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BOOK REVIEW

Geo Pallikkunnel, CMI, *Elevation to the Divine State through Holy Qurbana*, Bengaluru: Dharmaram Publications, 2016, Pages: xxii+303; ISBN: 978-93-84964-63-4

“The Holy Qurbana is for the Holy People”

India is a mosaic of cultures. So is the Syro Malabar Church. The Restoration and Renewal of the Syro Malabar liturgy since 1950's have led to certain confusions in the celebration of the Eucharistic liturgy. Consequently, the Syro Malabar Church has turned into 'a Church of a thousand liturgies.' Today, one should be really lucky to see two priests celebrating the Holy Qurbana in the same way. I do not take the liberty to state the reason for this as disrespect of the Liturgy. However, the embracing of the modernity clubbed with the emphasis and feeling of personal role in the Liturgy might have caused the uncountable alterations in the Syro Malabar Liturgy. Human beings have an inherent tendency to be freed from restrictions. The current observance of the Syro Malabar Liturgy is a fitting example of the display of this tendency.

The Syro Malabar Church is supposed to follow the East Syriac tradition in the matters of liturgy. Hence, Geo Pallikkunnel mentions that his intention in writing the book, *Elevation to the Divine State through Holy Qurbana*, is to explore and understand the theological expression of the integration into Christ and the elevation to the divine state and its dynamics as expounded through the East Syriac Eucharistic Liturgy (p. 2).

It is always noted that the sense of 'preservation' and 'observance' of something becomes stronger in one person by one's knowledge and love of it. Love is qualitative. Knowledge to a certain extent is quantitative. Pallikkunnel's book is certainly a great source of knowledge in the field of liturgical studies. Why should one study liturgy? This is the question most of us have. As the aim of every liturgy is to elevate the practitioner to the Divine beyond all restrictions, why should the practitioner be restricted? What is the role of inspiration in Liturgy? Does it end with the author of the liturgy? Has it to be with every practitioner of Liturgy as well? Is the inspiration of the author(s) final? Is there an organic growth in inspiration itself? How does one recognize true inspiration? This book answers many of the above questions discreetly and openly. The relevance of liturgical studies is partially answered by the evangelist Matthew. "Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom

of heaven is like the master of a house who brings out of his storeroom what is new and what is old" (Mt 13:52).

The intention of the author is to show that human and cosmic destiny is integration into Christ and elevation to the divine state is the purpose of the Eucharistic Liturgy. Pallikunnel tries his best to make the readers convince through the five chapters of the book that 'Eucharistic Liturgy is the *raza* of this divine process.'

In the prefatory chapter of the book, the vision and experience of the Divine in the religious traditions of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Islam, Sikhism, and Zoroastrianism and in some ancient religious and philosophical traditions is briefly sketched. A comparatively longer description of the vision and experience of the Divine in Christianity, predominantly from the Biblical and the East Syriac background, is also given in the same chapter.

Proper disposition of mind and place is a major factor in the experience of the Divine. The second chapter of the book is about the spatio-temporal dimensions of the Divine-human encounter and their relevance in the Eucharistic Liturgy. The East Syriac liturgy has three major parts viz., the Liturgy of the Word, the Anaphora and the Communion Rite. Although the Liturgy of the Word is celebrated in the Liturgy of the Hours, the Anaphora and Communion Rite make relevance only in the Eucharistic Liturgy. Moreover, Eucharistic Liturgy is complete only if it is celebrated along with the Liturgy of the Word. In the chapters three, four and five, the author uses his scholarly analysis of the ascend of the faithful by the proper celebration the Holy Qurbana to the Divine. Owing to the exegetical nature of this liturgical study in connection with the numerous imageries and types used, the book is a mystagogical feast.

The book also provides a vast collection of supplementary materials (35 pages) in the form of bibliography for establishing its claims and for inquisitive minds for further studies. The book, *Elevation to the Divine State through Holy Qurbana*, in no uncertain terms helps the reader to understand the intricacies of the divine process in the Eucharistic Liturgy of the East Syriac tradition. If there is a distant dream of unified liturgical celebration in the Syro Malabar Church with a single Eucharistic Liturgy, studies like this are quite useful and relevant.

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