

LITURGY OF HOURS AND ITS THEOLOGY

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Introduction

Christianity can be well defined as ‘a spiritual orientation’ which focuses on the interiorized relationship with God. The dynamism of this spiritual life is correlated with the expressions of ‘religious aptitude’ and ‘interiorization’. They all inherent the fervour of communion with God. The Word of God and the liturgy as the sources of this spirituality transmit the mystery of life and the substance of faith. They nourish the spiritual life and motivate the pilgrimage into the final destination. The liturgical celebrations which are based on the Word of God enable the worshippers to participate in the mystery and proclaim the faith of the Church. In order to meet the requirements of the journey towards the final destination, they entail a life of self-offering and total adherence to God. The devotion to the mystery of divine union is bound up with the eschatological nuance of the Christian faith. The expectation for the second coming of the Lord alters the attitudes and vitalizes the life of the worshippers for a constant preparation and vigilance. Hence the liturgical celebrations both annually and daily render the prospect for reawakening the theme of expectation of meeting the Lord. Consequently the life pattern of the worshippers orients towards the eschatological destination. The intimate union between the Lord and the devotees becomes the upshot of the ardent waiting for the second coming of the Lord.

The Gospel according to St.Luke depicts the presentation of Jesus in the temple with the entry of a prophetess named Anna¹. Her life is portrayed as a widow who has never left the temple, engaging in worship with fasting and prayer night and day. Her meeting with Infant Jesus is presented as a moment of praising God and proclaiming the reign of the Saviour. She stands as a model of an ardent devotee. The temple of God is her dwelling situate. She lives with God and dedicates herself fully in the presence of Him. Her life shines like a witness of the Saviour. Hence, it can be narrated that the celebration of the Mystery which is fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ is the sum and substance of the Christian life². This Mystery is known and lived in and through the Church. In the Church the devotee ascends his or her life to heaven and meets the revealing God. As the model of Prophetess Anna, the celebration of the Word and the indwelling in presence of the

¹Cf.Lk 2, 36-38.

² Cf. Rom 16, 25.

Saviour enrich for a process of union with God. The sublime attitudes of life like love, worship and service towards God in the most radical way are intertwined and complimentary aspects of the state of deification.

The course 'The Liturgy of Hours and its Theology' can be divided into two sections. The primary part includes an introduction to the topic whereas the latter depicts the theology and the history of the subject matter. The course begins to explain the nuance of the ecclesial life of the Syriac Church. The insights on the Syriac identity and spirituality substantiate the innermost life of the Worshipers. They further develop the basic mentalities which are attached with the Liturgical theology in general and of the Canonical Prayers in particular. The narration of the Syriac anthropology enhances the liturgical vocation of the worshipers. The notion of *Leitourgia* and the diverse characteristics of it enable us to imbibe the basic themes attached with the celebration of the liturgy of hours. The Syriac perceptions on prayer also substantiate the nuance of the most sublime prayer of the Church. The concepts like light, night and dawn are the foundational keys to understand the Liturgy of the Hours at different sets of times. As the second part, the course touches the very core of the course. The ancestral events connected with the Liturgy of Hours shed light on the historical journey of it. It explains the historical development of the Canonical Prayer of the Church with the particular remarks of the fathers of the Church. As an inevitable development, the history depicts the two developments of the Liturgy of Hours, viz., the Cathedral and the Monastic traditions and the clubbing of them subsequently. The characteristics of the *Shimo Namsakaram* of the West Syriac tradition are narrated consequently. The different time settings of the prayers, the themes of the Hours, the structure of the prayers, the symbols attached with them are also dealt at the final stage. At the closing part some of the particular themes of the *Shimo Namraskaram* are dealt in a special way.

The Concept of the Church

The word 'Church' which emerges from the Greek word *ecclesia* (ἐκκλησία) conveys various meanings and concepts. The Greek word *ecclesia* means 'an assembly and a gathering of the people'. The Pauline interpretation for *ecclesia* is as a spiritual gathering of the believers for worship³. The Syriac word *Knušyo*(ܟܢܘܫܝܘܐ) and the Greek word *Ecclesia* point to the aspect of 'coming together'. Imbibing the spirit of *ecclesia*, the Syriac Church perceives it as a liturgical gathering. The detailed etymological development of the Syriac

³ Cf. I Cor 11, 17.

The Church as a ‘sacred convocation’ stands as a liturgical assembly of the faithful in the same place with the same mind⁵. It stands as a community of the ‘people of God’⁶ which walks under the precepts of the Gospel, confesses the belongings to the Almighty and thrives for the life of perfection through various means. It is stated that “the Church is a sheepfold, the sole and necessary gateway to which is Christ (Jn. 10: 1-10). It is also a flock, of which God foretold that he would himself be the shepherd (cf. Is. 40: 11; Ex. 34: 11f.) (...)”⁷. The Church as a pilgrim family provides the signs and instruments of the union with God.

Syriac Spirituality and Identity

The Syriac tradition is archaic in the Christian movement. Syriac Orient as a great centre of Christianity in the South-Western Asian land stands as a great antiquity in the heritage of the Church. It is unique in its treasury and inestimable in its great contribution to the heritage of the Universal Church. Based on this ground the Syriac tradition is rightly pictured as ‘the third lung’ in the Christian tradition⁸. The word Syria is sometimes synonymous with ‘Levant’ and signifies illumination, vitality and source of life of the Eastern Mediterranean region. As a land of spiritual enlightenment, it has illumined the world and the Church with its spiritual brightness. It is Eastern in general and the Syriac Orient in particular in the expressions and methodology. The development of the West Syriac tradition was in and around the city of Antioch whereas for the East Syriac Tradition the centre was Edessa.

Spiritual life is an extension of the baptismal grace. The Gospel message and the life of Christ are the principle inspirations for the spirituality of the East. The urge of discipleship transforms the life to follow Christ in the radical way. The sacramental life, especially Baptism and Eucharist enable the worshippers to prosper in the communitarian orientation. The Syriac spirituality is centred on the communion between the divine and human person. The human person is portrayed

⁴ Mushe Bar Kephō (813-903) explains about the derivation of the Syriac word ‘*idto*’ which merges from ‘*ido*’ and ‘*sawbo*’ (gathering). In this context he explains that ‘*knusto*’ derives from ‘*knusyō*’ (gathering) and ‘*sawbo*’: cf. *British Museum Add 21210* (fol. 132-134) of AD1242; English tr., *The Rite of Consecration of the Church according to the Syrian Orthodox Church*, tr. A. Silvanos, 47.

⁵ Cf. Acts 1, 13-14; 2, 42-47.

⁶ Cf. APHRAHAT, *Demonstratio* XII, 3 in PS 1, 511; English tr., *Aphrahat Demonstrations*, tr. K. Valavanolickal, II, 21.

⁷ VATICAN COUNCIL II, «Lumen Gentium», no. 6.

⁸ Cf. S. BROCK, «The Syriac Orient», 5-20.

as a mystery and his/her life as a spiritual journey toward God. It is stated that “human society is still on the journey from the initial paradise of all potentialities to the realization of all potentials in the eschatological paradise”⁹. The whole orientation of the spiritual life in the Syriac tradition centres on the person of Christ. The fulfilment of the human existence is the sacramental orientation towards the eschatological life and hope. The following selected spiritual heritages and unique approaches to the mystery of the Syriac Churches facilitate the subsequent development of the subject:

a) *Worship*

The Syriac fathers while presenting the humans as ‘microcosm’ declare eloquently:

Consider, O discerning man, that you are the image of God and the bond of all creation, both of the heavenly and of the terrestrial beings, and whenever you bend your head to worship and glorify God, all the creations, both heavenly and terrestrial, bow their heads with you and in you to worship God; and whenever you do not worship and glorify Him, all the creations grieve over you and turn against you, and you fall from grace¹⁰.

The Syriac view of humans as the image of God clearly depicts them as the worshippers. It presents worship as the existential necessity and its failure causes declension of their very being. The Syriac liturgy and theology testify that the goal of the incarnation as to ‘teach us true worship’¹¹:

You have removed the perdition and proclaimed forgiveness to the lost. You have taught the created tongues your glorification and the lips of the earthly the praise of your greatness. You have filled the heaven with wonder and persuaded the earthly for the glorification of your divinity¹².

The worship provides the participants the healing, renewal and restoration status in the life. The worship itself is presented as a medicine and the Church in the liturgy participates in the healing ministry of Christ. Christ himself is presented as the *leitourgos par excellence*, the model and goal of worship. In other words he himself is “the primary subject of the liturgy, its active agent and principal actor (...) Dependent on Jesus Christ, and not acting on its own, the Church is the

⁹ T. KOLLAMPARAMPIL, «Church in the Modern World and Breathing in the Holy Spirit», 213. Ephrem in his *Hymns on Paradise* develops the concept of Church as paradise. The soteriological and the eschatological aspects of the Church are depicted here: EPHREM THE SYRIAN, *Hymnen de Paradise* VI, 8 in CSCO 174-175 (78-79), 21/20.

¹⁰ A.MINGANA, ed., *Mystical Works of Simon of Taibutheh*, 23.

¹¹ Cf. B.VARGHESE, *West Syrian Liturgical Theology*, 58.

¹² *Pampakuda Manuscript* 13; Malayalam tr., *Proimion Sedro*, tr. Augen, 1, 66.

secondary subject of the liturgy”¹³. In the anamnetical process that takes place in all the prayers of the Church the worshippers participate in the consecratory dimensions and the economy of salvation is recalled, celebrated and re-presented. To paraphrase the theme is to become ‘contemporaneous’ with the celebrated events.

b) *Concept of Tears*

In the Syriac tradition, prayer is in accord with tears. Tears are considered as the sign of repentance. The prayer with tears supposes repentance or compunction: “Tears are considered as a necessary expression of the self emptying love and of the unworthiness or sense of sinfulness of man”¹⁴. The Syriac fathers like Ephrem the Syrian, Isaac of Nineveh, and Jacob of Serugh in their homilies and others Syriac literatures pay special attention to the concept of tears with prayers. In their mystical doctrines tears are presented as “the frontier between corporeality and spirituality or between the passionate state and purity”¹⁵. The significance of the tears according to the Syriac vision is narrated by Jacob of Serugh like this: “those without tears to be in a desperate state (...) recommends: you have no tears? Buy tears from the poor. You have no sorrow? Call the poor to moan with you”¹⁶. The tears in the Syriac tradition are presented as a great feast of repentance which bring joy and forgiveness. The tears are the outcome of the pure love toward God. *Liber Graduum* exemplifies tears as this: “Sorrow on account of God is remorse that leads to life”¹⁷. It proposes a sorrow with tears for possessing and seeing God. The ‘Book of Steps’ differentiates the nature of tears: tears that come from sadness and joy. The sorrow with tears on account of God merges from joy and it is praiseworthy. The tears of joy are necessary “to work diligently to become sinless and to entreat our Lord to rescue us from sin”¹⁸. Finally more than sorrow and repentance, tears are perceived as ‘marks of ecstatic prayer’ and the sign of the sincerity, warmth of the ascetic and the manifestation of the grace of God.

¹³ H. VORGRIMLER, *Sakramenten theologie*; English tr., *Sacramental Theology*, tr. L.M.Maloney, 23.

¹⁴ G. PANICKER, «Prayer with Tears: A Great Feast of Repentance», 111.

¹⁵ E. KHALIFÉ - HACHEM, «Isaac de Ninive», col. 2047; English tr., *Introduction to Eastern Christian Spirituality*, tr. S.Beggiani, 77.

¹⁶ P. BEDJAN, ed., *Mar Jacobi Sarugensis Homiliae*, II, 226; English tr., *Penthos*, tr. I. Hausherr, 13; cf. also G. PANICKER, «Prayer with Tears: A Great Feast of Repentance», 122.

¹⁷ *Liber Graduum*, XVIII, 1 in PS III, 431; English tr., *The Book of Steps*, trs. R. A. Kitchen - M.F.G.Parmentier, 117; cf. also 2 Cor 7, 10.

¹⁸ *Liber Graduum*, XVIII, 2 in PS III, 434; English tr., *The Book of Steps*, trs. R. A.Kitchen - M.F.G.Parmentier, 119.

A prominent theology on the tears is explained by Jacob of Serugh in his *memra* 'the Sinful Woman'. This speculative depiction renders the theology of repentance and its uniqueness with tears. Mar Jacob presents the sinful woman as the model for all Christians and her anointing with oil and tears are presented as 'the prefigure' of the Baptism of the whole world symbolically. For Jacob, tears are 'the bribe' before God to get his mercy. Jacob presents Jesus as the physician in connection with his attitude towards repentance and tears. The tears are the means to sympathise the physician. It is depicted as 'the fees' to the physician for the healing. Jacob presents the weeping as an act of pure incensing for attaining the reward of atonement. Finally, in line with the biblical spirit, Jacob praises the weepers as the blessed ones. He presents tears as a necessary element in the act of repentance and forgiveness from sin. By and by, tears are presented as the precious gift together with prayer, and other virtues to express the love towards the merciful God.

c) *Sense of Awe and Wonder*

It is notable that John the Solitary, in his Syriac worldview presents humans from the moment of creation as oriented towards hope and placed them in this world in the expectation of the world to come. In this journey towards the heaven, they have to discover the transcendent aspirations of the existence. As a result, the hope of something beyond this world enables them to perceive the divine reality as a mystery. For Ephrem wonder is the proper attitude toward God and its failure leads to personal detachment from God. He explains that it as the root cause of faith. One of the noteworthy marks of the Syriac liturgy is the sense of awe and wonder toward the Mystery. This view is obviously underlined by the words of Martyrius (*Sahdona*): "Our spiritual ministry before God should be accompanied with a sense of awe and trembling with the spiritual fervour of joy and deep love"¹⁹. The Syriac spirituality calls for the attitude of awe while standing before God.

Imbibing the spirit of the Prophet Isaiah, the Syriac liturgy celebrates the angelic praising and the proclamation of holiness throughout the celebrations. The very construction of the church building is arranged in such a way to experience the majestic glory of the divine presence. Together with this sense of awe and wonder toward God, a profound sense of human unworthiness is imbibed in the liturgical tradition of the Syriac Church. The prayer that accompanies with tears keeps a balance between the awesome nature of God and the feebleness of the human nature. The plentiful use of liturgical signs and symbols and the frequent use of doxology in the Syriac liturgy point to the splendour of God's glory. The liturgical

¹⁹ S. BROCK, *Syriac Fathers on Prayer and the Spiritual Life*, 202.

proclamations of the deacons as ‘let us stand straight’ and ‘let us stand in fear’ essentially signify the Oriental perceptive towards the Divine as in awe and wonder. Hence it is remarked that humans as worshippers can be lifted above earth and become like those who stand in heaven.

d) *Sense of Husoyo* (ܚܘܫܘܝܘܐ)

The Syriac liturgy, more particularly the West Syriac liturgy encloses a deep sense of *husoyo*. *Husoyo* is the awareness of the weakness of the human nature. All liturgical prayers begin with the confession of the unworthiness and the shortcomings of the worshippers. The finest example is the placement of the Psalm 51 at the beginning of every liturgical prayer. The more vivid form of *husoyo* is arranged in the Holy *Qurbano* before begins the proper *Anaphoro*. In the Syriac Church the concept of *husoyo* has an ascetical influence. As part of the ascetical rootedness of life and its inclination, men of God concentrated on their states of sins and trespasses while focusing on the day of judgement. As a result, they always imagined on the moment of death, tomb and decay. Consequently the attitudes of ‘the sons of the covenant’ in the early Syriac Church were characterized as sadness, mourning, grief and affliction.

As in agreement with the particular name of ‘mourner’ which is given to the monk, it is praiseworthy to mention the nuance of the dress code of the clergy in connection with the aspect of *husoyo*. As in general and more particularly in the Oriental Churches, the bishops, the priests, the deacons and the monks wear the black cassock. As the etymology ‘*casaque*’ (French) indicates, black cassock is a long coat. Here comes the significance of another name given to the monks as ‘long garmented’. Theologically and symbolically the black colour indicates a spiritual reality. It is an awareness of sin, death and judgement. It is, of course, Christianity is a religion of hope through the resurrection. Yet the use of black attires indicates sorrow, mourning, sin, death and judgement. It emphasises the need of repentance and preparedness which arise from the sense of *husoyo*. It also symbolizes of dying to oneself and the world. This dying is for rising in order to serve the Lord and to give witness for the kingdom of God. As a result, this black symbol signifies the aspect of giving up for the consecration of one’s life for the service of the Lord and the Church.

e) *Sense of Repentance*

The word repentance imbibes deep theological and spiritual significances in the ecclesial life²⁰. The expectation for the second coming of the Lord and the sense of vigilance generate the attitude of repentance within the worshippers. The hope for the eschatological life is an invitation for a new creation and calls for a new relationship between God and man. The biblical motivation is taken seriously: “Repent, the kingdom of God is at hand”²¹. It is noteworthy to mention that *Sutoro*, the evening prayer in the West Syriac liturgy is explicitly dedicated for repentance.

According to Basil Krivocheine, “repentance is the beginning of the Christian life and the permanent foundation of all our efforts toward God”²². The prayers in the Syriac liturgy always include the aspect of repentance with the motivation of entering into the Kingdom of God. It is said that prayer is a turning toward God and a confession of our attachment to God, which demands a denial of Satan, sin and death. The Syriac liturgy presents the repentance as ‘the second Baptism’. The following prayer highlights the idea of repentance: “The sinner is loved when his face is bathed in tears and his mouth is cleansed by sorrowful mourning full of pain; precious gems are not so much loved as the drops which flow from the eyes of him who repents”²³. In a nutshell “repentance is a grace. It is a second birth of God. We receive the pledge of it in baptism”²⁴. The Christian life is based on the virtue of humility which strives for the threefold end of life: repentance, purity and perfection.

The inevitable significance of repentance in the Christian Orient is obviously a great contribution of the monastic life and its influence. The ascetical theology really fosters its vitality in the theological framework of the Church. In the Christian east, the threefold stages of mysticism like purification, illumination and union or *theosis* are achieved with the orientation of repentance. As a monastic concept, it penetrates into the liturgical and sacramental vitality of the Eastern Churches. The three stages of repentance are narrated like this: the initial repentance as the first stage begins with the initiation of Christian life, viz., by the reception of Baptism. The existential repentance as the second stage contains the whole of Christian life. The third and radical stage is known as the Christ-like repentance. As a deep monastic concept, it absorbs the repentance for the personal

²⁰ The Greek word *Metanoia* literally signifies an ‘after thought’ or a ‘change of mind’. A spiritual conversion is intensively intended here: cf. A. TORRANCE, *Repentance in Late Antiquity*, 2.

²¹ Mt 3, 1; 4, 17.

²² B. KRIVOICHEINE, *In the Light of Christ*, 87.

²³ *Shimo*, 89; cf. also *Awsar Slawo'o*, I, 365.

²⁴ P. BEDJAN, ed., *Homiliae Selectae Mar-Jacobi Sarugensis*, II, 320; English tr., *Introduction to Eastern Christian Spirituality*, tr. S. Beggiani, 74; cf. also I. HAUSHERR, *Penthos*, 131.

as well the communitarian inclinations towards the sin. It focuses on the salvation of the whole world. In the Eastern liturgical life the symbolic presentation of the incense which has an ascending nature crystallizes the aspect of repentance in the evident form²⁵.

f) *An Integrated Spiritual Formation*

Among the Syriac fathers John the Solitary who lived during the first half of the fifth century mentions of the uniqueness of Syriac spirituality. The commentary on the tripartite division of the spiritual life into body, soul and spirit is as follows:²⁶

Growth in the Christian life is seen (...) as a gradual process of liberation from the evil passions and in this process the three levels simply represent three main successive states in what is really a continuum. At the level of the body (*pagronuto*) there still exists enslavement to sin and subjection to the body's cravings; any love that may be present is both unstable and interested. At the level of the soul (*napšonuto*) there is a turning away from body's desire and an increasing awareness and cultivation of the virtues of the soul. It is at this level that repentance occurs and prayer is one of the principle accompaniments of the state; this prayer is however subject to distraction, and is not yet either pure or continuous. Progress takes place as a result of the process of 'self-emptying'; this leads ultimately to 'purity of soul', which stands at the dividing point between the level of the soul and that of the spirit (*ruhonuto*). Purity of soul makes possible 'luminosity, or transparency, of soul', which is a continuation of receptivity to the light of the revelation of divine mysteries. Only here is the meaning of 'true love' realized. This is the point at which entry is made into the life of the New Person (cf. Eph 2:15, 4:24) in the New World. Such a state may be glimpsed at during mortal life, and serves as the constant object of hope, but it can only be fully realized after the resurrection²⁷.

The Syriac spirituality aims at an integrated growth of the human person. The *tridimensional* holistic vision of human creation which is explained in the letter of St. Paul is fully imbibed in the holistic sanctification of the Christian journey²⁸. The Syriac prayers focus on the three dimensional aspects of the human person in order to build up an integrated personality of the worshippers. The spiritual life into three stages for John is 'the three orders' in life. The predominance of one order shows at what stage the worshippers remain in the spiritual life. The highest

²⁵ Cf. H. VORGRIMLER, *Sacramental Theology*, 208; K. MOOLAYIL, *A Guide to the Altar Assistance*, 57-58.

²⁶ Cf. G. PANICKER, «Prayer with Tears: A Great Feast of Repentance», 131.

²⁷ JOHN OF APAMEA (THE SOLITARY), *The Letter to Hesychius*; English tr., *The Syriac Fathers on Prayer and the Spiritual Life*, tr. S. Brock, 79-80; cf. also G. PANICKER, «Prayer with Tears: A Great Feast of Repentance», 131-32.

²⁸ Cf. 1Thess 5, 23.

order focuses on the life of resurrection. As a result the worshippers have to attain in this world the integrity of life with the virtuous conducts and the spiritual understanding of the future. In this formation, hope stands as ‘the fundamental principle’ of the whole spiritual life. In the ascending of the order, the worshippers reach at ‘the pneumatic stage’ and attain the union with God. The worshippers become the beloved sons who are freed from all that is of this world. As the beloved they accomplish ‘the luminosity or ‘the transparency of the soul’. In this process John the Solitary presents Christ as the model of attaining the perfection in the pneumatic stage. The transformation through the prayers and the ascetical practices make the worshippers ‘spiritual person’, include in the company of the Angels and strengthen to fight against ‘the old person’.

As it is narrated, humility is the source of intimacy with the Lord and peace with fellow men. It is through the ascetical virtue of humility, the worshippers lead the Christian life. As in humility, the worshippers approach fasting for the purity of heart, that is the absence of malice and evils. The practice of fasting creates the transformation of the entire personality of the worshippers. As a result, a life which is similar to the Angels and a Christian life based on charity are established. In a nutshell, as Ephrem narrates, the Christians strive for attaining the ‘luminous eye’: “Let not all sorts of thoughts be imprinted on our prayer; let the movements of Your face, Lord, settle upon it, so that, like a mirror, it may be filled with Your beauty”²⁹. The life of the worshippers is indeed the following of the footsteps of the ‘luminous eye’, Christ.

g) *Days of Fasting and Feast*

The Syriac ecclesial life is placed in the celebrations of feasts and fast. Such an arrangement in the liturgical calendar enables the faithful to journey with the mystery of salvation in and through the ecclesial life. One of the uniquenesses of Syriac ecclesial life and spirituality is the strict observation of the fast in the ecclesial journey³⁰. The feasts are always preceded by the fasting. There are fasting seasons and canonical “weekly fasts” (except the solemn celebration of fifty days that fall between Easter and Pentecost). The canonical weekly fasts on Wednesday and Friday are inspired by the *Didache*. Some of the fasting seasons in the Syriac tradition are the Great Lent of fifty days, the Fast of the Apostles of thirteen days,

²⁹EPHREM THE SYRIAN, *Hymen de Ecclesia* XXIX, 9-10 in CSCO 198-199 (84-85), 71-72/71; English tr., *Introduction to Eastern Christian Spirituality*, tr. S. Beggiani, 26.

³⁰ Cf. J.BERCHMANS, «Bhajanavum Shanthidinavum», 47. It is estimated that in the West Syriac tradition around 114 days in a year are celebrated as lent or fasting days: 25 (Lent as Preparation for the Christmas), 3 (Lent of Nineveh), 50 (Lent before the Easter), 8 (Lent as preparation for the birth of the Mother of God), 15 (Lent as preparation for the Assumption of the Mother of God) and 13 (Lent which is called the Apostles Lent).

the Fast of the Assumption of fifteen days, the Fast of the Advent of twenty five days and the Fast of Nineveh of three days.

Ephrem the Syrian in his hymns mentions about the view of sin. For him sin is a 'debt'. The sin of Adam is perceived as the debt of the humanity. The Syriac poet urges his readers to seek the mercy of God³¹. The liturgical community is asked to imbibe the same spirit of being aware of the debt before God and seeking the mercy of God. Fast is arranged as an occasion for the remission of the debts and the obtaining of the mercy of God. The Syriac tradition perceives uniquely the fast as a moment of victory as in the model of Jesus Christ who won the temptation in the desert³². Again it is presented as the moment of purification which enables the vision of God possible. Ephrem further presents it as 'a teacher' and 'an instructor' of the heart.

Severus of Antioch has pointed out this: "If Adam would have fasted at the time when it was necessary by abstaining from the fruit of that tree, there wouldn't be the need for us to fast"³³. According to him fasting has a healing function for the human, who is sick after the sin. Another important element of fasting is its presentation as 'the medicine' to attain the first state of glory in the paradise. The prayers of the West Syriac liturgy mention it as a means to be in company with the Angels: "The actions of he who fasts with purity, are mingled with that of the Angels"³⁴. Fasting is always accompanied by humanitarian deeds of charity and helping hands for the needy. The reward for the fast is the bridal chamber and the resurrection. The life of fasting further enables the faithful for the perfection in the Christian life. Feast celebration is incomplete without the fasting in the Syriac Church. As it is in the Acts of the Apostles, the Syriac Church too, anticipates prayer and fasting before taking the important decisions or appointment in the Church³⁵.

h) *The Role of the Heart*

The role of the heart in the Syriac spirituality is unique. It is highlighted as the starting point and the medium of Christian spiritual life. It stands even as the sense of the senses. It is the heart that plays a crucial role in the personality development and moral character. The Syriac fathers consider it as the centre of the very person.

³¹ Cf. E. VERGANI, «L'esegesi di Paolo in Efrem», 98.

³² Cf. EPHREM THE SYRIAN, *Hymnen de Ieiunio* I, 4: M. NIN, ed., *La restituzione del debito*, tr. E. Vergani, 14.

³³ SEVERUS OF ANTIOCH, *Homélie XXXIX, Sur le jeûne* in PO 36, 513; English tr., *West Syrian Liturgical Theology*, tr. B. Varghese, 119.

³⁴ *Valiya Nombileyum Munnu Nombileyum Prarthana kremam*, 140.

³⁵ Cf. Acts 13, 2; 14, 23.

The Syriac culture presents the heart as the seat of intellect, reason and will³⁶. *Liber Graduum* while it refers to the levels of uprightness and perfection makes it a point that it is the heart and its purity, which is very decisive in the integral formation of a man.

Book of Steps further presents the body as the temple and the heart as an altar in all purity³⁷. The function of the heart is to sustain as the centre of faith. The heart is the battlefield. It is said that Adam was a failure in the heart. The exit of Adam, due to the failure of the relationship, happened firstly in the spiritual Paradise. Hence the broken relationship has to be reconciled with proper purification of the heart. A conversion of the heart is estimated as a necessity in the spiritual formation. The spirituality of the heart calls for an integrated growth of the human person and a journey of perfection together with the Church. As the Syriac literature of *Book of Steps* recalls of ‘the interior Church’, it is ‘the Church of the heart’ where each having its own altar co-operates with the heavenly Church and the earthly Church.

i) *The Concept of Time and the Sanctification of the Day*

The Christian life according to the Syriac tradition renders a mystery character to the time³⁸. The material element of time is sanctified in the worship and it is perceived in the eschatological perspective. It is viewed that the liturgical time is an anticipation of the time to come. The arrangements of the liturgical year and the themes of the daily prayers portray the same view. The Syriac liturgical year, which is modelled after the Jewish calendar with the addition of the Christian nuances, is arranged specially to participate in the mystery of Christ events. The day, week and year (month is not much significant) are presented on the basis of salvation mystery. The salvation events from the creation to the second coming of Christ are the themes which are meditated and celebrated in the liturgical prayers. In the Syriac liturgy, Sunday has its uniqueness with the theme of resurrection and the first day of the week. The two classifications of the day are well presented in the liturgy of the Syriac Tradition. The day and evening are marked with unique theological significance in the liturgy. The evening prayers contain the important element of light by the meditation on the Word of God who removes the darkness into light. Christ is presented as the light and the Christian life is perceived as the life in the light. The morning prayers point to the theme of light and refer to the day of the second coming of Christ. The second coming is perceived as the victory of the light over the darkness. The morning

³⁶ Cf. T.KOLLAMPARAMPIL, «“Hidden Work” of the Heart in *Liber Graduum*», 300.

³⁷ Cf. *Liber Graduum*, XII, 2; English tr., *The Book of Steps*, trs. R. A. Kitchen - M.F.G.Parmentier, 120.

³⁸ Cf. B.VARGHESE, *West Syrian Liturgical Theology*, 122.

represents ‘the great morning’ of the resurrection when Christ defeated the darkness and the evil forces. The prayer testifies: “Creator of the morning, who drives out the darkness and brings light and joy to the creation, create in us the habits of virtue and drive from us all the darkness of sin; give us light and joy by the glorious rays of your grace, Lord our God, forever”³⁹.

The seven partitions of the canonical prayers which are recited at the evening, night, morning and noon times with the specific liturgical themes are significant in the liturgical journey of the faithful. The tradition exhorts the faithful “to worship God ceaselessly”. The biblical reference like the Psalms inspires the worshippers: “Seven times in the day have I praised thee for thy judgements, O Righteous One”⁴⁰.

j) *Liturgical Journey with the Church*

The Oriental Churches are enriched with a richness of worship as the foretaste of the beauty of the heaven. The liturgy provides the ambience for experiencing the ‘heaven on earth’. The liturgical participation enables the worshippers to prepare for the mystery of eschatology. The celebrations enrich the human responds in this world to become pro-active to the covenantal relationship: “Liturgy is the actualization of the new covenant carried out by the Church community through Christ, the mediator between God and humanity, in the Holy Spirit, under effective signs and according to proper order”⁴¹. By living in the sacramental life, the whole moment of life is blessed and sanctified. The liturgy in the Oriental Churches enables the worshippers to find Christian and ecclesial identity. Through the worship the participants go through the process of healing, renewal and restoration. Further, the liturgical celebrations enable the faithful to participate in the *oikonomia* or the economy of Christ events and make them responsible for the stages of *martyria*, *leitourgia* and *diakonia* in the Christian life of witness.

The liturgical year which is divided into seven periods (particularly in the West Syriac Tradition) inspires the faithful to journey together with the mystery of the Church. For example the liturgical year begins with *Qudoš ‘itho*, the Consecration of the Church and *Hudoṭ ‘itho*, the Renewal of the Church in the consequent weeks. Both events enable the faithful to begin the journey with the Church and be inspired by the spirit of consecration and the renewal within. The words of the anonymous monk testify that “the liturgical year from Christ in us, from his birth

³⁹ *Shimo*, 36.

⁴⁰ Ps 119, 164.

⁴¹ P. EICHER, ed., *Neues Handbuch theologischer Grundbegriffe*, III, 29; cf. also H. VORGRIMLER, *Sakramententheologie*; English tr., *Sacramental Theology*, tr. L. M. Maloney, 21.

the full stature of the perfect man. According a Medieval Latin saying, the liturgical year is Christ himself, *annus est christus*⁴². The Syriac Church is rich with movable feasts of the saints, who are ‘the pathways’ to Christ. The lives and the charisma of the saints are venerated in a special way as the auspicious and blessed paths of life to be followed. The commemoration of the Mother of God with specific fasts is unique in the Syriac liturgy.

The Concept of Time and the Sanctification of the Day

The Christian life according to the Syriac tradition renders a mystery character to the time. The material element of time is sanctified in the worship and it is perceived in the eschatological perspective. It is viewed that the liturgical time is an anticipation of the time to come. The arrangements of the liturgical year and the themes of the daily prayers portray the same view. The Syriac liturgical year, which is modelled after the Jewish calendar with the addition of the Christian nuances, is arranged specially to participate in the mystery of Christ events. The day, week and year (month is not much significant) are presented on the basis of salvation mystery. The salvation events from the creation to the second coming of Christ are the themes which are meditated and celebrated in the liturgical prayers. In the Syriac liturgy, Sunday has its uniqueness with the theme of resurrection and the first day of the week. The two classifications of the day are well presented in the liturgy of the Syriac Tradition. The day and evening are marked with unique theological significance in the liturgy. The evening prayers contain the important element of light by the meditation on the Word of God who removes the darkness into light. Christ is presented as the light and the Christian life is perceived as the life in the light. The morning prayers point to the theme of light and refer to the day of the second coming of Christ. The second coming is perceived as the victory of the light over the darkness. The morning represents ‘the great morning’ of the resurrection when Christ defeated the darkness and the evil forces. The prayer testifies: “Creator of the morning, who drives out the darkness and brings light and joy to the creation, create in us the habits of virtue and drive from us all the darkness of sin; give us light and joy by the glorious rays of your grace, Lord our God, forever”⁴³.

The seven partitions of the canonical prayers which are recited at the evening, night, morning and noon times with the specific liturgical themes are significant in the liturgical journey of the faithful. The tradition exhorts the faithful “to worship God ceaselessly”⁴⁴. The biblical reference like the Psalms inspires the worshippers:

⁴² *The Year of the Grace of the Lord* (A MONK OF THE EASTERN CHURCH), 2; cf. also B.VARGHESE, *West Syrian Liturgical Theology*, 138.

⁴³ *Shimo*, 36.

⁴⁴ Cf. Rev 7, 9-12; 1Thess 5, 17.

“Seven times in the day have I praised thee for thy judgements, O Righteous One”⁴⁵.

The Syriac Anthropology

The Syriac view on human is more biblical and faith oriented rather than any philosophical speculation. As an inimitable contribution, the Syriac worldview presents creation, revelation and incarnation as the elements of one divine process. Ephrem the Syrian presents his anthropological vision on the basis of the theology of incarnation. It is narrated that “By His grace through (His) humanity a nature never before fathomed is (now) perceived”⁴⁶. The incarnation is perceived as ‘the transformation’ of humanity. As a result, the human body becomes ‘a tabernacle’: “Blessed is He Who made our body a Tabernacle for His Hiddenness. Blessed is He Who with our tongue interpreted his secrets”⁴⁷. The human body is exalted and became worthy of Divine habitation. Further, it is narrated that “the body itself became the direct connection between the humanity and God”⁴⁸. The humanity, as a result, is empowered from its weakness and healed from its wounds. The following hymn renders the eminent position for the human body: “Whoever has a body, let him come to be a brother to my Beloved (Christ)”⁴⁹. Ephrem narrates further the blessed state of the human body: “Ears even heard of Him, the eyes saw Him, hands even touched Him, the mouth ate Him. Limbs and senses gave thanks to the One Who came and revived all that is corporeal”⁵⁰. On this basis he calls the Church as ‘a body’; the congregation as the Body of Christ enacts the liturgy throughout its whole Body. As in the human body, the ecclesial body too needs healing and it can be achieved through ‘the liturgy of the vigil’- liturgical celebrations.

The Syriac fathers have a tripartite view of humans. Ephrem the Syrian unites the Holy Trinity with the Human:

⁴⁵ Ps 119, 164.

⁴⁶EPHREM THE SYRIAN, *Hymnen de Nativitate (Epiphania)* III, 5 in CSCO 186-187 (82-83), 20/19; English tr., *Ephrem the Syrian*, tr. K. E. McVey, 84; cf. also S. A. HARVEY, «Liturgy and Ethics in Ancient Syriac Christianity: Two Paradigms», 306.

⁴⁷EPHREM THE SYRIAN, *Hymnen de Nativitate (Epiphania)* III, 7 in CSCO 186-187 (82-83), 21/19; English tr., *Ephrem the Syrian*, tr. K. E. McVey, 84; cf. also S. A. HARVEY, «Liturgy and Ethics in Ancient Syriac Christianity: Two Paradigms», 306.

⁴⁸S.A.HARVEY, «Liturgy and Ethics in Ancient Syriac Christianity: Two Paradigms», 306.

⁴⁹EPHREM THE SYRIAN, *Hymnen de Nativitate (Epiphania)* XVII, 8 in CSCO 186-187 (82-83), 88/80; English tr., *Ephrem the Syrian*, tr. K. E. McVey, 155; cf. also S. A. HARVEY, «Liturgy and Ethics in Ancient Syriac Christianity: Two Paradigms», 307.

⁵⁰EPHREM THE SYRIAN, *Hymnen de Nativitate (Epiphania)* IV, 144-145 in CSCO 186-187 (82-83), 38/34; English tr., «Liturgy and Ethics in Ancient Syriac Christianity: Two Paradigms», tr. S.A.Harvey, 308.

The three Names are disseminated threefold, in the spirit, the soul and the body, symbolically. Our Trinity perfected by the Three has ruled over the borders! When the spirit suffers, it is entirely inscribed by the Father. When the soul suffers, it is entirely mingled with the Son. When the body confesses and is then burnt, it shares entirely in the Holy Spirit⁵¹.

The presence of the Holy Trinity bestows human a unique position. While referring to the mystery of creation Ephrem speaks of speech and freedom as the distinguishing factors of humanity. The ‘Harp of the Spirit’ in his poem mentions that the function of the human body is to praise God and with the reception of the soul, the body attains the sound to praise Him. Glorification of God is presented as the central theme of the Syriac spirituality. Ephrem keeps on proclaiming that the obligation of the Church is to praise God. By inviting Christ to ‘the wedding feast’ of the Eucharist he makes a pleading to him: “(...) You are the guest who filled the jars with good wine, fill my mouth with Your praise”⁵². While mentioning the distinguishing elements of humans, Jacob of Serugh, the ‘flute of the Sprit’, speaks of four characters of the worshippers: being the collaborators in creation, having a spiritual dimension in the exercises of the higher faculties, having the ability of speech and possessing the free will. In short, it can be summarised that according to the Syriac anthropology “humans are not only the summit of creation, but also the bond uniting the Heaven and Earth”⁵³. This view is paraphrased with the Divine words: “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness”⁵⁴. While affirming the human creation as ‘the image and likeness of God’, Ephrem narrates that Adam becomes the uniting agent between heaven and earth. As the Syriac prayer recites “it is for his glory that the Lord gave you your tongue and intelligence”⁵⁵. The principle rationale of creation is to become the worshippers and the followers of the Divine presence. To paraphrase, to be humans is to be the worshippers of the creator.

⁵¹EPHREM THE SYRIAN, *Hymnen de Fide* XVIII, 4-5 in CSCO 154-155 (73-74), 70/54; English tr., *Ephrem the Syrian*, tr. J. T. Wickes, 148-149; cf. also S. J. BEGGIANI, *Early Syriac Theology*, 80; P. YOUSIF, «Symbolisme Christologique», 53. Irenaeus of Lyons also speaks of the trichotomy of the human person. According to him the perfect human person consists of three elements: flesh, soul and spirit: He mentions “(...) there are three things out of which the complete man is composed-flesh, soul and spirit”. IRENAEUS, *Adversus Haereses*, (bk.) 5, (chap.) 9, 1 in PO 7, 1144; English tr., *Irenaeus against Heresies*, trs. A. Roberts - J. Donaldson, I, 534.

⁵²EPHREM THE SYRIAN, *Hymnende Fide* XIV, 1 in CSCO 154-155 (73-74), 62/46; English tr., *The Harp of the Spirit*, tr. S. Brock, 23.

⁵³S. J. BEGGIANI, *Early Syriac Theology*, 21. This view is same as the view of Narsai who depicts man as ‘the bond of the universe’: cf. NARSAI, *A Homily on the Epiphany of Our Lord*, 50 in PO 40, 73; K. MCDONNELL, *The Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan*, 215.

⁵⁴Gen 1, 26.

⁵⁵S. J. BEGGIANI, *Early Syriac Theology*, 19.

Ephrem presents his view on anthropology on the basis of his narration of Genesis 1-3. While presenting the high status of Adam, he explains like this: “the dominion that Adam received over the earth and over all that is in it that constitutes the likeness of God who has dominion over the heavenly things and the earthly things”⁵⁶. Ephrem enumerates the ways in which God honoured Adam: “first, in that it was said, God formed him with His own hands and breathed life into him; God then set him as ruler over paradise and over all that is outside of paradise; God clothed Adam in glory; and God gave him reason and thought, so that he might perceive the majesty (of God)”⁵⁷. He dares to present the active role of the humanity in the original condition as “a second god over creation”⁵⁸. While referring on his freedom Ephrem states: “When God created Adam He did not make him mortal, nor did he fashion him immortal, so that Adam by either keeping or transgressing the commandment, might acquire from one of the trees, the (life) that he preferred”⁵⁹. In short, God created Adam in an exalted state which is reflective of God’s own image and glory. Adam as the representative of humanity expresses the renowned status of human existence.

Human Being as a Hybrid

The reflection on the mystery of man discloses the corporeal and the spiritual reality of humanity. It further enlarges the understanding of the human being on account of the inclination toward the Divine. It is appropriate to depict the deep fondness towards the presence of Jesus Christ which is beautifully presented by Ephrem in his narration of Mary of Bethany⁶⁰: she is the virgin and the lover of Jesus. She is ‘intoxicated’ with his presence. As furtherance, Gregory of Nazianzen entitles man as ‘a hybrid’:

The great architect of the universe conceived and produced a being endowed with both natures, the visible and the invisible: God created the human being, bringing its body forth from the pre-existing matter which he animated with his own spirit (...) Thus in some way a new universe was born, small and great at one and the same time. God sets this “hybrid” worshipper on earth to contemplate the visible world and to be

⁵⁶ EPHREM THE SYRIAN, *Commentarii in Genesim* I, 29 in SS71-72, 23/17; English tr., «Paradise as the Landscape of Salvation in Ephrem the Syrian», tr. T.Buchan, 149.

⁵⁷ EPHREM THE SYRIAN, *Commentarii in Genesim* II, 4 in SS 71-72, 27/20; English tr., «Paradise as the Landscape of Salvation in Ephrem the Syrian», tr. T. Buchan, 149.

⁵⁸ EPHREM THE SYRIAN, *Commentarii in Genesim* II, 10 in SS 71-72, 31/23; English tr., «Paradise as the Landscape of Salvation in Ephrem the Syrian», tr. T. Buchan, 149.

⁵⁹ EPHREM THE SYRIAN, *Commentarii in Genesim* II, 17 in SS 71-72, 35/26; English tr., «Paradise as the Landscape of Salvation in Ephrem the Syrian», tr. T. Buchan, 149.

⁶⁰ Cf. EPHREM THE SYRIAN, *Hymnen de Virginitate* XXIV, 5 in CSCO 223-224 (94-95), 86-76/; Italian tr., «Tra le altre», tr. E.Vergani, 111. “Blessed is your heart, captivated by the love of a beauty portrayed in your mind”: English tr., *Ephrem the Syrian*, tr. K.E.McVey, 366.

initiated into the invisible; to reign over earth's creatures, and to obey orders from on high. He created a being at once earthly and heavenly, insecure and immortal, visible and invisible, halfway between greatness and nothingness, flesh and spirit at the same time (...) an animal en route to another native land, and, most mysterious of all, made to resemble God by simple submission to the divine will⁶¹.

Human inclination and submission to the Divine will enable man to enter into the eminent status of a devotee or worshipper of the Supreme Truth and Beauty. Subsequently, worship can be considered as the central activity of an aficionado of God. As a result man can be depicted as *homo adorans*, the worshipper at the very core of being. The primary motive of human existence is to praise God. According to Alexander Schmemmann other designations like *homo sapiens* (man as a thinker) and *homo faber* (man as maker) are secondary:

Man alone (...) is to respond God's blessing with his blessing (...) All rational, spiritual and other qualities of man, distinguishing him from other creatures, have their focus and ultimate fulfilment in this capacity to bless God, to know, so to speak, the meaning of the thirst and hunger that constitutes his life. "Homo sapiens", "Homo faber" (...) yes, but, first of all, "homo adorans". The first, the basic definition of a man is that he is the priest. He stands at the centre of the world and unifies it in his act of blessing God, of both receiving the world from God and offering it to God (...) ⁶².

To paraphrase, the Holy Eucharist according to the West Syriac liturgy introduces the assembly of the people of God as this: "Stretch forth, O Lord God, Your invisible right hand and bless this congregation of Your worshippers who are prepared to receive Your precious Body and Blood for the remission of debts, the forgiveness of sins, and the confidence in Your presence our Lord and our God forever"⁶³.

Religiosity of the Christian

Alexander Schmemman reflects the basic characteristics of religion as this: "(...) religion is nothing other than a thirst for God (...) In the sacrifice man gives himself and his own over to his God, because, knowing God, he cannot but love him, and loving him, he cannot but strive toward him and toward unity with him"⁶⁴. The Christian life is nothing but a religious consciousness and a thirst for God and is presented as an 'accessional' life. With the life of Baptism, a Christian is in an ascending process to imitate and possess God. Moreover, the Christian life

⁶¹GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, *Oratio XLV*, 7 in PG 36, 631; English tr., *The Roots of Christian Mysticism*, tr. O. Clement, 77; cf. also D. W. FAGERBERG, *On Liturgical Asceticism*, 13.

⁶²A.SCHMEMANN, *For the Life of the World*, 14-15.

⁶³*The Order of the Holy Qurbano*, 96.

⁶⁴A.SCHMEMANN, *The Eucharist*, 101-102.

is presented as a process of conversion into Christ. Jesus is the focus and model of this religiosity and spirituality. And he is the *Ursakrament*, the 'primal sacrament' with whom the Christian life is attached. With him a new life and new relationship is formed. He is the '*eschaton*' - not a time or thing, but a person, the new Adam, Jesus Christ.

The Church as a Worshipping Community

The ecclesiological narration of the Syriac theology is unique. The Church is perceived in terms of her sacramental nature. As in the perception of *ekklesia* which is depicted in Acts, the Church is well thought-out as a 'sacred convocation' or a liturgical assembly. It is cited that, "Church is not only the source of the mysteries but is a sacrament of the union of Christ with his people"⁶⁵. The Church is the symbol of the presence of Christ and the custodian of the mysteries. It is obvious in the narration of the Syriac fathers on the origin of the Church which is traced to the Baptism of Christ in Jordan and the death of Jesus Christ on the Cross. The fathers view that the Church is betrothed by Christ at his Baptism in the Jordan and is wedded on the Cross. Ephrem in his hymns places the Church as 'the way and the voyage' in the economy of salvation and in the mystery towards the Kingdom of God. The Church is the Christian community which is placed in the place of the synagogue and "is the refound paradise, the Body of Christ and his holy and immaculate spouse"⁶⁶. By its very nature the Church is the 'tree of life', the source of sacramental grace.

Communion with God is perceived as to become a liturgical being. The aspect of liturgy is realised as an internal and an essential element of ecclesial journey rather than any external feature. The Syriac liturgy itself testifies: "You created me and placed your hand upon me. On Friday in the beginning God created Adam from the dust and breathed on him the Spirit and gave him speech that he might sing praise to him, halleluiah and give thanks to his creation"⁶⁷. The same rationale of the human existence by the creation of Adam as to become the liturgical being penetrates uniformly into the significance of the Church. Church, the worshipping community stands as the 'new paradise' and aims at the glorification of God through the liturgy. The frequent use of the hymns, "Glory be to the Father, to the Son and to the Holy Spirit" and its response "As it was in the beginning is now and

⁶⁵S. J. BEGGIANI, *Early Syriac Theology*, 86.

⁶⁶G. A. SABER, *Théologie Baptismale de Saint Ephrem*, 51; English tr., *Early Syriac Theology*, tr. S. J. Beggiani, 83.

⁶⁷*Shimo*, 186.

ever shall be .Amen”⁶⁸, testify the unique role of glorification of the Holy Trinity in the liturgy.

The Syriac fathers like Ephrem the Syrian and Jacob of Serugh underline the worshipping character of the Church. In his *Hymn on Nativity*, Ephrem speaks of liturgy in connection with the night vigil. As a community act, the liturgy bestows the proper catechization of Bible and the salvation history to the worshippers. The knowledge and awareness of the orthodoxy offer Christian identity for the worshippers through the liturgy. Ephrem presents the celebrations of the salvation events which are being continued and re-enacted through the liturgical celebrations. For him the liturgical celebrations are life oriented and they promote Christian ethics for the worshippers.

Jacob of Serugh while presenting another paradigm for the liturgical celebrations exhorts for the active participation of the worshippers in the liturgical act. For him listening and responding are the two responsibilities of the worshippers⁶⁹. He expresses the awe and wonder in the marvellous workings of divine dispensation⁷⁰. Mar Jacob obviously presents the primary purpose of human existence: “The mouth (O Lord) should speak Your praise out of the fullness of the heart. It should not proclaim Your word to listeners out of habit”⁷¹. For him, the Church as a congregation has a sacred vocation to participate actively in the liturgy⁷². On the sequence and repetition which are the salient features of the Syriac liturgy, he remarks like this: “The soul takes delight in the holy hymns (...) the more she hears these hymns that are sung for her, the more she becomes pure, modest and full of hope and discernment”⁷³. Jacob undoubtedly narrates that the liturgy is the primary responsibility of the Church: “Be awakened O Church, with

⁶⁸ *Ṭeksho d- teshmeshto d-qurbo*, 50.

⁶⁹ Cf. JACOB OF SERUGH, *Memrod'al banyoneh d'magdalo d'Bobel* XXXIII, 11, 69-74; English tr., *Jacob of Sarug's Homily on the Tower of Babel*, tr. A. M. Butts, 14; S.A.HARVEY, «Liturgy and Ethics in Ancient Syriac Christianity: Two Paradigms», 310.

⁷⁰ Cf. JACOB OF SERUGH, *Memro d'al kadišo mor Iliyo n'biyo w'al meskathe d'lašmoyo* V, 11, 119-122; English tr., *Jacob of Sarug's Homilies on Elijah*, tr. S. A. Kaufman, 366-368; S. A. HARVEY, «Liturgy and Ethics in Ancient Syriac Christianity: Two Paradigms», 310.

⁷¹ JACOB OF SERUGH, *Memro Kadmoyo d'al Eliša* I, 11, 19-20; English tr., *Jacob of Sarug's Homilies on Elisha*, tr. S. A. Kaufman, 10; cf. also S. A. HARVEY, «Liturgy and Ethics in Ancient Syriac Christianity: Two Paradigms», 310.

⁷² Cf. JACOB OF SERUGH, *Memrod'al nšaybuṭo d'roze kadiše* XCV, 11, 115-128; English tr., *Jacob of Sarug's Homilies on the Partaking of the Holy Mysteries*, tr. A.Harrak, 18; S.A.HARVEY, «Liturgy and Ethics in Ancient Syriac Christianity: Two Paradigms», 311.

⁷³ JACOB OF SERUGH, *Memro d'al nšaybuṭo d'roze kadiše* XCV, 11, 171-176 ; English tr., *Jacob of Sarug's Homilies on the Partaking of the Holy Mysteries*, tr. A. Harrak, 22; cf. also S. A. HARVEY, «Liturgy and Ethics in Ancient Syriac Christianity: Two Paradigms», 311.

your beautiful chants and offer to the Son gifts of praise”⁷⁴. The Church in this process of praising God joins with ‘the celestials and terrestrials’ and partakes in “the ceaseless and eternal occupation of the heavenly hosts in their splendid array”⁷⁵. Jacob narrates that in the perfect offering of worship, singing imbibes a sublime position⁷⁶.

Christian Life as Liturgical Life

Spiritual orientation in the Church is attached with the sacramental life. ‘Doxology’ is considered as the very obligation of the Christian to recognise and celebrate the glory of God. The worship is considered as the vocation and the purpose of man in the Syriac tradition. Praising God in Syriac tradition is understood as the realization of the human vocation. Glory is a key concept in the Hebrew thinking. The *Pšitta* version of Psalms stands as the foundational reflection which speaks that “From the beginning to the end, thou knowest me, O Lord, for thou hast formed and laid thy hand upon me”⁷⁷. According to the Syriac context the phrase ‘you placed your hands upon me’ is paraphrased as ‘you have ordained me (as a priest)’⁷⁸. In the Syriac tradition Adam is created as ‘a priest’ to stand before God on behalf of the whole creation. Here the priestly function of mediation is highlighted. The real spirit of the priesthood is portrayed as intercession. The tradition along with the biblical references states that the vocation of Adam is to praise God as a priest, a representative of the whole creation. In the Semitic world view the model of thanksgiving comprises praising and glorifying the giver. In the Syriac perspective, the true praise itself is a gift of the Creator. The praising the creator demands an integrated orientation from the worshippers: “O Lord may my mouth sing to you sincere praise with a loud voice”⁷⁹. Human failure in communion with God is understood as the malfunction in the priestly responsibility or the liturgical vocation. As a result, the Syriac tradition recounts the mystery of incarnation as ‘pedagogy’ to teach the true worship and consequently resume the initial communion between God and man.

⁷⁴JACOB OF SERUGH, *D'mawled d'farkan d'b'bazār* I, 11, 1037-1038; English tr., *Jacob of Sarug's Homilies on the Nativity*, tr. A. Harrak, 126-127; cf. also S. A. HARVEY, «Liturgy and Ethics in Ancient Syriac Christianity: Two Paradigms», 315.

⁷⁵S.A.HARVEY, «Liturgy and Ethics in Ancient Syriac Christianity: Two Paradigms», 315.

⁷⁶ Cf. JACOB OF SERUGH, *Homélie contre les Juifs* VII, 529-542; M. ALBERT, ed., *Jacques de Saroug, Homélie contre les Juifs*, 216-217; English tr., «Liturgy and Ethics in Ancient Syriac Christianity: Two Paradigms», tr. S.A.Harvey, 315.

⁷⁷ Ps 139, 5.

⁷⁸ Cf. B.VARGHESE, *West Syrian Liturgical Theology*, 8.

⁷⁹JACOB OF SERUGH, *Memro d'al Semavoon Kifo kad Emar leḥ Moran zel lok l'baṣṭar soṭono* XX, 1-16; English tr., *On Simon Peter*, tr. A. C. McCollum, 8; cf. also S. A. HARVEY, «Liturgy and Ethics in Ancient Syriac Christianity: Two Paradigms», 313.

Failure of praising is illustrated as the state of being lost of paradise. For the Syriac fathers praising God is the essential and elementary aspect in the life of the Christian. Ephrem says, “How can my harp, o Lord, ever rest you’re your praise? How could I ever teach my tongue infidelity?”⁸⁰. Subsequently, the worship is “the expression of our longing (nostalgia) to live in communion with God and to regain our former inheritance and dwelling place”⁸¹. Therefore it is said that, “liturgy is doing the world the way it was meant to be done”⁸². Through the liturgy the worshippers are on a return to paradise. The Syriac fathers are frequently reluctant to define liturgy because it is not perceived as a practical discipline or ‘an accessory’. It is on the ground that the Christians are named as worshippers that means their vocation is to worship God. The fulfilment of the Christian life is dependent on the ‘liturgical life’. The Christians are liturgical beings that means liturgy is lived and experienced in the life.

⁸⁰EPHREM THE SYRIAN, *Hymnen de Fide* XIV, 9 in CSCO 154-155 (73-74), 63/47; English tr., *The Harp of the Spirit*, tr. S. Brock, 23.

⁸¹B. VARGHESE, *West Syrian Liturgical Theology*, 8.

⁸²D. W. FAGERBERG, *On Liturgical Asceticism*, 26.

The Notion of Liturgy

Liturgy is depicted as the ‘foundational to the Christian identity’. The interrelationship between the Church and the liturgy is presented like this: “‘liturgy’ is the verb; ‘Christian’ is the noun. Liturgy is the verb form of ‘Church’ and ‘Church’ is the noun form of ‘liturgy’ ”⁸³. The liturgy is a sacred sign, an ‘efficacious sign of a supernatural reality’. The fathers of the Church portray it as a *sacramentum* or ‘mystery’, on the basis of the presence of Christ and the action of the Holy Spirit. Through the liturgy the worshippers participate in the mystery aspects of the economy of salvation. Fitting here appropriately *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* explains the prayer as “lifting up the mind toward God is an expression of our adoration of God: prayer of praise and thanksgiving, intercession and petition”⁸⁴. Liturgy is the most sublime official prayer of the Church to adore and praise God.

Etymological Meaning and Nuance of Leitourgia

The word liturgy emerges from the Greek word *leitourgia* (λεϊτουργία) which is rooted in *leitourgos* (minister) composing of *leitos* (people) and *ergos* (work) and etymologically it means ‘the public work’⁸⁵. The *Septuagint* uses *leiturgia* to assign the Levitic cult as a “divine institution entrusted to the care of Israel’s nobility, the Levitic priests”⁸⁶. In the New Testament there are fifteen references of the same word to designate the functions of the liturgy and some of the allusions are the priestly office of Zechariah (Rom 13:6), sacrificial and priestly service of Jesus Christ (Heb 8:2), the spiritual sacrifice of Christians (Rom 15:16) and the cultic celebration of the Christians (Act 13:2). Following the spirit of the Sacred Scripture, the *Didache* and *the Apostolic Tradition* submit the cultic meanings for the word liturgy. The Churches in the East make use of the term *leiturgia* as sacred rites in general and the Holy Eucharist in particular. In the Latin Church the same word in its totality for the first time appeared in the official documents during the pontificate of Gregory XVI (+1846). Although the word *leiturgia* indicates the cultic service to God, it includes the broader meanings like spiritual sacrifice or charitable works also.

Alexander Schmemmann defines the word *leitourgia* not as a mere cult but as the activity of God. He clarifies:

If Christian worship is *leitourgia*, it cannot be simply reduced to, or expressed in terms of ‘cult’: the ancient world knew a plethora of cultic religions or ‘cults’(...) But

⁸³ D. W.FAGERBERG, *On Liturgical Asceticism*, 1.

⁸⁴ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2098.

⁸⁵ Cf. A.J.CHUPUNGO, «A Definition of Liturgy», 3.

⁸⁶ A. J.CHUPUNGO, «A Definition of Liturgy», 3.

the Christian cult is *leitourgia*, and this means that it is functional in its essence, has a goal to achieve which transcends the categories of cult as such⁸⁷.

He is of the opinion that the Christian liturgy includes the antinomy between the cultic expression and the abolishment of it. It is through the liturgy the Church transcends the institutional and structural visibility and imbibes the true image and essence for which the Church stands for.

Vatican II on Liturgy

Sacrosanctum concilium is the fabulous contribution of the epoch-making Council of Vatican II on liturgy. The Council makes it a point that the liturgy is the occasion to express the life and manifest the mystery of Christ and the nature of the true Church. The liturgy becomes an inevitable source of life in the pilgrim end of the ecclesial life. In the ecclesial building up, the liturgy stands as a passage to make the people of God ‘a holy temple of God’, a dwelling place for God in the spirit, and to mature measure of the fullness of Christ. The Holy Scripture underlines the fact that “God who wills that all men be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth”⁸⁸. The Church as the continuation of the saving activity of Christ is blessed with his unique presence through the liturgical celebrations. It is well stated in the Constitution that, “Christ, indeed, always associates the Church with himself in this great work in which God is perfectly glorified and men are sanctified. The Church is his beloved Bride who calls to her Lord, and through him offers worship to the eternal Father”⁸⁹. The liturgy as the sacred action is efficient enough to participate in the heavenly liturgy. The Constitution further states that “it is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; it is also the fount from which all her power flow”⁹⁰. The Council testifies:

(...) the liturgy is considered as an exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ. In the liturgy, by means of signs perceptible to the senses, human sanctification is signified and brought about in ways proper to 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 members⁹¹.

However, *Sacrosanctum concilium* remarks that, “the sacred liturgy does not exhaust the entire activity of the Church”⁹². In this perspective the Council asks to reach the liturgical work in faith and conversion. As a result the Church adds the

⁸⁷ A. SCHMEMANN, «Theology and Eucharist», 79.

⁸⁸ 1 Tim 2, 4.

⁸⁹ VATICAN COUNCIL II, «Sacrosanctum concilium», no. 7.

⁹⁰ VATICAN COUNCIL II, «Sacrosanctum concilium», no. 10.

⁹¹ VATICAN COUNCIL II, «Sacrosanctum concilium», no. 7.

⁹² VATICAN COUNCIL II, «Sacrosanctum concilium», no. 9.

catechism, charitable activities and other pious activities which demand a certain amount of penance-‘an ascetical outlook’. The principles of the imitation of Jesus Christ in the perfect way are exemplified here. To paraphrase, the Council asks to become the light of the world and the radiators of God’s mercy. It encourages the worshippers to become the witnesses of faith and true adherences to the will of God. It heartens them to be possessed by God and detached from the worldly matters. Finally it calls for a life of glorifying God in the most sublime way.

The Liturgy of the Hours

The Liturgy of the Hours which is also known as the divine office is the fulfilment of the apostolic exhortations to pray constantly and “so devised that the whole course of the day and night is made holy by the praise of God”⁹³. It is called the public or the official prayer of the Church. By this celebration, all the members of the Church participate in the royal priesthood of the baptized. It narrates the ardent love relationship between the bride and the bridegroom. It is also “the prayer which Christ himself together with the His Body addresses to the Father”⁹⁴. It enables the faithful to be diligent in prayer and the service of the Word. The Liturgy of Hours demands more attentiveness to the Word of God especially to the Praising Psalms. They express the symbolism of the specific time of prayer. This prayer system expresses the intertwined relationship between the Word of God and the Liturgy of the tradition. It is also presented as ‘an extension of the Eucharistic celebration’⁹⁵. The Liturgy of Hours is situated in the pilgrim journey of the Church to sanctify day and night with the glorification of God. In short, it is presented as the source of devotion and sanctification.

Diverse Characteristics of Liturgy

The Christian life as a liturgical journey is the celebration of the mysteries. The celebration through various signs and symbols convey the proper meaning of the Christian life. The celebration of the mysteries has to be swotted for the active participation of the worshippers. Certain selected elements of the liturgical celebrations are dealt here for the befitting of the theme. The special features mentioned here are interpenetrated with the Liturgy of Prayers and its theology.

Liturgy as the Locus of Encountering the Triune God

The two basic concepts of the liturgy are anamnesis and epiclesis⁹⁶. Both dimensions substantiate the Trinitarian dimension of the liturgy. Liturgy as the

⁹³ VATICAN COUNCIL II, «Sacrosanctum concilium», 84; I Thes 5:17; Eph 6:18.

⁹⁴ *CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH*, II, 1174.

⁹⁵ *CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH*, II, 1178.

⁹⁶ Cf. A.J. CHUPUNGO, «A Definition of Liturgy», 7.

locus of encountering God bestows special attention for recalling the saving activity of God in the salvation history: “The act of recalling, of calling to mind, of making present is basic to the definition of the liturgy”⁹⁷. Here the liturgy through the signs and the symbols enables the faithful to experience the presence of the Triune God in the present life. The action of the recalling is culminated by the epiclesis in the liturgy. To paraphrase, it can be stated that the both accomplishments, the Paschal Mystery and the Mystery of Pentecost are intertwined: as the Paschal Mystery led to Pentecost, the anamnesis leads to epiclesis⁹⁸. Throughout the liturgy the Holy Trinity is active and becomes the indwelling presence in the worshippers. It is said that “(...) the liturgy, reaching from God to man and connecting man to the fullness of the Godhead, is the action of the Trinity in the Church. The Church in her liturgy partakes of the life of the divine society of the three persons in God”⁹⁹. Liturgy stands as a *locus* for meeting the Holy Trinity in the Church. It is indeed the activity of the Trinity. The liturgy is well explained as the action of the Holy Trinity:

The liturgy, through Christ, comes from the Father, the eternal source of divine life in the Trinity. It in tune addresses itself in a special way to the father, rendering him the homage and the glory of which it is capable through the power of Christ. The flow of divine life between the eternal father and the Church is achieved and completed through the operation of the Holy Ghost¹⁰⁰.

The cited words stand as the testimonies for presenting the divine origin of the liturgy. It is included in the divine plan and the humans in the course of time are incorporated into it. As per the will of the Trinity, the goals of the liturgy are assigned as the salvation of the world and the greater glorification of the Divine name.

Liturgy as the Reading of the Sacred Scripture

The Bible is the indispensable and nourishing constituent in the content and the celebration of the liturgy. It can be mentioned that “the liturgy is the Bible transformed into Word proclaimed, prayed, and actualized: the liturgy is the Word that is celebrated”¹⁰¹. The interrelationship between the liturgy and the Bible is complete and natural. Both remain as complementary as neither of them exhaustive in itself without the other. It is admirably stated that “liturgy (...) is the perfect

⁹⁷A. J.CHUPUNGO, «A Definition of Liturgy», 7.

⁹⁸Cf.A.J.CHUPUNGO, «A Definition of Liturgy», 7.

⁹⁹V. MICHEL, *The Liturgy of the Church*, 40.

¹⁰⁰V. MICHEL, *The Liturgy of the Church*, 40; cf. also D. W. FAGERBERG, *On Liturgical Asceticism*, 3.

¹⁰¹R.D.ZAN, «Bible and Liturgy», 34.

actualization of the biblical texts, for it places the proclamation in the midst of the community of believers, gathered around Christ so as to draw near to God”¹⁰². The words of God become contemporaries with us in the liturgy. The celebration of the liturgy in its embryonic forms is reasonably inscribed in the Sacred Scripture. In a nutshell, the liturgy is in the Bible and the Bible in the liturgy among which there is a foundational saving event as the *intratextual continuum*¹⁰³. It is the Christ who himself speaks through the Scripture and is present in his words. In the liturgy the worshippers in their life celebrate the words and deeds of the Saviour which are written in the Sacred Scripture. The words of God celebrated in the liturgy enable the worshippers to be inspired and accomplished beyond the ‘letters’. To paraphrase, the celebration facilitates the worshippers to become the living witnesses and the ‘existing gospels’ in the present scenario.

Liturgy as the Action of the Church

Liturgy is the work of the Church. It is the response of the Church to the ever revealing God. It becomes the visible activity of the Church and the very life of the Church. Through the symbolic actions, the Church responds to the saving work of Christ. The symbolic actions make the past as efficacious events to the present human reality, ‘now’. The action of the Church is a celebration and a re-presentation of a past action in order to participate in it.

The famous axiom of “the Church makes the Eucharist and the Eucharist makes the Church” can be elaborated as “the Church makes the liturgy and the liturgy makes the Church”¹⁰⁴. The fathers of the Church give importance to the inevitable role of the

¹⁰²PONTIFICAL BIBLICAL COMMISSION, *The Interpretation*, no. 110.

¹⁰³Cf.R.D.ZAN, «Bible and Liturgy», 35-36. *Intratextual continuum* clarifies that Bible and liturgy are not autonomous approaches. Rather they are perceived as a single reality with complementary function. The foundational saving event for the Jews is the Passover whereas for the Christians, it is the Paschal Mystery of Jesus. The assembly that existed after the event testifies the foundational event in the text. The celebration of the assembly that commemorates the event and the text that testifies the event are not autonomous. The belief, celebration and the transmission are interrelated in the interrelationship of Bible and liturgy. There is also an *extratextual continuum* in the relationship; the Bible is in the liturgy. Bible stands as an underlying structure of the celebration and it is reformulated in it. In a nutshell, the underlined fact is the *continuum* in the presentation of the mystery as the text and the celebration of the people of God.

¹⁰⁴B.STUDER, «Liturgy and the Fathers», 70. The well known Latin theological dicta, *Eucharistia facit Ecclesiam, Ecclesia facit Eucharistiam*, are coined together by Henride Lubac, a great French Jesuit who pioneered the renewal of the Church at the Second Vatican Council. He combined the two theological formulas of two millenniums: the first millennium put forwarded the phrase “the Eucharist makes the Church” and the second millennium with the influence of Scholasticism popularised the dictum “the Church makes the Eucharist”. Both theological formulas emphasises the

community of the people of God in the salvation journey. The liturgy by its very nuance reveals the communal aspect. The public role is very much stressed in it. It necessitates the participation in the communion with the saints, living and the dead. The earthly and the heavenly Churches are united in the unique moment of the liturgy.

The Church is alive with the liturgy. The liturgy constitutes the Church and expresses the Church. The liturgy which is celebrated in the sacraments constitutes the very existence of the Church on earth. The liturgy of praise, which follows the rhythms of time, expresses the Church. Through the sacraments the ecclesial Body is constituted. Each sacrament provides the members of the Church the powers and the privileges proper to the person's status in the ecclesial Body. For example, the liturgy of the Ordination renders the priestly power which is proper to exercise and constitute the function of the Church and bestows faithfulness to the apostolic tradition of the Church. The mystery aspect of the Church is celebrated through the liturgy. This expressive nature is not something added to the nature of the Church; rather it is its very nature and reason of its existence. "The Church expresses what it is and what it accomplishes"¹⁰⁵. The liturgy manifests the Church. It is the true 'epiphany' because it shows the true essence of the Church. The liturgical celebrations, more explicitly the sacraments are administered and received in the Church.

Liturgy as the Celebration through the Symbols

Liturgy and celebration are the two words which remain inseparable. It is worthwhile to mention the origin of the Latin word for celebration:

(...) a combination of three factors or circumstances, one or other of which, however, may be lacking in exceptional cases. The point of departure or occasion for a celebration is usually an important or a sensational event (*festivitas, solemnitas*). The event, whether present or commemorated, then leads to the calling of an assembly, a more or less large and solemn gathering (*conventus, coetus, frequentia*). This, finally, leads to the festal action (*actio, effectio*), which is the third constitutive element in a typical celebration. As a rule, the action is communal, comprising the combined activities of many or even of an entire populace and involving the life of society, the family, or the state in one or other manner. Sometimes this action is the reason for the assembly, but in every case it constitutes the celebration in the strict sense. For to celebrate is primarily to do something in common and in a solemn religious way. This rather complex idea of celebration originates in Latin conceptions, but the reality is found among all ancient peoples, Jews as well as the Greeks (though the technical

community dimension of the sacraments especially of the Eucharist: cf. HENRI DE LUBAC, *Méditation sur l'Église*, 1-120; English tr., «Liturgy and the Fathers», tr. B.Studer, 70.

¹⁰⁵H.DALMAIS, «Theology of the Liturgical Celebration», 234; cf. also VATICAN COUNCIL II, «Sacrosanctum concilium», no. 2.

language may be missing at times). Everywhere, moreover, in pagan and above all in Jewish thought, the religious element is always an almost inseparable part of all real celebrations, however secular these may appear to be (...) In Christianity, with its essentially religious and even eschatological outlook, a celebration is always cultic¹⁰⁶.

The celebration is connected with the theme of a feast. Every liturgy is a festal celebration. It is apt to state that “it is in the festive celebration the liturgy finds its authentic meaning”¹⁰⁷. It is estimated that “a feast commemorates a past, indestructible event, but its perfection is still in germ”¹⁰⁸. That means it focuses to an eschatological dimension.

a) *The Notion of Symbol*

The word, symbol comes from the Latin word *symbolon*¹⁰⁹. It was a custom in the ancient Greece that an object like a coin or bone is broken into two pieces. The purpose is to serve as a sign of mutual recognition in the future when the two pieces are ‘symbolized’. The two halves are thrown back together in the symbolizing process. It is a recognition. Here three agents are recognized: they are the symbolizer, the symbol and the recipient whom the symbol is supposed to unite with the giver¹¹⁰. The opposite of *ymballein* is *diaballein*. It is the throwing apart process. In the theological perspective, a symbol is nuanced as ‘an expression’- a symbol brings a being into reality and a being realizes itself by expressing itself.

b) *Meaning of Religious Symbolism*

John Breck defines the symbols in the perspective of the four stages of the religious symbolism¹¹¹: the symbol serves as a simple sign of recognition by manifesting the presence of the sacred. It becomes the means of mutual participation, where *sumballein* means a meeting or encounter between man and God. Its focus is turned to the material object itself, the *sumbolon* that enters into contact with the realm of the sacred and communicates divine power to the realms of the profane. All these later apply to verbal expressions, viz., consecratory formulas and incantations.

¹⁰⁶J.HILD, «Notion et structure classique d’une célébration», 114-115, 116; English tr., *The Church at Prayer*, tr. A.G.Martimort, I, 239-240.

¹⁰⁷H.DALMAIS, «Theology of the Liturgical Celebration», 240.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. T. SPIDLIK, *Prayer*, II, 105.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. D. TRIACCA - A. M. TRIACCA, eds., *Nuovo Dizionario di Liturgia*, 1280. *Symbolon* is merged by two words: *Sym* means ‘together’ and *ballein* means ‘to throw’. Its Syriac equivalent is *Rozo* which will be dealt later.

¹¹⁰Cf.D.W.FAGERBERG, *Consecrating the World*, 85.

¹¹¹Cf.J.BRECK, *The Power of the Word in the Worshipping Church*, 187.

The language of the liturgy especially that of the east is rich in symbols. The Mystery is spiritual and invisible. But the creatures are visible, corporeal and sensory. The sensible materials are used to provide a spiritual knowledge and experience. As per the words of Origen, the material realities are ‘image, shadow, model, imitation, type, symbol, sign’ etc. They all provide the opportunity for contemplating the spiritual reality. One must aware of the fact that moving beyond the symbolic object is crucial in the symbolic theology. The symbol is not the ultimate object of knowledge. It must transcend for the reality for which it stands. The Oriental view on the symbol is perceived through the Syriac concept *Rozo* and it is treated in detail little later.

Liturgy as the Glorification of God and the Sanctification of the Human

Christian liturgy as a ‘cult’ reveals its orientation toward the Mystery. As per the view of the cult, it expresses the indebtedness toward the Divine. It stands as the core of the religious mind. There are two distinguished attitudes in the cult: “the honour given to God in recognition of his excellence, and submission”¹¹². The uniqueness of Christian liturgy is not its cultic offer to God, but to bestow the grace of God for the worshippers. The reason is its sacramental nature of grace giving. It is stated that “the purpose of all Christian liturgies is to express in a ritual moment that which should be the basic stance of every moment of our lives”¹¹³. There are two movements in the liturgy: *anabatic* and *catabatic* movements. Anabatic is an upward movement and *catabatic* is a downward movement. These movements stand for the ascending and descending processes in the liturgy. The Divine descends in the liturgy to lift up the human into heaven.

The aftermath of Christ’s descending on the earth is the ascending of the humanity. The liturgical life helps for this ascending nature. Chrysostom crystallises this theme in his homily: “Two things he has done, the greatest things. He has both himself descended to the lowest depth of humiliation, and has raised up man to the height of exaltation”¹¹⁴. It is viewed that “the only Son of God is born a man of the virgin Mary, to achieve in his own person the elevation (*prokope*) of man to God in the fullness of time”¹¹⁵. The elevation of man is indeed the glorification of the humanity. It is remarked that “the Church’s visible act of sacramental worship is taken over by Christ and given the value of sanctification

¹¹² A. G.MARTIMORT, «Le sens du sacre’», 48-49; English tr.,«Theology of the Liturgical Celebration», tr. H.Dalmais, 246.

¹¹³ R. TAFT, *Sunday in the Eastern Tradition*, 32.

¹¹⁴ CHRYSOSTOM, *Epistolam ad Ephesios Commentarius* III, 1,15-20 in PG 62, 23-24; English tr., *Consecrating the World*, tr. D. W. Fagerberg, 61.

¹¹⁵ J.DANIÉLOU, *The Lord of History*, 191.

quite beyond what is possessed as an act of Church worship”¹¹⁶. The liturgy enables the worshippers to ‘lift up the heart’- to look into heaven and think accordingly. While mentioning the eminence of the Eucharist in the east, three effects are marked: union, transformation and purification. The liturgy makes a union between Christ and the partakers. This union subsequently leads to a transformation in the life and obviously purification is followed in the participants. According to Gregory of Nazianzus, “pure alone can grasp him who is pure”¹¹⁷.

Glorification and the sanctification are called the double movements in the liturgy. In the ascending nature of liturgy, praise and adoration are offered to God. It becomes obvious by the divergent characteristic between the Jewish prayer and the Christian liturgy. When the former prefers most often ‘bless God’ (*eulogia*), the latter prefers ‘thanksgiving’ (*eucharistia*) as a response of the gratitude to the Divine redemptive work which is fulfilled by Jesus Christ. It is stated that “liturgy is thus an outstanding school for the service of the Lord; it refines our sense of God”¹¹⁸. The task of the worshippers to glorify God and its necessity in the ecclesial life are corroborated by the prayers itself:

Glory to the Almighty Lord who is beyond all praise. You do not need any praise from the creatures; even then Seraphim praise you for the self sanctification; Cherubim bless you for receiving the blessing; the angels glorify you for becoming the pure; the chorus of singers praising you for receiving the glory; with the grace the offertory and the praise of the humans are received by You in order to give the remission of sins; to Him are due praise and honour at this time of divine offertory of praise and at all feasts, seasons, hours, times and all the days of our life forever and ever¹¹⁹.

Through this glorification the participants of the liturgy are invited to a renewal and conversion. It constitutes the partakers heaven oriented and detaches them from the worldly matters. The role of the sacraments in getting the sanctification is unique: “The sanctification of humans through incorporation into the divinity of Christ is extended through the mysteries (sacraments)”¹²⁰. The sanctification process is actualized in the Church through the channels of the sacraments. The presence of the Holy Spirit is the spring of this process.

Liturgy as the Locus of Profession of Faith

Christianity is presented not as a philosophical school of speculation on abstract truths. It is in all intentions and purposes a communion of the whole man with the

¹¹⁶C. ÓNEIL, *Meeting Christ in the Sacraments*, 119.

¹¹⁷GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, *Oratio 2-Apologetica* 29 in PG 35, 438; English tr., «Gregory Nazianzen», trs. C. G. Browne - J. E. Swallow, VII, 213.

¹¹⁸R. GUARDINI, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 130.

¹¹⁹*Tekhso d- qurbono*, 305.

¹²⁰S. J. BEGGIANI, *Early Syriac Theology*, 46.

living God. The state of communion is “a life of love and adoration with the living God, that is, to participate in his life, which has been offered to Man out of his infinite love”¹²¹.

In the Eastern Church the doctrine and the profession of faith is inseparably tied up with the celebration of the liturgy. The doctrine is presented not in the intellectual system. It is said that in the East, the liturgy is “the plastic representation of Christian doctrine”¹²². Liturgy is essentially perceived in the Eastern Churches as ‘re-presentative action’. The doctrinal matters are regularly and repeatedly included in the liturgy. Here the aspect of repetition is to be understood properly. Repetition, more than a pedagogical motive, is a “proclamation, a witness to the Church’s experience of God and its certitude regarding the meaning and goal of life”¹²³.

The liturgy becomes the *locus* of proclaiming the *orthodoxia*. The liturgy which contains the true doctrine enables the faithful to live a life in accordance with the plan of God and live according to the goal of Christian life. It sustains the deposit of faith undefiled and without any adulteration. Irenaeus of Lyons makes an intrinsic relationship between the doctrine and the Eucharist, the sublime liturgical celebration of the Church: “Our doctrine agrees with the Eucharist and the Eucharist confirms our doctrine”¹²⁴. The prayers of the Eucharist are indeed the declaration of the faith of the Church and initially composed of protecting the faith of the assembly rather than liturgical uniformity. The liturgical prayers which are intended of the orthodoxy portray the mind of the Church. The prayers are aimed at imprinting the faith of the Church in the heart of the faithful. It is said that “the doctrines are ‘lived’ that is, expressed, celebrated and transmitted in and through the liturgy”¹²⁵.

Liturgy as the Kenosis and Ascetic Movement

The liturgy is presented and celebrated in the kenotic and the ascetic process. Jean Corbon who develops these concepts of liturgy is of the opinion that creation is the first *kenosis* of God where the Blessed Trinity is hidden: “the Father gives himself, but who receives him? His Word is given, but who answers? His Spirit is poured out, but not yet shared”¹²⁶. Then comes the second kenosis, i.e., the history

¹²¹B.VARGHESE, *West Syrian Liturgical Theology*, 48.

¹²²S.ZANKOV, *The Eastern Orthodox Church*, 102-103.

¹²³B.VARGHESE, *West Syrian Liturgical Theology*, 47.

¹²⁴IRENAEUS, *Adversus Haereses* IV, 18, 5 in PG 7, 1023; English tr., *West Syrian Liturgical Theology*, tr. B. Varghese, 47.

¹²⁵B.VARGHESE, *West Syrian Liturgical Theology*, 48.

¹²⁶J.CORBON, *The Wellspring of Worship*, 17.

of salvation¹²⁷. He presents the climax of salvation in the hypostatic union of the Word of God:

If it be true that the drama of history is the interplay of God's gift and human acceptance of it, then the drama reaches its climax, and its eternal beginning, on this day (the day of Resurrection), because these two energies are now joined together forever (...)The liturgy has been born; the resurrection of Jesus is its first manifestation¹²⁸.

Liturgy as a *kenosis* and ascension (an *exitus* and a *reditus*) is explained as the "extension of Trinity's love in an act of creation and the return of that creation to its source in God"¹²⁹. The mystery of incarnation includes *kenosis* and *prokope*¹³⁰. The words of St.Hilary also mentions the same aspect: "the only son of God is born a man of the Virgin Mary, to achieve in his own person the elevation (*prokope*) of man to God in the fullness of time"¹³¹. The liturgy imbibes the kenotic love of God and renders the *prokope* for the people of God. Christ's *kenosis* is his coming down from the above for the motive of 'taking the manhood into God'. In other words the result of this *kenosis* is the ascent of the humanity. It is again pertinent to quote the words of Chrysostom to crystallize the theme of exultation: "Two things he has done, the greatest things. He has both Himself descended to the lowest depth of humiliation, and has raised up man to the height of exaltation"¹³². In a nutshell, these two movements take place in the entire liturgical activities and the Christian life. Hence liturgy enhances our ascent in the most sublime manner.

The sacraments offer a spirituality of *kenosis*. It represents the *kenosis* of God in the history. It is well discernible with Ephrem who speaks of *kenosis* in the sacraments, incarnation and revelation. On the value of renunciation it is estimated like this: "Christian renunciation is therefore a training ground for death in Christ understood as the highest deed of that radical state of submitting oneself to a higher will"¹³³. Together with the spirit of renunciation, the kenotic significance which is celebrated in the liturgy enables the worshippers to imbibe and imitate the *kenosis* of God in the awe-inspiring way. This process turns into a spirituality of asceticism in the outlook of the worshippers.

¹²⁷Cf.J.CORBON, *The Wellspring of Worship*, 17.

¹²⁸J.CORBON, *The Wellspring of Worship*, 32-33.

¹²⁹D. W.FAGERBERG, *On Liturgical Asceticism*, 8.

¹³⁰ The Greek word *prokope* signifies elevation, advancement, ascent, or progress: cf.D. W. FAGERBERG, *Consecrating the World*, 62.

¹³¹J.DANIÉLOU, *The Lord of History*, 191.

¹³²CHRYSOSTOM, *Epistolam ad Ephesios Commentarius* III, 1, 15-20 in PG 62, 23-24; English tr., *Consecrating the World*, tr. D. W. Fagerberg, 61.

¹³³K.RAHNER, «Reflections on the Theology of Renunciation», 52.

Liturgy as Imitation of Christ

Christian life is presented as a process of conversion into Christ. Liturgy is a spiritual journey after the footsteps of Christ and it creates the personal relationship with him. It generates Christ in the believer. It becomes a celebration of the life of Christ in its entirety. The life pattern of Jesus is repeated in the liturgy. The only difference is the order: he descended in order that we might ascend. Another difference is the nature of *kenosis*: “Christ’s *kenosis* consisted of putting away glory, and our *kenosis* consists of putting away the old man”¹³⁴. Liturgy enables to conform to the mind of Christ. Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger while explaining the theme of *sequel Christi* remarks:

Sequela Christi does not mean: imitating the man Jesus. This type of attempt would necessarily fail- it would be an anachronism. the *Sequela of Christ* has a much higher goal: to be assimilated into Christ, that is to attain union with God (...) Man is not satisfied with solutions beneath the level of divinization (...)The *Sequela of Christ* is not a question of morality, but a “mysteric” theme-an ensemble of divine action and our response¹³⁵.

In the liturgy Christ is sacramentally present and the Mystery is celebrated in the lives of the worshippers. This invites the Christians to conform to Christ. Consequently the liturgy can be presented as the *sitz im leben* of Christ’s saving pattern in every age and it functions as the outline of following the New Testament life itself with Christ.

Liturgy as Existential and Life Oriented

The Church, according to Karl Rahner encounters Lord sacramentally and existentially. He says:

(This) happens *sacramentally* (above all) in the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist, in which man baptised into the death of Christ proclaims this death until He comes again; and happens *existentially* in Christian renunciation (...) The Evangelical Counsels are therefore an inalienable and essential element of the appearance of the Church, in so far as she must represent tangibly and cause to appear what she lives interiorly: the divine love which transcends the world eschatologically. And conversely, attachment to the Church is essential to the Evangelical Counsels, since they exist precisely as the appearance of that principle which is proper to the Church and *thus* is shared by the individual¹³⁶.

Liturgy is the expression of life. It is all the time life oriented. It remains as an expression and norm for right belief and right practice. The faith formation that the

¹³⁴ D. W.FAGERBERG, *Consecrating the World*, 66.

¹³⁵ J.RATZINGER, «The New Evangelization», II, 3.

¹³⁶ K.RAHNER, «Reflections on the Theology of Renunciation», 55.

liturgy renders also enables to live a Christian life in its vitality and totality. The fathers of the Church narrate the faith “as a term not only an attitude of trust in God, but also a continued orientation to eternal life”¹³⁷. The life in the faith which begins with Baptism is called as the *sacramentum fidei*¹³⁸. This ecclesial entrance through the initial sacrament enables the faithful to proclaim the profession of faith and the renunciation of Satan. The liturgical life which begins at the time of Christian initiation stands as a source for the Christian life and is oriented toward the imitation of Christ.

Liturgy in a nutshell is an expression of Christian faith which leads the faithful to a right norm of Christian practice and belief. Through the sacrament of Baptism the members of the Church become adherent to the liturgy. The members are not the spectators of passivity but active participants in and through the liturgy of praise which makes them anew and renewed each time of participation. The celebration of the liturgy always prerequisites a holy life. The prayer of the *Ramšo* testifies: “Let him who comes to the holy temple to pray cleanse his body and soul from evil; then the lord will hear his prayers and his petitions and have compassion on him”¹³⁹.

According to Alexander Schmemmann the subject matter of liturgical theology is its encounter with the ‘mundane street’. To crystallise the idea, Schmemmann explains the very structure of the Church. The straight line from the sanctuary “directs the force of the liturgical explosion onto the street”¹⁴⁰. For him the need is the mundane liturgical theology which maintains a tie between the Church and the world. The life in the world must be lived in accordance with the radiance of the Kingdom of God. The words of Isaac of Syria go in hand with Schmemmann: “The ladder of the kingdom is within you, hidden in your soul. Dive away from sin into yourself and there you will find the steps by which you may ascend”¹⁴¹.

In summary, the celebration invites for two liturgies: the celebrated liturgy and the lived liturgy or the liturgy and the liturgy after the liturgy. That is why the fathers are of the opinion that the profession of faith constitute a ‘theological criterion’¹⁴² - i.e., *lex orandi-lex credendi-lex vivendi*¹⁴³: the prayer leads to belief and the belief leads to action.

¹³⁷B.STUDER, «Liturgy and the Fathers», 60.

¹³⁸ Cf. AUGUSTINE, *Epistola Classes Quatuor* 98, 10 in PL 33, 364. *Sacramentum fidei* basically refers to the sacramental character of faith. It primarily refers to Baptism and also other sacraments.

¹³⁹*Awsār Slawō'o*, I, 621.

¹⁴⁰ D. W.FAGERBERG, *Consecrating the World*, 76.

¹⁴¹P.BEDJAN, ed., *Mar Isaacus Ninivita De Perfectione Religiosa*, II, 9, 12; English tr., *St. Isaac of Nineveh on Ascetical Life*, tr. M.Hanbury, 34.

¹⁴² Cf. B. STUDER, «Liturgy and the Fathers», 61; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1124; P. E. FINK, ed., *The New Dictionary of Sacramental Worship*, 722-723. *Lex orandi - lex credendi* is

Liturgy as Eschatological

The Christian liturgy as its inimitability keeps its eschatological character throughout the celebration. The tension between ‘already’ and not ‘yet’ is frequently referred in the liturgy: “Christ is the one who came and is to come”¹⁴⁴. The Eastern theology mentions the theme of eschatology not merely as last judgement or in the juridical sense. It presents the eschatology as hope and salvation. The Syriac eschatology is portrayed in the liturgical prayers:

O you died in Christ, do not grieve, for, behold the resurrection has come and the day of retribution; you shall rise from your graves without corruption and go forth with speed to meet the Son of the King; you shall be clothed in a garment of glory and shall sing praise before him; O resurrection of the sons of Adam, have pity and mercy on us¹⁴⁵.

The second coming is presented as the moment of hope and life to all. The faithful have to be trusted in the mercy of God with which the sins are forgiven. The Syriac liturgy interpenetrates the aspect of eschatology with Pneumatology. That means, “the spirit himself yearns and ‘intercedes’ for the eschatological fulfilment of the economy of salvation”¹⁴⁶. The same aspect is made clear by Zizioulas:

The Spirit is beyond history, and when he acts in history he does so in order to bring into history the last days, the *eschaton* (Acts 2:17): hence the first fundamental particularity of Pneumatology is its eschatological character. The Spirit makes of Christ and eschatological being, the “last Adam”¹⁴⁷.

It is clearly estimated that “liturgy has been founded on the ‘first coming’ of Christ in the body, and it is the anticipation of the second glorious coming”¹⁴⁸. The essence of eschatology is perceived as the ultimate unity which can be achieved through the liturgy especially in and through the sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist. In other words the ultimate aim of the liturgy is nothing but the unity of all in Christ. As a result, it can be summed up that “the Church in its liturgical

a Latin maxim that can be loosely translated as ‘the law of praying is the law of believing’. This abbreviated maxim is composed by St. Prosper of Aquitaine (ca. 390- ca. 493) in his letter to St. Augustine in 428 as *ut legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi*.

¹⁴³Cf.L.BOEVE, *Theology at the Crossroads of University, Church and Society*, 94. *Lex Vivendi* is the Rule of Life.

¹⁴⁴*Vishutha Kurbana Kremam*, 178; cf. also Rev 4, 8 which also speaks as “the Lord God Almighty who was and is and is to come”.

¹⁴⁵*Shimo*, 114.

¹⁴⁶B.VARGHESE, *West Syrian Liturgical Theology*, 48; cf. also Rom 8, 18-27.

¹⁴⁷J.D.ZIZIOULAS, *Being as Communion*, 130.

¹⁴⁸B.VARGHESE, *West Syrian Liturgical Theology*, 108.

celebrations witnesses to the Last Things, the unity of all in Christ. The liturgy anticipates and prepares for the *Parousia*, and offers a foretaste”¹⁴⁹. The liturgy unfolds in time and essentially it transcends it. There is a transfer into the eternity. The time of liturgy is ‘sacred’ because it belongs to the ‘age to come’. The liturgy is a preparation for the Day of the Lord. It enables the worshippers in the process of becoming and partaking in the eschatological journey of the Church which is always in progress.

¹⁴⁹B.VARGHESE, *West Syrian Liturgical Theology*, 108.

Syriac Perceptions on the Spirituality of Prayer

Ṣluto (ܣܠܘܬܐ)

The Syriac word *ṣluto* signifies simply as prayer and occasionally as liturgical prayer. It is referred in the *Pšitta* version of Psalms 141:1 and 143:1 as in the sense of *tephillah* in Hebrew. The Hebrew word *tephillah* stands for prayer with various nuances. It comes from the verb *pallel* means ‘to intercede’ or ‘to intervene’¹⁵⁰. In the Jewish synagogal tradition *tephillah* is also known as *amidah* which means ‘standing’, a posture to be adopted for the prayer¹⁵¹. The Syriac word *ṣluto* comes from the *ṣlo* (ܣܠܐ) or *Sali* (ܣܠܝ) and means ‘to slope’, ‘to lean towards’ or ‘to be prone to’¹⁵² and in outline, prayer signifies as “the loving inclination towards God in which we bring our needs from him as a child brings them before its parents”¹⁵³. Here too the presence of God and the union with Him is assured.

The etymological study on *ṣluto* as prayer conveys the various nuances and implications in the liturgical life of the worshippers. It contains the depth of liturgical asceticism in its great exemplarity. The Syriac liturgy, the magnificent expression of prayer with its ascetical fondness provides auspicious moments for appraising the worshippers. It stands as a moment of evaluating the men of prayer. The mentality of the worshippers during prayer is depicted like this:

I have considered all things and I have not seen anything better than the fear of the Lord; blessed is he who has loved it (...) Woe to me for all the sinners I have done from my youth! Like the sinful woman I cry to you, and like the publican I beseech you: merciful Lord, have pity and mercy upon me¹⁵⁴.

The spirit of liturgy demonstrates a relationship. It turns into attachment and binding toward God. As a result it possesses a communion and well being with all. It further portrays a mental state of inclination and leaning toward God as the most sublime value. This love of God is presented by the prayers: “it is more desirable than gold and sweeter than the honeycomb; blessed is he who loves the fear of the Lord”¹⁵⁵. In a nutshell, *ṣluto* persuades toward the values of liturgical spirituality in its totality.

¹⁵⁰ Cf. D. J. A. CLINES, ed., *The Concise Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, 359; Is 56, 7.

¹⁵¹ Cf. P. F. BRADSHAW, *The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship*, 19.

¹⁵² Cf. B. VARGHESE, *West Syrian Liturgical Theology*, 45; M. SOKOLOFF, *A Syriac Lexicon*, 1287.

¹⁵³ O. CULLMANN, *Prayer in the New Testament*, 33.

¹⁵⁴ *Awsār Slawō'to*, I, 489-491.

¹⁵⁵ *Awsār Slawō'to*, I, 489.

a) *Tawdito* (ܬܘܕܝܬܘܐ)

The Syriac word *tawdito* signifies ‘to confess, profess, believe or praise’ and is used more frequently in the Psalms¹⁵⁶. The word indicates the role of praise and confessions in the liturgical celebrations. It further mentions the inseparability between the glorification of God and the confession of the faith in the liturgical theology.

The Syriac word *tawdito* is yet another concept to elaborate the nuance of liturgical asceticism. The liturgy as the glorification of God is also the perseverance for attaining the proximity to heaven. The prayer itself testifies: “Behold the Watchers on high give ear to the voice of the service of those on earth, and they say; how sweet is the voice of the children of the earthly Adam, who sing praise with the harp of the spirit and offer thanksgiving”¹⁵⁷. This meditative prayer of the *Ramsho* (evening) makes it clear the basic function of the children of Adam and the recognition of the heavenly inhabitants for the worshippers on the basis of their earthly liturgy. Hence the constant prayer of a worshipper is this: “Splendour of the Father, enlighten my eyes that I may give thanks for your grace”¹⁵⁸. While praising God, the worshippers confess and recognise their indebtedness to God. The prayer testifies:

By night awaken my heart, Son of God that I may sing praise to your grace and give thanks for your sovereignty. The evil one wishes to drown me in the sea of sin, and he drowns me in sleep that I may not sing your praise. Strengthen me that I may rise and praise you and worship you and take refuge in your compassion; and I will cry to you with face unveiled, glory to you, O Lord¹⁵⁹.

It is vivified with this prayer that praising God is the responsibility of the worshippers. The worshippers must stand before God for praising Him. Falling in this responsibility is considered as ‘a sin’. The state of sleep is perceived as the association with the evil and the worshippers must be awakened in these circumstances. These concepts of standing and awakening indicate the real substances of liturgical theology.

b) *Akoro* (ܐܟܘܪܘܐ)

The Syriac word *Akoro* is a prominent title which is given to Jesus¹⁶⁰. This biblical and the apocalyptic title has enormous significances in the Syriac theology

¹⁵⁶ Cf. B. VARGHESE, *West Syrian Liturgical Theology*, 45; Ps 118, 1; M. SOKOLOFF, *A Syriac Lexicon*, 1627.

¹⁵⁷ *Awsār Slawō’o*, I, 615.

¹⁵⁸ *Awsār Slawō’o*, I, 347.

¹⁵⁹ *Awsār Slawō’o*, I, 391-393.

¹⁶⁰ Cf. S. PLANTHOTTATHIL, «Akoro (Farmer in the Syriac Tradition)», 147.

and literature. The symbolic title *akoro* signifies as ‘ploughman’ or ‘husbandman’ on the basis of the root word *akar* (أَكَرَ) meaning ‘to dig’¹⁶¹. Its metaphorical usages are also given for the Apostles. This particular word denotes the activity of a cultivator and a farmer with theological significance. The Syriac literature *Odes of Solomon* refers the term as this: “As the work of the farmer is the ploughshare and the work of the steersman is steering the ship, so my work is the Psalm of the Lord in His praises”¹⁶². While referring the spirituality of Ephrem, the liturgy testifies the concept of the ploughing in connection with the prayer:

I, Ephrem, am dying and I write my testament that it may be a witness to my disciples after me: be unceasing in prayer day and night. When the ploughman ploughs twice, his harvest is good; do not be like slothful, whose fields sprout thorns; be unceasing in prayer, for he who loves it receives a great reward in this world and the next¹⁶³.

Ephrem in his hymns depicts God as the true farmer: “Glory to the farmer, the Hidden One of our thought. His seed fell on our earth and enriched our intellect. Its harvest was a hundredfold for the storehouse of our souls”¹⁶⁴. Elsewhere he narrates further:

Look and see how Nature and Scripture are yoked together for the husbandman; Nature abhors adulterers, the practice of magic and murderers; Scripture abhors them too. Once Nature and Scripture had cleared the land they sowed in it new commandments, in the land of the heart, so that it might bear fruit. Praise for the Lord of Nature, glory for the Lord of Scripture¹⁶⁵.

For Ephrem God is a symbol of ‘wise labourer’ and ‘blessed ploughman’, “who himself became the grain of wheat that was sown and a sheaf that was reaped”¹⁶⁶. In another context he depicts God as the jealous husbandman: “Be jealous O husband against the tares, which have sprung up and entangled themselves among the wheat (...) May it return in threefold measure! Thirtyfold and sixty and an

¹⁶¹Cf.S.PLANTHOTTATHIL, «Akoro (Farmer in the Syriac Tradition)», 147; M.SOKOLOFF, *A Syriac Lexicon*, 46.

¹⁶²*Oden Salomos*, 16, 1; English tr., *The Odes of Solomon*, tr. J.H.Charlesworth, 70.

¹⁶³*Awsār Slawōto*, I, 492-493.

¹⁶⁴EPHREM THE SYRIAN, *Hymnende Nativitate(Epiphania)* III, 16 in CSCO 186-187 (82-83), 23/21; English tr., *Ephrem the Syrian Hymns*, tr. K.E.McVey, 87.

¹⁶⁵EPHREM THE SYRIAN, *Hymnen contra Haereses* XXVIII, 11 in CSCO 169-170 (76-77), 114/102-103; English tr., *The Harp of the Spirit*, tr. S. Brock, 1974, 10; cf. also J. M. VAN DER MEER- S. MANDELBROTE, *Nature and Scripture in the Abrahamic Religions*, I, 85-86.

¹⁶⁶Cf.EPHREM THE SYRIAN, *Hymnende Nativitate(Epiphania)* III, 15 in CSCO 186-187 (82-83), 23/21; English tr., *Ephrem the Syrian*, tr. K. E.McVey, 86.

hundred! Blessed be He Who makes rich thine increase!”¹⁶⁷. Ephrem presents Christ as the farmer: “My Farmer, plough my lands and again and a third time, Lord! Just as by a threefold action thou has baptized and brought to life the soil of our souls, the Church of our spirits”¹⁶⁸. As a description of the Bishops Aphrahat also uses the concept of *akoro* in his demonstrations: “You are the diligent farmers, filling the storehouse and gathering the produce”¹⁶⁹. In Aphrahat this agricultural imagery is intertwined with the concept of vineyard. Following are some of the related concepts which are closely associated with the theme of *akoro*:

i. Sower (*Soruo*)

The synoptic gospels with disparities present Jesus as the sower¹⁷⁰. The Lord is the sower and the hearers are the land to receive the seed. Aphrahat in his *Demonstrations* mentions this word at least thirteen times and “considers the sowing of the good seed in us by Christ, as an expression of His love to us, similar to His love behind His actions toward mankind”¹⁷¹. Ephrem in his *Commentary on Diatessaron* explains the reason of having good and bad fruits. He explains: “(...) But those ears attend to whatever they wish because of their freedom. There are certain others who attend to (his voice), but do not act upon what this attentiveness requires”¹⁷². He mentions it on the basis of human free will. The root of evil seed is the *biso* (ܒܝܫܘܐ). The Syriac fathers elucidate this biblical theme in order to exhort the sons of the covenant. The heart of the covenanters is depicted as good field and the covenantal way of life bears good fruits. The *biso* is the antagonist of the covenantal life. It is to be noted that in the context of perceiving ‘the body as seed’¹⁷³, Ephrem develops his anthropology which imbibes the profound

¹⁶⁷EPHREM THE SYRIAN, *Hymnen Carmina Nisbena* XX, 2 in CSCO 218 (92), 53-54; English tr., «The Nisibene Hymns», tr.J. T. Sarsfield Stopford, XIII, 190. Other references from the same hymn are XIX, 35-36; XXXI, 27; XXXIII, 3-5.

¹⁶⁸EPHREM THE SYRIAN, *Hymnen Carmina Nisbena* XIX, 35 in CSCO 218 (92), 53-54; English tr., *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, tr. R.Murray, 196.

¹⁶⁹APHRAHAT, *Demonstratio* XIV, 38 in PS 1, 680; English tr., *Aphrahat Demonstrations*, tr. K. Valavanolickal, II, 93.

¹⁷⁰Cf.Mt 13, 3-8; Mk 4, 3-8; Lk 8, 5-8.

¹⁷¹APHRAHAT, *Demonstratio* XVII, 11 in PS 1, 814; English tr., *Demonstrations*, tr. K. Valavanolickal, II, 150-151; cf. also S. PLANTHOTTATHIL, «Akoro (Farmer in the Syriac Tradition)», 148.

¹⁷²EPHREM THE SYRIAN, *Commentaire De L'Évangile Concordant* XI, 11 in SC 121, 202; English tr., *Saint Ephrem's Commentary on Tation's Diatessaron*, tr. C. McCarthy, 180.

¹⁷³ Cf. EPHREM THE SYRIAN, *Hymnen de Ieiunio* VII, 11 in CSCO 246-247 (106-107), 21/16; English tr., «Akoro (Farmer in the Syriac Tradition)», tr. S. Planthottathil, 150; E. VERGANI, «La fucina di verita'», 610.

spirituality of martyrdom which has the style of asceticism and eschatological hope for the resurrection.

ii. Labourer (*Paloḥo*)

Ephrem develops his Christology with his favourable title of the labourer. He makes use of the same title to refer the Apostles and the Bishops as well. According to him, “Christ is the wise labourer whose storehouse contains all mysteries and the farmer who became the wheat which was sown and the sheaf which was harvested”¹⁷⁴. In another hymn he mentions: “Praise to the labourer the hidden one of our thought. His seed fell on our land and enriched our intellect. Its crop came in a hundredfold to the store house”¹⁷⁵.

iii. Harvest (*Lkoṭo*)

The theme of harvest is another concept in the Syriac theology. Ephrem in his hymns explains the harvest as this:

And if so be Thy words are too little, till Thou our land with deeds, that amid much tillage, stock and root may be strengthened. Better is a goodly deed, than the hearing of ten thousand words. Thy seed shall yield a hundredfold, and the after crop sixtyfold, yea that which grows of itself thirtyfold”¹⁷⁶.

The theme harvest contains the significance of eschatology. Ephrem in his biblical commentaries mentions about the fruits of the seeds in tune with the eschatological connotations. The fertility of the fruits bears the results some, after some time, others at the end and the other at the same time. The harvest is presented as the final judgement.

In short, the Syriac word *Akoro* provides deeper denotations for the celebration of the liturgy and consequently enables the vision of ‘the liturgy after the liturgy’. It conveys the nuances of liturgical asceticism. The liturgical prayers of the Syriac Church are celebrated at 7 times in a day. Each day is classified into 7 times in the canonical prayers. According to the West Syriac liturgy, the ecclesiastical day

¹⁷⁴EPHREM THE SYRIAN, *Hymnen de Virginitate* XX, 11 in CSCO 223-224 (94-95), 70/64; English tr., *Ephrem the Syrian*, tr. K.E.McVey, 348.

¹⁷⁵EPHREM THE SYRIAN, *Hymnen de Nativitate (Epiphania)* III, 14 in CSCO 186-187 (82-83), 22/21; English tr., *Ephrem the Syrian*, tr. K. E. McVey, 86; cf. also S. PLANTHOTTATHIL, «Akoro (Farmer in the Syriac Tradition)», 150.

¹⁷⁶EPHREM THE SYRIAN, *Hymnen de Carmina Nisibena* XVIII, 9 in CSCO 218-219 (92-93), 49/59-60; English tr., «The Nisibene Hymns», tr. J. T. Sarsfield Stopford, XIII, 188; cf. also E. VERGANI, «La fucina di verita'», 613.

begins with the evening prayer¹⁷⁷. The prayer at night includes 4 *Qawme* (قَوَمَة) -Watches-(literally means standing). For a theological hypothesis, it can be estimated that together with the other 6 times of prayers, there are 10 times of prayers in a day altogether¹⁷⁸. This supposition is to indicate the role of the 5 internal and external senses¹⁷⁹. Prayers at 10 times signify their purification. The whole person is incorporated into the spiritual realm of prayer. The sanctification of the worshippers is vivified here. The harvest is the procedure that happens in the celebrations of the canonical prayers.

The explanation of Patriarch Mor Ignatios Bar Wahib on the prayers at seven times is praiseworthy to be added in this context¹⁸⁰: evening prayer is the work on the earth and ploughing is continued there. *Southoro* is the time of sowing the seeds. During *Lilyo* which is comprised of 4 sections in which the growing plant is sheltered from weeds, thorns, thistles etc. Morning is the time of harvest. In the third hour, there is the carrying of the wheat crops and in the sixth hour the grains are collected in the harvest store. In the ninth hour there is alms-giving and sharing of the fruits of the harvest. The entire life of the worshippers is dedicated for the 'harvest'. Constant progress of a spiritual life is reflected here. The liturgical celebrations hence imbibe the spirit of liturgical spirituality which aim at the harvest of the spiritual life and the sanctification of the whole person.

¹⁷⁷ Cf. *Šhimo*, ii. The 7 liturgical times are *Vespers (Ramsho)*, *Compline (Sutoro)*, *Matins& Laudes (Lilio)*, *Prime (Sapro)*, *Terce (Tloth sho in)*, *Sext (Sheth sho in)* and *None (Tsha sho in)*.

¹⁷⁸ Cf. *Šhimo*, ii.

¹⁷⁹ Cf. *Šhimo*, ii.

¹⁸⁰ *Šhimo*, ii-iii.

Concept of the Light

The concept of Light is attached with the celebrations of the Liturgy of Hours. The theme of light represents the presence of God and the manifestation of Him. Ephrem says: “On Sunday the light conquered and was exalted as a parable”¹⁸¹. It is narrated that, the light at the beginning of time is a symbol of Christ, who conquered sin and death on Sunday, the day of resurrection. The burning lamp and the light are depicted as the symbolic motivations for the illumination of the whole personality of the worshippers. The rubrics pay much attention on keeping the lamp burning as in the model of the wise virgin. The lamps are the symbolic presentations of the life itself. The liturgy testifies that it is the light which causes the enlightenment for the blessed worshippers. Therefore the celebrations are the invitations for getting the ‘blessings of the light’ and becoming ‘the blessed’. Here the state of enlightenment is perceived as the life which possesses the virtues and good deeds. In other words the concept of light in this context aims at a life of pleasing God unceasingly. The symbolic act also signifies the entry into the mystery of resurrection and reminds the necessity of being enlightened in the earthly life:

How beautiful is this night when we meet the Lord! How glorious, wondrous and beautiful! Behold both old and young join together, carrying lights and singing hymns. The baptismal font is adorned like a glorious bride and gives life to those who partake of its waters and are born again in purity¹⁸².

The prayer asserts the importance of the service of light. It focuses on the event of meeting with the Lord. It is remarkable that the ritual of carrying or lightening the candle resembles in meaning with the aspect of praising the Lord. The symbolic action, hence, indicates that the state of enlightenment encompasses the life of liturgy, i.e., praising the Lord unceasingly. It takes the humanity into the original status in the paradise and makes him or her a liturgical being. The worshippers are called as ‘the sons of light’¹⁸³. As a fraternal exhortation, the worshippers are invited by the liturgy to light the lamp like the wise virgins to receive the bridegroom: “Awake, my brothers, and arise and light your lamps, because the bridegroom is about to come, go you forth to meet him”¹⁸⁴.

¹⁸¹ EPHREM THE SYRIAN, *Hymnen de Virginitate* LI, 1 in CSCO 223-224 (94-95), 162/142; English tr., *Ephrem the Syrian*, tr. K. E. McVey, 461.

¹⁸² A. P. MOHRBACHER, *Holy Week Service Book*, 22.

¹⁸³ Cf. *Awsār slawōt'o*, I, 749.

¹⁸⁴ *Awsār slawōt'o*, I, 751.

The Concept of the Night

It is commendable to remark about the conceptual nuance of night on account of the context of the celebration of the Liturgy of Hours. The West Syriac liturgy has an influence from the Greco-Roman concept of night¹⁸⁵. It divides the night into four watches or *qawme*¹⁸⁶. The prayer during the night concretely depicts the sleep as ‘the moments of sin’ and death that which overpower man. The Syriac view on night is more crystallized in the *bo’utho* prayer: “Let me, Lord, before Thee stand, wakefully my watch I’d keep, should I fall to slumber’s hand, guard Thou me from sinful sleep. Waking, if to wrong I take, mercifully absolve Thou me; sleeping, if a sin I make, pardon grant in clemency”¹⁸⁷. At this point, slumber signifies the spiritual inactivity and indifference to God’s living and loving presence. Sleeping is perceived as a state which is inclined to sin. It clearly mentions that, the root causes

¹⁸⁵ Cf. P.F. BRADSHAW, *Daily Prayer in the Early Church*, 6. The New Testament passages like Mt 14: 25 and Mk 6: 48 present ‘a set of division’ of the night. Both passages present the visit of Jesus during the fourth watch of the night. The Jewish view on the night divides it into three watches. There was a discussion on the time of the departure of light and the coming of darkness or the end of night and the beginning of the day. There is a reckoning of the day from evening to evening which is based on the biblical traditions (Lev 23, 32). The scriptural basis of Gen 1, 5 shows the Jewish mind of perceiving the sunset as the starting point of the day. Basil, the Greek father, is of the opinion that evening is the boundary common to day and night: cf. BASIL, *Hexaemeron*; English tr., *Daily Liturgical Prayer*, tr. G.W. Woolfenden, 15. Ambrose narrates about the evening as the anticipation of the Sunrise and the morning light shines in times of darkeners on those who meditate on the Word of God: AMBROSE, *Expositiops*. 118, 19, 30 in CSEL62, 433, 437-439; English tr., *Liturgy of the Hours in East and West*, tr. R. Taft, 142.

There is a nocturnal watch which is known to the Jewish priesthood for the purpose of tending the lights. The pattern of praying at night is also associated with eschatological nuances (Mt 25, 1-13). Light burning during night is considered as a well distant ancestor of Christian evening light ceremony. The Greek fathers (Melito, Origen, and Clement of Alexandria) uphold the symbolism of light overcoming darkness as a powerful imagery of the Risen Christ. For Basil the coming of night is the moment of seeing God’s eternal light. For Chrysostom and Severus the rationale for the evening prayer is its theme of repentance and seeking the divine protection. Evening and morning prayers are dedicated with the theme of Passover from the death to the life. The initial perception of praying at night is based on the view of the night as turning to the day by the light of Christ. In other words it reminds of the anticipation of the morning light to the evening darkness. In a nutshell, the concept of evening and night is that the morning light embraces the light of all others including the evening: cf. G.W. WOOLFENDEN, *Daily Liturgical Prayer*, 20- 24.

¹⁸⁶ The four watches or *qawme* have various significances. Except on Friday when the theme of Cross is commemorated, the first *qawmo* remembers the Mother of God. The second *qawmo* is dedicated to the Saints and the Apostles. On Monday, Tuesday and Thursday in the third *qawmo* the theme of repentance is commemorated, whereas on Wednesday and Friday the departed ones are specially remembered. The fourth *qawmo* contains the general themes: cf. B. VARGHESE, *West Syrian Liturgical Theology*, 127.

¹⁸⁷ *Vishudha Kurbana Kremam*, 30.

of the sin are the impious thoughts and wicked people which are like the terror. Here the Cross and the Angels are placed as the agents of protection and refuge. The Holy Eucharist strengthens the worshippers: “Grant Thy angel’s watchful view, guard my limbs without abate, hateful lusts in me subdue, by Thy living flesh I ate. While I lie and sleep in calm, may Thy blood my keeper be. Let my soul dwell free from qualm in Thine image mad’st Thou me”¹⁸⁸. The worshippers pray to God for making the breath during sleep like the incense. The worshippers acknowledge Christ as the light and beg constantly for the indwelling in that light: “Saviour Christ, our hearts inspires, Thee to see effulgent bright, Thee whose honour shines as fire, worshipped by all sons of light. Jesus, saviour of the world, Thou who dwellest in the light, prise we Thee for love unfurled mercy, now with future bright”¹⁸⁹. The Syriac theology affirms the aspect of sinful sleep and the urge for vigilance during night. Here the Lord is presented as the Vigilant, who has no sleep¹⁹⁰. The vigilance is presented as the illumination of ‘the eyes of the heart which has no sleep’¹⁹¹. In this illumination process, there is the purification of the vision, faithful keeping of the commandments, day and night meditation on the law of the Lord and the obedience of the will of God¹⁹². The ardent prayer of the worshippers during the night is for obtaining the awakened intelligence, the illuminated mind and the pure sleep¹⁹³. Another deep Syriac perception on night is presented in the launching part of *lelyo*:

Lord, from our sleep in the sloth of sin that we may praise your watchfulness, you who watch and do not sleep; give life to our death in the sleep of death and corruption, that we may adore your compassion, you who live and do not die; grant us in, the glorious company of the angels who raise you in heaven, to praise you and bless you in holiness, because you are praise and blessed in heaven and on earth, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, now and always and forever, Amen¹⁹⁴.

Remembering the Lord must extend even to the bed¹⁹⁵. This meditation enables the worshippers to keep the constant contact with the Lord. The state of vigilance enables the worshippers to stand in the presence of God for praising Him unceasingly¹⁹⁶. Hence the worshippers confess: “And to you, belongs the praise O God”¹⁹⁷ and elsewhere, it is also mentioned: “ To you belongs glory, to you

¹⁸⁸ *Vishudha Kurbana Kremam*, 31.

¹⁸⁹ *Vishudha kurbana kremam*, 32.

¹⁹⁰ Cf. *Awsār Slawōt’o*, I, 63.

¹⁹¹ Cf. *Awsār Slawōt’o*, I, 263.

¹⁹² Cf. *Awsār Slawōt’o*, I, 63, 65; PS 119, 13-16.

¹⁹³ Cf. *Shimo*, 22.

¹⁹⁴ *Awsār slawōt’o*, I, 63.

¹⁹⁵ Cf. *Shimo*, 268.

¹⁹⁶ Cf. *Awsār slawōt’o*, I, 63.

¹⁹⁷ *Awsār slawōt’o*, I, 65.

belongs praise, to you belongs honour, God of all, the Father of truth, with the only Son and the living Holy Spirit, now and always and forever”¹⁹⁸. In this context the joy of the worshippers is to follow the commandments of the Lord¹⁹⁹. The beauty of the creation becomes the subject matter for praising the Lord: “Praise him, sun and moon; praise him, all stars of light; praise him, heaven of heaven, and he waters above the heavens: let them praise the name of the Lord”²⁰⁰. The night prayer also elucidates the motivation for praising the Lord on account of the benefit of the forgiveness of offences²⁰¹. One soliloquy of the worshipper illuminates the attitude of the life: “Why do you love sleep more than praise, my soul, and how long will you be engrossed in pleasure which do not profit? Awake now and rise and sing praise: Lord of all, to you the praise”²⁰². The state of vigilance during the night enables the worshippers to beseech the Judge for not putting into condemnation.

The worshippers are called the ‘watchers’ (*iro*) who never sleep²⁰³. The advantage of the prayer at night is presented as the moment to hear the voice that the Lord is coming²⁰⁴. Here the watchers have the company of the Just, Righteous, Prophets, Apostles and Holy Martyrs who are prepared enough to meet the Lord and enter into the marriage chamber for inheriting the life and the Kingdom²⁰⁵. The rising up in the middle of the night is called as ‘a wise act’²⁰⁶. As a result of these wise and loving acts in the night, the darkness is driven away and the night shines as the day²⁰⁷. The watchers recognize the Lord as ‘the day’ and hence they can perceive the snaring and stumbling characters of the world²⁰⁸.

The prayers assert the necessity of the repentance during the night: “Awake, sinner, while you have time for repentance; with tears and sighs cleanse and purify your stains”²⁰⁹. The human inclination to sin is evidently presented in the night prayers. As a result, the liturgical celebration exhorts the worshippers to repent because the Lord prefers to those who repent. It is noteworthy to mention in this

¹⁹⁸ *Awsār slawōt'o*, I, 123.

¹⁹⁹ Cf. *Awsār slawōt'o*, I, 63-65.

²⁰⁰ *Awsār slawōt'o*, I, 107; cf. also Dn 3, 40-42.

²⁰¹ Cf. *Awsār slawōt'o*, I, 221.

²⁰² *Awsār slawōt'o*, I, 625.

²⁰³ Cf. *Awsār slawōt'o*, I, 221. The Syriac word *iro* indicates watcher. It also contains the meaning of angel. The word *ihiruto* signifies watchfulness. The root form for watching is *rho*: cf. S. BROCK - G.A.KIRAZ, *Syriac English- English Syriac Dictionary*, 438.

²⁰⁴ Cf. *Shimo*, 63.

²⁰⁵ Cf. *Shimo*, 63.

²⁰⁶ Cf. *Awsār slawōt'o*, I, 263.

²⁰⁷ Cf. *Shimo*, 65.

²⁰⁸ Cf. *Awsār slawōt'o*, I, 263.

²⁰⁹ *Awsār slawōt'o*, I, 367.

context about the Syriac perception of the sin as the ‘debt’²¹⁰. It is narrated that, “(...) By the wood of the tree man came to be a debtor; therefore when the Lord came he paid the debt by the wood of the Cross”²¹¹. *The Book Steps* exhorts its readers to have the mournful tears of prayer for eliminating sin from within and enabling to be perfected. Tears are presented as ‘the bribe’ for appeasing the Judge. As a result of the repentance with tears the door is opened to the penitent: “In the middle of the night a bribe is offered to the Judge. Stand and pray and beg for pardon, for by tears your Lord is appeased and his door is open to the penitent by night and by day”²¹². Here it is noticeable that the position of the prayer is standing. “Raise up those who are fallen, confirm those who stand, that we may all be worthy with you to offer praise to the Son, Christ our Saviour, and to his blessed father and to his Holy Spirit, now and always and forever, Amen”²¹³. The position of standing has a monastic signification in the Syriac liturgy and it will be dealt with later. The repentance of the Thief, the Publican, the Sinful Woman, the Canaanite Woman and the Samaritan Woman motivate the worshippers in the radical way²¹⁴. The righteous people are praised on account of the repentance:

You righteous, who loved the truth, and you just, who died for the love of the Son of God, your memory is a blessing; you are harbours of relief for sinners who repent; pray with us to Christ, who rests in your bones, that he may show compassion and mercy to us on the day of the manifestation of his majesty, and may grant us an open face, before the throne of his godhead, and we will sing praise to him by night and by day²¹⁵.

It is during the night vigil the watchers beg for the entrance into the bridal chamber with the garments worthy of the marriage feast²¹⁶. In the night prayer, both the Church and the monasteries sing together and it signifies the interconnectedness of both in their journey towards the eschatological bliss. “Behold the Churches and the monasteries sing praise (...) and give glory to the watcher who awoke our sleep (...)”²¹⁷. To sum up, the nuances of the prayer and vigil during the night imbibe the very significance of the Liturgy of Hours during

²¹⁰ Cf. *Perunalukal*, 125-126; Mt 18, 18-35. It is in this context, the West Syriac liturgy arranges ‘the Service of *Šubkono*’ which is a liturgy for the reconciliation of debts and held before commencing the Great Lent: cf. J. PAYNE SMITH, ed., *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary*, 563; M. SOKOLOFF, *A Syriac Lexicon*, 1518.

²¹¹ R. MURRAY, «Mary, the Second Eve in the Early Syriac Fathers», 374.

²¹² *Awsār slawōt'o*, I, 391.

²¹³ *Awsār slawōt'o*, I, 509.

²¹⁴ Cf. *Awsār slawōt'o*, I, 391.

²¹⁵ *Awsār slawōt'o*, I, 509.

²¹⁶ Cf. *Šhimo*, 92.

²¹⁷ *Awsār slawōt'o*, I, 375.

night. The attitudes like repentance and vigilance and the themes like bridal chamber and bridegroom depict significance of the prayers at the *lelyo*.

The Concept of Dawn

In the teaching of the Syriac fathers, there is a constant acknowledgment of God as the principle source of the light and a motivation to become the spiritual light in the world. The holy people imbibe this light in their hearts and the worshippers aspire to become worthy of the luminous stage of life. It is mainly focused on the theme of creation and its light. The prayers during the morning time, direct to the mysteries of the resurrection of Christ, the new life and the light that dawned over the creation. Another Significance is its connection with the ‘great morning’, the second coming of Christ when the light will overpower the forces of darkness, sin and death. In the genesis, God the Creator removed the darkness by the creation of the light and renewed it by giving light, life and joy. The prayer testifies the aspects of creation and light: “Creator of the morning, who drives out the darkness and brings light and joy to the creation, creates in us the habits of virtue and drives from us all the darkness of sin; gives us light and joy by the glorious rays of your grace, Lord our God, forever”²¹⁸. Consequently, according to the Syriac liturgy every morning is celebrated as the memorial of the morning of the resurrection which won over the darkness, Satan and death: “All the time of morning praise to you from those above and those below, O Son who sits at the right hand, by whose command darkness and death and Satan were destroyed and your light has regained over the world”²¹⁹. Hence, the duty of the worshippers in each morning is to praise the Lord of the two worlds. As a result, they get the foretaste of ‘the great morning’, the second coming of the Lord:

From morning to morning I have sought your salvation, O lover of man; on your great morning when you come, make us to stand at your right hand. On this morning, I will sing praise to you, and on that which is to come, I will magnify you; on both mornings glory to you, Lord of the two worlds²²⁰.

The prayers make a comparison between the ‘passing morning’ and the ‘morning which does not pass’: “On this passing morning we worship you, who give light to creation; on that morning, which does not pass, grant that we may all exult at your right hand, O living Lamb, who redeemed us by your cross”²²¹. The reward for ‘the great morning’ is the direct meeting with Christ and receiving the recompense:

²¹⁸*Shimo*, 36.

²¹⁹*Shimo*, 105.

²²⁰*Shimo*, 109.

²²¹*Shimo*, 376.

In the morning let us hasten to prayer like Abraham to the sacrifice; that on the great morning which is to come we may see Christ and he may say to us: Come in peace, good and trusty servants; come and enter and inherit the kingdom and life which does not pass away²²².

In brief, the theme of the morning prayers imbibes the liturgical nuance of the light. Moreover, the very themes of resurrection and the new life are in close proximity with the concept of the light. This liturgical celebration contains the concept of light in connection with the life of the ten virgins.

²²²*Shimo*, 70.

Part II

The Liturgy of the Hours in the Annals of History

Didache (AD 50-70) is the first explicit reference for the daily prayer system of the primitive Church. It exhorts the worshippers to recite 'Our Father in Heaven' thrice a day. Clement of Rome in his 'First Letter to the Corinthians', the earliest Christian witness (1 Clem 40:1-4) refers to the expression "at set time". In the context of the mystery of resurrection, he mentions like this: "Let us consider, beloved, how the Lord continually manifests to us the resurrection to come, whose first fruits he made Christ by raising Him from the dead. We see, beloved that the resurrection was accomplished according to the time. Day and night make visible to us a resurrection. The night goes to sleep, the day rises; the day departs, the night follows"¹.

In the third century, Clement of Alexandria gives the reference for the orientation in prayer based on the theme of light. Rising of the Sun in the east is compared with Christ, who is the light of the world and the sun of justice: "And since the dawn is an image of the day of birth and the place from where the light which shone forth first from the darkness, increases, there has also dawned on those wrapped in darkness a day of the knowledge of the truth; prayers are made toward the sunrise in the east, in accord with the system of the sun"². The teaching of Clement of Alexandria is also unique in narrating the eschatological character of the night prayer for the first time. The trait of vigil is developed on this basis. In this context, one must remember the Syriac perceptions on 'vigilance' and 'watchfulness' and the attribution of 'the sons of covenants' as the friends of the angels, who need no sleep and engage in the unceasing praise of God. Hence, the religious life which is perceived as the angelic life is valued based on the unceasing prayer.

Among the Earliest Church Fathers, it is Origen who mentions the prayer that is facing towards the east. In his treaty on 'Prayer' (32) he exhorts to pray without ceasing. He mentions the prayer three times. According to him, "it is good to go morning, midday and evening into the Lord's dwelling, for the glory of your

¹ 1 Clement 24:1-3.

²CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, *Stromata* VII, 7, 43:6-7.

creator”³. Tertullian also speaks of the orientation in the prayer and the rubrics connected with it. There is a growing standardization of Christian prayer. In the writings of Tertullian we can distinguish the categories of prayer as obligatory (morning and the evening) and highly recommended (third, sixth, ninth, and the vigil). He also speaks of the prayer before meal, bath, and reception of the guests. There is an account about the psalms which are alluded with the Alleluia. He remarks specially of the rising at night for the prayer. The earliest evidence for ‘agape supper’ with the evening lamp ritual is also mentioned in his writings. The temple sacrifice system practiced twice a day influenced him to provide the importance for the prayers in the morning and the evening (Ex 29: 38-41; 30: 7-8; Num 28:3-8). The importance given to the day hours by the secular world is also made into consideration in his remarks on the daily prayer system. The divisions of the day on the matters of the business circle are underlined here. There are intervals of the works during the day. Consequently, these hours are depicted as ‘the little hours’ in the patristic writings. It agrees with the division of the 12 hours into three groups. They are considered as the normal points of reference in the ancient world. Moreover, in the Roman tradition, they are presented as ‘the apostolic origin’ based on the passion account in St. Mark.

Annals of the history of the daily prayer system depict the influence of the Jewish Prayer System. The Jewish prayer which is known as the *tefillah* or benedictions is recited thrice a day (Dan 6:10). The morning and the evening prayers include the twofold recitation of the *Shema*. The records also mention the three times prayer system in the Qumran community. In the Jewish tradition, the vigil at night is dedicated to the study of the law. Flavius Josephus (BC 37- AD 101) mentions the privileged role of the prayers in the evening and the morning. The focal theme of the prayers is described as the acknowledgment of the goodness of the Lord.

However, there are differences of opinions about the impact of the Jewish Prayer System on the official Prayers of the New Testament. Some of the references provide their acquaintance with the *Shema*: (Mt 22:37; Mk 12:29-30; Lk 10:26-27; 1 Cor 8:4-6). There are other references also for the praying portrait of Jesus at Morning (Mk 1:15) evening (Mt 14:23) vigil in the night (Lk 6:12). The disciples are also engaged in prayer at the third (2:1,15) the sixth (10:9) and the

³ R. H. CHARLE , *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English*, 2:461 A

ninth (3:1) hours. Praying at night is also mentioned in Acts 16:25. The unceasing prayer and the constant vigilance narrated in the biblical passage (Mt 25:1-13) are presented as the motivating meditations of eschatological bliss. The Pauline references like 1 Cor 14: 26; Eph 5:14; Jas 5:13 speak of the prayer gatherings of the early Christian community with psalms, hymns, reading, etc.

The third century is notable for the general spread of Old Testament themes into Christian theology, the replacement of the Saturday to Sunday when fasting was forbidden, and the Old Testament Priesthood to the Christian ministry. The early references like Didache and the Apostolic Constitutions (VII) speak of the Jewish influence on the liturgy of hours of the Christian movement. The New Testament development of Light is also decisive in this progress. The Psalms from the Bible, canticles, and the typology provided ample content for it.

Cyprian(+258) confirms the view of Tertullian, in his work called 'On the Lord's Prayer'. According to him the prayers of the young people with Daniel at the third, sixth and ninth hours are significant times for the liturgy of hours. The narrations of the events in the Acts of the Apostles about the testimony of the Holy Spirit descending upon the disciples at the third hour (2:15); the journey of Peter to the housetop at the sixth hour, the crucifixion of Jesus from the sixth to the ninth hours, etc. are also decisive moments for fixing at the timing of the prayers. The resurrection of our Lord is the foundational moment for the prayer in the morning. Again the Scripture testifies that the time of morning is important for hearing the voice of the Lord and pleasing the Lord in His second coming (Ps 5: 3-4; Hos 5:15-6:1). For Cyprian, the sunset is also an important occasion to pray on the view of the Christians on Christ as the true sun and the true day. Furthermore, the Lord provides the Grace of the eternal light when He returns. In the Psalms, there is a prognostic statement about Jesus as the day (Ps 11: 22-24) and as the Sun in Malachi (4:2).

Since Christ is presented as the day and the sun, no time in a day is exempted from prayer and praise. Those who are in Christ are in the true day and the sun. Hence the nocturnal darkness makes no harm to the sons of the light because even in the night there is a day. The light in the heart is decisive in this context. Those who are in Christ must pray even in the night. The Prophetess Anna depicted in Luke 2:37 is the model for a true worshipper: "She did not leave the temple, serving with fasting and prayers night and day". Let us count the night as the day. There should not be any loss of prayers in the night hours. Hence Cyprian

mentions that those who are in God's indulgence are recreated and reborn spiritually. He exhorts us to be vigilant in the night as in the light of day.

The views of Cyprian on light and resurrections served to systematize the sets of prayer in the evening and the morning. For him the established and the obligatory times of the prayer in Judaism are not the morning and evening temple; rather the three Jewish hours of private prayers given in Dan 6:10,13 have occupied the positions. It is against the popular understating of the pristine Christian times of prayer as morning and evening to which the little hours are added later. For Cyprian, the theory is the opposite. For him, the older and the obligatory Jewish times of prayer are the third, the sixth, and the ninth hours to which Christians added the prayers at evening and morning.

The Apostolic Tradition (215)

The Greek text called the Apostolic Tradition of the third century is said to be written by Hippolytus of Rome around 215. Chapter 35 of the same text speaks of the prayer at home on rising and on special occasions catechetical instructions in the early morning. The Latin version of the text speaks of the prayer at the ninth hour. The reconstructed text further remarks on the prayer at the third hour at home. Prayer at heart is advisable if the person is not at home. It advises praying at the sixth hour in which Christ was nailed to the wood of the cross and spread darkness. Hence it is recommendable to pray at such a time to evade the darkness in the world. The text also speaks of the prayer at the ninth hour. The theme described is the piercing of the sword and the pouring out of water and blood from Jesus' bosoms. In the evening, prayer is advisable to bring light. The book also describes the Prayer before sleep. Rising at midnight and washing the hands with water are also presented as rubrics for the prayer at night. It is said that all the creations are active to praise God and hence the humans must pray at that moment. Moreover, the necessity of prayer at night is remarkable as the night is presented as the time of the arrival of the bridegroom. The prayer at cockcrow is centered on the hope of the eternal light at the resurrection of the dead.

The Cathedral Office

The peace of Constantine in 312 is a significant milestone in the history of Christianity. Developments have taken place in art, architecture, and liturgy. The Church was organized as provinces and dioceses and monasteries were built. The age also witnessed the developments in liturgical life in a special way. The local Christian communities came together regularly for the daily prayers. The scholars prefer to designate the development of the prayer system as Cathedral and Monastic Offices.

The liturgy of the hours in the fourth century could be organized in two ways. A. Baumstark explains it: the prayer of the Christian community together with the Bishop and the Priests was called the Cathedral Office; whereas the prayer that was conducted at the monasteries was entitled the Monastic Office⁴. In the cathedral offices, the main hours of prayers are morning (*Lauds*) and evening (*Vespers*). Together with these two sets of prayers, the community gathered on Sundays and Holy Days for the Vigils. The Cathedral Office was meant for all the people. It included the symbols and rites like lights, incense, processions, etc., and the chants-hymns, responsorial, antiphons. The ministries like Bishop, Presbyter, Deacon, Reader, Psalmist, and Chanter were also present for the prayers. The selection of the psalmody was limited. The Morning Prayer included Psalms 50, 62, 66, 117, 148-150. The prayers were concluded with prayers of intercession, 'Our father in Heaven', and collect by the leader of the prayer. The prayer in the evening which was known as the office of the Light (*lucernarium*) included Psalms 140.

However, in the monastic office, the prayers at *terce*, *sext*, *none* were added, and later *prime* and *compline* were also included. It is remarked that the monks 'institutionalized' the vigil prayer as a daily office. The usage of the psalmody was unlimited and continuous in the Monastic Office. The two distinct offices were not opposed; rather complemented each other. In the west, the distinction between them was disappeared because of the general monastic inclination of the liturgy of the Hours. Both of them together constitute the foundation of the traditional patrimony of the divine office.

It was Eusebius of Caesarea, the famous Church historian who gives the earliest evidence about the information of the cathedral office. The Cathedral

⁴ A. BAUMSTARK, *Comparative Liturgy*, ed., B. Botte, trs. F.L.L. Cross, 111f.

Office practiced the daily gathering in the morning and the evening times as pre-eminent occasions for prayer. Other sets of times were (Pre-Nicene hours) considered as individual and special devotions of the monks. Eusebius of Caesarea as the early Church historian remarks on the specialty of the times as this: “The pleasures of God are the hymns which everywhere in the world are offered in his Church at morning and evening time”⁵. These two sets of prayers have been distinguished from the beginning itself as obligatory. There are reasons for the importance of them in the Cathedral Office. Firstly, the rest of the hours were not convenient for the common people to gather and pray. Hence those prayers were started to recite at home individually or a house prayer. Hence the choice for morning and evening is the practical reason. Secondly, although the prayer of praise was considered as a sacrifice in the early generations, “no attempt had been made to equate particular times of prayer with specific Old Testament sacrifices: instead, it was a continual prayer which was seen as the fulfilment of the morning and evening sacrifice of Israel”⁶. John Chrysostom remarks that the morning and the evening offices are the Christian fulfilment of the daily sacrifice. Hence we can remark that praise and thanksgiving were the two dominant notes of these offices. It is also remarked that along with them there is a strong penitential theme that crept into the contents of the prayers. According to Chrysostom, “...This is the reason why each evening we must beg pardon from the Master for all these faults”⁷.

There are differences of opinions among the theologians about the origin of the prayers during morning and evening. The light cult of the pagans which was widespread in the eastern Mediterranean area was attributed as one of the influential factors. There is another opinion that supports the influence of the lighting of the lamp in Judaism. It was connected with the community meal in the evening. Later as part of the development of the offices, the offering of the incense was included to enrich and fulfil the daily sacrifices of the Old Testament. As we read in the Scripture, in the evening and morning there was the burning of the incense. Exod. 30:7-8 narrate that “Aaron shall burn upon it sweet incense every Moring; when he prepares the lamps, he shall burn incense upon it. And when

⁵EUSEBIUS, *Commentary in PS.* 64.10.

⁶ P.F. BRADSHAW, *Daily Prayer in the Early Church*, 73.

⁷CHRYSOSTOM, *Baptismal Instructions*, 8.17-18; Eng. trns. P.W. Harkins, *St. John Chrysostom: Baptismal Instructions*, 126-127.

Aaron lights the lamps in the evening, he shall burn incense upon it, a perpetual incense before the Lord throughout your generations”. This ritual was supported by the penitential theme attached to the prayer. In the OT the incense was perceived as expiatory power of sins (Num. 16:46-47).

It is remarkable that the use of incense as in the Old Testament fashion used primarily in Syria and is explicit in the Hymns of Ephrem (*Carmina Nisibena*): “Your Fasts are a defence unto our land, your prayer is a shield unto your city; your burning of incense is our propitiation; praised be God, who has hallowed your offering”⁸. However, there is no clarity to remark about the use of incense whether in the office or the Eucharist. Later, the lighting of the lamp and the burning of the incense came to be the important rubrics in the daily offices. The journey details of Egeria of the fourth century throw light on the daily office prayers at Jerusalem. She narrates both cathedral and monastic offices of Jerusalem that existed at the end of the fourth century.

It was John Chrysostom who gives the reasons for the daily meeting for the prayers: in the morning one comes for giving thanks and praise to God for the benefits received and also for getting God’s presence in the daily activities. In the evening the faithful seek the pardon of the offenses committed during the day. Further, the protection of God is pleaded during the night. For him, Psalms 140 have a penitential significance and as a spiritual chant, it is fruitful as medicine for curing ourselves of the sins committed during the day. Psalms 62 enlighten the soul with ardent longing for God. Moreover, he asks the Christian faithful to pray frequently during the day.

The prayers during these times included the Christological themes and the mystery of redemptions. They enabled the faithful to sanctify the time and participate in the sacredness. The office is said to be ecclesial because it is celebrated in the Church. The structure of morning and evening offices is identical:

1. Chanting the Psalm 140 at vespers, Psalm 62 at laudes
2. Prayers of the catechumens
3. Dismissal of the catechumens
4. The deacon invites all to pray(Admonition)
5. Prayer of the bishop
6. Diaconal admonition for the laying of the hands

⁸EPHREM THE SYRIAN, *Carmina Nisibena* 17:37f.

7. Prayer of blessing said by the Bishop before dismissing the people
8. Dismissal by the deacon, ending the celebration.

In short, the Cathedral Office was well organized and celebrated by all the community-the Bishop, Clergy, and Lay People. The office provided a community bond and a sense of the body of Christ. The absence from the office was considered as the deeds to weaken the body of Christ. The morning prayer was considered a Christian form of beginning and consecrating a new day. It was a service of thanksgiving and praise for the day given. It also confesses the salvation achieved through Jesus Christ. The prayer in the evening was considered as the time to thank God for the benefits achieved and the opportunity to ask forgiveness for the human limitations during the day. It also aimed to beg for the grace of God and the protection for a peaceful and sinless night. Each office was enriched by the selections of the Psalms and canticles suitable for the occasions. Light, incense, processions, and intercessions were added to it when it developed as an organized prayer pattern. The symbolism of light was fundamental to the office. Passing from darkness to light referred to the mystery of the resurrection. Christ was presented as the Sun of Justice and Eternal Light.

Pure Monastic Office and Urban Monastic Office

John Cassian in his work 'Institutes' and 'the Conferences' depicts the monastic ideals of the east and the west. The former work speaks of the monastic celebration of the divine office. He mentions mainly the monasteries in Egypt. He remarks on the lavish usage of the Psalms in prayer. With the arrival of the 'rule of the angel' - the recitation of the twelve Psalms in the nocturnal offices, the number of the Psalmody is fixed. Since the monks were mainly anchorites the monastic rules maintained a reduced version of the prayers in the community and insisted upon the uninterrupted solitary prayer pattern. Cassian in his treatises mentions further the recitations of Psalms 140 and 62 and records the explicit relationship between Christian praise, the old sacrifices, and the sacrifice of Christ. According to him, the evening celebration as the true evening sacrifice is instituted by the Lord in the evening of the last supper. Moreover, it is connected with the evening sacrifice of the following day when Christ extended his hands on the Cross as a

sacrifice for the salvation of the world. For him the evening gathering is not a matter of pious evocation; rather a true content in the mystery of the liturgy itself.

Cassian also speaks of a mixed urban monastic office in which the Monastic and the Cathedral traditions are united. In 'the institutes' he remarks of the prayers at third, sixth, and ninth hours. The celebration at *prime* is also remarked there. It is said that the prayer at *prime* is added in the monastery to prevent the monks from returning to their beds to sleep after the morning and night offices. The symbolism of the number seven is established as nocturnal vigil, *Lauds, Prime, Terce, Sext, None, and Vespers*. Vigils were classified as canonical, which was celebrated as a community program and private that the monks practiced in their abodes. Cassian remarks about the uninterrupted prayers as a spiritual offering to God. It also expresses the acceptance of the sovereignty of God, the docility and the humble heart, and constant struggle. The lips and the hearts are occupied in spiritual meditation. There is a complete harmony of liturgy and life, prayer and work, community and individual and hence formed an organic synthesis.

The monastic office in Cappadocia is mentioned in the writings of St. Basil the great. As a unique expression, he uses the term Christian for the monks. They are Christians *par excellence*. The monastic office imitated the Cathedral Office largely. Unlike the nocturnal vigil in Palestine and Antioch which was celebrated at cockcrow, Basil introduced it at midnight. About the evening prayer, he applied the expression 'giving of thanks through light'. The uniqueness of the monastic office is its insistence on praying seven times. It also combined the prayers in the community and privately. There was a combination of Monastic and Cathedral elements in the morning and evening prayers. The monks at the end of the fourth century introduced a monastic *cursus* with the introduction of the lesser hours. The monks preserved the lavish usage of the monastic psalmody at the beginning and the end of the day. They introduced a new hour of *compline*. The psalmody and the vigil were considered ascetic and contemplative. There was a perfect bending of prayer, work, and monastic life.

The liturgy of the hours in the east in the fourth century can be divided into three: Monastic, Cathedral, and Urban Monastic or mixed. They are not three successive chronological stages of development. Rather they are three distinct kinds of offices that developed in three separate areas of ecclesial life. The pure monastic office had no special relation to the time of the day. It is considered as the stimulus to the attitude of the uninterrupted prayer of the monks. The lavish usage

of the psalmody is the outcome of it. Each psalmody was succeeded by the prostration for private prayer and finished with collect. Each gathering was ended with the reading from the Scripture.

Hybrid Urban Monastic Offices

The monasteries which were in the urban areas maintained a relationship with the secular Churches and adopted the main aspects of the Cathedral Offices without neglecting the basic aspect of unceasing prayer and psalmody. The hybrid urban monastic office is a combination of both offices at the end of the fourth century. As a result, the office included the prayers at the third, sixth and ninth hours as the formal liturgical services. They were called ‘the little hours’ previously. It also included the elements of cathedral morning praise and the evensong and introduced the monastic psalmody at the beginning and the end of the monastic office. The prayer at *compline* was introduced as a bedtime prayer. Previously the prayers of the day were ended with vespers in both the Cathedral and the Pre-monastic Offices. The contents of the prayers in the urban monastic office differed according to the areas.

The Latin Terms of Liturgy of Hours arranged by St.Benedict

1. *Matins*- Prayer during the Night; about 2 am. Sometimes it is called Vigil and composed of 2 or 3 *nocturns*
2. *Lauds*- Prayer at dawn; about 5 am
3. *Prime*-First Hour Prayer; approximately 6 am
4. *Terce*-Third Hour Prayer; approximately 9 am
5. *Sext*- Sixth Hour Prayer; approximately 12(noon)
6. *None*-Nine Hour Prayer; approximately 3 pm
7. *Vespers*-Prayer at the lighting of the lamps; about 6 pm
8. *Compline*- Prayer before retiring; about 7 pm

The Prayers of the Hours in the East in General

In the east, there started a prayer system seven times. The Armenian and East Syrian (Assyro-Chaldean) offices preserved their Cathedral Office. The Coptic tradition which is strongly monastic kept the Cathedral and Monastic Offices juxtaposed and separated. In the other traditions especially Byzantine tradition there is a blending of both offices.

The Syro-Antiochene tradition is a combination of native Syriac elements. It includes hymns, choral pieces which included the text from the translations of the Greek liturgical texts. The synthesis work was done by the non-Chalcedonian monastic groups in Syria, Palestine, and Mesopotamia. The Syriac traditions have a full complement of the seven customary times of prayers: *Nocturns, Matins, Terce, Sext, None, Vespers, and Compline*. *Matins* or *Safro* is said to have absorbed the Cathedral Vigil. In *Nocturns* or *Lilyo* there is a replacement of continuous nocturnal psalmody and introduced ecclesiastical poetry. There is also a doubling of *Matins* as juxtaposition in the same service of Monastic and Cathedral usages.

The various Syriac literary pieces like *Nuhro, Sugito, Bo 'uto, Qolo* are the strophic chants. The ecclesiastical poetry *Bo 'uto* which is a supplication is recited at the end of the offices is a paradigmatic instance.

***Shimo Namaskaramm* or Daily Prayers**

Shimo is the official prayer book for the liturgy of the hours in the West Syriac Tradition. The word *Shimo* etymologically means simple, common, or ordinary. Hence the book refers to the prayers that are for ordinary days. This canonical prayer book consists of prayers from Monday to Saturday. On Sundays and feast days the book of *Fenqitho* is used. Each time the prayer begins and ends with a *qawmo* which literally means standing. The content of the prayer is Trisagion and Lord's Prayer. The Nicene Creed is also included at the end of the prayer. The church has developed the seven liturgical hours of prayer (Ps. 119:164). The day according to the liturgical tradition begins in the evening at sunset. The Book of Genesis (1:5) testifies that "that God called the light day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning the first day". The seven canonical prayers according to the Syriac traditions are given below:

a) *Ramsho*-Evening or Vespers. Sometimes it is called *nogah* which means 'beginning of'.

b) *Soutoro* or Bedtime Prayer (Compline)

c) *Lilyoor* Midnight Prayer

d) *Saphro* or Morning Prayer (*Matins*)

e) *Tloth sho 'in* or Third Hour (*Prime*/9 am)

f) *Sheth sho 'in* or Sixth Hour (*Sext*/noon). It is also known as *felgeh d-yawmo* which means the middle of the day

g) *Tsha 'sho 'in* or Ninth Hour prayer (*Nones*)

<u>Liturgical Hour</u>	<u>Syriac Name</u>	<u>time</u>
<i>Vespers</i> (Evening)	<i>Ramsho</i>	6pm
<i>Compline</i> (Night)	<i>Soutoro</i>	9pm
<i>Nocturnes</i> (midnight)	<i>Lilyo</i>	12am
<i>Matins</i> (Morning)	<i>Sapro</i>	6am
Third Hour	<i>Thloth sho 'in</i>	9am
Sixth Hour	<i>Phalgeh d'yaumo</i>	12pm
Ninth Hour	<i>Thsha 'a sho 'in</i>	3pm

In our practice, there are different names for the Liturgy of Hours: *Prethidinaprathan*, *Yamanamskaram*, *Sheemopadi*, etc. *Yamanamskaram* is the official prayer of the Bride of Christ. It is significant in the spiritual movement of the Church. The prayers sanctify the *yamas* of the day. It is the ancient Christian style of prayer to bless the day and night. Those who have made the covenant with

the Bridegroom are obliged to participate in the prayers and celebrate the communion with Him. It reveals not only the obligatory responsibilities but also the due reverence towards the Bridegroom. The failure in the celebration of the prayers is considered as the breaking of the communion with God and the faithfulness towards God and the Church.

The Syriac Church in the *Yamanaskaram* includes the breaking of the Word and the service of praise. The codified works of the prayers started in the fourth century under the patronage of the monasteries. The psalmody which was at the beginning the content of the prayer came to be replaced by the hymns and the chants of the holy fathers of the Church. The Syriac fathers who were the pioneers in the poem form of theologization had composed countless hymns and contributed them to the treasury of the liturgical tradition. The great personalities like Ephrem the Syrian Balai, Jacob of Serugh, Simon Stilita (Desthuni), Iwanios of Antioch, etc. were the prominent figures among them. As the protectors of the orthodoxy, they composed against the heretics and the unorthodox teachings through their literary hymns. They were faithful to the Word of God and made use of the symbolic expressions of the Scriptures.

The structure of the prayers is modeled after the Jewish prayer system which included the fixed times of prayers. The first Christian community also followed the Jewish prayer system. However, the contents of the Christian prayers were Christ and the salvation achieved through him. The prayers of the Syriac Church were life-oriented and directed for the salvation of the faithful. Repentance which is presented as the beginning of Christian life is presented as the main theme of the liturgy of the hours, especially on Monday and Tuesday. The role of Mary, the Mother of God in the salvation history is specially recognized and her intercession of prayer is supplemented in the prayers. The holy people of the Church are considered as the true witnesses and the models of the orthodoxy of the faith. The mystery of the Cross is commemorated as a decisive theme in salvation history. The Church remembers the departed souls and praises the Lord together with them. Their intercessions are also valued for our journey towards salvation.

The themes attached with the Hours

1. Evening- Ceaseless praise and uninterrupted thanksgiving
2. Soothoro- Repentance
3. Liliyo- Vigilance(Divided into four Watch)
 - First Quamo(Watch)-Mother of God except on Friday when the mystery of Cross is celebrated
 - Second Quamo-Saints except on Thursday when the Holy Apostles are commemorated
 - Third Quamo-Repentance on Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday; the departed ones are commemorated on Wednesday and Friday
 - Fourth Quamo-General Themes
4. Morning-Mystery of Creation and Resurrection; the theme of light is celebrated.
5. Third Hour- Contains the theme of the day
6. Sixth Hour- General Themes
7. Ninth Hour- Departed souls
 - The third, sixth, and ninth hours include the themes of falls and salvation which are considered decisive moments in the history of salvation.

The Themes of the day

Sunday– Resurrection of Christ
Monday – Repentance
Tuesday– Repentance
Wednesday – *Theotokos*(Mother of God)
Thursday– Holy Apostles and Saints
Friday– Holy Cross, Martyrs, Confessors
Saturday– Departed Clergy and Laity

Praying Positions of the Liturgy of the Hours

Embodiment is symbolic participation in the actions of worship. We recognize the body as the temple of God and it is sanctified in the prayer (1 Cor 6:19). The resurrection of Christ gave us hope for the resurrection of our human person. In the prayer, our bodies imbibe active participation for the purification and the sanctification of the human person. The sanctification of our embodiment enables us to achieve communion with God. In the canonical prayers, we are

fortunate enough to obtain the foretaste of the Kingdom of God where there is unceasing praise and worship.

a) Standing

Standing is the principle position of the prayer. The beginning prayer is known as *qauma*. The word etymologically means standing and hence prayer is in the standing position. We stand as the position of the children of God. Standing is also a position of reverence and respect.

b) Kneeling

Kneeling is another position during the prayer. It is a symbolic action of submission to God. It is significant as an act of repentance. Kneeling, kissing the feet, and making the sign of the cross is the actions joined together. On Sunday there is no kneeling; the day is the commemoration of the resurrection of the Lord and the day of joy.

c) Facing towards the east

East is the direction of prayer. Facing towards the east signifies the preparation for the glorious coming of the Lord (Mt.24:27). It is the direction of the light. Hence the orientation signifies the Christian purpose of life as illumination. The position of Paradise and Jerusalem is also considered as the east.

The General Themes in the Canonical Prayers

There are some unique themes of the liturgy of hours of the West Syriac tradition.

a) Rootedness in Bible

The liturgy of hours is composed based on biblical content. The prayers, hymns, and symbols are taken from the Bible and they are always in connection with the true revelation. The salvation history described in the scripture is well depicted in the liturgical prayers. The Old Testament is presented as preparation and the New Testament is portrayed as its fulfillment of the salvation history.

b) Trinitarian Doxology

As a unique way of expression, the prayers include the trinitarian doxology by the end part of all prayers. The theology of the Holy Trinity is well presented in the prayers.

c) Fear and reverence

The worshiper remains in the prayer with fear and reverence before the Lord. Is 6:1-9 speaks of the human attitude towards the holiness of the Divine reality. The very construction of the Church building speaks of the same attitude. The position of *Madbaha* is located as an elevated place from other parts of the Church. Removing the sandals before the entrance to the Church also symbolizes the same aspect (Exo.3:5).

d) Sense of Husoyo and Repentance

Isaiah reveals his unworthiness to stand before the divinity (Is 6:5). The main theme of Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday is Repentance.

e) Sense of the Immense Love and Mercy of God

The sense of *husoyo* enables the faithful to seek the mercy and love of God. The love and the mercy of God are presented as the fortresses of the worshipper.

f) Confession of the True Nature of Christ

The hymns which were mainly composed in the context of orthodoxy, include the proclamation of the true faith. The Liturgy of hours gives much importance to the presentation of the true nature of Christ.

g) True Reverence and Veneration to Mother of God

The aspect of Mother of God is very much emphasized in the prayers. While portraying the mystery of incarnations, the liturgy renders much reverence for Mary, the Mother of God. The prayers also emphasize the extraordinary virtues of Mary. The biblical imageries and types are used lavishly in the prayers to depict the marvelous role of her in salvation history. Many of the Old Testament types are presented to show her uniqueness in the imitation of Christ. Wednesday is specially dedicated to recollecting her incomparable role and to intercede in the Christian pilgrim.

h) Special Reverence to the Apostles, Prophets, Martyrs

They are the members of the mystical Body of Christ. They are well presented in the prayers as the witnesses of Christ and the Gospel message. The martyrdom is depicted as the means to enter the Kingdom of God. Their witness was at the risk of martyrdom. The prayers pay due reverence and veneration to them.

i) Remembrance of the Dead and the Eschatology

The prayers remember the departed souls in due reverence. The day of Saturday is specially dedicated for them. The prayers also prepare the faithful for the second coming of Christ. As a unique perception, the second coming is not presented as a moment of judgment; rather it is an act of mercy from the Lord. It is said that it is a pneumatological eschatology; since the Holy Spirit is always at the assistance.

In general, the Liturgy of the Hours includes all the themes of the salvation history: the Holy Trinity, the Mystery of Incarnation, the Holy Cross, the Mystery of Resurrection, the Second Coming, the Bride and Bridegroom relationship, the roles of Mary, Mother of God and the Martyrs, Apostles, and Prophets, the Theology of eschatology, etc.