.

ii. Sacrifice of Thanksgiving

The Church's offering, memorializing the sacrificial economy is a sacrifice of thanksgiving (*sacrificium laudis*). The prayer for the access to the altar identifies the offering of the priest in the holy of holies as a spiritual and reasonable sacrifice⁷²; and the priestly prayer for folding the *sosappa* asks grace "to offer.....this living and holy sacrifice"⁷³. The expression *the reasonable and unslain (or bloodless)* sacrifice convey an idea of sacrifice of thanksgiving offered in the eucharist as essentially a spiritual sacrifice or the sacrifice of praise.

Conclusion

From what has been stated, we may draw the following conclusions:

1) The divine dispensation of Christ is found to be the centre of the eucharistic worship in the context of the salvific will of God. True, the Pasch itself is the mid-point of the mysteries of Christ. But today there is a theological consensus in considering the

71. DIX, *Shape*, 242; cf. also 182, 185

72. OR, 38

73. OR, 43

74. K. STEVENSON, *Eucharist and Offering*, New York 1986, 26

paschal mystery in relation to the whole Christ event⁷⁵.

It is not an oversimplification of the earthly economy of salvation. It unites both the earthly Jesus and heavenly glorified Lord. Even the constitutive elements of the celebration, praise-thanks-supplication, offering the oblation and memorial, have in their inner core the comprehension of the same mystery. It is the golden thread which binds the whole structure and prayers of the divine liturgy. The Qurbana thus is the celebration of the Church by which we are drawn to the saving acts of Christ and are united in His offering eternally made before the Father, actualizing salvation.

2) The eucharistic text expresses rich content of the theology of the divine dispensation, the faith experience of the Syro-Malabar Church. It reflects the rule of prayer (*lex orandi*) which essentially determining her rule of faith (*lex credendi*) and vice versa. Inspired fundamentally by the Scripture, this eucharistic expression manifests the orthodoxy of the worshipping community of the particular Church handed down from the early Church.

3) This faith expression contributes to the concept of the ecclesiology of communion. The liturgical assembly is the specific representation of the ecclesia which has received *the example by tradition from Christ*⁷⁶. This *relation with Christ through a unique tradition* is basic to the particular Church and differentiates it from other Churches. The Syro-Malabar Church thus becomes an essential expression of the Christ-experience which forms part of the divinely revealed and undivided heritage of the universal Church⁷⁷.

4) Today more and more the Church sees the liturgy as a source of life and rule of sanctification. The anamnesis of Christ's dispensation is the well spring of all Christian prayer and life. The eucharistic celebration of the saving deeds of Christ by the people of God is the perfect realization of the ecclesial spirituality. In such a liturgical spirituality there is no dichotomy between public and private, objective and subjective, liturgical and personal; liturgical spirituality is essentially ecclesial, includes them all.

75. See for example: C. VAGAGGINI, *Theological Dimensions of the Liturgy: a General treatise on the theology of the liturgy*, Collegetown 1976, 250-252.

76. OR, 50

77. OE 1

5) Another value of this reflection is its prospectus for the pastoral action of the Church. Evangelization and Catechesis always go hand in hand. While evangelization is essentially a testimony announcing of the salvific event of Christ to the non-believers, catechesis may be called a second evangelization whose content is the same, but which helps to deepen the faith-response of believers. What we want to stress here is that catechesis should ultimately help a Christian entering the liturgical experience of the mystery of Christ's dispensation, which in its turn should help him to live it. In the present context of the Syro-Malabar Church a basic theme of evangelization and catechesis should be the divine dispensation.

6) Social commitment is another inspiration of this reflection as regards the pastoral action of the Church. Christ's kingdom, *already* and *not yet*, is a challenge that calls for a social commitment too. Christ has gained for us victory and life, and has seated us at the right hand of the Father in heaven. This dignity of human being as a child of God is a constant invitation to the Church to dedicate herself to the cause of creating that social status of the person on earth liberating him from the power of all evils.

7) This reflection has shown the immense richness of the Syro-Malabar eucharistic text which manifests the biblical perspectives, doctrinal, ecclesial, spiritual and pastoral visions of the theology of the divine dispensation. The long used text in the Syro-Malabar Church itself is a strong witness of its inculturation among the people of India. Therefore it calls to our serious study and profound deliberation while it needs to be changed. The great importance which the sacred liturgy and Christ's divine dispensation occupy in the life of the Church demands a proper liturgical formation.

THEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SPACE AND TIME OF WORSHIP

- Rev. Dr. Fr. Pauly Maniattu

In all religions space time¹ are decisive factors of worship. As regards the Christian religion we can observe a change of the attitude towards the space and time of worship. The ancient tradition did not emphasise the dimensions of space and time. Any time or space could be utilized for worship. Thus we find just ordinary houses as places of Christian worship. The symbolic significance of time was also not emphasised. However, later there was the tendency of fixing the space and time of worship. Space and time were consecrated for the sake of worship. As in the case of the important pre-Christian religions, Christian worship, too, became a temple worship, that is, the worship which emphasises the role of space and time. The Fathers of the Church, both in the East and West attributed specific theological function to the space and time of worship. Later, in some cases the symbolic significance of space and time gave way to artistic excellence and even to pomp. Church buildings became pieces of art. In the modern times with the development of liturgical theology there is a growing interest in the true theological significance of liturgical space and time. Here we may evaluate the theological significance of liturgical space and time with special reference to the East Syrian liturgical tradition.

1. The Meaning of Sacred Space and Time

In the history of religions there has always been a distinction between sacred and profane space. To the religious

1. With regard to the symbolic significance of space, time etc. better expression would be spacetime, a concept contributed by modern physics. The term spacetime includes space, time, person, object, word, and action. The application of this term in liturgy enables us to understand the symbols of liturgy as a 'symbolic whole', the concept held by the Fathers of the Church. See P. Maniyattu, *Heaven on earth: The Theology of Liturgical Spacetime in the East Syrian Qurbana*, Rome 1995.

man space is not homogeneous. There are certain breaks in the continuity of space, distinguishing the sacred from the profane (Cf Ex. 3.5). According to Mircea Eliade, ordinary or profane space is without structure or consistency, and is, therefore, amorphous. For the religious man, time, too, is neither homogeneous nor continuous. There are intervals of sacred time. Just as a church or temple constitutes a break in the profane space of a city, the service celebrated inside it marks a break in the profane duration of time.²

The believing man experiences two types of sacred space and time: one is sacred in its origin itself, the other is his own creation. He sees the cosmic phenomena such as, stars, planets, solar and lunar eclipses, sunrise, air, fire, water, mountains, stones, trees, etc. as sacred. Sometimes he creates sacred spacetime by consecrating ordinary space and time. Sanctuaries, and the time of offerings, feasts, etc. are examples of such consecrated space and time. The enclosure, wall, or circle of stones surrounding a sacred place constitute the most ancient known forms of man-made sanctuaries. Sacred space is considered the centre of the world and therefore, the centre of divine-human communication. It is the image of the world and hence a microcosm. Sacred space like sacred mountain, sacred stone, pillar, Altar, temple etc. are therefore, centre of the world. Being the centre of the world they are called cosmic mountain or cosmic tree or cosmic pillar. The altar and the temple, later developments of the sacred place, are microcosms because they are the centers of the world, and stand at the very heart of the universe and constitute an *imago mundi*.³

The history of religion tells us that man has always had the desire for an ordered space where communication with the divine is possible. Consecration is cosmicization or creation of a cosmic region which is always in communication with the world of the gods. The sacred establishes order, fixes the limits, and founds the world. With the creation of sacred spacetime, this communication with the world of gods is ensured. The most ancient sanctuaries were hypaethral or built with an aperture in the roof - the 'eye of the dome' - symbolizing the breakthrough from plane to plane, communication with the transcendent.⁴

2. Cf. M. ELIADE, *The sacred and the Profane: The nature of Religion*, W.R. TRASK, trans., New York 1961, pp. 68-72.

3. M. ELIADE, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, London 1987, p.271.

4. ELIADE, *Sacred and Profane*, 57-59.

2. Sacred Space and Time in the Mesopotamian Religions

Mesopotamia, the great centre of ancient civilization between the rivers Euphrates and Tigris, witnessed many of the most important phases in the evolution of mankind's religious views. Mesopotamia nurtured its religion in different versions of the Akkadian, Assyrian, Sumerian and Babylonian traditions.

2.1. Space and Time as Divinity

According to the early Sumarians the phenomenon of heaven, earth, and Apsu (cosmic water under earth) were represented by three deities, namely Anu, Enlil (Bel) and Ea (Enki or Nammu) respectively. According to the Akkadian "Creation Epic", gods were formed from within the waters of Apsu and Tiamat.⁵ Apsu is called the "begetter of the great gods". Marduk was created in the heart of Apsu. Tiamat, the cosmic water, is the source from which Marduk formed the universe.⁶

For the Babylonians Sun or Šamaš is the god, who is the medium of divine communication.⁷ Like the Sun-god, the Moon-god (Sin) is also the medium of divine communication.⁸

2.2. Mountains as Sacred Space

Mountains may be considered the archetype of the space of man's worship of God. In all religions mountain has been a symbol of the divine abode.⁹ In the history of religions there were attempts to make the shrines after the model of the sacred mountains. The Ziggurat was literally a cosmic mountain: the seven stories represented the seven planetary heavens; by ascend-

5. "Creation Epic", I (tablet). 9(line). ET: E.A. SPEISER, trans "Akkadian Myths and Epics", in J.B. PRITCHARD, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 2nd edition, Princeton 1955, p.61.

6. "Creation Epic", IV 137-140. ET: E.A. SPEISER, "Akkadian Myths", 67.

7. "Hymn to the Sun -God", line 54. ET: F.J. STEPHENS, trans., "Sumerian-Akkadian Hymns and Prayers", in PRITCHARD, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, p. 388.

8. Cf. "Hymn to the Moon-God", lines 22-23. ET: STEPHENS, "Sumero-Akkadian Hymns", 386.

9. Many mountains were associated with gods: Lebanon and Hermon with Baal, Casios with Zeus, Kailasa of Himalaya with Siva. M. LAGRANGE, *Etudes sur les religions semitiques*, Paris 1903, p. 190. Ps 68.16 refers to the mountain which Yahweh selected as his abode.

ing them, the priest reached the summit of the universe.¹⁰ God is sometimes called mountain. 'Great Mountain' is a synonym for the god Enlil.¹¹

Mountains are often looked on as the centre of the world where sky and earth meet. In Mesopotamia, a central hill (the 'mountain of the lands') joins the sky to the earth.¹² So many sacred places, temples, palaces, and holy towns are likened to mountains, and are themselves made 'centres', becoming in some magic way part of the summit of the cosmic hill. The names given to the Babylonian sanctuaries - 'mountain of the house', 'house of the mountain of all lands' 'mountain of storms' - show the importance of mountains as centres of divine encounter.¹³

2.3. Consecrated Spacetime

2.3.1. Sacred Columns

One of the earliest and simplest attempts at consecrating space was by erecting sacred columns. These seem to be a natural evolution of simple sacred stones. The Egyptians might have imitated the Semitic idea of two great columns when they constructed the obelisk, the form of which, however, was of Egyptian origin. In the religious edifices of the Semitic traditions we find two great columns. The higher one is situated at one of the entrances, while the other smaller one was more closely related with the altar. There were also columns called *khammanim*, which were consecrated to the sun.¹⁴

2.2.2. The Temple

According to *Chaldean cosmogony*, gods created men so that they might construct abodes (sanctuaries) for them, and

10. ELIADE, *Sacred and Profane*, 40

11. Cf. "Psalm to Marduk", line 13. STEPHENS, "Sumero-Akkadian Hymns" 390.

12. ELIADE, *Patterns*, 375. Cf. W.G. LAMBERT, "The Cosmology of Sumer and Babylon", in C. BLACKER & M. LOEWE, eds., *Ancient Cosmologies*, London 1975, p. 61.

13. Temples were also called the 'bond between heaven and earth' (*dur-an-ki*), 'house of the foundation of heaven and earth', etc. ELIADE, *Patterns*, p. 376.

14. LAGRANGE, *Religions sémitiques*, pp. 208-211.

worship them.¹⁵ The temple was the house of god, also considered his palace.¹⁶ The temple of Urnk is called the abode of Anu and Ishtar.¹⁷

So much did the Sumerians emphasize the sacredness of the temple that it came to be identified with the 'power' dwelling within it. Some of the titles given to temples reveal this: *E-babbar* (house-rising sun), *E-hush* (house-terrifying), *E-kur* (house-mountain), *Kur-gal* (mountain-great).¹⁸

The temple is considered the medium par excellence of divine communication. The concept of a temple's pinnacle merging with heaven is a commonplace in Sumero-Babylonian literature.¹⁹

In Mesopotamian tradition, the temple on earth is the counterpart and model of the heavenly sanctuary. The sanctuary for Marduk is modelled after the temple of Babylon,²⁰ a replica of the cosmic mountain and hence a pre-eminent link between earth and heaven. It is a symbol of the entire cosmos. The Esagil temple is considered the image of heaven and earth.²¹ The temple or sacred city is the place through which the *Axis Mundi* passes, the point of junction between heaven, earth and the underworld.²²

15. "Pour faire habiter les dieux dans une demeure qui rejouisse le coeur, il (Mardouk) crea l'humanite." "Cosmogonic chaldeenne", 19-20, in P. DHORME, *Choix de textes religieux assyro-babyloniens: Transcription, Traduction, Commentaire*, Paris 1907, p. 87. Cf. SPEISER, "Akkadian Myths", 68; LAGRANGE, *Religions semitiques*, 323-324; "Creation Epic", VI. 6-8. ET: SPEISER, "Akkadian Myths", 68.
16. Cf. P. DHORME, *La religion assyro-babylonienne*, Conferences donnees a l'Institute Catholique de Paris, Paris 1910, pp. 131, 299. See "L'arbre d'Eridu", 1-7, FT: DHORME, *Choix de textes*, 99.
17. Cf. "Epic of Gilgamesh", I.i, 36,37,44; II.ii, 16. ET: SPEISER, "Akkadian Myths", pp. 75,77.
18. Cf. K. LUKE, "The Sacred and the Profane in Mesopotamia", *Jeevadhara* 17 (1987), p. 104.
19. W.G. LAMBERT, "The Cosmology of Summer and Babylon", in BLACKER & M. LOEWE, eds. *Ancient Cosmologies*, London 1975, p.58.
20. "Creation Epic", VI 57-58. ET: SPEISER, "Akkadian Myths", 98
21. "Temple program for the New Year's Festivals at Babylon", line, 276. ET: A. Sachs, trans "Akkadian Rituals" in in PRITCHARD, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, p. 332.
22. ELIADE, *Patterns*, 325

2.4. Sacred Time

Certain auspicious occasions are prescribed by the Babylonian and Assyrian traditions for the sacrifice.²³ The prescription to the kalu-priest covering the temple kettle-drum shows the importance of a particular time for the sacrifice: "On a good day in the correct month, in the morning, before sunrise, you shall prepare three sacrificial stands for the gods Ea, Shamash and Marduk."²⁴

3. Sacred Space and Time according to the Israelites

The Israelites accepted much of the religious symbolism of the peoples they encountered in the course of history, including Mesopotamian and Canaanite influence. The canaanites exerted special influence on the religious views of the Israelites. Therefore, in our attempt to understand the meaning of sacred space and time according to the Israelites, we shall make occasional comparisons with the Canaanite religion.

3.1. Sacred and Profane

The Israelites were well aware of the separation between the sacred and the profane. A clear distinction is made between profane and sacred space when Moses approached the sacred space on Horeb, the 'mountain of God': "Do not come near; put off your shoes from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground" (EX 3.5). The sacred is always dangerous to anyone who comes into contact with it without having gone through the preparatory 'gestures of approach' that every religious act demands.

According to the Jewish understanding, sacredness or holiness was primarily an attribute of God, marking his transcendent separation from all creatures. Secondly, it was an attribute of those person and things set apart for intimate contact with God (Lev 21.6-8). Thus the sacredness of spacetime is a participation in God's holiness.

The vision of the new temple in the book of Ezekiel (Ezek 40-44) conveys the theological importance Israel attached to sacred spacetime. For the Israelites, the proper distinction between sacred and profane spacetime was something essential

23 G. FURLANI, "Il Sacrificio nella religione dei Semiti di Babilonia e Assiria", in *Atti della storiche e filologiche*, Vol IV, Roma 1931, p. 341

24 "The Ritual to be followed by the Kalu-Priest when Covering the Temple Kettle- Drum", text c. ET: SACS, "Akkadian Rituals", p. 336.

to the ethos of the people of God. The violation of this distinction resulted in the disappearance of God's presence from among them, and consequently their destruction. Throughout the book of Ezekiel the emphasis is on Israel's cultic pollution and profanation as the cause of its destruction and exile.²⁵ Ezekiel was convinced that the sins of Yahweh's people had driven his presence ('glory') away from the temple (Ezek 8. 6; 9.3; 10. 18-19; 11.22-23)

There are restrictions on the communication between the sacred and the profane (Ezek 42. 14; 44. 19; 46.20). The description of the two separate cooking areas (Ezek 46. 19-24) where the sacrifices eaten by the priests and laity were prepared, makes clear how the distinction between the sacred and profane is maintained.

There is a detailed architectural description of the temple in Ezekiel's vision of the temple. The reason for the careful measurement of the entire temple complex (Ezek 42. 15-20) is precisely the separation of the sacred from the profane. The vision of the new temple emphasizes the re-establishment of a proper cultic sanctity of land and people. Ezekiel sees a new temple where the distinction between the sacred and the profane is perfectly maintained.

The walls around the temple complex, six cubits high and six cubits thick (Ezek 40.5), form a separation between the holy and the common (Ezek 42.20). Further protection of the sanctity of the temple complex is provided by an area stretching fifty cubits beyond the walls on all side, which is to be left open (Ezek 45.2). It is stated in Ezek 43.10 that such a description of the temple area is intended for the conversion of the people of Israel. This conversion is understood as the decision to respect the difference between sacred and profane spacetime.

3.2. Sacred Mountains

The Canaanite tradition of associating the divine abode with the mountains influenced the Israelites. Most of the Canaanite sanctuaries were linked to mountains. The surroundings of Mount Hermon had so many temples that the whole mountain was considered a holy place²⁶

25 L. BOADT, "Ezekiel," in R.E. BROWN, et al., *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, London 1993, p. 326.

26 LAGRANGER, *Religions semitiques*, p. 181

The OT speaks of Mount Zion as the mountain of Yahweh. "Remember Mount Zion, where thou hast dwelt" (Ps 74.2).²⁷ It serves as the great mountain of divine communication. Ezekiel's vision of the temple (Ezek 40.2) states that the temple is upon a very high mountain, Zion, the place of the temple just above the city²⁸. The expression 'very high mountain' is a commonplace in the symbolism of sacred space.

3.3. Sacred Stones

Sacred stones called *ansab* were used to mark sacred places. The nomads saw certain rocks as abodes of the angels. They came to such rocks for prayer and sacrifice. The Syrians used to adore the god *Adadu* in the form of the stones noted for their resemblance to parts of the human body like the eyes, fingers and kidneys. The primitive altar was nothing other than a large stone on which blood was shed. Therefore, sacred stones represent altars. The sacred stone is a habitation of the god, roughly akin to the temple and the statue. It may also be considered a type of the altar and throne.²⁹

Jacob called the place where he had the dream of a ladder between heaven and earth 'Bethel', meaning house of God (Gen. 28.10-22). "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." Gen 28. 17. Jacob set up for a pillar the stone which he had put under his head, and poured oil on top of it (Gen 28.18). ".....this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house....." (Gen 28. 22). Is 19.19 prophesies the installation of a pillar to the Lord at the border of Egypt. In Solomon's temple there were two free standing pillars, called Jachin and Boaz.³⁰

3.4 Consecrated Space

In the history of Israel's sanctuaries we can distinguish the period of the patriarchs, the tabernacle, the sanctuaries after the conquest of Canaan, and the temple.

27 Cf. Ps 48. 1-2; 50.2; 68.16; Ezek 28.14.

28. Cf. Is 2.2; Zech 14.10

29 LADRANGE, *Religions semitiques*, pp. 184, 191, 213

30. Cf FLAVIUS JOSEPHUS, "Antiquities", in *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged*, W. WHISTON, trans., New updated edition, Massachusetts 1991, p. 217

3.4.1. Patriarchal Sanctuaries

In the period of the patriarchs, there were special spaces consecrated to God. Abraham built an altar at Shechem (Gen 12. 6-7). Jacob built an altar at Bethel (Gen 35.1-9, 14-15; 28.18-19), taking over an already existing Canaanite shrine and dedicating it to the one true God. As a memorial to God's revelation at Beer-Sheba, Isaac built there an altar (Gen 26.23-25). However, according to Gen 21.33, Abraham established this shrine, planting a tamarisk tree there, and calling on the name of the Lord, the everlasting God.

3.4.2. Tabernacle

The tabernacle or tent was probably a portable sanctuary during the exodus. It indicates the presence of Yahweh among a group of nomadic people³¹. Moses relied on it in order to consult Yahweh and learn his will (Ex 33.7,11; Num 12.8). In the later tradition a new word *miskan* is preferred to the ordinary word for tent, '*Ohel*'. This new term emphasizes the abiding presence of Yahweh among his people.³²

Ex 26; 36.8-38 deals with the important architectural features of the tabernacle. It was a rectangular wooden framework (45ft x 15ft x 15ft). One curtain closed off the eastern entry, another of more precious material was placed 15ft from the western end. Thus the holy place was separated from the 'holy of holies'. Here the Ark of the Covenant was kept. In the holy place were the seven-branched candlestick and the table for the *Loaves of Presence*. Outside the entrance were the altar and the laver used for the ritual purification. The tent was surrounded by a large courtyard, 150 ft x 75ft marked off by a system of bronze posts to which were affixed silver rods, and from which hung linen drapes.³³

31 The pre-Islamic Arabs had the qubba, a small tent in which the idols of stone were transported by camel, during processions and combats. Cf. AM. DI NOLA, "Religione degli Ebrei", in A.M. DI NOLA, et al., eds., *Enciclopedia delle religioni*, Vol. II, Firenze 1970, pp. 783-784.

32 J.J. CATELOT & A. CODY, "Religious Institutions of Israel", in R.E. BROWN, et al., eds., *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, London 1993, p.1260.

33 Cf. FLAVIUS JOSEPHUS, "Antiquities", pp. 86-87

The Ark was the locus of God's presence in Israel (1 Sam 4.7,22). It is God's footstool (1 Sam 4.4) and throne (1 Chron 28.2; Ps. 99.5; 132.7; Lam 2.1; Is 66.1). The Ark was also the depository for the tablets of the decalogue (Deut 10.1-5). When the Ark was destroyed during the Babylonian exile, no new Ark was built because the New Jerusalem in its entirety would be Yahweh's throne (Jer 3.16-17). A *kapporet* (mercy seat) Ex 25. 17-22; 37.6-9) was installed in the Second Temple, perhaps as a substitute for the Ark when the latter was no longer in existence. In the post exilic period God's Mysterious presence was focused on the *Kapporet*.³⁴

3.4.3. The Temple

For the Israelites, the temple was the sacred space *par excellence*. While referring to the temple area Ezek 43.12 says: "...the whole territory round about upon the top of the mountain shall be most holy." ".....Son of man, this is place of my throne and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the people of Israel for ever" (Ezek 43.7). There are explicit references to the temple as the abode of Yahweh,³⁵ which he himself consecrated: ..."I have consecrated this house which you have built, and put my name therefor ever; my eyes and my heart will be there for all time" (1 Kings 9:3)

The temple has three parts: a porch or vestibule (*'ulam*); the sanctuary (*hekal*) with lampstands, the table of showbread, and the altar of incense; and the 'holy of holies' (*debir*) that held the ark of the covenant. The general structure of Solomon's temple (1 Kings 6) was similar to Phoenician and Canaanite models: a tripartite building facing east, comprising an outer porch (*ulam*), a sanctuary or holy place (*hekal*) and an innermost holy place or 'holy of holies' (*debir*)³⁶. The Canaanite temple of Hazor at Galilee provides a close parallel to the ground plan of Solomon's temple³⁷.

34 CASTELOT & CODY, "Religious Institutions of Israel", p. 1261

35 Cf. Ps 5.7; 11.4; 26.8; 27.4; 63. 2

36 Cf. FLAVIUS JOSEPHUS, "Antiquities", pp. 216-218; H. RINGGREN, *Israelitische Religion*, Stuttgart 1963, pp. 143 -145; J.L. MCKENZIE, "Temple", in J.L. MCKENZIE, *Dictionary of the Bible*, London 1984, pp. 872-874.

37 Cf. RINGGREN, *Israelitische Religion*, 144

The Jews built their temple with due respect for cosmic symbolism. The court of the temple represented the sea (that is, the lower regions), the holy place represented earth, and the Holy of Holies heaven³⁸. The Temple of Jerusalem had a temporal symbolism also. The twelve loaves of bread on the table signified the twelve months of the year and the candelabrum with seventy branches represented the decans (the zodiacal division of the seven planets in to tens)³⁹.

3.4.4 Altars

Israel shared with other peoples the religious practice of sacrifice, and therefore had an altar similar to that of the neighbouring peoples. There were certain outdoor altars called *bema*, literally 'high place'. These were open air places of worship, not a temple or sanctuary. They served as altars where sacrificial offerings could be made without the intervention of a priest.⁴⁰

The architectural features of the altar of Ezekiel's vision resemble that of a Babylonian temple-tower or Ziggurat, on a miniature scale. The altar, like the Ziggurat, is the place of visitation where God's presence comes⁴¹. The altar was a sign of divine presence.

The altar is the most holy object, and therefore, whatever touches the altar becomes holy (Ex 29.37). The altar of holocausts (Ex 29.37; 40.10) and the altar of incense (Ex 30.10) were particularly holy and could be served only by the priests (Lev. 21.6; 1 Chron 23.13). The altar of holocausts had to be consecrated before it could be used (Ex 26.36-37; Lev. 8.15). The altar is also called the 'Lord's table' (Mal 1.12; Ezek 44.16).

3.5, Liturgical Time

The symbolism of time had a decisive impact on the religious life of a Hebrew. For him the matter of supreme

38 ELIADE, *Sacred and Profane*, 42-43. Cf. L. JACOBS, "Jewish Cosmology". in C. BLACKER & M. LOEWE, eds., *Ancient Cosmologies*, London 1973, p.71.

39 ELIADE, *Sacred and Profane*, 75.

40 When a *bêt bemâ*, some type of a sanctuary building, was built the service of a priest was required. 1 Kings 12.31. Cf. CSATELOY & CODY, "Religious Institutions of Israel", 1267.

41 BOADY, "Ezekiel", pp. 326-327.

importance was not time in its mathematical measurement but time in its actual content and moral quality⁴². History, to the Hebrews, was first and foremost a pattern of *covenant-times*. They celebrated those times with thankfulness and rejoicing and looked forward to the time of the new and determinative covenant when past and present would find their fulfilment in the final day of God. Hebrews believed that God chose special time to fulfil his special purposes. They insisted on celebrating two symbolic times in their life: the annual Passover festival and the weekly Sabbath. While these festivals were being celebrated the past became a reality of present experience in faith. The ritual celebration leads this reality into future, providing the hope that what God had done in the past he would do again on an even wider and grander scale⁴³.

4. Sacred Space and Time of the Hindu Traditions of Ancient India

4.1. Divinity of the Cosmic phenomena

For the ancient Indians the celestial bodies, sea, rivers, air, fire, stones, trees, birds and animals all were gods.

Vedas traced the origin of the cosmos to a great sacrifice performed by the gods. According to *Puruṣasukta* (RV X. 90), the gods sacrifices Puruṣa, a cosmic being, to create the physical universe, which originates from the body of the sacrificial victim:

The moon was born from his mind; the sun was born from his eye; Indra and Agni were born from his mouth, Vayu from his breath.

From his navel came the firmament, from his head the heaven was produced, the earth from his feet, the quarters of space from his ear, so they constituted the world.⁴⁴

Thus the cosmic *yajña* (sacrifice) offered by the gods is the foundation of spacetime. Space and time are themselves gods for the vedic worshipper of India.

42 F.W. DILLISTONE, *Christianity and Symbolism*, Londo 1985, p. 85. For a short discussion of sacred time according to the Hebrews see DI NOLA, "Ebrei", pp. 935-939; L. BOURYER, *Rite and Man: Natural sacredness and Christian Liturgy*, M.J. COSTELLOE, trans., Notre Dame 1963, pp. 196-198.

43 Cf. ELIADE, *Patterns*, 398; DILLISTONE, *Christianity and Symbolism*, pp. 86-88

44 RV X. 90. 13-14 (Astaka VIII, Sukta 6. 13-14). ET: *Rg-Veda Samhita*, Vol.. VII, 253.

According to Hindu vision, the spatial extension is nothing other than God himself. One of the Sanskrit words used for space is *aditi*, meaning boundlessness or infinite expanse. Aditi, the Vedic god, is the middle region (*antariksa* = atmosphere) between heaven and earth. "Aditi is heaven; Aditi is the firmament; Aditi is mother, father, and son; Aditi is all the gods; Aditi is the five classes of men; Aditi is generation and birth."⁴⁵ Aditi represents boundlessness in space and time, endless space and endless time.

Heaven is called *Dyau*, 'Father heaven', whereas the earth is called *prthvi*, 'Mother earth' (RV X. 18.10). For the ancient Dravidians, worship of 'Mother earth' (*Bhumidevi*) meant periodic renewal and restoration of the fertility of 'Mother earth'⁴⁶. The Pair *Dyavaprthvi* are the parents of the world. In the Vedas we find an invocation to *Dyau*, the 'Sky Father', the 'Sky who knows all' (AVI. 32.4)

According to the Vedic tradition, the cosmos has its spiritual and material origin in the gods. The Prajapati identifies himself with the universe (BU I. 4.1).

Verily, all this is the immortal Brahman! He is everywhere-above, below, in front, at the back, upon the right, upon the left! All this world is indeed the Supreme Braman.⁴⁷

He himself becomes the universe (BU 1.2.3). The Whole universe has come out of the whole Brahman.⁴⁸ The whole spacetime may be seen as sacred because of its origin in the sacrifice. In Vedic thought the extensions of spacetime are represented by the gods Heaven and Earth.⁴⁹

The Hindus also view time as God himself. According to *Prasnopanishad*, day and night, and the month are the Prajapati

45 RV I, 89. 10 (AstaKA viii, sUKTA 5.10). et: *Rg-Veda Samhita*, Vol. I, 230

46 W. CROOKE, "Dravidians (North India)", in J. HASTINGS, d., *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. V, Edinburgh 1912, p.4.

47 *Mundakopanisad* II. 2. II. *Numerous texts speak about the immanent presence of God Spacetime*. Cf. Bu. III. 7.3.-15; *Mahanarayanopanisad* I. 1.3; 2.6; 79.16; *Prasnopanishad* II.5; *Mundakopanisad* II. I. 4,5,9; II. 2.5; *Sveasvatara Upanisad* IV.2; *Chandogya Upanisad* III. 14.1

48 Cf. the peace invocation in *Svetasvatara Upanisad*, p.7. *Mahanarayanopanisad* says that the time is born of the Lord of creation. MU I.8-9

49 Cf. RV I.106.3; RV VI. 70. 6; AV IX. 10. 12 ; XII 1.1.12

or the Supreme Reality (PU 1.12,13). In *Brhadaranyakopaniṣad* the Prajapati is described as the year (BU. 1.5.14). The time of common experience is only a symbol of the divine time which is God himself. Hindu cosmology makes a distinction between the time of human experience and divine time. A solar year is just one day in the time of Gods.⁵⁰ Among the gods themselves, *Brahma* has a different calculation of time. One day for him is a world period (*kalpa*), with a total duration of 24 million divine years. (One divine year is 360 human years) The day of *Brahma* constitutes the creation of the world, and the night is its destruction. The *Puranas* know a larger unit of time than *kalpa*. It is *para*, the life span of *Brahma*, namely 100 years.⁵¹

4.2. Sacred Mountains

Mountains are of great religious significance for the Indian religions. In India there are numerous mountains attracting crowds of pilgrims. Many of the peaks of the Himalayas became seats of the Hindu gods. One of the titles of Siva is *Giriśa*, Lord of the mountain, while his consort is *Parvati*, the daughter of mountain (Himalaya). The Dravidians of the Central Hills imagine each peak to be the haunt of an evil spirit, which they are careful to propitiate before they make an ascent.⁵² Sabarimala and Palani are examples of the famous sacred mountains of South India.

Indian cosmology views a mythical mountain as the middle point of the cosmos.⁵³ The Hindu, Buddhist and Jain cosmologies agree that there is a cosmic mountain running through the middle of the universe, with its centre at our level but its top and bottom reaching to at least one of the seven heavens and hell. This *axis mundi* is called Meru in Sanskrit.⁵⁴

50 Cf. A.M. DI NOLA, "Induismo", in A.M. DI NOLA, et al., eds., *Enciclopedia della religione*, Vol III, Vellechi editore, Florence 1970, p. 1078.

51 GOMBRICH, "Indian Cosmology", 122-123

52 CROOKE, "Dravidians (North Indian)". p.7

53 W. KIRFEL, *symbolik des Hinduismus und des Jnismus*, *Symbolike der Religionen*, IV, Stuttgart 1959, p. 58 Cf. ELIADE, *Patterns*, 375

54 Cf. j. GONDA, *Les religions de l'Inde*, Vol. 1: *Vedisme et hindouisme ancien*, L. JOSPIN trans., Paris 1962, p. 393; GOMBRICH, "Indian Cosmology", 119.

4.3. Sacred Stones

From ancient times the worship of stones was prevalent in India, especially in the villages.⁵⁵ Natural stones or consecrated stones were considered to represent deities. Under the shade of the village tree were placed crude stones which collectively embodies the *Gramadevata* or local gods and godlings.⁵⁶

4.4. Consecrated Spacetime

4.4.1 Village Shrines

In the villages of ancient India, the village shrines were the most sacred places. The village shrine is called *Deohar* - holy place - a term which is applied to the whole body of village gods. Generally the village shrines are situated outside the village in the groves of trees, and are much dreaded by the people. Their position is marked by a red flag hung from the adjoining sacred tree; alternatively a bamboo pole is erected close by to serve as a perch for the deity when he (she) deigns to visit the shrine to receive the offerings and to attend to the prayers of his (her) votaries. In its simplest form the village shrine is a collection of water-worn stones placed under the sacred tree of the settlement.⁵⁷

The ancient Dravidians of South India found the presence of gods and goddesses in a shapeless stone, a tree, a vase, or an image curved in wood or stone or modelled in clay.⁵⁸

4.4.2. Temples

The basic architectural elements of a Hindu temple are the central shrine *garbhagrha* (*Srikovil*) and the *mandapa*, the rectangular hall serving as a porch.⁵⁹ The *garbhagrha* is the pivotal structure of the temple. A high tower covers this 'Holy of Holies'. The temple represents the whole universe in symbol: the various

55 DINOLA, "Induismo", 1059

56 CROOKE, "Dravidians (North India)". pp.3-4.

57 ELIADE, *patterns*, pp. 269-270. Cf. H. KRISHNA SASTRI, *South Indian Images of Gods and Goddesses*, Madras 1916, p. 233.

58 Cf. J. BOULNOIS, *Le caducee et la symbolique dravidienne indo-mediterraneenne, de l'arbre, de la pierre, du serpent et de la deede-mere*, Paris 1939, p. 142; KRISHNA SASTRI, *South Indian images*, 223, 229

59 Cf. BERNIER, *Temple Arts of Kerala*, 22-23 KRISHNA SASTRI, *South Indian Images*, 2-3

floors or terraces are identified with the 'heavens' or levels of the cosmos⁶⁰. The temple is furthermore the centre of the cosmos. It is the meeting place of the divine and human levels, and therefore the medium of communication between heaven and earth.⁶¹ The cosmic symbolism of the Hindu temple is evident from the rites of the construction of the temple.

The temple has both a material and spiritual foundation. The spiritual foundation of the temple is a mystical figure called *yantra*, traced on the ground where the temple is to be constructed. It is also called the *Vastupuruṣamandala*. Here *Vastu* is the guardian of place and *puruṣa* is the prototype of the creation (RV X.90). *Puruṣa*, as the primordial essence of every created form makes the construction consistent. Moreover, it realizes the cosmic reality in itself. It is elevated to the nature of the Supreme One and of the cosmos⁶².

The temple is constructed first in the spiritual space of man, and only then is it constructed in material space. The architect, assisted by a Brahmin, has to contemplate the form of the construction which he undertakes. First he should construct an image in his inner self with his interior ascetical fire, and then project that into the matter. The instruments themselves to be used for the construction work have to be ritually venerated. These materials are transformed into instruments for a cosmic and divine work⁶³.

The whole cosmic reality may be seen as involved in the cosmic sacrifice. All that which exists is made to share in the sacrifice (SB III. 6.2.26). There are three levels distinguishable in the cosmic sacrifice, each level is a triad of a deity, a form of speech and an abode. If we view them in the context of a sacrifice, they are the sacrificing person, the sacrificing mantra (formula) and the space of the sacrifice. These three forms of speech (*Rg Veda*, *Yajur Veda*, and *Sama Veda*), three spaces (Earth, *Antarikṣa*, and Heaven) and three deities (Agni, Indra or Vayu and Sun) are the media of the circulation of the cosmic sacrifice. The whole cosmos is the sacred space of the cosmic sacrifice. The *Brhadaranyaka Upaniṣad* views the cosmos as a sacrificial horse (BUI. 1.1)

60 ELIADE, *Patterns*, 373. Cf. DI NOLA, "Induismo", 1098

61 DI NOLA, "Induismo", 1098

62 GONDA, *Religions de l'Inde*, 380 Cf. DI NOLA, "Induismo", 1098-1099

63 Cf. GONDA, *Religions de l'Inde*, 389.

The *Soma yajña* symbolizes the whole year. The main offering in this sacrifice is of the *soma* whose ingredient prevades all the three *lokas* (worlds), namely, earth, *antarikṣa* (atmosphere middle region), and *dyu* (heaven) (SB III 9.4.12). The sacrificer establishes in himself the effulgent *amṛtabhava* or nectarlike quality in the form of the annual cycle, and this very state of incarnating the eternal cycle of the year in oneself (SB I. 6.3.37; AB XIV 4;5,6).

He who makes the sacrifice goes up to heaven, alone or with his wife, upon this post now ritually transformed into the world axis itself⁶⁴. The sacrifice is thus for the attainment of heaven (Cu II 24. 3-16). It is the bot to heaven (SB IV 2-5-10), and the means of liberation (*Mahanarayanopaniṣad* 78. 10; 79.11).

5. East Syrian Understanding of Sacred Space and Time

There has been considerable influence of the Mesopotamian, Israelite and Indian traditions of sacred space and time on the East Syrian Christianity. The basic function of sacred spacetime in the Christian understanding also is divine-human communication leading to salvation. The disposition of the East Syrian church building reveals the function of sacred space. Christian liturgical space is a dynamic space. There is a progressive evolution of the earthly space into heavenly space. Liturgical space in its eastward movement becomes more and more sacred and finally it becomes the space of heaven (narthex-haykla-gestroma-madbaha). The earthly Jerusalem (bema) is linked to the heavenly Jerusalem (madbaha) by the way to heaven or ladder between heaven and earth (sqagona). The processions between madbaha and bema reveal the interaction between heaven and earth⁶⁵. Eastward evolution of space implies and eastward evolution of time also. The cross on the eastern wall thus symbolizes both the heavenly space and time (eschatological times).

64 See S B V. 2.1.9. Cf. ELIADE, *Images and Symbols*, 45

65 P. MANYATTU, "Sacres Space of the Eastern Liturgies: An Evaluation in the Light of the Instruction for Applying the Liturgical Prescriptions of the Code of canon Law of the Eastern Churches" in A.G. KOLLMPARAMPIL & J. PERUMTHOTTAM, ed., *Bride at the Feet of the Bridegroom*, Changanassery 1997, p. 239.

5.1. Sacred Space

The temple, the typical sacred space, is seen as the image of the cosmos in the Mesopotamian, Israelite, Indian and East Syrian Christian traditions. The Sumero-Babylonian temple's highest points are believed to merge with heaven⁶⁶. The Mesopotamian temple is considered to be the image of heaven and earth⁶⁷. A similar concept is found in Israelite religion, where the court of the temple represented the sea, the holy place represented earth, and the Holy of Holies, heaven.⁶⁸ According to Hindu belief the temple is the meeting place of the divine and human levels, and therefore the medium of communication between heaven and earth⁶⁹. It represents the whole universe in symbol, and is the centre of the cosmos⁷⁰. According to the East Syrian tradition, the Christian temple is the centre of the cosmos. The liturgical space is the meeting place of two worlds the visible and the invisible⁷¹. During the eucharistic liturgy, heaven and earth become one. The sanctuary is heaven on earth, earth being represented by the *haykla*.

The Mesopotamian and Hebrew traditions of liturgical space might have influenced East Syrian liturgical architecture. According to M. de Villard, the two second century churches in Arbela were modelled on the Babylonian temple⁷². The basic division of the church into *Madbha* and *haykla* was influenced by the Jewish temple, with its *hekal* (holy place) and the *debir* (holy of holies)⁷³. The East Syrian *darta* (court) has a parallel in

66. LAMBERT, "Cosmology of summer and Babylon", 58

67. "Temple Program for the New Year's Festivals at Babylon", line, 276. ET: SACHS, "Akkadian Rituals", 332

68. ELIADE, Sacred and the Profane, 42 -43. Cf. JACOBS, "Jewish Cosmology", 71

69. DI NOLA, "Induismo", 1098

70. ELIADE, Patterns, 373 Cf. DI NOLA, "Induismo", 1098.

71. Liber Patrum, J.M. VOSTE, ed. & tans., Fonti, Serie II, fasc. XVI: Caldei-Diritto antico III, Vaticano 1940, p. 36 Cf. P. YOUSIF, "The Divine Liturgy According to the Rite of the Assyro-Chaldean Church" in J. MADEY, ed., *The Eucharistic Liturgy in the Christian East*, Kottayam-Paderbon 1982, P. 189; P. YOUSIF, "Le lieu de la celebration de la parole dans la liturgie caldeenne", *Chroniques d'art Sacre*, 34 (ete 1993), p. 6

72. U.M. De VILLARD, *Le chiese della Mesopotamia*, OCA 128, Roma 1940, p. 62

73. Aphrahat sees that tabernacle and temple of Israel as types of the new temple built by Christ Dem., XII 8 (PSI, 524-525)

the Jewish *ulam* (porch). In India the church buildings were built in the fashion of the Hindu temples. The only Christian distinction was the cross that was put upon the roof and that was built in front of the Church in the open air⁷⁴. The inner disposition of the church was not much influenced by the structure of the Hindu temples. However, the sanctuary of the St. Thomas Christians in India was similar to the *garbhagrha* of the Hindu temples. Another elements of similarity in the inner disposition of the church is the presence of the *nilavilakku* (a brass lamp standing on the pedestal) and *tukkuvilakku* (a suspended brass lamp) in the sanctuary.

The sanctuary or the 'holy of holies' in all the Semitic and Hindu religions are honoured greatly and, therefore, separated from the rest of the temple. In the Israelite tabernacle and temple a curtain separated the holy place from the 'holy of holies'. The Mesopotamian temples had similar curtains, which were opened and closed during the sacrificial rituals⁷⁵. Therefore the curtain in the East Syrian church could have been the contribution of the Israelites or Assyro Babylonian.

The temple was considered inaccessible to the 'non-believer'. Only the Israelites were permitted in to the Jewish temple. The Mesopotamian and Hindu traditions restricted the entry of outsiders on the basis of the grades of Sacredness⁷⁶. The dismissal rite of the East Syrian eucharistic liturgy emphasizes the sacredness of liturgical spacetime. Entry into the sanctuary is reserved to priests and deacons⁷⁷. The reverence

74 See p. PODIPARA, *The Thomas Christians*, London 1970, p. 86; MUNDADAN, *History of Christianity in India*, 195.

75 A ritual prescription for the proest reveals this: "you shall pull the curtains shut. You shall scatter (about?) heaps of flour. You shall place the Exalted Bull in a place forbidden (to the outsider), and then you shall whisper three times into his right ear and his left one." "Temple Program for the New Year's Festivals at Babylon", text: C. ET: SACHS, "Akkadian Rituals", 336

76 Violation of the sacred space by an animal was a grave sin for the whole people. The temple ritual enjoins: "If a dog enters the temple the gods will show no mercy to the land." "Temple Ritual for the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Days of an Unknown Month at Uruk", text: A. Et: SACHS, "Akkadian Rituals", 340.

77 Cf. W.C. VAN UNNIK, ed. & trans., *Nestorian Questions on the Administration of the Eucharist by Iso yahb IV: A Contribution to the History of the Eucharist in the Eastern Church*, Haarlem 1937, p. 167. q. 27, 28, 29.

shown to the altar in both the Jewish and East Syrian traditions is based on the symbolism of the altar. Both Jews and East Syrians emphasize the importance of the altar as a sign of the divine presence. According to the Israelites, the altar is the most-holy, and whatever touches it becomes holy (Ex. 29. 37)⁷⁸.

An important characteristic of the temple according to the Mesopotamian and Hindu religions, is the principal function of the temple as the abode of God. The St. Thomas Christians of India also view the place of the Christian worship in this way⁷⁹. The Malayalam words used to denote church reveal this fact. Two terms used to mean the space of eucharistic celebration are *deivalayam* (*devalayam*) and *Palli*. Both of these terms refer to the abode of God.

5. 2. Solar Symbolism

Another important element of cosmic symbolism common to the Semitic, Hindu and East Syrian traditions is solar symbolism. As we have seen above, in the Mesopotamian and Hindu religions the sun is viewed as a divinity. In the Vedas there are many gods represented by the sun. In the East Syrian tradition the sun is a symbol of Christ, the Sun of Righteousness (Mal 4.2). The East Syrian tradition combines solar symbolism of the East. The eucharistic liturgy is viewed as an eastward movement in which the cosmos, mainly represented by the sun, joins us in the worship of God. Together with the cosmos we look towards the Sun of Righteousness, Christ, and proceed to the heavenly East⁸⁰.

The Rg Veda clearly speaks of the importance of the East in sacrifice.⁸¹ In his vision of the temple Ezekiel realizes the symbolic importance of the East in liturgical space. The glory of the God of Israel enters the temple by the outer gate of the sanctuary, which faces east (Ezek 43.2,4; 44. 1-2).

5.3. Sacred Time

The East Syrian concept of liturgical time as God's time is influenced by the Jewish understanding of sacred time.

78 Cf. Ex 30. 10; 40. 10; Lev 21.6; 1 Chron 23.13

79 Cf. C.K. PULLAPILLY, "Hindu Symbols in the Syro-Malabar Liturgy and Devotions", *One Church* 25 (1971), p. 72

80 THEODORE, *Eucharist*, 83

81 RVI. 188.4; III. 1.2; III. 6.1; III. 6.10; V 28.1.

According to East Syrian liturgical theology, liturgical time is the symbol of heavenly time⁸². In the liturgical celebration the mystery of the eucharist, hidden in God before all time is adapted to time. According to Ephrem the month of Nisan is the symbol of eucharistic time. God selected this month to realize the great phases of salvation like the incarnation, death and resurrection (HResur 4,13).⁸³ The Jewish- sabbath and feasts influenced the Christian celebration of Sunday and feasts. The Hebrews viewed history as a pattern of covenant times. The feasts were celebrations of those times with thankfulness and rejoicing, the same time looking forward to the time of the new and definitive covenant when past and present would find their fulfilment in God's time⁸⁴. The annual Passover festival and the weekly Sabbath were celebrations of symbolic time in the life of the Israelites: this symbolic time is the time of God in which there is no more distinction between past, present and future⁸⁵. According to East Syrian liturgical theology, the past of the OT economy, the present of the NT economy, and the future eschatological time of heavenly life become in liturgy a 'new present reality of salvation'. The ritual memorial is the present efficacious sign of the eternal reality of God's saving activity.⁸⁶

Mesopotamian religion saw time as a divine phenomenon. The flow of time is observed by the moon-god. Divine symbolism is also attributed to the phenomena of seasonal changes⁸⁷. The concept of a sacred time transcending the ordinary flow of time is found in Mesopotamian tradition, too. With the liturgical recital of *Enuma Elish* (Akkadian Creation Epic) at the new Year festival, the worshippers felt that creation was renewed in the processes of the agricultural year⁸⁸. They believed that through liturgy time is transformed. However, they selected certain auspicious occasions as liturgical time⁸⁹.

82 Cf. SJT, 131-132; *Syriac Didascalia*, 34-35; *Liber Patrum*, 36

83 Cf. YOUSIE, *Eucharistie chez Ephrem*, 135

84 DILLISTONE, *Christianity and Symbolism*, 86

85 Cf. ELIADE, *Patterns*, 398

86 TAFT, *Beyond East and West*, 3

87 Cf. RODRIGUES, "Tammuz" 95; DHORAME, *Religion assyro - babylonienne*, 105-107; DUSSAUD, *Historie des religions*, 56-57; LUKE, "Nature in Hebrew Bible", 170-171; BOULNOIS, *Caducee*, 61

88 Cf. ELIADE, *Sacred and Profane*, 80

89 Cf. FURLANI, "Sacrificio", 341.

Hinduism sees time as God himself. *Prasnopaniṣad* (Pu. 1.12,13) and *Brahadaranyakopaniṣad* (Bu 1.5.14) described Prajapati as time. Sacrifice, creates time. With the building of the fire-altar, both space and time are regenerated ⁹⁰. In sacrifice, time is rendered immortal. Through the performance of the vedic sacrifices the sacrificer achieves within himself a configuration of the perennial annual cycle as immortality (*amṛta*). According to the East Syrian theology, the eucharist is the medicine of life and the food of immortality. The Hindu concept of the attainment of immortality through sacrifice is similar to the East Syrian concept.

5.4. Christian Sacred Spacetime: Meeting of Heaven and Earth

Christian sacred spacetime is the convergence of heavenly space and earthly space, heavenly time and earthly time, heavenly persons and earthly persons. There is the real encounter between heaven and earth.

According to the author of Revelation, the Christian sacred space is Christ himself (Rev 21.22)⁹¹. He is the true altar (*madbaha qusta*). (HAzy 4. 26) Being the Space of Christ, the church building is the meeting place of heaven and earth. The symbolism of the liturgical architecture reveals this. The *hykla* represents the place of the people of God who are still in the earthly Church. The *bema* represents earthly Jerusalem and as such the place of the accomplishment of the salvific mystery of Jesus. The sanctuary is the symbol of heaven, the 'space' of the glorified Lord. The *gestroma* serves as the intermediary space between heaven and earth. The *šqaqona* represents the pathway between heaven and earth. However, the symbolic distinction is not very sharp. The sanctuary and the altar within it have a dynamic symbolism. They represent heavenly and earthly realities, and therefore symbolize the evident convergence of heavenly and earthly space. The altar is Lord's tomb, the throne of God, and the table of the Kingdom (*pathura malkutha*).

Liturgical space symbolizes heaven and earth, but not alone or exclusively. It is the presence of Christ symbolized through persons, and the prayers and actions of Christ symbolized through the prayers and actions of the persons, which

90 ELIADE, *Sacred and Profane*, 74

91 Cf. "Instruction for Applying the Liturgical prescriptions of the Code of Canons of Eastern Churches", Congregation for Eastern Churches, OIRSI, Kottayam 1996, no 102

give to the liturgical space the power of representing heaven and earth. The convergence of these symbolic elements in the sacred time of liturgy makes possible: not only between heavenly and earthly space, but between the heavenly and earthly spacetime. Commenting on the Sanctus of the East Syrian Qurbana, the Anonymous Author (10th/11th century) says: ".....This means, heaven and earth have been already made one Church; neither heaven is heaven nor earth is earth because the time and space composite have been dissolved; for heaven is the heaven of earth and earth is the earth of heaven."⁹²

For the Church, the spacetime of Christ in the liturgy is the spacetime of salvation. It is the new space and time of salvation. The Lord comes to the earthly Jerusalem, we hear his words, we experience his healing touch, our sins are forgiven, we participate in his passion, we enter with him and the Good Thief into the Paradise.

Liturgical spacetime parallels the ladder of Jacob (Gen 28.12). Indeed it is more than Jacob's ladder, which was only a passage between heaven and earth along which only angels went up and down. In liturgical spacetime God himself comes down to humans, preaches to them, makes them worthy to enter heaven. Finally he comes down with the heavenly food, his own body and blood. On the one hand, God is entering our spacetime; on the other, we are entering God's spacetime. The veil of the OT was rather a barrier preventing the access to the sacred. According to Heb 10.19, it is Christ who has broken this barrier. Thus we are enabled to enter the sanctuary of God. We are given the right of access to the spacetime of God. In the vision of the author of Hebrews, Christ himself is the sacred space. He himself is the veil that marks the boundary of sacred and profane spacetime. Being the sacred spacetime itself, he is also the door to the sacred spacetime. The veil is the symbol of the separation between ordinary and sacred spacetime. Even though this veil appears to be a barrier, for Christians it is no longer a barrier to the spacetime of God rather the door to it.

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THE PSALMS IN THE LITURGICAL USAGE

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Psalms Belong to the Word of God

The Bible, understood as the word of God, is the narration of the salvific act of God. It contains the salvation experience of the People of God from the Exodus event (the time of Moses) till the Christ event. It begins with the formation of the People of God in the Old Testament and concludes with the formation of the People of God in the New Testament. The entire narration of the salvific acts of God in the Old Testament is centred around the three great events of salvation, namely the Creation-event, the Exodus-event and the Exile-event (for the New Testament it is the Christ-event that is the centre of its narration). When narrating these three great events of salvation, the writers of the Books of the Bible had three specific purposes, namely, that of explaining the theology of the believing community (about their election, establishment and protection by God), of teaching the community to live a life proper to their call and according to the precepts of God and of celebrating the salvation events in the worshipping community. If we make a general classification of the books of the Old Testament, we can say that the Books of the Law and the Prophets are written with a theological purpose, and those of the writings with a didactic purpose, and the Book of Psalms with a cultic purpose (it does not mean that one type of narration cannot include the other types).

The Psalms and the Prayers in Community

Although the Book of Psalms is a part of the revealed Word of God, and a special type of narrating the salvation events, in the opinion of many, both in the Jewish community and in the Christian community, the approach towards the Psalms and its use were different. There is a general tendency to see the Psalms

as the prayers of the People of God. But it is very much doubtful whether either the Jews or the Christians were making use of the Psalms as their prayers or not.

In the Jewish community as well as in the early Christian community Psalms were recited in their worship together with the readings from the Law and the Prophets. There is no evidence that they considered the Psalms as prayers of the community, and not as readings from the Scripture. Besides, the Jews had their proper prayers known as *hodayot*, composed in the style of the Psalms for their particular circumstances. Among the early Christians also there existed proper psalms as prayers of the community, distinct from the Psalms of the Bible. There were psalms of the Jewish Christians as is seen in Lk. 1:46ff; 1:68ff; 2:29ff, and of the Gentile Christians as is seen in Revel. 5:9f.; 11:17f.; 12:10ff. Paul himself was exhorting the Christians to come prepared with hymns, psalms and spiritual songs on the basis of the mysteries revealed in Jesus Christ (1 Cor 14:26; Eph 5:19f.; Col 3:16). He is not speaking about praying the Psalms taken from the Bible.

The Use of the Book of Psalms in other Writings

The authors of the New Testament Books mention only the Book of Psalms from the writings of the Old Testament (Lk 20:42; 24:44; Acts 1:20). They sometimes consider the Book of Psalms as identical to the Law (Jn 10:34; 12:34; 15:25) and sometimes to the Prophets (Mt 13:35; Lk 24:44). They made use of the Book of Psalms (there are about 95 quotes in the New Testament from the Book of Psalms) with the specific purpose of proving the role of Jesus as the promised Messiah. The Psalms, together with the Law and the Prophets, are considered as containing prophecies to be fulfilled in Jesus Christ (Lk 24:44).

The early Christian writers also were making use of the Book of Psalms as a proof text and as a source for their theological treatises. A typical example is Saint Augustine who cites frequently from the Psalms (11500 out of 20000 Old Testament citations in his works are from the Book of Psalms).

The approach of the early commentators of the Psalms was either typological (of the Antiochian School) or allegorical (of the Alexandrian School and of the Latin writers) by which they interpreted the Psalms either as types or as allegories concerning Christ and the Church.

Recitation of Psalms in Prayers

Among the Christian communities of the first centuries, especially in the early monastic circles, gradually developed the system of reciting the Psalms several times a day. This developed into the formation of the breviary (the prayers of the hours). By the fourth century the recitation of the Psalms was introduced also into the Roman Basilicas. It was Pope Damasus I who asked Jerome to make a uniform Latin translation (AD 383) of the Psalms for the purpose of using it in the Basilicas of Rome. Jerome attests that Psalms were sung even by ordinary people.

In the formation and development of the Christian liturgical, sacramental and other official prayers, the Psalms of the Bible were taken as models and as basic and integral part. Whereas the Church has fixed the various prayers and specified the liturgical acts, the Psalms in themselves contained the different prayer forms and the cultic acts.

Since the majority of the Psalms are in one or other prayer form, it is easy to confuse them as prayers of the community just like the manifold liturgical, sacramental and other official prayers of the Church. Therefore the Psalms, as part of the revealed Word of God, are to be distinguished from the various prayers recited in the worshipping community. The Psalms are prayers only in their form, but actually they are Word of God. One may ask: Why do the Psalms appear as prayers, and belong at the same time to the Word of God? Truly, the Psalms are originally prayers uttered by some individuals or by the community of Israel as expressions of their salvation experience. These existed among the People of Israel either as single psalms or as small collections. But "what happened to the Psalter when it was assembled in the final form and incorporated into that part of the Jewish Bible called *ketubim* sometime about 200 BC, probably before the Greek translation of the Bible was completed? The answer to this is 'Scripturalization'. As a Book the 150 psalms entered into the holy books of the Jews; they became 'scripture'... The Psalms were originally addressed to the Lord in great part; therefore they were words to God. Now the community of faith come to understand them as the Word of God to God's People".¹

1 R.E.Murphy, "The Psalms: Prayer of Israel and the Church," The Bible Today 32 (1994), pp. 134-135.

Celebration of the Salvific Acts of God

Now let us come to the point where we have started, namely, the Psalms as the cultic narration of the of God's acts of salvation. Hence their recitation in the worshipping community is specifically intended for the celebration and participation of the salvation experienced by the People of God. Precisely speaking, through their recitation the community is celebrating the great events of salvation contained in the Old Testament, and is becoming part of them. Moreover, accepting the vision of the New Testament that the Psalms are prophetic words fulfilled in Jesus Christ, we can even say that by reciting the Psalms in our worship we are also celebrating the Christ-event, and sharing the fullness of grace made manifest in Jesus.

The aspect of sharing or participating in the salvific acts of God (or of Jesus) by reciting the Psalms in the worshipping community reveals the sacramental nature of the Psalms. This means that the recitation of a psalm is more than an act of remembrance. It inserts those who read it into the reality of a divine act of salvation. The event of salvation experienced by the People of God in ancient times is an experience that every generation may have in its turn. "Each time Israel recited these psalms in the liturgy she appropriated to herself the redeeming work of Yahweh, and on the basis of that encounter made her own response".² "This cultic re-enactment of past events makes such a vivid impression on the members of the congregation that they imagine themselves seeing and hearing at first hand the events of the past as things which actually happen in their presence. This is one of the essential marks of the Old Testament understanding of history, which is rooted in the cultus, and in that it overcomes the time-factor that separates the historical events from each other, fundamentally differs from the modern understanding of history, which has its roots in the scientific way of thinking"³.

The Symbolism Used in the Narration of Salvation

As cultic presentation of the Word of God, what is important and characteristic in the Book of Psalms is the symbol-

2 D.Cox,, *The Psalms in the Life of God's People*, St. Paul's Publications, Slough, 1984, pp. 8-9.

3 A. Weiser, *The Psalms*, SCM Press, London, 1962, pp. 780-781.

ism of the literary forms used, the words and phrases employed and the actions indicated in it. In every celebration there should be behind it a realised event. Everything that is performed in the celebration should somehow or other bring to the scene that realised event. Therefore whatever is said or done in celebration is understood as a symbol, a sign or an image of that event. Exhibiting this characteristic of celebration what the Psalms bring to the scene is the salvation that God has done for the whole creation. Only by analysing and understanding the particular act of salvation indicated by the symbols, signs and images one can give an appropriate response in life to the realised salvation and actively participate in the celebration.

The Literary Forms in the Psalms

In the use of language the highest human ability is made manifest in composing poems, and in beautifully singing them. The Psalms are written in cultic poetry, making a good selection of fine words, phrases, similes, images and metaphors. This means that in worship poetry itself presents symbolically the highest value of the events that are celebrated in the worshipping community. (In worship the recitation of the psalms should be beautiful music).

The most characteristic literary forms used in cultic poetry are all pertaining to the forms of prayer. The prayer forms are hymn (descriptive praise), lament, thanksgiving (declarative praise) and trust and confidence. These prayer forms have their origin in the four fundamental moods (joyful, sad, restful and hopeful moods), and the three life situations (orientation, disorientation and reorientation) of man; and they articulate in the psalms the three phases (creation, salvation and protection), the three-fold circumstances (order, disorder and re-establishment) and the three dimensional aspect (past, present and future) in God's acts of salvation. Therefore, the different literary forms of prayer symbolically represent the situation of creatures where God has intervened with the act of salvation.

Prayer is defined as personal relationship of the creature with the creator. This is a reality to be experienced in actual life. This can be called God-experience. When a person expresses this personal relationship with God, namely, God-experience, in a human language, he makes use of all the elements that appear in the inter-personal relationship among human beings. The moods

and life situations that give occasion to inter-personal relationship appear also in the act of sharing God-experience as the four literary forms of prayer. Therefore, these literary forms in the Psalms are only symbols of a personal relationship between the creature and the creator. The reality lies in the inter-personal relationship among creatures. As Word of God what is narrated in the Psalms are God's dealings with creatures (acts of salvation); but for the sake of celebration in the community they are symbolically presented as prayer.

Just as the inter-personal relationship among creatures is an 'I (We) - You' relationship, the Psalms too present symbolically the relationship of creatures to God with the first person (singular and plural) and the second person (only singular) pronouns. The 'I' represents any and every creature (that is, the entire creation), while the 'We' is generally understood as standing for the chosen People of God. In worship the 'I' is the worshipping community comprising the entire creation, whereas the 'We' is the covenant community. In any case there are only two entities in worship - God and the community. Whatever comes as a hindrance to this personal relationship of the creatures to the creator is designated symbolically with the third person pronoun ('He' or 'They'), which stands for the enemy.

Function of the Literary Forms

Further, the four literary forms - hymn, thanksgiving, lament, and trust and confidence - are means for celebrating the three great events of salvation (Creation, Exodus and Exile) in the three circumstances (order, disorder and re-establishment) in which the creatures are involved, and in their three periods of existence (past, present and future). Each of the salvation events takes place in three phases, namely, the act of creation (= making order), the act of salvation (= removing disorder) and the act of protection (= keeping in the re-established order). In the psalms belonging to the literary form of hymn, God's nature as one who is eternally existing (an *eternal* present tense) is presented and his activity as creator (of making order in the universe) are described. Laments are also in the present tense, describing the state of disorder and the need of salvation for the universe of creatures. The psalms of thanksgiving narrate the realised salvation in the past tense. What the psalms of trust and confidence bring to the scene is only a narration on the continuation of the state of

salvation and of re-establishment, that is, the protection of God.

Taking into consideration the eternity of God, the three phases in God's act of salvation and the three circumstances of creatures are to be understood as merging into the one and the single act of God, that is, the act of salvation. This is what the community celebrates through the different literary forms. The worshipping community is surpassing space and time, and presents itself as a group that has experienced salvation (thanksgiving), as a group that is experiencing salvation (lament) and as a group that continues in the state of salvation (trust and confidence). In other words, we can say that through the literary form of thanksgiving the worshipping community is sharing the salvation of those who have already experienced it (the past generation), through lament it is sharing the salvation of those who are at present experiencing it, and through the literary form of trust and confidence it sharing the salvation experience of the coming generation. In short, the literary forms as a whole in the psalms is a symbol of God's universal act of salvation; and the time factor symbolically represents the eternity of God.

The Symbolism of Terminology

The components of the literary forms used in the psalms are the manifold terminology employed in them to denote the salvation which God performs for the universe of creations and the act of worship which the community does for God. As the literary form themselves are symbols, so too the entire terminology used in the psalms are symbolic.

A. The Symbolic Words denoting the Act of Salvation:

The act of salvation, according to the biblical understanding, is God's saving the entire creation by subduing the inimical chaotic powers. Therefore as the cultic narration of the act of salvation, the Psalms contain terms and phrases referring to the three characters, God, the universe of creations and the enemy. Since the narration takes place in worship, the worshipping community represents the entire creation. The entire terminology referring to salvation can be classified according as they stand for the three characters, God, the worshipper and the enemy. The symbolic pronouns 'You', 'I' ('We') and 'He' ('They') stand as the basic terms referring respectively to these three characters. The rest

of the terms and phrases include 1) their names, 2) epithets, 3) attributes, 4) the verbal forms denoting their nature and action and 5) description of their dwelling place.

1) *The Names:*

The divine names are intimately related to the being of God. Four names, *Yahweh*, *'elohim*, *yahweh seba'ot*, *shem yahweh*, are used in the psalms referring respectively to the facts that God exists and causes existence, that he acts and manifests his power in the creation, that he controls the universe and leads his chosen people and that his presence is with (immanence) the entire creation. The names of the worshipper in the psalms are the names of the constituent parts of human organism (according to the Hebrew anthropology), namely, body, soul (life, blood), spirit and heart, and the names of the different organs of the human body, such as eye, tongue, mouth, bones, hands, etc. The enemy in the psalms holds only two distinct names, namely, Sin and Death, which evidently refer to non-action and non-existence.

2) *The Epithets*

The epithets for God are many. They have their origin from the position and status that God occupies in the universe of creatures. The common epithets appearing in the psalms are : the Most High, the Holy One, the King and the Lord. Other epithets: the Salvation, Rock, Fortress, Refuge, etc. The epithets for the worshipper are on the one side related to God, and on the other side related to the suffering caused by the enemy. Indicating his good relation with God and his good disposition before God he presents himself a righteous person, a saint, a servant, a seeker and a lover of God, etc. Indicating his suffering caused by the enemy and the resultant separation from the presence of God, he describes himself as a person poor, afflicted, broken-hearted, wounded, etc. There are plenty of epithets used for the enemy in the psalms. Some of them derive from the nature of their actions. The terms 'enemy', 'adversary', and 'hater' are predominant in this group. Other epithets are persecutor, pursuer, plunderer, liar, arrogant, wicked, etc. The evil-doer (*po'ale 'awen*) is a comprehensive term. Also the names of the chaotic elements, sea, deep, flood, leviathan, etc. which opposes God's act of creation, the natural calamities and catastrophes, such as illness, trap, net, etc., and the wild animals, like lion, wild-bull, dog, etc. are used as epithets of the enemy.

3) *The Attributes:*

The attributes used in the psalms manifest par excellence the perfection of God. And hence they are applicable only to God; applicable neither to the creation nor to the enemy. The created universe is presented as either reflecting the divine qualities or as being sustained by them. It is, in other words, the salvation of creatures. The creation deflecting the divine perfection or hindering its manifestation is known as sinfulness or wickedness. The sinners and the wicked attach themselves to the enemy who is devoid of all perfection.

The attributes usually supplied to God are eight in number, which often appear in pairs. The first pair of attributes, holy (*qadosh*) and glory (*kabod*) belongs to the nature of God. The glory of God is understood as the reflection of his holiness in creation. The second pair, love or grace (*hesed*) and faithfulness or truth (*'emet*) belongs to the essence of God (the meanings of the Hebrew terms *hesed* and *'emet* are rendered by a number of terms in all other languages). Love is the divine quality which effects upon all creation, whereas his faithfulness activates only in the direction of a covenanted community. The third pair includes righteousness (*sedeq*) and justice (*mishpat*) - two attributes used in connection with God's acts of salvation. Righteousness is the gift of salvation rendered to every creation, and justice is salvation which God performs in the covenant people. The fourth pair of attributes refers to the efficacy of the action of God. They are might (*koah*) and strength (*'oz*). The distinction of the meanings of these terms is not clear.

4) *The Verbal Forms:*

Because the nature and the activity of God, of the created universe and of the enemy are distinct and different, the verbs denoting the nature and action of each one of them are also distinct and different. The nature of God is uniquely perfect and his actions are essentially salvific. He is and he acts always as Creator, Saviour and Protector. Therefore the verbs used for presenting the nature and acts of God can be grouped under the three verbs 'create', 'save' and 'protect'. The created universe, represented in the psalms by the worshipper, is always the recipient of the effect of God's actions, and is always dependent on him. Therefore the actions of the worshipper are indicated by verbs of hoping, waiting, trusting, crying for pardon and help, coming

and serving in the presence of God. The nature of the actions of the enemy are evident : his nature is always to oppose God and his action is to destroy the order established by God. Therefore, in the psalms, verbs signifying wickedness and destruction are reserved for the enemy.

5) *The Terms Denoting the Dwelling Place*

Finally in the psalms there are various symbolic terms referring to the dwelling places of God, the worshipper and the enemy. Heaven, Earth and the Sheol (under-world) are the common names for the dwelling places of God, of the worshipper and of the enemy respectively. The other terms, e.g., holy hill, temple, sion, holy tent, pit, desert etc. are synonyms for the one or the other of these places.

B. Symbolic Words Denoting the Act of Worship

The terms referring to the act of worship in the psalms can be classified into 1) those referring to prayer, 2) those referring to the music and musical instruments, and 3) those referring to adoration.

1) *Words Referring to Prayer:*

The action-indicating words for hymn and thanksgiving are common whereas lament and psalm of trust and confidence have separate ways of performance. The actions indicated by the two terms *qol* and *rinnah* (both have the meaning 'voice' or 'sound') denote a sound of jubilation in case of praises (hymn and thanksgiving), and a voice of weeping in case of lament.

a) Performance of Praise (hymn and thanksgiving) :

The performance of hymn and thanksgiving is indicated through the two general terms *hillel* (its noun form *tehillah*) and *hodah* (its noun form *todah*). Although *hillel* is translated as 'praise' and *hodah* as 'give thanks', 'acknowledge', or 'confess', both signify a similar act of praising. This act of praising is performed in various stages as indicated by the following terms : meditate or whisper; remember; proclaim or announce; extol or magnify or glorify; bless (related to kneel); a number of terms that signify the external expressions of joy and happiness (rejoice, make merry, be happy, etc.) and raise voice or sound.

b) Performance of Lament :

Here again there is one general term, *hithpallel* (and its noun form *tefillah*), meaning 'prayer', referring to the symbolic action of the worshipper in suffering and in distress. The follow-

ing are the other terms used for indicating the performance of a lament: make supplication; cry or cry aloud; raise voice or sound; call or call upon; weep or sigh; cast down or bowed down; complain; confess or narrate the miseries; be repentant or penitent; weep and shed tears.

c) Performance of Trust and Confidence :

The terms used for indicating act of trust and confidence are : trust, take refuge, wait for and hope. The various stages of doing this act can be imagined in the context of an attained salvation or approaching distress. We should not think in this context of an approaching salvation, because trust and confidence are expressed in the psalms only when the worshipper is in a situation of salvation (for maintaining the attained salvation) or when he is in a situation of distress (for attaining salvation).

2) Words Referring to Music and Musical Instruments

The verb 'to sing' and the noun 'song', indicated by the Hebrew *shir* (verb and noun), refer to singing songs which are beautifully composed with very attractive words, and which are very apt for singing. Another verb *zamar* ('to sing' or 'to praise') and noun *mizmor* refer to songs composed in metric following musical rules. '*anah* with the meaning 'to sing' refers to songs sung in two groups by turn. Also *sapar* (meaning 'to narrate'), when used in the psalms, is to be understood as a 'narration in poetry' with the purpose of giving thanks, praising, telling the glory and proclaiming the wonderful deeds of God to those who are present and to the coming generation. The act of the one narrating the salvation in the worshipping assembly is complemented by the act of those who are listening which is indicated by the verb *shama'* ('to hear', 'to listen').

The use of musical instruments in the psalms is indicated by the general term *nagan* (meaning 'to play in stringed instruments'). The names of the instruments mentioned in the psalms are in majority stringed ones. They are *neginah* (translated as 'string', 'strings', 'eight-stringed', 'ten-stringed'), *kinnor*, *nebel* and *mahalat*. Other instruments are : *top* ('tambourine'), *shopar* ('trumpet'), *ugab* ('pipe'), *hasosrot* ('horn'), *silsle-teru'ah* ('clanging cymbals'), *silsle-shama'* (loud clashing cymbals). Together with these instruments are to be considered the terms, 'dance' (*mahol*) and 'clapping of hands' (*maha' kap*), referring to various movements of the body in accompaniment to the music.

3) Words Referring to Acts of Adoration

a) The Place of Adoration:

The acts of adoration are first and above all intimately connected with the worshipper's relation to the place of worship. The place of worship symbolises the presence of God. Therefore it is qualified as the 'holy place' (*qodesh* or *miqdash*). Referring to a cohabitation of God and the worshipper, this place is often mentioned as 'house' (*bayit*) or 'palace' (*hekal* ; can be also translated 'temple') or 'courts' (*hasar*). The location of this 'house' or 'palace' is 'the holy hill' or 'the holy heavens'. Besides the presence of the worshipper before God, the things that are seen in the house of God are the 'altar' (*mizbeah*), the things for offering and the utensils used in the offering

b) The Coming and Entering into the Place of Adoration :

The verbs *BW'* (to come, to go), *HLK* (to walk, to journey), and *LH* (to ascend, to go up) indicate the essential action of the worshipper in adoration. This is pilgrimage, i.e. coming or journeying to the house of God. Symbolically this represents the life of creatures and the process by which they experience salvation.

c) The Preparations for Adoration :

The preparations are mentioned by a lot of actions, all of which are done in the place of adoration by the worshipper, after his arrival there. They are *YSHB* (to sit, to reside), *SHKB* (to lie down, to rest), *LYN* (to sleep, to abide), *SHKN* (to dwell), *GWR* (to abide, to sojourn), *WR*, *YSHN*, *QYS* (to awake), *KBS*, *RHS* (to wash), *LBS* (to wear), *THR*, *TAM*, *ZKH* (to be pure, blameless). All these are actions that a person does as preparations for his duties in the day to day life. But in the place of worship these actions have meaning, when take into consideration the tediousness of the long pilgrimage that one has completed.

d) The Adoration Proper :

The adoration as a whole is indicated by the verbs *SHH* and *HISHTAHWAH*, meaning, 'to adore', 'to venerate', 'to prostrate', 'worship'. The acts adoration include the different postures of the body, namely, rise up, stand, raise hands or eyes or soul or offering or praise, stretch arms, kneel down and bow down. All these actions express symbolically the supremacy of God and the greatness of salvation. At the same time there are certain other actions that are symbolic of the humble nature of the creatures and their unworthiness for salvation. These are indicated by the

verbs to fast, to fall on face, to mourn, to weep and to pour out tears.

The offering of the sacrifice is the important act of adoration. On the basis of the different modes of offering, the act of sacrifice is indicated by different verbs and nouns. The verbs : ZBH (to slaughter), 'LH (to lift up), 'SH (to perform) and 'SHM. The nouns : *todah* (thank offering), *sedeq* (righteous offering), *teru'ah* (offering with shouts), *simhah* (joyous offering), *berit* (covenant offering), 'olah (burnt offering), *hata'ah* (sin offering), *qetoret* (incense offering) and *mehim* (smoke offering). The taking or making vows and fulfilling them, referred by the term *neder*, also is considered as a type of sacrifice.

Celebrating feasts (*hag*) is an act of worship performed on particular occasions. Also the making of processions is a part of worship. It is done either within the house of God or outside around the house of God.

CONCLUSION

Through the literary forms, especially the prayer forms, and through the terminology that narrate God's act of salvation and that indicate the community's act of worship, the Book of Psalms presents before us the Word of God with a cultic purpose. This purpose should be before us in reciting the psalms either as individuals or as community, both in the reading the Bible and in the liturgical function. The literary forms and the terminology, both are symbolic in their entirety because they belong to the cultic language where only symbols, signs and images are used. To understand them literally or to take them as reality would be incorrect and totally unfitting in the context of worship and celebration. By reciting the psalms in the worshipping assembly we are actually re-enacting or re-presenting the historically experienced salvation of a particular people, namely, the People of God, on the one hand, and becoming a part of that people in sharing their salvation experience on the other hand. Both these elements, re-enactment and participation, are essential for the full celebration of the salvation events.

The re-enactment of salvation takes place in the worshipping assembly through an act of intellect from the part of each member of the community; that is, each one should have a proper understanding of the historically occurred salvation event to

which the symbolic terminology (both the narration of the salvation event and the acts of the worshipper) of the psalms are referring. By understanding and reciting the terminology referring to the salvation event which God has performed and the People of God has experienced, we celebrate God's act of salvation in the community of worshippers. Similarly, by understanding and reciting the terminology referring to the acts of worship what we celebrate is the life-situation of the People of God and their response in life to the realised and experienced salvation. Moreover, the terms that indicate the acts of worship demand also a symbolic performance of those acts by the community in the celebration. But the tendency is to omit the performance of cultic acts as far as possible, mostly because of the lack of understanding and of practical inconvenience. This way of celebrating the salvation can be considered as 'diachronic approach' to the event of salvation.

The participation in the salvation event and in the act of worship is rather an act of the will of each member. This means that both the narration of the salvation event and the acts of worship should be experienced in the life of each member. This does not happen during the liturgical celebration; but we should assemble for the celebration as persons saved by God, experienced salvation and functioned as medium of salvation for one another. Just as the People of God encountered and experienced the salvation that God bestowed upon them, we should seek the will of God and find the gift of salvation in each event that takes place in our life. This in reality is the life of prayer - to be with God at all times. Just as through the literary form of prayer and through the various liturgical acts we are symbolically subjecting ourselves to God, we should in reality, in our day to day life, admire and respect our fellow-creatures (hymn), seek their help in our needs (lament), be grateful to them for the good that we obtain from them (thanksgiving) and make our life meaningful in peaceful co-existence (trust and confidence). Just as through the various acts of adoration we celebrate the gift of divine salvation, we should submit all our abilities and all our possessions for the well being and service of our fellow-creatures. In this way, through the recitation of the psalms and the performance of liturgical acts in worship, we are becoming one with the People of God whose salvation and salvation experience are narrated there. This, in fact, is the 'synchronic approach' to the event of salvation narrated in the Book of Psalms.

LITURGICAL SPIRITUALITY

- Rev. Dr. Thomas Mannooramparampil

A genuine Christian life is a life which is nourished, matured, expressed and realized fully through the liturgy. Since each particular Church has its own liturgy, the type of liturgical spirituality which one Church offers differs from that of other Churches. Our aim is to study the liturgical spirituality as such in its various aspects and to expound its relations with other activities of Christian life. Then we make a brief survey on the spirituality of St. Thomas Christians.

The Notion of Liturgical Spirituality

'Liturgical spirituality' refers to that distinctive interior life of the spirit that is formed and nurtured by the Church's liturgy.¹ Liturgy is the fundamental source of Christian spirituality because it is essentially the work of the Holy Spirit². Christian spirituality is at its core liturgical because the work of our redemption is accomplished through the liturgy (SC 2).

Brasso tries to explain the concept of liturgical spirituality in a detailed way. For him, spirituality is the particular way of conceiving and realizing the ideal of Christian life. This ideal is union with God through Jesus Christ, and the way to it is incorporation into Jesus Christ and the participation of his mystery in our life. The realization of this ideal must take into account personal and subjective elements. Everyone has to apply his internal activities to the attunement of the supernatural ideal. Differences in spirituality originate mainly from the intellectual order. There are also psychological, moral, and cultural causes which determine the differences in it. Differences in spiritualities do not depend on the various elements which constitute them, because these elements are the same in every spirituality. They

1 Philip H. Pfatteicher, *Liturgical Spirituality* (Pennsylvania 1997) p. IX

2 Idem

rather depend on the relative importance given to these elements in them.

Liturgical spirituality is the true spirituality of the Church because it tries to reproduce in the private life of the Christians what the Church has done and taught in liturgy. Every legitimate spirituality is liturgical because it assigns a necessary place to the liturgy of the Church. The spirituality of the Church is the particular way of conceiving and realizing the ideal of the Christian life which is taught in practice by the Church herself without additions and modifications drawn from particular schools of spirituality.³ The Church does not recommend any school of spirituality in a special way. It is enough to have the spirituality which the Church officially offers. The special characteristic of this spirituality is that it establishes unity between her public worship and the spiritual activities of each faithful. It is called liturgical because it tends to reproduce in the private life of the Christian what the Church does and teaches in offering God her liturgy. Every legitimate spirituality is liturgical because it assigns a necessary place to the liturgy of the Church. In the method and style of private sanctity, the Church seeks to imitate fully the method and style she uses in her liturgy. Liturgy gives rise to true spirituality because it applies to Christian practical life the rules and principles which the Church uses for her public worship⁴. The public worship of the Church is nothing but her spirituality officially manifested through the formulas and rites which constitute the liturgy.

Vaggagini explains the liturgical spirituality in a similar way: 'Liturgical spirituality is that spirituality in which the specific concretization and proper synthetic ordering of the diverse elements, common to every catholic spirituality as a means towards Christian perfection, are determined by the liturgy itself'⁵. It is the liturgy which determines the particular ordering of the elements, common to every spirituality. The particular way in which these elements are concretized in the liturgy becomes the means of living the Christian life during the

3 Gabriel M. Brasso, *Liturgy and Spirituality* (Minnesota 1971) 17.

4 Gabriel M. Brasso, *Liturgy and Spirituality* (Minnesota 1971). 1-17, 233.

5 Cyprian Vaggagini, O.S.B., *Theological Dimension of the Liturgy*, tr. by Leonard J. Doyle and W.A. Jurgens (Minnesota 1976) 661.

liturgical celebration as well as outside it⁶. It is the spirituality of the one who considers the use of the means offered by the liturgical action as sufficient for his tending to Christian perfection. Every Christian spirituality is necessarily liturgical because it must assign an essential place to liturgy.

Characteristics

Let us consider the general characteristics of liturgical spirituality:

1. **Trinitarian.** The principle of true worship is to be found in God, in the mystery of the Holy Trinity and in the inner relationship of the divine life. Liturgy emphasizes the Trinitarian sense. It follows the rhythm of salvation history which is developed in a scheme of Trinitarian economy: the Father sends the Son; the Son gives the Spirit; the Church returns to the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit. This ascending and descending plan of sanctification and cult is fully reflected in the liturgy. Therefore liturgical spirituality is oriented to the Father, in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit (a Patre, in Christu Jesu, virtute Spiritu Sancti, ad Patrem)⁷.

2. **Theocentric.** Liturgy develops as a great **dialogue** between God the Father and the Church. Prayers are addressed to Him and every grace comes from Him.

3. **Christocentric.** Christ occupies the central place in the liturgy. He is the mediator of salvation. Every prayer, praise and thanksgiving are pleasing to the Father since they are assumed in the unique act of the offering of Christ.

4. **Spirit-centered.** Spirituality is a life in the Spirit and led by the Spirit. The role of sanctification is attributed to Him.

5. **Ecclesial.** It is oriented to the Church.⁸ Liturgical acts are not private acts but the celebrations of the Church (SC 26). Only by passing through the Church one can participate in the salvation. It is the Church which vitalizes the history of salvation in the liturgy.

6 Id., 663

7 Achille M. Triacca SDB, "Liturgy and Spiritual Life " or "Liturgical Spirituality?", in Paul Pallath (ed), Church and its Most Basic Elements (Rome 1995) 151.

8 cfr. Adian Kavanagh, Liturgie et conscience ecclésiale. Une dialectique de changement, in La Maison - Dieu 154 (1983): Liturgie et Spiritualité, 9-35.

6. **Communitarian.** A liturgical spirituality which does not tend to the edification of the ecclesial body is mutilated. It emphasizes the social aspect of the salvific design of God and the union of all in the people of God. Thus it stresses the need for mutual charity and interdependence of all in the growth of sanctity. Since it is the liturgical action which determines the special balance in which common elements of spirituality are viewed and lived and since it is communitarian, the communitarian aspect in the liturgical spirituality is on the first level.

7. **Personal.** A Christian who appreciates the communitarian sense of the liturgy is not dispensed from the individual activity. The community is constituted of individuals on whom God's design has bestowed concrete characteristics and missions. The participation is full and enriches the community when each one lives according to his personality and vocation, making use of all the gifts of nature and of grace.

8. **Objective.** Liturgy places the object (God, Christ, sacraments, etc) on the primary level, drawing attention of the subject on it. In the liturgical spirituality the characteristic traits under which the object is considered by the subject come from the liturgy. As a result, much importance is attached in the liturgical spirituality to understanding of liturgy, its texts and rites. This does not mean that no importance is given to the subjective elements like examination of conscience, etc. Introspective analyses are tempered by the majesty of the object.

9. **Total.** Liturgical spirituality treats man as a totality and unity. With some relative balance it brings into operation the various psychological faculties of man : intellect, will, emotion and affection.

10. **Dogmatic.** It presents to the faithful the revelation proposed by the Church in the framework of salvation history.

11. **Biblical.** The whole Christian life is lived by putting the Bible into act. The Word of God occupies an eminent place in the liturgy. All prayers and rites are inspired by it.

12. **Symbolical.** Through symbols God actualizes the salvific mysteries. By means of symbols man is elevated to God. Faith helps us to interpret the symbols and make use of them for a personal encounter with God.

13. **Eucharistic and sacramental.** Eucharist is considered in the sacrificial context. Holy Communion is the sacramental

participation in the sacrifice of Christ. Sacraments are the most important elements in liturgy.

14. **Missionary.** It tends to the manifestation and testimony of the divine life received in liturgy as SC 2 notes: "For the liturgy...is the outstanding means whereby the faithful may express in their lives, and manifest to others, the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true Church."

15. **Eschatological.** The salvation which we received now is a beginning, a prelude of the fulness of the gifts which will be given to us at the parousia. Every celebration acknowledging these gifts is a joyous anticipation of the situation after the parousia. SC 8 explains this fact thus: "In the earthly liturgy we take part in a foretaste of that heavenly liturgy which is celebrated in the holy city of Jerusalem towards which we journey as pilgrims, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God, a minister of the holiness and of the true tabernacle; we sing a hymn to the Lord's glory with all the warriors of the heavenly army; venerating the memory of the saints, we hope for some part and fellowship with them; we eagerly await the Saviour, Our Lord Jesus Christ, until He, our life, shall appear and we too will appear with Him in glory". Liturgical spirituality is characterized by the expectation of salvation, by a tension full of hope at the final consummation (Phil 3:20; Col.3:4).

Fr. Triacca classifies these characteristics under three headings:

- a. **Theological characteristics:** Liturgical spirituality is seen in its relation to each one of the Persons of the Holy Trinity.
- b. **Historico-salvific:** It is in relation to the history of salvation. Biblical, ecclesial, communitarian, sacramental and paschal aspects are examined.
- c. **Dynamic-operative:** Christian behaviour is permeated with liturgical spirituality, it is an operational dynamic life. It points out cyclicity, objectivity and totality as the main characteristics. The unifying, pedagogical, eschatological and universal dimensions are also mentioned⁹.

Summit and Source.

SC 10 explains the preeminence of the liturgy in these words: 'Liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the fountain from which

9 idem

all her power flows. For the goal of apostolic works is that all who are made sons of God by faith and baptism should come together to praise God in the midst of His Church, to take part in her sacrifice and to eat the Lord's supper". It is easy to relate this statement with the definition given in SC 7. It is the source and summit because it works out our sanctification and the glorification of God: "The liturgy is considered as an exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ. In the liturgy the sanctification of man is signified by signs perceptible to the senses, and is effected in a way which corresponds with each of these signs; in the liturgy the whole public worship is performed by the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, that is, by the Head and His members. From this it follows that every liturgical celebration, because it is an action of Christ the priest and of His Body which is the Church, is a sacred action surpassing all others; no other action of the Church can match its claim to efficacy, nor equal the degree of it." SC 10 also states that grace is poured forth upon us from the liturgy and especially from the eucharist as from a font and the sanctification of God, to which all other activities of the Church are directed as toward their end, is achieved in the most efficacious possible way. In SC 2 the Council clearly states that liturgy is the source of Christian life and that the real missionary witnessing is the Christian life sanctified by the liturgy. *Novus homo gloria Dei*. That liturgy is the source of Christian life is evident if we examine the effects of sacraments. Christian life begins with baptism and chrismation, restored in penance and matured in the Eucharist. Every initial spiritual life matures through contact with Christ; now Christ comes in contact with men through the sacraments in an objective and real way. We are reminded of the exhortation which His Holiness Pope John Paul II gave to the Latin bishops of India: "In a full and active sharing in the Eucharistic Sacrifice and in the entire liturgical life of the Church all our people find the primary and indispensable source of the true Christian spirit. Here they draw the strength to be able to give to the world the witness of faith and the witness of love. The joyful commitment of service to humanity in need can only be sustained by the power derived from the Eucharistic Christ"¹⁰.

10 Cfr. Paul Pallath(ed), Pope John Paul II and the Catholic Church in India(Changanacherry 1996)180

Summit of Christian Life.

The goal of every spiritual life is the response to the gift of God. This response is actualized in the Christian sentiments of faith, hope, love, thanksgiving etc. All these find expressions in the liturgy especially in the supreme act of worship and sanctification which is the Eucharist.

From the Eucharist all graces are conferred and those who receive it receive holiness and spiritual strength. All other sacraments are oriented to it. That is why other sacraments are administered together with it. The Decree on the life and ministry of priest says: 'The other sacraments, as well as with every ministry of the Church and every work of the apostolate, are tied together with the Eucharist and are directed toward it. The Most Blessed Eucharist contains the entire spiritual boon of the Church, that is, Christ Himself, our pasch and Living Bread, by the action of the Holy Spirit through His very flesh vital and vitalizing, giving life to men who are thus invited and encouraged to offer themselves...' ¹¹. The decree states that no Christian community, however, is built up unless it has its basis and center in the celebration of the most Holy Eucharist; from this, therefore, all education to the spirit of community must take its origin. This celebration, if it is to be a genuine and complete celebration the eucharist should lead to various works of charity and mutual help, as well as to missionary activity and to different forms of Christian witness. ¹² We may draw attention to the words of the Pope on the Holy Eucharist in the above mentioned exhortation: "The Eucharist is our source of hope for the future. It is the heart of our ecclesial communities ... The full expression of human concern and love will be effected only through the Eucharist ... Every member of the Church, especially Bishops and Priests, must be vigilant in seeing that this sacrament of love shall be at the centre of the life of the people of God" ¹³.

There is a liturgical spirituality and it is of obligation to all (SC 14,17-19). It presupposes full and fruitful participation in liturgical celebrations and the achievement of this aim is the supreme norm for the reform and restoration of the liturgy (SC 21,33,41 and 43).

11 Presbyterorum Ordinis, no.5

12 Idem, no.6

13 Paul Pallath, Pope John II, p. 80-81

Extra Liturgical Activities

Liturgy does not exhaust the entire activity of the Church. Before men come to liturgy they should be called to faith and conversion. She must preach faith and penance to the believers. She must prepare them for the sacraments, teach them to observe all that Christ has commanded and invite them to all the works of charity, piety and apostolate (SC 9). She must prepare them for a conscious, active, fruitful participation in the liturgy (SC 11). SC 12 speaks of personal prayer and asceticism. In all these, there are certain elements that are necessary and without them liturgical spirituality cannot subsist. No one can doubt the importance of these realities. Worship remains abstract if it is not related to life. Therefore SC 10 says: "The liturgy in its turn moves the faithful, filled with the paschal sacraments to be one in holiness; it prays that they may hold fast in their lives to what they have grasped by their faith."

Every act of asceticism and apostolate gets light and strength from the liturgy and every activity tends to it. SC 10 teaches: "For the aim and the object of apostolic works is that all who are made sons of God by faith and baptism should come together to praise God in the midst of the Church to take part in the sacrifice and to eat the Lord's supper".

The practice of personal encounter with God is necessary in order to receive and assimilate the sanctification given in the liturgy. Without it, it is difficult to create an atmosphere for a conscious and profound participation in the liturgy. All activities of the Church are derived from the liturgy and are directed back to it.

Pious Exercises.

If liturgy is the primary source of spirituality, there is no room for a spirituality in which the dominant element comes from pious exercises. They have only a secondary role in the interior life. SC 13 says: "Popular devotions of the Christian people are to be highly commended, provided they accord with the laws and norms of the Church, above all when they are ordered by the Apostolic See". Their legitimacy is asserted under the following conditions: "These devotions should be so drawn up that they harmonize with the liturgical seasons, accord with the sacred liturgy, are in some fashion derived from it and lead the people to it, since, in fact, the liturgy by its very nature far

surpasses any of them." A strong life of internal piety is needed to strive for Christian perfection. The acts of piety are to be subordinated to the liturgy.

The ascendancy which the liturgy exercises in the spirituality over the rest of human activities in order to attain perfection is a qualitative one and not necessarily a quantitative one. There is quantitative ascendancy when the time assigned to the participation in the liturgy predominates over other concerns, at least over the spiritual ones. There is qualitative ascendancy when non-liturgical occupations consume the greater part of one's time, yet they are lived in a spirit of preparation for the liturgical action or as a derivation from it. They take part in the liturgical celebration in an intense way.

The ordering and subordinating of everything else to the liturgy means that everything outside the liturgy is regarded and lived either as preparation for the liturgy or as its derivation. So it is with private prayer and meditation, private devotions and other pious exercises outside the liturgy.

Preparation for the Liturgy.

a. **Penance and purification.** Since we are sinners the effects of grace in our soul, obtained in liturgy, are pardon and purification. An essential dimension of Christian life is asceticism as proposed by the second Vatican Council: 'We also learn from the same Apostle that we must always carry around in our body the dying of Jesus so that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our mortal flesh (SC 12). The manifestations of Christian asceticism are various: constant accomplishment of one's own duties, joyous acceptance of pain and sickness, fight against sin, privations, spiritual and corporeal mortifications, etc. What is the relation between asceticism and liturgy? First of all, Christian asceticism has its source in baptism which inserts the faithful into the mystery of Christ who is dead and risen. The fundamental attitude is enforced by the participation in other sacraments: Chrismation strengthens the faithful to fight against evil forces; the sacrament of penance is aimed at the renewal of the baptismal graces; the anointing of the sick places the suffering Christians in a particular relation with the paschal mystery of Christ. The Eucharist in which union with our Lord is achieved turns us to be a sacrifice. Besides, in particular periods of liturgical year the Church proposes as the fundamental attitude penance

and Christian asceticism (SC 109, 110). The penitential features are to be given greater prominence with special emphasis on the social aspect of penance. The doctrine of the mystical body underlies this social aspect of penance.

b. **Compunction.** Liturgy is the optimum medium for the internal growth of compunction of heart. Since we are sinners we should have deep sorrow for sins and evil tendencies and have sincere desire for an effective return to God. Participation in the Eucharist and in other sacraments demand such a feeling of compunction. It should be habitual in a Christian since he lives in the presence of God. It is not difficult to obtain this compunction if we make the supernatural content of liturgy as the conscious part of our lives. Liturgy makes us humble and leads us to the acknowledgement of our condition as sinners.

c. **Spiritual reading.** Liturgical spirituality gives importance to spiritual reading as a preparation for the participation in the liturgy. It presupposes in the participants of liturgy a personal effort of study and of assimilation of the teachings which have been received.

Assimilation of Liturgy.

a. **Personal prayer.** Liturgical prayer is a true prayer. It is public because it is done in the name of the Church. It is individual because it is recited by individuals. Personal prayer helps to continue the contact with God which is established in liturgy and helps to assimilate the abundant spiritual food which one has received in the liturgy.

b. **Meditation.** It occupies the external senses and imagination and persuades the intelligence to stir up the will in respect of God and divine things so that the whole person may participate in the search for God. Meditation is often called mental prayer as if only the intellect were involved in the search for God and divine things. It is the whole person who is involved in it. Regular meditation cherishes self-knowledge. The themes which meditation brings to imagination and to reason are from the field of dogmas, examples of saints, virtues to be practised and vices to be avoided.

c. **Contemplation.** Meditation leads to contemplation where God's presence is honoured and even experienced in a special way. It transcends the faculties of man in such a way that it is

more intuitive than discursive. It is an infused act of awareness of God and his mysteries. Contemplation is God taking joy in the human person and human society¹⁴.

Practice of Virtues.

The effort to attain perfection and the spiritual strength derived from prayer are manifested in the practice of theological and moral virtues. How is their exercise related to liturgical spirituality? Liturgy as the complexus of signs of sanctification and worship is necessarily connected with the active exercise of these virtues and the spirituality which is centered on the liturgy is the one in which the exercise of the virtues has predominance.

Christian life is a life of theological virtues: faith, hope and charity. A Christian is one who believes, hopes and loves. The supreme service of God is realized in the exercise of these virtues. Mediator Dei says: 'The worship which she (the Church) offers to God, all good and great, as St. Augustine puts it tersely: 'God is to be worshipped, he says, by faith, hope and charity' (No 47). They are the content of liturgy: "In faith, hope and charity we pray always with constant yearning"¹⁵

One of the most important moral virtues is the virtue of religion, since liturgy is the exercise of that virtue. Liturgical spirituality gives a worshipful character to all acts of the Christian life. Humility and obedience are the other main fundamental virtues which stand in relation with the virtue of religion.

Some General Principles.

- a. Every truly Christian life has its source and summit in the liturgy of the Church. It does not exist outside the liturgy or alongside of it, but by means of the liturgy.
- b. Spiritual life is transmitted, matured and reaches its perfection above all through liturgy. It is the life of the faithful in as much as it is a life of worship in spirit and truth.
- c. Our spirituality is liturgical if it accords with the content, style and rhythm of the spirituality of the Church.
- d. Spirituality is a Christian experience of salvation events which are the object of liturgy. Therefore salvation history, Christian experience and liturgy are inseparable.

14 Louis Bouyer, Introduction to Spirituality (Minnesota 1961) 68.

15 St. Augustine, Epist 13, MD 48

e. If we relate the liturgical spirituality with different schools of spirituality, liturgy in its content manifests a unificatory role. These schools in their turn contribute to the profundity of the salvific mysteries contained in the liturgy.

f. Extra-liturgical activities draw their impulse from the liturgy and are referred to them as their end.

g. A spiritual life without much contact with liturgy remains incomplete and impoverished. One can have intense spiritual life without explicit reference to liturgical rites because of the lack of education or of defect of knowledge of liturgy, etc. Yet we should not forget that Christian life begins with the reception of baptism and is oriented to the Eucharist as its summit.

Liturgical spirituality of Thomas Christians

All the basic characteristics which are mentioned above can be discerned also in the spirituality of the Thomas Christians¹⁶. In the light of their ancient documents and traditions we can highlight the following characteristics:

Eucharist is the center of their Christian life. They have very deep veneration towards it and are very keen on participating actively in the Eucharistic celebration, not only on Sundays and feastdays but also on ordinary weekdays. All those who participate in the Qurbana should receive the Holy communion in double species¹⁷.

The main purpose of the Qurbana is to offer worship, honour, glory and thanksgiving to the Holy Trinity. Christian life is a life of complete dedication to the Holy Trinity who dwells in us. Forgiveness of sins is one of the main aims of the Holy Qurbana because it is the reenactment of the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ. Most noteworthy is the eschatological vision which is

16 Cfr. Patros Yousif, An Introduction to the East Syrian Spirituality - Liturgical, Ecclesial and Theological Dimensions, in Fr. Augustine Thottakkara CMI(ed), East Syrian Spirituality (Bangalore 1990)1-96; Jacob Vellian, Liturgical Spirituality, in Thomas Vellilamthadam and others, Ecclesial Identity of the Thomas Christians (Kottayam 1985).179-190.

17 Cfr. Joseph Chalassery, The Spiritual life of St. Thomas Christians, in Paul Pallath(ed), Catholic Eastern Churches .Heritage and Identity (Rome 1994)276.

found throughout the Qurbana. The Eucharistic assembly hopes for the new life in the kingdom of heaven and participation in the heavenly liturgy after the parousia. The earthly liturgy is the foretaste of the heavenly liturgy.

The Liturgy of the Hours is the prayer of the whole Church. The priests and people together recited it in the Church in the morning and evening. Melchior Nunes Baretto wrote from Malabar to Europe: "On all days before sunset they assemble in the Church to recite the psalms and lessons in Chaldean, and in the morning they do the same, the cassanars ... reciting their matins at the altar and the people answering their alleluias and other words with such impetus of the spirit"¹⁸.

They lived the liturgical year. The liturgy presents the history of salvation centered in Christ within the liturgical year which is divided into nine seasons. Each season prepares the faithful to assimilate some aspect of this mystery. The incarnation of the Son of God is the central event commemorated in the period of Annunciation and Nativity. The season of Denha is centered on the baptism of Jesus and remembers also His public life. The period of Great Lent reminds us of His forty days fasting and prepares us for the Easter through prayers and penance. The Resurrection of Christ is the central theme of the period of Resurrection. The period of Apostles recalls the descent of the Holy Spirit, the preaching of the Gospel by them, the sufferings they endured and the spread of the Church. The period of Qaita (summer) as a continuation of the period of the Apostles invites all to accept the discipleship of Christ and shows the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church. The period of Elia and Sliba expects the return of Christ and the victory of the cross. The period of Moses is aimed at the immediate preparation for the second coming of Christ. The period of the dedication of the Church refers to the final dedication of the Church by Christ to His Father at the parousia.

Thus the liturgical year presents systematically different phases of the salvation history and integrates man into the mystery of Christ. The spiritual renewal which it brings about deepens the conviction of his pilgrim nature and of his eschatological orientation.

18 J.Wicki(ed), Documenta Indica, Vol.V (Roma 1958)416.

Their ecclesial and sacramental life draws special attention. Our forefathers were aware that they were incorporated into the Church through baptism and therefore their life was centered on the life of the Church. Therefore they were involved in all affairs of the Church. They were convinced that the sacraments and the Liturgy of the Hours with which the Church nourishes them suffice for their spiritual growth. That is why private devotions were not popular in this Church till her latinization in the 16th century.

Their ascetical life was centered around the liturgy. The basic ascetical practice was prayer, fasting and works of charity. Fasting and abstinence are the most important elements in the life of penance for the growth in holiness. Fasting is undertaken as a preparation for the Qurbana as the following prayer indicates: "Come, O brethern, who have fasted, and receive the Holy Thing which sanctifies those who eat it"¹⁹.

In 1579, Fr. Dionysio SJ wrote from Cochín: "They (the Christians of Malabar) are friends of fast by obligation ... on the days of fasting they eat neither fish nor extracts from milk, nor do they drink wine. They abstain from conjugal relations... They take the principal meal at 3 or 4 o'clock in the afternoon"²⁰. The testimony of different documents show that there were 290 days of fast among them. If overlapping is avoided they observed 225 days of fast over a year's time.

Their liturgical life is cherished by family prayer and by ceremonies in families in connection with birth, beginning of education, marriage and death.

It is a sad fact that the spirituality of the Syro-Malabar Christians now cannot be claimed to be strictly liturgical because, although they do not neglect sacramental life, they find more refuge in private devotions and pious exercises which have been introduced from the Latin Church. Because of the loss of their own liturgy, they were denied the right to base their spirituality on their own liturgy. Their latinized and hybrid liturgy offered them a hybrid spirituality. In order to regain the genuine liturgical

19 Supplementum Mysteriorum, p 57.

20 Dionysio F.S.J, Informacao de Christandade de Sao Thomé que esta no Malabar, Reino da India Oriental (1578)=Silva Rega Documentacao XII, 402.

spirituality, the Syro-Malabar church has to restore first all items of their liturgy in their integrity and celebrate them following the prescribed rubrics. They should be studied and taught in various dimensions so that the Church may be able to draw spiritual fruits from them through the active, full, conscious, intelligent and fruitful participation. The liturgy of the Hours should regain its place as the prayer of the whole Church including the laity. Pious exercises and private devotions which are incompatible with the liturgical spirit are to be avoided or reformed. The Church has to live the liturgical year. The present liturgical controversy and false propaganda against their genuine liturgy will alienate the faithful from the liturgy and badly affect the liturgical spirituality of the Church. At the contrary, if she resources herself to her own liturgical spirituality, she will certainly recover her genuine enthusiasm, unity and missionary zeal.

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REFLECTIONS ON THE MYSTERY (SACRAMENT) OF RECONCILIATION

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The Mystery¹ (Sacrament) of Reconciliation², though instituted by Christ in the history of various ecclesial traditions, did not have a unique form of celebration. In accordance with the changing conditions of man, it has received different structures and forms in history³. However this sacrament remains as the sacrament of conversion and Reconciliation. At present in the ecclesial milieu, this sacrament faces a certain crisis⁴. There is no doubt that the research into the variety of forms of its celebration in history and a search into the various features and theological input will produce a certain effect which can provide a new hope for its future. There is no doubt that it is a sign different from the Eucharist and Baptism, instituted by Christ, so that man may establish a good relation with God and himself as well as with others, which was broken by sin. This good relation is a reality wrought by God himself through the suffering and death of Jesus Christ (Rom. 5, 11). It is a gift of God and consists in taking hold of a new existence with God in peace and friendship. God established peace with man and the universe through the Blood of Christ (Col. 1, 20-22; Rom. 11, 15; Eph. 2, 16; 2Cor. 5, 20). Here God is the Initiator and executor of Reconciliation. This article is to bring out certain insights in this.

1. Mystery (Raza-Raze) is the normal term usually used in the East for sacraments. By mystery we mean also the action of the Holy Spirit.
2. Reconciliation literally means restoration of friendship. Sacrament of Reconciliation aims at restoration of friendship with God and human beings.
3. Orsy, L. The Evolving church and the Sacrament of penance, N. Y. 1978, p. 12-13.
4. Hellwig Monica, K. The meaning of the Sacraments, Dayton, 1972, p. 79-80.

The term Reconciliation

Literally it means restoration of friendship. In Hebrew language the term used is "Kapar" and in Greek we find "Kattalaso" being used for this. In Old Testament we may not find this term being used widely⁵. However when we come to the New Testament we find it being used in many places (Mt. 5, 24; Ac. 7, 26; 2Cor. 5, 18-21). Other terms being very often used are Repentance, Penance, Confession, Compunction etc⁶. The basic Biblical concept is Reconciliation which is clear in Mt. 5, 24 and Mt. 6, 13-14. Commenting on these texts, Origen introduced the biblical and theological concept of this mystery as "Reconciliation with the Church as the sign of reconciliation with God"⁷. In the East Syrian and St. Thomas Christian tradition we have the text of this Mystery by the name "Taksa d' Hoosaya"⁸. The apostolic letter of Pope John Paul II in 1984, is named "Reconciliatio et Paenitentia". The Catechism of the Catholic Church etc. uses this term. The net result of the celebration is the restoration of friendship with God and the community⁹. So mystery of Reconciliation has to be preferred as the proper name for this sacrament more than any other name.

Theology of Reconciliation

Christian revelation holds that man carries within himself the burden of radical disharmony and alienation caused by sin¹⁰. He found unable to liberate himself from the shakles by his own power. In the O. T. we see man's sinful rebellion against

5. Butrick G. A. et al (eds) The interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, N. Y. 1961, Vol. iv. p. 17. The terms used in the Bible for Reconciliation are in Heb. "Kapar" and in GK. "Katallaso; Katallage" (2Mac. 1,5; 8, 29; 7,33; Kapar is used in Lev. 6, 30; 8, 15; Ez. 45, 15; Dan. 9, 24).
6. Compunction. Hurst D. Compunction. in NCE. Vol. iv. London, 1967. p. 96. PL. 76. 275b-277a.
7. Origen (185-253) P. G. XII, Col. 361-362. Hom. 9, on Ex. 1, Sc. 16, p. 206. Hom Lev. 3, 1; S. 286 P. 170; Hom. 1, on Gen. 8, Sc. 7, 73-75. PG. XII. P. 152.
8. Taksa d'Hoosaya, Kelaitha J. The liturgy of the Church of the East, Mosul 1928, pp. 174-180.
9. In other religions also this term aims at the restoration of friendship e. g. Islam. Vat. II, LG. 8, 11; Cat. Cath.Church, 468, 1443-1444.
10. Monden L. Sin, Liberty and Law, (Tranl. Doncel J.) NY. 1965, P. XI. Haring B. Sin in the Secular Age. NY. 1974, pp. 34-36.

God and fellowmen. At the same time we see God's unfailing offer of salvation, healing concern, restoration of his people, renewal, new creation, redemption, pardon, forgiveness, atonement, justification, righteousness, expiation, atonement and grace. All these are summed up in one word "Covenant"¹¹. "Mercy of God and grace of God" are usually used. In O. T. we may find words which imply reconciliation. The covenantal relationship repeatedly offered by Yahweh expresses accurately all that reconciliation implies. The idea of placating an offended deity was totally foreign to Israel. God promised to make a definite and final covenant with man through the prophets (Jer. 31, 31). It was to be a covenant of renewal and recreation (Ez. 36, 25-28). Through the messianic Servant, God promised to bring His "Justice" to all nations (Is. 42, If; Is. 49,6). All these indications are aiming at a renewed community in the Old Testament.

At the same time it is in the book of Maccebees that the actual term of reconciliation is widely used¹². The greek word "Katallasso" is used in the place of hebrew word "Kapar" which literally means restoration of friendship. In the N. T. it is a reality brought about by the suffering and death of Jesus Christ. In the N. T. different authors express the reality of God's Salvation and God's salvific act under different imageries and terms. They speak frequently about the kingdom of God, eternal life or salvation, redemption, divine adoption, new creation etc. It is actually St. Paul who uses the word reconciliation as comprehensive term for God's saving act and salvation. In Paul the word "Kattallasso" or "Kattallage" means a radical inner transformation of man and the resultant new relationship with God and man to man¹³. The Gospel of reconciliation according to Pauline writings is given in 2Cor. 5, 17-20. Here in the first place it is entirely a result of God's moving and merciful redeeming love for man caught up in the dilemma of sin. God is the Author of reconciliation¹⁴.

11. John Paul II. "Reconciliation and Radical transformation, In La Documentation Catholique 68, 15, 1986, pp. 758-759.

12. 2Mac. 1, 5-6; 7, 9, 33; 8, 29; 14, 23-36.

13. Van Den Berghe, P. Reconciliation in the Bible in TD. 23, 3, (1975) pp. 196-202.

14. Mar Aphraates, Homily 14, cf. Graffin A. R. PSYR. Paris, 1894, Vol. I. pp. 318-319. Connolly R. H. "Aphraates and Monasticism" in JTS 6, (1905) pp. 522-539.

God himself has no need to be reconciled to man. "We were reconciled to Him through the death of His Son" (Rom. 5, 11)¹⁵. It is a loving gift from the part of God in St. Paul and St. John (Rom. 8, 32; Jn. 3, 16; 1Jn. 4, 9-11). In Paul "Reconciliation is a central concept in his understanding of the Gospel. In his letter to Corinthians, the words for reconciliation appear five times in a theologically charged passage which is the heart of Paul's appeal for Recalcitrant Corinthians (2Cor. 5, 18-21). The whole of God's activity in the history of salvation is captured in the statement that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself" (Rom. 11, 15; 2Cor. 5, 19). It is probable that this basic statement and perhaps more of 2Cor. 5, 18-21 was a typical evangelistic abstract of the Gospel used here by Paul, in a different context. In his letter to the Romans 5, 10-11, this theme of reconciliation is a key concept. The idea of God's work of salvation through reconciliation is developed further in Eph. 2, 16; Col. 1, 20-22. Here God is the initiator and executor of reconciliation. This is inconsistent with the O. T. themes of the Mercy of God (Ex. 34, 6-7; Ps. 103, 8-4; Is. 43, 25) and His gift of the covenant with His people (Jer. 31, 31-34). The reconciliation accomplished by God stands as a completed act which alone makes possible human contact with God (Rom. 5, 10)¹⁶. The assurance that God has taken the matter in hand is the ground of the believers' joy. (V. 2). Christ has not simply eliminated the hostility that existed on God's side, thereby allowing God to participate in human affairs. Human hostility confronts God as He begins the reconciliatory process (V. 10), Col. 1, 21. At the same time, the death of Christ on the cross did effect atonement through becoming a sin offering for believers (2Cor. 5, 21) and thereby made possible God's entry into the sinful human condition (Rom. 5, 10; Eph. 2, 13; Col. 1, 20-22)¹⁷.

Divine reconciliation has effects just beyond the relationship of the individual believer to God. Christ's death is also the basis for the restoration of human relationship, since the enmity

15. Van Den Berghe, P. "Reconciliation in the Bible, pp. 196-202.

16. Idem. Nikolash F. The sacrament of Penance learning from the East "In Concilium 7, 1. (1971) pp. 25-75.

17. Mar Ephrem, Cf. Lamy T. J. Sancti Ephremi Syri. Hymni et Sermones Vol. I. Mechlinae, 1882, p. 55f.

between human groups has been "slain" by God's action of reconciliation (Eph. 2, 16). Therefore Christ is "our peace" whether in relation to God or to other humans (V. 14). Paul's appeal to Corinthians that they be reconciled to God (2Cor. 5, 20) arises from his concern for their alienation from himself and their misunderstanding of his ministry (2Cor. 1, 23-6, 13). He expects that a renewal of their relationship with God on the basis of divine reconciliation in Christ will resolve the problems existing between them (Col. 1, 19-20). Divine reconciliation has the dimension of cosmic reconciliation. For Jesus' death has reconciling significance for the whole cosmos¹⁸. Since "in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell" i. e. because God was fully present in Christ. (V. 19), not only humanity but all of creation has been put back into proper relation to God by the blood of his cross¹⁹.

In 2Cor. 5, 18-21 Paul makes use of this terminology in a quite spontaneous and free manner. The thought complex of reconciliation is less typical for Paul than that of righteousness. It does not mean that the notion of reconciliation is subordinated to the other. The doctrine of justification for Paul is more than one variant among other possible explications. By making use of the traditions (V. 19) Paul formulates an appeal to conversion (V. 20)²⁰, and points to a future event (Rom. 11, 15). In 2Cor. 5, 20 we find an appeal to human activity or human collaboration, "to reconcile oneself to God". In the Pauline usage the two terms "Reconciliation and expiation" are rare in the same context, but in 2Cor. 5, 14-21, Paul emphasizes two ideas i. e. God's reconciling activity in the event of the Cross and God's simultaneous institution of the ministry of reconciliation²¹. This reconciliation viewed in the context of 2Cor. 5 and Rom. 5 has an eschatological aspect (future event) too (Rom. 11, 15)²².

18. Mckenzie J. L. Dictionary of the Bible, Milwaukee, 1965 pp. 722-723.

19. Myer A. C. et al (eds) The Eerdmans Dictionary, Michingan, 1987 pp. 870-877.

20. Kittel G. Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. 4, 1967, p. 980-987.

21. Lipinski E. La Liturgie Penitentielle dans la Bible, (Lectio Divina 52) Paris, 1969, pp. 11-26.

22. Ziesler J. A. The meaning of Rightousness in Paul. Cambridge, 1972, p. 1-69.

Reconciliation was brought about by the death of Jesus once and for all (Rom. 6, 10). Reconciliation is the new basis of a new creation. It is the eschatological work of God in Christ i. e. God's remission of Sins. But it is also offered to humanity again and again at the "Now" moment by the proclamation and celebration (2Cor. 5,20; 6,1-2) of the mystery. In 2 Cor. 5, 21 Paul proposes the sin offering or sacrifice relating with an O. T. background in Lev. 4, 24 and the suffering Servant in Is. 52-53. This suffering Servant theology is reflected in 2Cor. 5, 21, as we find in Col. 1, 24-26. The incarnational interpretation of Rom. 8, 9 has also the sacrificial aspect. Christ is sent into our sinful nature as a sacrifice for sin. This is found also in Hebrew 10, 6-8. Paul uses such themes (paradoxical) in Gal. 3, 13 too as we find in 2Cor. 5, 21 i. e. sin and righteousness. According to the Catholic exegetes by this reconciliation, a moral transformation and regeneration are brought about in man in Christ which enables the process of Deification to begin. Divine grace is infused. Since God's Word is creative one, new life in Christ is the fruit of Christ's suffering and death. One is made ontologically righteous. Righteousness is an inherent attribute of the believer. It enables him to be an inheritance of the sacramental dispensation of Christ's Church.

The inheritance is obtained by the incorporation into Christ's Body by baptism. This incorporation in Christ enables the Christian to share in a real way in Christ's life. He becomes a new creation, which demands from him moral life i. e. a new ethical existence. The reason is that righteousness and justification are two aspects of one reality in St. Paul (Gal. 2, 21 b; Phil. 3, 9; Rom. 6, 18-19)²³. The saving righteousness of God is manifested in Christ and the believer can participate in it. It is at the same time God's activity and God's gift to the believer (Rom. 3, 5-26). By sharing or participating in the saving righteousness of God the believer becomes righteous. It is made present in the proclamation of the Gospel and the execution of Christ's deeds. The justification enacted by God and the righteousness resulted in Christ are the two aspects of the same reality realized in the relationship of man with God.

Justification is the result of Grace through faith from the part of man and God's saving righteousness. These effects are

23. Ziesler J.A. The Meaning... p. 171.

results of the restoration of relationship between God and man, man is made anew, ethical and righteous being (Rom. 1, 17ff.)²⁴. Righteousness as a possibility for the believer is presented in Rom. 10, 3 and Phil. 3, 9. In all these, we find Christ as the mediator (2Cor. 5, 21b and 1Cor. 1, 30). He continues this mediation through his Institution of the Eucharist, as the ever-memorial of the Salvation History. So St. Paul stresses that reconciliation is not merely a gift of the past, but the present situation of Christians which is Divine with regard to their eschatological salvation. He confirms the salvation promised and realized in Christ against the background of Is. 49; 2Cor. 6, 1-2 in its Christological and salvational aspects. The righteousness in and through Christ is already "Now and Not Yet" too. For resurrection remains still in future (Rom. 6, 1-14). Here righteousness is a new existence of a new relationship and implies a moral renewal "a Walking in newness of life" (Rom. 6, 4), resulting from reconciliation. This newness of life is enriched and fostered by the celebration and participation of the Body and Blood of Christ at the altar. The act of Christ in reconciliation and justification was not for a period of time but for eternity. For Christ is God and Man, His actions cannot be limited to a fixed time. He has done everything for the human race for ever. His redemptive act is being continued and realized in the life of earth and every individual, in the Eucharistic celebration. In the sacramental celebration of the paschal mystery of Jesus each individual experiences, participates and expresses the objective redemption. The Eucharistic celebration is the source of all sacraments where the redemption is being celebrated again²⁵. The sacrament of reconciliation is the extension and explanation of the redemptive action celebrated in the Eucharistic assembly of the individuals.

The Celebration of Paschal Mystery²⁶.

Sacrament of Reconciliation is the participation in the paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ. In the economy of salvation ev-

24. Ibidem p. 188-189. According to Ziesler the words *dikaiosisyne Theou* are the key to the meaning of Justification and the interpretation varies as one takes them as noun or verb and its case as genitive of subjunctive or genitive of origin.

25. Tillard J. M. R. "The Bread and the cup of Reconciliation" In *Concilium* Vol. 7, 1 (1971) 38-54 (pp. 39-40).

26. Catechism of the Catholic Church, TPI, 1994, pp. 214-225 LG. 22, 2; LG. nos. 8, 11 Vat. II. S. C. 5, 6, 103, 86.

ery sacrament is instituted to experience the objective redemption realized in the life of Jesus. The celebration of every sacrament (Mystery) is to experience and realize subjectively the redemption experience in the different stages of an individual. It is also realized in the celebration of the Mystery of reconciliation in an extensive and explanatory way. The penitent as an individual deeply experiences the paschal Mystery in its celebration. The passion and suffering of Jesus is experienced by the penitent in his acts of repentance and penance. The suffering of Jesus is an eternal act and it is being continued in his mystical body the church of Christ through the participants²⁷. For a member of the Mystical Body, suffering in mind and body becomes the suffering of Jesus, the Head of the Body and it becomes salvific in the plan of God (Col. 1, 24). Our suffering has value only because it is in the Body of Christ. The confession of sins has two dimensions. First it is the proclamation of faith in the mercy of God. When a penitent makes his confession, he is fulfilling his duty to proclaim the Gospel message of a Merciful God²⁸. Secondly it is a symbol of dying with Christ to sin. Through baptism a Christian has participated the death and burial of Christ. A person who makes confession is continuing the life of baptism by dying to sin and sinful occasions. One is renouncing Satan and his temptations while he makes confession. So it is actually the continuation of baptismal life. So the fathers like St. Irenaeus and St. Ignatius called this sacrament the second baptism. A penitent is renewing his dedication to Christ and the Church (Rom. 6, 1-11; 2Tim. 2, 11-12). When he takes decision to renounce Satan, sin and the past sinful life as well as to lead a new life in Christ, he is regenerated into the life of resurrection experience in Christ. Here also one is growing in the life of resurrection which is started in Baptism (1Cor. 16, 22; Rom. 6, 3-11). It is the growth of baptismal life.

27. ICor. 12, 12 f.; 2Pet. 4, 13; Rom. 8, 7; Vat. II. LG. no. 11.

28. Denzinger H. *Ritus Orientalium Coptorum, Syrorum, et Armeniorum* in p. 471f.

Administrandis Sacramentis, Wuzburg, 1863. It was at the time of St. Thomas Aquinas that this rite was removed from the administration of this sacrament in the Latin Church.

The Role of the Holy Spirit

The very institution of this mystery (Jn. 20, 21-23) highlights the role of the Holy Spirit in the deification by the remission of sin through this mystery of reconciliation. Jesus imparts Holy Spirit on the Apostles and He entrusted them the Power of Keys as they being instruments in the hands of the Holy Spirit to forgive sins or to bind the sinners. The Orientals have this deep understanding that it is the Holy Spirit who purifies the soul. The priest is only an instrument in His hands. So they use always the deprecativ form in the absolution formula itself. Till the 13th century there was imposition of hands too²⁸. This tradition was broken in the Universal church after the theological development of the Scholastic school in line with St. Thomas Aquinas. The East Syrians and St. Thomas Christians in India always preserved it in their celebration of this Mystery. They had this in their rite for the public sinners by anointing, imposition of hands and signing of the cross²⁹. To make the faithful more aware of the work of the Holy Spirit in remitting the sins they have a special service and its rite in their Divine office called "Pentecostal Genuflection". It was celebrated by the liturgical assembly by kneeling during the season of pentecost in the liturgical cycle³⁰. It is the culminating penitential service of penance all through the year. For the Easterners especially the St. Thomas Christians are more guided by the Gospel of St. John and the writings of St. Paul³¹. Through this celebration the faithful are made more conscious of the fact that it is the Holy Spirit who remits sins. Besides St. Thomas Christians have a rite of reconciliation just after the Epiclesis³². This service begins just after invoking the Holy Spirit to make holy and deified the mysteries. It is theologically very rich to have it in this part of Eucharistic celebration.

29. Kelaitha J. The liturgy of the Church of the East, Mosul, 1928, pp. 174-180.

30. Bedjan P. Breviarium Juxta Ritum Syrorum Orientalium id est Chaldaeorum, Paris and Rome, Pars III. (1887) 1938, p. 75-82.

31. 2Tim. 1.6; Ac. 4, 23f; Eph. 4, 30; 1 Thes. 5, 19; 1Jn. 4, 13.

32. Taksa d'Qurbana, 1986. pp. 112-132.

The Communitarian Celebration

In the history of this Mystery, celebration of it was mostly in common. It was in the community that this sacrament was celebrated in the East. In the seventh century in Rome, Milan and in Mesopotamia as well as in Malabar, it had a communitarian form of celebration³³. Through this form of celebration the priesthood of the community was highly emphasised. The involvement of the community in the conversion of one of its members was made clear. Each and every sin has its ecclesial, personal and social dimensions. Since a priest was involved, full sacramental validity was attributed to this form. In 1973 Rome also reintroduced communitarian form as recognized by the church which centuries ago St. Thomas Christians practised. This form of celebration was considered of greater significance. The practice of private confession which developed from the community rite was closely related to the eucharistic celebration or to the monastic liturgy of the office³⁴. The Divine office included the penitential characteristics. In ecclesial terms sin and forgiveness involve exclusion from and reconciliation to the eucharistic community³⁵. St. Thomas Christians had communitarian celebration except when there was only one penitent to celebrate it. Paulinus a Bartholomea confirms it in his famous book on Indian journey³⁶. The lay involvement is very clear in its celebration in connection with the Palliyogam, where priest being the president, the yogam hears the penitent and the penance was given by the palliyogam. They observed the conversion process too. Finally the elders of the community too participated in the reconciliatory service. It has its connection with the Hindu and other Indian Religions. The communitarian celebration found in the eucharistic service after epiclesis before the Our Father has connection with the Judaeo-Christian tradition in the Synagogue liturgy³⁷.

33. In Rome it was on Maundy Thursday; At Milan it was on Good Friday; and in the East Syrian Church it was on Holy Saturday. It was the same with the Malabar tradition.

34. Ligier, L. "Dimension Personnelle et Dimension Communautaire la penitence en Orient in LMD. 90 (1967) pp. 164-171.

35. Ligier L. "Penitence et Eucharistie en Orient, in OCP 29, (1963) pp. 5-78.

36. Bartholomeo P. A. Viaggio alle Indie Orientali, Rome, 1796, pp. 136-138.

The lenten season also expresses the communitarian form of celebrating it by starting it on the first day of Lent and concluding on the Holy Saturday. The whole lent is spent in penance, prayer, fasting and almsgiving. Here the spirit of reconciliation with the church as the reconciliation with God could be well expressed³⁸.

The Mystery of reconciliation as the healing ministry

The eastern traditions, St. Thomas Christians too, kept the spirit of healing in the celebration of this Mystery. Here Yahweh is the source of healing. He is the physician and great healer (Ps. 147, 3f; Gen. 20, 17; Ex. 15, 16; Ps. 32; Dt. 28, 58-61). In Isaiah we read that sin and sickness are connected (Is. 1, 4-9). In Hebrew the word "Raphah" is used in the sense of healing. The concept of Yahweh as the physician is well expressed in Ex. 15, 26; Hos. 6, 11; Ps. 41, 4; 103, 3). When we go to the New Testament we see that Jesus Christ is presented as Great Healer. Sin and healing are connected in Jesus' ministry (Mk. 2, 2-12). Healing is a sign of God's rule (Mk. 11, 5). Jesus announced the eschatological quality of his ministry, in his teaching and messianic proclamation (Lk. 4:16-27). His ministry was among the needy, bruised, despised oppressed and those who were in bondages, which were the cause of sins. He expresses his divine authority to heal and forgive sins (Mk. 2:1-12). Here healing leads to the fullness of health. He was convinced of His father's purpose for human wholeness and salvation (Jn. 3, 16; 10, 10). For him disease was not a punishment but the result of evil producing an imbalance within the personality. For him it is the operation of evil in human life (Lk. 13, 16). His mission was to destroy evil so he was engaged in healing the sick. The healing activity in Jesus and his preaching were directed to this aim. The sermon on the mount is an explicit proof for this. It mainly deals with human motives and deep working of the mind. He was aware of the place of emotional conflict, resentment fear, anxiety hatred etc. in the genesis of disease (Mt. 5, 1-10)³⁹. The healing influence

37. Ligier L. Penitence et Eucharistie en Orient. pp. 24-32.

38. Vellian J. The Lenten Fast of the East Syrians in (Fisher R. B. (ed) A Tribute to Arthur Voobus, Chicago, 1977 pp. 372-378.

39. Buttroch G. A. et. al (eds) The Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible. NY. 1962 Vol. 4, pp. 546-548.

and the spiritual authority of Christ penetrated these areas. The healing of both body and mind is operated with the help of Divine love and the faith of Man- a conscious intelligent commitment of the person to the will of God in Christ (Mt. 9, 29).

Jesus's healing ministry in Mt. 8, 17 is seen as the prophetic fulfillment (Is. 53, 4ff). His healing had two aspects i. e. the exorcism and bodily defects which included the forgiveness of sins (Lk. 4, 40ff; 8, 2; Mt. 8, 16). The basic thought in his healing is that there is no sickness or weakness which Jesus cannot master⁴⁰. In New Testament Jesus is the Great physician and Saviour of sinners (Lk. 5, 17; 6, 19; Mk. 2, 17). The healing in Jesus' ministry and in the New Testament era is not an end but an impulse towards an eternal movement. Here the personality of Jesus is very important. Evil and Sin are not separated. Sin in the moral sense being the source of evil, man is to be delivered from it. So Jesus invades the kingdom of evil with his divine power of healing. Here healing in its deepest sense becomes the forgiveness of sins (Lk. 10, 18; 11, 21ff)⁴¹. Jesus at the same time made it clear that he did not come to heal our bodies, but to make us whole. For him the wholeness or salvation of man is the blessedness (Makarios) in Mt. 5, 3-11⁴².

The healing ministry of Jesus was continued by the apostles and the primitive church (Ac. 3, 6-7; 16, 8; 7, 9-17). It was through the Holy Spirit that they continued the healing ministry⁴³. It was considered as the messianic age. The believers have been transferred into the kingdom of God's Beloved Son (Col. 1, 13). Christ's Power was delegated to all who believe in Him. People were astonished at the healing power of Peter, Paul and Philip (Ac. 3, 11; 5, 15; 8, 9-13; 14, 18-10)⁴⁴.

40. Kittel G. (ed) Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. 3. pp. 130-131.

41. Ibidem. pp. 212-215.

42. For the "Whole" the greek word "Hygies" (Jn. 5,6) is used. In the N.T. the verb "Sozo" which means to "Save" is used equally for the healing of the Body and saving of the Soul (Lk. 7, 50; 9, 24).

43. Vellian J. The Syrian Churches series Vol. 9, Poona. pp. 103-106. The Holy Spirit is the healer as the Spirit of the exalted Christ. In the Eastern liturgies this aspect is highly emphasized.

44. Buttrich G. A. (et al) (eds) The Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible. pp. 546-548.

The elders and members of the Church were engaged in the healing in James, 14-16. Here prayer and anointing were two rites applied. Here St. James affirms the power of faith in prayer to work forgiveness which is resulted in physical health. Guilt is a destructive force which can produce physical illness. Healing on the basis of creation and redemption are combined in James 5, 14-16. All healing is of God whether provided through creation, providence or redemption. Healing on the basis of redemption is provided by God through the ministry and work of Jesus Christ. It brings forgiveness of sin⁴⁵. This biblical concept of healing was taken up by the apostolic and post-apostolic fathers, especially by the East Syrian fathers. They were teaching the community through the biblical terms and figurative expressions. When we go through their explanations and treatises on penance and forgiveness, we find many figurative expressions. They see sin as sickness and the sinner as a sick man. The priest is very often called as physician especially in the penitential context. His ministry is called healing the sick in connection with the Mystery of Reconciliation. The celebration of the sacrament of reconciliation must effect the wholeness of the person. By the reception of this Mystery the faithful should experience the healing of the whole person. Our confessional has to be a place of healing. Our people should feel its effect in the ministry of the priest.

The Concept of Sin among St. Thomas Christians and its relation to Their service of Reconciliation.

Sin is always considered as denial of faith⁴⁶. So all sinners become sick by the denial of faith. It is very clear in their prayer expressions⁴⁷. If we analyse some of their expressions as Haimen, Haimanoosa, Hehemtha, Beth Haimen etc. we can understand it better. Haimen is derived from the Aramaic word

45. Ferguson S. B. et al (eds) *New Dictionary of Theology*, England, 1988 p. 287.

46. Jn. 8, 24; 5, 40-43; 8, 30-42; 1, 12; Here faith consists in knowing, loving esteeming, respecting honouring dedicating our life etc. The rite of Reconciliation "Taksa d' Hoosaya" is known as the service for those who denied their faith.

47. The very ancient dictum "Lex Orandi Lex Credendi" could be applied here, to elucidate it better.

Eman wherein comes the term Amen. The root meaning is to fix; to make firm; fixing oneself on the ground of one's being; inserting oneself into the total mystery of our existence. Whatever man does knowingly, or unknowingly⁴⁸ which does not fit into the faith and love relationship with God is considered as sin. There is also another expression in their prayers i. e. Rahamma, Rahammanooza, Rehemtha etc. which has its root "Rhm". The root meaning is "Love" just as the mother child relation i. e. to be related to the womb as a child to its mother. It is one of tender love; loving concern, kindness etc. Hence the relation between God and man is the "Cadre" of this basic sensibility of the mother-child relation. This love God has poured into us (Jn. 3, 16). Any infringement of this faith and love, the free gifts of God⁴⁹, is considered as sin. So here sin has a relational understanding. Whatever man does which does not fit into the relationship or friendship and love relation with God in the daily life is considered as sin. Human actions and values are measured against the bountry, goodness and love of God, not oriented on law. Hence the concept of sin is more a concern on God rather than on man and his actions. It is a living fidelity that man keeps himself away from sin. Sin is always seen as the negative response to the call of God. Sin and forgiveness are always related to the concept of kindness, mercy, love, tenderness and compassion of God. The concept of forgiveness has a positive understanding i. e. it is always related to the sanctity of God. Forgiveness and Reconciliation are always understood in the context of hope in resurrection and new life with the just. More than asking pardon and forgiveness of God they give more emphasis on making themselves holy, just and blameless (Eph. 1, 3-4, Agios Kai Anatos). So they pray God in the liturgy for making them holy, taking off their faults and sins. It is a request for deification. The concept of reconciliation consists in the integration of man into the mystery of God. Anything that takes away from the total integration into the mystery of God is considered as sin. Here sin becomes a negative response to God's call. Reconciliation is to take away this negativity from man. Here sin is not a crime and a sinner is not a

48. Taksa d' Qurbana, 1986, TVM. pp. 113-114.

49. The Word "M' dhaberanooza" is more applicable here. The wonders of God being praised and celebrated.

criminal but a sick man. Priest is not a judge but a physician and a mediator and helper. So he has to heal the wounds caused by the sin. The Eucharist is the medicine to cure the wounds caused by sin⁵⁰. We can find references in Acts of Judas Thomas, in the writings of Mar Aphraates, Mar Ephrem, Mar Narsai, Mar Theodore and St. Chrysostom etc. Mar Theodore while commenting on Isaiah 6, 3-4, speaks about eucharistic mysteries as taking away our sins and debts⁵¹.

The terms Compunction and deprecative form⁵².

In the history of this mystery, we see a major change in its theological development in the thirteenth century. It was done by the Scholastics. Instead of a biblical and patristic approach to the mysteries (Sacraments), the Scholastics made a rational and scientific method of presenting and explaining them. What happened is that the spiritual, Biblical and symbolic impact of them was lost. The celebration of the Mysteries became mechanical and ritualistic. The liturgical sense disappeared. In the place of compunction which is more patristic and biblical, St. Thomas Aquinas introduced a new term contrition⁵³. The term compunction was used by the fathers. The term contrition is used as synonym for compunction. The original meaning in Greek and Latin is "to prick" or "to pierce". It is first used in Acts 2, 37 wherein we find the phrase "Compuncti sint in corde". The speech of St. Peter after pentecost, on the events that took place before pentecost, pierced to the heart of the hearers as to ask the disciples "what shall we do? It was St. Benedict who first introduced it in the penitential context. In 547 he used this term in his rule for the monks, in the sense to stir up within them sorrow and repentance for their sins. Before him St. Cassian and after him St. Gregory gave its classical import in the penitential system. For it

50. Theodore of Mopsuetia, Homily 15. 7 (Mingana A. ed) Theodore of Mopsuetia: Catechetical Homilies in woodbrooke Studies Vol. VI. 1933. pp. 117-118.

51. Taksa d'Qurbana, 1980, Alway. pp. 49-50.

52. Compunction is derived from the Latin word *Compungere* which means to prick, to pierce, pricking or reproach of conscience, remorse, regret etc. It contains the ideas of contrition but not contrition alone. Fathers of the Church used this term in the place of contrition.

53. Palmer P. F. Sources of Christian Theology, Vol. 2, London. 1960. p. 184.

was one of the elements of affective prayer. The pain felt at the remembrance of sin led the soul to fervent aspiration for God⁵⁴. In St. John Cassian these two were not distinguishable. But in St. Gregory, it is combination of fear and love. He gives four stages in its understanding. First a shame overpowers the soul on the past sins; 2nd it realizes the just punishment deserved; 3rd it foresees the future possibility of sin; and the fourth stage is that the soul affected with the longing for the heavenly home, foretastes the joys of heaven in the prayer of contemplation⁵⁵. We don't get such an understanding of the attitude of the soul in any other expressions. Contrition includes rejection of sin and previous sinful life and the repudiation of the past sinful action and a reorientation of the whole person. It goes with the term repentance. It can be out of perfect love and punishment deserved for sin committed⁵⁶. The eastern churches hold always the biblical and patristic expressions. Here the emphasis is on the grace of God and the penitents rely more on God's mercy and put confidence and hope on the gifts of God for the renewal and deification of life. Compunction stresses this aspect more⁵⁷. St. Gregory compares the celebration of this mystery to the resurrection of Lazar coming out of the tomb (Jn. 11, 43-44).

It is also the same with the forms of absolution. In the Universal Church until the time of St. Thomas Aquinas the absolution formula was always in the deprecativ form. In the theological formulations of the Scholastics and in the canonization of scholastic theology, especially that of St. Thomas Aquinas by the Council of Trent, this absolution form also had to suffer. The importance of this form is that it gives emphasis on the working of the Holy Spirit in the celebration of the sacraments (Mysteries). The priest prevails only as an instrument in the hands of God. The ministry of the priest is a supplication⁵⁸. By upholding the

54. Hurst D. "Compunction" in NCE. Vol. iv. London, 1967. p. 96. (Cf. Conf. 9, 11, 26-33; PL. 76, 275b-277a).

55. Ibidem p. 96.

56. Contrition is a term derived from Latin word *Conterere* which means to grind, Pound, Pulvarize etc. It is the grinding of the heart of the sinner to dust; To dispose him to the influence of grace. Perfect contrition can be compunction but it is something more.

57. P.L. 76, 1100f. His homilies on the Gospels 2; Hom. 26.

58. PL. 54. 1011f. Epistle 108 of Pope Leo the great (440-461) to Theodore: The priest's prayer for the divine pardon is however efficacious since the Saviour is never absent from what He has entrusted to His minister.

deprecativ form of absolution the East does not belittle the sacerdotal authority of the priest to absolve sins. We may not find indicative form of absolution formula among the Easterners⁵⁹. St. Thomas Christians in India also practised the optative form of absolution, which they inherited from the East Syrians who were sending Bishops to their Church. Through the deprecativ form of absolution the celebrant begs the merciful Lord to grant to his servant the pardon of sins, to forgive him every fault and unite him to His Church. The deprecativ form of absolution helps also to understand the ecclesial nature of Reconciliation⁶⁰. We have a deprecativ form existing in the celebration of the Qurbana⁶¹. Although it is God who forgives, it is through the prayer and supplication of the priest that He imparts pardon and absolution⁶². Since the priest is the mediator he has to use the optative form⁶³. Mar Narsai and George Arbel when they speak about the role of the mediatorship of the priests, they give stress to the deprecativ form of absolution⁶⁴. The absolution prayer in the optative form is more biblical and not legalistic. It is also more liturgical.

CONCLUSION

The Mystery of Reconciliation faces a crisis in the celebration of it among the faithful. The decline in the reception of this Mystery is due to certain problems. The main problem with regard to this mystery as far as we understand is lack of knowledge among the faithful about its basic meanings. In this article we were trying to understand its theological input and relation to the paschal mystery of Jesus. Having studied its biblical and liturgical as well as the paschal aspects we must be ready to re-

59. Maclean A. J. & Browne W. H. *The Catholicos of the East and his people*, London, 1892. p. 264-265.

60. Origen *Homilia V. in Lebrum Jesu Nave* PG. 12. 851.

61. *Taksa d'Qurbana*. TVM. 1989, p. 109

62. Vacant A. et. al (eds) *Dictionnaire de Theologie Catholique* Vol. 1, 1. Paris 1903. p. 74; 67-168.

63. Connolly R. H. (ed) *The Liturgical Homilies of Mar Narsai: Text and studies VIII*. Cambridge, pp. 65-68.

64. Connolly R. H. (ed) *Two Commentaries on Jacobite Liturgy* by George Arbel and Moses Bar Kepha, London, 1913 pp. 67-68.

new its form of celebration. Today the liturgical rite is too ritualistic and the faithful find it too mean. Many people who went to celebrate it no longer do so. Its anonymity is still under question. For there are many places where public absolution was given⁶⁵. People began to question what is its main content. As the theologians fail to explain to them its meaning and its relation to the redemptive act of Christ it won't have real impact on the faithful. The main factor which causes the crisis is the lack of consciousness of sin itself⁶⁶. Another fact is the transformation of the way in which Christian faith is being understood. Perhaps the third point is a new solidarity in the sense of sin, still further we have a complex view of our innermost selves. Perhaps the fall of status accorded to the clergy and the revival of a new sacramental theology⁶⁷ also might have contributed to the numerical fall. If we look into the real situation we can find further, factors as a new understanding of guilt feelings and sin awareness as well as a new understanding of freedom and responsibility. If we are approaching this mystery with a biblically and patristically renewed insight it will become meaningful⁶⁸. Hence the relevance of our study.

65. Hellwing Monika K. The meaning of the Sacraments. Dayton (Ohio) 1972. pp. 79-80.

66. Leijsen L. Penance and Anointing of the Sick. Leuven, 1989. pp. 4-44.

67. Schillebeeckx E. Christ. The Sacrament of the encounter with God, NY. 1963 pp. 11 6-118.

68. Jose Saraive Martins, The Sacraments of the New Alliance, 1988. TPI. pp. 134-155.

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