

The Divine Liturgy According to the Rite of the Assyro-Chaldean Church

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Assyro-Chaldean Theology of Liturgy:

Following biblical interpretations of the world, the Liturgy has as background the vision of the existence of two worlds: the one is visible, mortal, corruptible and morally instable; the other is invisible, immortal, and incorruptible with an eternal moral stability. According to the Gospel Morals, the present world is a necessary preparation for the Future. Death and Resurrection are the way through which we go to the coming world, but in as much as they are in conformity with Christ. Redemption of Christ, however, makes future world already present on earth. The church being a type of Heaven, her liturgy is an image of the celestial liturgy; and liturgical ceremonies, mainly Eucharist, by their symbolism, make the faithful share the heavenly Liturgy.

Symbolic Metamorphosis of a Milieu:

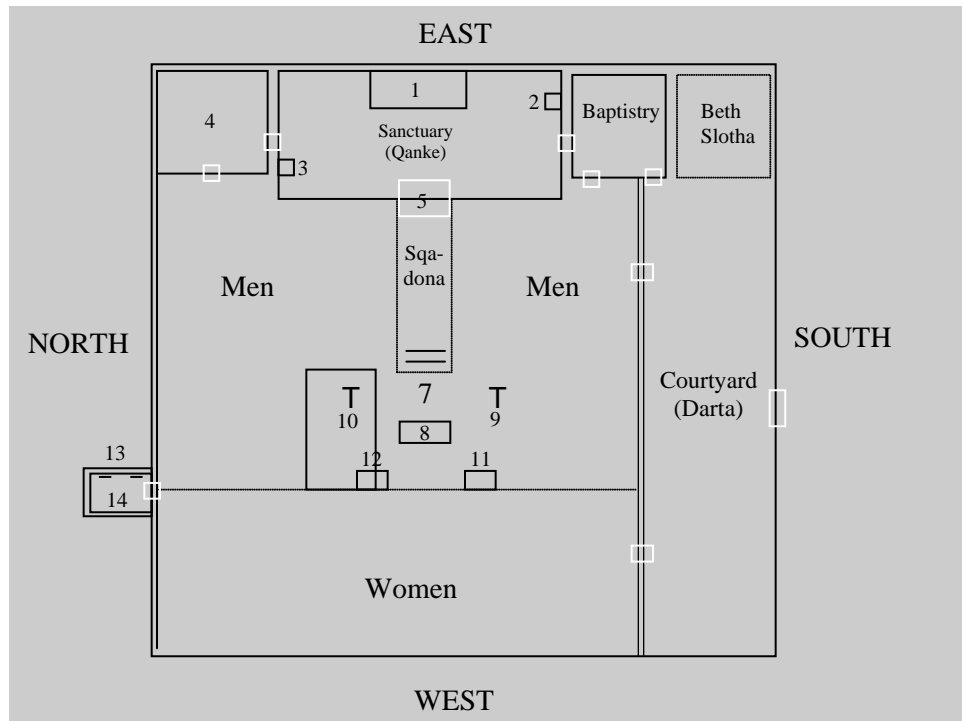
Liturgy is normally performed in a church, that is, in a consecrated temple. According to The Assyro-Chaldean tradition, the church is not a hall for friendly meetings or for public performances, etc. It is the house of God where the faithful meet the Lord in prayer, receive the Body and Blood of Christ, repent from their sins, listen to the Word, etc. All these elements acquire a new light and life if we situate them in the *milieu* meant for them by our liturgy. Those who appreciate the importance of the composition of the place, like saint Ignatius of Loyola, would easily see the importance of the space and its symbolic value for Liturgy. Indeed man is naturally conditioned by time and space, even for prayer. No wonder that monasteries are built on privileged sites, inviting all to prayer and recollection! Liturgy understands human psychology and is a pedagogical process in the preparation of man to meet God. Our tradition has understood these postulates, and it gives to the space elements a precise symbolism. There is also the functional aspect of the architecture of the church.

Church Building:

The plan of the church is according to the specific nature of the celebration. The Word of God and the liturgical prayer are on the *Bema*, while the Eucharistic Liturgy is celebrated in the heavenly Holy of Holies. In other words, the mystery

is celebrated on the altar; but the prayer and the Word of God is for the people, and among them.

The sanctuary symbolizes heaven and the sacrifice offered on the altar is the symbol of that which exists in heaven. The veil separating the sanctuary from the nave symbolizes the firmament; the nave of the church is the earth and the bema is Jerusalem from where Christ teaches us through the readings of the scriptures. The *bema* is a platform somewhat higher than the rest of the nave. In the middle of the *bema* a table is set, symbolizing Gaghultha, on which the living cross and gospel are placed. At its right side (North) there is the lectern for the New Testament readings and at its left side (South) the lectern for the Old Testament (and Acts), namely, the first two readings. The room by the southern side of the sanctuary is the baptistery, and that at the northern side is the *beth diaqon*, where services, bread and wine, etc. are prepared. In the sanctuary there are two niches in the wall called *beth gazze*: the right one for the bread and paten and the left one for water, wine and chalice. In the middle of the sanctuary there is a candle, lit day and night, symbol of Christ, the light of the world. In the nave, immediately after the veil, there is the *qestroma*; an extension of the sanctuary beyond the veil and it represents the visible heaven. The *sqaqona* is a processional passage from the sanctuary to the *bema*. In the churches where the *bema* is united to the *qestroma*, *sqaqona* does not exist. In the nave at the right side there is the *beth sahde*, the Martyrium, containing martyrs' relics and where the procession ends after the liturgical prayer with the recitation of the martyrs' anthems (*onita-d-sahde*). In the courtyard there is also an altar for the liturgical prayer and the first part (till the gospel only) of the Eucharistic Liturgy that takes place during the hot period of the year that is, from the Ascension till the dedication of the Church. Graphically we could present the following scheme of the Assyro-Chaldean Church (concretely there are always some possible changes).



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|---------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 01. Altar | 08. Small altar (Gaghulta) |
| 02. Tabernacle | 09. Lectern (N.T.) |
| 03. Bishop's throne | 10. Lectern (O.T.) |
| 04. Sacristy (Beth Diaqon) | 11. Bishop's throne |
| 05. Qestroma (step) | 12. Archdeacon's see |
| 06. Relics niche (See 13 below) | 13. Relics niche |
| 07. Bema | 14. Martyrium (Beth Sahde) |

Liturgy and Aesthetics:

Beauty and aesthetical sense are considered essential in Liturgy by a worshipper, who sees in God and in Jesus Christ the source and summit of all beauty, and in the Church a splendid spouse worthy of her celestial bridegroom. They were already important in the Old Testament worship by which our liturgy is also inspired.¹ All the Churches are convinced that Liturgy should be beautiful,

¹ "Chaldean Breviarium," ed. Bedjan-Khayyat, 2nd ed. (Rome 1938). III., 420 and 395-397.

because it is addressed to God and because in this way it helps the soul to elevate itself to the mystery. It is so in our liturgy also: the worshipping Church is beautiful.² This beauty is expressed in different ways through gestures, objects, texts, music, etc. We will treat them briefly.

As regards to gestures, the beauty of Liturgy is in the movements of the celebrant (inclination, elevation of arms, etc.), or of the community (processions, giving the sign of peace, receiving communion, etc.), or in the accompaniment of incense, cross, gospel, etc. But the absence of the *bema* has inhibited much of the movements in the church and has reduced the participation of the faithful.

We find in the Assyro-Chaldean Liturgy a lot of artistic prose texts, some of them are short, such as the priestly prayers (collects) and some others long and compact, like the prayers of Abu Halim of venerable antiquity, and the *anaphora*, mainly that of the Apostles *Addai and Mari*. These texts, except some of the *madrashé* and Abu Halim, are generally in elegant and beautiful style. Some of the later compositions are weak and clumsy, such as the prayers of the feast of the Eucharist by Joseph II Marouf (1696-1713) in the parts, which are not borrowed from the older composers.

The great amount of beautiful poetical texts, probably about 80% of the whole liturgical books, could be considered as a special feature of our liturgical tradition. We find an astonishing variety of literary genres (psalms, hymns, or *madrashé*, *memre*, and especially 'onita', etc.) and rhythms mainly in the *madrashé* and in the 'oniati (plural of "Onita"; hymns and responses). We need another special work to establish this variety and its richness. One may see the extent of this variety in the list of the *reshqale* (the type-melody), which is limited to the 'oniati.³ The differences in melody are generally based on the differences of mode and practical rhythm. Fr. Mateos lists 145 melodies.⁴ Some of these are repeated under a second name and therefore their real number in the *Breviarium* should be about 140. Here we must take into account not only the *qale* (mentioned above: about 140 types of melodies), but also the psalm-melodies (I counted more than 65) and the *madrashé* (hymns, may be about 40) and the different *memre* (metrical homilies as in the *Ba'uta*, Rogations) and particular chants. These are the fixed melodies that are composed in different rhythms and modes (not only major and minor, but several others with tone, which Western ear is not used to). As regards the prose texts, they are often chanted with modes freely chosen by the celebrant and the deacon and freely

² *Breviarium* I, 393 and 402.

³ Mateos, *Lelya-Sapra*. Les Offices Chaldeens de la nuit et du matin, *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 156, 2nd ed., (Rome 1972), 477-484.

⁴ Cfr. Also Th. Hannon, *Resh Qale 'Edtanaye* (Church Melody-Types), (Basra 1942), (In Syriac, unpublished, a systematic study of the melodies and their use in the Liturgy).

developed during the chant. Hence, creativity according to the capacity and experience of the singer is possible. Music as well as the rest of artistic elements of Liturgy serves the function of giving the word more emphasis and they are aids to meditation. They are also an invitation to moral engagement. The Liturgy says, “. . . as the melodies of our chants are beautiful, so let our conduct be the same in His presence, so that with our words and our deeds we may please the Lord.”⁵

The beauty of the house of the Lord, the church, is also important for the spiritual life in Liturgy. The church is the symbol of the bride of Christ. We have already seen that the church building is a poem of symbols and at the same time it is very functional. The beauty of the church-building is required also because it is the symbol of God’s glorious heavenly dwelling: “How glorious is your tabernacle and beautiful your altar and great your Majesty. You, the Being who dwell in the height...” sings the church.⁶ The same should be said about the other ornaments of the Church, the altar, the different depictions of the Cross, the priestly vestments, etc. The splendor of the vestments of the priest is a fact attested by Narsai: “The priest bears them at the moment of his function as mediator through the worship.”⁷ It is Timothy II who gives us the names of the vestments of the priests and the deacons and their symbolical meaning. Here is his text: “That the priest and the deacons discover their head is in honor of the altar and of that who dwells in it. Their ornaments with (linen) garments (*Kuttana*) and splendid vestments point to what said Isaiah (Vision chap. 6, God’s throne and seraphim). That they put on the stole is the sign that they accomplish a religious service.”⁸ Later he writes:

That who goes out, the archpriest, who puts on *Ma’epra* and *Masnapta* and *Birona*. *Ma’epra* which goes down till the chest points to the true faith in the heart. The *Birona* which covers all the body [means] that [the archpriest] carries on himself the actions and the deeds of the Congregation in order to pardon and to remit them. The *Masnapta*, which covers his head, indicates that he is shepherd; and that *Masnapta* is covered by *Birona*, points to the glory of the priesthood on his head. The crook which he holds in his hand indicates that he is shepherd, and

⁵ *Breviarium* II, 361.

⁶ *Breviarium* III, 418

⁷ Narsai, *Liturgical Homilies*. Engl. Tr. By R.H. Connolly, (Cambridge 1909), 4. (Homily 17, *An Explanation of the Mysteries*: [The celebrant] now comes in procession . . . stands there in great splendor and in beautiful adornment...he bears in himself the image of our Lord at that hour...(becoming mediator as Christ is mediator to the Father).”

⁸ De Septem Causis. MS Vat. Syr. 151, fol. 100r. (Yousif’s English translation)

that it is long and more than his own stature, indicates the high authority which he has on the whole church.”⁹

Besides, the painted pictures are not neglected in the Assyro-Chaldean traditional worship, as it is commonly believed.¹⁰ We may conclude that art and beauty in the church are used as means of helping the worshipper to a better prayer and a deeper faith experience as is worth the mystery celebrated in the Liturgy.

From the above-mentioned symbolism we understand that the Eucharistic Liturgy, the *qurbana* (offering) or the *qudash*a (sanctification) is an image of the heavenly Liturgy. This theology is founded on the letter to the Hebrews, and on the heavenly liturgy in the *Book of Revelation*, chapter 15 and *passim*. Consequently the faithful share the latter through sharing the Body and Blood of Christ. This, evidently, is perceived through faith. Theodore of Mopsuestia writes:

As often, therefore, as the service of this awe inspiring sacrifice is performed, which is clearly the likeness of heavenly things and of which, after it has been perfected, we become worthy to partake through food and drink, as a true participation in our future benefits we must picture in our mind that we are dimly in heaven, and through faith, draw in the image of heavenly things, while thinking that Christ who is in heaven and who died for us, rose and ascended into heaven and is now being immolated.¹¹ . . . the sacraments, especially Eucharist and Baptism are a type of Christ’s death and resurrection and of our own with him (Pauline theology), and they make us pass in anticipation to the future world of immortality.¹²

The Appellation of the Assyro-Chaldean Liturgy:

The Qurbana is called by Narsai “the mysteries of the Church” in the 17th

⁹ Ibid., fol. 101r (Yousif’s translation)

¹⁰ R. K. Delly, “Le Cult des Saintes Images dans l’Eglise Syrienne Orientale”. *L’Orient Syrien* 1, (1956), 291-296. J. Dauvillier, “Quelques Temoignages Litteraires et Archelologiques sur la Presence et Sur le Culte des Images dans L’Ancienne Eglise Chaldeenne”. *O. S. 1*, (1956), 297-304.

¹¹ *Commentary on the Lord’s Prayer and on the Sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist* ed. and trans. by A. Mingana (Woodbrook Studies 6),83.

¹² I owe some of this data and those on the following paragraphs to some papers of Prof. Macomber, given as ‘manuscriptum ad privatum auditorum usum’.

Homily in which he interprets only the Eucharistic part.¹³ Gabriel Qatraya calls it simply “Mysteries”;¹⁴ Abraham Bar Lipah calls it “Service” (teshmishta).¹⁵ Timothy II gives five appellations:

First: assembly (Knushya) that is Church, because it gathers the divided life in us to unity with divine [life]. Second: Communion (Shotaputa) or fellowship: because in the reception of these mysteries we become members of Christ. Third: offering (Qurbana), and this because it is the mystery of that who offered Himself to His Father as Offering for us. Fourth: Mystery (Raza) because Christ mysteriously performs it for His disciples in the cenacle. Fifth: Sanctification (Quddasha) because it sanctifies those who receive it, through its action taking away their sins and purifying them from sins.¹⁶

Concelebration:

The Assyro-Chaldean rite has a special position and practice on this point. The liturgy of the Word is celebrated together between bishop, priests and other members of the congregation; every one, according to Ordination precedence, saying a prayer, or accomplishing a part (deacons, sub-deacons . . .) on the bema. Traditionally it is one priest who, with the deacon, carries the *oblata* (bread and wine) to the altar, offers them, deposits them on the altar, and covers them with the veil; whereas it is another who consecrates them.¹⁷

In the MS Diarbekir 57, it is the same priest who does both: transfer and consecration; but many other MS are not clear on this point. At the end of the mass, all the participating priests facing the people stand on the left and on the right of the principal celebrant who alone recites the prayer and gives the benediction. But in all the cases of consecration (baptism, sacerdotal ordination...) only one (bishop or priest) says the formula. The others may participate in the gesture (ordination of bishop). Only one MS (Vat. Borgia Syr. 150) says that in the consecration of oil, the other priests say the prayers “in their heart,” that is secretly, and if the celebrant makes a mistake, they correct him (!).¹⁸ All this shows the originality of the Assyro-Chaldean Rite: the unicity of the celebrant symbolizes the uniqueness of Christ’s priesthood. Gabriel

¹³ Engl. Tr. Connolly, 1.

¹⁴ Engl. Tr. Podipara, 87,89.

¹⁵ Conolly, (Text) II, 171.

¹⁶ De Septem Causis Vat. Syr. 151, fol. 84r-84w. (Yousif’s English translation)

¹⁷ W. F. Macomber, “Concelebration in the East Syrian Rite,” in J. Vellian, (ed.) *The Malabar Church*.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 22.

Qatraya writes: “That one priest offers the sacrifice is the symbol of one High Priest who was sacrificed for the salvation of our race.”¹⁹ Although Theodore does not explain why there is one priest, he insists on that. “The priest who draws nigh unto the altar is representing His (Christ’s) image.”²⁰

The Main Sections of the Assyro-Chaldean Liturgy:

Although we could divide mass in two main parts that is, Liturgy of the Word and Liturgy of the Eucharist, we can still find in it six distinguished sections, a division which we may adopt in order to expose Qurbana in a more didactical and clear way. These sections are:

1. Initial section, from the beginning to the Trisagion (Qadisha Allaha:²¹ a hymn meaning “three times holy”).
2. Liturgy of the Word: from Trisagion to dismissal of catechumens (non-baptized participants).
3. Pre-Anaphoral section: from the transfer of the *oblata* (bread and wine) to diptychs.
4. Anaphora (Quddasha, liturgical prayer): From prefatory dialogue to epiclesis.
5. Preparation for communion: From “Misere” (Bash’rara Mar La Sha’weenan :ܒܫܪܪܐܡܪܠܫܐܘܘܢܐ) and fraction to Sancta Sanctis (Khad Awa Qadisha :ܚܕܐܘܩܕܝܫܐ).
6. Communion: from the communion of the celebrant to the final blessing (and ablutions Khu’tama :ܚܘܬܡܐ).

Initial Section of Qudasha:

The main elements of this section are the initial service of prayer, the entrance of the clergy, followed by the veneration of the Cross, and the Incensing with Lakhu Mara. Since the liturgy of the Word is performed on Bema, the Assyro-Chaldean rite has as peculiarity the entrance procession from Sanctuary

¹⁹ Tr. of Podipara, 98.

²⁰ Tr. of Mingana, 83.

²¹ The spelling or transcription of certain words in the context of this study are inconsistent with the manner in which JAAS' Assyrian language editorship would have liked them to be. For instance, JAAS would have substituted "alaha" for "allaha" and "qaddisha" for "qadisha". However, in order to maintain the writer’s original rendition as much as possible, JAAS has opted to keep the editing of the spelling to the minimum.

to Bema (now from altar to qestroma), since the Bema is annexed to qestroma. The most ancient element is the procession to bema preceded by greeting and followed by readings. Incensing and Lakhu Mara also date to ancient times, followed by *Onita d'Qanke*. By 600 is added *marmita* with *aqqapta*. In the 9th century *Our Father* was introduced, and later the *Gloria in Excelsis*. (Tish'bukh'ta l'Alaha Bam'raw'meh : ܩܘܕܫܐ ܕܥܠܝܝܡܐ ܕܩܕܝܫܐ ܕܩܕܝܫܐ) Veneration of Cross was added about the 10th century (?).

Highlights of Selected Elements: Tish'bukh'ta l'Alaha Bam'raw'meh:

This is the public beginning of Qudasha. It is used in many other services and in other rites (especially Maronite), which suggests to Fr. J. Mateos that it is very ancient,²² and Fr. P.E. Gemayel argues that the nucleus of the somewhat longer Maronite formula is found in the Assyro-Chaldean one.²³ It sounds: “*Glory to God in the highest (repeat three times) and on earth peace and good hope to men at all times for ever. Amen.*”

So the exordium of the Eucharistic liturgy (and of other offices) is a proclamation of the hymn of the angels (Luke 2:14) which sums up the joy of the Good News united to God's glorification: two fundamental themes of any religious service, but especially of Qurbana which represents as we saw the divine dispensation in Jesus Christ.

All the parts from the beginning with “Glory to God in the highest” till the trisagion (*Qaddisha Allaha*) constitute a spiritual preparation for hearing the Word of God. These parts include the *Our Father* with its special doxological *qanona* = Prayerful Proclamation), the psalms (*marmitha*) the hymns (*Lakhu Mara*, and *Qaddisha Allaha*), *'onita d-qanke* (the anthem of rails) and the respective sacerdotal prayers. They elevate the soul and help it to be more recollected. During the procession to the *bema* the faithful welcome Christ, symbolized by the veneration of the cross. The incense symbolizes the sweetness of Christ, here His love, and in the future His revelation. The prayer said by the priest runs like this:

When the sweet savor of the fragrance of Your love is wafted upon us, O our Lord and our God, and our souls are enlightened by the knowledge of

²² Le “Gloria in Excelsis” du debut des offices Maronites, in *L'Orient Syrien* 12 (1967), 119.

²³ Avant-Messe Maronite, Histoire et Structure (*Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 174), (Rome 1968), 290.

Your truth, may we be accounted worthy to receive the revelation of
Your beloved Son from heaven.²⁴

Qatraya insists more on the eschatological sweetness of Christ. Two prayers of this preliminary part are worth mentioning. The “Our Father” has the *qanona* (said also at the end of the mass), borrowed from the *sanctus*) *Qadish, Qadish, Qadishat Awon d’wash’may* : ܩܕܝܫܬܐ ܕܘܢܝܫܬܐ ܕܘܢܝܫܬܐ ܕܘܢܝܫܬܐ) and put after ‘your kingdom come’, as follows: Holy, holy, holy art You, our father who are in heaven: heaven and earth are full of the greatness of Your glory. Watchers and men cry to You: Holy, holy, holy are You, Our Father who art in heaven...

The other important element is the resurrection hymn, the *Lakhu Mara* of venerable antiquity and of deep theology, attributed to Catholikos Mar Shimun bar Sabae: “You, Lord of all, we thank, and You, Jesus Christ, we praise, for You are the quickener of our bodies and You are the savior of our souls”.

The Marmitha :

It (elevation hymn) consists of two or three psalms, parallel with vespers (prayers), varying according to liturgical seasons. In Gabriel Qatraya, Marmitha is presented as the initial element of Mass. It is recited while the veil is shut.

Prayer of the Anthem of the Sanctuary:

The formula of festivals and Sundays says: “Before the glorious throne of Your greatness, O my Lord, ...we kneel, worship, give thanks and glorify You at all times . . .”²⁵ This indicates that it is an adoration prayer of those who are in the presence of God; it concerns the entry of the clergy into the sanctuary, with a public prayer in which the congregation is supposed to participate.²⁶

Anthem of the Sanctuary (‘Onita d-Qanke):

It is chanted during the procession to Bema. Usually there are two ‘*oniati*’ (plural of *onita*) proper for every liturgical solemnity: the first one recalls the mystery celebrated during the liturgical year; the second one most frequently, is about the Cross, evidently because the procession is with the Cross and the *onita*

²⁴ Cfr. The sacerdotal prayer, “When the sweet Savor. . .” in Brightman, *Liturgies Eastern and Western*, I, *Eastern Liturgies*, (Oxford 1986), 254; and S. Jammo, *La Structure de la Messe Chaldeenne*, du debut Jusqu’a l’anaphore. Etude Historique, *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 207 (Roma 1979), 84-85.

²⁵ Engl. tr., in Brightman, 253.

²⁶ S. Jammo, *Structure*, 80.

is for its veneration or for enthronement on bema. For Gabriel Qatraya, the Anthem symbolizes the praise of the heavenly congregation or that of John the Baptist: “This is the Lamb of God.”²⁷

Procession to Bema:

According to Ps. George of Arbela, Ishuyahb III disposed it as follows:²⁸ The Clergy in the sanctuary line up; the sub deacons wait on the qestroma. The archdeacon, who is a priest, gives a signal and the veil is opened. The two deacons (Michael and Gabriel), who administer, go first followed by sub deacons bringing lamps and candles, then the deacons, the one who carries the Cross and the other who carries the Gospel, and finally the bishop with, on his left, the archdeacon. All come forward to bema, but only Michael and Gabriel go up to bema; the sub deacons go back to qestroma. The other deacons stay at sqaqona. The bishop sits on a throne before the little altar (Gaghulta), on which the Cross is enthroned and the Gospel deposed. Around the bishop stay the priests. The archdeacon stands on the left of the bishop keeping the bishop’s crook; Michael and Gabriel stand probably one on each side. When everybody has found his place, the archdeacon (or the deacon) says: “Peace be with us! Symbolically, the going out of the cross means, “the going out of Jesus to wilderness to fight with the Satan”. The raising up of the cross on the bema is the mystery of the frequent going up of Jesus to Jerusalem accompanied by His twelve and seventy two disciples,”²⁹ Bema signifies Jerusalem. But the real reason of the procession is that the Liturgy of the Word, for which the procession is made, does not suppose the exercise of strictly priestly functions, and the bishop is among his people as the *prepositus Rabba*, and as such, he sits among his people for his own instruction.³⁰ This procession makes clear the natural distinction between the liturgy of the Word and the Eucharistic liturgy. Today there is no such procession in the Chaldean Church.

Prayer Before *Lakhu Mara* and Incensing:

²⁷ Tr. Podipara, 90; see *Expositio Officiorum* II, 9.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 9-10.

²⁹ Eng. tr. Podipara, 90. About the two candles that accompany the cross he says “that is the mystery of the light of the two Testaments by which Christ was confirming the words of his teachings as He said: ‘it is said to the ancients so but I say thus’ (*Ib.*).

³⁰ S. Jammo, *Structure*, 81.

The clergy arrives at Bema, a priest imposes incense. The Incensing follows this order: Gaghulta, the bishop three times, the priests one, and then the congregation. In our time there are two prayers before Lakhu Mara. The one of Sundays and festivals says: “When the sweet savior of the fragrance of your love...(see above). The second prayer, for memorials is identical with that of vespers. It is a thanksgiving for graces and a glorification “in your crowned church full of help and bliss.”³¹

The meaning is beautiful: the love of the Lord and the light of his faith make us ready to receive Him in his manifestation from heaven. The two prayers may have been but one, with eschatological meaning realized in the Church in which Qudasha, the heavenly service, is performed. Gabriel Qatraya says:

The smoke of the spices is the mystery of the future sweetness which our Lord promised to those who believe in Him and keep His commandments.”³²

Lakhu Mara:

This hymn, in the form of a troparion celebrates Christ, source of our resurrection:

You, Lord of all, we confess; you, Jesus Christ, we glorify: for you are the quickener of our bodies and you are the savior of our souls.

It is repeated with the psalm: I have washed my hands. . . ; and then a third time with Gloria and a Saeculo (Min Alam Almeen).³³

That is “one of the most archaic elements of the Assyro-Chaldean Liturgy. Its simplicity, its conciseness and theological deepness put it among the eschatological masterpieces of the Universal Church.”³⁴ It is received from the time of Qatraya as an essential and a not debatable element established from time immemorial. According to his mystical interpretation of this part of Mass (public life of Jesus), Qatraya sees in it “The confession of the Apostles by which in the person of all, Simon said: ‘You are Christ, the Son of God’”.³⁵

After this ensemble of sacerdotal prayers for clergy and People, after the procession to bema and the beautiful hymn of Lakhu Mara, ends this section as a good preparation for the Liturgy of the Word. It has introduced the congregation to the divine Dispensation and the Presence of God the Redeemer. It invites us to

³¹ Ibid., 82.

³² Engl. tr. Podipara, 90.

³³ Engl. tr. in Brightman, 254.

³⁴ S. Jammo, *Structure*, 86.

³⁵ Engl. tr. Podipara, 90. For the Anonymous Author it points to the manifestation of Christ, especially at his baptism (I, 132).

have a good attitude in the celebration: thanksgiving for Christ's salvation and hope of future bliss. The Cross symbolizes the presence of Christ among the people celebrating the principal act of redemption, the two candles symbolize the two Testaments; the incense symbolizes Christ's sweetness and gives the smell of divine perfume. This ceremony is a foretasting of Qurbana. The milieu is created; the good dispositions also. The congregation is ready to hear the Word of God.

Liturgy of the Word:

The main elements of this section are the trisagion (Qadisha Allaha), scriptural lessons with interlectionary chants, litanical prayers, blessing and dismissal with which ends the mass of the catechumens (non-baptized). Some of the peculiarities of the Assyro-Chaldean mass are a scheme of archaic lessons: Law and Prophets, Psalm, the Apostle (Paul), halleluiah with psalmist verses, and Gospel. Furthermore, the prayer of the Faithful (the litanies) and the blessing of the Clergy precede the dismissal, which means that in the Assyro-Chaldean liturgy a longer part of the mass was accessible to non-baptized (and not admitted) persons.

The ancient form of this section consisted in scriptural lessons, full interlectionary psalms, homily, and prayers for catechumens and of sinners and may be for other categories, and the faithful. Each prayer terminates with a special blessing in the form of imposition of hands, and, each category being dismissed, save the faithful who evidently assist to the Mysteries. Perhaps there was also a prayer and a blessing of the Clergy. By mid 6th century trisagion and sacerdotal prayers before lessons were introduced and the interlectionary psalms reduced to a few verses. By the end of the 6th century a series of prayers were fused together. Blessings and dismissal, and Gospel reading received prominence with procession, incense, and later, kissing by all the present. Far later, by the 13th century, Apostle and Gospel were introduced by turgame (sign of decline).³⁶

Highlights of Selected Elements:

The Trisagion:

Literally means three times holy: the hymn angels sing in heaven. The deacon who is the herald says:

Lift up your voice and glorify the Living God, all ye people. And, they answer (three times): Holy God, Holy mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us'; Gloria, (Shu'kha : **ܘܫܘܟܗܐ**) Holy. . .; A saeculo (Min Alam:

³⁶ I owe some of these details to Prof. Macomber.

ܩܘܢܘܢܐ), Holy mighty, and Immortal. Have mercy on us. From everlasting to everlasting. Amen.³⁷

The literary origin of the Trisagion may be found in the vision of Isaiah 6:3. The Chalcedonian Fathers chanted it. At the time of Ishuyahb I (582-595), its usage was established. It is possible that it was brought into Assyro-Chaldean liturgy by Mar Aba, in one of his travels (540-552). The chant is addressed to the Trinity, as it appears from the prayers that follow it. Gabriel Qatraya says:

This *Qanona* is praise and glorification of the divine Nature, one in its essence and trine in its persons. It proclaims the Immutability of the divine Nature and the distinction among the persons of the Holy Trinity, and the indivisible unity of the transcendent Being.”³⁸

The Trisagion, an addition in the beginning of the Liturgy of the Word, is an introduction to invite people to have good disposition in front of God Holy and strong and immortal who will soon speak through the readings which recall the action of He who is the living God.³⁹

The Old and New Testament Readings:

The *readings* are, according to the most ancient tradition, four for Sundays and feast days: the first two from the Law and Prophets (or from the Acts), the third from Paul and the last from the Gospel. These last two were preceded by the *turgama* (explanation of the reading by the Assyro-Chaldeans), still in use in the *Raza*. The introduction of the Gospel is significant: “Holy, gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, the preaching of Mathew, Mark. . .”. Evidently the gospel, the Word of Christ; is recited with special solemnity. According to liturgicalologists well versed in comparative liturgy, the East Syrian variety of the liturgical seasons presents new perspectives to understand the pericopes. (Pasoqa ܩܘܢܘܢܐ ; A section of Holy scripture read as a lesson). The Eucharistic Liturgy was celebrated only on Sundays, feast days and some Fridays, and readings were assigned only for these solemnities. The daily (ferial) mass was introduced later on. In order to take the most advantage of them, the readings are accompanied by sacerdotal prayers and psalms. In case of any attempt at the reorganization of readings, it is important that this should be made without changing coherent traditional system.

³⁷ Engl. tr. Brightman, 255.

³⁸ Qataronsis Interpretatio fol.26r.

³⁹ In the mass it means for Gabriel Qatraya: “the acclamation ‘holy’ by the angels who were accompanying Him (the Lord) in all His dispensation as Mathew says: “The angels approached and were serving Him.” So he gives here a Christological accommodating interpretation.

The fact of having two lessons of the Old Testament as in Judaism remained only in the Assyro-Chaldean Rite, which as in the Synagogue, inserts among the lessons, Psalms and prayers. As for the pericope, the present Assyro-Chaldean liturgy uses the High Monastery Tradition (near Mosul), but there was another one, that of the Church of Koche.⁴⁰

The Old Testament readings stress the prophecies realized in Jesus Christ as attested in his gospel. The idea is well expressed by Gabriel Qatraya

The Law and the Prophets that are read signify the arguments, which our Lord put forward from Moses and from all Prophets to confirm His teaching as He said to the Jews: "Search the Scriptures from which you preach the eternal life and it is they that bear witness to me". Our Lord was adducing many proofs in confirmation of His teachings. Because of this, Law and Prophets are read first. The Acts of the Apostles are read with the Old (Testament) to show, first of all, the agreement of both Testaments and secondly to indicate what was done by Our Lord before He suffered, since the Old was still in force and the Apostles were behaving as Jews.⁴¹

The Reading of the Apostle (and *Turgama*):

The deacon announces the title of the reading and says 'Bless, O my Lord.' The priest says: "May Christ make you wise by His holy teaching and make you a beautiful mirror to those who hearken unto you!"

Here is chanted the *Turgama*, (explanation of the reading by the Assyro-Chaldeans): it introduces the reading and exhorts the faithful to hear fruitfully the reading. The *Turgame* were composed by Abdisho, Khamis and others.⁴² The epistle is taken only from Paul; that is why it is called Apostle (shlikha) considered like John the Baptist announcing the coming of the Lord and preceding Him.⁴³ It is read by a deacon and not by a priest because John was in the order of deacon before our Savior and not in the order of priest.

The Reading of the Gospel and the Homily:

⁴⁰ W.F. Macomber, "The Chaldean Lectionary System of the Cathedral Church of Kokhe," in *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 33 (1967), 483-516. (Followed in the Malabar Church.)

⁴¹ Podipara, 91.

⁴² A *Turgama* for the Apostle see Brightman, 257.

⁴³ Gabriel Qatraya, tr. Podipara, 92.

After the incensing, the priest reads the Gospel, and at the end he presents it to the bishop to kiss it. Then the archdeacon takes it and puts it on the Bema altar. The deacon says: “Sit down and be silent.” All sit, except the deacons, to hear the homily. Qatraya gives the meaning of the ceremony. “The reading of the Gospel is the mystery of all the words which our Lord said to the Jews before He suffered. The Cross over the rod is the mystery which our Lord said explaining by which death the Son of man would be exalted.” The lights are symbols of the disciples to be light of the World: and *two* lights because the word is said for them and for those who believe through them. “The incense burnt in this hour is the mystery of the sweetness of the words of our Lord as what he said shows: “come to me . . .”⁴⁴ The *homily* or “the *Turgama* after the Gospel is the mystery of the teaching which Jesus gave before He suffered.”⁴⁵ Mar ‘Abdishu’ Bar Brikha says that the homily is “the explanation of the words of the Gospel⁴⁶ and the precept was given already at the synod of 410.”⁴⁷

Liturgical Prayers:

After the homily, the deacon says the *Karouzuta* and its two sequences. It has nothing to do with the catechumens. The first one (the *ba’uta*) is composed of short ‘intentions’: for the peace, the country, the climate, the church (Patriarch, bishop, the faithful), and the temporal governors . . . to each of which the people answer: “O Lord, have mercy upon us!”⁴⁸

The second one, *Karozuta*, is longer with developed intentions explaining in a concrete way the mission of each category for which we pray.⁴⁹ If the prayer is in memory of somebody, mention is made of his example and his intercession. The congregation answers ‘Amen!’ The third is called “*Angel of Peace* litany” (which in St. Chrysostom’s Liturgy is for the catechumens): it begins asking the protection of the angel of peace and of mercy, and then it continues praying for peace, love, forgiveness of sins and God’s mercy: short intentions to which the people answer: ‘From you, O Lord!’

⁴⁴ Engl. tr. Podipara, 92-93.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 93. Qatraya by the word *Turgama* means homily.

⁴⁶ Ordo Judiciorum, 95.

⁴⁷ Sinodicon Orientale (Chabot) p.265, canon 9

⁴⁸ Engl. tr. Brightman: *ba’uta*, 262-263; *Karozuta*, 263-266; *Angel of Peace*, 266.

⁴⁹ E.g. for the bishops: “That He (the Lord) may keep and raise them at the head of all their dioceses: that they may feed and serve and make ready for the Lord a people prepared, zealous, of good and fair works.” (Brightman, 264).

The deacon concludes: 'Let us commit our souls and one another's souls to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit'. The priest says a collect asking God to 'perfect with us His grace and to pour His gift by our hands' and remit our sins, we the sheep of His pasture.⁵⁰ This is a good sealing for an intercession prayer.

Blessing:

The deacons say with a loud voice: "Bow down your heads for the imposition of hands and receive the blessing." And follows a priest's blessing prayer said first part secretly, the other one in a loud voice.

And the people bow their heads with the deacons, and the Priest repeats this Imposition of hands in his heart quietly, inclining himself the while." After this rubric comes the text: "O Lord (. . .) yours is the holy catholic Church (. . .), with your glorious godhead are given the degrees of the imposition of hands of the true priesthood: (. . .) you have vouchsafed to the feebleness of our frail nature to become known members of the great body of the holy catholic church and to administer spiritual helps to the souls of the faithful. (. . .) May the mercy (. . .) be on us and on this people."

And he raises his voice and says:

"And grant unto us (. . .) that all the days of our life we may all alike and together be well pleasing to your godhead in good works (. . .), and that we (. . .) raise to you praise and honor (. . .)."⁵¹

This prayer is called 'imposition of hands' and the text at least in its first part can only be applied to the Clergy. That is why this is a prayer of the clergy thanking God for the ecclesiastical degrees and asking his help for celebrating the Eucharist. At the end is added a blessing for the people.

The Assyro-Chaldean *Takhsa* of 1971 has the oldest known formula (MS Diarbekir 57 of A.D. 1240), which is a *syamida* proper:

"Lord God lay the right hand of your mercy on the Apostolic Catholic Church."

Then it asks God's protection and help for a good administration of mass.⁵² The second part is the same as above: "and grant unto us . . ."

⁵⁰ Engl. tr. in Brightman, 266.

⁵¹ Engl. tr. in Brightman, 267.

⁵² Gabriel Qatraya explicitly speaks of *Syamida*. Imposition of hands: ". . . is the mystery of the prayer He (the Lord) prayed for the disciples before He suffered; 'Holy Father, keep them in your name (. . .)' (Podipara, 93).

In both formulas there is no blessing for the catechumens before their dismissal; the second one concerns all people present in the church, and both ask for divine help in the celebration.

Dismissals:

And the deacons enter the sanctuary and say:
“Let him that has not received baptism depart! Let him that does not receive the mark of life depart! Let him who does not accept it depart!
Go, ye hearers, and watch the doors.”⁵³

Narsai speaks of a real dismissal of the unsigned, unbaptised and of those who do not communicate.⁵⁴ Practically, it was - and is by the “Nestorians”- based on the non admission to communion.

The *rushma* or mark of life is a rite of *signatio* with oil on the forehead of heretics and schismatic at the moment of their reconciliation through the Pardon rite (*Takhsa d'khusaya*) in the Church. The dismissal, according to the formulae would concern those who are not baptized (catechumens or not), the baptized who denied their faith and made penance in the church, and the baptized that for other reasons could not communicate in the Eucharist.⁵⁵

The ‘hearers’: according to Narsai, they are Faithful but “not partaking of the Mysteries of the Church like those of the household.”⁵⁶

The Pre-anaphora:

Here begins the preparatory ceremony of the Eucharistic rite proper. Its principal elements are the transfer, the deposition and the veiling of the gifts followed by the washing hands *of the priest on the bema* and the access to the Sanctuary, the Creed, the access to the altar, the kiss of peace, the reading of diptychs and the admonition of the deacon.

Highlights of Selected Elements:

The Anthem of the mysteries:

This section is very complex and the MSS do not agree, although the Commentators give the main elements without essential divergence. In fact at the

⁵³ Brightman, 267, translates simple ‘sign’ (Latin: signaculum).

⁵⁴ Narsai, Homily 17, Connolly, 3.

⁵⁵ Jammo, *Structure*, 154, following Narsai and Timothy II.

⁵⁶ Connolly, 3.

same time there are two ceremonies. *In the sanctuary* the transfer, the offering, the deposition and the unveiling of the *oblata* (bread and wine), with the proper prayers and the Mysteries Anthem; *on the bema* there is the washing of hands and the salutation. Moreover there must be at least two priests, one performing in the sanctuary and another from bema entering for the first time the sanctuary in order to consecrate. Both must be accompanied by some deacons. The MSS diverge because they try to remedy to some situations; for e.g. when there is one priest they put the offertory at *Karozuta* recitation.⁵⁷

The Anthem of the mysteries opens the Eucharistic liturgy. The theme of the variable anthem is the Eucharist; sometimes it is also the liturgical festivity. It is chanted three times; but it is not clear who does the first two times; the third time it is made by the assembly.

The washing of hands:

Ancient position was during the *Anthem of the Mysteries* while another priest transfers the gift. To it Narsai seems to allude when writing: “In that hour let us put away from us anger and hatred.”⁵⁸ Thus he gives its symbolic meaning. Gabriel Qatraya sees in it:

“The mystery of the washing of their hearts (the priests on bema) from envy and from division regarding the charity of their master . . .”⁵⁹

We have said that the Eucharistic Liturgy is a representation of the heavenly one. This is because of the fact that Christ, though mystically immolated, is always glorious and He is in heaven, the living and immaculate Lamb. But mass is also the mystery of his death and this is expressed through sacramental elements, gestures, and words. When the bread and wine are brought to the altar that is to the tomb the faithful are invited to see with the eye of the spirit, Jesus going to his passion. The bread and wine arranged on the altar symbolize Jesus in the sepulcher; the deacons on the two sides are the angles. Meanwhile the *Anthem of the Mysteries (onita d'raze)* is chanted, and the priest arranging the “mysteries” on the altar says the formula addressing Christ that he may accept this sacrifice, memorial of His passion and resurrection.

Transfer, Deposition and Unveiling of the mysteries:

⁵⁷ See Jammo, *Structure*, 164-173.

⁵⁸ Connolly, 3.

⁵⁹ *Val Syr* 151m fol. 106: “it points to the washing of the hearts of the disciples from wrath and lasting anger.” He says that after having spoken of the Anthem of the Mysteirs.

This happens in the Sanctuary. The priest takes the bread and the deacon the wine on paten and chalice from *Gazza* (niche in a wall of the sanctuary) where they were after preparation. At this moment is chanted the '*Onita d-Raze*'. Then the priest takes the paten in his left hand and the chalice in his right hand putting his hands in the form of a cross. The deacon says: Let us pray. Peace be with us! The priest says: Let us send up praise to your glorious Trinity at all times forever.⁶⁰ For Narsai this rite represents the passion and the death of Christ. He analyses this part in these words:

At this hour...let us see Jesus who is being led to Death on our account. On the paten and in the cup He goes forth with the deacons to suffer. A symbol of His death, these (deacons) bear upon their hands; and when they have set it on the altar and covered it they typify His burial: not that these (deacons) bear the image of the Jews, but (rather) of the watchers (the angles) who were ministering to the passion of the Son . . . The priest who is selected to be celebrating this sacrifice bears in himself the image of our Lord . . . the priests in the sanctuary bear the image of those apostles, who met together at the sepulcher. The altar is the symbol of our Lord's tomb . . . and the bread and the wine are the body of our Lord, which was embalmed and buried. The veil, which is over them, presents a type of the stone sealed with the ring of priests and the executioners. And the deacons standing on this side and on that brandishing (fans) are a symbol of the angels at the head and the feet thereof (i.e. of the tomb). And all the deacons who stand ministering before the altar depict a likeness of the angels that surrounded the tomb of the Lord. The sanctuary also forms the symbol of the garden of Joseph, whence flowed life for men and angels.⁶¹

Thus the offertory is a summary and anticipation of the anaphora in which the Church accomplishes the sacrifice of Christ according to his commandment.

Procession to Sanctuary:

The clergy leave the bema; but before leaving it, the priest who consecrates and his fellows exchange greetings. Then during the procession, deacons and faithful address the clergy, especially the celebrant priest, by songs of veneration and congratulation. The celebrant says two prayers: the first one is for the entry and it asks for purification of hearts to be worthy to enter the holy of holies; the

⁶⁰ Brightman, 267-268.

⁶¹ Narsai, XVIIth Homily, Engl. tr. in: R. H. Connolly, *The Liturgical Homilies of Narsai*, Text and Studies 8, (Cambridge 1909), reprint 1967, 3-4. Also Gabriel Qatraya (Cfr. G. Vavanikurnnel, ed. *Homilies and Interpretations of Holy Qurbana*, 45).

second one is for the priest himself that God may forgive his sins. If he has no opportunity for this, he says a shorter prayer: “Our Lord Jesus Christ be with us all in His grace and mercy for ever. Amen.”⁶²

The assigned priest leaves the *bema* after making the prostrations (now kept in the *raza* and goes to the sanctuary. The Creed is recited followed by the proclamation of the deacon. The priest then approaches the altar and begins the *anaphora*.

Creed:

Peculiar formula, Antiochene tradition and not Nicene as thought Narsai who gives on it a rather long paraphrase and calls it ‘the Faith of the Fathers.’⁶³ It is said in the sanctuary, at the time of *Expositio*, (the Creed of Fathers: ܐܘܨܬܘܬܐ ܕܘܥܬܐ ܕܘܥܬܐ) by two choirs, one in the sanctuary to whom answers the congregation. Abdisho I decreed that it should be recited wholly by all.⁶⁴

Gabriel Qatraya so understands its role:

This signifies that every one that does not believe rightly in the Holy Trinity and in the dispensation perfected in the Christ, is foreign to truth and is deprived of the sweetness with Christ our Lord, who was sacrificed for the salvation of the world.⁶⁵

Access of the Celebrant to the Altar:

The celebrant was formerly chosen only after the liturgy of the Word. Here is a complex rite of worshipping and kissing the altar and asking prayers of the congregation, in order to show the unworthiness of the priest who glorifies God who in His mercy made him worthy of this sacrifice. Narsai writes:

The priest is in awe and great fear and much trembling for his own debts and the debts of the children of the Church. He is the eye of the whole ecclesiastical body; and he makes remembrance in his mind of the doings of all his fellow-servants. He is also the tongue of the whole body of Jesus: he is an attorney, and fulfills an advocacy on His behalf.⁶⁶

Gabriel Qatraya more precisely indicates the aim of the access:

⁶² Engl. tr. in Brightman, 270; the first formula is of Syrian Rite: see P.E. Gemayel, *Avant-Messe Maronite*, 259-260.

⁶³ Connolly tr., 5-6.

⁶⁴ Texts in Jammo, *Structure*, 189.

⁶⁵ Engl. tr. Podipara, 96.

⁶⁶ Connolly, 97.

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. Since till now mass represented the Passion, now it symbolizes Christ's Resurrection. The celebrant prays and resumes:
 "Glory be to you O founder of the lost (. . .) who did call me (. . .) in the great body of your Catholic Church that I may offer before you this living and holy and acceptable sacrifice which is a memorial of the passion and the death and resurrection of our Lord."⁶⁷

The First G'hanta and its Kussapa (Division of the Anaphora):

Here begins the anaphora with its first *G'hanta*, but it does not concern directly the Eucharist. The Anaphora is divided into four sections by the time of Isho'yah (+595). Each section has the following structure: *Kussapa*, 'Pray brothers', *g'hanta*, and *qanona*. The *Kussapa* is a devotional prayer of the celebrant. It does not exist in Mar Eshaya MS. It appears only in the 12th century. The *G'hanta* is a prayer of inclination recited in low voice; the *Qanona* is a doxological ephronesis to *G'hanta* : ܩܢܘܢܐ.

After the bishop recites the first *G'hanta* (preparatory prayer), the celebrant signs himself with the Cross so that his finger is visible over his head in order to show that he is communicating the people in this benediction. The priest thanks God and asks for his help to minister the holy mysteries "that with entire love and belief of truth we may administer your gift to us . . ." and the people answer: Amen!⁶⁸

Narsai writes in the 17th Homily:

The priest asks for hidden power together with (divine) help, that he may be performing His gift according to His desire; and in all that the priest says before God the people concur, and they seal his ministry with Amen. (. . .) and take part with him by their prayers and by their word (i.e. Amen).⁶⁹

The Kiss of Peace:

⁶⁷ Brightman, 271. This prayer, common to the three Anaphoras, is called the first *gigla* (wheel, circle) in the Anaphora of Theodore (Darmo, 103) and of Nestorius 139.) In fact in both anaphoras there is no other *gigla*. And this title may be given to this prayer because the celebrant makes metanies ? in all directions.

⁶⁸ Brightman, 274.

⁶⁹ Podipara tr., 8.

The priest says “Peace be with you!” to express the peace given by Christ: victory on death, reconciliation with God and Angels and between the Peoples. . . The people answer “With you and with your spirit.” Narsai comments:

They call spirit not that soul which is in the priest, but the Spirit, which the priest has received by the laying on of hands (. . .) that he may be able to perform the divine mysteries.⁷⁰

Gabriel Qatraya says:

That the priest “prays for the people that there remain with him and by him the peace which Christ left before He died,” and they respond (. . .)

“With you and with the spirit of the priesthood you have received.”⁷¹

The deacon says: “Give peace one another in the charity of Christ!”

So the peace is given before the anaphora according to the oldest usage. The deacon kisses the altar, then the hand of the priest, and gives peace to others in this way: he who receives peace joins his hands to those of whom he receives it, and brings them to his mouth and to his forehead. This is done now in order to purify the hearts from hatred and enmity and to reconcile before the offering according to the Lord’s command: “When you offer your gift on the altar . . .” (Mt. 5: 23-24).

Diachonal Admonition (*Nawde w-nebe*):

It invites to a suitable attitude for anaphora: prayer, standing fairly, while the priest says, “that by His mediation peace may be multiplied unto you. Watchfully . . . and let no man dare to speak. Who prays let him pray in his heart. And in silence and fear stand ye and pray.”⁷²

Unveiling of the Mysteries:

Formerly the veil was so large that two priests were needed to remove it. Now the priest lifts it and folds it round about the chalice and the paten when the deacon says ‘watchfully and diligently’. The priest says a prayer to be worthy of the boldness in the days of Judgment as he is accounted worthy of the body and blood of Christ. The unveiling symbolizes the removal of the stone from the tomb of our Lord.⁷³ Narsai is not clear. He says that it does not symbolize the resurrection.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ Connolly, 8.

⁷¹ Tr. Podipara, 98.

⁷² Text in Brighton, 282.

⁷³ Timothy II, fol. 110r.

⁷⁴ 17th. Homily, Connolly, 11.

The Anaphora:

The *anaphora*, which is used most, is that of the *Apostles Addai and Mari*. It presents parallelism with the Jewish blessing of the table, *birkat h-mmazon*. (The *anaphora* “of Theodore” is used from *subbara* (annunciation) to *osha’ne* [Hosanna] and that “of Nestorius” is used only five times a year. Both these seem to be of East Syrian origin, though with Theodorian liturgical theology.) It is distributed in four inclination prayers (*g’hanta*), each of which, after the inclusion of the *Khussape* (supplications), is set in the following structure: (i) The priest says the *Khussapa*. (ii) He asks for the prayers of the congregation and deacons. (iii) He says *the g’hanta* in low voice. (iv) He says or chants the *ecphonesis* in higher voice. The first *g’hanta* is praise and thanksgiving for the priestly ministry. Then, in order to participate in this most important action, the faithful are invited to receive and give peace, the sign of reconciliation. The mysteries veiled are the symbols of Christ in the tomb; their unveiling, after this gesture of peace, symbolizes the removal of the stone from the sepulcher of our Lord.⁷⁵ The second *g’hanta* is praise and thanksgiving for the creating and saving action of the Trinity. This is followed by the *sanctus*, and the third *g’hanta* relates the economy of Incarnation. The institution narrative is fittingly introduced at the beginning of this *g’hanta*. The fourth *g’hanta* consists of the memorial of the Fathers and the anamnesis (Uh’dana: **ܘܗܕܢܐ**) and is concluded with the invocation of the Holy Spirit who realizes the resurrection of Jesus. Qatraya writes: “(The epiclesis) is the mystery of the return of His (Christ) soul into His body and of His resurrection from the dead; for, the priest mystically vivifies the body by the work of the Spirit.”⁷⁶

Highlights of Selected Elements:

The Narration of the Institution:

Every Eucharistic liturgy is an accomplishment of Christ’s order ‘do this in memory of me’. In the *anaphora of Theodore*, it is followed by the *Anamnesis*: ‘So do whenever you congregate’.⁷⁷ The *Anaphora of Nestorius* adds the order of Christ to eat and drink the Eucharist in memory of Him till his coming that it may give the faithful the remission of sins, the hope of resurrection, the eternal

⁷⁵ Timothy II (1318-1332), On the Seven Causes of the Sacrament of the Church, manuscript Vaticanus Syrus, 151, folio, 110.

⁷⁶ Gabriel Qatraya, Cfr. G. Vavanikunnel, ed. *Homilies and Interpretations of Holy Qurbana*, 99; and Narsai, *XVIIth Homily*, Engl. transl. By R. H. Connoly, 20-21.

⁷⁷ Darro, 126.

life, where they raise up glory....⁷⁸ Qatraya proposes it at the beginning of the anaphora as to show that it is the aim of the anaphora itself. It indicates the change of bread and wine, through the hovering of the Holy Spirit, into the body and blood of Christ. Qatraya is explicit on this point. Before explaining the *epiclesis* he writes:

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. For as our Lord Jesus Christ who when He gave those Mysteries blessed and gave thanks and said; so the Church according to His command set apart a priest to bless and give thanks like Christ our Lord; through the recital he makes, it is known that he says the words of our Lord, namely: "This is my body which is broken for you for the remission of sins."⁷⁹

The coming of the Holy Spirit sanctifies the gifts, and also the faithful.⁸⁰

Is the *mass facing the congregation* more conducive to the spiritual benefit of the people? When we deal with this problem, we should remember the fact that the Liturgy of the Word in Latin rite was once carried out in silence, facing the altar and in Latin. Our Liturgy distinguishes the Liturgy of the Word, which is celebrated at the bema in the middle of the congregation, and the Liturgy of the mystery, which is prepared in the sanctuary. The former requires a listening act of the people, and this need is well satisfied by the Liturgy at the *bema*. The latter is a worshipping act and it is normal to perform it in the sanctuary where the celebrant and the people are turned to the altar and to the cross. In this respect, our Liturgy presents a magnificent equilibrium.

Fraction and Communion: Takhsa d'Rushma wadh Qsatha:

ܬܚܫܐ ܕܪܫܡܐ ܘܕܗܩܫܐ

Preparation for the Communion is composed mainly of the fraction, signing, and blessing; then of the diaconal karozuta and litany of fraternal charity, Our Father, and Sanctum Sanctis. It is peculiar to the Assyro-Chaldean Rite to have initial prayers and psalms, and an elaborate rite of the incense, of the approach and the veneration of the Mysteries. Peculiar also are some symbolic manual acts: the rejoining and piercing of the Host, the signing of forehead. The Pauline blessing once associated with fraction now follows it; we have a direct

⁷⁸ Ibid., 158-160

⁷⁹ Tr. Podipara, 97.

⁸⁰ For more details on this section Cfr. P. Yousif, *The Divine Liturgy*, 210-226; and Th. Mannoorampampil, "The Anaphora and the Post-Anaphora of the Syro-Malabar Qurbana," *OIRSI* 87; Kottayam 1984, 42-67.

passage from embolism to Sanctum Sanctis (From Takhsa d'Rushma wad Qsatha: to “Khad Awa Qdisha : **كَلِمَاتُ الْبُرُودِ**) to which there is no elevation of the oblation (sacrifice).⁸¹

Highlights of Selected Elements:

Incensing:

Putting the incense, the priest says a prayer on it; it is a symbol of prayer of reconciliation and renovation of the creatures. Then the deacon incenses the priest's face and hands as a sign of his purification which he expresses in his prayer: Sweeten, O our Lord and our God, the Savior of our uncleanliness....⁸²

Rite of Approach:

As in the rite before the anaphora, the priest expresses his unworthiness reciting “the mercifulness of your grace . . .” three times, after each of which he folds his hands on his breast in the form of a cross and kisses the middle of the altar and then the right side and the left side.

Fraction:

The fraction originally came from practical necessity; currently it has a symbolic meaning: the passion of Christ (*the body which shall be broken for you*: variant added to biblical text in Consecration). *The consignation* is first mentioned by Theodore: “And with the bread he (the priest) makes the sign of the Cross over the blood, and with the blood over the bread and he unites and joins them together, in order to reveal to all that although these elements are two, they are nevertheless one in power and are the remembrance of the death and the passion that affected the body of Our Lord . . .”⁸³

Gabriel Qatraya relates this action with the coming of the Holy Spirit. He writes, “When the priest calls the Spirit and it broods over, he joins the body to the blood and blood to the body, is the mystery of the return of His soul into His body . . .”⁸⁴

⁸¹ I owe some of these details to Prof. W.F. Macomber.

⁸² Both texts in Brightman, 289.

⁸³ Mingana, 105.

⁸⁴ Gabriel Qatraya, Cfr. G. Vavanikunnel, Ed. *Homilies and Interpretation of Holy Qurbana*, 99.

The deacon then invites the congregation to prepare for communion. After recalling the incarnation, death and resurrection of the Lord, the faithful now should approach the mysteries with deep faith, immense love, deep humility, intense prayer, reasonable compunction, conversion, from sins, forgiveness of brothers' offenses, clean conscience and with brotherly concord, so that they become means for the resurrection of the bodies and salvation of the souls. After that the celebrant utters an absolution formula:

“Pardon, O my Lord, by your compassion, the sins and transgressions of your servants, and hallow our lips by your grace that they may yield the fruits of praise to your exalted godhead with all your saints in your kingdom.”⁸⁵

He then invites the people to recite the Our Father with filial trust. Narsai gives the meaning of the introductory prayer: that God sanctify us, make us worthy to stand before him without blemish, and call Him, all of us, with confidence, Abba, Our Father.⁸⁶ After that he recites its embolism, and reminds that “the Holy (mystery) is for the holy ones (Sanctum Sanctis). This is the reason why only the baptized ones partake of it, those who have received the first fruits of the Holy Spirit in the second birth. Then the priest adds, “You must strengthen in you the gift . . .” To this the people answer invoking the one Holy God. The real meaning of the Sanctum Sanctis and of the answer is that while the priest warns that the Holy Thing (the Eucharist) fits only the Holy persons, (the communicants), they answer him with humility saying that only God-Trinity (One Holy Father . . .) is really holy to whom the Eucharist fits in sanctity and dignity, since it is celestial.

The communion of the clergy is in the sanctuary. Two deacons then present the sacred Body and the precious Blood to the people. The faithful “purify their hands with the incense, receive the communion in crossed hands, press the host on their eyes, kiss it, and communicate themselves. Then they communicate directly from the chalice. Qatraya explains the meaning of the symbol of our participation with Him (Christ) in the Kingdom of Heaven.⁸⁷ The deacons recite the “*unnaya-d-bema* while the clergy communicate, and during the communion of the people they chant other hymns from the works of Ephrem, Narsai and others. When the distribution is finished (or even before), the deacon invites the assembly who ‘by gift of the grace of the Holy Spirit’ have received communion, to ‘thank God who granted’ us these mysteries; and the people answer, “Glory be to Him for His ineffable gift.”

⁸⁵ Engl. Tr. in: Brightman, *Liturgies Eastern and Western*, I Eastern Liturgies, 295.

⁸⁶ 17th Homily, Connolly, 25; the text of the prayers in Brightman, 295.

⁸⁷ Gabriel Qatraya, Cfr. G. Vavanikunnel, *Homilies and Interpretations of Holy Gurbana*, 99.

The celebrant, in the name of the congregation, says two thanksgiving prayers 'for these glorious, holy, vivifying and divine mysteries.' (This is a statement often repeated in our Liturgy, for example, after the epiclesis, before the fraction, etc.) At the same time he recalls the expected fruit of the participation in the mysteries, as he had already said in the epiclesis, 'that they may be for the remission of debts, pardon of sins, the great hope of the resurrection of the dead and for the new life in the kingdom of heaven.' The "Our Father" follows with the proper *qanona*. The seal of the *khuttama* is the blessing and the good wishes of the celebrant to the assembly, said at the door of the sanctuary while the veil is shut and clergy in the sanctuary recite psalm 148-149 praising, "the Jesus who gave us his Body and Blood." This last blessing symbolizes Jesus before his Ascension or the coming of the Holy Spirit on the apostles on the Pentecost.⁸⁸

This study presents the Assyro-Chaldean Qurbana as it is in use now and as it was historically. It gives the original meaning of the main rites and texts. The historical and liturgical data help us to understand their theological and spiritual meaning.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 97.