

Unique Features of the Theology of SYRO-MALABAR QURBANA

1. INTRODUCTION TO THE THEOLOGY OF QURBANA IN THE EAST SYRIAN TRADITION

East Syriac tradition is undoubtedly the custodian of one of the most ancient theologies of Eucharist. This theology of Eucharist is remarkably biblical and it represents the views of the apostolic Church and that of the early Fathers on the Eucharist. The fact that the East Syriac tradition remained for many centuries isolated, helped it in preserving its ancient theology without much influence of the Greek thought patterns. After the rift from the West (West Syrian tradition) and the Greek and Latin Churches as a whole due to the Nestorian controversy, the East Syriac tradition chose its own path of theologizing.

We find a steady development of the Jewish Christian understanding of Eucharist, fostered by the Antiochene School of theology and brought to a final shape in the East Syriac Schools of Nisibis, Edessa, and Seleucia-Ctesiphon. The most ancient phase of the East Syriac Eucharistic theology was one of sharing the West Syriac Eucharistic theology. Both in the celebration and theological understanding of the celebration these traditions had much in common.

A theology specific to the Eucharist of the East Syriac tradition emerged in a clear form in the fourth century. Theodore of Mopsuestia's interpretation of the Eucharist is foundational for the Syriac tradition. His theology serves a real basis for the interpretation of the East Syriac Qurbana. Later authors follow his line of interpretation. Thus, we may find Theodore's stress on the commemoration of the mystery in the commentaries of Narsai of Nisibis, Gabriel Qatraya, Abraham Bar Lipah, Anonymous Author of the Exposition of the Offices (or the Pseudo George of Arbel), Yohannan Bar Zo'bi, Abdisho, and Timothy II. Fathers like Aphrahat and St. Ephrem had distinct ways of talking about the Eucharist. Their concern was more biblical and theological.

The Homily XVII on the Exposition of the Mysteries, attributed to Narsai (399-502) provides us with a distinctive and specific theology of the Eucharist in the East Syriac tradition. The shift of the ecclesiastical centre towards Seleucia Ctesiphon contributed to the specificity of the East Syriac Eucharistic theology. The East Syriac liturgy had attained distinctive characteristics at the time of Gabriel Qatraya (6/7th century). The development of new elements in the liturgy of the Word and pre-anaphoral part of the Qurbana contributed new inputs to the theology of Eucharist.

The St. Thomas Christians of India shared one and the same liturgy of the East Syrian Church of Mesopotamia at least since the fourth century. The continuous relation between these two ecclesial traditions paved the way for the borrowing of the liturgical tradition by the Thomas Christians. It does not mean that the liturgy of Malabar was a copy of the Mesopotamian liturgy. The East Syriac liturgy was adapted by the Thomas Christians to the Indian cultural context. Thus, we find many Indian cultural elements incorporated into the liturgy of the Church in Malabar. The liturgical architecture resembling the architecture of the temples; the 'puqdankon' in the beginning of the Qurbana; the rite of prostration on the bema are all examples of such adaptations made in the Qurbana. The Thomas Christians made many decisive changes with regard to the sacraments of marriage and the anointing of the sick. The sacramentals like the rites related to initiation and death have numerous typical Indian elements which are shared by both Hindus and Christians.

The East Syriac tradition has its theology of Eucharist based on the entire space-time of the Qurbana. Thus, the space, time, persons, objects, words and actions of the celebration of the

Qurbana contribute to the theological understanding of Eucharist. The commentaries of the Fathers are centred on the liturgical space-time of the Eucharist. The liturgical space is seen as the meeting of heaven and earth; the processions between the sanctuary and bema are understood as the movements between heaven and earth, namely the incarnation and the ascent to heaven.

East Syriac Qurbana insists on the commemoration of the paschal mystery of Christ. The entire space-time of liturgy becomes the medium of this commemoration. The commemoration of the mystery of God is made along with the commemoration of the mystery of man. Thus, Eucharist is seen as the remembrance (*uhdana*) of the *Raza* of God and the remembrance (*dukhrana*) of the *Raza* of the Church. This twofold commemoration is done in view of a twofold sanctification: the sanctification of God and the sanctification of man. The prayers, actions and the objects in the liturgy serve as authentic means for the sanctification of God and for our own sanctification. Thus, the East Syriac theology of Eucharist stresses the transformation of man through the sanctification of God.

East Syriac Eucharist stresses the essential consequences of the sanctification. It is a sanctification leading to vertical and horizontal communion (*šawtaputha*). This sanctification includes forgiveness (*husaya*) from God and reconciliation with God and fellow beings. Eucharist is rightly depicted by the Fathers as the ‘Medicine of Life.’

The East Syriac eucharistic celebration is understood as Qurbana (offering) of various dimensions. In the katabatic dimension it refers to the offering made by God towards us, the offering of his only Son. In the anabatic dimension it is the offering made by Christ, as the head of the Church towards the Father. The offering of the mysteries of the body and blood of Christ, the offering of the mystery of Christ along with our mystery, and the offering of the eucharistia, the praise and thanksgiving constitute the anabatic dimension of Qurbana.

Another important aspect of the Eucharistic theology of the East Syriac tradition is that the celebration in space-time is viewed as an anticipation in the heavenly banquet. The Eucharist enables us to transcend the limits of time and participate in the heavenly liturgy, while we are still on earth. There is a meeting of the heavenly and earthly choirs in the liturgy. The celebration makes the participants worthy of eternal life. The Eucharist is therefore called the food of immortality. Thus, the Eucharist in the East Syriac tradition is that which gives us “the pardon of debts, remission of sins and the great hope of resurrection from the dead and new life in the kingdom of heaven with all those who have found favour in your presence.”

2. CELEBRATION OF THE PASCHAL MYSTERY IN THE SACRED SPACE

The theology of the Eucharist is very often determined also by the space of its celebration. *Hagia Sophia* of Constantinople had considerable influence on the development of the Byzantine Eucharistic theology. There is no doubt that in the East Syriac tradition, the symbolic understanding of the sanctuary as heaven, haykla as earth, central bema as the earthly Jerusalem, and šqaqona as the way to heaven, has contributed in a substantial way to the Eucharistic theology.

2.1. Madbaha

Sanctuary or *madbaha* in the Syriac tradition is very important with regard to the understanding of the Eucharist. The term *madbaha* is used in Syriac to denote both the sanctuary (apse) or place of the altar and the altar itself. In the East Syriac liturgical tradition, in all its various versions with local adaptations, the sanctuary is treated as a place of awesome sacredness. The canons of Išo'yahb IV stress the sacredness of the sanctuary in relation to the altar which makes the sanctuary sacred. Any action neglecting the sacredness of altar and sanctuary is considered an injury to the altar. An unworthy entry into sanctuary by persons not permitted, or by persons permitted but without due preparation, desecrates the altar place and the altar. Fasting is required as preparation for the entry.

The sanctuary is normally kept hidden from the other parts of the church by a stone-wall or by a curtain, in order to maintain its sacred and mystic nature. Entrance to the sanctuary is restricted to the priests and ministers of the liturgy. Ephrem compares the function of the sanctuary veil to the hiding of the glory of the inner tabernacle of Paradise (*HParad* 3.5). In relation to the history of salvation, Narsai sees the sanctuary as the 'garden of Joseph' (*HomMyst* 4), the place where Jesus was buried, the same place from where he rose. Pseudo-George of Arbel clearly speaks of sanctuary as heaven. He emphasises the movements in the liturgy from the earthly space represented by the haykla, to the heavenly space represented by *madbaha*. According to the Anonymous Author, the drawing of the veils of the sanctuary symbolizes the opening of heaven. The author of *Liber Patrum* sees the veil as the figure of the firmament separating us from heaven.

2.2. Altar

The commentary of Gabriel Qatraya emphasises the position of altar as the place of burial. The altar, being the sepulchre of Christ, is also the place of his resurrection. Qatraya, Abraham Bar Lipah, Bar Zo'bi and Abdišo, following Narsai, speak of the veil over the mysteries as the tombstone. Emphasising the altar as the place of resurrection, Qatraya says: "The deacons who stand on this side and on that side are the mystery of the angels who were seen in the sepulchre, one at His head and one at His feet." A similar idea is found in Abraham and Bar Zo'bi.

On a different level of symbolism, the altar is the throne of God. In the Qurbana the diaconal proclamation after the third g'hanta of the anaphora of Addai and Mari refers to the altar as the glorious throne of Christ. Theodore calls the altar the 'holy communion-table'. It is the table that brings man into communion with God. Išo'yahb I, in the letter to Jacob, the bishop of Darai, speaks of the altar as the 'table of life'.

There is a step close to the altar on which the celebrant stands while he is celebrating in the sanctuary. In the East Syriac tradition this step is known as *mestabtha*, and in the West Syriac tradition it is known as *darga*.

2.3. Haykla

According to the Anonymous Author of the Exposition of the Offices, haykla, the place of the faithful, is the symbol of the whole earth. Bar Zo'bi finds the root of this earth-symbolism in the OT tabernacle of the covenant, of which the exterior tent symbolized this world. However, Bar Zo'bi specifies that when he says 'this world', he does not mean the world as such, but the Church

which is in this world. Thomas of Marga considers the haykla (church) as the symbol of the earthly Jerusalem which is upon earth.

2.4. Bema

The East Syriac bema, an elevated platform in the haykla for the Liturgy of the Word, is a remarkable architectural element of the Christian liturgical space. Some sort of bema or ambo is found in all Christian liturgical traditions. However, the structure of the East Syriac bema with its episcopal throne, seats for the archdeacon and priests, and the altar for the gospel and cross, and the low-walled pathway known as šqaqona makes it different from the ambo of all other Christian traditions.

The Anonymous Author, while speaking of any movement between bema and sanctuary, always considers the bema as Jerusalem, the place of the accomplishment of the dispensation of Christ. For example, the procession to the bema is depicted as the coming of the Lord to Jerusalem; the procession of the cross and the gospel back to the sanctuary is the symbol of the ascension. Another significant characteristic of the bema, according to the Anonymous Author, is its centre symbolism. Jerusalem is the centre of earth according to the ancient tradition. The bema, being the symbol of Jerusalem, becomes the centre of the earth. The centre of the earth is considered in the history of religions as the symbolic space of communication. Jerusalem, being the symbolic centre of world, is the place of divine communication. Jerusalem was historically the venue of the divine communication par excellence, through Jesus. Therefore, the centre symbolism of bema in relation to Jerusalem suits well to the liturgical function of communication. Another element which favours the centre-symbolism of the bema is Golgotha. The Anonymous Author considers the altar which is in the middle of the bema as Golgotha. The early Christian tradition speaks of Golgotha as the centre of the world. According to the West Syriac commentator, Yahya Ibn Jarir, the bema is the symbol of Golgotha, the place of our Lord's crucifixion.

The theological significance of the central bema lies in the fact that the Word of God accomplished his 'leitourgia' or ministry among the people. "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (Jn 1.14). Hence bema among the people, is quite meaningful for the celebration of the ministry of the Word.

2.5. Šqaqona

According to the Anonymous Author, šqaqona the passage between bema and sanctuary, is the way leading from Jerusalem to Paradise and from Paradise to heaven. Here the Paradise is symbolized by qestroma.

The šqaqona is the space for the many movements in the liturgy. It serves as the intermediary between the heavenly and earthly spaces represented by sanctuary and haykla respectively. The Anonymous Author attaches great importance to the symbolism of šqaqona. He calls it the way of truth, the way along which everyone walks into heaven. The doors in this passage enable the entry into the holy way which leads from Jerusalem to the Paradise and from Paradise to the heaven. Thus, the šqaqona is the way of salvation. Anonymous Author sees this way also as the way trodden by the prophets. He compares it to the ladder which Jacob saw. Thomas of Marga defines it as the

symbol of the narrow path which goes up to heaven. Bar Zo'bi considers this way (space) as the symbol of the small door, the entrance of which is narrow.

2.6. Liturgical Space is Meeting of Heaven and Earth

If liturgy has the central concern of the communion of the earthly and heavenly persons for the glorification of God, liturgical space prepares the ground for such a communion. The liturgical space becomes the meeting place of heaven and earth. Therefore, the liturgical space symbolizes heaven and earth. This symbolic understanding is true of all Christian liturgies. However, it is made explicit and very significant in the alignment and interpretation of the liturgical space in the East Syriac tradition. Syriac Fathers like St. Ephrem viewed liturgical space as the very presence of Christ himself in space (*HCruc* 3.10). It is in fact the presence of Christ which makes possible the real encounter between heaven and earth in the liturgical space.

3. EAST SYRIAN CONCEPTS OF THE EUCHARISTIC CELEBRATION

3.1. Qurbana

It is characteristic of the Syriac traditions to speak about the eucharistic celebration as Qurbana (offering). The East Syriac liturgy has many prayers clearly speaking of the Eucharist as offering. The emphasis on this aspect accounts for the common appellation 'Qurbana' for the eucharistic celebration as a whole.

The title Qurbana has the meanings of both offering as an action and offering as the offered object. Since the term has the meaning of sacrifice in Malayalam the expression '*Divyabali*' (Divine Sacrifice) is also used. In the strict sense in Syriac language the term for the offering as an action is '*Qurawa*', whereas the term Qurbana means the offered object. The title preferred by St. Thomas Christians in the past was '*Qurawa*', stressing the action of offering. We find the title '*Quraw Qurbana*', meaning Offering of Qurbana, in the old Syro-Malabar Taksas. Even now in the Malankara tradition the term *Qurobo* (the West Syriac pronunciation of *Qurawa*) is used in the Taksa as the title for the celebration. The title *Qurawa* emphasizes the aspect of sacrifice in the celebration of Qurbana.

When we understand Qurbana as offering we need to answer three questions: who offers? What is offered? To whom is offered? Jesus Christ the head of the Church is the offerer. Along with Christ we, the members of the body of the Church, are also offerers. We become offerers in so far as we are the members of the Body of Christ. But when we go out of the Body of Christ due to mortal sins, we cease to be the offerers of the Qurbana. What is offered is Christ himself. The body and blood of Christ are the true offerings. Through the body and blood of Christ his paschal mystery itself is offered. We also are offered along with Christ. We are offered in union with the body and blood of Christ. We are offered together with the body and blood of Christ symbolically through the liturgical space-time. Thus, the mystery of our lives becomes identified with the mystery of Christ. Here we are reminded of the words of St. Augustine: "what lies on the altar is your mystery." The mystery of our lives has to be offered to the Father along with the paschal mystery of Christ.

Qurbana is also the offering of praise and thanksgiving. That is why Qurbana is known in the Latin tradition as Eucharist. The notion of Qurbana has a meaning in the descending dimension. We can understand the Eucharistic celebration as God the Father's Qurbana (offering) of his only Son for us. In the ascending dimension Qurbana means offering of the body and blood of Christ to the Father, offering of the paschal mystery, offering of the faithful along with the mystery of Christ. In the ascending dimension the Qurbana is offered to God the Father, whereas in the descending dimension, Qurbana is offered to us, for our salvation.

There are many instances in the anaphora where the notion of eucharistic offering is evident. The prefatory dialogue clearly expresses the idea of offering. The g'hantas, the kušapa of intercession, the prayer request of the celebrant and the response, and the epiclesis of AM and AT contains explicit reference to Eucharist as Qurbana.

Theodore comments on the offering of the Eucharist:

He offers a sacrifice for the community, and a reverential fear, which embraces both himself and us all, is cast upon him on account of what has happened, namely that our Lord suffered for us all a death, the remembrance of which is about to be performed in the present sacrifice.

The main object of the sacrifice or the offering is the mystery of the passion and death of Christ. The important characteristic of the eucharistic celebration, according to Theodore, is explicit from the following words:

...we commemorate the death of our Lord through this awe-inspiring service, and receive the immortal and spiritual food of the body and blood of our Lord, for the sake of which, when our Lord was about to draw nigh unto His passion, He instructed His disciples that all of us who believe in Christ had to receive them and perform them through these (elements), and in this way to commemorate by stages the death of Christ our Lord, and to obtain therefrom an ineffable nourishment.

The commemoration prepares the setting of the sacrifice of the death of Christ. Theodore shows here the real purpose of the Qurbana. "It is indeed offered so that by the coming of the Holy Spirit it should become that which it is said to be: the body and the blood of Christ." In the XVII homily, Narsai treats well the idea of Eucharist as Qurbana. His views on the eucharistic offering are clear from the expressions used to describe the eucharistic action. "Mysteries are offered (*HomMyst* 2,3,7). The offering is nothing but the mystery of redemption. In this respect Narsai, too, thinks with Theodore that the offering is the sacrifice of death of Christ.

3.2. Eucharist as Raza

The East Syriac tradition prefers the title 'Raza', which means mystery. The usual title for the eucharistic celebration found in the East Syriac tradition is 'Raze' (mysteries), the plural for of the word 'Raza'. Qurbana is called Raza in the sense that it is the celebration of the paschal mystery of Christ. It is quite relevant to call the celebration of the mysteries of God as 'Raza'. In the East Syriac tradition, all the sacraments are also called mysteries. In fact, all the sacraments contain the celebration of the paschal mystery of Christ. Among all such mysteries Qurbana is the most

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important mystery and hence it is indeed meaningful to call Qurbana as Raza. In the present practice of the Syro-Malabar Church only the most solemn celebration of Qurbana is called Raza.

Christians adopted the concept of mystery from the Greek mystery religions. In the understanding of the Greek pagan religions the term mystery signified what is hidden or secret. According to Raymond Brown, the NT term mystery may be properly understood only in its Semitic background. e.g. “There is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries.” Dan 2:28. “The mystery of the kingdom of God has been granted to you” (Mk 4:11). The mystery referred to is God’s plan of salvation. Paul’s use of the term: “Servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God” (1 Cor 4:1); “Mystery of Christ” (Eph 3:4); “This is a great mystery.” (Eph 5:32); “...the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now made manifest to his saints.” (Col 1:26). For Paul the term mystery conveys the content of his gospel, that is the paschal mystery of Christ.

Since the term ‘raza is concerned about the celebration or commemoration of the mystery, it is closely associated with the term ‘anamnesis’ (commemoration or memorial). The Syriac terms for memorial are ‘uhdana and dukhrana. ‘*Uhdana* of the paschal mystery is the central concern of the liturgy. The commentators too share the same concern. One of the important theological features of the Syro-Malabar Qurbana is that it is viewed as the ‘*uhdana* of the raza of God and the *dukhrana* of the raza of the Church

The liturgical texts and the commentaries explain the mysteries commemorated: the mysteries of the death and resurrection of our Lord. “...rejoicing and glorifying, commemorating and celebrating this great awesome, holy, vivifying and divine mystery of the passion, the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” According to Theodore, we celebrate the death of our Lord through the awe-inspiring service of the mysteries. This commemoration has its foundation in the command of the Lord. The phrase in the anaphora “as we have been commanded” confirms this. In Theodore’s vision the commemoration of the death of Christ and the communion of his body and blood constitute the core of the Eucharist as instructed by Christ. Narsai points to this commemoration when he speaks of the celebration of the mysteries. The Church commemorates the Lord’s death and resurrection by the mysteries (*HomMyst 2*). She depicts the glorious mysteries mystically (*HomMyst 1*). According to Qatraya, the time of the celebration of the mysteries is the type of that hour in which our Lord gave this mystery to the disciples. He says: “Now the priest approaches to figure the type of resurrection through the recital of the holy words with his mouth and by the signing (blessing) of the cross in his hand.” The Qudaša with the three bows and recitation of the holy words of oblation is the mystery of the three days during which the humanity of our Lord was under the power of death.

The whole eucharistic celebration may be seen as a series of repeated commemorations of the paschal mystery of Christ. Such a concern seems to be prominent in the commentaries too. Therefore, while commenting on the epiclesis, which according to the Eastern liturgies, is a significant prayer with regard to the change of the mysteries, commentators like Narsai, Gabriel Qatraya and Yohannan Bar Zo‘bi enthusiastically talk about the commemoration of the mystery of resurrection.

The reality of the repeated commemoration of the paschal mystery is the characteristic of the Christian liturgy. St. Paul speaks about this repeated commemoration: “For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.” (1 Cor 11.26). Within a celebration of the East Syriac Eucharist, we may see consecutive repetitions of the memorial of the paschal mystery. In fact, the ‘Glory to God in the highest’ at the very beginning of the celebration may be considered as a summary expression for the entire Christ event. It is very often considered the commemoration of the nativity of Christ, especially because of the angelic hymn. However, for the East Syrian celebration the rite of introduction has a steady pattern of commemoration. It includes the commemoration of the Old Testament waiting for the coming of the Messiah and also the coming of the Messiah. In the earlier tradition the descent of Christ symbolized by the procession from sanctuary to bema was at the time of the *onitha d’ qanke*. The *marmitha* (set of three psalms) recited before the *onitha d’ qanke* represents the mystery of the OT phase of the waiting for the Lord. Therefore, it may not be easy to think of the ‘Glory to God’ before the *marmitha* as just commemorating the nativity of Christ.

The whole liturgy of the Word may be seen as commemorating the entire mystery of the passion, death and resurrection. Thus, the rite of introduction and the liturgy of Word together commemorate the entire mystery of Christ.

The preparation for the Qudaša (anaphora) has a full commemoration of the paschal mystery. According to the commentators, the preparation of the mysteries on the beth gazzas and their transfer to the altar along with the *onitha d’ raze*, placing on the altar and covering with veil (*šošapa*) and finally removing the veil, symbolize the passion, death and resurrection. Then the Qudaša (anaphora) has a full commemoration of the paschal mystery. Thus epiclesis, the culmination of the Qudaša commemorates the resurrection. Again, the rite of fraction and consignation repeats the commemoration of the passion, death and resurrection. Once again, the whole paschal mystery is commemorated. According to Narsai, receiving Communion in hands (in the form of the Cross) symbolizes participation the death and resurrection of the Lord. Pope Benedict XVI in *Sacramentum Caritatis*, the Post Synodal Exhortation, emphasises the aspect of our participation in the paschal mystery of the Lord in Qurbana. “The Eucharist draws us into Jesus’ act of self-oblation. More than just statically receiving the incarnate *Logos*, we enter into the very dynamic of his self-giving.” (*Sacramentum Caritatis* 11).

The commemoration of the paschal mystery being the primary concern, the East Syriac liturgy as a whole is not much concerned about the when and how of the change of the mysteries, a question extremely significant to the scholastic theologians.

An important feature of the liturgical commemoration is that it is the commemoration of the entire mystical body, and hence of the head and the members. Christ and his paschal mystery are commemorated along with the church, his body, now formed in the eucharistic celebration. Here members of the earthly and heavenly Church are remembered. The priest, therefore, makes special remembrance of the “this people who look for and await your mercies” and “all the departed and who have been severed and have gone forth from among us”. The liturgy has various occasions making the ‘*dukhrana*’ of the living and departed members of the Church. The dyptics

containing such a detailed *dukhrana*, therefore, has a significant place within the anaphora where the paschal mystery of the Lord is commemorated. The *dukhrana* of the Mother of Christ, and other saints are all such a way inevitable in the liturgy. The commemoration (*dukhrana*) of the Fathers and the Just, seen in the fourth g'hanta, and the commemoration of the hierarchy and all categories of the members of the Church in the kušapa before the fourth g'hanta, therefore, very well agree with the commemoration (*uhdana*) of the paschal mystery of the Lord. The *raza* of the Lord is nothing but our *raza*. Here we are reminded of the beautiful words of St. Augustine: "So if you yourselves be the body of Christ and his members, then on the eucharistic table lies your own mystery." The *uhdana* of the paschal mystery involves the *dukhrana* of the mystery of the entire body of Christ.

The individual members of the Church are to be seen in the body of the Church and their lives with all joys and worries are to be seen in the mystery of Christ. The appellation Raza tells us that the eucharistic celebration is an invitation to place ourselves in the body of Christ and see our lives as part of the mystery of the passion, death and resurrection of the Lord.

3.3. Eucharist as Qudaša

In Syriac tradition Qurbana is also called Qudaša. The word Qudaša means sanctification, consecration, or hallowing. East Syriac commentators like Narsai, and Gabriel Qatraya prefer to use the term Qudaša emphasising the aspect of the eucharistic prayer as an action. The term Qudaša as it is employed in the East Syriac liturgy has both the anabatic (ascending) and katabatic (descending) dimensions. In the anabatic dimension this term is much similar to the term *eucharistia*. It means the sanctification or hallowing of God. Therefore, it is mainly praise (*tešbohta*) and thanksgiving (*tawditha*). In the katabatic dimension it means consecration of the mysteries or of the assembly. In the Anaphora (Eucharistic Prayer) of the Qurbana both these dimensions of Qudaša are at work. Therefore, the Anaphora is known in the East Syriac tradition as Qudaša. The name of the *Taksa* published in 1960 was *Taksa d' Qudaše*.

3.3.1. Qudaša of God (Eucharistia)

The earliest form of the anaphora of the Church is praise and thanksgiving to God the creator and the redeemer. Justin sees the content of the *eucharistia* as thanksgiving for creation and redemption. This could have been the normal content of the eucharistic prayer in the second century. As Jungmann says, the eucharistic prayer was the thanksgiving prayer, the *eucharistia* over the gifts of bread and wine. Emphasising the thanksgiving aspect, the apologists of the second century spoke of the Eucharist as though it were solely a matter of prayer. The third century East Syriac document the *Acts of Thomas* witnesses to such a simple Eucharist. It is practically a eucharistic prayer in which praises and thanksgivings are found in the primitive form.

The East Syriac anaphoras frequently use terms like *šabbah* (to praise), *tešbohta* (praise, glorification), *awdi* (to confess), *tawditha* (thanksgiving). The frequent occurrence of these terms points to the general character of the anaphoras as prayers of praise and thanksgiving. We find an address of praise to the name of the creator and redeemer, a thanksgiving for what has been done for man, and finally praise and thanksgiving for the redemptive death and resurrection of Christ.

Thanksgiving prayer is said over bread and wine, and the bread and wine thus blessed are eaten and drunk. The anaphoras of Theodore and Nestorius also place thanksgiving at the heart of the eucharistic action.

Theodore emphasises the aspect of thanksgiving in his commentary on Eucharist. The anaphora contains praise and glorification of the visible creatures and invisible hosts. There is commemoration of the economy accomplished in Christ. Thanks are rendered on account of this economy. Narsai, too, underlines the importance of the praise and glorification of the Divinity. According to him, the important elements of Eucharist are seen in the action of Christ at the Last Supper, namely thanksgiving and blessing over the bread and wine. Claiming to be citing the tradition from Theodore, Narsai puts in the mouth of Jesus such a prayer of praise and thanksgiving. The importance attached to the thanksgiving for redemption is clear from the long narration of the ministry of Christ.

The Qudaša as eucharistia is seen all throughout the East Syriac eucharistic liturgy. In all instances the eucharistia is one joined with the praises of the heavenly choir. The liturgy begins with the sanctification of God along with the angelic choir. The praise “Glory to God in the highest” is repeated thrice, the repetition being a symbol of the unceasing praise of the heavenly liturgy. The Lord’s Prayer has a special form in which a sanctification, called qanona, is added in the beginning and end. It serves as an extension of the first petition of the Lord’s Prayer, that is, “hallowed be your name.” The prayer before Lakhu Mara and the Lakhu Mara are classical formulation of the praise and thanksgiving. The prayer before Lakhu Mara is as follows:

“For every help and grace that you have given us, for which we can never repay you enough, may we thank you and glorify you unceasingly in your Church, crowned like a spouse and full of all help and blessing, for you are the Lord and Creator of all, for ever.”

In the hymn Lakhu Mara, the glorification is indeed a profound confession of faith. “Lord of All, we praise you; Jesus Christ, we glorify you; for you are the quickener of our bodies and the gracious saviour of our souls.” Jesus Christ is praised as the source of our resurrection. He is the one who shall transform us all and the entire cosmos, the one who shall be our Lord in the heavenly life too.

Trisagion is again praises added to the praises of the heavenly hosts as in the vision of Is 6.3. A similar concern for the sanctification of God is seen in the *Onitha d’ raze* of the first Sunday of Annunciation. Here this praise is against the background of the commemoration of the passion and death of the Lord. The second g’hanta, sanctus, and the third kušapa are all intense forms eucharistia, joined with the heavenly hosts. Deacon’s karozutha after the third g’hanta and the onitha during fraction and consignation contain prayers of praise and thanksgiving on account of the divine mysteries. The tešbohta after the rite of communion expresses a strong hope of the liturgical assembly praising and thanking God in the kingdom of heaven. Thus, it becomes an anticipation of the eucharistia in the heavenly liturgy.

In the East Syriac liturgy, the eucharistia (Qudaša) has the following characteristics: It is an eucharistia in the model of the Jewish Berakah. According to Sarhad Jammo, the anaphora of the Addai and Mari (AM) contains the eucharistia which reflects the same basic structure of Birkat

Ha-Mazon in its paschal context. Therefore, the praise and thanksgiving in the anaphora has the similar function of the praise and thanksgiving during the Jewish paschal meal. In order to understand the true characteristic of the Christian eucharistia we have to view it in the context of the biblical memorial.

The East Syriac Qudaša is the eucharistia rendered by the Church experiencing salvation here and now, anticipating the eschatological fulfilment of that salvation and joining the heavenly hosts in the eternal praise of God.

3.3.2. Qudaša of the Mysteries and of the Assembly

The term Qudaša, in the katabatic dimension means sanctification or consecration, of the mysteries and of the assembly. This sanctification primarily refers to the change of bread and wine into body and blood of Christ. Then it means the sanctification of the assembly. The sanctification is attributed to the work of the Holy Spirit. In the Syriac tradition, the Holy Spirit is the *Ruha d-Qudša* or the Spirit of sanctity or holiness. Thus, the Spirit is specially remembered as the one who causes the sanctification. To understand the relevance of the sanctification in the East Syrian Qurbana it is enough to see the epiclesis of the anaphoras, and the commentaries on them.

The epiclesis is one of the most ancient elements of the eucharistic prayers in the East Syriac tradition. A good example may be cited from the *Acts of Thomas*:

And he began to say: “Come gift of the Exalted; come, perfect mercy; come Holy Spirit;...come and communicate with us in this Eucharist which we celebrate, and in this offering that we offer, and in this commemoration which we make.” And he made the sign of the Cross upon the bread, and began to give (it).

Even though this resembles the classical epicletic prayers of the Church, no invocation is made for the change the offering. Rather, the Holy Spirit is invoked to communicate with the assembly in the offering. The reference to communication brings this epiclesis close to the epiclesis of AM. The epiclesis of AM seems to be an explanation and expansion of the formula of the *Acts*. Epiclesis of AM is the following:

O my Lord, may your Holy Spirit come down...and dwell in this Qurbana of your servants and bless it and sanctify it that it may be to us, O My Lord, unto the pardon of debts, remission of sins and the great hope of resurrection from the dead and new life in the kingdom of heaven with all those who have found favour in your presence.

In AM there is clear mention of the sanctification of the offering. However, the sanctification of the offering is oriented to the sanctification of the assembly. It envisages a participation in the divine dispensation. The ultimate goal is the resurrection and life in the kingdom of heaven. This is to be realized by the remission of sins. The epiclesis in the Anaphora of Theodore (AT) elaborates and clarifies the theme as in AM. However, the invocation is made first for the assembly. Thus, the sanctification of the assembly is more emphasised in AT than in AM. In AM there is no explicit mention of the change of the bread and wine into the body and blood. AM puts all these in the expression of “the sanctification of the offering”. As regards the sanctification of the offering and that of the assembly, the epiclesis of the Anaphora of Nestorius (AN) is similar to that of AT. But

AN adds a new factor in the sanctification of the assembly, namely the aspect of becoming one in love and peace; one body and one spirit, as envisaged by the Christian vocation.

These two types of the sanctification are explained in the commentaries. According to Theodore the priest prays to the Holy Spirit to come upon the bread and wine so that they may become the body and blood; and to come upon all those present so that they may be knit into one body by Communion. As in AN, Theodore stresses the unity of the liturgical assembly. By the Qudaša, the offering passes into a new state of existence, transcending the space-time. In Theodore's view the body and blood are realities in space-time, but with the properties of non-space-time. Comparing the body and blood after the epiclesis to the resurrected body of our Lord, he states that the epiclesis is the celebration of the resurrection. For those who partake of this sanctified body and blood, they acquire the power of spiritual and immortal nourishment.

The emphasis on the sanctification of the assembly is remarkable in the East Syriac liturgy. The eucharistic celebration, according to the East Syriac tradition, ought to be a Qudaša for the Christian assembly. Qudaša as eucharistia finds its true meaning in the Qudaša of the assembly. The sanctification of the assembly as the goal of the celebration is all the more strong in the epiclesis of AM. This epiclesis is recognized as a communion epiclesis. The stress is on the change of the assembly. The sanctification of the mysteries is presented as a means for the sanctification of the assembly. The Malayalam translation of the epiclesis of AM has reduced the primary importance given to the sanctification of the assembly. According to the Malayalam text, the invocation of the Spirit is made for two things. First for the sanctification of the mysteries, then for the sanctification of the assembly, both having equal importance. The original text means that the sanctification of the mysteries should become the means for the sanctification of the assembly. Such an intrinsic relation between these two types of sanctification is ignored in the Malayalam translation.

The sanctification of the assembly effected by the Holy Spirit leads to šawtaputha (communion). Qurbana lays great stress on the vertical and horizontal dimensions of the šawtaputha. Repeated exhortations on the need of fraternal communion reveal the concern for the horizontal dimension of šawtaputha. This horizontal šawtaputha is one extended to the entire cosmos. Establishment of the šawtaputha in the model of the Trinitarian šawtaputha is the important goal of the East Syriac Qurbana. The whole eucharistic liturgy is oriented towards the Communion.

According to St. Ephrem, Eucharist transforms man and enables him to reach Paradise. Man is enabled to fly over the clouds and reach Paradise. "Whoever eats of the bread of the Heavenly One will become heavenly without doubt."

In the Western traditions the eucharistia or the Qudaša is often isolated from the sanctification of the assembly. There is a tendency to reduce the liturgical community to a cultic community, praising and thanking the Lord, however, not much concerned about the personal sanctification. Believers are happy about the eucharistia, which they are ready to continue even outside the eucharistic celebration itself.

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From the Middle Ages onwards there has been an exaggerated emphasis on the change of the mysteries. With the encouragement of the scholastic theologians the change of the mysteries became the central point of attraction. Great theologians of the Middle Ages tried to explain the mystery of the Eucharist in terms of the Aristotelian philosophy. The question of the real presence of the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament became so vital that for many believers this real presence was the goal of the entire eucharistic celebration. According to them, the priest through his words of divine guarantee works out the miracle of bringing down the Lord of the universe to the simple and humble table of the church! Thus, the eucharistic celebration becomes an invitation to the assembly to witness the greatest miracle possible on earth.

One should not ignore the tremendous amount of work done by the scholastic theologians to convince 'scientifically' the Christian believers in the Middle Ages of the real change occurring in the bread and wine. However, amidst the enthusiasm to emphasise the change of bread and wine into Body and Blood, the question of the change of the human persons was rather ignored.

4. EUCHARIST AS CELEBRATION OF MOVEMENTS BETWEEN HEAVEN AND EARTH

East Syriac liturgy has symbolic actions which help us considerably in understanding the theology of the Eucharist in this tradition. The important processions in the East Syriac liturgy between sanctuary and bema, are celebration of the salvific movements between heaven and earth.

4.1. Procession from Sanctuary to Bema

The initial procession is of much significance with regard to the theology of Eucharist. The liturgy begins with a solemn procession of the celebrant and the ministers from the sanctuary to the bema for the liturgy of the Word. Historically this procession was instituted for the practical purpose of the entry of the bishop. Gabriel Qatraya speaks of a solemn procession to the bema with the cross, two candles and incense. Bar Zo'bi and Abdišo have a similar reference to the procession. The Anonymous Author of the Exposition of the Offices says that Išo'yahb III established a solemn order for this procession: The clergy in the sanctuary line up; the subdeacons wait on the qestroma. The archdeacon gives a signal, and the veil is open. The two officiating deacons (Michael and Gabriel) walk in the front, and then the two subdeacons, who carry the lamps and candles, and other subdeacons. They are followed by the deacons carrying the cross and the gospel, and finally the priests and the bishop with the archdeacon on his left.

The entry of the bishop marked the official beginning of the liturgy. The most ancient practice was to begin the Qurbana with the procession to the bema preceded by the greeting and followed by readings. Waiting for the bishop, the congregation spent the time praying the psalms. According to the Anonymous Author, the marmitha has the simple function of filling the time until the bishop's arrival in the sanctuary. Today Syro-Malabar Qurbana has the entrance procession at the very beginning, whereas the Chaldean tradition has two practices with regard to the entrance procession: one is similar to the Syro-Malabar, at the very beginning. According to another custom,

the celebrant remains in the sanctuary up to the Lakhu Mara and then comes out of the sanctuary for the liturgy of the Word, without the solemn procession.

The procession to the bema is the first important movement in the East Syriac liturgy. If we are to take into consideration the symbolism of the sanctuary and the bema, it is clear that the movement from the sanctuary to the bema is a movement from heaven to the world. It represents the mystery of the incarnation. The Anonymous Author says that the procession is from heaven to Jerusalem. "And thus, from heaven, along the way trodden by the prophets, the ladder which Jacob saw, he descends and comes to Jerusalem. Indeed, they proceed from the sanctuary - heaven - and come to the bema - Jerusalem." The general view of the commentators is that the procession to the bema represents the incarnation and the manifestation of the Lord. There is at the same time an allusion to the eschatological coming of the Lord as well. Incarnation marks the historical foundation of Eucharist. The Eucharist becomes incomprehensible without viewing it against the background of God the Father sending his only Son into the world (Jn 3.16) for its salvation. For the salvation the first initiative is from God himself. The Eucharist, therefore, is celebration of God the Father's salvific love. The eucharistic prayer is indeed elaborated commemoration of the love of God the Father.

According to the East Syriac understanding, Eucharist is not just the past reality of the paschal mystery made present. The liturgical act is at the same time anticipation of the eschatological reality.

Thus, the procession is a realization of the past, present and future merging in the liturgical celebration.

4.2. Procession of the Gospel from Sanctuary to Bema

East Syriac Commentators like Gabriel Qatraya, Abraham Bar Lipah, the Anonymous Author, Bar Zo'bi and Abdišo point to the gospel procession and reading as the culmination of the liturgy of the Word. The procession of the gospel with the cross gives the reading of the gospel an interpretation which goes beyond the purpose of instruction through the Word. Qatraya views this second procession as a preparation for the passion. It is the solemn entry into Jerusalem:

The going out of the gospel and the cross with it is the mystery of the humanity of our Lord which was with body and soul. The cross is the mystery of the body which was crucified and the gospel is the mystery of the soul in which there is reasonableness. The gospel goes out with the solemnity of the deacons in the mystery of the solemnity with which our Lord entered Jerusalem riding on an ass.

The same interpretation is found in Abraham and Bar Zo'bi. The reference to the solemn entry into Jerusalem and the symbolism of the cross as the crucified body indicate that this procession symbolises the preparation for the passion. The reading is presented as the culmination of the entry into Jerusalem. It is the mystery of all the words which our Lord said to the Jews before he suffered.

The Anonymous Author finds in this procession the symbolism of the advent of the Lord from heaven into Jerusalem. But for him the descent of the gospel from the place of the lectors and its placing on the altar of the bema symbolises the crucifixion. According to Qatraya, the return of

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the gospel to the sanctuary, symbolizes the passion procession. Qatraya gives a detailed account of this passion procession. The removal of the cross with the gospel from the throne signifies the mystery of the arrest of Jesus and the journey to the place of the crucifixion. The priest carrying the gospel stands for John the Evangelist. The deacon who carries the cross represents Simon of Cyrene who carried the cross for Jesus. The erection of the cross at the sanctuary door is the mystery of the crucifixion. The separation of the gospel from the cross and its replacement on the other side is the mystery of the separation of Christ's soul from his body and its entry into Paradise. According to the Anonymous Author, the procession of the gospel and cross back to the sanctuary symbolizes the ascension, the solemn entry of the Lord into heaven. The gospel processions between the sanctuary and the bema, together with the rites in connection with the reading, celebrate the central mysteries of the Christ-event, the incarnation, the earthly ministry, the teaching of the Lord, the passion, death, resurrection and ascension. The gospel processions re-enact in space-time the movements of God toward man accomplished in the salvific work of Christ.

4.3. Procession of the Mysteries (Communion Procession)

The celebrant and the deacons come down to the door of the sanctuary for distributing the holy Mysteries to the faithful. The commentators give great importance to this communion procession. According to Narsai, the procession is a symbol of the meeting of two Churches, the earthly, and the heavenly. The Anonymous Author views the coming of the priest from sanctuary to distribute communion as symbolizing Christ descending from heaven to Jerusalem. According to Bar Zo'bi the distribution of communion is the symbol of the manifestation of the risen Lord to those who believed in him. For the faithful, this procession is the time of encounter with the risen Lord. In Narsai's vision, such an encounter is realized in participating in the death and resurrection of the Lord.

4.4. *Accessus ad Altare*

In all liturgies *accessus ad altare* (Access to the altar) has been of great theological significance. In the Syriac tradition the very title of the celebration of Eucharist is related to the movement towards the sanctuary. The West Syriac tradition has *Qurobo* as one of the preferred titles of the eucharistic celebration. The Syriac word *Qurawa* (*Qurobo*) comes from the root *Qreb* meaning to 'come near' or 'draw nigh'. The word Qurbana is in the sense of offering comes from *Qareb*, which is the pa'el form of the root *Qreb*. Thus, both titles, Qurobo and Qurbana have their origin in the word *Qreb* meaning approaching or coming near. Approaching the altar was given great symbolic meaning in the Eastern traditions since the sanctuary was understood as the symbol of heaven, and the altar as the heavenly throne. Going into the sanctuary had the simple symbolic meaning of ascent to heaven.

The East Syriac Qurbana has a very important place given to the procession to the altar. This procession has a complex structure with various rites related to it. The different elements of this rite contribute to the material and spiritual preparation for the access to the altar for the celebration of the mysteries. The rites like dismissal of the unworthy, the prostrations on the bema, salutations by

the deacons, the washing of hand by the celebrant, procession to the door of the sanctuary, entrance prayer, creed, procession of entry with the prayer and three times bowing down and venerating the altar, karozutha by the deacon during the entry of the celebrant contribute to the proper meaning of the rite of the procession to the altar from the bema.

The Syro-Malabar Qurbana attaches great importance to the rite of access to the altar. When the Liturgy of Word is concluded, the celebrant who is about to enter the sanctuary for the celebration of the mysteries, expresses his unworthiness prostrating on the veil spread in the middle of the haykla. The veil spread in the middle of haykla reminds us of the bema which was in the middle of haykla. The journey towards the altar begins from the bema at the centre of the haykla. In the order of Raza, there is the rite of the deacons coming down to the celebrant at the centre of haykla, in order to welcome him and lead him to the sanctuary. The lavabo (washing of the hand) takes place at the bema, as an immediate preparation for the journey towards the holy of holies. The priest moves towards the door of the sanctuary and prays there asking for the worthiness to enter the sanctuary and celebrate the mysteries. The creed recited at the door of the sanctuary serves as a password for the entry into the holy place. Every one participating in the celebration recites the creed as an essential preparation for the celebration of the mysteries. Thereafter, the celebrant makes a procession to the sanctuary, with a prayer and bowing three times during the procession.

The celebration of the entry into the sanctuary is the anticipation of the eschatological entry into heaven. Entry into heaven is of immense significance in the East Syriac theology of Eucharist. The kušapa before the first g'hanta ('be made worthy to sing your praises with the hosts of angels', *Raza*, 34), epiclesis ('new life in the kingdom of heaven', *Raza*, 45), prayer after the fraction of the mysteries ("for the new life in the kingdom of heaven", *Raza*, 49), silent prayer of the celebrant during the litany of fraternal charity (*Raza*, 51), words said by the celebrant while the assembly is receiving communion (*Raza*, 56), the prayers of ablution (*Raza*, 57), tešbohta after the communion (*Raza*, 57-58), thanksgiving prayer of the celebrant after communion (*Raza*, 59), and the huttamma prayers (*Raza*, 60-62) emphasise the entry into heaven as the true purpose of the celebration of the Eucharist.

5. LEITOURGIA (SERVICE) OF THE WORD IN THE QURBANA

East Syriac tradition attributes great theological significance to the liturgy of the Word. Liturgy of the Word is not merely an occasion of the communication of the Word of God, having a pre-dominant pedagogic function. As the title of the part of the liturgy says, it is the *leitourgia*, that is, service or ministry, by the Word of God. It is, nothing but the ministry of salvation accomplished by Christ, the Word of God.

The attribution of the passion symbolism to the liturgy of the bema seems to be inconsistent with the early Syriac commentaries like that of Theodore and Narsai, who interpret the transfer of gifts as a commemoration of the passion. But if the bema symbolizes Jerusalem, then it necessarily includes passion also, because passion is the culmination of Jesus' ministry in Jerusalem. Therefore, the attribution of the passion to the bema liturgy by Qatraya and those who closely follow him cannot be regarded as something artificial and anachronistic. The important role of the cross in the liturgy

of the Word supports this interpretation. The liturgy of the Word is not just a continuation of the synagogal liturgy. With the commemoration of the passion of Christ the liturgy of the Word transcends a mere didactic purpose. It is a primary level commemoration of the paschal mystery of Christ, serving as a meaningful preparation for the commemoration in the Qudaša. Liturgy of Word prepares the ground for a meaningful eucharistia for the sake of the ministry of salvation accomplished by Christ.

5.1. Liturgy of Word as The Karozutha of the Paschal Mystery

The East Syrian liturgy commemorates the paschal mystery through the karozutha or proclamation. Even though the whole liturgy is proclamation of the mystery of salvation, certain elements in liturgy are specially called proclamation (karozutha). The Liturgy of the Word is the most important occasion of the karozutha. We may observe five levels of karozuthas in the East Syriac Qurbana: 1. Karozutha of the Old Testament (Readings of Law and Prophets who proclaim the mystery of Christ through figures and symbols. 2. Karozutha of the Apostle (Epistle especially of Apostle Paul). It is the proclamation of the mystery of Christ by Paul the Apostle, on the basis of his Christ experience and according to the life situation of the Church to which he was proclaiming the mystery of Christ. 3. Karozutha of the evangelist (eg. *karozutha d Mathai*). It is the proclamation of the mystery of Christ by the evangelist, on the basis of his Christ experience and according to the life situation of the Church to which he was proclaiming the mystery of Christ. 4 Karozutha made by the priest (homily). It is the mystery of Christ proclaimed by the celebrant, on the basis of the previous karozuthas and according to the life situation of the people entrusted to his pastoral care. 5. The Karozutha of the faithful and deacon. It is the proclamation of the mystery of Christ made by the people under the leadership of the deacons. This is done as a response to all the previous karozuthas.

All the karozuthas in the liturgy have one and the same content, that is the paschal mystery of Christ. That has been always the content of the Apostolic preaching. Even during the liturgy of the Word, the East Syrian tradition is particular to proclaim the entire paschal mystery. Thus, the liturgy of the Word becomes the commemoration of the life, teachings, saving deeds, passion, death, and resurrection of the Lord. The commentators all stress this aspect. The karozutha of the priest has to present a specific portion of the Word of God in its relation to the entire paschal mystery. The karozuthas of the deacon, which are already fixed by the liturgical traditions, proclaim the paschal mystery, however, seeing it as the means of our sanctification.

6. QURBANA AS PARTICIPATION IN HEAVENLY WORSHIP

Eucharistic liturgy is a celebration of the earthly choir together with the heavenly choir. The earthly and heavenly Churches come together in praising and thanking God. There are numerous elements in the liturgy showing us that liturgy is truly the meeting of the earthly and the heavenly. The initial 'Glory to God in the highest', the qanona of the Lord's prayer, the prayer before onitha d'Qanke, the trisagion, 'onitha d' raze, sanctus, the diaconal admonition before the fourth kušapa in AM, and 'onitha of fraction, are all examples of liturgical elements illustrating the joining of the

earthly choir with the heavenly hosts (Is 6.3) in praising God. Praise and thanksgiving in the anaphoras are joined to that of the heavenly assembly. It is clear in the expression: “And with these heavenly hosts we give you thanks, O Lord, and we bless God the Word.” Ephrem in his *Commentary on Diatessaron* explains: “We have eaten Christ’s body in place of the fruit of the Tree of Paradise, and his altar has taken the place of the Garden of Eden for us; the curse has been washed away by his innocent blood and in the hope of the resurrection we await the life that is to come, and indeed we already walk in this new life, in that we already have a pledge of it”

While rendering praise to God, the Church is anticipating her joy in the heavenly marriage feast. The tenth century Anonymous Author of the *Exposition of the Offices* interprets the *sanctus* as the praise of the earthly Church joining the heavenly Church:

“...but in that manner today we, angels and men, become a single holy Church, and in Christ we have been made one flock; as the heavenly apostle says, he wished that we too may be brought together in harmony, and thus like the watchers [angels] we may praise him with their praises.”

...This means, heaven and earth have been already made one Church; neither heaven is heaven nor earth is earth because the time and space composite have been dissolved; for heaven is the heaven of earth and earth is the earth of heaven. Certainly, unless there was (might be) a heaven above, there might not be an earth below, and unless there was an earth below, there might not be a heaven above. Now that those above and those below are brought into a single Church, there is neither ‘above’ nor ‘below’. And yet, God appeared on earth, and our nature ascended into heaven; and when God descended to us, earth became heaven; and when the Son of our race was elevated, heaven became earth. Wherefore heaven and earth have become one, and there is neither heaven nor earth; and we were already constituted with the spiritual ones. It is their predication itself- ‘holy’, that we recite as being perfected through resurrection.

Eucharistic Communion is the pledge of eternal life. There are numerous prayers in the Qurbana stressing the effect of Communion as immortality. The epiclesis (*Raza*, 45), the ‘onitha during the fraction and consignation (*Raza*, 47-48), the prayers accompanying the consignation (*Raza*, 48-49), the karozutha of fraternal charity (*Raza*, 50-51), the formula of receiving Communion (*Raza*, 54,56), the tešbohta, the thanksgiving prayers and the huttama (*Raza*, 57-62) show Eucharist as the food of immortality.

The eucharistic Communion is the symbolic food of the immortal life initiated by baptism. According to Theodore, the symbolic birth in baptism necessitates the symbolic nourishment through eucharistic Communion. Ephrem in his *Commentary on Diatessaron* explains: “We have eaten Christ’s body in place of the fruit of the Tree of Paradise, and his altar has taken the place of the Garden of Eden for us; the curse has been washed away by his innocent blood and in the hope of the resurrection we await the life that is to come, and indeed we already walk in this new life, in that we already have a pledge of it.” Narsai observes: “His mystical birth takes place in a manner spiritual; and according to his birth is the nourishment also that is prepared for him.” The grace of Holy Spirit feeds us through the holy sacrament. Theodore discusses at length the theme of the

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Eucharist as the food of immortality. The expression ‘bread of life’ stresses this aspect of the eucharistic Communion. It enables us to transcend the space-time and attain the immortal and imperishable existence, by hope. Ephrem says: “Whoever eats of the bread of the Heavenly One will become heavenly without doubt.” Qatraya speaks of Communion as the guarantee of our future immortality. Communion in the holy sacrament is the pledge of eternal life. It is the symbol of the eternal communion after resurrection, the foretaste of the heavenly happiness. In Narsai’s vision, Communion for the baptized is the imitation of the heavenly life. The *karozutha* which precedes Communion points to the new state of existence that we attain through Communion.

Eucharistic Communion helps us to transcend the earthly space-time and enables us to participate in the heavenly space-time. Participation in the eucharistic banquet is a symbolical participation in the heavenly banquet of the Kingdom- *pathura d-malkutha*. Ephrem thinks that one receiving Communion is like an eagle, which flies to meet the Lord in the very clouds. Eating of the living bread, one is able to transcend the limitations of space-time and reach as far as Paradise. The Anonymous Author, too, thinks that with the Communion the faithful enter into the new space-time of the Kingdom. The joy and thankfulness on account of this are evident in the proclamation of the deacon following Communion.

The gestures and the prayers of the Qurbana are clear manifestations of our participation in the heavenly life. The liturgical architecture itself makes us share in the anticipated experience of heavenly life. The symbolism of the sacred architecture tells us that the church building is the meeting place of both heaven and earth. In the Qurbana we join the heavenly hosts. We celebrate the Qurbana together with Bl. Virgin Mary, the angels, apostles and also all the saints. Our Qurbana gets united with the heavenly worship. In the Encyclical on *Ecclesia d’Eucharistia* (2003) Pope John Paul II mentions this heavenly experience as realized in Qurbana: “This is an aspect of the Eucharist which merits greater attention: in celebrating the sacrifice of the Lamb, we are united to the heavenly “liturgy” and become part of that great multitude which cries out: “Salvation belongs to our God who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb!” (*Rev 7:10*). The Eucharist is truly a glimpse of heaven appearing on earth. It is a glorious ray of the heavenly Jerusalem which pierces the clouds of our history and lights up our journey.” (*Ecclesia d’Eucharistia* 19).

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Fr. Pauly Maniyattu
Paurastya Vidyapitham
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