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Christian Ministry & History of Christianity



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About the cover painting...



The Crucifixion of the Lamb to the Resurrection of the Ram
- Ajiyan George -

| Acrylic on Canvas | 24x30 | 2014 |

In the Old Covenant the blood of lambs and rams were the sacrifices offered to please God. Lambs were considered to be weaker animals when compared to the adult rams. This painting is a symbolic representation of the submission of Christ, the kenotic Lamb into the hands of man which ultimately resulted in his resurrection as the powerful Ram. This is depicted in Genesis 22:7, where Isaac asks Abraham “where is the lamb for the sacrifice?” as they ascended Mount Moriah. Abraham replies to him, that God would provide the lamb. However, God was so impressed by the faith of Abraham, that he replaced Issac, the weak lamb by the Ram.

Editorial

Our first encounter with an article is like our first meeting with a person. We may feel an interest and attraction, or we may feel indifference or hostility. But experience teaches us to question these initial responses, since often, further acquaintance reverses our attitude. With every article, as with every other person, further reading/acquaintance is essential for full enjoyment and appreciation. The more we know about it, the richer our experience of it will be. Like a person having a lot of experiences, knowledge and feelings, article presents us the same. It enriches our level of understanding and flourishes our wish to live contentedly.

Keeping this in mind, we present to you this new issue of *Hekamtho* that attempts to address the various aspects of Christian Ministry and Ecclesiology.

In the first article, *A Brief Historical Introduction to the West Syrian Liturgical Year*, Biju M Parekkaattil elaborately discusses the various elements that led to the formation of the Liturgical Calendar in the Syrian Orthodox Church. The arrangement of the Seasons in the Liturgical Year is based on seven central events in the celebrations of the Salvation History. Even though the liturgical year follows the same course of seasons punctuated by various feast days, the faithful must not see this as repetitive, rather as an opportunity to live the saving mysteries anew.

Marriage, as a social institution, is a fundamental human right and a joint responsibility. Binoy Thattankunnel provides a Orthodox undersanding to it through his article, *The Sacramental Nature of Marriage and Sexuality Within an Orthodox Perspective*. It clearly explains the role that both bride and groom have to play for its potential experience.

Nowadays the accessibility of electronic media is unimaginable and the church is making use of it to a great extent to convey the Christian message. However, video as an art form is almost unfamiliar to the Christian Communication. In the third article, *Video Art and Dominance of Visual Culture*, Aji George analyses the origin and growth of video art as a notable form of visual communication in the realm of conceptual art. It seeks the possibilities of using video art in today's media saturated world as a means of communicating spiritual and moral concepts.

Can women be ordained to the priesthood? This is a question which provokes much debate in our modern world, but it is one to which the Church has always answered "No". Greger Kollannur, in his article *The Office of the Deaconess in Orthodox Churches- A Historical Analysis*, elaborately discusses this issue from the perspective of the Church Fathers.

The last article, *Names of God in the Holy Bible- An Exgetical Study*, by Anish K Joy elucidates the understanding of Old Testament period about God. Throughout Scripture God reveals Himself to us through His names. These names explain His nature, character and the way He cares for us. That makes the article a remarkable read.

We hope that the present volume will not only enrich our knowledge but will also encourage each one of us to work towards a better world.

- Fr. Dr. Ajiyan George
Editor

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A Brief Historical Introduction to the West Syrian Liturgical Year

Biju M Parekkattil¹

The organization of the liturgical year as the annual cycle seems to have originated in Jerusalem in the time of Cyril (+386) and it spread to the other churches and developed differently.² The West Syrian liturgical year can be divided into a cycle of seven periods and each of these periods having approximately seven weeks.³ The importance of number 'seven' is originated from the important seven Sundays of the salvation history found both in Bible and in tradition.⁴ In the West Syrian Liturgical year, seven seasons of seven weeks provide a perfect frame work for the celebration of the economy of the Salvation

¹ Rev. Fr. Biju M Parekkattil is a reserach fellow at National University of Ireland Maynooth (NUIM).

² Irénée-Henri Dalmias, *The Eastern Liturgies*, trans. Donald Attwater (London: Hawthorn Books, 1960), 133.

³ Baby Varghese, *West Syrian Liturgical Theology* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004),136.

⁴ John Moolan, *Liturgy of the Hours (Divine Praises): Syro—Malabar Church* (Kottayam : OIRSI Publications, 2014), 162.

(ܡܚܒܘܨܝܐ)⁵. However, the length of the cycle varies considerably, with the exception of the Advent, Lenten and Easter cycles. This variation is mainly due to the integration of the Church calendar with the civic calendar and which is made through the adjustments of the weeks in certain liturgical seasons. Generally speaking, each cycle is centred on a principal feast and it begins and ends with Sunday⁶. The distribution of weeks in seasons primarily centred on four feasts of the Lord such as *Yeldo d Moran* (Christmas December 25), *Denho d Moran* (Epiphany – January 6), *Qyomtho d Moran* (Easter) (Sunday, following the full moon after March 21) and Feast of the Cross (September 14).⁷

1. From *Qudesh Etho* ܩܘܕܝܫܐ ܕܥܬܘܐ (Sanctification of the Church) to *Yeldo d Moran* ܝܠܕܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܪܐܢ (Christmas)

In the West Syrian tradition, the liturgical year begins with *Qudesh Etho* (Sanctification of the Church). *Qudesh Etho* is the first Sunday of the November or 30/31 October if it falls on a Sunday.⁸ Anton Baumstark considered it as the dedication of the Church of Edessa, while Maclean related it to the Cathedral of Seleucia-Ctesiphon.⁹ According to B. Botte, it is not dependent on the dedication of a particular church; but is the Christianised version of the Jewish feast of Hanukkah (1 Mac. 1:36-59), which lasted for eight days from 25th of the Jewish Month of Chislew (between November 30 and December 25).¹⁰ In the Syraic version of the Bible (Peshito), the name *Qudesh Etho* is given to the feast of the dedication of the Jerusalem temple (Jn.

⁵ Stephen Plathottathil, *Themes of Incarnation in the Sedre for the Period of Suboro-Yaldo According to the Mosul Fenqitho* (Kottayam: SEERI, 2009), 11.

⁶ Baby Varghese, *West Syrian Liturgical Theology*, 136.

⁷ John Moolan, *Liturgy of the Hours*, 162.

⁸ Ignatius Aprem I Barsaum, *Chithariya Muthukal* (The Scattered Pearl)(Mal.) trans. Jacob Varghese Mannakuzhiyil (Chenganassery: Mor Adai Study Centre, 2009), 125.

⁹ Anton Baumstark, *Festbrevier und Kirchenjahr der syrischen Jakobiten: Eine liturgiegeschichtliche Vorarbeit* (Paderborn: Druck und Verlag von Ferdinand Schöningh, 1910), 140; A.J. Maclean, *East Syrian Daily Offices*, (London: Rivington, Percival and co., 1894), xxv; Cf. M. Black, “The Festival of Encoenia in the Ancient Church with special reference to Palastine and Syria“, in JEH 5 (1954), 78-85.

¹⁰ B. Botte, “Les Dimanches de la Dedicace dans les eglises Syriennes”, in LOS 2 (1957), 65.

10:22).¹¹ The Christian community from the early centuries might have celebrated the feast of *Qudesh Etho* as the ‘feast of the dedication of the all the altars in the world’, but the period seems to have been evolved later.¹² *Qudesh Etho* is followed by *Hudosh Etho* (the Sunday of the Renewal of the Church) and the Sundays of Advent. The offices of the ‘two festivals of the Church’ do not discuss the doctrine of the Church, but it remains as a mystery.¹³ In the Old Testament, the Church was prefigured and its nature and vocation were alluded in the prophecies. These two first Sundays introduce the goal of the liturgical year. The nucleus of the Annunciation period is at first attested as two-week preparation for nativity by Antipater of Bostra (+451/58), Syria and which named as the Sunday of John the Baptist and the Sunday of Annunciation to Mary.¹⁴ At present, the West Syrians have tripled these two Sundays in the period of Annunciation, while the East Syrians have doubled them in this season.¹⁵ The *Suboro* of the present model, in the same order and under the same titles, is found in a Jacobite Menology of the 12th –13th century and in the menology of Segestan.¹⁶ Thus the West Syrians have six Sundays before Christmas and its first, third and fourth Sundays for the Baptist and the second, fifth and sixth Sundays for Mary.¹⁷ The Syrians call this season *Suboro* (سُبُورُ) Annunciation), while Latins and Armenians call it *Advent*. The East and West Syrian

¹¹ John Moolan, *Liturgical Year: Syro-Malabar Church*, (Kottayam: OIRSI, 2013), 26; Irénée-Henri Dalmias, *The Eastern Liturgies*, 134.

¹² Varghese Pathikulangara, *Divine Praises and Liturgical Year* (Manganam: Denha Services, 2000), 200. In the East Syrian Tradition, Four Sundays were separated from the period of Moses by Catholicose Isho Yahb III and formed four Sundays of Dedications and it attached not in the beginning but at the end of the Liturgical Yearly cycle in order to manifest the final glory of the Church.

¹³ Baby Varghese, *West Syrian Liturgical Theology*, 136.

¹⁴ PG 85, 1764-1792; R. Caro, *La Homiletica Mariana Griega en el siglo V*, 241-255; M. Aubineau, *Les homélies festales d’Hésychius de Jérusalem*, 134; M. Jugie, “La première fête Mariale en Orient et en Occident, l’avent primitive,” 136.

¹⁵ John Moolan, *The Period of Annunciation-Nativity in the East Syrian Calendar: Its background and place in the Liturgical Year* (Kottayam : OIRSI Publications, 1985), 62, 268-269; John Moolan, *Liturgical Year*, 103; P. Jounel, “The Year”, in, *The Church at Prayer vol. IV: The Liturgy and Time*, eds. Aime Georges Martimort (London : Geoffrey Chapman, 1985), 93.

¹⁶ Archdale A. King, *The Rites of Eastern Christendom Vol. 1*, 112.

¹⁷ The East Syrians have four Sundays before Christmas, and its first and third Sundays devoted for the Baptist and second and fourth Sundays for Mary.

prayers reflect the theology of the fulfilment, whereas the Latins and Armenians express the theology of expectation in this season.¹⁸ The Sundays of this period are the following:

1. *Qudesh Etho* (Sanctification of the Church) مَبْحَعًا وَهُدُوعًا حَبْلًا
2. *Hudosh Etho* (Renewal Sunday) مَبْحَعًا وَشُدُوعًا حَبْلًا
3. Annunciation to Zachariah, Priest مَبْحَعًا وَهُدُوعًا وَرَحِيمًا صَدَقًا
4. Annunciation to Mary مَبْحَعًا وَهُدُوعًا وَرَحِيمًا كَرِيمًا
5. Visitation of the Mary to Elisabeth مَبْحَعًا وَهُدُوعًا وَرَحِيمًا كَرِيمًا
6. Birth of John the Baptist مَبْحَعًا وَهُدُوعًا وَرَحِيمًا كَرِيمًا
7. Dream of Joseph مَبْحَعًا وَهُدُوعًا وَرَحِيمًا كَرِيمًا
8. Sunday Before Christmas مَبْحَعًا وَهُدُوعًا وَرَحِيمًا كَرِيمًا

The Nativity of our Lord Jesus on December 25 is the central feast of this season. It is a feast of Roman origin, but beautifully assimilated to the Syriac tradition.¹⁹ St. John Chrysostom speaks about the adoption of the Christmas in Antioch about the year 375²⁰ and St. Gregory of Nazianzus in Constantinople in 379.²¹ Following the two Sundays of the church, the six Sundays of the Annunciation prepares the whole season to be a nativity celebration or the extended Christmas.²² The Season of Advent makes its appearance for the first time, as the first six weeks and then four, in Rome in the sixth Century.²³

¹⁸ John Moolan, *Liturgical Year*, 122.

¹⁹ Joseph F. Kelly, *The Origins of Christmas* (Collegeville :Liturgical Press,1999)68; It was during 337-352, at the time of Pope Julius I, that the feast of the Nativity of Christ was first established in Rome. See in, K.A. Heinrich Kellner, *Heortology: A History of the Christian Festivals from their Origin to the Present Day* (London: Kegan, Trench, Truebner & co., 1908), 449.

²⁰ Archdale A. King, *The Rites of Eastern Christendom*, 112.

²¹ K. A. Heinrich Kellner, *Heortology*, 450.

²² The supposition of Annunciation on a Sunday might have been originated from the surveillance of important events that have taken place on other Sundays of scheme. Second Canon of the Doctrine of the Apostles, a fourth century document of pseudo apostolic teachings on the liturgical feasts and commemorations, says that on the first day of the week He manifested Himself in the World. See in: W. Cureton, *Ancient Syriac Documents*, 26; Arthur Vööbus, *Synodicon in West Syrian Tradition*, 201-202, trans. 189; Pauly Kannookadan, *The East Syrian Lectionary*, 159.

²³ J.D. Crichton, *The Coming of the Lord: Advent to Candlemas (Origins of the Feasts and Seasons with Homily notes)* (Rattlesden: Kevin Mathew Ltd, 1990), 8. It started as a baptismal preparation in Spain in 380, and then in Gaul (France) three days of fast of the week from the Feast of St.Martin (November 11) until Christmas.

2. From *Yeldo d Moran* ܡܘܪܢܐ ܕܡܘܪܢܐ (Christmas) to *Denho d Moran* ܕܢܗܘܐ ܕܡܘܪܢܐ (Epiphany)

The Period between Nativity and Epiphany is dedicated to the expression of joy at the birth of Messiah. The central themes of this period are based on the mystery of revelation and the liturgical themes expressed here are the baptism and the revelation of the Holy Trinity. The syriac term - ܕܢܗܘܐ - *Denho* means ‘the rising of the sun’ and it denotes theologically the divine manifestation of Jesus at His Jordan baptism.²⁴ The early Church’s understanding of Jesus as the Sun of righteousness might have prompted to use the term for this season. Not only the West Syrians but all the churches in the East commemorate the baptism of Jesus on January 6, but in the West, it is the feast of the adoration of Magi.²⁵ The Syrian Church celebrated the nativity of Jesus at Epiphany in earlier times and in that tradition the birth of Jesus had cosmic consequences.²⁶ St. Ephrem wrote 28 beautiful hymns on the Nativity celebrated at Epiphany. But this tradition was lost when the Roman date of December 25 was received and the birth narrative cut away from the manifestations and from baptism.²⁷ After the detailed analysis of early Syrian and Armenian texts, Gabriele Winkler proposes in her monumental essay, ‘Die Licht-Erscheinung bei der Taufe Jesu und der Ursprung des Epiphanie-festes’ that the earliest layer of the celebration had to do with Jesus’ “pneumatic birth” in the Jordan²⁸. She also suggests that the use of τὰ φώτα for 6th January, together with the Syriac ܕܢܗܘܐ *Denho* may well be among the earliest designations of the feast. It was the first time that revealed the great mystery of the

²⁴ John Moolan, *Liturgical Year*, 160.

²⁵ Paul F. Bradshaw and Maxwell E. Johnson, *The Origins of Feasts, Fasts and Seasons in Early Christianity* (Minnesota: SPCK, 2011), 126.

²⁶ K. A. Heinrich Kellner, *Heortology*, 129.

²⁷ Martin Connell, *Eternity Today: On the Liturgical Year Vol I (On God and Time, Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Candlemas)* (New York: Continuum, 2006), 158; Archdale A. King, *The Rites of Eastern Christendom Vol. 1*, 113. In a hymn for laudes on Feria III, we read: “In the month of April, the Angel Gabriel announced thy Incarnation and in the month of January we have seen thy birth”.

²⁸ Gabriele Winkler, “Die Licht-Erscheinung bei der Taufe Jesu und der Ursprung des Epiphanie-festes, *Oriens Christianus* 78 (1994) 177-229. This essay appears in English translation of David Maxwell in Johnson, *Between Memory and Hope: Readings on the Liturgical Year*, (Minnesota: The Liturgical press, 2000) 291-348.

Triune God, which was hidden for generation. This revelation liberates humanity from the bondage of sin and leads to the freedom of the children of God. Therefore, the creation was renewed in the Lord. The blessing of the waters is the central ceremony of the *Denho* liturgy of the West Syrian tradition.²⁹ This service is now found in a number of Eastern churches, but with considerable differences.³⁰ *Ma'de'dono*, the ordo of the feast days in the Syrian Orthodox Church, says two manuscripts have been consulted in its production: the first from Jerusalem and represents the tradition of the *Za'faran* monastery, the other has been the printed edition from India. The introduction also mentions about a *Denho* service revised by James of Edessa, as well as orders from Amid, Mardin, Tur Abdin, Tagrit and Mosul.³¹ The feast of the circumcision of the Lord on January 1st originated in the West and spread to the East.³² The feast of the entrance of the Lord into the Temple was attested in Palestine at the time of Egeria's visit (ca. 386) as the celebration of the fortieth day after the Christmas-Epiphany (i.e. February, 14.), 'with special magnificence.... all things are done with the same solemnity as at the feast of Easter'.³³ Emperor Justin introduced it to Constantinople on 2nd February, 542, as a thanksgiving

²⁹ P. Jounel, "The Year", 88; Paulose Mor Athanasius Kadavil, *The Syrian Orthodox Church: Its Religion and Philosophy* (Cheeranchira: Adai Study Centre, 2015), 105.

³⁰ Adrien Nocent, *The Liturgical Year Vol.1: Advent, Christmas, Epiphany* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2013), 271

³¹ Murad Saliba Barsom (tr.), *Ma'de'dono : The book of the Church festivals* (Lebanon, 1985), 37.

³² Stephen Plathottathil, *Themes of Incarnation*, 35. The Octava Domini on January 1st appeared first as the *Festum Circumcisionis* in the Calendar of Charlemagne around the year 781. See in, K.A. Heinrich Kellner, *Heortology*, 452; John Dowden, *The Church Year and Kalendar* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1910), 38. It was by the beginning of the 7th century, 1st January was observed rather as the Octave of Christmas. The title "the circumcision of Our Lord" appeared first in a lectionary from Capua in 456 and was widely accepted in Gaul before being finally adopted in Rome in the ninth century. 1st January is also the feast day of St. Basil the Great. According to St. Gregory of Nyssa, 26th December was the feast of St. Stephen, 27th of St. James and St. John, 28th of St. Peter and St. Paul and first January, of St. Basil, the champion of Orthodoxy. See in, Peter G. Cobb, "The History of the Christian Year" in *The Study of Liturgy*, eds Cheslyn Jones, Geoffrey Wainwright, Edward Yarnold and Paul. F. Bradshaw (London: SPCK, 1992), 416.

³³ K.A. Heinrich Kellner, *Heortology*, 129; Peter G. Cobb, "The History of the Christian Year", 417.

for the end of a plague and from there it spread throughout the East.³⁴ In the sixth century, the feast was adopted in Syria.³⁵

The Sundays of this period are the following:

1. First Sunday after Christmas
2. Second Sunday after Christmas
3. Circumcision of Jesus (ܘܨܚܘܬܐ ܕܝܫܘܥ) January 1
4. *Denho d Moran* (ܐܦܝܫܘܢܐ) (Epiphany) January 6
5. First Sunday after Epiphany
6. Second Sunday after Epiphany
7. Third Sunday after Epiphany
8. Fourth Sunday after Epiphany
9. Fifth Sunday after Epiphany
10. The entrance of the Lord into the Temple (Presentation of Christ in the Temple) (ܘܨܘܪܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܒܗܝܟܠܐ)

3. From *Denho d Moran* (ܐܦܝܫܘܢܐ) (Epiphany) to *Qyomtho d Moran* (ܘܨܘܪܐ) (Easter)

The feast of commemorates the baptism of Jesus in Jordan by John the Baptist and provides the theological basis for a proper understanding of Christian baptism as the continuation of Christ's Baptism.³⁶ The Sundays after Epiphany, of which eight is the maximum number, are known as "Sundays of the Baptised"³⁷. From Epiphany to Easter, there are about 14 Sundays, but the number of the Sundays may vary depending on the date of the Easter. In this period, the first five Sundays recount the themes related on epiphany and are considered with the *Denho* season. The last seven Sundays comes during the time of great Lent. In between these two, there are two Sundays first for the commemoration of all the departed Clergy and the second for all the departed faithful.³⁸ Owing to the increased number of the Sundays of this period, we can comfortably rearrange this way like one period up to

³⁴ Peter G. Cobb, "The History of the Christian Year", 416.

³⁵ P. Jounel, "The Year", 88.

³⁶ John Moolan, *Liturgy of the Hours*, 191.

³⁷ Archdale A. King, *The Rites of Eastern Christendom Vol. 1*, 113.

³⁸ Actually there were three Sundays (in some places three Fridays) following the fast of Nineveh commemorated the departed such as the Sunday of the Departed Priests, of the departed Faithful and of the Deceased Strangers. See in., Archdale A. King, *The Rites of Eastern Christendom Vol. 1*, 112.

the beginning of the Great Lent and another up to the Psalm Sunday. This is the way that we find both in the *betgazo* system of the West Syrian tradition and in the East Syrian tradition.³⁹

In the West Syrian Tradition, the celebration of the Eucharistic liturgy is prohibited during the Great Lent, except for Saturdays, Sundays, Mid Lent and the Feast of annunciation.⁴⁰ Sundays of the Great Lent commemorate the miracles of the Lord: the Wedding at Cana, the healing of the lepers, the paralytic, the daughter of the Canaanite women, and the man born blind.⁴¹ The first of the seven Sundays of the Lent is “the Sunday of Cana” or “of the Entrance of the Fast”.⁴² The Wednesday after the Fourth Sunday in Lent is observed as Mid-Lent, with commemoration of the Exaltation of the Cross and the Conversion of Abgar the Black, the king of Edessa.⁴³ The feast of Cross half way through Lent marks actually the celebration of the return of the relic of Cross, which the Persians had taken when they captured Jerusalem in AD 614, but it was recaptured from them in 631 by the Emperor Heraclius (610-641).⁴⁴ This rite half way through Lent was introduced in Constantinople between 670 and 730.⁴⁵ The sixth Friday in Lent is known as the “Friday of the Forty”, as it is fortieth day of the Fast. The following day is called the “Saturday of the Lazarus”, being a type of the resurrection of Jesus, and is assigned for Christian initiation.⁴⁶ The Last week of the Lent is called “Palm Week” and

³⁹ Stephen Plathottathil, *Themes of Incarnation*, 62; John Moolan, *Liturgical Year*, 178.

⁴⁰ Council of Laodicea (363.AD), Canon 49; Egeria 27.8

⁴¹ Christine Chaillot, “The Ancient Oriental Churches”, 157.

⁴² “Lent has been a closed season for marriages since the fourth century in both East and West (Canon 52 of Council of Laodicea, c. 363)”, says, Peter G. Cobb, in “The History of the Christian Year”, 413.

⁴³ Paulose Mor Athanasius Kadavil, *The Syrian Orthodox Church: Its Religion and Philosophy* (Cheernchira: Mor Adai Study Centre, 2015), 92.

⁴⁴ The return of the relic of the Holy Cross to Jerusalem occurred in the first days of March in 630 during the fourth week of Lent. Janeras, *Vendredi-saint*, 298-299; Elena Velkova Velkovska, “The Liturgical Year in the East”, in *Hand Book for Liturgical Studies V : Liturgical Time and Space*, ed., Anscar J. Chupungco (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2000),167; Peter G. Cobb, “The History of the Christian Year”, 409.

⁴⁵ Louis van Tongeren, *Exaltation of the Cross: Toward the Origins of the Feast of the Cross and the Meaning of the Cross in Early Medieval Liturgy* (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 3

⁴⁶ Elena Velkova Velkovska, “The Liturgical Year in the East”, in *Hand Book for Liturgical Studies V: Liturgical Time and Space*, ed., Anscar J. Chupungco (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2000),161.

which is concluded with the Psalm Sunday. Palm Sunday is characterized by the procession with olive branches and its blessing.⁴⁷ The “Hossana Sunday” begins the “Week of the Passion of the Redeemer”.⁴⁸ In the fourth century, when the penitential season of Lent came to be a normal part of the Christian year, Holy Week formed the climax of sorrow, to be succeeded almost in a moment by Easter, the climax of joy.⁴⁹ We find the usage of “the holy week of Pascha” in the *Apostolic Constitutions* (v.13), “the week of the holy Pascha” in the *Festal Epistle* of Athanasius and “the six days of the Pascha” in the *Exposition of the Faith* of Epiphanius.⁵⁰ In fourth century, Egeria attested the fact that the holy week was called “The Great Week” in Jerusalem⁵¹ and this title is often used among the West Syrians even now. The Concept of *triduum* (τρίήμερον -a three-day unity) in the East comprises the commemoration of the death of Christ on Friday, his repose in death and his descend into Hades on the Saturday and his resurrection on Sunday.⁵² But they spoke more of a “holy and great” week, instead of using the western technical term “Sacred Triduum”.⁵³ The Wednesday of the Passion Week is named as “Pascha of Mysteries” and the Good Friday as “Great Friday of the Crucifixion” and the Saturday before Easter as “Saturday of Annunciation” or “Saturday of Lights”.⁵⁴ In order to remind that our Lord observed the Pascha as his Last Supper on 13th Nisan and celebrated not the old, but a new mystical Passover, the Pascha Mass is celebrated on Wednesday night.⁵⁵ Holy Thursday is the day of both the service of washing of the feet, which is done mainly by bishops, and the consecration of the Holy Myron, by the Patriarch. The origin of the ceremony of the consecration

⁴⁷ Paulose Mor Athanasius, *The Syrian Orthodox Church*, 95.

⁴⁸ Anton Baumstark, *Festbrevier und Kirchenjahr*, 230.

⁴⁹ John Walton Tyrer, *Historical Study of Holy Week: Its services and ceremonial* (London: Oxford University Press, 1932), 3.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 69.

⁵¹ Egeria’s Travels, 132; P. Jounel, “The Year”, 70.

⁵² Bradshaw and Johnson, *The Origins of Feasts*, 62; Greg LaNave and Donald Molloy, *Days of the Lord : Liturgical Year. Vol III(Easter Triduum, Easter Season)* trans. Jours du Seigneur (Collegeville : liturgical Press, 1988)2

⁵³ Elena Velkova Velkovska, “The Liturgical Year in the East”, 161

⁵⁴ Archdale A. King, *The Rites of Eastern Christendom Vol. 1*, 114.

⁵⁵ Johannes Philoponus, *De Paschate*, ed. C.Water (Leipzig, 1899), See in K.A. Heinrich Kellner, *Heortology*, 53.

of the Oil on Maundy Thursday can be traced back to the early years of the third century or probably to the last decades of the second.⁵⁶ The Washing of Feet is certainly as old as the seventh century, because it is shown by canon 3 of the 17th Council of Tolendo (A.D.694).⁵⁷ The veneration of the Cross is the central service took place on Good Friday and the origin of such a service is, after the discovery of the true cross, witnessed in Jerusalem by Egeria in 380s⁵⁸ and it was adopted later in Antioch using a fragment of Cross.⁵⁹ After the second procession of the Good Friday service, its burial took place and when the resurrection is announced at the Easter service, the cross is elevated decorated with a red scarf and placed on a stand in front of the altar with two lighted candles.⁶⁰

The Sundays of this period are the following:

1. Ninveh Fast (Three days Fasting) (3 نينوى)
2. All Priests' Day (سبوعنا واهتنا)
3. All Souls' Day (سبوعنا وحنينا)
4. Cana (سبوعنا مريما وبنينا مريما وحمليا)
5. Leper (سبوعنا لاونا وبنينا مريما وحنينا)
6. Paralytic (سبوعنا الحاملا وبنينا مريما وحنينا)
7. Canaanite Woman (سبوعنا وحنينا وبنينا مريما وحنينا)
8. Mid Lent, Elevation of the Cross (فكليه وبنينا مريما وحنينا)
9. Bent Woman (سبوعنا مريما وبنينا مريما وحنينا)
10. Man born blind (سبوعنا مريما وبنينا مريما وحنينا)
11. 40th Day of Lent (بنينا مريما وحنينا)
12. Lazurus Saturday (مريما وبنينا مريما وحنينا)
13. Hossana (سبوعنا واهتنا مريما وحنينا)
14. Passion Week (مريما وبنينا مريما وحنينا)

⁵⁶ John Walton Tyrer, *Historical Study of Holy Week : Its services and ceremonial* (London : Oxford University Press,1932), 97.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 109.

⁵⁸ Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels*, 156; Paulose Mor Athanasius, *The Syrian Orthodox Church*, 98.

⁵⁹ Robert F. Taft, "Holy Week in the Byzantine Tradition", in *Between Memory and Hope: Readings on the Liturgical Year*, ed. Maxwell E. Johnson (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2000), 160-162.

⁶⁰ Christine Chaillot, "The Ancient Oriental Churches", 157.

15. Thursday of the Mystery (Maundy Thursday), Washing of the feet
 مصلحاً وَاوْرَا مَعْبَدَا اُوْرَسَا
16. Good Friday
 حَبْسَا وَاوْرَا مَعْبَدَا
17. Saturday of the Lights
 مَحَلَا وَاوْرَا مَعْبَدَا
18. Annunciation to Mary (March 25)
 مَعْبَدَا وَاوْرَا مَحَلَا
19. Easter
 حَاوْرَا وَاوْرَا مَعْبَدَا

The period of Great Lent (حَبْسَا وَاوْرَا *Saumo Rabo*) is the time of Great Fast that signifies the imitation of the great fast of Jesus Christ (Mt. 4:2). This follows the period of Passion Week which calls forth the mystery of suffering and death of Jesus for the salvation of humanity.

4. From *Qyomtho d Moran* (عَصْرَا وَاوْرَا مَعْبَدَا) (Easter) to Pentecost حَبْسَا وَاوْرَا مَعْبَدَا

Qyomtho d Moran or Easter appears to be one of the earliest feast of Christians and it is always known as the feast of Feasts.⁶¹ From the very beginning itself, the Christianity used to hold an annual resurrection day in order to commemorate the rising up of the Lord Jesus Christ, gaining the victory over death. The Johannine Community of the Asia Minor began to celebrate the annual resurrection day on the 14th of Nisan itself, whatever is the calendar day, in order to coincide with the exact day of our Lord's death and resurrection.⁶² The earliest account on the Easter celebration comes to us through a third century Syriac work, *Didascalia Apostolorum*⁶³. Not only the liturgical year but the entire liturgy of the Church itself is developed around the death and resurrection of the Lord.⁶⁴ Hence, the Orientals regard it as the centre, source and culmination of every liturgical celebration and also of the whole liturgical year.⁶⁵ The feast days of Easter are included the following Monday and Tuesday.⁶⁶

⁶¹ Varghese Pathikulangara, *Divine Praises and Liturgical Year*, 123.

⁶² Thomas J. Talley, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year*, 5-12, 16-22, 25-27; Paul F. Bradshaw and Maxwell E. Johnson, *The Origins of Feasts, Fasts and Seasons*, 39-47.

⁶³ R. H. Connolly, *Didascalia Apostolorum*, 189.

⁶⁴ Paulose Mor Athanasius, *The Syrian Orthodox Church*, 100.

⁶⁵ Varghese Pathikulangara, *Divine Praises and Liturgical Year*, 125.

⁶⁶ Ignatius Aprem I Barsaum, *Die Kanonischen Gebete*, trans. Amil Gorgis and George Toro (Warburg : Koster St.Jakob von Sarug, 2006), 120.

The first week of the Easter is a period of festivities for the newly baptised.⁶⁷ On each day, the Eucharistic celebration was held with great solemnity and the newly baptised occupied an esteemed position in the Church and they wore their white garments throughout the week. West Syrians call this week “white week” (ܡܨܘܒܐ ܘܡܨܘܒܐ), because the neophytes appeared in their white garments. The conclusion of the festivities of the week is the New Sunday or the St. Thomas Sunday.⁶⁸ The feast of the Ascension of Our Lord falls on the 6th Thursday after the Easter and it signifies not only the entrance of Christ into the right hand side of the Father, but our own elevation and confirmation of our possession of Paradise in Christ. The period from Easter to Pentecost is considered as a single unit of a Big Sunday.⁶⁹ According to St. Athanasius (296-373), the great victory over death and sin needs a special lengthy occasion for its full experience. Resurrection is only an opening up into this new phase of Victory.⁷⁰ The West Syrian Churches did not kneel during this season as well as on Sundays, because genuflection is a gesture of penance and servitude and inappropriate to these days of felicitations.⁷¹ The Sundays of this period are the following:

1. New Sunday ܡܨܘܒܐ ܡܨܘܒܐ
2. First Sunday after New Sunday
3. Second Sunday after New Sunday
4. Third Sunday after New Sunday
5. Fourth Sunday after New Sunday
6. Ascension of the Lord ܕܘܪܘܫܐ ܘܡܨܘܒܐ ܘܡܨܘܒܐ
7. Sunday before Pentecost
8. Pentecost Sunday ܕܘܪܘܫܐ ܘܡܨܘܒܐ ܘܡܨܘܒܐ

⁶⁷ J. Mateos, Lelya-Sapra, 241; Josef .A. Jungmann, *The Early Liturgy* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1959), 264.

⁶⁸ John Moolan, *Liturgical Year*, 201.

⁶⁹ Peter G. Cobb, “The History of the Christian Year”, 411.

⁷⁰ PG 26, 1 366.

⁷¹ *Apostolic Constitution* 2. 59; *Council of Nicaea, Canon* 20; Paulose Mor Athanasius, *The Syrian Orthodox Church*, 102; Peter G. Cobb, “The History of the Christian Year”, 411; (Tertullian, *de Cor.* 3.4; Egeria, 41; Nicaea, Canon. 20)

The feast of the Ascension of the Lord was first mentioned by Eusebius in 325.⁷² Egeria noticed it, though the name ‘Ascensa’ is not given to it.⁷³

5. From Pentecost to the Feast of the Tents

As the Easter celebrates the fact of eternal redemption, so the Pentecost celebrates the fact of the Christian possession of the Spirit, which makes redemption an effective reality in our life time. After the Pentecost, the apostles went out as per the guidance of the Holy Spirit to preach the Word of God throughout the world and the people of all castes and creeds received faith in Christ and achieved a universal vocation into a Messianic unity. Thus the Pentecost became the starting point of the apostolic activity and of universal faith spreading. Therefore, this period is called in Syriac tradition *Sleeho* ܣܠܗܘܐ (Apostle) meaning the one who sent. The first Friday of this period is called “Friday of Gold” (ܦܝܢܟܝܘܣܐ ܕܕܒܗܘܐ *rubtho d Dab’ho*), because this Friday commemorates the first of the miracles by the apostles after the descent of the Holy Spirit.⁷⁴ From June 16th to June 29, there is a fast called “Apostles Fast” in the West Syrian Tradition and it concludes with the feast of St. Peter and St. Paul and the Feast of the Twelve Apostles on 30th June. The first mention of a post-Pentecostal fast is found in the Apostolic Constitution.⁷⁵ The Feast of the Tent is celebrated as the

⁷² K.A. Heinrich Kellner, *Heortology*, 449; “The Ascension was commemorated on either Easter Day itself following the Lucan and Johannine narratives (Lk. 24. 50-3; Jn. 20. 21f; Ep. Of Barnabas 15.9; Aristides, Apology 2; Tertullian, adv. Jud. 13, but cf. Apol. 21) or on the fiftieth day (Eusebius, de Sol. Pasch., PG. 24.699). It was not until the second half of the fourth century that the Ascension was commemorated as an historical event on the fortieth day and the gift of the Spirit on the fiftieth. These commemorations resulted from various tendencies: the influence of the Chronology of Acts (see, for example, John Cassian, Collatio 21.20; PL 49.1194); the development of the theology of the Spirit by the Cappadocians, which led to the desire for the institution of a feast to highlight the role of the Third Person; and perhaps the influence of the Holy places.” Peter G. Cobb, “The History of the Christian Year”, 411.

⁷³ John Dowden, *The Church Year and Calendar*, 42; She celebrated it not on the Mount of Olives, but at Bethlehem (42). Peter G. Cobb, “The History of the Christian Year”, 411; P. Devos, *Anal. Boll.* 87-108.

⁷⁴ According to Tradition, this Friday got its name from Acts. 3:6, where St. Peter told to the lame man at the Temple gate, “I have no silver and Gold”.

⁷⁵ *Apostolic Constitution V.20*, 14; Baby Varghese, “Canonical Fasts in the West Syrian Tradition”, 97; “Originally, the week after the Pentecost was the time to resume fasting and

Feast of Transfiguration of Jesus on 6th August and it represents the symbolically the transformation that happens in each individual and the whole creation by assimilating the salvation accomplished by Jesus Christ.⁷⁶ Archdale A. King explains the arrangements of this period as follows:

The first Sunday after the Pentecost is the first of the seven Sundays of the Apostles, and the eighth Sunday, the first of the Sundays of Summer, which end before Holy Cross day. The two series together make up the Sundays after Pentecost, which vary in number from thirteen to seventeen. There is another arrangement with twelve Sundays after Pentecost, followed by the Sunday after the Transfiguration, and four Sundays after the Assumption.⁷⁷

The origin feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord, in all likelihood, is related to the dedication of the basilicas on Mount Tabor and it was adopted in the East Syrian Church at the end of the fifth century or the beginning of the 6th and the West Syrian church in the seventh.⁷⁸ This feast was assigned to August 6, forty days before the feast of the exaltation of the Cross, because the transfiguration of the Lord took place, according to one tradition, forty days before his crucifixion.⁷⁹ The Sundays of this period are the following:

1. First Sunday after Pentecost Sunday
2. Second Sunday after Pentecost Sunday
3. Third Sunday after Pentecost Sunday
4. Fourth Sunday after Pentecost Sunday
5. Fifth Sunday after Pentecost Sunday
6. Sixth Sunday after Pentecost Sunday
7. Seventh Sunday after Pentecost Sunday
8. Eighth Sunday after Pentecost Sunday
9. Ninth Sunday after Pentecost Sunday
10. Tenth Sunday after Pentecost Sunday
11. Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost Sunday

penitential exercises (Egeria, 44.1; Leo, Serm. 78-81). This explains the ceremonial genuflexions at Vespers on the Feast of Pentecost in the Orthodox Churches". Peter G. Cobb, "The History of the Christian Year", 411.

⁷⁶ Varghese Pathikulangara, *Divine Praises and Liturgical Year*, 193.

⁷⁷ Archdale A. King, *The Rites of Eastern Christendom Vol. 1*, 114-115.

⁷⁸ P. Jounel, "The Year", 97; John Dowden, *The Church Year and Kalendar*, 43.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 98.

12. Feast of the Apostles *ܘܘܫܬܐ ܘܘܫܬܐ ܘܘܫܬܐ*
13. Feast of the Tents *ܘܘܫܬܐ ܘܘܫܬܐ ܘܘܫܬܐ*

6. From the Feast of the Tents to the Feast of the Cross

This period commemorates the flourishing of the Church by the works of the Apostles and the Church fathers and prepares the faithful for the Second coming of the Lord. In general, the readings reveal the vanity and meanness of earthly life and its pleasures and the greatness of the eschatological realities. The life and transition of St. Mary is commemorated at the centre of this period as the ideal way of Christian death. The feast of the Dormition of St. Mary is celebrated with 15 days of lent and induce man to do penance in preparation to the end of time and last judgment. The warnings to be vigilant against the ambushes of Satan are also heard frequently during this period.

The Sundays of this period are the following:

1. First Sunday after the Feast of Tents
2. Second Sunday after the Feast of Tents
3. Feast of Dormition of St. Mary *ܘܘܫܬܐ ܘܘܫܬܐ ܘܘܫܬܐ*
4. First Sunday after the Dormition of St. Mary
5. Second Sunday after the Dormition of St. Mary
6. Third Sunday after the Dormition of St. Mary
7. Fourth Sunday after the Dormition of St. Mary
8. Fifth Sunday after the Dormition of St. Mary
9. Feast of the Cross (September 14) *ܘܘܫܬܐ ܘܘܫܬܐ ܘܘܫܬܐ*

7. From the Feast of the Cross to *Qudesh Etho* (Sanctification of the Church)

The feast of the Cross commemorates the historical discovery of the Cross of the Lord Jesus and here Cross is symbolised as the Symbol of resurrection and victory of Christ, rather than His suffering.⁸⁰ It is a time to recall the victorious Second Coming of the Christ and to prepare the faithful to think of the eternal realities.⁸¹ The finding and the feast of the Cross are related to the feast of the dedication of Churches on

⁸⁰ Louis van Tongeren, *Exaltation of the Cross: Toward the Origins of the Feast of the Cross and the Meaning of the Cross in Early Medieval Liturgy* (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 3

⁸¹ Varghese Pathikulangara, *Divine Praises and Liturgical Year*, 196.

Calvary and the tomb, which took place on 13th September 335.⁸² According to George Arbel, the Cross, which was found out on September 13, 335, was to be shown to the people on September 14.⁸³ Andrew of Crete (+740) taught that the Cross was found out in order to be exalted.⁸⁴ The feast of the exaltation of the Cross originated among the Orientals and the Latin Church accepted it only in the Seventh century.⁸⁵ The process of the Second Coming and the power of the Cross are the two important themes of this season. The liturgical year of the West Syrians is concluded with six, seven or eight Sundays of the Holy Cross. The Sundays of this period are the following:

1. First Sunday after the Feast of the Cross
2. Second Sunday after the Feast of the Cross
3. Third Sunday after the Feast of the Cross
4. Fourth Sunday after the Feast of the Cross
5. Fifth Sunday after the Feast of the Cross
6. Sixth Sunday after the Feast of the Cross
7. Seventh Sunday after the Feast of the Cross
8. Eighth Sunday after the Feast of the Cross

Conclusion

The first liturgical calendar originated among the Syrians was in AD 411 and which included the feasts of the Saints and the commemorations of the martyrs of Persia.⁸⁶ In the 6th century, a calendar was formed in the Kenstrine Monastery for remembering the saints and the chief monks who lived there. Jacob of Edessa reformed it excluding the local saints and including the important feasts, fasts and commemorations for the entire year.⁸⁷ In 1095, Sayad Bar Sabuni, the

⁸² P. Jounel, "The Year", 99; Eusebius, *Vita Constantini*, 3. 25 and 35; K. A. Heinrich Kellner, *Heortology*, 449.

⁸³ R. H. Connolly, *Anonymi auctoris Expositio officiorum II*, 84.

⁸⁴ PG 97, 1038-1039.

⁸⁵ *Calendarium Romanum*, 103; John Moolan, *Liturgical Year*, 243. The word "exaltation" (lifting up) is taken from the Gospel (John 3:14), and is suitable for its liturgical service especially among the Syrians and the Byzantines. See in, P. Journal, "The Year", 100. The existence of this feast is first attested by Egeria during 385-387. See in, K. A. Heinrich Kellner, *Heortology*, 450.

⁸⁶ Ignatius Aprem I Barsaum, *Chithariya Muthukal* (The Scattered Pearl)(Mal.) trans. Jacob Varghese Mannakuzhiyil (Cheeramchira, Chenganassery : Mor Adai Study Centre, 2009), 154.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 155.

bishop of Melitine, added the feast days of some of the Church fathers and monks. Again, in 1340, Sleeba bar Qairur, a monk from Hah, extended the list. Among the West Syrians, there are many church calendars, varied in the number of saints and in feast days, but without differing from the important feast days.⁸⁸ There are three classes of feasts such as Feasts of the Lord, important Feasts of the year other than the Feasts of the Lord, and Feasts of St. Mary, Mother of God and of the Saints.⁸⁹ The third category is a mere commemoration.⁹⁰

A common feature of seven week principle of its seasonal division reveals the importance of seven Sundays which systematically present all phases of the paschal mysteries in the salvation history from Incarnation to Parousia. The annual Paschal Sunday (Easter day) is the centre and basis of the Christian year. To this scheme of redemption, the movable and fixed feasts of the Lord and of saints, together with the observation of fasts, were added in accordance with the spirit of the particular seasons. In short, the liturgical year of the West Syrian Church reveals us the history of the Church from its very beginning until now through its dominical and sactoral cycles. The structure of the liturgical year manifests as the practical application of its theology and spirituality in Christian life.

⁸⁸ Mathen Konattu, *Prarthana Kramam* (Malayalam) (Prayer Book of the Jacobite Syrian Christian Church) (Puthencruz : JSC Publications, 2014), 381.

⁸⁹ Archdale A. King, *The Rites of Eastern Christendom Vol. 1*, 115; Mathen Konattu, *Prarthana Kramam*, 372.

⁹⁰ Archdale A. King, *The Rites of Eastern Christendom*, 115

The Sacramental Nature of Marriage and Sexuality within an Orthodox Perspective

Binoy Alexander Thattankunnel¹

This article mainly deals with the Orthodox Church's understanding of the spirituality of marriage with an appraisal of Orthodox theology. In particular, it aims at exploring the Orthodox view of the sacramental nature of sexuality for an intimate and sanctified marital relationship, and how a sound theology of marriage and sexuality can come to their assistance in this regard. This is, moreover, an appraisal of the position of the Church in relation to sex and sexuality within marriage.

1. Marriage: An Orthodox Perspective

From an orthodox perspective, marriage is not only a bond between one man and one woman for the purpose of bearing and

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rearing children but also for their oneness and holiness.² Here the couple enters into marriage by attending and receiving Holy Communion together and being blessed by the clergy with a beautiful liturgy in which God was asked to bless and unite them together in a lifelong bond.³ When we come to the Christian marriage, first of all, it is considered to be a vocation. A vocation generally implies regular or appropriate occupation or calling. Theologically vocation means a call or invitation given by God to the Christian life or to some particular service or state. Earlier the call to priesthood and religious life was considered to be vocation, but now vocation includes the call to Christian ministry in general and also to the state of marriage in particular. Marriage is a call, with procreation and looking after of children as its responsibility, and with unity, oneness, holiness and sanctification as its properties. Since marriage is a vocation, this vocation can be lived only with the grace of God. Jesus raised marriage to the state of a sacrament by bestowing His blessing and graces abundantly upon those who are called to this vocation. Dr. Philip Mamalakis⁴ presents marriage as a journey. It is a journey together, of getting to know each other, toward oneness, of learning to love with God's love, of being transformed, to heaven and finally to their salvation.⁵

2. Marriage is a Sacrament and Mystery

In the Orthodox Church's understanding marriage is not simply an agreement between two eligible persons from the opposite sex to share their lives but it is a Holy Sacrament because they are joined together as members of the Eucharistic

² Alkiviadis C. Calivas, "Marriage: The Sacrament of Love and Communion", *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, 40/3-4 (1995): 270.

³ Ibid. 252.

⁴ Philip Mamalakis is the assistant professor of pastoral care at Holy Cross Orthodox School of Theology. He offers seminars, retreats, and lectures on marriage, family life and parenting in the Orthodox Church. I had some discussions with him on this subject too.

⁵ Philip Mamalakis and Charles Joanides, *The Journey of Marriage in the Orthodox Church* (New York: The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, 2010), 2-32.

Community sharing together the Body and Blood of Christ and receiving the grace of God for their union through the presence of clergy and the people of God. All Orthodox catechisms and textbooks define marriage as a sacrament or a ‘mystery’ of the Church. In this regard John Meyendorff, a contemporary Orthodox theologian, comments:

The very notion of marriage as a sacrament presupposes that man is not only a being with physiological, psychological and social functions, but that he is a citizen of God’s Kingdom, i.e., that his entire life – and especially its most decisive moments – involves eternal values and God Himself.⁶

Here the partners are transformed by love and enter into an eternal bond with God. It is moreover a relationship in which the partners work out their salvation together. “Holy Matrimony is a mystery of the Church in which the man and woman work out their salvation in love and submission, serving as a living icon of Christ’s relationship with the Church.”⁷ Orthodox catechism teaches the following:

Marriage in the Orthodox Church is forever. It is not reduced to an exchange of vows or the establishment of a legal contract between the bride and groom. On the contrary, it is God joining a man and a woman into one flesh in a sense similar to the Church being joined to Christ (Ephesians 5:31, 32). The success of marriage cannot depend on mutual human promises, but on the promises and blessing of God. In the Orthodox marriage rite, the bride and groom offer their lives to Christ and to each other - literally as crowned martyrs.⁸

⁶ John Meyendorff, *Marriage: An Orthodox Perspective*, 10.

⁷ Clark Carlton, *The Faith- Understanding Orthodox Christianity: An Orthodox Catechism* (Salisbury: Regina Orthodox Press, 1997), 227.

⁸ The Orthodox Church, “A brief overview of the Eastern Orthodox Church’s History and Teaching: Some Contemporary Moral Questions,” http://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/eng/catechism_ext.htm. (January 15, 2012).

There are two separate services in the Orthodox marriage liturgy, namely the service of rings (Betrothal or Engagement) and the service of crowning which proclaim the entire Orthodox teaching concerning marriage. By exchanging their rings, each other, the couple expresses their self-offering readiness to each other which is essential for oneness and intimacy in their married life. The exchange of the rings symbolically expresses the self-offering of each spouse to the other and their mutual responsibility for one another.⁹ Through this sacrament of marriage, the couple receives the divine grace to take up the new task of their life and they are consecrated as “crowned martyrs”. Here the crown symbolizes that the couple, in their union with Christ, participates in God’s kingship and also symbolizes their participation in Christ’s self-sacrificing love.¹⁰ The word “martyr” means witness. As crowned martyrs, husband and wife are called to giving up their own way and their own desires and living out and bearing witness to the self-sacrificing love of God in their own life to each other and in the society where they live. So marriage stands for the union of two human beings in God.

The Orthodox Church teaches that with His presence and first miracle at the wedding ceremony in Cana of Galilee Jesus Christ blessed and sanctified marriage. Marriage is a sacrament in the sense that it reflects our savior Jesus’ life-giving love for the church and the church’s love for Jesus.¹¹ Jesus is the loving one and He is the Love that is the one who loves the whole universe unconditionally. Jesus has revealed God’s love for us by His incarnation, public ministry, suffering, death and resurrection. His whole public ministry was a manifestation of God’s love for us. Jesus loves us and at the same time He invites us to love one another. Within the bond of marriage, husband and wife

⁹ Peter A. Chamberas, *This is a Great Mystery: Christian Marriage in the Orthodox Church* (Brookline, MA: The Metropolis of Boston, 2003), 128.

¹⁰ Chacko Aerath, *Liturgy and Ethos: A Study Based on the Malankara Liturgy of Marriage* (Rome: Mar Thoma Yogam, 1995), 135.

¹¹ *Ibid.* 124

experience a union with one another in love. They are not only confessing their love and commitment for one another during the marriage ceremony but carrying their love and care for each other throughout the ups and downs of their married life because they are married in Christ. The Orthodox spirituality regarding marriage is a vocation to a holy life by living and reflecting the love of Jesus in their day to day marital life. Alkiviadis C. Calivas says:

“The sacrament of marriage celebrates both the restoration of the conjugal union to its original order as well as its integration again into the realm of grace. The sacrament reveals to the couple the dynamic dimensions of mutuality, the loveliness of human sexuality, and the nobleness of procreation, always in union with God, the husband and wife are graced to act together to heal and overcome the impotence of impaired masculinity and femininity, and thus rediscover and fulfill the original wholeness and communion of nuptial life.”¹²

Jesus Christ raised the covenantal level of marriage into the level of a sacrament which enables the partners to sanctify each other in such a way that their union becomes a living symbol of the presence of Christ Himself for the welfare of human beings. In family life, husband and wife are enabled by Christ to make a similar offering of themselves for their spouses' and children's wellbeing.

According to an orthodox theologian, Nicolas Zernov, “The sacrament of marriage is known under the name of ‘Crowning’ in the Orthodox Church. This is a solemn blessing by the Church of a man and a woman, with the intention that their new life together may be one of unity and concord.”¹³ This conjugal unity has been compared to Christ's union with His Church and it is binding

¹² Alkiviadis C. Calivas, “Marriage: The Sacrament of Love and Communion,” *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 40/3-4 (1995) : 251

¹³ Nicolas Zernov, *The Christian East: The Eastern Orthodox Church and Indian Christianity* (Delhi: S.P.C.K, 1956), 68.

forever. Nicolas Zernov says again that “The solemnity of the marriage service emphasizes the sacredness of the union between man and woman and the connection between the mystery of human love and the love which God has for His creation.”¹⁴ So through marriage man and woman enter into a very close relationship, and it is never dissolved. The presence of God sanctifies the marital relationship of a couple because Christ comes to the couple’s life through the sacrament of marriage. This union has different purposes based on the teachings and faith of the Church.

3. Purpose of Marriage

Orthodox theology defines marriage as “the unity of two persons in one being, a single substance” or “the union in one body and one soul, but in two persons”¹⁵. This union is reflected in the Triune God, one and at the same time Triune. In the same way the married couples are united and become one in God. As in the creation account God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner” (Gen. 2:18.). The partner was created from man, and Adam said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called women, for out of Man this one was taken.” (Gen. 2:23). This nuptial union makes the husband and wife one body. Marriage, therefore, is “the union of two persons, male and female, into a communion of unconditional love for their mutual companionship and for their personal fulfillment, completion, and perfection in Christ.”¹⁶ Their Christ centered (Christo-centric) life helps the couple to grow together in the likeness of God (holiness) in and through the graceful unity of their body, mind and soul. As

¹⁴ Ibid. 69.

¹⁵ Paul Evdokimov, *The Sacrament of Love : The Nuptial Mystery in the Light of the Orthodox Tradition*, (New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1985) , 117.

¹⁶ Alkiviadis C. Calivas, “Marriage: The Sacrament of Love and Communion,” *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 40/3-4 (1995) : 268

Theophilus of Antioch¹⁷ observes, “God made the women together with the man, not only that thus the mystery of God’s sole government might be exhibited, but also that this mutual affection might be greater.”¹⁸ Thus the nuptial love of humankind necessarily involves the love and image of God.

St. John Chrysostom teaches, “When husband and wife are united in marriage, they are no longer seen as something earthly, but as the image of God Himself. So we can see a living icon of God in marriage, a ‘theophany’ ”¹⁹. So the husband and wife are seen as the image of God on earth and it is the responsibility of each partner to maintain that image in their lives. It moreover brings in the idea of mutual responsibility and co-creativity between husband and wife. Following are some of the purposes of marriage.

The Orthodox marriage service portrays the relationship between husband and wife with symbolic representation of the relationship between Christ and the Church. As Paul Evdokimov notes, “There is a definite order within the marriage relationship that serves as an icon of God’s relationship to the world and of Christ’s relationship to the Church.”²⁰ In this regard it is important to note the words of St. Paul, “For this cause, shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the Church” (Eph. 5:31-32). This mutual

¹⁷ Theophilus of Antioch was the 6th bishop of Antioch in Syria (169- 177). He made a lot of contributions to the departments of Christian literature, polemics, exegetics and apologetics. His famous work “The Apology to Autolyucus” is a series of books defending Christianity written to a pagan friend named Autolyucus.

¹⁸ Theophilus of Antioch, “Theophilus of Antioch to Autolyucus.” Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, ed. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol.11(May 2007) :105, Quoted in Paul Evdokimov, *The Sacrament of Love*, 117.

¹⁹ Evdokimov, *The Sacrament of Love*, 118.

²⁰ Ibid. 231

submission clearly shows the equality and co-creativity of husband and wife in marriage.

During the time of joining the hands of the couple in the Orthodox marriage ceremony the man and the woman hold their right hands together, and the minister says: “Here from this moment I give unto each of you, to the care and protection of each other...”²¹ It shows that one is not above over the other but they are equal. Any kind of discrimination is the denial of the image of God and through which the iconic relationship in the marriage will be broken down. In the Genesis account God created man and woman with a mutually caring nature in order to grow together in oneness and holiness. The sexual differences between man and woman are the cause for the yearning to be one. This relationship is reflected in the Song of Songs, described in a romantic language, as the love of God to the people. This unbreakable relationship is highlighted in the marital relationship between husband and wife.

4. The Orthodox Theology of Marital Sexuality and its Essential Features

Today, Syriac Orthodox church faces enormous family problems and challenges irrespective of ages and situations in our community. Sexuality has often lost its real meaning and been degraded merely to a commodity. Too often only the biological dimension of sexuality is highlighted and is totally misinterpreted. Because of the South Indian religious and cultural influence, people keep a certain public silence and lack of appropriate language in discussion around sexuality. For example, most of the parents pretend not to be heard or redirect their attention when their kids ask questions regarding sexuality and also they do not use the right names and terms for sexual organs and sex related matters. Considering this cultural context, it is the responsibility of the church to create a strategy in order to prepare her members

²¹ *Malankara Orthodox Sabhayile KoodhasaKramangal* (Mal), trans. Konattu Abraham Malpan (Kottayam: M.O.C Publications, 2001), 228.

how to handle these issues and teach them about the church's sacramental view of sexuality, so that they may grow with a positive attitude and outlook and be a sexually integrated person. Syriac Orthodox priests can do a lot to help their parishioners in understanding the sacramental view of sexuality and marriage within an Orthodox framework. It is the responsibility of priests to find out the appropriate containers/spaces in order to build a bridge between the private and public discussion of sexuality in respecting both public and private boundaries and the integrity of people. Following are some essential theological features of orthodox marital sexuality.

5. Sexuality and Oneness

For the Orthodox Church, “marriage is a journey towards oneness.”²² It is a divine call to become one in heart, mind and body. Through marriage the couple grows closer toward one another becoming one flesh. Here oneness means: thinking in terms of we, rather than me, working together as a team, rather than on your own and working together through the differences, difficulties or disagreements.²³

The purpose of Orthodox Christian marriage is to have a nuptial community in the family. Here the center thing is love that will transform the couple into one in body, mind and spirit and to live for each other. In marital life this love is expressed as erotic love. This can be obtained through establishing an intimate relationship between husband and wife. To develop intimacy between husband and wife within the framework of marriage is an essential task of the couple. In this regard bodily mutuality plays a central role in the marital intimacy. Here they express that “I belong to you and you belong to me”. This mutuality can be communicated through the intimate relationship which they have mutually developed in their family atmosphere. Thus through

²²Philip Mamalakis and Charles Joanides, *The Journey of Marriage in the Orthodox Church*, 13.

²³ Ibid.

marriage both man and women are entering into a deeper relationship. This is not a single event rather it is a continuing process. According to Tubbs and Moss, “It includes all the communication activities we engage in from the time we get up until we go to bed. Such activities can be thought of as transactions; it is a situation in which ‘I do something to you and you do something back’.”²⁴ Thus we can say that developing mutuality, intimacy and affection among the couples is a continuously growing process and it provides a joyful life in their marital relationships that leads them toward oneness.

Regarding bodily mutuality, St. Paul speaks of the importance of the human body in the context of sexual passion, “The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; likewise, the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does” (1Cor. 7:4). This mutual authority over the partner’s body clearly shows the need for real mutuality which can lead to bodily oneness and intimacy in marriage.

The Orthodox Church has a sacramental approach to human sexuality that can be interpreted on the basis of “kenotic theology”. The sacramental nature of sexuality in marriage could be understood through the concept of “kenosis” self-emptying and self-sacrificing. By emptying oneself for the sake of the other, the couple becomes mutually one in flesh and mind and also through the bodily mutual relationship man and woman consummates their love and become one. They experience an unbreakable union with one another in the love and grace of God which they received through the administration of the sacrament of marriage. Here God’s self-emptying and self-sacrificing love for the sake of the world is the model for the couples. In marriage

²⁴ Stewart L. Tubbs and Sylvia Moss, *Interpersonal Communication* (New York: Random House, 1974), 4.

they prepare and submit themselves to the wellbeing of their life - partner and also share their happiness and sorrows between each other which eases the burdens of their life. As Christ loves and calls her into a covenant relationship with all its limitations, that act is sacramental. As we read in the Bible, “Submitting to one another in the love of Jesus Christ. Wives, submit yourselves to your own husband as to our Lord... Husband, love your wives, even as Christ loved His Church and Himself for it...For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and unite with his wife and the two will become one flesh. (Eph.5:21-31). This mutual submission and understanding is the sacramental attitude of the body. A sacramental attitude to physical relationship in marriage transcends a utilitarian attitude. One cannot have a utilitarian as well as a sacramental attitude in marital life. In a utilitarian attitude, one partner sees the other as a means to his or her own emotional satisfaction whereas in a sacramental attitude, the partner’s personhood is loved and respected for their own sake.²⁵ Here bodily mutuality is the experience of sharing each other and the two persons merge into one, as expressed by the biblical phrase “to become one flesh”. It is not only meant to satisfy a biological urge but to attain the oneness which can lead to holiness.

6. Sexuality and Holiness

Through the sacrament of marriage in the Orthodox Church the couple learns God’s purpose for their marriage which teaches them how to love each other like God loves the world with His perfect love by giving His only son, Jesus Christ. With God’s love each partner will be able to be respectful, kind, gentle and patient rather than angry, critical or blaming. They still be able to focus on

²⁵ Jacob Cherian, “Marital Counseling: A Special Reference to Human Sexuality,” *Journal of Shalom*, (Kottayam, Thomas Mar Athanasuis Institute of Counseling, (November, 2005): 23.

what is best for each of them rather than what one wants for himself/ herself.²⁶ St. John Chrysostom says:

There are two reasons for which marriage was instituted: for the procreation of children and for the chastity of the couple themselves. Now that the earth is filled with people, there is no great need for procreation. Besides, since Christ has given us the hope of resurrection, we do not need children to perpetuate us. Therefore, the more important reason for marriage is to give us chastity. The virtue of chastity must be understood positively. It is not merely avoidance of immortality, but integrity of the person, body and soul and direction of oneself towards holiness. So the primary reason for marriage is the unity in love and holiness of the couple themselves, not the good of society or the reproduction of the species.²⁷

With God's love, a mutual submission of husband and wife is taking place in marriage irrespective of their boundaries and differences which transform them into holiness where they enjoy a selfless and unconditional love and care.

7. Sexuality and Sanctification

Through the sacrament of marriage the couple starts their journey together towards the kingdom of God which is depicted as the final human destination or salvation. Salvation is an ongoing process where the couple grows in godliness by invoking God's love and grace constantly throughout their life. With this divine vision the couple is invited and challenged not only to begin their journey together, but also to be guided and inspired by it all the days of their life towards salvation. The couple, in their journey of marriage will be transformed to become perfectly selfless and caring toward each other. Through this selfless love and care the couple will experience God's love in their married life that helps

²⁶ Philip Mamalakis and Charles Joanides, *The Journey of Marriage in the Orthodox Church*, 21.

²⁷ John Chrysostom, *On Marriage and Family Life*, trans. Catherine P. Roth and David Anderson (New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1986), 22.

the couples attain their ultimate destination of human life.²⁸ According to Alkiviadis C. Calivas, an Orthodox theologian, “A marriage of faith is anchored in the sanctifying grace of the incarnation. In such a marriage two unique and fragile persons, a man and a woman are called to enter into the mystery of unlimited love and care in order to deepen in knowledge of each other and to become instruments of salvation and deification.”²⁹ By complementing each other, the couple surpasses their limitations and indifferences and work together in order to secure their eternity. Dr. Mamalakis says “Marriage does not end in this life. The perfecting that happens in marriage prepares us to live eternally with God. The destination of the marriage journey is heaven. The perfecting that happens in marriage is what we call salvation.”³⁰ While the couple acts in integrity, trust and faithfulness within their marital life there is less chances of disharmony and distress which may lead to the sanctification of their marriage life. On the other hand the couples commit their lives to the journey in togetherness, love, dedication, imitation of Christ likeness or self-sacrifice and one mindedness towards their goal of common attainment of oneness, holiness and salvation through mutual self- giving trust, commitment and intimacy.

Parents have to become role models for their children. Children are searching for good models everywhere. Parents must talk about these important theological aspects of marriage to their children and children should see the oneness, holiness and sanctification when they look at their parents’ day to day affairs. This experience and family atmosphere could guide and prepare them for their marriage. Parents should set clear expectations and boundaries for their children and also make use of all teachable moments occur every day in their life which can make the

²⁸ Philip Mamalakis and Charles Joanides, *The Journey of Marriage in the Orthodox Church*, 31.

²⁹ Alkiviadis C. Calivas, “Marriage: The Sacrament of Love and Communion,” *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, 251.

³⁰ Philip Mamalakis and Charles Joanides, *The Journey of Marriage in the Orthodox Church*, 31.

communication comfortable and natural. Parents should make it as a lifelong process. So that they can build up a respectful and trusting relationship with their children.

The Orthodox marriage is a life long journey growing together towards oneness, holiness and salvation, requiring 100% faithfulness in relationship and commitment. Christian family life is built on the exercise of fundamental biblical principles. But the values and qualities of marital life are challenged by the ideologies of modern society. Pastoral counseling, marriage enrichment programs, pre- marriage counseling seminars are different containers through which priests can prepare people how to hold and maintain the biblical and traditional values and principles of marital life throughout their life in a long term process. The local parish priest can do a lot in preparing young people for their marriage mentally and spiritually and also strengthen the congregation with a positive approach to marriage and marital sexuality.

Conclusion

In this article, we discussed the sacramental meaning of marriage from an Orthodox perspective. The different meanings of marital relationship in Orthodox Church express the Christian virtue of love. Through marriage both husband and wife are mutually obliged to fulfill this responsibility. Thus marital relationship is an act of the total unity of two persons while each retains their complete separate identity. Therefore, marital sexuality is a recurrent act of prayer of the couple where they give the Christian virtue of love to each other. I hope that this sacramental meaning of sexuality will help our Syriac Orthodox members to create a positive attitude to sex and family life which can promote true understanding, proper communication and mutual intimacy in marital sexuality there by creating deeper relationships and making life more sanctified and sacramental.

Video Art and Dominance of Visual Culture

Aji George¹

Introduction

Art has the immense ability to convey deep hidden meanings in a very effective manner. In many cultures of the world, art has been used as an efficient mode to express human psyche.

The emergence of television and broadcasting media had given rise to the practice of using video as a vibrant mode of conceptual art. During the end of 1960's, for the first time artists from United States and Europe recognized video as a powerful expression of artistic statement². It provided a new platform for the creative aspiration of budding artists. It was the liberation from the traditional art form into a more diverse and dynamic art culture.

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² Cfr. WESTGEEST, H., *Video Art Theory: A Comparative Approach*, John Wiley, New Jersey, 2015 , 88.

1. What is Video Art?

Video art is a form of artistic expression exploiting the potential of moving images as a powerful tool of communication. The late 1960's saw the invention of compact cameras which lead to the birth of this new language of art. Video art is an avant-garde artistic movement which is a self-expressive display of ideas in the forms of words, images, and sounds³. It covers a wide range of themes and the most common among them being birth, death, spirituality, race, sexuality, love and war. Video art is the combination of rich visual imagery using video as the canvas and time, sound and movement as the content of the art resulting in a profound aesthetic experience.

Video art is not a restricted form of art; it provides a free space to the expression of one's imagination without any inhibitions⁴. The traditional art form is bounded by a strict range of disciplines which constricts the creative space of artists, while video art provides a wide range of opportunities for experimentation. Previously it was known under various names such as 'video art', 'artist's video', 'experimental video', 'artist's television', 'the new television' and even 'guerilla TV'⁵. The advancement in technology along with theoretical ideas and social activism resulted in the evolution of video art as a promising art movement.

Towards the end of the middle decade of the twentieth century the art world was highly commercialised and was dominated by the art dealers but the birth of video art led to the liberalisation of art from the clutches of such forces⁶. In spite of the lack of modern technologies such as the latest editing software and sophisticated cameras, the artists were able to produce and show their own parallel stream of work which showcased their ideologies. At the turn of the 20th century there was a rapid

³ MANASSEH, C., *The Problematic of Video Art in the Museum: 1968-90*, Cambria Press, New York, 2009, 3.

⁴ Cfr. HOWLEY, K., *Understanding Community Media*, Sage Publications, London, 2009, 139.

⁵ Cfr. ANDREWS C. M., *A History of Video Art: The Development of Form and Function*, Berg publishers, New York, 2006, 2.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 2-3.

advancement in video technology resulting in the reduction of production costs. It also began to explore new avenues which conventional canvas could not reach out to.

Video art created a rebellious movement in the art world by crossing all boundaries and making itself an easily accessible tool for both professional and amateur artists who could use video as a medium of expression of his/her statement. It doesn't have any long history of art criticism. The flexibility of the medium and lack of critical position attracted many to use video as their tool for doing experiments. American art critic David A. Ross called this nature as 'pure delight': "Video was the solution because it had no tradition. It was the precise opposite of painting. It had no formal burdens at all"⁷. Many fascinated artists took up video as their destined path and it created a new arena of infinite experimentation in art world.

Video art is a signature product of an artist which can never be separated from its creator. The usual forms of art can be easily exhibited and be sold. Video art has got certain requirements to display itself such as TV, projector or LCD monitor. Despite its non commercial status, many artists consider this provision as an opportunity to engage the spectator in a state of critical detachment in which the television set itself could be simultaneously perceived as both a support structure for the image and as a manifestation of the work itself⁸. This aspect underlines the statement of Marshall McLuhan, 'medium is the message'⁹. The television screen is both present and absent in a work of art; the viewer experiences the work of art as the record of a particular period of time, at the same it grants the tangibility of the medium it is 'here and now' of the present.

The yardstick used to analyse any work of art is the same for video art, but each piece of work in video art is different from the other in form and content. And hence a proper system of

⁷ Cfr. ANDREWS C. M., *A History of Video Art*, 21.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ McLUHAN M., *The Medium is the Message*, Penguin books, London, 1967, 10.

classification is absent. The unique style work of plastic art revolves around a theme which is conceived and visualized by an artist while in video art all that matters is the conceptual way the artist communicates his/her ideas.

Video art is significantly different from cinematographic reproduction of reality. The experimental nature of video art shows the flavours of parallel cinema or underground cinema. It mainly deals with a specific concept rather than a narrative. This concept may be either an abstract or concrete version. It never uses an actor for a staged play, usually the artist him/herself perform in the art with an intention to be a part of the finished piece¹⁰. It lacks both dramatic plot and narrative with dialogues and stylized mis-en-scene. Although it displays the elements that satisfy the viewers' expectations of a video, the main goal is to evoke a sense of alternative perception of reality or to share the space of an artist's mind such as his/her views and aesthetic sense.

Television makes use of many of the techniques which were first introduced by video artists such as addressing viewers directly by restricting the image to a talking head. Video artists employed these techniques to highlight the importance of visual language in the mediated world.

2. History of Video Art

Nineteenth century science is the back bone of twentieth century video art. The discovery of the cathode ray tube and the electron in 1897 were the starting point of the electronic reproduction and transmission of images¹¹. By the beginning of 1950's technology advanced to record images as well as sounds on magnetic tape and this resulted in the new age of portable cameras¹². The birth of video art became a reality when the Sony Corporation launched their first portable camera Sony Potapak in 1965. It allowed the artists to record, manipulate and to

¹⁰ Cfr. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Video_art <Accessed on Dec. 02, 2015>

¹¹ Cfr. [www.canadianencyclopaedia.com/video art](http://www.canadianencyclopaedia.com/video_art) < Accessed on Dec. 02, 2015>

¹² Cfr. WESTGEEST, H., *Video Art Theory: A Comparative Approach*, 88.

electronically produce visuals and audio on tape and this evoked the new generation of electronic art.

Video art allowed artists outside the commercial television industry to creatively involve in the process of social activism. They were able to produce a counter television culture which was free from the formal restrictions of the broadcasting media. Video activists considered video as the potential tool to participate actively in the process of raising the social and political consciousness¹³. Among the many who were influenced Marshal McLuhan was the prominent person who believed that the electronic media was the extension of the human nervous system¹⁴. It effected a notable change in the thinking pattern of artists and resulted in an increasingly dynamic and richly varied moving image culture.

2.1 Fluxus Movement

Fluxus movement is one of the main influential elements in the formation of Video art. It is a radical anti-art movement which emerged in United States in 1960's and later on moved to Europe and finally to Japan¹⁵. It touched three continents and shared the culture and aesthetic practices of each, with an intention to fuse the art into a simple but meaningful form. It explored the chances of different mediums of art ranging from performance art to poetry to experimental music. The main characteristic feature of this movement was the shift of emphasis from the creation of the artist to what he conveyed through his work of art; his opinions, actions and personality were considered more important than the inanimate piece of work created by him.

Fluxus can be called as the proto type of video art. The elements that influenced video art are the revolutionary aspects and childlike approach of Fluxus towards art world. It promoted

¹³ Cfr. LOPEZ S., *A short History of Dutch Video Art*, Episode publishers, Rotterdam, 2005, 19.

¹⁴ Cfr. McLUHAN M., *The Medium is the Message*, 41.

¹⁵ Cfr. <http://www.artmovements.co.uk/fluxus.htm> <Accessed on Dec. 6, 2015>

'live art'¹⁶ which proposes an art culture without critic and higher end professionalism¹⁷. It tried to cleanse the commercialized art culture that promotes dead art, imitation, artificial art, abstract art, illusion art, and mathematical art¹⁸. It tried to fuse different genres of art and different genres of audience to a single stream of natural flow of art. According to Fluxus, the role of art should not be finished within itself but it has to promote a positive attitude towards life. The art should be a catalyst in social evolution. The objective of such a treatment is to eliminate the commercial aspect of art and to bring the art closer to the human life.

The advocates of Fluxus attempted to build an intermediate space where they tried to experiment what will happen if different art forms intersected. In September 1962, the main proponent of Fluxus, George Maciunas along with John Cage, an American experimental musician enacted a performance in Wiesbaden, Germany¹⁹. They wanted to create a concrete form of art by blending different stage programs, public discourses and audio visual installations. They used different forms of art such as ballet, theatre, poetry, visual arts, film, posters and video were blended together along with music to articulate this art form²⁰. The fusion of variety of art forms manifested the unity of form and content rather than their separation.

Artist with inclination towards music wanted to give more importance to music and make it as the highlight of their art work. And they also considered the audience participation as an inevitable part of the performance. The American composer John Cage was the promulgator of such an idea. He explained that the noises made by audience during the concert were the crucial element to concretize art²¹. They defined art as an interlaced form of aesthetic experience and they structured their performance for

¹⁶ 'Live art' is a movement in art where the notion of 'conscious and interactive spectator' is extremely important.

¹⁷ Cfr. BALKEMA A. W. & Slager H., *Screen Based Art*, Radopi, New York, 2000, 82.

¹⁸ HARRISON, C. & WOOD P. (eds.), *Art in Theory (1900-2000)*, Blackwell publishing, Oxford, 2009, 725.

¹⁹ <http://www.mediamatic.net> <Accessed on Dec. 20, 2015>

²⁰ HARRISON C. & WOOD P. (eds.), *Art in Theory*, 728.

²¹ Cfr. ANDREWS C. M., *A History of Video Art*, 10-11.

inviting the audience involvement. They advertised art as an everyday matter and tried working with every possible medium that related to the popular culture. Later on many Fluxus artists were seriously engaged in Pop art. The interdisciplinary character of Fluxus art allured people from outside the art world to offer their knowledge and share their interest in the process of moulding a work of art.

The Fluxus artists tried to minimise the gap between modern art and modern life style through their exploration of different media²². Fluxus always showed an instantaneous transition from ‘time art’ (literary arts) to ‘space-time art’ (visual and performing arts) and vice versa through its collaboration with different streams of art²³. Video art also indicates the same features within the parameters of a multimedia digital art. It combined different layers of written text, audio tracks, visuals, movements and graphics to form an aesthetical and eye-catching form of art²⁴. The modern concept of visual poetry is also derived from the mould of Fluxus movement.

Although video art does not contain audience participation up to the level that was conceived by Fluxus, still it shared the same attitude in its critical approach towards commercialized art world, acceptance and incorporation of modern technology and it also tried to stand on its own foot by finding alternative solutions to present artistic and social situations.

2.2 Opposition to Commercial Television

American curator John Hanhardt observed the evolution of video art as the result of two historical situations: the prevalent inter-textual fine art practices of the early 1960s and the opposition of intellectuals and artists towards the commercialisation of television²⁵. Firstly these two stirred the conventional practices of communication and paved the path for a

²² Cfr. HARRISON C. & WOOD P. (eds.), *Art in Theory*, 691.

²³ *Ibid.*, p.728.

²⁴ Cfr. BELTING H., *Art History after Modernism*, University press, Chicago, 2003, 91-92.

²⁵ Cfr. ANDREWS C. M., *A History of Video Art*, op. cit., 9.

new perspective on declaration of art, which promoted a revolutionary flood and tide in art; an art that could be grasped by all peoples, not only critics and professionals.

During this period the prosperity of the western nations and USA had increased. Technology became more readily accessible and hence became an integral part of the society. Along with the inter textual art form and the Fluxus movement, the monopolized status of broadcasting media also played a crucial role to recognize video art as a potential tool for art discourse and a audience friendly medium of art. By then television had become a part of every house hold. Video art expressed both the negative and positive features of technology and a lot of it was relevant to television²⁶. On one hand they were influenced by McLuhan's idea of a global village through the collective use of a proper communication system²⁷. They embraced technology and broadcasting media for its wide reach and acceptance among public. On the other, they were conscious about the unidirectional character of media without proper feedback.

In the beginning the explosion of electronic ways of communication offered a high tide of information to the public but later on the information was reduced to a minimal level. It became more evident during the period of Viet-Nam War (1959-1975) that like radio, television also provided service in a one-way traffic mode and lacked an alternative view point about war and its consequences²⁸. The broadcasting industry drew a strict line of biased news and kept a distance from real communication²⁹.

Video artists denounced the unidirectional attitude of media and realized the fact that television stood for the establishment and not for the public. Since it was under the influence and control of TV Channels and broad casting agencies, they tried to set a parallel stream to make the public realize the true nature of

²⁶ Cfr. <http://www.mediamatic.net/page/14315/en> <Accessed on Dec. 28, 2009>

²⁷ Cfr. MITCHELL W.J.T., *Picture Theory*, The University of Chicago press, Chicago, 1994, 15.

²⁸ Cfr. <http://www.mediamatic.net/page/14315/en> <Accessed on Dec. 15, 2015>

²⁹ Cfr. BELTING H., *Art History after Modernism*, University press, Chicago, 2003, 91.

television. By watering down of crucial information and providing illusory happiness, the broadcasting industry pushed television as the opium of the people. More over there was also the manipulation of news and information in television. These negative features along with some of its positive sides were elaborated by video art and it put forward various other options to know-how the true nature of reality.

2.3 Nam June Paik and Wolf Vostell

Artists Nam June Paik (Korea/USA) and Wolf Vostell (Germany) played an important role in the conversion of television from being a mere household electronic item to a more iconic necessity and this in turn helped in the establishment of video art as a powerful media and also in the nurturing of video artists³⁰. Both of them were connected to the Fluxus art movement and were influenced by the works musician John Cage. They tried to bring art from the market places to the drawing rooms of the public which resulted in the formation of an 'anti-art'³¹ and that later led to the evolution of video art.

The key event in the origin of video art is the introduction of first commercially available portable video recorder called Sony Portapak. Nam June Paik was one of the first few artists to possess the new Sony Portapak video camera which was made available in the market in the year 1965. During this period Pope Paul VI's visited New York. Using his new Portapak Paik followed the papal procession in a taxi and recorded everything he saw. He could not do any editing since the recording was reel-to-reel for a maximum period of one hour, so Paik just continued recording the entire procession till the tape got over. This resulted in the production of a 'real time' work which actually took the same time the procession took to complete. He then broadcasted it at Café a Go-Go alongside the TV version of the same event. The difference appreciated when compared to the TV version was the

³⁰ Cfr. ANDREWS C. M., *A History of Video Art*, 9.

³¹ Anti-art is a movement challenges the existing definitions of art. It is associated with Dadaism and refers to an array of concepts and attitudes that rejects prior definitions of art and question conventional artistic standards.

absence of voice-overs, studio discussions, flash backs or advertisements. It was a vidéo vérité³² record of the procession. The work was an exact replica of what the artist saw and felt when he was at that particular occasion and time³³. That was the origin of Video art.

Nam June Paik wanted to use audio-visual to bring people closer together, he wanted to humanize technology. The origin of video art is very much adhered to his contribution to this medium. He was attracted to the specific language of television and used a kind of deconstruction than the direct attacking style of his contemporary artist Vostell. He used television set as an art material and demonstrated his exhibition as a game which questioned the nature of television as a medium of unidirectional communication³⁴. He clearly demonstrated his statements against media through an art program called "*The Medium is the medium*" which was broadcast by 'WgbhTV' (Boston) in 1969. He combined different visuals like two lovers, hippies, dancers, and a speech by President Richard Nixon. He interlaced the fragments and distorted them to create an effect of mental agitation. Then he instructed the viewer to close his eyes or switch off the TV set. Through this experiment Paik deviated from the usual monotonous routine of television and created a new bi-directional mode of communication. By which he underlined his frequently quoted slogan, "*TV has been attacking us all our lives- now we can attack it back*"³⁵. Here he intended the reconstruction of video aesthetics for a better understanding of newly formed visual culture.

Although Paik and Vostell were considered as the fathers of video art, their attitude towards art and ideologies were different. Paik incorporated with the broadcasting media and criticized it from within itself, but Vostell completely denounced the role of

³² It is a style of film making which shows the ordinary people in actual activities without being controlled by a director.

³³ Cfr. ELWES C., *Video Art: A Guided Tour*, I.B. Tauris, London, 2005, 4.

³⁴ Cfr. BORDINI S., *Arte Elettronica: I Grandi Movimenti Artistici*, Giunti Editore, Firenze, 2004, 16.

³⁵ Cfr. ANDREWS C. M., *A History of Video Art*, 18.

broadcasting media and his works were always critical to media monopoly. He considered social life and art have the same role in human life and artist has the inflexible responsibility to instruct the society whenever it goes in the wrong direction³⁶.

The works of Vostell revolved around his concept of 'Décollage'³⁷. In this he used destructive techniques to create a fear in the public eye by showing destruction and human distress in order to get a therapeutical effect and this he did by tearing out objects or concepts in a new framework. *Schwarzes Zimmer* (1958) was one of his pioneer works which was latter considered as the forerunner of the video-installation. The mass-murders of Treblinka and Auschwitz were expressed in the form of a television set with distorted figures on it covered with barbed wires and was shown in a triangular setting. *Schwarzes Zimmer* demonstrated how the mass media was used by the Nazi's in Germany for the manipulation of public opinion. During the sixties Vostell expressed his ideas and views by destroying or disrupting the television set or the picture. He even went to the extent of burying a TV set while it was working at the *Yam Festival* (New Brunswick, USA, 1963)³⁸.

Heuschrecken (1969) by Wolf Vostell was the first real video installation. Using this installation he tried to express his criticism on the media which tried to always equalize the different degrees of information. When a visitor entered a room he was shown simultaneously on 20 monitors³⁹. Above these monitors there hung two huge pictures one was an erotic photography and another war scene. During that period, the Vietnam War was raging on and this installation referred to the reports made on war by the media.

The traditional pattern of the media was severely criticized by all the proponents of video art through different channels. The

³⁶ Cfr. <http://www.mediamatic.net/page/14315/en> <Accessed on Aug. 18, 2016>

³⁷ Décollage is the opposite of collage. In collage an image being built up of putting different things together. Décollage tears away or removes the pieces from an original work to reach the desired end.

³⁸ Cfr. <http://www.mediamatic.net/page/14315/en> <Accessed on Dec. 29, 2015 >

³⁹ Ibid.

adoption of *décollage* techniques of Vostell and deconstruction technique of Paik stirred the art world and many new comers revised their strategy and formed a blurring tendency towards art. The Paik-Vostell approach of removing the domestic television from its usual setting and incorporating it into performances and installations produced a ground breaking development in anti-art movement and post-modern art. They broke the ‘frame’ of establishment and provided a new social and cultural frame of reference⁴⁰.

2.4 The Era of Transition

Social activism was the common theme used during the 1970s. The 1980s show cased a change of work by the video artists giving more importance towards personal and formal issues such as contemporary literature, new narratives, and new figuration in painting. Filmmakers such as Perreault and Groulx from the 1960s who belonged to the French unit of the National Film Board introduced a new technique called direct cinema (*vidéo vérité*), which had a positive effect on video artists⁴¹. This influence was evident in two video graphic works which were released in the early 70s. The first work was the ironic documentary based on Québec society⁴² named *Continuons le combat* (1971), by Pierre Falardeau, was shot in typical ‘direct cinema’ style where the commentary accompanying a professional wrestling match refers it to as a social ritual. In this work the voice of the artist Falardeau revealed multiple feelings ranging from humorous to sarcasm and sometimes even theoretical. It showed a change from political use of video art to a more personal recall of social events.

The aesthetic qualities of the electronic image were the trendiest evolution of video art. Two Canadians Jean-Pierre Boyer of Montréal and Calgary-born Ernest Gusella explored the

⁴⁰ Cfr. ANDREWS C. M., *A history of video art*, 23.

⁴¹ Cfr. <http://thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE1ARTA0008366> < Accessed on Dec. 29, 2015>

⁴² It is a French-speaking community in Canada.

electronic nature of video resulting in the production of ‘image synthesis’ or ‘image processed video’⁴³. Between 1972 and 1975 Boyer used the electronic music of Pierre Henry and Jean-Claude Risset to create the forms which was central visual content of the tape. Using the audio and video synthesizers Gusella tried to find out a relationship between electronic sound and image between the years 1980 and 1984. These abstract video works have not yet attracted a great following.

2.5 New Directions

The computer started to influence video art by the second half of 80s by means computer editing, image manipulation and graphics. It has changed the total outlook of video and the amateurish character of art and artist changed to a more professional techno savvy one. Among the public this technological transformation created an enormous impact on video art. American writer and critic Marita Sturken identifies this crucial relationship between technological change and video art and describes it as,

In a medium heavily dependent on technology, these changes ultimately become aesthetic changes. Artists can only express something visually according to the limits of a given medium’s technology. With every new technique or effect, such as slow motion or frame-accurate editing, attempts have been made to use these effects for specific aesthetic results. The aesthetic changes in video, irrevocably tied to changes in its technology, consequently evolved at an equally accelerated pace.⁴⁴

Thus the evolution of image technology served the backbone contemporary video art, with new developments such as colour processing, digital editing, graphics, virtual studio and image layering created a new trend both aesthetically and stylistically. It helps the video art to enter into the mainstream of the museum

⁴³ ANDREWS C. M., *A History of Video Art*, 33.

⁴⁴ STURKEN M., *TV as a Creative Medium: Howard Wise and Video Art*, Howard Wise Gallery, New York, 2004, 103.

and gallery system and no one can imagine an art gallery without a video art. The concept of gallery space has been changed to a digitally rendered virtual environment. Today the video installations hold the mainstream video art practices and which integrates different new forms of media art such as electronic art, animation, designs, techno music, CGI⁴⁵, computer simulations etc. The installation art⁴⁶ style redefines the character of video art as a 2D image and offers a visual environment of interactive images and sounds. This three-dimensional works are designed to transform the perception of space. Video installations take into account the entire sensory experience of the viewer. This integral approach of video art entails the closure of the gap between art and life.

Video art has now become a part of a larger world known as media art⁴⁷, since it requires the latest communication technology. Changes in technology, reliability, advances in electronic imaging systems, and computer controlled devices are having an unpredictable influence on the development of aesthetics of video art. Development of new interactive technical invention opens up a whole set of new avenues for artistic exploration. The emergence of computer aided editing technology and HD cameras drastically changed the character of video art to a more techno centric visual poetry.

3. Forms and Functions of Video Art

Video art is a sensible mixture of different art medium: picture, sound, light, perspective, composition, movement, multiple and rapidly changing point of view, repetition, slow motion and fast forward, graphics, virtual images etc⁴⁸. It draws from both the diverse art media as well as from cognitive perspective of an artist. It is not a mere reproduction of artist's

⁴⁵ CGI is computer-generated imagery used in visual effects and computer graphics.

⁴⁶ An art that is created for a specific site; often it incorporates materials or physical features of the site.

⁴⁷ It is the art of new digital technology which incorporates a wide variety of art form which evolved as the result of digital expertise like virtual art, web art, robotics, interactive art, electronic art, generative art, informative art etc.

⁴⁸ Cfr. HARRISSON C. & WOOD P. (eds.), *Art in Theory*, 727.

imagination or thoughts rather a statement on the medium itself; an announcement of his/her own life in the milieu of prevailing visual culture.

In the beginning video art was part of a social movement and it evolved a great degree of counterculture. Many social activists used video as an easy tool for social change and many of these activists called themselves as video artist. Although the origin of video art is inseparable from its nature as a tool for social awareness, the character has been later changed to a more personal expression. Hence any definition of video art will be incomplete without mentioning the complex and creative tensions between video artist and video activist⁴⁹.

3.1 Conceptual Art

Conceptual art is an art form which based on the notion that art can exist solely as an idea. It gives priority to the thought process behind an art form than the aesthetic and material concerns⁵⁰. It questions the nature of art as a skilled execution of imagery. It redefined the language of art. As a reaction against the commoditisation of art, video art rightly fit in the class of conceptual art⁵¹. Right from the very beginning video artist laid their interest in asserting an idea rather than following a particular style. They tried to communicate make the spectators feel the things and they denied the usual practice of art exhibition: 'coming-seeing-leaving'. As an effort to diminish the gap between the viewer and creator, video art intends to convey the concept and rejects the importance of an artist or his talents in a work of art.

3.2 Video Activism

From the very beginning video art upholds its character as an alternative media. Even though the media was monopolized by the broadcasting industry, video art has played an important role

⁴⁹ Cfr. <http://www.colincampbellvideoartist.com/writings.php?id=61> <Accessed on Dec. 29, 2015>

⁵⁰ Cfr. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conceptual_art <Accessed on Dec. 28, 2015>

⁵¹ ZURBURG N., *Art, Performance, Media: 31 Interviews*, University press, Minnesota, 2004, 331.

of protesting against it. The influence of Fluxus movement played an inseparable role to establish the video art as separate voice of information. The early practitioners of video art, Nam June Paik and Wolf Vostell used TV set as the iconic symbol against its own role as a medium of manipulation⁵². In 1958, Vostell proclaimed his denouncement against television by raising an analogy between Nazism and television information. The use of television as a means for generating propaganda was severely criticized through his work called *Scharzes Zimmer*⁵³. Vostell's act of rebellion against the monopoly of television stations was exercised in the attack of television sets: televisions were buried, cemented, shot, thrown on hospital beds or between pieces of glass and worn-out shoes. His works also manifested his denial of the cultural status of television as a symbol of wealth and prestige. In later period the video artist used the prospective of video to involve creatively in public domain. They coined their artistic life with that of an activist. They used both spoken and written words to create a critical dialogue between the art and audience. They wanted to provoke the audience to get them involved in the social process.

3.3 Sharing Personal Experience

By the end of 70s video art lost its role as a political instrument to engage in public discourse. Artists started to approach the medium as a tool for sharing their personal experience and producing a stimulating experience by means of creative and imaginative articulation. They utilized their medium to have an inward appreciation of things, where they explores notions of truth and falseness, artificiality on the self and the influence of media culture⁵⁴.

Kate Craig, the founder of artist-in-residence program at the Western Front in 1976, documented herself in *Delicate Issue*

⁵² Cfr. ANDREWS C. M., *A History of Video Art*, 9.

⁵³ The mass-murders of Treblinka and Auschwitz were expressed in the form of a television set with distorted figures on it covered with barbed wires and was shown in a triangular setting.

⁵⁴ MANASSEH C., *The Problematic of Video Art in Museum (1968-1990)*, Cambria press, New York, 2009, p.151.

(1979) by filming her body in extreme close-up. By this she tried to explore the notions of self and body and the limit between the public and the private, while at the same time highlighting the fact how women are objectified through media⁵⁵.

One of the leading artist Sara Diamond's first video *The Influences of my Mother* (1982) was stirred up by the death of her mother. In which she attempts to posit her mother's image in relationship to the socio-political struggles she lived.⁵⁶ Due to her academic background in history, her videos had a more formal and historical flair than the rest of her peers. Her most achieved work to date is her trying to explore her father's memories as a New York Jew involved in the union movements through confessions and for this she used multi-channel and 8 monitor installation and named it *Paternity* (1990)⁵⁷. This complex installation consisted of a mixture of photographic and textual elements with video, this like all her other works relies on storytelling to detect the patterns in the past⁵⁸.

In the 1980s Europe and United states were the prominent video centres and they faced the problem of modernization of video art mostly due to artists focussing on self-reflexiveness and structuralism. But in the 1990s the artists had a change over again towards social issues such as minority politics and censorship. This change over was illustrated in the work of Lisa Steele. Her early works, like *A Very Personal Story*(1994) or *Facing South*(1997), employ narrative forms and first-person story-telling to explore the relationship between two worlds; one being the internal world of perceptions and the other an external world of nature and society.

3.4 Culture and Life Style

Video art is never complete by itself alone; it is linked with other streams of art and culture. The works of Canadian artist

⁵⁵ Cfr. <http://front.bc.ca/research/texts/7> <Accessed on Jan. 1, 2016>

⁵⁶ Cfr. <http://www.fondation-langlois.org/html/e/page.php?NumPage=183écollage> <Accessed on Jan. 1, 2016>

⁵⁷ Cfr. <http://www.colincampbellvideoartist.com/writings.php?id=61> <Accessed on Jan. 1, 2016>

⁵⁸ Cfr. BLAMIRE D. M., *David Jones: Art and Writer*, University press, Manchester, 1971, 23

Vera Frenkel compose obvious statement on the inseparability between video art and culture. In her video art she tries to draw a line between reality and fiction, facts and fantasies. She also tries to find the difference between authenticity and falseness. In works like *The Secret Life of Cornelia Lumsden* (1979) or *Her Room in Paris* (1979), Frenkel addresses issues of mythic constructions in media and culture⁵⁹. *From the Transit Bar*, is a perfect fusion of documentary and aesthetic features and it was first showcased in the year 1992 at Documenta in Kassel, Germany. By using the techniques of confession and story-telling she created a documentary that emphasizes the problems of the 20th century such as the troubles faced by the minorities and migrant culture. This was involved with issues such as the migration of the society and the transitory nature of memory⁶⁰.

3.5 Vidéo Vérité

In the early days of video art, the artists perceived this medium as an effort to achieve objective truthfulness. The artist addressed his/her mirrored self as the viewer⁶¹. They captured the reality in an observational mode: rendered the feeling of real life situations without any manipulation of media. They addressed the viewers directly without any personal interference. Editing equipments remains the most difficult things to obtain, so in this era many artists simply put their work as a raw expression of reality. They tried to record everything that went on before. When played back, it created a sort of past experience parallel to the present.

It was a real time work which captures the same time stretch of actual event. Nam June Paik's '*Procession of Pope*' (1965) was a vidéo vérité record of a real life situation⁶². He demonstrated the fact that meaning and message in visual media is always mediated. The proponents of vidéo vérité tried to tear out the

⁵⁹ Cfr. <http://www.aec.ca/exhibitions/2006/tellsecret.html> <Accessed on Jan. 3, 2016>

⁶⁰ Cfr. <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params> <Accessed on Aug. 1, 2016>

⁶¹ Cfr. HARRISSON C. & WOOD P. (eds.), *Art in Theory*, 995.

⁶² Cfr. ELWES C., *Video Art: A Guided Tour*, 4.

objective form of an everyday situation from the passage of time and to exhibit the experience in a different space and time without losing its tempo and fevered temperature. They used video as a tool for cultural criticism and challenged society's mediated versions of art and artist.

Conclusion

Art has the immense ability to convey deep hidden meanings in a very effective manner. In many cultures of the world, art has been used as an efficient mode to convey spirituality. The most prominent artists and architects of the early centuries have tried to create a fundamentally spiritual form of art. But the scenario has changed now due to the slow disappearance of religious imagery in the modern era. Art and artists have now started looking for secular concepts and crafts.

The second half of twentieth century have seen a new form of art called video art. It's the form of art which make use of the prospective of audio and visual medium. It has the potential to create an out of the world experience for the onlooker. It is the manifestation of reality in a compact form. Video art unites dissimilar things in order to arrive at a notion of a greater reality. It has a complex nature but at the same time by its simple and coherent narrative style it helps the viewer to easily understand the hidden message. It is also complimented by the dominance of visual culture, where all the meanings are constructed in the form of visuals.

The Office of the Deaconess in Orthodox Churches- A Historical Analysis

Greger R Kollannur¹

Issue of woman ordination is not a new thing for discussion in the theological forums. From the past few decades, feminist thinkers argue for the ordination of women in all the churches. In the western Christianity, most of the Protestant and Pentecostal churches showed some compassion towards this issue. But the Catholic and Orthodox Churches took an obstinate standing not only against the woman ordination but also allowing them to participate in the daily offices (such as reading of text, leading prayers, taking sermons etc). In such a context this is an attempt to find out the ecclesiastical role of women in the ordained ministry under the title 'Female Deaconate' in the Orthodox Churches².

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² Here the term '*Orthodox*' includes: a) Chaldean /Assyrian Church of the East, b) Oriental Orthodox Churches of: Coptic, Syriac Orthodox, Armenian, Ethiopian, Orthodox Syrian, Eritrean, c) Eastern Orthodox Churches.

recorded in the scriptures show some similarities to these terms. *Deacon* (Romans 16:1-2), *Chēras* (Acts 9:36-41), *Prostatis* (Romans 16:2), *Kyria* (2 John), *Gynē* (1 Timothy 3:11) are some of the words which are mentioning some particular women in the Bible. The Acts of Apostles Chapter 6 clearly states that the position of deacon existed from the apostolic period. But it does not give any account of ordained women in Bible.

Paul the Apostles remembers many women in his letters. In his letters to Romans he describes about ten women and among them the name of Phoebe has some momentous role. Phoebe was presented as a minister (*Deaconess*) in the sense of one who ministers the *gospel*. 'Phoebe is referred to with the masculine 'deacon', from which it emerges that at that time there was no distinction between a male deacon and a female deacon'⁷. Later the term *Deaconess* emerged to denote a female deacon and also acknowledged as the wife of a deacon⁸. Priscilla, Junia⁹, Mary, Tryphena, Tryphosa, Persis, Julia etc, were mentioned as the co-workers of Paul. It shows that women played an important role in the ministry of Paul for the expansion of Christianity in the then world. Acts of the Apostles also records the service of Tabitha - who served the church, died and resurrected through Apostle Peter. In short, the New Testament acknowledges the presence and service of women for the expansion of early Christianity.

3. Outline of Female Diaconate in the Early Church

New Testament keeps silence on the origin of female diaconate in the early church. But the terms which are used to describe certain women in the New Testament are closely related with the idea of diaconate. Less attention is usually given to Paul's instruction about widows in 1Timothy 5 than to the matter of women's teaching in chapter II. Yet these instructions were of great importance, especially as widows became increasingly recognized in the early church as an order of ministering women.¹⁰ As for widows in the New Testament

⁷ Susanne Heine, *Women and Early Christianity* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publications, 1988), 88.

⁸ Ruth A. Tucker and Walter Liefeld, *Daughters of the Church* (Secunderabad: OM Authentic Books, 2006), 72.

⁹ It is the Latin female name and the counter part of Julius. John Chrysostom and Jerome referred this person as woman. See: Raymond E Brown, Joseph A. Arzmyer and Roland E. Murphy, *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (Bangalore: TPI, 1992), 868.

¹⁰ Mercy K. John *Sthirithwa Dharshanam*, Malayalam (Thiruvalla: CSS, 2001), 51-52.

period, Kelly says, ‘such glimpse as we obtained from acts (6.1; 9:39ff.) reveals that at the early stages the community treated the widows in its midst as an important responsibility, and that they for their part were grouped together as a body occupied in deed of kindness to the poor.’¹¹ The feminine ‘deaconess’ is only attested for the second century. So some scholars like A. T. Hanson, Kelly etc, argues that the term *Gynē* refers the deaconess of the early Christianity or a certain groups of women who are in parallel with the deacons.¹²

At the beginning of Christianity and in the periods of the Apostles and Apostolic Fathers, there were no strict hierarchical structures in the church. Christian ministry mainly concentrated on the proclamation of *gospel* and the table fellowships with some charitable works. Three institutions which are prevailed in the Christian administration world are bishop, presbyter and deacon. ‘It is not possible for us, now, to give a clear outline or a straight forward classification of the functions of them.’¹³ The ministry of bishop, presbyter and deacon appeared in various form, and these offices shared the powers and responsibilities with teachers, prophets, widows and deaconesses. So there were not specific role for women as deaconess. By the year 451, the three fold ministry was fixed and universal. Other forms of ministry, especially those of prophets and teacher, had become functions of bishops, priests and deacons, and whatever part in them women had once played has disappeared.¹⁴

4. Female Deaconate in 2nd and 3rd Centuries

The second century provides some imprecise ideas of Deaconate in the history of Christianity. In a secular text, one of the letters from Pliny, Governor of Bithynia, to Trajan (112AD), he asks for guidance on how to handle the Christian sect, writing that he had to place two women called ‘deaconesses’ (*ancillae quae ministrae dicebantur*) under torture.¹⁵ Its makes clear that, from the second century onwards, the position of female deaconate existed in the church. In the letter of Ignatius of Antioch to the Smyrnaeans, he mentions, “I salute the

¹¹ Cited in Ruth A. Tucker and Walter Liefeld, op.cit., 86.

¹² Ibid., 86.

¹³ Susanne Heine, op.cit., 91.

¹⁴ Stuart G. Hall, op.cit., 237.

¹⁵ Joan Morris, *The Lady was a Bishop*, translated by Mrs. K. K. George and M. Kurian (Thiruvalla: TLC, 1989), 3.

families of my brethren, with their wives and children, and those that are ever virgins and the widows”¹⁶. Mentioning about *virgins* and *widows* can also be seen in the “Epistle of St. Ignatius of Antioch to the Philadelphians”¹⁷. It shows clearly that the virgins and the widows hold some greater position in the church. But they were not called as deaconess because it was a later development which happened only after the second century.

In the writings of Tertullian (CE. 155-250), he explains the position and dress costumes of a *virgin* or a *widow* who are ready to take vow of celibacy for Christ.¹⁸ The *Canons of the Alexandrian Church* (which are wrongly ascribed to Hippolytus) also mentioning about the codes and contexts of Virgins and Widows (Canon No.9, 17, 32 & 35)¹⁹. The *Didascalia Aposotlorum* from a Syrian Church dates from the middle of the third century and is the earliest testimony to an ecclesiastical office of deaconess point outs that women were appointed to assist in other women’s baptism and to visit the sick and elderly in their homes.²⁰ In the 4th Century, as a consequence of the entry of the pagans’ masses into the church, the office of the deaconess increased even more importance and attained its definitive form and full development.²¹

5. Reference of Female Diaconate in the Early Church Documents

The author of the ‘*Apostolic Constitution*’ located deaconesses within the church’s function. The *Apostolic Constitutions* regulates the order of Deaconess in the church by fixing the qualities of a deaconess. It records, a deaconess, she must be “a pure virgin, or a widow who has been but once married, faithful and well esteemed”.²² It also explains that she must be a virgin or a worthy widow. She was subordinate to

¹⁶ Cyril C. Richardson, *Early Christian Fathers*, Vol. I (London: SCM Press Ltd., n.d.), 116.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 111.

¹⁸ “Latin Christianity: Its founder Tertullian,” In *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*. Vol. III. Edited by Alexander Robert and James Donaldson, (Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing company, 1963), 687.

¹⁹ “Hippolytus,” In *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*. Vol. III. Edited by Alexander Robert and James Donaldson, (Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing company, 1963), 258.

²⁰ Marie Eloise Rosenblatt, “deaconess,” *The Modern Catholic Encyclopedia*. edited by Michael Glazier and Monika K. Hellwig (Bangalore: Claritian Publications, 1997), 232.

²¹ Hubert Jerdin & John Dolan, *History of the Church*, Vol. I (London: Burns & Oates, 1980), 312.

²² “Apostolic Constitution,” In *Dictionary of Apostolic Church*. Vol. I. Edited by James Hastings (New York: Charles Scriber’s Sons, 1916), 85.

the male deacon but above other women in her relation to the bishop. This *Constitution* also explains that her service in the community was directed by the bishop, seems to have been adapted to changing pastoral practice and need, but her principal service seems to have been directed towards women. She was not authorized to teach in church or to baptize. The bishop laid hand on her, invoked the Holy Spirit, and prayed a special blessing on her behalf. She was ordained after the deacon but before the sub deacon and lector.

5.1 Eligibility and Age of a Deaconess

In the earlier period it was only a widow who could become a deaconess, but undoubtedly the strict limits of age, sixty years, which were at first prescribed for widows, were relaxed, at least at certain periods and in certain localities, in the case of those to be appointed to be deaconesses. The age of entry fixed at sixty by St. Paul, and at fifty by *Didascalia*, was reduced to forty by the 15th Canon²³ of the Council of Chalcedon.²⁴

5.2 Functions of the Diaconate

There can be no doubt that in their first institution the deaconesses were intended to discharge those same charitable offices, connected with the temporal well being of their poorer fellow Christians, which were performed for the men by the deacons. According to the First Apology of Justin the Martyr (150 AD), the ministry of the deacon was expressed in the liturgical celebration of the gathered Eucharistic assembly, "...reading the gospel, leading the intercessions of the people, receiving the gifts of the people and 'setting the table' for the meal, serving the Eucharistic meal..."²⁵ Moreover the social service carried on by the deacons seems to be rooted in the liturgical celebration. But in one particular, viz., the instruction and baptism of catechumens, their duties involved service of a more spiritual kind. The universal prevalence of baptism by immersion and the anointing of the whole body which preceded it rendered it a matter of propriety that in

²³ G. Chediath, *Sunahadosukal*, Malayalam (Kottayam: OIRS, 1997), 58.

²⁴ "Deaconess," *The Oxford Dictionary of Christian Church*. edited by F. L. Cross (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), 377.

²⁵ Anglican-Lutheran International Commission, *The Diaconate as Ecumenical Opportunity* (London: Anglican Communion Publications, 1996), 10.

this ceremony the functions of the deacons should be discharged by women.²⁶

The *Didascalia Apostolorum* (III, 12) explicitly directed that the deaconesses are to perform this function. It is probable that this was the starting point for the intervention of women in many other ritual observances even in the sanctuary. The Apostolic Constitutions expressly attribute to them the duty of guarding the doors and maintaining order amongst those of their own sex in the church, and they also (II, 26) assign to them the office of acting as intermediaries between the clergy and the women of the congregation; but on the other hand, it is laid down (VIII, 27) that "the deaconess gives no blessing, she fulfills no function of priest or deacon", and there can be no doubt that the extravagances permitted in some places, especially in the churches of Syria and Asia, were in contravention of the canons generally accepted. It is hear of them presiding over assemblies of women, reading the Epistle and Gospel, distributing the Blessed Eucharist to nuns, lighting the candles, burning incense in the thuribles, adorning the sanctuary, and anointing the sick (II, 448). All these things must be regarded as abuses which ecclesiastical legislation was not long in repressing.²⁷

According to the newly discovered "Testament of Our Lord" (c. 400), widows had a place in the sanctuary during the celebration of the liturgy, they stood at the anaphora behind the presbyters, they communicated after the deacons, and before the readers and sub deacons, and strange to say they had a charge of, or superintendence over the deaconesses. Further it is certain that a ritual was in use for the ordination of deaconesses by the laying on of hands which was closely modeled on the ritual for the ordination of a deacon.²⁸

6. Female Deaconate in the Persian/Chaldean Tradition

Role of Female Deaconate in the Persian/Chaldean tradition was very less. Mentioning about the Female Deaconate in the church documents was also very low. The canons of the Synod of Marutha (of Maifarcut) in 410 AD insisted that each village must have at least one

²⁶ Ward Powers, *The Ministry of Women in the Church* (Summer Hill: SPCKA, 1996), 167-168.

²⁷ Marie Eloise Rosenblatt, op.cit., 232.

²⁸ H. Thurston, "Deaconesses." cited in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* published in <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04651a.htm> (09/10/2009)

deaconess for the smooth functioning of the church. The Synod fixed the role of deaconess in the church as a helper in the time of baptism.²⁹ In the commentary of Baptism, Catholicos Isayahab III (580-596) records that, 'In the time of women baptism, the role of deaconess is to immerse the candidate three times in water, smear the Holy Oil and decorate with new dresses'³⁰. The commentary also indicates that, in case of the absence of a deaconess, the whole duties can be done by the *baskyomo*³¹ of that church. From this statement, it is clear that the Persian/Chaldean church doesn't consider deaconate as an ordained ministry but only as a service ministry.³²

In the reign of Patriarch George I, the duties of deaconess were limited to reading the Psalms in the time of liturgy and to assist the elder women when they take baptism.³³ When adult baptism became rare the office of deaconess declined in importance. This process was helped by abuses which had crept in when deaconess arrogated to themselves ministerial function, e.g. in the Monophysite and Nestorian communities, where they administered Holy Communion to women, read the scriptures in public and the Council of Epaon (517) and Orleans (533) abrogated the office, but it is found in other places till the eleventh century.³⁴

7. Female Deaconate in the Oriental Tradition

In the Oriental tradition, the orthodox churches have their own systems of ordination. Alexandrian (Coptic Orthodox) and Ethiopian Churches hold the tradition of deaconess from the period of St. Clement of Alexandria and of Origen. The general canons of these churches documented the position of deaconess in the church. In most of the cases, deaconesses were constituted for assistance in the baptism of the adult women and for the reading of scriptures in the time of Holy Communion.

²⁹ G. Chediath, *Maruthayude Kanonakal*, Malayalam (Kottayam: OIRS, 1989), 36.

³⁰ Mathew Mor Severious, *Pourastya Vedashasthra Darshanangal*, Malayalam (Kottayam: MOC Publications, 2000), 101.

³¹ Baskyomo (Syr): It means the wife of a deacon or a priest. In the ancient Syrian tradition, they have some special powers and duties along with their husband.

³² Mathews Mor Severious, op.cit., 101.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ "Deaconess," *The Oxford Dictionary of Christian Church*, op.cit., 377.

Canon³⁵ of the Syriac Orthodox Church and the Orthodox Syrian Church also indicates that these two churches exercised the Female Deaconate in their tradition. Patriarch Severious records that, ‘in the East, i.e., at Antioch, deaconesses have the right to become abbot of a monastery’³⁶. Hudaya Canon explains about the ordination, rights and duties of a deaconess as: 1) there is not ordination for deaconess but some special prayers to install a women as deaconess, 2) She have the right to sit at the front row of the seats, 3) She have the right to give Holy Communion to women and the children those who are under the age of five, 4) She can enter in to the Altar for lighting the lamps and for cleaning, 5) She have the right to take Holy communion from the Sculpture and to give it to women in case of emergency and she have the right to smear Holy Chrisom in the time of adult baptism for women.³⁷ In India, the position of deaconess prevailed in the periods of Mor Osthathios Sleeba³⁸. He elected some *baskyomos* as deaconess and they assisted him in the time of adult female baptism. It is believed that the Armenian Church gave ‘ordination’ to women deaconesses.³⁹

8. Female Deaconate in the Eastern Orthodox Tradition

Eastern Orthodox tradition was based on the Greek tradition which was prevailed in the eastern Christendom. Didascalia (Teachings of Apostles) was the base of Greek ecclesiastical codes and canons. Didascalia rightly points out that women holds some special positions in the church in the early periods. Widows, Virgins and Old Ladies were appointed in the church for special functions. Most of them worked with the male deacons without any discrimination. At the same time, the *Nomocanon* of Photius⁴⁰ restricted to give priestly ordination to a woman.⁴¹ Though there were no ordinations for them but at the same time they were installed as deaconess through some special prayers. The main duties of these deaconesses were to visit the gentile

³⁵ Both of these churches accepted the “Hudaya Canon” as their official Canon compiled by Maphriano Bar Ebroyo Greegorious in 13th C.

³⁶ Yakoob Mor Julious, *Hudya Canon*, Malayalam (Udayagiri: Seminary Publications, 1995), 79.

³⁷ Yakoob Mor Julious, op.cit., 79-80; Konatt Abraham Malpan, *Hoodaya Canon*, Malayalam (Kottayam: MOC Publications, 2000), 90-93.

³⁸ A delegate bishop to India from the Patriarchal See of Antioch from 1908-1930.

³⁹ Mathews Mor Severious, op.cit., 103

⁴⁰ The standard code of Eastern Church Law

⁴¹ Kallistos Ware, “Man, Woman, and the Priesthood of Christ,” edited by Peter Moore, *Man, Woman, and Priesthood* (London: SPCK, 1979), 69.

women and to evangelize them. They were also deputed to visit the sick and needy.

Later in the fourth century, the deaconesses were mentioned in the Council of Nicea in 325 which implies their clerical, ordained status. Olympias, one of the closest friends and supporters of the archbishop of Constantinople, John Chrysostom, was known as a wealthy and influential deaconess during the 5th century.⁴² Even Justinian's legislation regarding clergy at the great imperial churches of Hagia Sophia and Blachernae in the mid-sixth century included female deacons. He also included female deacons among the clergy whose numbers he regulated for the Great Church of Hagia Sophia, listing male and female deacons together, and later specifying one hundred male and forty female deacons. Furthermore, from the luminal period of the eighth century, the Barberini Codex, containing a liturgical manual, provides an ordination rite for a female deacon which is virtually identical to the male deacons' rite. The deaconesses continued to exist after the middle Byzantine period predominantly in the capital city as well as many monastic communities. Evidence of continuing liturgical and pastoral roles is provided by Constantine Porphyrogenitus' 10th century manual of ceremonies (*De Ceremoniis*), which refers to a special area for deaconesses in the Hagia Sophia.⁴³

Balsamon, Patriarch of Antioch⁴⁴ about A.D. 1070 states that deaconesses in any proper sense had ceased to exist in the Church though the title was borne by certain nuns⁴⁵, while Matthew Blastares declared of the tenth century that the civil legislation concerning deaconesses, which ranked them rather among the clergy than the laity had then been abandoned or forgotten.

9. Reason for its decline

After the 4th century the role of the deaconesses changed drastically. It appeared that the amount of involvement with the community and the focus on individual spirituality did not allow the deaconess to define her own office. Social attitudes promoted during

⁴² Chrysostomos (Archbishop), "Women in the Orthodox Church," *Orthodox Life*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (Jan-Feb, 1981): 34-41.

⁴³ H. Thurston, "Deaconesses." op.cit.

⁴⁴ 'Patriarchate of Antioch' under the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

⁴⁵ Robinson, *Ministry of Deaconesses*, p. 93 cited by H. Thurston, "Deaconesses." cited in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* published in <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04651a.htm> (09/10/2009).

the 4th and 5th centuries councils which structured the organization and defined roles within the Church resulted in a patriarchal church. With Christianity's allowance as a legally valid religion by Constantine, leadership roles for women within the church diminished. During the rule of Constantine, as Christianity became more institutionalized; leadership roles for women decreased as they became subordinate to males within the church organization.

It was during the fifth and sixth centuries in the western part of the Roman Empire that the role of deaconess became less favorable. The Councils of Orange in 441 and Orléans in 533 directly targeted the role of the deaconesses in the church by the male-dominated hierarchy which forbade their ordination. By at least the ninth or tenth century only nuns were ordained as female deacons. Evidence of female diaconal ordination itself is less conclusive for the ninth through early twelfth centuries than for previous eras. There is enough of a historical record to indicate that the female diaconate continued to exist as an ordained order in Constantinople and Jerusalem for most if not all of this period.

In the Byzantine Church⁴⁶, the female diaconate decline began sometime during the iconoclastic period with the vanishing of the ordained order for women in the twelfth century. It is probable the decline started in the late seventh century with the introduction into the Byzantine Church of severe liturgical restrictions on menstruating women.⁴⁷ By the eleventh century, the Byzantine Church had developed a theology of ritual impurity associated with menstruation and childbirth. The dichotomy between Alexandrian and Antiochean attitudes about menstruation and other bodily functions was a method of restricting leadership roles of women in the church. By the end of the medieval period the role of the deacons decreased into mere preparation for priesthood, with only liturgical roles. In the 12th and 13th century deaconesses have completely disappeared in the Christian church. By the eleventh century they have ceased to exist in the eastern Mediterranean Christian churches.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Also called as the Eastern Orthodox Church

⁴⁷ Constance F. Parvey, ed., *Ordination of Women in Ecumenical Perspective* (Geneva: WCC, 1980), 14.

⁴⁸ Mary P. Truesdell, *The Office of the Deaconess*. Cited in www.philosophy-religion.org/diaconate/chapter_7.htm (18/09/2009)

10. Attempts for the re-establishment of Female Diaconate

As early as the 17th century, the Anglican/Episcopal Church blessed a form of ministry for women that focused on caring for the sick, the poor and needy, women and children. This was the beginning of the reinstatement of the office of the diaconate, a process that spanned over three hundred years. It was a juxtaposition of women filling the various ministerial needs of the Church and a growing understanding of the theological underpinnings of the order. Apart to this movement, certain Orthodox women started a parallel move within the church. With the support of Feminist and liberal promoters, the argument for re-establishing 'Female Diaconate' become vigorous.

There have been numerous attempts for over one-hundred and fifty years to reinstate the female diaconate. As early as 1855, the sister of Czar Nicholas I tried to restore the office. Other prominent Russians also lobbied for its restoration, including Alexander Gumilevsky and Mother Catherine. According to numerous sources, in 1905-06, several bishops, archbishops, and metropolitans of the Russian Orthodox Church encouraged the effort. According to a report on the Consultation of Orthodox Women in Agapia in 1976, this issue was to be a major topic at the Council of the Russian Church beginning in 1917, but due to the political turmoil in Russia at the time, the council's work was not addressed.⁴⁹

Other efforts were made in Greece. On Pentecost Sunday in 1911, Archbishop (now, Saint) Nektarios ordained a nun to the diaconate to serve the needs of the monastery. A few years later, Archbishop Chrysostomos of Athens appointed monastic 'deaconesses' who were nuns, actually appointed to the sub-diaconate. More recently, the issue has been discussed at the international conferences for Orthodox women in Agapia, Romania (1976—at which its restoration was unanimously recommended), Sophia, Bulgaria (1987), Rhodes, Greece (1988), Crete (1990), Damascus, Syria (1996) and Istanbul (1997).

Furthermore, in July of 2000, after over a year of careful review of the subject, a formal letter was sent to the Ecumenical Patriarch by more than a dozen Orthodox theologians as Elisabeth Behr-Sigel, Fr. Boris Bobrinsky, Olivier Clément, and Nicolas Lossky. The letter

⁴⁹ Constance J. Tarasar, and Irina Kirillova, eds., *Orthodox Women: Their Role and Participation in the Orthodox Church* (Report on the Consultation of Orthodox Women, Sept. 11-17, 1976, Agapia, Romania) cited in <http://incommunion.org/?p=945> (18/09/2009)

traces the history of the female diaconate and notes that the Patriarch himself has stated that there is “no obstacle in canon law [that] stands in the way of the ordination of women to the diaconate. This institution of the early Church deserves to be revitalized.”⁵⁰

Conclusion

In the current scenario, where the issues of woman ordination and female ministerial participation are discussed in the theological realm, the idea concerning female deaconate is very important. Office of the women deaconate was not a new issue in the history of Christianity and in the church orders. Especially in the history of the Orthodox Churches, female deaconate existed and flourished in ancient times. Due to the influence of patriarchy and strict monastic traditionalist, it was abolished from the church. But the new era requires the participation of women as well as men to meet the daily requirements of the church. While comparing to the past, mission of the church become more complex and perplexed. So the active participation of both men and women is required to fulfill the mission of the church. Then the re-establishment of female deaconate will become the first step towards a new future.

⁵⁰ *Orthodox Women's Consultation on Church and Culture*, Crete, January 1990. Cited in <http://members.iinet.net.au/~mmjournal/MaryMartha/CONSULTATIONS%20and%20REPORTS/CRETE%20Consultation%201990.html> (18/09/2009)

Names of God in the Holy Bible: An Exegetical Study

Anish K Joy¹

We are living in a world where there is a plurality of religious beliefs. Even among Christians, there exist thousands of denominations. Moreover, each denomination has one's own view in God and God's name. The name of God says about His reputation and His glory, His recognition by human where His deeds are recited. His name is recalled and He is recognised everywhere as what He is. The purpose of this article is to inspect briefly the chief explanations that have been offered to the origin and significance of the "Names of God". Exegetically study the revelation of God's name, analyse the third Commandment, "*You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain: for the LORD*

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will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain” and bring out the misuse of the “Names of God” which is very often done in the present human life. People usually get confused with the different names of God in our Holy Scripture. Therefore, I am trying to bring out an inclusive understanding that is critically open to the common people.

Names and Its Significance

It is a widespread cultural phenomenon that the ‘name’ is considered more than an artificial tag, which distinguishes one person from another. ‘Name’ is a word or set of words by which someone or something is known, addressed or referred to². The ‘name’ has a mysterious identity with its bearer; it can be considered as a substitute for a person, as acting or receiving in his place. The name is often meaningful; it not only distinguishes the person, but it is thought to tell something of the kind of person he is. The “name” is a “distinguishing mark”; seen in an etymological perspective and this is true for the common Semitic word šumu and consequently for the Hebrew word šēm³. In the ancient world generally, a name was not merely a convenient collocation of sounds by which a person, place, or thing could be identified; rather, a name expressed something of the very essence of that which was being named⁴. Hence, to know the name was to know something of the fundamental traits, nature or destiny of that to which the name belonged. To ‘greet the friends by name’ (3 John 14) is a token of a letter writer’s regard, and a name alone may arouse emotional response (Song 1:3; Jer. 33:9).

1. Significance of names in Old Testament

In the Bible, this connection between the name and what is named is particularised in a number of different ways. A name may denote some feature considered fundamental to that which is being so designated –

² Judy Pearsall, ed. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, See “Name”. 946

³ David Noel Freedman, See “Names” *A B D*, 1002

⁴ David Noel Freedman, ed. *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, 944

whether that feature is physical or something more abstract⁵. The practice of highlighting a significant feature by means of the name given to it is also found in those instances in which a person's name is that of a plant or animal⁶. Another particularity of the name, which is relevant for personal names, centres on the circumstances of a child's birth⁷. Sometimes the name is particularly focused on the destiny of a person; which is somehow presages that person's future⁸.

2. Different names of God

In this section I have tried to study and analyse the major names used to refer God in the Old Testament in order to understand what each of these names means and to see how these names means. Moreover, to see how these names functioned in the life and times of the people who used them and in the text that they occur. God is the central subject of the Bible and is always presented in relationship with the world, with that which is not God. God is the object of the religio-mystical consciousness or attitude. It is clear that revelational knowledge reaches by man through the grace of the Divine who permits this opening out of the consciousness of the individual to be conscious with His infinite consciousness.

2.1. Elohim: אֱלֹהִים

To get some idea of the meaning of this name of God, Elohim, we must examine its origin and note how, generally, it is used. The usage *El*, *Elohim* which means 'God', 'Gods' can be seen in "God, the God of Israel" (Gen 33:20), "I am God, the God of your father" (Gen 46:3) and

⁵ For example:- Giving a town the name of Gilbeah indicated that its physical positioning on a hill was probably deemed its most significant feature. In addition, the name Esau, meaning 'hairy', is quite fitting for the first-born son of Rebekah and Isaac, since what was noticed about him, physically, was his hairy body. (Gen. 25:25; 27:11)

⁶ Deborah means 'bee' which is said to be a busy and industrious insect certainly intersects with the many and varied positions this woman took on in her life (judge, prophetess, wife, mother, warrior, singer; Cf. Judg 4-5)

⁷ Jacob comes out of the womb gripping his older twin brother's heel: Jacob means 'heel-grabber'(Gen 25:26)

⁸ Jesus is the Greek form of the Hebrew name Joshua; its meaning is saviour.

many other verses. Very rarely, it is also used to refer god of another people as in “The Philistines gathered to offer a great sacrifice to Dragon their god” (Judg 16:23). Twice it refers to a female deity, “Solomon went after Ashtoreth, goddess of the Sidonians” (1 Kgs 11:5 and 11:33). Somewhat more frequently, it refers collectively to the deities of all the nations surrounding Israel, “ye shall not serve... the gods of the people who are around you” (Deut 13:7). Occasionally it denies the deity of certain so-called deities, emphasising that they are not gods at all, “the kings of Assyria have laid waste the nations, and their lands; and have put their gods into the fire, for they were no gods” (2 Kgs 19:17-18).

Elohim may be considered as a derivation from *El*, which means mighty, strong, prominent and it indicate the great power of God (Deut 10:17). It is this word *El* which is used in that great name Almighty God, the name under which God make great and mighty promises to Abraham and to Jacob (Gen 17:1; 35:11). After Abraham had been called by God and had left off worshipping many gods, he and his Hebrew descendants used the name *Elohim* basically to refer to the “one supreme God”, somewhat as when the pagan king Nebuchadnezzar finally realised this great truth, he said to Daniel: “your God is the God of gods” (Dan 2:47).

The Hebrew word for God has two singular forms *el* and *eloah*. Both forms occur quite often in Old Testament, but *el* is by far the most frequent in occurrence. The two singular forms mean that there could also be two plural forms; however, the plural *elim* does not occur in Scriptures. It is the plural form *elohim*⁹ based on the root *eloah* that occurs throughout the Old Testament. The singular form *el* appears in isolation in a number of places in such expressions as “the God of Bethel” (Gen 31:13); “O God, I beg you” (Num 12:13). However we see that frequently in composite names like God Almighty – *el shaddai*, the Most High – *el elyon* and so on. Also appears frequently in compound place or personal names, such as *Bethel* - house of el, *Peniel* - face of el, *Elijah* - jah my el, *Elimelech* - my el is king, *Elisha* - el my saviour, *Eltelon* - el is firm, so on. There are a few instances where *el* in the singular is used for other gods: “The Lord alone led him and there was

⁹ It has the usual Hebrew ending for all masculine nouns in the plural.

no strange god with him” (Deut 32:12), “the chiefs of Shechem went into the high place of the house of the god Berith”(Judg 9:46), “they weigh silver on the measure; they hire a refiner and he makes it a god” (Isa 46:6). In the last instance, it actually stands for the word *idol*.

The singular variant *eloah* never achieved great importance or a truly distinctive function. Its shorter form *elah* appears much more frequently than *eloah* itself. However, in a general way we can say that *eloah* appears to occur mainly in poetic passages, where it is usually translated only as God, and nothing more (Deut 32:15-17, Job 3:4, Ps 50:22).

Among the two possible plural forms only the plural *elohim*, based on the singular *eloah*, appears in the Old Testament. Eichrodt words are notable in this part

*“The singular eloah never attained to any importance in itself, but the plural form elohim played a part of greatest significance. That the word was also plural in meaning is indicated beyond reasonable doubt by the frequent employment with it of the plural of the verb. Yet there is a good deal to be said for the view that elohim, as distinct from elim, was originally used as the so-called “abstract plural” or “plural of intensity”, serving to expand and reinforce the concept in question, and to elevate the person designated by it to the status of general representative of his class. In that case, the employment of the word as a true plural in the sense of “gods” would be secondary. As an “abstract plural”, however, the term corresponds to our word “Godhead” or “divinity” and is thus suited to the task of summing up the whole divine power in a personal unity.”*¹⁰

According to Dr. Parkhurst *Elohim* is a name usually given in the Scriptures to the ever-blessed Trinity by which they represent themselves as under the obligation of an oath to perform certain conditions¹¹. *Elohim*

¹⁰ *Theology of the Old Testament*, pp 184-185

¹¹ Parkhurst, Hebrew Lexicon – See Elohim

does function as a true plural in that it occurs with plural verbs and plural modifiers, but in this usage it never speaks of many High Gods, but rather of gods - a class of beings which people worship, but who are not to be equated with God. For example, with plural modifiers. “you shall have no other gods besides me” (Exod 20:3), “our God is greater than all the gods” (2 Chr 2:5); and with plural verb forms, “these are the gods who struck the Egyptians” (1 Sam 4:8), “have the gods of the nations delivered them ...?” (2 Kgs 19:12), “you are our gods” (Isa 42:17).

However, by far the most frequent occurrences of the plural form *elohim* is with singular verbs and with singular modifiers; and in such instances it always refers to God, the one and only High God: “in the beginning God created ...” (Gen 1:1)¹² and “the righteous God is a trier of hearts” (Ps 7:9)¹³. There are some contexts in which *elohim* is not clearly marked by verbs or modifiers and in which it is very difficult to decide whether we should translate it as God or as gods, for instance “your eyes shall be opened and you shall be as God/gods” (Gen 3:5). Thus, the use of plural form only implies that the word in the singular is not full enough to set forth all that is intended. The plural form teaches us that no finite word can adequately convey the idea of the infinite personality or the unity of persons in the Godhead.¹⁴

Thus, *Elohim* may be said to express the general idea of greatness and glory. The name *Elohim*, however, contains the idea of creative and governing power, of omnipotence and sovereignty. This is clearly indicated by the fact that from Genesis 1:1 to 2:4¹⁵.

2.2. YHWH: יהוה

This four consonant word represents the personal name of the God of the Hebrews, the name that set apart from all the other gods as the only true God. This is found in the Scriptures with the following variants: *yhh*, *yhw* and *yh*. It is very hard to say precisely at what point

¹² Singular verb

¹³ Singular adjective

¹⁴ Nathan Stone, *Names of God*, (U S A: The Moody Bible Institute Of Chicago, 1944), 17

¹⁵ In these the word *Elohim* alone is used, and that thirty-five times

the Israelite people began to use this name. God revealed his name as *YHWH* during his confrontation with Moses at the burning bush (Exod 3:14-15). This would appear to suggest that it was only with Moses that God first revealed that his name was *YHWH*.

The origin of the name has been the subject of much controversy, and there is as yet no general agreement among Old Testament scholars. According to the Kenite hypothesis, *YHWH* was originally the God of the Kenites, a Midianite clan into which Moses married (See Exod 3:1, 18:1; Judg 1:16; 4:11). G R Driver has suggested that the name *Yahweh* may have developed from a primeval interjection, a “god-cry” *Yah*¹⁶. There are many indications that the name *Yahweh* is extremely ancient, although it received a new significance in the exodus period. Its form is archaic, retaining the ׀ which was later replaced by a ׁ in the verb היה with which the name is connected – a change that took place long before the time of Moses. Since cognate languages keep the ׀, the tetragrammaton would seem to go back to a time when Hebrew approximated far more closely to its kindred tongues. In that case, יה appears to be a contracted form, but its presence in an early poem, “The Song of the Red Sea” (Exod 15:2), and in an early poetic extract (Exod 17:16) implies the existence of the full name for some considerable time¹⁷. So also does its occurrence in the name of Moses’ mother יוכבד (Exod 6:20; Num 26:59). Although only the priestly writer mentions this name, its early form¹⁸ suggests a pre-exilic origin, and there is no good reason for doubting its genuinely ancient character¹⁹. There is thus

¹⁶ “G. R. Driver, “*The Original Form of the Name Yahweh. Evidence and Conclusion*”, *ZAW* (1928): 24

¹⁷ Raymond Abba “*The Divine Name Yahweh*” *JBL* Vol LXXX part IV (Dec 1961), 322

¹⁸ Hy prefixed

¹⁹ E Nestle believes that this name is a compound with hy. This is accepted also by G. B. Gray who, however, doubts whether the priestly writer so understood it, since the only other compound with hy found in his works is [wfwy, which he is careful to explain was first given after the Exodus (Num 13: 16). Gray maintains, therefore, that we may infer that this name was neither coined by P nor obtained by him from current names but was presumably derived from a pre-exilic source. See *Hebrew Proper Names*, pp 156, 190, 257. M. Noth, however, doubts whether the name should be connected with wfwy. Cf. H. Bauer, *ZAW*, 10 (1933), pp. 92 f.

considerable support for the biblical tradition that the use of this divine name goes back to primeval times (Gen 4:26; 9:26)²⁰. The link between the *YHWH* and the God of the patriarchs is made in Exodus 3: 13-16: Yahweh is “the God of your fathers.”²¹ We can therefore say that the revelation given to Moses at the burning bush was not therefore the revelation of a new and hitherto unknown name; it was the disclosure of the real significance of a name long known²². This is also implied by the Hebrew idiom of Exodus 3:13. When the interrogative pronoun *מה*, which occurs in the question, refers to substantives, it frequently expresses an inquiry concerning quality and may be rendered, “What kind of?”²³ In addition, in biblical Hebrew it is never used in asking a person’s name; for this *מי* is employed (See Judg 13: 17)²⁴.

The situation is further complicated by the fact that in Gen 4:26 we are informed that it was at the time of the birth of Enos that mankind first began to worship God using the name *YHWH*, when in actual fact the biblical record says that *YHWH* was already active in the creation of the world (Gen 2: 4-25). Probably the best explanation for this situation is found in the fact that the Hebrews wanted to emphasize that *elohim* and *YHWH* were the same God, and in the fact that the content of the Old Testament was transmitted orally over a long period before it was

²⁰ Cf. H. H. Rowley, From *Joseph to Joshua*, pp 148-49: “That the name is older than the time of Moses... there is little reason to doubt.”

²¹ Cf. M. Buber, *Moses*, pp. 43-44: “All we have to do is to compare the peculiarities of the God of Moses with those of the God of Fathers... If the material of the Bible is subjected to such an examination, the two likenesses will be found to differ in a special manner; namely, just as a clan god in non-historical situations might be expected to differ from a national god in an historical situation. Yet at the same time it can be observed that both depict the identical God.”

²² Cf. S. Mowinckel, *The Two Sources of the Predeuteronomic Primeval History (J E) in Gen. i-xi*, p 55 “Yahweh is not telling his name to one who does not know it ... The whole conversation presupposes that the Israelites know this name already.” Similarly, E. Jacob, *Theology of the Old Testament*, E. T., 1958, pp 49-50; “We do not have in the Exodus narrative the revelation of a new name but the explanation of a name already known to Moses which in that solemn hour is discovered to be charged with a content the richness of which he was far from suspecting”

²³ See Gesenius, *Hebrew and English Lexicon*, E. T., 1844, p.546

²⁴ Cf. M Buber, *Moses*, pp.48-49

finally put into the written form. Thus even if the name *YHWH* was indeed first revealed to Moses, it soon became associated with earlier events like the call of Abraham and the creation of the universe. On the other hand, if the name *YHWH* had already been revealed earlier, then the Exodus statement would suggest that the full meaning of that name and of *YHWH's* purpose had not been revealed until *YHWH* spoke to Moses.

It is believed that the correct pronunciation of the name was *Yahweh*²⁵. However, we know that, because the third commandment ordered the Hebrews not to use *YHWH's* name in vain, they began to avoid pronouncing it when reading the Scriptures aloud. The pronunciation Jehovah, which appears in a few places in King James Version (Exod 6:3, Ps 83:18, Isa 12:2), is a kind of mixture. It resulted from pronouncing the consonants of the name *YHWH* with the vowels of the Hebrew word *Adonai* “lord”.

When we think about the meaning of the name *YHWH*, we find that in Exodus 3: 14 it is explained as meaning, “I am” and “I am that I am”. In this case, however, the text contains actual forms of the verb “to be”. As for the *YHWH* root itself, the best interpretations see it as a causative root of the verb “to be” and translate it as “the one bringing into being”²⁶. Others define its meaning as “independent underived existence”²⁷.

We can see this concern, about *YHWH* being the one and only true God, throughout the Scriptures. On arrival in Cannan Joshua calls upon the people to “turn away from gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt and serve Jehovah” (Josh 24:14). During the time of the kings, the prophet Elijah calls upon the people to choose for the last time: “if Jehovah is God, follow him; and if Baal, follow him... the god who will answer by fire, he is God...” In addition, when *YHWH* does

²⁵ Jacob A. Loewen, “The Names of God in the Old Testament” *The Bible Translator*, Vol 35, No 2 (April 1984): 204

²⁶ Brown, Driver, Briggs, See “hwhy,” *Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 218

²⁷ I. Howard Marshall, A.R. Millard, J.I. Packer, and D.J. Wiseman eds. *New Bible Dictionary*, 475

send fire, then all the people shout: “Jehovah, he is God, Jehovah, he is God” (1Kg 18: 21-39).

It is therefore, within the context of the covenant with Israel that the divine name has significance. “The name is not like *Elohim*, which expresses God on the side of His being, as essential, manifold power; it is a word that expresses rather relation – *Elohim* in relation to Israel is Jehovah.”²⁸ The name expresses the covenant relationship of God with his people: Israel is עַמִּי (Exod 3:7,10)²⁹ and *YHWH* is אֱלֹהֵי (Exod 6:7-8).³⁰

2.3. Adonai

Adon is a general Hebrew word for “lord, master, owner” which was used by a servant for his master, a subject for his king, and even by a wife for her husband, as when Sarah called Abraham “my lord” (Gen 18:12). However it was also used for God, as in “the ark of the covenant of the Lord” (Josh 3:11), or Joshua calling on God saying, “what does my Lord say to his servant?” (Josh 5:14). While plural *Adonai* is used for God and it functions as a “plural of intensity” just like the plural of *Elohim* (Gen 20:4, Isa 3:17, Lam 2:1).

2.4. Combined Names

a. *YHWH Elohim*: is found in the creation account in Genesis (Gen 2:4) and from then according to the order in Bible it occurs in all the historical, poetic and prophetic books.

b. *Adonai YHWH*: is usually printed as “Lord God” in K J V. We find it in a good many passages- “and Abraham said, Lord Jehovah” (Gen

²⁸ A. B. Davidson, “The Theology of the Old Testament” *The Princeton Theological Review* 4[1906]: 116.

²⁹ Buber draws attention to the emphatic nature of this repeated reference to Israel as “my people” at the beginning and the end of the passage, even though Yahweh has not yet designated himself their God. So far, he has revealed himself only as the God of their ancestors, but this emphasis upon Israel as his people points to the existence of a long-established bond. See Moses, pp 45-46.

³⁰ E. Jacob says “Yahweh, because he is the God capable of being with someone, and that in a more complete sense that the tutelary and family gods of the patriarchs, becomes the God of the people to whom he is joined by a covenant.”

15: 2) and king David said... “O Lord Jehovah” (2Sam 7: 19, 28), and so on.

c. *Yh YHWH*: occurs only once- “for in Jah Jehovah is everlasting strength” (Is 26: 4).

d. *El Elyon*: The name elyon meaning “the Most High” occurs both alone and together with El as “the Most High God” (Gen 14: 18-20, Num 24: 16, Deut 32: 8, Ps 21: 7, Lam 3: 35).

e. *El Olam*: means “the everlasting God”, “the ancient God” or “the eternal God” (Gen 21: 33, Is 40: 28).

f. *El Roi*: means “the God of seeing”, “the God who sees”, or “the God who appears” (Gen 16: 13).

g. *El Shaddai*: means “the almighty or the all-sufficient God” (Gen 17: 1, Ex 6: 3, Ezek 10: 5).

2.5.Praise names

These are the praise names based on *YHWH*. *yhwh jireh* – Yahweh provides, *yhwh nissi* – Yahweh my banner, *yhwh shalom* – Yahweh of peace, *yhwh tsidkenu* – Yahweh our righteousness, *yhwh shammah* – Yahweh (is) there, *yhwh sebaot* – Yahweh of the armies or Yahweh is victorious and this word occurs 88 times in Jeremiah alone, *yhwh rapha* – Yahweh heals, *yah raah* – Yahweh is my shepherd (Gen 22: 8, 14; Ex 17: 15; Judg 6: 24; Jer 23: 6, Ezek 48: 35, 1 Sam 1: 3, Exod 15: 26, Ps 23: 1).

The Third Commandment

*“You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain: for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain”*³¹.

The Third Commandment follows naturally on first and second. In the first Commandment, the duty is laid down of worshipping God and worshipping Him only. The second Commandment man is required to worship God in spirit and not through the mediation images. On these two follows, appropriately the command not to dishonour God by

³¹ Deut 5:11; R S V translation. Cf. Exod 20:7 also.

invoking His Name to attest what is untrue.

You shall not swear falsely by the name of *YHWH* appears to reflect the meaning of the parallel text in Lev 19:12. The Ten Commandments are presented as the direct address of Yahweh, who spoke with you on the mountain out of the midst of the fire. The first three commandments focus on God himself in relationship to human beings. To know or to use the name of Yahweh, therefore, was a matter of utmost solemnity, even peril. So even today, we cannot be quite sure how the sacred Tetragrammaton was pronounced. The Holy Name of God deserves great reverence, and it is sinful to make bad use of them. So God forbids human to use His Holy Name how they please, and tells them that they must not mention Him without the great reverence and respect.

In the Old Testament we know that the Jews were never allowed to say the special word of God. Even today, in Jewish prayer books, they do not print the Hebrew word for God, and Jews never use it. Only the High Priest was allowed to pronounce this Holy Name. But we Christians are rather the children of God than the servants of God, and we may say the Names of God, the Lord, and Jesus, as often as we wish. But it is never lawful to speak disrespectfully of these Names.

The main question is obviously is what is the meaning of the phrase “in vain”? In Hebrew the phrase literally means for “unreality”³² It is used to the man who has lifted up his soul to vanity (Ps 24: 4). It is also used in Exod 23: 1 for a false report. The word describes that which is empty, idle, insincere, and frivolous. This commandment, then, lays it down that the name of God must never be used in an empty, frivolous or insincere way.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches “The holiness of the divine name demands that we neither use it for trivial matters, nor take an oath which on the basis of the circumstances could be interpreted as approval of an authority unjustly requiring it. When an oath is required by illegitimate civil authorities, it may be refused. It must be refused

³² William Barclay, *The Plain Man's Guide to Ethics-Thoughts on the Ten Commandments*, (Great Britain: Collins Fontana Books, 1973), 22.

when it is required for purposes contrary to the dignity of persons or to ecclesial communion”³³.

Let a man think long before he takes the name of God or the son of God irreverently upon his lips. This is one of the commandments, which will never go out of date, for it asserts the sacredness of every promise and it rebukes the blasphemy of irreverence.

3. Conclusion

We humans cannot exist without God. Whether consciously or subconsciously, we join the psalmist who cries out, “My soul thirsts for you; my flesh pines for you” (Ps 63:1). In our need for wholeness, we yearn to be joined to the Incomparable One who transcends all human categories. However, the only way in which such a communion can occur is with a good relation with God. This should start from the basic level of using the God’s name in a respectful manner.

Considering the life situation along with my personal experience of different incidents I summarise the three main ways in which people mis-use the Divine name and is listed below:

The name is misused in *sorcery*³⁴: Sorcerers invoke the Lord’s name in order to summon His assistance. They call on the Lord’s name in order to exercise control over Him through an incantation.

1. The name is misused in *false prophecy*³⁵: False prophets declare, “Thus says the Lord,” when in fact they have not been sent by Him (Deut 18:22; 1 Kgs 22:11; Jer 14:15; Ezek 13:6).

2. The name is misused in the *false oath*³⁶: The commandment is a prohibition of taking the name of God in vain in a promise or pledge. Making a promise in the name of God and then afterwards breaking it because, it was inconvenient or uncomfortable to keep it.

Nowadays it has become a fashion to use the name of God in our day-

³³ Catechism of the Catholic Church - 2155

³⁴ J Douma, *The Ten Commandments- Manual for the Christian Life*, (Translated by Nelson D. Kloosterman, N J: P & R Publishing, 1996), 74.

³⁵ Ibid. 74

³⁶ ibid 74

to-day life's talks. "Oh God", "Oh my God", "For God sake..." are some of the major examples. The pity thing in our life is that when we utter these words or phrases with our mouth we are not even thinking, "what He is" or "who He is" still we use that.

To conclude it is our duty to take at most care when we use the Divine Names, no matter in which language we are using it. However, use it in a respectful manner and discourage others or help others in understanding the sanctity of the God's Name. Also, one should be careful not to interpret Holy Bible related to the theme of the "Names of God" simply in the light of our modern conceptions of person, personality, existence or identity. In doing so, one would run the risk of missing the appropriate approach to the essential dimensions of the Biblical faith.

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