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CHRISTOLOGICAL UNDERPINNINGS OF THE SYRO-MALABAR QURBANA

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Abstract

This article is a modest attempt to outline the Christological underpinnings of the Syro-Malabar *Qurbana*. It makes a very brief survey of the liturgical texts keeping in mind the dictum, *lex orandi, lex credendi*, and attempts to highlight the Cristocentrism in the Holy *Qurbana*. The article tries to delineate how the Christ-event is commemorated and celebrated in the Holy *Qurbana*. It also tries to expound how the whole course of the liturgy with its prayers and rituals with a Christological accent proclaims the role of Christ the Lord in the human redemption.

Keywords: *Bema, Christ-event, Cristocentrism, Divine Dispensation, Enarxis, Evangelion, History of Salvation, Huttama Locus Theologicus, Madbha, Marmitha, Onitha d'qanke, Paschal Mystery, Puqdane d'msiha, Puqdanakon, Qurbana, Slotha*

1. Introduction

Christology occupies a central and prominent position in all the liturgies in general, and in the Eastern liturgies in particular, as they are the celebrations of the mystery of Christ.¹ Holy *Qurbana*, the

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¹M. Vellanickal, "St. Thomas' Christ-Experience: Foundation of the Syro-Malabar Church," in M. Manakatt - J. Puthenveettil, ed., *Syro-Malabar Theology in Context*, Kottayam: OIRSI, 2007, 86.

Eucharistic celebration of the Syro-Malabar Church is the celebration of the redemptive mystery fulfilled in Christ. It is the commemoration of the history of salvation, i.e., the mystery of incarnation and its background of First/Old Testament history, private and public life of Jesus Christ, his passion, death and resurrection, the gift of the Holy Spirit, reconciliation of the humankind with God and the final union with Him. As the Holy *Qurbana* is the ritual re-enactment of the salvific actions of Christ the integral saviour (Lord of all) of the entire world, it carries on the redemptive actions and communicates the same to the liturgical assembly.

Celebrating the entire mystery of Christ with a special emphasis on the resurrection of the Lord, as the Eastern liturgies in general, the Syro-Malabar *Qurbana* gives prominence to Christology.² This article is a modest attempt to highlight the Christology of Syro-Malabar Church housed in the Holy *Qurbana*, for the liturgy is the privileged *locus theologicus*.

2. Christocentrism in the Celebration of the Christ-Event

The liturgical assembly welcomes and adores Christ at the entrance procession of the celebrant with the ministers carrying the *Sliba* and *Evangelion* from the *madbha* to the *bema*. The celebration of the Holy *Qurbana* is a response to the command of Christ and the community remembers the same at the very beginning of the celebration, *Puqdane dmsiha*.³

The Holy *Qurbana* contains numerous prayers addressed to Christ. The liturgical prayers begin with the designation of God as 'Our Lord and Our God' (*Maran w-Alahan*) that reveals both the divine and human nature of Christ in one person and shed light on their role in the salvation and sanctification of the humanity. The Holy *Qurbana* celebrates the Lordship of Jesus by calling Him 'the Lord,' 'my Lord,' 'Lord of all,' 'Lord of heaven and earth,' etc. Some of the other titles employed in are 'Lord of All,' 'Lord, God Almighty,' 'Lord O God' and 'Christ, Our Lord.' Generally the prayers are concluded with the expression 'Lord of all,' thus praising Christ as the Lord of the universe and heaven. The expression, 'Lord of all' summarizes the essential nature of His supreme Lordship. These and similar invocations manifest the dominion and sovereignty of Jesus Christ as

²S. Athappilly, "Christological Faith-Expressions in the Syro-Malabar Qurbana," *Christian Orient* 14, 2 (June 1993) 76-90.

³S.M.B.C., *The Syro-Malabar Qurbana: The Order of Raza*, Trivandrum: San Jose Press, 1989, 1.

Lord and God. Jesus Christ who gained victory over death (1 Cor 15:53) reigns as the Lord of all (Phil 2:10-11). The appellation 'Lord, God Almighty' is a fitting one, as God is powerful and capable to render strength in the weakness and to enable the humans to offer the sacrifice.

The other titles and appellations retained in the Holy *Qurbana* are 'saviour,' 'preserver of lives,' 'the quickener of our bodies,' 'saviour of our souls,' 'glorious and mighty,' 'immortal one,' 'wise ruler,' 'light of the world,' 'splendour of the glory of the Father,' 'God the Word,' 'giver of life,' 'Lord and adorable king,' 'image of both servant and creator,' 'Christ king of ages,' 'king and saviour,' 'peace of those in heavenly Court and great hope of those on earth below,' 'good shepherd,' and 'heavenly bridegroom.' The *slotha* before the *huttama* on Sundays and feast days sums up the Christological faith by important titles, "May Christ our God, our Lord, our King and Saviour, Giver of life,... grant that we may please him in word and deed, in thought and action."⁴ The Holy *Qurbana* presents Christ also as the fulfilment of the First Testament Prophecies and celebrates the Christ-event, the mystery of human redemption and thus with its Christocentrism Holy *Qurbana* restates that the economy of salvation is Christ and Christ-event centred.⁵

2.1. Christ as the Fulfilment of the First Testament Prophecies

The *enarxis* of the Holy *Qurbana* from *puqdanakon* to *laku mara* and the priestly prayer that follows celebrate the salvific events of the incarnation of the Son of God, its First Testament background, the private life of the Lord and the great manifestation in the river Jordan.⁶ To phrase differently, it celebrates the dawning of the Messianic age. The *puqdanakon* and its answer *puqdaneh da Msiha* is followed by the angels' hymn which implies the good news as the economy of the Trinitarian God.⁷ It is a proclamation of the mystery of incarnation, which is the focal point of all the mysteries of human salvation.⁸ The angels' hymn proclaims and recalls the birth of Jesus

⁴The Order of Raza, 59.

⁵S. Athappilly, "Christological Faith-Expressions," 89.

⁶C. Velampampil, *The Celebration of the Liturgy of the Word in the Syro-Malabar Qurbana: A Biblico-Theological Analysis*, Kottayam: OIRSI, 1997, 122; V. Pathikulangara, *Qurbana: The Eucharistic Celebration of the Chaldeo-Indian Church*, Kottayam: Denha Service, 1998, 150-151.

⁷J. Chittilappilly, *Mdabbranuta: The Divine Dispensation of Our Lord in the Holy Qurbana of the East Syrian Tradition*, Kottayam: OIRSI, 1999, 90.

⁸S. Salaville, *An Introduction to the Study of Eastern Liturgies*, London: Sands, 1938, 131.

and all the historical events⁹ such as the creation (Gen 1:26) culminating in the human beings (Gen 1:28; 1:31), the freedom and its misuse leading to the expulsion of the first parents from the garden of Eden (Gen 3:22-24).

As a result of incarnation the human beings became the adopted children of God and the Lord's Prayer that follows the angels' hymn is the expression of the privilege of the children to call God 'Father.'¹⁰ *Marmitha* stands as a symbol to delve deeper into the reasons of the mystery of incarnation,¹¹ the First Testament dispensation, the private life of the Lord and the preaching of John the Baptist.¹² It presents the history of salvation from the creation of the world till the coming of Christ.¹³ For the Anonymous Author, *marmitha* signifies the voice of John the Baptist.¹⁴ According to Bar Zo'bi the conclusion of each verse by 'halleluia' symbolizes the angels' hymn at the birth of the Lord.¹⁵ For Qatraya, halleluia represents the praise of the heavenly hosts.¹⁶ The doxology at the end of *marmitha* symbolizes the manifestation of the Trinity at Christ's baptism.¹⁷

Onitha d'qanke symbolizes the chant of the angels and the proclamation of John the Baptist (Jn 1:36). Qatraya also comments that it symbolizes the praise of the heavenly hosts to the Lord or praise of Christ as the Lamb of God (Jn 1:29).¹⁸ The Anonymous

⁹T. Mannoorampampil, "Biblical Allusions in the Pre-anaphoral Part of the Syro-Malabar Qurbana," *Christian Orient* 16, 2 (June 1995) 75.

¹⁰T. Mannoorampampil, "Enarxis and Liturgy of the Word in the Syro-Malabar Qurbana," *Christian Orient* 22, 2 (June 2001) 60; T.M. Kunnathettu, *The Holy Qurbana Celebration of the Divine-Human Encounter: A Study on the Basis of the Syro-Malabar Qurbana*, Kottayam: OIRSI, 2006, 97.

¹¹V. Pathikulangara, *Qurbana*, 162-163.

¹²G. Pallikunnel, *Elevation to the Divine State through Holy Qurbana*, Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2016, 132.

¹³T. Mannoorampampil, "Bema in the East Syrian Church," *Christian Orient* 19, 2 (June 1998) 87-88; J. Bar Zo'bi, *Explanation of the Divine Mysteries*, T. Mannoorampampil, tr., Kottayam: OIRSI, 1992, 22-23; R.F. Taft, "On the Use of the Bema in the East Syrian Liturgy," *Eastern Churches Review* 3 (1970-71) 32-33.

¹⁴*Anonymi Auctoris Expositio Officiorum Ecclesiae Georgio Arbelensi vulgo Adscripta*, II, in R.H. Connolly, ed. & tr., CSCO, Scr. Syr. Tom. 92, Parisiis: Gabalda, 1915, 9.

¹⁵J. Bar Zo'bi, *Explanation of the Divine Mysteries*, 23; G. Qatraya, *Pithakanmarude Kudashabhashyngal: Homilies and Interpretations on the Holy Qurbana*, T. Mannoorampampil, ed. & tr., Kottayam: OIRSI, 1992, 6.

¹⁶G. Qatraya, *Commentary on the Liturgy*, in S.P. Brock, tr., "Gabriel of Qatar's Commentary on the Liturgy," *Hugoye* 6, 2 (2003), [accessed 22.10.2017] <http://syrcom.cua.edu/Hugoye/vol6no2Brock.html>.

¹⁷G. Qatraya, *Commentary on the Liturgy*, 6; J. Bar Zo'bi, *Explanation of the Divine Mysteries*, 24.

¹⁸G. Qatraya, *Commentary on the Liturgy*, 7.

Author understands it as the descent of the Word into the world, the incarnation and the fulfilment of the dispensation in Jerusalem.¹⁹ For Timothy II, it signifies the praise of the shepherds (Lk 2:20), offerings of the Magi (Mt 2:11-12) and the words of John (Jn 1:29).²⁰

The liturgy of the Word explains the salvific plan of God prophesied and fulfilled in Jesus Christ. The First Testament readings and their culmination in the gospels make a progressive actualization of Christ-event.²¹ The *surrayya* sung before the epistle is a symbol of the fulfilment of the First Testament promises in the Second Testament.²² The progressive revelation reaches the climax in the gospels, i.e., Christ (Heb 1:1), for the gospel is the fulfilment and seal of the prophets and apostles.²³

2.2. Public Life of Jesus

The liturgy of the Word is an exclusive celebration of the public ministry of Jesus Christ and His words. The prayer said by the priest while taking the gospel reveals the splendour and glory of Christ: "O Christ, splendour of the glory of your Father and image of the person (qnoma) of Him who begot you; you did manifest yourself in a human body like ours and did illumine the darkness of our mind by the light of the gospel... Lord of all, forever, Amen."²⁴ The *turgama* of the gospel gives a concise but comprehensive portrait of the life of Christ. It alludes to the incarnation, public life, death, resurrection, ascension, sending of the Holy Spirit and sending the apostles to the four quarters of the world.

The gospel procession is a symbol of the procession with which the Lord entered Jerusalem,²⁵ and the proclamation of the gospel is His teaching. But George of Arbel understands the procession of the gospel as the manifestation of the Lord at Jordan and the gospel proclamation as the teaching of the Lord and dispensation after baptism.²⁶

¹⁹Anonymi Auctoris Expositio Officiorum Ecclesiae II, 9.

²⁰Timothy II, *Mystery of the Eucharist*, J. Kochuparampil, tr., *The Mystery of the Eucharist: Syriac Critical Text, Translation and Studies of the Chapter "On the Mysteries of the Body and Blood" from The Book of the Seven Causes of the Mysteries of the Church by Catholicos-Patriarch Timothy II (1318-1332)*, Romae: PIO, 2000, 56.

²¹J. Vellian, *Qurbana Oru Padhanam*, Kottayam: OIRSI, 1968, 179.

²²F. Pittappillil, *The Celebration of the Holy Mysteries: A Critical Study of the Eucharistic Treatise in the Exposition of the Church Services of Pseudo-George of Arbel of the 9th Century*, Kottayam: OIRSI, 2011, 159.

²³G.P. Badger, *Nestorians and Their Rituals: With the Narrative of a Mission to Mesopotamia and Coordistan in 1842-1844*, II, London: Darf Publishers, 1987, 416.

²⁴The Order of Raza, 18.

²⁵G. Qatraya, *Commentary on the Liturgy*, 24.

²⁶Anonymi Auctoris Expositio Officiorum Ecclesiae II, 17-25.

During the *onitha d'qanke*, the celebrant kisses the Cross and extends it to be kissed by the other ministers and faithful. According to the ancient custom at this time the Cross is taken from the sanctuary and enthroned at the *bema*, and according to Qatraya this solemn procession signifies the Lord's solemn entry into Jerusalem.²⁷ The procession of the Cross from the sanctuary signifies the episode of the Lord's going to the wilderness and His fight against the accuser.²⁸

The *trisagion* invites the community to be aware of the holy, mighty and immortal God.²⁹ For Iso'yahab I, *trisagion* is a definition of God that expresses the divine nature in its positive (holy and mighty) and negative (Immortal) attributes.³⁰ In the first part of the hymn, God is invoked in a confessional form and in the second part His mercy is implored.³¹

Trisagion was sung for the first time at the Council of Chalcedon (451)³² and it was understood differently in different geographical areas. At Jerusalem, Constantinople and in the West, it was understood as a Trinitarian hymn, whereas in Syria, parts of Asia Minor and Egypt it was understood as a Christological hymn.³³ *Trisagion* "expresses the Christological dimension of the power of God in order to understand the forthcoming proclamation of God's powerful word which is sharper than any double-edged sword that cuts all the way through the joints and marrow (Heb 4:12)."³⁴ Qatraya sees the *trisagion* in relation to the earthly ministry of Jesus: "The *qanona* 'Holy...' is a symbol of the sanctification (of Christ) by the angels who accompanied him during his entire dispensation (*kolah mdabbranuteh*), just as the blessed Matthew said, 'the angels

²⁷G. Qatraya, *Commentary on the Liturgy*, 8-9.

²⁸G. Qatraya, *Pithakanmarude Kudashabhashyangal*, 6; Timothy II, *Mystery of the Eucharist*, 57.

²⁹P. Yousif, "The Divine Liturgy according to the Rite of the Assyro-Chaldean Church," in J. Madey, ed., *The Eucharistic Liturgy in the Christian East*, Kottayam: OIRSI, 1983, 203; T. Mannoorampampil, "Holy Qurbana: From Lakumara to Trisagion Pastoral Aspect," *Christian Orient* 24, 1 (March 2004) 40.

³⁰G. Furlani, "Il trattato di Yesoyahb d'Arzon sul Trisagion," *Rivista degli studi orientali* 7 (1916-1918) 712.

³¹D. Royel, "East Meets East: Byzantine Liturgical Influences on the Rite of the Church of the East," *Journal of the Canadian Society for Syriac Studies* 8 (2008) 50.

³²S.P. Brock, *Studies in Syriac Spirituality*, Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2008, 104; "The Origins of the *Qanona* 'Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal' according to Gabriel of Qatar (Early 7th Century)," *The Harp* 21 (2006) 174.

³³S.P. Brock, *Studies in Syriac Spirituality*, 105.

³⁴J. Moolan, "Liturgical Mystagogy Part II," *Christian Orient* 34, 1 (March 2013) 31.

approached and were ministering to him” (Mt 4:11).³⁵ Bar Zo’bi relates the hymn of *trisagion* to the angels’ cry of “holy” and their ministrations to the Lord after the temptation.³⁶

2.3. Passion and Death

The Syriac word *Qurbana* means the Eucharistic memorial of the passion, death and resurrection of Christ.³⁷ Theodore calls Eucharist the remembrance of Christ’s death and resurrection.³⁸ Qatraya interprets the liturgy of the mysteries in terms of death, burial, resurrection and ascension.³⁹ The entire Eucharistic liturgy in the East Syriac tradition is a continuous commemoration of the paschal mystery of Christ and there are repeated commemorations of the same mystery.⁴⁰ While the Anonymous Author considers the deacon’s *karozutha* the symbol of the passion, death and resurrection of the Lord,⁴¹ Bar Zo’bi interprets it as the symbol of the Lord’s prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane.⁴²

The taking down of the gospel and the cross from the *bema* without solemn procession indicates the seizure of Jesus and leading Him to be crucified when none of His disciples was with Him.⁴³ The removal of the cross and the gospel from the *bema* symbolizes the arrest of our Lord.⁴⁴ The setting up of the cross at the threshold of the sanctuary is the symbol of the crucifixion of the Lord and the separation of the

³⁵G. Qatraya, *Commentary on the Liturgy*, 13.

³⁶D. Webb, “The Mimra on the Interpretation of the Mysteries by Rabban Johannan Bar Zo’bi, and Its Symbolism,” *Le Muséon* 88, 3-4 (1975) 308.

³⁷J. Danielou, *The Bible and the Liturgy*, Indiana: University of Notre Dame, 1956, 172.

³⁸Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Lord’s Prayer and on the Sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist*, in A. Mingana, ed. & tr., Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons Limited, 1933, 20-21, 106-107.

³⁹W.F. Macomber, “Liturgy of the Word according to the Commentators of the Chaldean Mass,” in R.J. Clifford – G. MacRae, ed., *The Word in the World: Essays in Honor of Frederick L. Moriarty S.J.*, Cambridge, MA: Weston College Press, 1973, 182-183.

⁴⁰P. Maniyattu, “Theological Significance of Uhdana and Dukhrana in the East Syrian Eucharistic Liturgy,” *Bollettino della Badia Greca di Grottaferrata* 3, 5 (2008) 235.

⁴¹*Anonymi Auctoris Expositio Officiorum Ecclesiae* II, 27; F. Pittappillil, *The Celebration of the Holy Mysteries*, 155.

⁴²J. Bar Zo’bi, *Explanation of the Divine Mysteries*, 32.

⁴³Abdisho, *Pithakanmarude Kudashabhashyangal: Interpretation of the Mysteries*, in T. Mannoorampampil, ed. & tr., Kottayam: OIRSI, 1992, 32-33; Timothy II, *Mystery of the Eucharist*, 61.

⁴⁴J. Bar Zo’bi, *Explanation of the Divine Mysteries*, 32; G. Qatraya, *Pithakanmarude Kudashabhashyangal*, 12.

cross from the gospel signifies the mystery of the separation of the soul of the Lord from His body.⁴⁵

The rite of preparation and presentation is a proleptic celebration of the suffering, death and burial of the Lord.⁴⁶ The preparation of gifts at the *betgazze* symbolizes the preparation of the Lord in Gethsemane for undertaking the salvific suffering.⁴⁷ The liturgical commentators attach great significance to the transfer of the gifts. Theodore of Mopsuestia is the earliest witness to the ritualized transfer of gifts in the Christian East,⁴⁸ and according to him this liturgical rite symbolizes the passion, death and burial of the Lord. He explains that Christ lies on the altar slain and buried and compares the linen on the altar to the linen clothes of the burial of the Lord.⁴⁹ Narsai also expounds that the bread on the paten and the wine in the cup are symbols of the death of Jesus.⁵⁰ According to Narsai, the transfer of gifts, their deposition and covering with the *soseppa* symbolize the burial of the Lord and the covering of the tomb with the stone.⁵¹ The carrying of the bread and wine to the altar symbolizes the funeral procession of Jesus.⁵² For Timothy II, the carrying of the paten and chalice to the altar signifies the approach of the Lord to suffering and death.⁵³

The prayer of presentation of the gifts is a christological text as it proclaims Christ as the offerer, the victim and the receiver of the sacrifice: "May Christ who was sacrificed for our salvation, and who commanded us to celebrate the memory of His passion, death, burial and resurrection accept this sacrifice from our hands, through His grace and mercy, for ever."⁵⁴ Here Christ has all the three roles of the

⁴⁵J. Bar Zo'bi, *Explanation of the Divine Mysteries*, 33; G. Qatraya, *Pithakanmarude Kudashabhashyangal*, 12-13; Timothy II, *Mystery of the Eucharist*, 61.

⁴⁶V. Pathikulangara, *Qurbana*, 190.

⁴⁷J. Moolan, *Introduction to the Oriental Liturgy and Its Theology: Syro-Malabar Church*, Kottayam: OIRSI, 2013, 92.

⁴⁸R. Taft, *The Great Entrance: A History of the Transfer of Gifts and Other Pre-Anaphoral Rites*, OCA 200, sec. edn., Rome: PIO, 1978, 35-38.

⁴⁹F.J. Reine, *The Eucharistic Doctrine and Liturgy of the Mystagogical Catechesis of Theodore of Mopsuestia*, Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1942, 22.

⁵⁰Narsai, *Liturgical Homilies of Narsai: Translated into English with an Introduction*, Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2004, 3.

⁵¹Narsai, *Liturgical Homilies of Narsai*, 3; H. Connolly, "A Homily of Mar Jacob of Serugh on the Memorial of the Departed and on the Eucharistic loaf," *Downside Review* 29 (1910) 267.

⁵²V. Pathikulangara, *Qurbana*, 195.

⁵³Timothy II, *Mystery of the Eucharist*, 62.

⁵⁴*The Order of Raza*, 30.

offerer, victim and receiver; and the christological perspective is dominant. Ephrem also describes Christ as the offerer and victim: "Christ is the altar and Lamb, victim and offerer, priest and sacrificial food."⁵⁵

A concise narration of the history of salvation takes place in the *Qudasha*. The first *g'hanta* is a general thanksgiving to God for having showered abundant graces on the liturgical assembly and making worthy to minister the holy mysteries of the body and blood of His Son.⁵⁶ The second *g'hanta* praises God for the creation and the third *g'hanta* narrates the mystery of salvation accomplished in Jesus Christ.⁵⁷ The first part of the third *g'hanta* proclaims the personality of Jesus Christ, His relation to the Father, and the reasons of His incarnation and focuses on the dogmatic teachings of the early Councils. Here one finds descending Christology of the Word⁵⁸ (Jn 1:18; Col 1:15; Heb 1:13; Phil 2:6-8). God the Word renounced the glorious state and assumed the nature of a limited human being. Jesus Christ is the pre-existent eternal Word who assumed full humanity. It is through the incarnate Word that God revealed himself (Jn 1:18). The second part proclaims that the memorial of Jesus' salvific action is celebrated according to His very commandment. It refers to the effects of the redemptive work of Christ.⁵⁹ The institution narrative inserted in the third *g'hanta* is a memorial of the passion and death of the Lord.

The third and fourth *g'hantha* prayers contain explicit references to Christ as God, and the fourth *g'hanta* has the most important text of commemoration (*uhdana*): "...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."⁶⁰ Here the central event remembered is the death and resurrection of the Lord and it is done with joy and thanksgiving, for in the liturgy the Church looks at the death of the Lord as a great, awesome, holy, vivifying and divine mystery.⁶¹ The fourth *g'hanta* concludes by recapitulating the Christ-event by which

⁵⁵HCruc 3.10; *Des Heiligen Ephraem des Syrsers Paschahymnen: De Azymis, de Crucifixione, de Resurrectione*, in E. Beck, ed., CSCO 248, 249, Scr. Syr. Tom. 108, 109, Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1964, 52/41.

⁵⁶T. Mannoorampampil, "The *Anaphora* of Addai and Mari: Its Origin, Development and Theology," *Christian Orient* 20, 2 (June 1999) 102.

⁵⁷V. Pathikulangara, *Qurbana*, 228.

⁵⁸S. Athappilly, *Theology in India*, 123-124.

⁵⁹*The Order of Raza*, 42; S. Athappilly, *Theology in India*, 125-127.

⁶⁰*The Order of Raza*, 44.

⁶¹P. Maniyattu, "Theological Significance of Uhdana and Dukhrana," 233.

Jesus became the Lord and Saviour. The *Qudasha* re-enacts the central events of the mystery of Christ, viz., His death and resurrection together with the giving of the Holy Spirit. According to J. Danielou what is present on the altar is not only the body and blood of Christ but also the mystery of His passion, resurrection and ascension.⁶²

Though the fraction of the bread before the communion originated from practical necessity, later it was given a symbolic meaning of passion and death of the Lord.⁶³ The liturgical commentators relate the rite of fraction with the passion of Christ.⁶⁴ Timothy II explains, "His breaking [of the bread] and signing of the cup, and again the body with the divided part, signifies the separation of the soul of our Lord from his body."⁶⁵ During this rite the priest breaks the bread and joins it with the blood as a symbol of the passion and death of the Lord.⁶⁶ For Theodore signing is the best symbolic expression of the death and resurrection of the Lord.⁶⁷

2.4. Resurrection

The essence of Christian Eucharistic liturgy is the feast of the resurrection, *Mysterium Paschae*.⁶⁸ The Syro-Malabar *Qurbana* is impregnated with the deep faith in the resurrection of Christ and the hope of human resurrection.⁶⁹ *Laku mara* the resurrection hymn that celebrates Christ the source of human resurrection⁷⁰ is a profound praise to the Lord of all. The liturgical assembly in this hymn confesses the divinity of the Lord and the faith in human resurrection and life after death and celebrates His victory over suffering, death and Satan.⁷¹ It praises and glorifies Christ as the quickner of the bodies, saviour of the souls and the source of human resurrection⁷²

⁶²J. Danielou, *The Bible and the Liturgy*, 136.

⁶³P. Vazheparampil, "Covenant into *Quddasa* the Anaphora of Addai and Mari: A Re-reading," *Christian Orient* 17, 2 (June 1996) 104.

⁶⁴G. Qatraya, *Commentary on the Liturgy*, 24; Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Commentary on the Eucharist*, 107; Narsai, *Liturgical Homilies of Narsai*, 23.

⁶⁵Timothy II, *Mystery of the Eucharist*, 68.

⁶⁶Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Commentary on the Eucharist*, 105-107; G. Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, London: Adam & Charles Black, 1970, 134.

⁶⁷Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Commentary on the Eucharist*, 105.

⁶⁸J. Ratzinger, *The Feast of Faith: Approaches to a Theology of the Liturgy*, G. Harrison, tr., San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986, 65.

⁶⁹T. Mannoorampampil, "Holy Qurbana: From Lakumara to Trisagion," 39.

⁷⁰V. Pathikulangara, *Resurrection, Life and Renewal: A Theological Study of the Liturgical Celebration of the Great Saturday and Sunday of Resurrection in the Chaldeo-Indian Church*, Bangalore - Kottayam: Dharmaram Publications and OIRSI, 1982, 62.

⁷¹V. Pathikulangara, *Qurbana*, 167.

⁷²P. Yousif, "The Divine Liturgy," 201; L. Arangassery, *Ecclesial Dimensions of East Syrian Liturgy: An Introduction to Liturgical Ecclesiology*, Kottayam: OIRSI, 1990, 108.

and it “expresses the Christological dimension of the eschatological orientation to be achieved in heaven.”⁷³ In the first part of the hymn Jesus is addressed as the “Lord of all” that connotes the Lordship of Christ over the physical and spiritual world. The second part of the hymn acclaims the Lord’s divinity and humanity.⁷⁴

The dialogue-chant of the celebrant and the deacons during the rite of prostration accentuates the theme of the presence of the risen Lord. “O Lord, be present in our midst, as you were with the Apostles”⁷⁵ is the repeated request. The celebrant and the deacons entreat the Lord that He may be present in their midst as he promised to the twelve apostles.⁷⁶

At the commencement of *Qudasha* the folded *soseppa* around the gifts is a sign of the resurrection of the Lord. The folded *soseppa* declares the mystery of the risen Lord being perfected on the altar,⁷⁷ for St John the folded napkin was a sign to believe in the resurrection of the Lord (Jn 20:7). The *Qudasha*, especially *epiclesis*, is the proclamation and the symbol of the resurrection of the Lord.⁷⁸ For Qatraya the theme of resurrection is the centre of *epiclesis*: “When the priest invokes the Spirit and she hovers, he joins the body to the blood and the blood to the body: a symbol of the returning of the soul of our Lord to His body and His resurrection from the dead. For the priest resurrects the body symbolically through the agency of the Spirit.”⁷⁹ Bar Zo’bi also follows the same thought pattern: “The priest mystically resuscitates the body of our Lord by the working of the Holy Spirit who descends and dwells there.”⁸⁰ In Theodore’s view the *epiclesis* is the celebration of the resurrection and he compares the body and blood after the *epiclesis* to the resurrected body of the Lord.⁸¹ Narsai also sees *epiclesis* as the celebration of resurrection: “A symbol of His resurrection has the priest typified by the completion

⁷³J. Moolan, “Liturgical Mystagogy Part II,” *Christian Orient* 34, 1 (March 2013) 31.

⁷⁴P. Kalluveetil, *Syro-Malabar Qurbana: Bible Darsanangal*, Kakkanad: LRC Publications, 2004, 30-31.

⁷⁵*The Order of Raza*, 28.

⁷⁶P. Maniyattu, “Structure and Theology of the Spiritual Preparation for the Qudasha in the East Syriac Qurbana,” *Ephrem’s Theological Journal* 7, 2 (October 2003) 157.

⁷⁷V. Pathikulangara, *Qurbana*, 199.

⁷⁸T. Mannoorampampil, *The Anaphora and the Post-Anaphora of the Syro-Malabar Qurbana*, Kottayam: OIRSI, 1984, 67; T. Kuzhuppil, “Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Mystery of the Eucharist,” in J. Koodapuzha, ed., *Church in the Orient*, Fs. X. Koodapuzha, Kunnoth: Good Shepherd Books, 2012, 249.

⁷⁹G. Qatraya, *Commentary on the Liturgy*, 70.

⁸⁰J. Bar Zo’bi, *Explanation of the Divine Mysteries*, 49.

⁸¹Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Commentary on the Eucharist*, 118-119.

of the Mysteries, and a symbol of His revelation before His disciples by distributing Him.”⁸² Therefore *epiclesis* is the mystery of the resurrection of Christ, for the Holy Spirit descends upon the oblation and completes the mystery of the resurrection of the Lord from the dead.⁸³ The rites of elevation, fraction and consignation are the celebration of the sacrifice of Calvary and the resurrection of the Lord.⁸⁴ The fraction is interpreted as the passion and death of the Lord and the rite of consignation is regarded as a symbolic act of resurrection.⁸⁵

3. Conclusion

Holy *Qurbana* is the celebration of the redemptive mystery fulfilled in Christ and therefore it commemorates the history of salvation, i.e., the mystery of incarnation and its First Testament background, private and public life of Jesus, passion, death and resurrection, the gift of the Holy Spirit, reconciliation of the humankind with God and the final union with Him. It stresses the economy of salvation centred around Christ and the Christ-event. As it is a sacramental re-enactment of the salvific actions of Christ the Lord of all, it carries on the redemptive actions and communicates the same to the participants.

In order to highlight the Christological underpinnings of the Holy *Qurbana*, a brief survey of the liturgical texts is done and for that the themes were limited to Christ as the fulfilment of the prophecies, public life, passion, death and resurrection. The survey brings to light the Christocentrism expressed through numerous prayers addressed to Christ the Lord and God and the several Christological titles and appellations employed in the Holy *Qurbana*. They reveal both the divine and human nature of Christ in one person and the role of the Lord in human salvation. The Lordship and divinity of Jesus Christ, Christ as the Son of God and God the Word who emptied himself are celebrated in the Holy *Qurbana*.

As the effective re-enactment of the Christ-event, the Holy *Qurbana*, especially the *Qudasha* of Addai and Mari, lays out the whole

⁸²Narsai, *Liturgical Homilies of Narsai*, 30.

⁸³Narsai, *Liturgical Homilies of Narsai*, 20; G. Qatraya, *Commentary on the Liturgy*, 70.

⁸⁴M. Kumpuckal, *The Post-Anaphoral Part of the Chaldean and Syro-Malabar Qurbana: Critical Edition, English Translation and Study*, (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation), Rome: PIO, 1993, 180.

⁸⁵P. Yousif, “An Introduction to the East Syrian Spirituality: Liturgical, Ecclesial and Theological Dimensions,” in A. Thottakkara, ed., *East Syrian Spirituality*, Rome – Bangalore: CIIS and Dharmaram Publications, 1990, 16-17.

dispensation of Christ through a wide variety of terms, expressions, actions and prayers associated with Christ and the sacred mysteries. They reveal the Christo-centric content of the celebration.

Glossary

Bema (Syriac): Elevated platform for the liturgy of the Word, and it symbolizes the earthly Jerusalem.

Betgazza (Syriac): Recess in the northern and southern walls of sanctuary where the bread and wine are prepared.

Enarxis (Greek): Introduction or beginning. The introductory part of liturgical celebrations.

Epiclesis (Greek): *Epi* (over) + *klēsis* from *kalein* to call. Invocation or calling down of the Holy Spirit to consecrate the bread and wine during the Eucharist.

Evangelion (Syriac): Gospel.

G'hanta (Syriac): Prostration, usually the celebrant's *anaphora* prayer in prostration.

Haykala (Syriac): Nave, the place for the faithful inside the church.

Huttama (Syriac): Sealing or conclusion. The final or concluding blessing during the liturgical celebrations.

Karozutha (Syriac): Proclamation. The litany prayer or proclamatory prayer in worship.

Laku Mara (Syriac): "To thee, Lord" (literally). It is a very ancient hymn sung in the liturgical celebrations, expressing the faith in Christ the Lord of all.

Madbha (Syriac): In the Syriac tradition, it denotes both Sanctuary and place of the altar and the altar itself. It has also the meaning of sanctuary. The Syro-Malabar *Taksa* employs *Madbha* to designate altar.

Marmitha (Syriac): Exclamation Prayer (literally); In the Holy *Qurbana* it means a group consisting of three psalms.

Onitha (Syriac): Responsorial hymn or alternatively sung anthem.

Onitha d'bema (Syriac): Anthem of *bema*. The hymn sung during the Holy Communion.

Onitha d'evangelion (Syriac): The hymn in praise of the gospels.

Onitha d'qanke (Syriac): The hymn of the sanctuary.

Onitha d'raze (Syriac): Anthem of the mysteries. The hymn sung by the congregation during the procession of the Eucharistic gifts to the altar.

Puqdanakon (Syriac): Your command (literally). It is the initial dialogue of the SMQ.

Qanke (Syriac): Sanctuary.

Qanona (Syriac): Antiphon, a responsorial Psalm.

Qestroma (Syriac): Choir, the place for intermediary or trained choir, situated three steps below sanctuary and one step above the nave.

Qudasha (Syriac): Consecration; sanctification; sacrament. It denotes also *anaphora*.

Qurbana (Syriac): Offering, Eucharistic celebration.

Sliba (Syriac): Crucified one; *Sliba* signifies crucified and resurrected Christ.

Sliha (Syriac): Apostle; *slihe* (plural); the liturgical period of apostles.

Slotha (Syriac): Prayer recited by the priest in loud voice during the liturgical celebrations.

Soseppa (Syriac): A square shaped piece of cloth made of the same stuff of *paina*, being enough to cover the chalice and paten together, symbolizing the tombstone and the head covering cloth of Jesus at his burial.

Trisagion (Greek): Thrice holy hymn to the most Holy Trinity with Christological stress based on Isaiah's and John's visions (Is 6:3; Rev 4:8).

Turgama (Syriac): Interpretation; explanatory hymn sung before the epistle or the gospel.

Uhdana (Syriac): Commemoration or memorial of events.