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Book Review

Paul Kalluveetil CMI, *Rahasyavum Danavum* (Mystery and Gift), (Malayalam), OIRSI: Kottayam 2009, pp. 623, Rs. 350/-

This detailed and profound study on the themes of Syro-Malabar *Raza* (Most Solemn Form of Holy *Qurbana*) in the light of Biblical perspectives may be called the *magnum opus* of Professor Paul Kalluveetil CMI (henceforth P.K), whose expertise in both biblical and liturgical fields is well known. This new comprehensive study deals with 24 themes. In this review on *Rahasyavum Danavum* I limit myself to introduce the readers to the sublime world of *Raza*, as the author unveils before us.

The work has a Presentation (*avatharanam*) in the beginning, and a salutation (*anjali* = folded hands) at the end. It is divided into three parts, a mystical world, the portrait (*prathibhâsam*) of human being, and the responsive acts. The first part contains 18 themes.

In the Presentation P.K. explains the dynamics of the study. He depends upon a word by word analysis of the Syriac text. Each chapter is conceived as an independent reality, so that the readers can imbibe an exhaustive understanding of the terms, phrases and sentences. Hence certain repetitions become unavoidable. In each chapter the author first presents the biblical milieu of the theme; then he studies the text of *Qurbana* from that perspective. Thus he shows the depth of the biblical richness of the Holy *Qurbana*, which will fill our eyes with tears of love and gratitude. Naturally we will render praise, honour, thanksgiving and adoration to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As example:

The first theme “Mystery and Mysteries” has an introduction, in which P.K. points out that the terms *râzâ* and *râzç* occur 26 times in the Divine Liturgy. The author then takes us to the biblical milieu. The words have a background of worship, which provides salvation. The NT concept of mystery is related to that of the cross, the realities of passion, death, burial and resurrection. In *Qurbana* we become contemporaries of such realities and experience their fruits. In the light of the biblical concept the author analyses the liturgical texts, and imprints in our minds the everlasting fruits of *râzâ* and *râzç*.

Chapter 2 studies “the Holiness Horizon” of *Qurbana*, which is the hymn of divine holiness. After some introductory remarks on the relevance of holiness for the modern man P.K. exposes the biblical milieu of the concept. Then he presents the Holiness in the context of *Qurbana* celebration. The very hymn “Holy, Holy, Holy,” which is repeated in the beginning and at the end (in the Order of *Râzâ* 4 times),

introduces us into the world of the Holy One. In *Trissagion* the community praises thrice the Blessed Trinity by using the same formula. During the time of the Presentation of the Gifts the congregation sings it twice. At the end of *Ghanta II* the mortals join the heavenly choir in singing it. After the 'Osana song the priest recites it in low voice. Before the Holy Communion the liturgical assembly exclaims: "The One Father is holy; the One Son is holy, the One Spirit is holy." The author studies all the texts in which the term 'holy' occurs. I do not enter into details. The very name of the third person of the Blessed Trinity, *Rûhâdqudsâ* indicates that holiness has its origin, source, fullness and the end in God Himself. The Order of *Râzâ* uses *qudasâ* and *qudsa*. Christ is the incarnated form of the divine holiness. His body, his hands, his words and his name are called holy. *Qurbana* speaks of the holy mysteries. It is the holy sacrifice. The Church is holy. There are *qdos qudse*, holy *hyklâ*, and holy *madbahâ* in it. There are holy angels. Mother Church is holy, Pope and Bishops are holy.

Thus *Qurbana* unfolds the world of holiness.

In chapter 17 the author makes us familiar with the world of the celestial beings of *raza*. He makes it clear that *Qurbana* is not a reality which takes place on earth alone, but the whole heaven is present in that mystery. After exposing the biblical milieu of heaven, with its synonyms and the inhabitants of heaven, P.K. takes us into the world of *Qurbana*, which speaks of heaven (15 times), Kingdom of heaven (13 times), the Kingdom of above (once), the Highest like *çl* (once), *elâye* (once), *mrâvmç* (once), *mrâvmç elâye* (once), the above Jerusalem (once), the extolled and blessed place (once), the place of light (once), Paradise (once), bridal chamber (twice) and the inhabitants of the heaven like the angels (4 times), who are from the highest (once), the army of the spiritual beings (once), the ministers of fire and the formless beings (once), the spiritual beings (twice), the company of the wise (once), the Cherubim (twice), Seraphim (4 times), the Archangels (3 times), the Heavenly Hosts (twice), Mother Mary (twice), the Apostles (4 times), Martyrs (4 times), the Prophets (3 times), the Venerable (2 times), the Righteous (7 times), the Church Fathers (once), Saints (once).

"The Cosmic Perspective" is the next theme. The entire creation irradiates the presence of God. Every being reflects His living and loving face. The Bible speaks of such a cosmic perspective. In the light of it the author introduces us to the theme in *Qurbana*. Because of the limitations of a review article, I omit the details. The cosmic perspective of *Qurbana* makes it a mystical and sublime mystery.

After portraying the mystical and sublime world of *Qurbana* P.K. concentrates on human beings. Chapters 19-22 draw out the picture of humans. They are the despicable and wretched (the effects of sin and debts), still the servants and dear ones of God. *Qurbana* uses the first and second persons both singular and plural in order to designate the celebrant and the participants. It is a world of numerous pronouns which sheds light into the beautiful world of liturgy. The biblical term "The Flock

of the Pasture” provides the sublime and intimate relationship with God and Christ. Here too I do not enter into details.

The third part of the study deals with the responses of humans for the ineffable gifts and love of the Blessed Trinity. They offer praise and honour, thanksgiving (acknowledgment) and adoration. Each term is studied in the light of the biblical significance. Another response is saying Amen, “Amen” to the wonderful saving deeds of the loving and compassionate God. The study concludes with a salutation (*anjali*) of the author for the divine grace given to him to make a meditative study on the Order of *Raza*. He humbly acknowledges that the study is imperfect and non-comprehensive. According to him *Qurbana* is the imperishable and inexhaustible “gold-mine”, from where we can draw out ever old and ever new treasures. His conclusion is a liturgical acclamation: “Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit! From Eternity to Eternity, Amen Amen!”

In my humble opinion, it is a book to be meditated upon by everybody – Bishops, Priests, Religious and all other Faithful – in the Syro-Malabar Church. Let the Lord bless Father Paul Kalluveettil CMI most abundantly for providing such studies with celestial and mystical insights and intuitions. The more we know about what we celebrate, the more we will be able to love and appreciate our Church and her Liturgy.

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