

**The Rite of Consecration of the Church  
According to the Syrian Orthodox Tradition**

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Ayub Silvanos

School of Arts, Languages and Cultures

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Word Count: 91,144

## **List of Abbreviations**

AD	Anno Domini
ANF	Ante-Nicene Fathers
BC	Before Christ
BNF	Bibliothèque Nationale de France
BAV	Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana
CMS	Church Missionary Society
CSCO	Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
CSS	Christava Sahitya Samithi
ed.	Editor
eds.	Editors
HE	Historia Ecclesiastica
JSC	Jacobite Syrian Church
JSOT	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament
LXX	The Septuagint
Mal	Malayalam
MGOCSM	Mar Gergorios Orthodox Christian Student Movement
MOC	Malankara Orthodox Church
MSOT	Malankara Syrian Orthodox Theological
MSS	Manuscripts
NPNF	Selected Library of Nicene and post-Nicene Fathers
OCA	Orientalia Christiana Analecta
OLA	Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta
PUG	Pontificia Universitas Gregoriana
Rev	Revised
SCM	Student Christian Movement
SEERI	St. Ephrem Ecumenical Research Institute
SPCK	Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge
trs.	Translated
Vol.	Volume

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## Abstract

From ancient times it has been the practice of humankind to build structures in which to worship God. People built centres of various shapes and sizes in which different kinds of worship were conducted. Within the Christian Church, even though the basic concept of worship is the same, there are different doctrines and customs in different Church traditions.

In this thesis I attempt to shed some light on the consecration of churches in the tradition of the Syrian Orthodox Church; this is a relatively uncharted field. It is prefaced by an overview of dedication in the early Christian period and of the Jewish liturgical traditions on which the worship was based. Next I consider some Syriac literary works, the importance of Syriac literature and liturgy, and the liturgical books of the Syrian Orthodox Church. I then describe house churches of the first centuries and their gradual development into today's magnificent and artistic churches.

An important part of my work focuses on the Holy 'Myron', which is an integral component used in the consecration of Syrian churches. I discuss the importance accorded to 'Myron' in the church and the different types of anointing involving Myron and other oils. The main part of the thesis focuses on the construction of a church from its very beginning until its consecration once it has been completed, referring to biblical and symbolic interpretations. This includes a detailed description of the different tools and utensils used in the Syrian Orthodox Church (some illustrated) with an explanation of their relevance and meaning.

The views of the church fathers such as Aphrahat, Ephrem, Moses Bar Kepha, Dionysius Bar Salibi and Jacob of Serugh, and the references and allegories from the Acts of Thomas and the *Sugitho* on the Church of Edessa are also included in my work.

The main sources for this study are my translations of the Vatican Borg. manuscript Syriac 57 and Paris manuscript Syriac 110. The official version of the church consecration used in the Syrian Orthodox Church is a copy of Vatican manuscript 51. The Syriac texts with translations are provided in chapter two.



## Declaration

No portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other University or other institute of learning.

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## **Acknowledgements**

When I began my research in the University of Manchester I was already serving as a priest of the Syrian Orthodox Church with responsibilities for communities in the United Kingdom. During this time I was chosen as a Metropolitan of the Syrian Orthodox Church. In the course of time the Church entrusted me with the responsibility for the parishes in America, Canada and Europe, which has raised obstacles in the course of my research. Many parish-related issues in India and USA and a lawsuit, in which I am one of the defendants, also caused an interruption to my studies. Many times, and often at crucial moments, I reached a state of paralysis where I could not use my time fruitfully for research.

During this period too, the departure of my dear father, who was a strong support and whom I considered my mentor, severely affected my studies and work. It was my dear parents who nurtured me in the Syrian Orthodox faith and I am indebted to them for my rise in the Syrian Orthodox hierarchy.

It was during the final stage of my research that my spiritual mentor and the Holy Father, the Supreme Head of the Church, His Holiness Ignatius Zakka I Iwas, who raised me to the position of Metropolitan, departed for the heavenly abode. I had to travel to Lebanon and Syria several times related to this sad episode. Also I had to travel in connection with the election and enthronement of the new head of our Church, His Holiness Moran Mor Ignatius Aphrem II. All these travels had a negative impact on my research and resulted in the loss of time.

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Above all, I thank Almighty God for granting me knowledge, wisdom, good health and the patience required to undertake and complete this research. I strongly believe that it is only with the assistance of the unseen hands of God Almighty that I have succeeded in completing it.

## Dedication

For the memory of my late father K. O. Uthuppan,  
who did not live to see this thesis finally written,  
but his words of inspiration and encouragement still linger on.

Thank you Pappa for all the wonderful things  
you have done for me since day one.

When I was informed about you having cancer, I was in much pain.

You were the strongest and most loving Pappa.

Rest assured, you are now in Good Hands.

My greatest pride is, and will always be, in you being my Father.

I LOVE YOU PAPPA AND I MISS YOU VERY MUCH

## General Introduction

The tradition of setting aside buildings or special places for worship and ritual has a long history. Pagans of all times delighted in erecting magnificent temples in honour of their gods. The most primitive of heathen tribes considered their groves and grottos very sacred places where they assembled to perform their superstitious rites and to pay homage to their idols. Even before they reached the Promised Land God commanded Moses to erect a Tabernacle for the Israelites when they were journeying across the desert; this later persuaded Solomon to build a temple in Jerusalem.

The interpretation of the meaning and importance of a church building has its roots in the Old Testament. In Genesis, Patriarch Jacob, while journeying through Canaan, lay down to sleep, and saw in his dreams a ladder which reached up to heaven on which angels were ascending and descending. In response, Jacob announced, “How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God. And this is the gate of heaven” (Gen. 28:17). Through the ages Christians have called their churches the “house of God”. This title describes a dwelling place for God where we seek to meet Him. It describes a building constructed for the purpose of coming into God’s presence, and which must be worthy of its owner.<sup>1</sup>

There is actually no reference in the theology of the New Testament to the consecration of a church building. This is probably because the early Christians did not have church buildings as we understand them. For the Apostles and other early Christians, the Temple of Jerusalem still represented the house of God *par excellence*. Although they gradually distinguished themselves as the Church, the New Israel, and usually met in a private house for worship, the image of the temple still lingered in the back of their minds.

A distinctive Christianity, ascetic in outlook and strongly influenced by Jewish ways of thought, emerged by the end of the first century. They met in whatever places suited the occasion. In some places they might assemble in a Jewish place of worship, elsewhere in a synagogue. But with the widening gap between old and new believers, such meetings became increasingly difficult. Christians might assemble at a street corner, as St. Paul and his listeners did in the market place (Acts 17:5f). Only rarely would they have been able to hire a

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<sup>1</sup> Stroik, (2012), *The Church Building as a Sacred Place*, 15.

public hall, as the congregation at Ephesus did at the time of Paul's visit (Acts 16:13; 19:9). Later regular gatherings were held in private, in the house of one or other of the brethren, 'breaking the bread from house to house' (Acts 2:46). Such houses are known to us, if not from the first and second centuries, at least from the fourth and fifth.

The style and outlook of Christianity changed after the middle of the second century. During the second century the number of Christians increased substantially and controversies with pagans and Jews as well as among themselves started. In the last years of the second century and the first half of the third century men of wealth and rank rose among the Christian leadership and the congregations became increasingly organised.<sup>2</sup> Christians expanded their activities of divine worship. Bishops, presbyters and deacons formed a hierarchy and each one of them was assigned different spiritual and administrative functions. In the Syrian church the seating of the congregation became formalised: the children were at the front, while the men occupied one side of the room, women the other. This continued to be the custom during later times.<sup>3</sup>

From about AD 250-260, persecutions, arrests and executions of Christian leaders in Alexandria and Rome took place, as well as the prohibition of assembly by Christian congregations, and confiscation of Christian property because Christians refused to take an oath on the Emperor's divinity.<sup>4</sup> These persecutions ended in AD 260 when the Emperor Gallienus restored the churches and their property, their buildings of worship and their right of assembly.<sup>5</sup> Christians established cemeteries outside the cities, where they marked the tombs of the martyrs and built appropriate structures for memorial services, some of which probably became churches later on.

One of the oldest house churches, at Dura-Europos, was destroyed with the neighbouring Jewish synagogue and other houses when the town wall was reinforced in AD 275.<sup>6</sup> House churches were used for services even in the early 4<sup>th</sup> century, for example the house church at

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<sup>2</sup> Krautheimer, (1986), *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*, 25.

<sup>3</sup>The arrangement and furniture of the assembly rooms in the early centuries can be gathered from scattered references in the early fathers and from church orders. See Connolly, (1929), *Didascalia Apostolorum*, chapter 12, 120.

<sup>4</sup> Krautheimer, (1986), *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*, 25.

<sup>5</sup> Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, VII, xiii.

<sup>6</sup> See Kraeling, (1967), *The Christian Building: The Excavations at Dura Europos* 8.2.

Capernaum<sup>7</sup>. The house church at Aquileia was converted to a cathedral prior to AD 319. During Constantine's reign (AD 313-337) Christianity was openly recognised and granted official standing<sup>8</sup> so that the political and social position of the Church changed radically. Churches were built in various places under different patronages and Constantine himself presided over Church Councils and settled their controversies over dogma, using the machinery of government to implement decisions of the Councils.<sup>9</sup>

The church building used to be either a formal church or a house church rather than both. The house churches were places for Christian celebration. They were not sacred monuments built to give glory to God, nor were they simply gathering - places for the proclamation and study of the scriptures. They were places where the assembled community experienced the mystery of the Christian faith. Originally the house churches where Christians gathered were known as "houses of the church" and only later, with the recognition of Christianity by the Roman Empire, was the name converted into the "house of God".

### **Earlier Studies of the West Syriac Liturgy**

The West Syrian liturgical rite is sometimes called the Antiochene rite to distinguish it from the East Syrian or Chaldean rite. It is a system of liturgical practices and discipline observed by the Syrian Orthodox Church, the Indian Orthodox Church and three Eastern rite communities, the Maronite Church, the Syrian Catholics and the Malankara (Roman) Catholic Church. The West Syrian (or you could say 'this system of') liturgy, which was the model for almost all Eastern rites, originated, as its name implies, in the patriarchate of Antioch and later generated the Alexandrian and Byzantine rites. According to Brock, "Although the West Syrian liturgical traditions had always included many texts translated from Greek, this new influx of material of Greek origin led to the emergence of two slightly difference Syrian Orthodox traditions, that of Antioch, incorporating these new elements, and that of Tagrit, which did not. It was essentially the Tagrit rite that was introduced into South

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<sup>7</sup> See Corbo, (1969), *The House of Saint Peter at Capernaum*, 49.

<sup>8</sup> See Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, Book 3 & 4.

<sup>9</sup> Krautheimer, (1986), *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*, 39.

India in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century”.<sup>10</sup> The characteristics of the “Tagrit rite”, used under the Maphrianate of Tagrit<sup>11</sup>, have been described by Mouret<sup>12</sup> and are not discussed further here.

Some texts relating to specific liturgical practices of ordination, baptism and the Eucharist have been published at various different times, but the Church still lacks a comprehensive or definitive document. Examples of such texts include the liturgy of ordination with a Latin translation and notes which was published by Morin in 1655<sup>13</sup> and the text of the ordination of priests published in 1896 by Graffin.<sup>14</sup> More recently Smet published a French translation of the consecration of bishops and patriarchs along with the notes by Gabriel Khoury-Sarkis.<sup>15</sup> In 1572 Guido Le Fèvre de la Boderie published the Syrian Orthodox baptismal ordo attributed to Severus of Antioch (+536) under the somewhat misleading title *D. Severi Alexandrini Quondam Patriarchae De Ritibus Baptismi, Et Sacrae Synaxis Apud Syros Christianos Receptis, Liber*.<sup>16</sup> The text (in Serto characters with rubrics in Estrangelo) is printed in parallel with a Latin translation.<sup>17</sup> Later, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Assemanus published several West Syriac liturgical texts of baptism and Eucharist with a Latin translation.<sup>18</sup>

The Syrian Orthodox Church prides itself on having no less than eighty short and long Eucharistic liturgies, which it is still using, although the anaphora of St. James is the principal one. The fundamental parts of the St. James Eucharistic prayer have not changed since the fourth century<sup>19</sup> (though see below). The Liturgy of St. James existed in both Greek and Syriac forms since church scholars in Syria were bilingual, using both Greek and Syriac. However, through time and because of the theological disputes which dominated in the fourth

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<sup>10</sup> Brock, (2011), “Liturgy”, 249.

<sup>11</sup> The Maphrianate or Catholicate of Tagrit was established the first half of the seventh century halfway between the sites of the cities of Mosul and Bagdad. It became the centre of the Syrian Orthodox primate in the Persian territory.

<sup>12</sup> See Mouret, (1990), “Un Rituel d’ordination de Tagrit”.

<sup>13</sup> See Morin, (1756), *Commentarius de sacris Ecclesiae Ordinatioibus*.

<sup>14</sup> See Graffin, (1896), “Ordination du prêtre dans le rite Syrien Jacobite”.

<sup>15</sup> See Smet, (1963), “Le Rituel du sacre des évêques et des patriarches de l’Église Syrienne d’Antioche”. Gabriel Khoury-Sarkis (1898-1968) was a Catholic priest of the West Syrian Rite and an editor of *L’Orient Syrien*.

<sup>16</sup> Latin translation was reprinted in 1610. See Duduc, F., et al., (1610), (eds.), *Bibliotheca Patrum et Veterum Auctorum Ecclesiasticorum*.

<sup>17</sup> Varghese, (2011), “West Syriac Liturgy: One hundred years of research”, 55.

<sup>18</sup> See Assemanus, (1751), *Codex Liturgicus Ecclesiae Universae*.

<sup>19</sup> For details see Saka, (2009), *Commentary on the Liturgy of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch*.



and fifth centuries, the Liturgy of St. James suffered many changes; for example when discussing theological development from the *Apostolic Constitutions* to the Liturgy of St. James Bouyer notes: “If we look at the Eucharist of St. James as a whole, we are especially struck by the clarity of its Trinitarian theology, which is expressed with much more exacting precision in its structure than could be seen in the liturgy of the 8<sup>th</sup> book of the *Apostolic Constitutions*. All the duplications and all the repetitions in thought have been definitively and categorically removed”.<sup>20</sup> We know that Jacob of Edessa (d.708) revised it and his revision, except for minor and superfluous changes, is used by the Syrian Church today. In the early eighteenth century Lebrun produced a French translation of the anaphora of St. James and passages from the commentary of Jacob Edessa.<sup>21</sup> A little before this Renaudot’s publication of more than forty West Syriac anaphoras introduced the richness of the Syriac liturgy with a Latin translation.<sup>22</sup> Likewise an English translation of the West Syriac Anaphoras was published by Howard<sup>23</sup> in 1864 and Brightmann in 1896.<sup>24</sup> In 1926 Fuchs published one of the oldest Syrian Orthodox anaphoras attributed to John I (+648), Patriarch of Antioch.<sup>25</sup> A landmark in the study of the West Syriac Anaphora is Labourt’s *Dionysius Bar Salibi* (+1172), *Expositio Liturgicae* <sup>26</sup> on the Eucharist and *Two Commentaries on the Jacobite Liturgy*<sup>27</sup> edited by Connolly and Codrington.

One of the main sources of information regarding the manuscripts of West Syriac liturgy is Baumstark’s *Geschichte der Syrischen Literatur* published in 1922.<sup>28</sup> His research on the Lectionary,<sup>29</sup> the Festal Breviary and the Liturgical Year<sup>30</sup> were carried on after his death by

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<sup>20</sup> Bouyer, (1968), *Eucharist: Theology and Spirituality of the Eucharistic Prayer*, 279.

<sup>21</sup> See Lebrun, (1726), *Explication de la messe*.

<sup>22</sup> See Renaudot, E., (1716), *Liturgiarum Orientalium Collectio*.

<sup>23</sup> See Howard, (1864), *The Christians of St Thomas and their Liturgies*.

<sup>24</sup> See Brightman, (1896), *Liturgies Eastern and Western*.

<sup>25</sup> See Fuchs, (1926), *Die Anaphora des monophysitischen Patriarchen Johannan I.*

<sup>26</sup> Labourt, (1903), *Dionysius Bar Salibi, Expositio Liturgicae*.

<sup>27</sup> Connolly, and Codrington, (eds.), (1913), *Two Commentaries on the Jacobite Liturgy by George Bishop of the Arab Tribes and Moses Bar Kepha*.

<sup>28</sup> See Baumstark, (1922), *Geschichte der Syrischen Literatur*.

<sup>29</sup> Baumstark, (1972), *Nichtevangelische Syrische Perikopenordnungen des ersten Jahrtausends im Sinne Vergleichender Liturgiegeschichte Untersucht*.

<sup>30</sup> Baumstark, (1910), *Festbrevier und Kirchenjahr der Syrischen Jakobiten*.

several scholars such as Burkitt<sup>31</sup>, Vööbus<sup>32</sup>, and Rouwhorst<sup>33</sup>. Baumstark's study on the West Syrian Liturgical year, however, still remains the only major work on the subject<sup>34</sup>. Patriarch Barsoum's book *The Scattered Pearls: History of Syriac Literature and Sciences*<sup>35</sup>, shows historical and liturgical development as well as illustrating materials in the field of Syriac literature, liturgy and sciences of the Syrian Orthodox traditions.

In 1972 Brock published an important study of the Syrian Orthodox baptismal liturgy<sup>36</sup>, followed by a series of articles on the same subject which were widely acclaimed by scholars. Indeed Brock's numerous articles and books are important contributions to the history of Syriac literature and liturgy. Syriac studies in general have advanced substantially in the last 40 or so years, but there are very few studies on the West Syriac liturgical tradition. We still have little knowledge of the historical development of the West Syrian liturgy relating to ordination, funerals, monastic tonsure, marriage, anointing of the sick, the consecration of the Church, the daily offices and the liturgical year.<sup>37</sup> The study of the two manuscripts dealt with in this thesis makes a contribution to the understanding of the rite of consecration of church and puts it on a firmer foundation.

## Background of the Thesis

The Syrian/Syriac<sup>38</sup> Orthodox Church<sup>39</sup> declined to follow the Council of Chalcedon (AD 451) in its assertion of the presence of two natures in Christ. Those who repudiated this

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<sup>31</sup> Burkitt, (1921), "The Early Syriac Lectionary System".

<sup>32</sup> Vööbus, (1985), *The Lectionary of the Monastery of Aziza 'el in Tur 'Abdin, Mesopotamia*.

<sup>33</sup> Rouwhorst, (1996), "Les Lectionnaires Syriaques".

<sup>34</sup> See footnote No. 28.

<sup>35</sup> See Barsoum, (2003), *The Scattered Pearls*.

<sup>36</sup> Brock, S. P. (1972), "Studies in the Early History of the Syrian Orthodox Baptismal Liturgy".

<sup>37</sup> Varghese, (2011), "West Syriac Liturgy: One hundred years of research", 72.

<sup>38</sup> Syriac (ܣܝܪܝܐ) is a dialect of Aramaic that was once spoken across much of the Fertile Crescent. Fertile Crescent is a region in the Near East and Mesopotamia. Classical Syriac became a major literary language throughout the Middle East from the 4<sup>th</sup> to the 8<sup>th</sup> centuries. Syriac had a fundamental, cultural and literary influence on the development of Arabic which replaced it towards the end of the eighth century; nevertheless Syriac remains the liturgical language of Syriac Christianity. See Beyer, (1986), Healey, (trs.), *The Aramaic Language: Its Distribution and Subdivisions*, 44.

<sup>39</sup> The Syrian Orthodox Church is one of the most ancient Christian Churches tracing its roots to the Church of Antioch. The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch (Acts of the Apostles 11: 26). The Church is known as Syrian because the people came from the Near East and Mesopotamia and they were commonly called Syrians. Today the Church is known as Syrian/Syriac Orthodox Church of Antioch.

dogma were subsequently misleadingly called Monophysites.<sup>40</sup> During the early Christian centuries, different rites emerged in Antioch and Alexandria which spread throughout the Christian Orient. The Coptic and Ethiopian liturgies developed in Alexandria. The Syrian Orthodox liturgy, however, stems from the primitive rite of Antioch, which is the parent of three other liturgies, Nestorian, Armenian and Byzantine.

The language of the Syrian community was Syriac, a form of Aramic not far removed from that spoken in first century Palestine. The main interest of this Community was with the poetic and ascetical dimensions of the Christian experience rather than with its intellectual formulation. Their modes of expression and Christian thought patterns were distinctively Semitic and in close continuity with the spiritual and cultural context from which the Gospel emerged. The richness of Syriac Christianity's own Syriac Bible, literature, liturgy and doctrines up until the seventh century meant that this period was described as the Golden Age.<sup>41</sup> Edessa, the small capital city of Osroene, east of the Euphrates, was its main spiritual centre and contributed much to the spread of early Christianity. Syriac became the language of the West Syrian<sup>42</sup> and the East Syrian<sup>43</sup> Churches. The history of Syriac liturgy is not very clear before the end of fourth century. However, early Christians took up and developed many Jewish practices and translated the biblical texts into their own languages.

The consecration of a Syrian Orthodox Church is a very attractive, meaningful and lengthy rite. The consecration is also called "the anointing of a church with Myron"<sup>44</sup> because during this service a church building is anointed by using Myron. The service of consecration can on the one hand simply be called the baptism of the church building but at the same time it refers to the spiritual marriage between the communicants who worship there and the Son of God Himself.

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<sup>40</sup> Monophysiticism is the Christological position that Christ has only one nature as opposed to the Chalcedonian position that holds that Christ maintains two natures, one divine and one human.

<sup>41</sup> Brock, (2006), *An Introduction to Syriac Studies*, 13.

<sup>42</sup> The West Syrian Church, known to many as 'Jacobite' (after Jacob Baradeus, the sixth-century reorganizer of the West Syrian Church) and historically inherited the Semitic, Palestinian tradition of Christianity, though not uninfluenced by the Hellenistic milieu in which they lived. See Davies (ed.), (1986), *A New Dictionary of Liturgy & Worship*.

<sup>43</sup> The East Syrian Church is the Syrian Church of Antioch as it developed east of the frontiers of the Roman-Byzantine Empire.

<sup>44</sup> The Myron is perfumed oil, which is used for anointing the churches during the consecration. For more details see chapter three.

This study describes the rituals of consecration with their biblical and patristic allusions. The significance of the description in the rubrics and the anointing of the walls, altar and the whole building with Myron is considered. For Syrians, the church building had always been the centre of all religious activity, especially since the holy sacrifice of the Eucharist around which the Syrian faith centres, is celebrated in the church building. Here I trace the consecration of the churches in the early centuries of Christianity. It is clear that a new church was not to be used as a place of worship before its dedication took place, unless great necessity compelled the use of the building as a church.

Each new church was also given a title; the general rule regarding the naming of a church in Roman Catholic Canon Law states that “Each church is to have its title which cannot be changed after its dedication”<sup>45</sup>, similarly in the Syrian Orthodox tradition, once a church has been named it may not be changed, although in some rare cases it has been changed by the hierarchy. Parishes today are much more involved in the selection of a name or title for a church than in the past. It seems to be a common practice to select several possibilities which are then submitted to the bishop for final determination or confirmation. The choice of the name for a church can also be an occasion for growth in understanding by the faithful of the titles role of Mary, or the apostles, martyrs and saints.

The bishop, who as administrator of the diocese and shepherd of the local church, dedicates churches in the diocese and presides over the celebration. If a diocese is divided into geographical regions the Bishop in-charge of the particular region is usually the chief celebrant. If that bishop is unable to preside, another bishop of the diocese may preside. The celebration also involves readers, deacons and priests alongside the bishop. In the Roman Catholic Church the directives indicate that the priests who celebrate the rite should be chosen from those who are associated with the bishop and those who have the pastoral care of the parish for which the church has been built,<sup>46</sup> however in the Syrian tradition it is usually senior priests who assist the bishop in the divine liturgy. The day chosen for the dedication should be a convenient day when as many people as possible can participate.

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<sup>45</sup> Coriden, Green, Heintschel, (eds.), (1985), *The Code of Canon Law: A Text and Commentary*, 848-849.

<sup>46</sup> Lysil, (1999), *The Liturgical Documents: A Parish Resource*, 325.

Consecration is an act by which a person or thing is dedicated to the service and worship of God by prayers and ceremonies. According to the West Syriac tradition even though the Holy Eucharist should not be celebrated in any place except a consecrated church, with an altar stone or *tablito*,<sup>47</sup> it can, if necessary, be celebrated in any suitable place. Once a church is consecrated to Divine worship, it is forbidden to use it for common or profane purposes. The act of solemn anointing of the church by the Bishop with Myron dedicates that building to the service of God. Dedication helps to remove the malign influence of Satan, and makes it a place in which favours are more graciously granted by God. Solomon's dedication of the Temple (1 Kings 8:63) provided the model for the consecration of churches by Christians, but no special rite was devised at first. The dedication of the church of Tyre in AD 314 or 316, described by Eusebius<sup>48</sup>, simply involved the celebration of the Eucharist.

The liturgical year begins in the West Syriac Churches at the end of October or on the first Sunday after the 30<sup>th</sup> of October with the festival of the consecration of the church in which the theology of the Church, as the bride of Christ, is unfolded. The liturgy is an on-going catechesis of the Church and it includes both the content and action of faith. In the pre-Christian era the process of sanctification was carried out by the sprinkling of the atoning blood of sacrifice on the persons as well as on the materials needed for worship (Exod. 29:21). In the New Testament sanctification is described as being carried out to separate men and things for God (1 Cor. 1:30, 2 Thes. 2:13, 1 Pet. 1:2). The Church is understood as the bride of Christ. The identity of the Church is based on her relationship to the incarnate Son. She has been called to be with Christ and to be a dwelling place of God.

A major part of this study is devoted to drawing out the rich biblical imagery used for the Church from both the Old and New Testaments. The church consecration manuscripts can themselves be taken as an extended commentary on the relevant biblical material by the Fathers of the Church in the West Syrian tradition. They resort to the typological interpretation of the biblical text in order to create an abundance of images for the Church.

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<sup>47</sup> *Tablito* is a wooden plank anointed with Myron (Holy Oil) and consecrated by the Bishop. It is usually 18 inches long, 9 inches broad and half an inch thick. Only persons in sacerdotal orders may handle it.

<sup>48</sup> In Eusebius Ecclesiastical History (10: 4, 12-72) he reproduces the full text of his address at the dedication of the church of Tyre. See Schaff and Wace (eds.), (1999), *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. I; Quasten (1983), *Patrology*, Vol.3, 343.

## **Aims of the Thesis**

From my early childhood I was very much interested in going to church and participating in worship. I used to be thrilled to participate in and witness the consecration of new churches. This service, laden with meaning, was celebrated by a Metropolitan with numerous priests and deacons participating and it greatly attracted and impressed me. These childhood impressions and images which were stamped on my mind might have been sufficient reason for me to take up the subject of the consecration of church in the Syrian Orthodox tradition as the theme of my research. Later, when I became aware that there were no studies concerning the consecration of a church in the Syrian Orthodox Church tradition, I was more convinced than ever to choose the subject.

In this thesis I will focus on the consecration texts of the Syrian Orthodox tradition only. The aims of the study are to explain the content of the church consecration rite and to analyse its biblical, liturgical and theological importance. Unlike Baptism, Eucharist and other services, there are not many liturgical commentaries written on the rite of church consecration in the Syrian Orthodox tradition. Even though a church consecration ceremony is not a sacrament in the technical sense in the Syrian Orthodox Church, it is a beautiful ceremony of the Church.

## **Problems and Methodology**

Unfortunately, there is no clear evidence as to how and when the ceremony of consecration in the Syrian Orthodox Church tradition actually started. The earliest available West Syrian manuscripts of church consecration are the Vatican Manuscripts which date back to the 12<sup>th</sup> century and they indicate that this practice began before the time of Michael the Great, the Patriarch of Antioch (d. 1199). They provide the foundation for my research.

The translation and arrangement of the manuscripts was in itself a challenging task. Some of the folios are very difficult to read, requiring a disproportionate amount of time to decipher the text in order to transcribe it.

Since there are no prior studies relating to the consecration of a church in the Syrian Orthodox tradition and because within the Syrian Orthodox Church many texts are used for the Consecration ceremony, the texts had to be collected from various sources. Fortunately

the Syrian Orthodox Patriarch still uses an almost exact copy of the Vatican manuscript for church consecration.

The method I use in my research is an explanatory and analytical one. It includes the editing of the manuscripts together with a translation, I also highlight their theological content. I also include various parts of the prayers from the rite of consecration of a church along with the commentary of Moses Bar Kepha.

### **Structure of the Thesis**

This thesis, “The Rite of Consecration of the Church according to the Syrian Orthodox Tradition,” is divided into five chapters with a general introduction and conclusion.

The first chapter deals with early Syriac literature, the Syrian Orthodox Church liturgy and the role played by other literary sources (e.g. Greek sources) in Syriac literature and its remarkable growth. This chapter also includes a discussion of the origin and early development of the liturgy, the main liturgical texts of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch and the origin and development of the rite of Consecration of a church. A brief consideration of the manuscripts’ sources is also included in this chapter.

The manuscripts and their translation can be found in the second chapter. At the end of the translation I have made a chart which summarises the main differences between the two manuscripts.

The third chapter focuses on different types of anointing in the Syriac Orthodox tradition and the use of Myron oil in the Eastern and Western Churches. It includes a description of the Sacrament of the Holy Myron and biblical references to anointing with the Holy Oil; this is followed by an explanation of the use of Myron in the Syriac tradition and an examination of the teachings of the Church Fathers concerning the anointing of an altar with Myron.

The fourth chapter examines what is involved in the construction of a church building and the importance of the cardinal point ‘East’ in the Syriac tradition. It describes the structure of a Syrian church including the sanctuary, altar, nave (place for the faithful), the area between the sanctuary and the nave for the choir and what they symbolise. It also includes the important items inside the church building and the components necessary for the ceremony

associated with laying the foundation stone as well as a detailed explanation of the consecration of the altar and the church building.

The last chapter demonstrates the significance and importance of the allegory of the Church in respect of the consecration of a church and in the liturgical texts as well as in the writings of Aphrahat, Ephrem, the Acts of Thomas, Jacob of Serugh and in the hymn on the church of Edessa.

For biblical quotations, I have followed the New Revised Standard Version, unless otherwise noted. Absolute consistency in transliterations has been impossible to maintain. In general, I have used the most familiar forms of names and terms or the simplest methods of transliterating phonetically. All the photographs and other illustrations are mine.



## Chapter One

### Syriac Literature, Liturgy, and the Development of the Ritual of Consecration of a Church

#### 1.1. Introduction

Worship in the early Church is hard to interpret, but it is clear that from the fourth century onwards the liturgy went through a series of developments. Theological, political and social changes helped to produce a rich liturgy. In Syrian Orthodoxy, the Eucharistic liturgy is the source of all other meaning in life. Sunday worship is not merely a segment of life, it is regarded as life united and offered with Christ as the living sacrifice of love.

The liturgy uses the Syriac language. Syriac is a form of Aramaic, a Semitic language that was spoken by Syrian Christians in antiquity. It<sup>49</sup> was the Aramaic dialect that was spoken around Edessa.<sup>50</sup> Aramaic originated in Mesopotamia and was spoken in the Middle East from early in the first millennium BC, in the Assyrian and Persian administrations and throughout the Roman period.<sup>51</sup> Jews and others who lived in Edessa and the surroundings also used the Syriac language. The Syrian Orthodox Church is one of the ancient churches native to Syria, with the Syrian Orthodox people being largely from the Syrian and Mesopotamian region.

This chapter gives a brief account of early Syriac literature, the liturgy of the Syrian Orthodox Church and the development of the consecration of church buildings. In it I will refer to the origins of Syriac literature and of the liturgy of the Syrian Orthodox Church. Special mention is made of the contributions of Bardaisan and Ephrem to the Syriac language and the role played by other literary sources to Syriac literature and its growth.

In terms of the development of the liturgy the Peshitta Bible and excerpts from the Psalms played a vital role. This chapter also gives a brief overview of the contents of the liturgical books that are used in the Syrian Church and also their origin in different monastic traditions.

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<sup>49</sup> Ancient writers use a variety of different terms for Syriac, the most precise being 'Edessene' and 'the language of Mesopotamia'. Brock, (1998), "Syriac Culture, 337-425", 708.

<sup>50</sup> Brock, (1998), "Syriac Culture, 337-425", 708.

<sup>51</sup> Howatson, (2011), "Aramaic", 61.

As the house churches developed larger church structures began to be constructed by Christian communities who dedicated them to God with great ceremony and splendour. This chapter explains the description of the word 'Church' which was given by Moses Bar Kepha, one of the Syrian Church fathers. The dedication ceremony came to be known as a consecration or dedication ceremony, reminiscent of the dedication of the Temple built by King Solomon. This ceremony, which Christians adopted from other traditions, grew popular among the Syrian Christians as well.

The details of the early Christian churches and the dates of consecration of some of them are also included in this chapter. It is notable that the worship in a particular church commenced only after it was consecrated. The manuscripts used for this research are described towards the end of this chapter together with some of the prayers discussed in other chapters.

## **1.2. Early Syriac Literature and the Liturgy**

All the Syriac churches of today trace their origins back to the Christian communities that developed in Mesopotamia in the second and third centuries, especially to those that in this period used some variety of Aramaic rather than Greek as their primary language.<sup>52</sup> It is only towards the middle of the fourth century, however, that Syriac literature begins to emerge from its initial period of obscurity.<sup>53</sup> Rompay stated that: "Syriac literature is nourished mainly by two cultural streams. One, linked with the Aramaic tradition of the Middle East, has provided first and foremost the language, in a form already well suited for literary use. The other, the Greek stream, is a direct result of the Greco-Roman domination in the Middle East, and the Greek impact on early Christianity".<sup>54</sup> The city of Edessa (in southeast Turkey) became the meeting place of many cultures such as the Jewish and Christian cultures, and Greek Philosophy and paganism.<sup>55</sup> Both the Aramaic and the Greek traditions have been deep rooted in the life and religious activities of the Syrian Christians. For centuries they have managed to complement one another, either in harmony or in tension.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Murre-van den Berg, (2010) "*Syriac Christianity*", 251.

<sup>53</sup> Brock, (1998), "*Syriac Culture, 337-425*", 709.

<sup>54</sup> Rompay, (2000), "*Past and Present Perceptions of Syriac Literary Tradition*", 74.

<sup>55</sup> Drijvers, (1965), *The Book of the Laws of Countries*, 2.

<sup>56</sup> Brock, (1982), "*From Antagonism to Assimilation: Syriac Attitudes to Greek Learning*", 17-34.

A large proportion of the Aramaic-speaking Christians adopted the local Aramaic dialect of Edessa,<sup>57</sup> known today as Syriac, as their literary language before the end of the second century AD. According to Brock, “It is likely that Syriac had already been adopted as a literary language by local Jews as well as by pagans before it was taken up by Aramaic-speaking Christians.”<sup>58</sup> Brock points out that, “Early Syriac writers use a variety of terms to refer to the language, but besides the more general terms ‘Aramaya’ (Aramaic) and ‘Suryaya’ (Syriac), a third term stands out, ‘Urhaya’, the dialect of Urhay/Edessa, or Edessene (Aramaic)”.<sup>59</sup> He claims that the existence of this term must indicate that the Syriac language, which was initially the local Aramaic dialect of Edessa, later assumed popularity and became the literary and cultural language of the Aramaic speaking Christians of the regions of the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire and over the border in the Sassanid Empire.<sup>60</sup>

Syriac boasted writers like the author(s) of the Odes of Solomon<sup>61</sup> (AD 125), Bardaisan<sup>62</sup> and the poet Ephrem (AD 306-373).<sup>63</sup> Brock pointed out that “Around 200 AD the famous heretic Bardaisan wrote in Syriac, and later in the third century Mani<sup>64</sup> propagated his remarkable new religion in the same language, but virtually nothing of all this survives.”<sup>65</sup> He claims

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<sup>57</sup> Brock, (2004), “The Earliest Syriac Literature”, 161.

<sup>58</sup> Brock, (2004), “The Earliest Syriac Literature”, 161.

<sup>59</sup> Brock, (1999), “Eusebius and Syriac Christianity”, 272.

<sup>60</sup> Brock, (1999), “Eusebius and Syriac Christianity”, 272.

<sup>61</sup> Regarding the date of the Odes of Solomon, some scholars suggest that it is of Hebrew origin and of first-century date but most scholars favour that it is a work of early or late second century. Drijvers argues that it is a work of the third century. For more details See Murray, (2006), *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 25.

<sup>62</sup> The earliest Syriac literature is The Book of the Laws of Countries under Bardaisan’s name (AD 154 - 222/3) but was written by his pupil, Philippus. There is only a single manuscript extant of the Book of the Laws of Countries, British Manuscript Add. 14,658. See Drijvers, (1965), *The Book of the Laws of Countries*, 1 & 3.

<sup>63</sup> Ephrem commonly called Ephrem the Syrian, was born in Nisibis, and was a prolific Syriac language hymnographer (writer of hymns) of the 4th century. He is venerated by Christians throughout the world, and especially among Syrian Christians, as a Saint. See McVey, (1989), *Ephrem the Syrian*; Wright, (1894), *A Short History of Syriac Literature*.

Ephrem is also variously known as Ephraim (Hebrew and Greek), Ephraem (Latin), Aphrem and Afrem (both Syriac). However, ‘Ephrem’ is the generally preferred spelling. See [http://orthodoxwiki.org/Ephrem\\_the\\_Syrian](http://orthodoxwiki.org/Ephrem_the_Syrian).

<sup>64</sup> Mani (AD 216–276) was the founder of Manichaeism, a Gnostic religion of Late Antiquity which was once widespread but is now extinct.

<sup>65</sup> Brock, (1977), “Greek into Syriac and Syriac into Greek”, 422.

though that “Syriac must have already served as liturgical language in the time of Bardaisan, since he composed hymns in that language”.<sup>66</sup>

Ephrem created a wealth of theological works in prose and creative poetry.<sup>67</sup> His poetry may be divided into homilies (Syriac - *memre*, i.e. discourses) and hymns (Syriac - *madrashē*, i.e. instructions). The homilies are written in seven-syllable verses, often divided into two parts of three and four syllables respectively. The hymns offer a greater variety in both style and rhythm. Brock notes that they are “constructed on isosyllabic principles, and the isosyllabic pattern can range from the very simple (e.g. five short lines of four syllables each to a stanza) to the highly complex and diffuse patterns of the longer stanza models.”<sup>68</sup> Elsewhere Brock says, “in Edessa of the 370s, on the other hand, Ephrem’s liturgical poetry makes it clear that Syriac was the language of the liturgy, and indeed it is likely that the oldest of all extant anaphoras, that attributed to Addai and Mari, has its roots in Edessa”.<sup>69</sup> Ephrem’s poetry in Syriac further reaffirms the fact that Syriac was the liturgical language in his time. Here it is also worth mentioning the strong possibility of the oldest anaphoras attributed to Addai and Mari having originated from Edessa, in Syriac. Gelston stated, “Several factors are suggestive of a date around the beginning of the third century. If this is correct, the Anaphora of Addai and Mari is almost certainly the oldest extant anaphora within the Syrian tradition, and very probably the traditional Anaphora of Edessa”.<sup>70</sup> Even if a specific date of the origin of Anaphora of Addai and Mari is a debatable matter, it is an important text in liturgical history and originated from Edessa. Gelston points out that, “The East Syrian Church’s name for the Eucharistic Prayer of Addai and Mari is ‘The Sanctification/Consecration of the Apostles’”.<sup>71</sup> He argues that the apostle Addai and his disciple Mari are the traditional founders of the Church at Edessa.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Brock, (1999), “Greek and Syriac in Late Antique Syria”, 158.

<sup>67</sup> See McVey, (1989), *Ephrem the Syrian*.

<sup>68</sup> Brock, (1992), “Syriac and Greek Hymnography: Problems of Origin”, 78.

<sup>69</sup> Brock, (1999), “Greek and Syriac in Late Antique Syria”, 158.

<sup>70</sup> Gelston, (1992), *The Eucharistic Prayer of Addai and Mari*, 28.

<sup>71</sup> Gelston, (2010), “The East Syrian Eucharistic Prayers”, 56.

<sup>72</sup> Gelston, (2010), “The East Syrian Eucharistic Prayers”, 56.

Another writing, *The Doctrine of Addai*,<sup>73</sup> contains the fascinating legend of King Abgar, the King of Edessa. Eusebius shows that some form of the *Teaching of Addai* already existed in the early fourth century, and he had in his possession a text translated from a Syriac copy reportedly found in the archives of Edessa.<sup>74</sup> All the evidence points to the fact that Syriac was the language of Edessa during the time of King Abgar.

The *Acts of Thomas* was composed in Syriac and dated to the early third century. It has often been associated with Edessa<sup>75</sup> and considered to be a major source for the knowledge of early Syriac theology. Its various descriptions of baptisms with accompanying prayers are very important for understanding the early Syriac baptismal tradition.<sup>76</sup>

Jews, Christians and pagans, all shaped Syriac literature in Mesopotamia, especially in and around Edessa.<sup>77</sup> The characteristics of the Syriac literature are biblical, ritualistic, polemical, theological, historical and traditional.<sup>78</sup> The Syriac literature of the first three centuries consists mostly of anonymous texts whose date and origin cannot be clearly established.<sup>79</sup> However, almost all Syriac literature is of Christian and ecclesiastical origin.<sup>80</sup> It is the intellectual work of clerical authors and learned men who were engaged in translating, punctuating and commenting on the Bible, developing Syriac grammar, natural science, astrology, civil and religious history and church music and so on.<sup>81</sup> In fact they covered the commonly known fields of human learning without exception. The golden age of Syriac literature, which extended from the fourth to the eighth centuries, produced a number of

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<sup>73</sup> *The Doctrine of Addai* is a Syriac Christian text, perhaps written about AD 400. The date of the Doctrine of Addai is disputed. For a brief critique of this legend see the article by Healey, (1999), "Edessa", 176-177; and for full details see Segal, (1970), *Edessa: The Blessed City*.

<sup>74</sup> The correspondence is cited in Eusebius, History of the Church 1.13.

<sup>75</sup> Brock, (2004), "The Earliest Syriac Literature, 167.

<sup>76</sup> Brock, (2004), "The Earliest Syriac Literature, 167-168.

<sup>77</sup> Brown, (2006), *Encyclopedia of Language & Linguistics*, 439.

<sup>78</sup> Barsoum, (2003), *The Scattered Pearls*, 7.

<sup>79</sup> Sawma, (2006), "The Syriac Influence", 104.

<sup>80</sup> Barsoum, (2003), *The Scattered Pearls*, 6.

<sup>81</sup> Barsoum, (2003), *The Scattered Pearls*, 6.

important figures<sup>82</sup> and Ephrem stands as the pillar of the Syriac Christian literature and culture.<sup>83</sup>

### 1.2.1. The Peshitta Bible

An important element of the common heritage of Syriac literature relevant to the liturgy is the Peshitta Bible. The Peshitta version contains all the canonical books of the Old Testament (except Chronicles), and was translated straight from Hebrew into Syriac.<sup>84</sup> The Old Testament Peshitta dates from the second and early third centuries, whereas most of the New Testament translation is supposed to have originated in the fourth and early fifth centuries.<sup>85</sup> The word Peshitto, coming from the Syriac root ܦܫܬܐ means ‘simple’ or ‘common’ and represents the Bible used daily by the Syriac-speaking people.<sup>86</sup> The name Peshitta however, was not used until the 9th century when the Syrian Church father Moses Bar Kepha used the term in his commentary.<sup>87</sup>

There is specific evidence for the existence of fixed readings from the Peshitta for particular occasions from the sixth century onwards in the surviving Syriac biblical manuscripts.<sup>88</sup> Initially readings probably only covered the main liturgical feasts and particular occasions, such as baptism, or the consecration of a church. The cycles of readings already included Sundays and further feasts, as well as all the days of the weeks before and after the Resurrection and the middle week of Lent by the sixth century.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Balai, Aphrahat, Jacob of Serugh, Severios, Jacob of Edessa, etc.

<sup>83</sup> McVey, (ed.), (1994), *St. Ephrem the Syrian Selected Prose Work*, 3.

<sup>84</sup> Sugirtharajah, (2001), *The Bible and the Third World Pre-colonial, Colonial, and Postcolonial Encounters*, 15.

<sup>85</sup> Murre-van den Berg, (2010) “Syriac Christianity”, 263.

<sup>86</sup> Shedinger, (2001), *Tatian and the Jewish Scriptures*, 3.

<sup>87</sup> Sugirtharajah, (2001), *The Bible and the Third World Pre-colonial, Colonial, and Postcolonial Encounters*, 15.

<sup>88</sup> Brock, (2006), “The Use of the Syriac Versions in the Liturgy”, 4. This statement is based on the evidence of a 6<sup>th</sup> century MS, British Museum Add. 14528, which has a list of biblical readings; these include: the Dedication of a Church: Ps. 84 (resp. 3b, 4a), Heb. 9:1-28, Ps. 147 (resp. 12a = Syr 1a), Jn. 10:22-42 and the Dedication of an Altar: Ps. 43 (resp. 4a), I Kings 8:1-53, Heb. 12:28-end, Ps. 26 (resp. 1a), Matt. 23:12-22. See Burkitt, (1921), “The Early Syriac Lectionary System”, 313.

<sup>89</sup> Brock, (2006), “The Use of the Syriac Versions in the Liturgy”, 4.

Other example of the use of the Peshitta is by Dionysius Bar Salibi (d.1171) in his commentaries. According to Rompay, for a number of books (Psalms, Proverbs, Song of Songs, Jeremiah and Daniel), Bar Salibi based the factual commentary on the Peshitta, and the spiritual one on the Septuagint.<sup>90</sup> In his commentary, where Bar Salibi makes heavy use of material from Greek sources, the Peshitta still plays a dominant role and held a special place in the mind and liturgical life of Bar Salibi.<sup>91</sup>

In addition to Peshitta the *Diatessaron*<sup>92</sup> is generally accepted as the earliest form of the Gospels in Syriac. It is also called the Harmony of the Four Gospels, and is associated with the name of Tatian (AD 120-180). It remained in use into the first half of the fifth century<sup>93</sup> when its use was abolished by Rabula (d. 435), Metropolitan of Edessa, to protect the integrity of the Bible.<sup>94</sup> The Syriac *Diatessaron* exercised a considerable influence on early Syriac literature and a commentary on it is attributed to Ephrem.<sup>95</sup>

### 1.3. Syrian Orthodox Liturgy

The West Syrian liturgy is the traditional liturgy of the Syrian Orthodox, as well as of the Syrian and Malankara Catholics, of which the East Syrian, Byzantine, Armenian and the Maronite<sup>96</sup> liturgies are the other members.<sup>97</sup> The West Syrian tradition had its origin and

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<sup>90</sup> Rompay, (2000), "Development of Biblical Interpretation in the Syrian Churches of the Middle Ages", 573.

<sup>91</sup> Ryan, (2006), "The Reception of the Peshitta Psalter in Bar Salibi's Commentary on the Psalms", 333 & 337.

<sup>92</sup> Tatian's (AD 120-180) most famous work is the *Diatessaron* or harmony of the four gospels. This became the standard text of the four gospels in the Syriac-speaking churches. For more details see Petersen, (1994), *Tatian's Diatessaron: Its Creation, Dissemination, Significance, and History in Scholarship*.

<sup>93</sup> Brock, (2004), "The Earliest Syriac Literature", 164.

<sup>94</sup> Rabula introduced the separate Gospels, which had been revised according to the Greek origin. He was followed by Theodoret of Cyrus (d. 457) who destroyed more than two hundred copies of the *Diatessaron* in his diocese. For more details see Barsoum, (2003), *The Scattered Pearls*, 42.

<sup>95</sup> For an English translation of Ephrem's commentary on the *Diatessaron*, See McCarthy, (1993), *Saint Ephrem's Commentary on Tatian's Diatessaron*.

<sup>96</sup> Maronites are members of one of the Eastern Catholic Churches. Today, Maronites are one of the principal religious groups in Lebanon.

<sup>97</sup> See, Dalmais, "The Eastern Liturgical Families", 27-43; Varghese, (2004), *West Syrian Liturgical Theology*, 1.

development in and around the city of Antioch, whereas the centre<sup>98</sup> of the East Syrian tradition was Edessa.<sup>99</sup>

Syriac was divided into two dialects i.e., West Syriac and East Syriac, which are mainly distinguished by their tradition of pronunciation (and also the different scripts). For example ‘o’ in West Syriac is pronounced ‘ā’ in East Syriac. (e.g., the name of God which in West Syriac is *Allōho*, is pronounced *Allāhā* in East Syriac; in West Syriac *malko*, (“king”), while in East Syriac *malka*). A further variation is found in connection with the type of script used; the east Syrians (also known as the Chaldeans) use the form known as “*Estrangelo*” (probably from Greek *strongulos*, “rounded”), whereas the Western Syrians employ the *Serto* script (literally “a scratch, character”).<sup>100</sup>

The liturgical language of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch, the Maronites and others is West Syriac, whereas for the Church of East (often misleadingly called ‘Nestorian’) East Syriac is the liturgical language. The history of the Syriac liturgy before the end of the fourth century is not very clear because of the lack of references in contemporary literature. The writings of Aphrahat<sup>101</sup> and Ephrem are not of much use in reconstructing the early history.

The Syriac Churches have preserved more Jewish liturgical elements than Greek or Latin speaking Christian communities. The West Syrian church lectionary system,<sup>102</sup> which

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<sup>98</sup> Three principal liturgical centres had a major influence in the origin of these rites: Antioch, Jerusalem and Edessa. Edessa was a centre of Syriac language and culture; the other two were Greek cities, though not without Syriac-speaking minorities. See Macomber, (1973), “A Theory on the Origins of the Syrian, Maronite and Chaldean Rites”, 235-242.

<sup>99</sup> Varghese, (2004), *West Syrian Liturgical Theology*, 1.

<sup>100</sup> Brock, (2006), *An Introduction to Syriac Studies*, 23.

<sup>101</sup> Aphrahat (also known as ‘the Persian Sage’) is the author of a collection of 23 short works described as ‘Demonstrations’ or ‘letters’. The first 22 form an alphabetic acrostic (the Syriac alphabet has 22 letters), and 1-10 are specifically dated to AD 337, 11-22 to AD 344, and 23 to August AD 345. The exact identity of the author was unclear to later writers. See Brock, (1997), *A Brief Outline of Syriac Literature*, 19.

<sup>102</sup> Syrian Orthodox Church lectionary system is a cycle of biblical readings for the church year. In the Syrian Orthodox Church these readings are for a calendar year beginning with the *Qudosh ‘Idto* (Sanctification of the Church) that falls on the eighth Sunday before Christmas. Both the Old and the New Testament books are read, including the Apocrypha, except the books of Revelation, Song of Solomon, and I and II Maccabees. Scripture readings are assigned for Sundays and feast days, for each day of Lent and the Holy Weeks, for consecrating laymen and clergy to various offices of the Church, for the blessing of Holy Oil and various services such as baptisms and funerals. Generally, three Old Testament lessons, a selection from the prophets, and three readings from the New Testament are prescribed for each Sunday and Feast day. The New Testament readings include a reading from Acts, another from the General Epistles or the Pauline Epistles, and a third reading from one of the Gospels. See Johnson, (1991), “Lectionary”, *Syriac Orthodox Resources*; Varghese, (2004), *West Syrian Liturgical Theology*, 155; Romeny, (2008), *Jacob of Edessa and the Syriac Culture of His Day*, 104.



appears in several manuscripts,<sup>103</sup> and the *Apostolic Constitutions*<sup>104</sup> attested to the custom of reading the Bible in the Eucharistic service, with a reading taken from the Pentateuch and another from the Books of the Prophets. Rouwhorst points out two explanations for the existence of the Jewish liturgical traditions in early Syriac Christianity. He says: (a) The Syriac Christians - or at least a great number among them - wanted to remain faithful to the oldest ritual traditions they had received from the first missionaries. Eventually their conservative attitude may have been occasioned or reinforced by a certain - though of course not a total - isolation from the rest of the Christian world, which, in turn, might have accounted for, among other things, their use of the Syriac language; (b) these Christians were more acquainted and familiar with Jewish liturgical traditions than those living in other areas and moreover, unlike the latter, they attached a particular importance to the maintenance of a number of these traditions.<sup>105</sup> He argues that “early Syriac Christianity retained traces of ‘Jewish’ architecture and liturgical traditions, including the presence of a *bema*<sup>106</sup>, regular readings from both the Torah and the Prophets during the Eucharist, the language of the Eucharistic prayer, and Quartodeciman traditions (of celebrating Easter on the date of the Jewish Passover) until the fourth century Council of Nicaea”.<sup>107</sup> The reason for adopting Jewish liturgical traditions in Syriac churches was probably because a large number of the first Christian communities in the Syriac area involved a large proportion of converts from Judaism. Some of these communities will have continued keeping observances that may be described as Jewish Christian.

The theological discussions of the fifth and sixth centuries certainly helped to reinforce the Greek impact on the Syrian world. From then on, there were mainly two separate traditions:

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<sup>103</sup> See Burkitt, (1921), “The Early Syriac Lectionary System”, 301-339; Manuscripts Add. 14485 and Add.14487, are a West Syrian Lectionary, comprising lessons from the Old and New Testaments, principally for the Sundays of the whole year, dated AD 824. See Wright, *Catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts in the British Museum*, Part I, 146-149 and 152-154; Rouwhorst, (1997), “Jewish Liturgical Traditions in Early Syriac Christianity”, 72-93.

<sup>104</sup> Connolly, (1929), *Didascalia Apostolorum*, 189.; The Compilation known as the *Apostolic Constitutions* written in Greek has reached us in a complete form only in an early Syriac translation. See Connolly, (1929), *Didascalia Apostolorum*, p. xi.

<sup>105</sup> Rouwhorst, (1997), “Jewish Liturgical Traditions in Early Syriac Christianity”, 84-85.

<sup>106</sup> A *bema* is a large horseshoe-shaped platform or a pulpit in the centre of the nave of a church. The *bema* churches were built between the second half of the fourth century and the early seventh century, like the numerous other churches of the limestone massif of north-western Syria. For more details see Loosley, (2003), *The Architecture and Liturgy of the Bema in Fourth – to Sixth – Century Syrian Churches*.

<sup>107</sup> Shepardson, (2008), *Anti-Judaism and Christian Orthodoxy*, 42; Rouwhorst, (1997), “Jewish Liturgical Traditions in Early Syriac Christianity”, 72-82.

(a) one which adopted strict dyophysite theology<sup>108</sup> and eventually became the East Syrian tradition, and (b) one which emanated from the rejection of the Council of Chalcedon and was subsequently known as the ‘Miaphysites’,<sup>109</sup> Syrian Orthodox or West Syrian tradition.<sup>110</sup>

According to Brock, “the Syrian Orthodox Church only gradually became separated from the mainstream church in the course of the late fifth and the sixth century, and it was not until the first half of the sixth century that a separate hierarchy developed as a result of the deposition, by the emperor Justin, of the anti-Chalcedonian patriarch of Antioch, Severus”.<sup>111</sup>

Based on the Christological history of the Church, Syrian Orthodox liturgy places great emphasis on the divine nature in Christ. The custom of addressing Christ as ‘our God’ and not only addressing the Father through Jesus Christ, which is part of the Trinitarian doctrine, is mostly derived from the Greek tradition and even uses Greek terms.<sup>112</sup> Mary, as mother of God, is given utmost importance as the one “who brought forth God” (Isa. 66: 7; Rev.12: 5). This veneration and great devotion to the Virgin Mary is based on the fact that the person whom Mary brought forth to this world was truly God.<sup>113</sup> Deep Biblical and theological devotion to the Virgin Mary grew up in the Church due to the belief in the incarnation and that resulted in faith - filled poetic expressions like “in your arms you embraced the flames and gave milk to the devouring fire; blessed is He, the infinite who was born of you”.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Dyophysite is a theological term used in understanding how the divine and human are related in the person of Jesus Christ. This Greek term literally means ‘two natures’. The doctrine of Nestorius explains that the human nature and divine nature exist in the one person of Jesus Christ. See Kelly (2006), *Early Christian Doctrines*.

<sup>109</sup> The term *miaphysite* means “one nature” and Miaphysites affirmed that the human and the divine had merged together in Christ into one nature. The Council of Chalcedon in AD 451 stated that the divine and human nature was combined in Jesus Christ. Miaphysite Christians were convinced that the Chalcedonian Creed had erred in its (to their way of thinking) overemphasis on the duality of Christ’s human and divine characteristics. For Miaphysites, it was God who walked the earth in Christ, not just a man. It was God who suffered on the cross. See Kelly (2006), *Early Christian Doctrines*.

<sup>110</sup> Rompay, (2000), “Past and Present Perceptions of Syriac Literary Tradition”, 74.

<sup>111</sup> Brock, (2006), *An Introduction to Syriac Studies*, 73.

<sup>112</sup> Between the fourth and the seventh centuries an impressively large number of Greek texts, mostly of Christian provenance, were translated into Syriac. See Cameron & Garnsey (eds.), (1998), *The Cambridge Ancient History*, 717-19. The Greek term *hypostasis* is represented in Syriac by the word *qnoma*; one essence (*ousia*) and three persons (*hypostaseis*).

<sup>113</sup> Griffiths, (trs.), (2005), *The Book of Common Prayer*, ix.

<sup>114</sup> Lilio (night) on Tuesday, See Griffiths, (trs.), (2006), *The Book of Common Prayer*, 375-376.

The Syriac liturgy is also deeply rooted in its devotion to the Prophets, Apostles, Saints and Martyrs. In Hebrews 13:7, the author exhorts the people to remember those who evangelised them and hence the devotions in memory of them. They are considered as the members of the Mystical Body of Christ to which the faithful are also considered members.

For example the Saints and Fathers of the Old Testament, like Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; Moses, David and the Prophets, Job, Daniel and the three Holy young men in the furnace of Babylon are placed along with the Apostles who lived with Christ and who are considered as living witnesses to the Mystery of Christ. It is quite striking to see the reference in the book of the Holy Eucharist to 'our father Adam and our mother Eve',<sup>115</sup> which carries back the mystery of salvation to the first man and first woman. In Christ's descent to Sheol, (Eph. 4:7-11) the place of the dead,<sup>116</sup> He proclaims the message of salvation to the dead, including Adam and Eve, at the time of His resurrection.<sup>117</sup> This concept of the dead awaiting resurrection in Sheol at the glorious second coming of Christ leads us back to the early Jewish Christian theology, from which the Syriac liturgy adopted many things. It also largely helps to explain how the devotion to the departed was deep rooted and flourished in the early church.<sup>118</sup>

Also we find that in the Syriac liturgy, the central theme is 'repentance' for sins committed. Throughout the Syriac liturgy we can witness the sense of remorse for the sins. In the evening prayer on Monday we read "the Lord will come and heal the broken-hearted; our heart was broken by sin and Christ healed it by the waters of baptism, *hallelujah*, blessed is he who heals it".<sup>119</sup>

The Syriac liturgy in its poetic form has been said to reveal the expressions of the Christian Spirit.<sup>120</sup> It is the spontaneous overflow of powerful emotions revealing the mysteries of Christian faith such as the trinity and incarnation, the cross and the redemption, the

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<sup>115</sup> *The Service Book of Holy Eucharist (Anaphora)*, (2010), 20; See Brightman, (1967), *Eastern Liturgies*, 73.

<sup>116</sup> The descent of Christ into the grave simply affirms the reality of his death, and is juxtaposed as such to his resurrection and victorious ascent. See Harris, (1996), *The Descent of Christ: Ephesians 4:7-11 and Traditional Hebrew Imagery*, 31.

<sup>117</sup> Griffiths, (trs.), (2005), *The Book of Common Prayer*, x.

<sup>118</sup> Griffiths, (trs.), (2005), *The Book of Common Prayer*, xi.

<sup>119</sup> Ramsho (evening) on Monday, See Griffiths, (trs.), (2006), *The Book of Common Prayer*, 195.

<sup>120</sup> Brock, (1992), "Syriac and Greek Hymnography: problems of Origin", 81.

resurrection and the second coming, the Church as the bride of Christ, Mary the Mother of God and the saints of the Old and New Testaments, and the dead in Sheol waiting to return to paradise.<sup>121</sup> Inspired poets, who were mostly monks, vividly depict these themes in poetic form.<sup>122</sup> It is believed that their profound theological insight and astonishing poetry were the result of their deep meditation on the mysteries of faith. Their liturgies have long antiphons known as *qolos*,<sup>123</sup> *boo'uoas*,<sup>124</sup> and short antiphons known as *eqbos*<sup>125</sup> and *enyonos*.<sup>126</sup> The immense and rich poetic beauty of Syriac liturgy can be found in these long and short songs.

The Syrian Orthodox Church has set the number of times for prayer to seven each day,<sup>127</sup> based on Psalms 119:164; which reads “Seven times in the day have I praised thee for thy judgements, O righteous one”. Although specific themes are devoted to each of these seven hours, today a merging of hours has reduced this to three times of prayer in a day, even in monasteries. The nine o'clock evening prayer, the evening prayer itself and the compline prayer are said together, and the midnight, the morning and the three and six o'clock prayers are also said together early in the morning. *Sūtoro* prayers are said before going to bed at night.

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<sup>121</sup> Griffiths (trs.) (2005), *The Book of the Common Prayer*, xi.

<sup>122</sup> The poet theologians like Ephrem, Jacob of Serugh, Balai and such others contributed greatly to Syriac liturgy.

<sup>123</sup> *Qolo* (voice, sound, tune) is an exclusively liturgical poem in several stanzas, which, together with Psalm verses, is rendered responsorially or antiphonally. See Werner, (1976), *Contributions to a Historical Study of Jewish Music*, 61.

<sup>124</sup> *Boo'uto* (petition) comes nearest to the occidental type of litany or supplicatory prayer. It is usually rendered as response, whereas the choir chants a refrain.

<sup>125</sup> *Eqbo* is short hymn which usually follows the supplicatory prayer before incense. See Barsoum, (2003), *The Scattered Pearls*, 95.

<sup>126</sup> *Enyono* is originally a series of stanzas linked together by a refrain. The *enyono* later became an extremely popular form of chant in connection with the paraphrased rendition of Psalms and canticles.

<sup>127</sup> Evening or *ramsho* prayer (Vespers), the drawing of the Veil or *Sūtoro* (meaning ‘Protection’ from Psalm 91, is sung at this office, ‘He who sits under the protection of the Most High’), Midnight or *lilyo* prayer, Morning or *saphro* prayer (Matins), the Third Hour or *tloth sho'in* prayer, the Sixth Hour or *sheth sho'in* prayer and the Ninth Hour or *tsha' sho'in* prayer. The Midnight prayer consists of three *qawme* or ‘watches’ (literally ‘standing’). The ecclesiastical day begins in the evening at sunset with the *ramsho*.

### 1.3.1. Psalms in the Liturgy

The Psalms became an important part of Christian liturgy. “For the early church, the book of Psalms was daily bread”<sup>128</sup> and the church was born in psalmic song, and the joyful character of psalm singing was noted in the Pauline communities of Ephesus and Colossians.<sup>129</sup>

Music was deeply associated with pagan worship, and music also remained expressive of Jewish and early Christian worship.<sup>130</sup> Clement of Alexandria (AD 150-215), exhorted Christians not to use pagan musical instruments, but instead, quoting from Psalm 150, to “praise him in the psaltery”.<sup>131</sup> The third-century *Didascalia Apostolorum* briefly instructed Christians that “And if you wish for songs, you have the Psalms of David”.<sup>132</sup> The post-Nicene Church father Athanasius (AD 296-373), describes the Psalter as a unique and marvellous garden of devotion, in his famous *Letter to Marcellinus*.<sup>133</sup> It is a remarkable document in providing a summary of the diverse forms and pastoral applications of the Psalms<sup>134</sup>.

Egeria (AD 381-384) in her description of the daily service in Jerusalem describes the scripture reading and the singing of psalms and hymns during the celebration of the liturgy as wonderful.<sup>135</sup> With regards to the daily service Egeria writes, “What I found most impressive about all this was that the psalms and antiphons they use are always appropriate, whether at night, in the early morning, at the day prayers at midday or three o’clock” (25.5).<sup>136</sup> Egeria also gives a description of the liturgical ceremonies carried out each day, and more

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<sup>128</sup> Daley, (2003), “Finding the Right Key: The Aims and Strategies of Early Christian Interpretation of the Psalms”, 189.

<sup>129</sup> Singing in the worship described in the New Testament is mentioned in Eph. 5:18-20; Col. 3:16-17; Matt. 26:30; Mark 14:26; Rom. 15:5-6; 1 Cor. 13:1; 14:7-8; 15:51-52; Rev. 5:8-9.

<sup>130</sup> Quasten, (1983), *Music and Worship in Pagan and Christian Antiquity*, 59-95.

<sup>131</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus*, ii, iv; PG viii, 441; McKinnon, (1987), *Music in Early Christian Literature*, 32-33.

<sup>132</sup> Connolly, (1929), *Didascalia Apostolorum*, 2, 12.

<sup>133</sup> Waltke and Houston, (2010), *The Psalms as Christian Worship*, 44.

<sup>134</sup> See Stead, (1985), “Athanasius on the Psalms”, 65-78.

<sup>135</sup> Schuman, (2004), “Paschal Liturgy and Psalmody in Jerusalem 380-384 CE: Some Observations and Implications”, 141.

<sup>136</sup> Wilkinson, (trs.), (1981), *Egeria’s Travels to the Holy Land*, 126.

specifically those of Good Friday and the Easter Vigil.<sup>137</sup> Here Egeria underlines the relevance of psalms in the liturgical components of the ceremony of the fourth century Christian community of Jerusalem.

The Psalms were widely used by Christians as prophetic texts and seem to have also been used for family and private prayer throughout the second century.<sup>138</sup> John Cassian, the ascetic visiting the monastic communities in the desert of Scetis (Egypt), from around 380 to 399, describes the psalmody there. He says that during prayer time, after each psalm, monks rose and prayed in silence with arms outstretched sideways, palms up or in the *orans* position.<sup>139</sup>

By the end of the fourth century, Christian writers began to introduce the Psalms into the liturgy as metrical hymns with special melodies,<sup>140</sup> although they continued to write simple supplications as well as metrical ones. By the end of the seventh century the great majority of the rituals of the Syrian church were in their final form, with only a few additions introduced in the following generations.<sup>141</sup>

Jacob of Edessa (AD 633-708) is one of the most significant figures of Syriac Christianity, especially in the Syrian Orthodox Church. He is famous for his compilation of the liturgy of the Church which is formed the basis of the present order of the liturgy.<sup>142</sup> His work covered canon law, biblical scholarship, liturgy, translations of ecclesiastical and philosophical work from Greek to Syriac, the study of grammar, and the relationship of scientific knowledge to the Bible.<sup>143</sup> Jacob revised the current Order of Epiphany.<sup>144</sup> He also wrote four pages on the consecration of the Myron on Holy Thursday and on the difference between the Myron and

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<sup>137</sup> Wilkinson, (trs.), (1981), *Egeria's Travels to the Holy Land*, 131-132.

<sup>138</sup> Origen, Or. 12.2; Tertullian, Or.24-25; Cyprian, Dom. or.34; Clement of Alexandria, Strom. 7.7; For the best general survey of early Christian practices of prayer See Hamman, (1963), *Les trois premiers siècles*, Vol.2.

<sup>139</sup> Orans position is a figure with extended arms usually standing, with the elbows close to the sides of the body and with the hands outstretched sideways, palms up. It was common in early Christianity. See Taft, (2003), "Christian Liturgical Psalmody: Origins, Development, Decomposition, Collapse", 11; Texts and details on Taft, (1986), *Liturgy of the Hours in East and West*, 58-61.

<sup>140</sup> Barsoum, (2003), *The Scattered Pearls*, 55.

<sup>141</sup> Barsoum, (2003), *The Scattered Pearls*, 55.

<sup>142</sup> Others such as Michael the Syrian (d.1199) and Bar Hebraeus (AD 1225-1286) and others made some changes in the liturgical texts.

<sup>143</sup> Salvesen, (2008), "Jacob of Edessa's Life and Work: A Biographical Sketch", 3.

<sup>144</sup> Barsoum, (2003), *The Scattered Pearls*, 349.

the unction.<sup>145</sup> Canons on the order of Baptism and consecration of water are also the work of Jacob.<sup>146</sup>

#### 1.4. Liturgical Development in the Syrian Orthodox Church

No liturgical uniformity was imposed in the Syrian Orthodox Church. In fact almost every monastery and diocese followed its own liturgical books reflecting diverse liturgical practices. The liturgical collections are of very varied dates and go back to at least the sixth century. This diversity was regarded as a sign of spiritual vigour and a wealth of devotions.<sup>147</sup>

Patriarch Ignatius Aphram I Barsoum (d.1957) lists the present liturgical tradition of the Syrian Orthodox Church for each main liturgical event and where it originated (See the chart below).

Order of	Origin of the Tradition
Nativity	Church of the Forty Martyrs in Mardin
Blessing of Palms	Rabban Saliba Khiron (+1340) and Patriarch Michael the Great (+1199)
Good Friday	Church of the Forty Martyrs in Mardin
Presentation of our Lord in the Temple	Tradition of Mardin
Forgiveness for Lent and a second Order	Tradition of Mardin
Resurrection	St. Barsaumo and St. Hananya
A second Order of Good Friday and the Resurrection	St. Gabriel's monastery in the Tur Abdin
Order of Lights	Tradition from Edessa

With regard to the liturgical differences in various places, the Church father Dionysius Bar Salibi (d. 1171) claims that “the fact that people of every country pray differently, and have something which singles them out from the rest, goes to their credit, first because it indicates the wealth of their devotions and spiritual vigour, and secondly because it is a sign of the

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<sup>145</sup> Barsoum, (2003), *The Scattered Pearls*, 90

<sup>146</sup> Barsoum, (2003), *The Scattered Pearls*, 342.

<sup>147</sup> Varghese, (2004), *West Syrian Liturgical Theology*, 2-3.

incomprehensibility of God, who wishes to be glorified in different ways in different countries and towns”.<sup>148</sup> The socio-political conditions of the Syrians made it rather difficult to bring the dioceses and the monasteries under a centralised authority, as in the Latin or Byzantine traditions. Instead the monasteries enjoyed considerable freedom in liturgical matters and the people lived in close relationship with ascetics who always maintained a simple faith and traditions of folk wisdom.<sup>149</sup> There is no doubt that the monastic liturgical system has played a vital role in influencing the liturgical and spiritual traditions of the Syrian Orthodox Church.

The Syriac liturgical traditions are extremely rich in poetry. The main repositories are “the large festal hymnaries, usually referred to today as the *Fenqitho* (‘small (!)’ volume, from Greek *pinakidion*) in the Syrian Orthodox/Catholic and Maronite traditions, and as the *Hudra* (‘Cycle’) in the Church of the East/Chaldean traditions.”<sup>150</sup>

The main liturgical texts of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch are as follows:

#### **1.4.1. Shehimo**

The Syriac word *Shehimo* (ܫܗܝܡܐ) literally means “simple” or “ordinary”. The regular service book (or breviary for the weekly cycle – in Syriac *shehimo*<sup>151</sup>) is comprised of prayers and songs. The *Shehimo* is the liturgical prayer of the hours for days other than feast days for the entire year. This service book was most likely compiled at the end of the seventh century by Jacob of Edessa<sup>152</sup>, and includes seven times of prayer, i.e. evening prayer, night prayers, compline, morning prayers and the prayers at the third hour, sixth hour and ninth hour.<sup>153</sup> Bar Salibi comments that this compilation was prepared for chanting by simple worshippers and ascetics. This is why its compilers chose simple verses which could immediately be

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<sup>148</sup> Mingana, (1927), *A Treatise of Bar Salibi Against the Melchites*, 34.

<sup>149</sup> Varghese, (2004), *West Syrian Liturgical Theology*, 3.

<sup>150</sup> Brock, (2010), “Poetry and Hymnography (3): Syriac”, 665.

<sup>151</sup> For English translations, see Griffiths, (trs.), (2005), *The Book of Common Prayer*; Dale, (2002), *Daily Prayers from the Language of Jesus*.

<sup>152</sup> Barsoum, (2003), *The Scattered Pearls*, 59.

<sup>153</sup> Barsoum, (2003), *The Scattered Pearls*, 59.



assimilated by the mind and would move the heart.<sup>154</sup> Today, the monks in the monasteries chant these prayers only in the mornings and evenings.

### 1.4.2. Fenqitho

The West Syriac churches have been using *Fenqitho* (فنيثو)<sup>155</sup> for the yearly cycle from the very early Middle Ages. The *Fenqitho* is a book gathering different hymns for Sundays and feasts of the year and for selected saint's days and it is here that the full depth of the theology of the Syrian Church is displayed.<sup>156</sup> The *Fenqitho* gives a detailed understanding of the true meaning of the celebration of the Church's prayer. It has magnificent offices for all the great festivals of the Christian year,<sup>157</sup> beginning with the festival of the consecration of the church, in which the theology of the Church as the bride of Christ is unfolded.

### 1.4.3. Holy Eucharist Book Including Anaphoras

The Anaphora is the central part of the Eucharistic liturgy. The Greek word *anaphora* means offering<sup>158</sup> and also it signifies the celebration of the Eucharist<sup>159</sup>. The Eucharistic liturgy of the Syrian Orthodox Church is perhaps the richest in all Christendom with more than eighty anaphoras in existence.<sup>160</sup> The West Syrian Church had adopted the Jerusalem Anaphora of Saint James, its main anaphora, probably in the first half of the fifth century.<sup>161</sup> Most of the

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<sup>154</sup> Mingana, (1927), *A Treatise of Bar Salibi Against the Melchites*, 64.

<sup>155</sup> *Fenqitho* (means volume) is a collection of liturgical texts for the entire year, according to the West Syrian rite of Antioch. Vatican MS. 116 written in AD 857 and British Museum MS 307 written in AD 893, MSS 14525, 14719, 14699, 14708. A part of this text is translated to English. See *Fenqitho: A Treasury of feasts according to the Syriac-Maronite Church of Antioch*, 1980, Acharya, (ed.), (1982), *Prayer with the Harp of the Spirit*.

<sup>156</sup> Griffiths, (trs.), (2005), *The Book of Common Prayer*, xiii.

<sup>157</sup> The liturgical year in the Western Syriac Churches begins at the end of October or the beginning of November.

<sup>158</sup> Offering is a presentation made to a deity as an act of religious worship or sacrifice. See Liddell, (1996), (revised edition), *A Greek-English Lexicon*.

<sup>159</sup> The Syriac word for the Eucharist is either *qurobo* (ܩܘܪܒܐ) or *qurbono* (ܩܘܪܒܐܢܐ) meaning offering, oblation or sacrifice.

<sup>160</sup> Many of the anaphoras are attributed to famous Syrian Orthodox figures, such as Jacob of Serugh (d. 521), Philoxenus of Mabbug (d. 532), Severios of Antioch (d. 538), Moses Bar Kephah (d. 903), Dionysius Bar Salibi (d. 1171), Michael the Great (d. 1199), Bar Hebraeus (d. 1286) etc. See Samuel, (1967), *The Anaphora*, v.

<sup>161</sup> Varghese, (2004), *West Syrian Liturgical Theology*, 1.

anaphoras and other liturgical writings were composed between the fifth and fourteenth centuries.<sup>162</sup>

The Anaphora of St. James may be used on any occasion (unlike other anaphoras) but it is obligatory on the occasions of all the festivals of the Church, at the ordination of deacons, priests, the consecration of a new church, the consecration of a bishop and enthronement of a patriarch. The Church rule stipulates that it must be used at the celebration of the Holy Eucharist for the first time by a newly ordained priest and at the celebration of the Holy Eucharist for the first time at any church<sup>163</sup> because it is the first and foremost anaphora of the Syrian Orthodox Church. A revision of the Syriac rendering of the Anaphora of St. James is attributed to Jacob of Edessa.

The Syrian Church refers to the Eucharistic liturgy as the *roze qadishe* (the Holy Mysteries), signifying the mystery of the bread and wine becoming the Body and Blood of Christ in a manner that is not comprehensible to the external human senses.

The Eucharist itself consists of two basic parts, the order of offering and the anaphora proper. The order of offering is composed of the liturgy of preparation and the liturgy of the Word and concludes with the Creed. The Anaphora<sup>164</sup> opens with the prayer of the kiss of peace and ends with post-communion prayers.

#### 1.4.4. Husoyo

The *husoyo* (ܡܫܘܝܐ) is a book of prayers, i.e. prose prayers recited at specific times. *Husoye* are used for Sundays, feasts, Lent, Passion Week and other occasions. A *husoyo* prayer has two parts: the *promion* (ܦܪܡܝܘܢ) or introductory prayer, usually brief, and the *sedro*, (ܣܕܪܐ), which contains the text of the prayer and is usually longer than the *promion*.<sup>165</sup> The *sedro* is recited jointly with a concluding prayer, a usage for which the Orthodox Church alone is distinguished.<sup>166</sup> There are many manuscripts<sup>167</sup> of *husoyo* kept in different libraries.

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<sup>162</sup> Chaillot, *The Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch and the All the East*, 97.

<sup>163</sup> *The Service Book of Holy Eucharist (Anaphora)*, (2010), 101.

<sup>164</sup> For a brief explanation of the anaphora, see Spinks, (2007), *Eastern Christian Liturgical Traditions*, 348.

<sup>165</sup> Barsoum, (2003), *The Scattered Pearls*, 77.

<sup>166</sup> Barsoum, (2003), *The Scattered Pearls*, 77-78.

#### 1.4.5. The Service Books for the Sacraments

The Syrian Orthodox Church has a service book containing prayers for the Order of the Sacraments. The seven Sacraments are Baptism,<sup>168</sup> Myron, Confession,<sup>169</sup> Eucharist, Marriage,<sup>170</sup> Ordination (Priesthood)<sup>171</sup> and the Anointing of the Sick.<sup>172</sup> Of these seven, five are compulsory for all Christians and two are optional, marriage and priesthood. The sacrament of marriage is for those who desire it and priesthood is for those who are called (Heb. 5:4).

The Syrian Orthodox Church developed several baptismal ordos, suggesting regional differences. These are attributed to Severios of Antioch, Timothy of Alexandria and Philoxenus of Mabbug.<sup>173</sup> However, the baptismal rite now in use is that of Severios of Antioch. The marriage rite has the usual eastern brief betrothal, with the joining of right hands.

#### 1.4.6. The Service Book of Feasts (M'adh'dhono)

The Syrians have a special service book (ܡܕܚܒܐ) for the principal feasts called *M'adh'dhono*.<sup>174</sup> This book covers the special services to be conducted on the various Holy days of the Lord, from the Nativity<sup>175</sup> through to the Feast of the Holy Cross,<sup>176</sup> including special Lenten forgiveness rites as well as services for the various feasts of the Virgin Mary and the other saints of the Church.

It contains the Orders for the Nativity of the Lord, the Order for the consecration of water at Epiphany, the Order for the Monday of Lent called the Monday of Forgiveness, the Order for

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<sup>167</sup> See BNF Syriac 70, 167, British Museum MSS. 14494, 14495, 17128 etc.

<sup>168</sup> See British Museum MSS. 17128, 14495.

<sup>169</sup> See BAV Borg. Siriaco 51 & 57.

<sup>170</sup> See BNF Syriac 102.

<sup>171</sup> See BNF Syriac 113, British Museum MSS. 17232 and BAV Borg. Siriaco 51 & 57.

<sup>172</sup> Kadavil, (1973), *The Orthodox Syrian Church*, 153.

<sup>173</sup> Spinks, (2007), *Eastern Christian Liturgical Traditions*, 349.

<sup>174</sup> See British Museum MSS. 141494, 17128, Samuel, (1984), *M'adh'dhono*.

<sup>175</sup> December 25.

<sup>176</sup> September 14.

the mid-Lent Festival of the Cross, the Order for the consecration of branches on Palm Sunday, the Order for the washing of feet on the Thursday of Passion Week, the burial service of the Cross on Good Friday, the Order for peace on Easter morning, the Order for Pentecost and the Order for the Feast of the Holy Cross.<sup>177</sup>

The difference between the *Fenqitho* and *M'adh'dhono* is that the *Fenqitho* contains the proper hymns for the daily offices throughout the liturgical year, which are chanted as a preparatory ritual for the Eucharist, whereas the *M'adh'dhono* contains the liturgical services of Church festivals.

#### **1.4.7. Funeral Books**

Funeral rites are provided for males, females, children and clerics. The rite is known as the *tesko d' oufoyo* (Order of Enshrouding). The overall structure of each is similar, and consists of four services for lay people and eight services for clergy. The Divine Liturgy is required on the third, ninth, thirtieth and fortieth days and the first anniversary of a death.

#### **1.4.8. The Books of Ordination and Consecration**

These service books contain the prayers for various offices of ordination for both low and high offices within the Church.<sup>178</sup> The present ordination rites are attributed to the Patriarch, Michael the Great.<sup>179</sup> The rites are given for singer, reader, sub-deacon, deacon, priest, and bishop as well as for the institution of an archdeacon, Cor-episcopos<sup>180</sup>, monk, nun, Catholicos and Patriarch. In the churches of the Syriac tradition, women are not admitted to the priesthood or higher ranks.

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<sup>177</sup> Barsoum, (2003), *The Scattered Pearls*, 87-88.

<sup>178</sup>The church ranks include the offices of singer, reader, sub deacon, deacon, archdeacon, priest, Cor-episcopos, monk, nun, bishop, Catholicos and Patriarch.

<sup>179</sup> Spinks, (2007), *Eastern Christian Liturgical Traditions*, 351.

<sup>180</sup> Cor-episcopos is an honorary rank among priests. The cor-episcopos is privileged as “first among the priests” and given a chain with a cross and has specific decorations on his vestment. The word literally means ‘bishop of a village’. In ancient times they were put in-charge of a village or a locality under a bishop. Cor-episcopos is the highest rank a married priest can be elevated to in the Syrian Orthodox Church. For any rank above the Corepiscopos the priest must be unmarried. See Melling, (1999), “Chorepiscopos”, 119.

The rites for the consecration of churches, new altars and altar *tablito*, the consecration of baptismal oil<sup>181</sup> and unction oil,<sup>182</sup> the consecration of Myron,<sup>183</sup> the order of installation of a new bishop<sup>184</sup> and so on are also included in this book.

#### 1.4.9. Other Prayers

The Syrian Orthodox Church Fathers also wrote different prayers for the blessing of meals, fruit, fields, crops, homes, children, and the sick as well as prayers for reconciliation, for the driving away of harm, plagues, calamities, etc.<sup>185</sup>

### 1.5. The Consecration of a new Church

For many centuries, it has been customary to hold a service of consecration for the inauguration of a new church. The building becomes a holy place, not as a result of some special ceremony, but from the moment that it is first used as a church, that is, once people have assembled in it to pray. Prior to that time, the structure is not truly a sacred space.

Church buildings may be constructed according to a variety of architectural styles. There is no requirement in Syrian Orthodox tradition that the church or its grounds assume a particular pattern, but Syrian Orthodox Christians traditionally face the east when celebrating the liturgy. It has become customary to place the altar against the eastern wall of the sanctuary, so that worshippers face eastwards when they recite prayers. We will see more details in chapter four.

In the Syrian Orthodox tradition, the diocesan bishop usually performs the consecration of a new church, but if he is unable to perform the consecration he may ask another bishop to act

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<sup>181</sup> Baptismal oil is consecrated by bishops and this oil is used for anointing during the time of baptism.

<sup>182</sup> This oil is also consecrated by bishops who anoint it on the body parts of a sick person, normally on the head, chest, arms, legs, palms etc.

<sup>183</sup> According to the tradition of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch the *Myron*, Chrism is usually consecrated on Thursday of Passion Week and it is the exclusive right of the Patriarch of Antioch.

<sup>184</sup> Also called *suntroniso* or enthronement (سُنْطْرُونِسَا). The ordained bishop confesses that he will follow the teachings of the fathers and doctors of the Church and obey the Patriarch of Antioch and the Metropolitan of his diocese and will renounce the heretics and dissenters, enumerating them one by one from the apostolic era to the ninth century. See Barsoum, (2003), *The Scattered Pearls*, 86.

<sup>185</sup> See *The Service Book of Prayer*, (1990).

on his behalf.<sup>186</sup> All churches are consecrated to God but are also given names with reference to a particular patron saint, e.g. St. Mary, St. Peter, St. Paul, etc.

### 1.5.1. The Reason for the Word ‘Church’

The Greek word *ecclesia* refers to ‘an assembly’ but is generally translated as ‘a small groups of believers’. The word holds no essential connection with a building i.e., a temple, cathedral, church etc. but only an assembly of people. In fact more precisely, it represents members of a specific spiritual assembly. The term *ecclesia* is also used symbolically for the church, portrayed as a community wedded to Christ and the object of his love and devotion (Eph. 5: 23f). According to Paul (1 Cor. 11: 17), the word *ecclesia* signifies the community of believers gathered together in a specific place or house for worship. The apostles always called their Christian gathering a church, to distinguish it from a gathering of the Jews.<sup>187</sup> Following the New Testament understanding of *ecclesia*, the Syrians and the Byzantines saw the Church primarily as a liturgical gathering.<sup>188</sup>

The Syrian Orthodox ecclesiology is essentially the same as the Syro-Antiochene ecclesiology, as developed by the Byzantines.<sup>189</sup> The relationship between the church and the assembly was perhaps in the mind of Moses Bar Kepha<sup>190</sup> (d. 903), when he referred to the term ‘*idto*’; he explains the word for the church as follows:

The reason for the name, Church: As in Syriac the name ‘*idto*’, is derived from the word ‘*ido*’. According to old manuscripts, we observe that the name ‘*idto*’ is in the feminine gender, while ‘*ido*’ is masculine. i.e. *mor* (sir) and as *mortho* (lady), again, i.e. *malko* (king) and *malktho* (queen). The name ‘*ido*’ denotes “a gathering full of

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<sup>186</sup> Bar-Hebraeus, (1986), *Nomocanon of Bar-Hebraeus*; Julius, (trs.), (1974), *Hudayacanon*, 12.

<sup>187</sup> Thiselton, (2011), *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, 28.

<sup>188</sup> Varghese, (2004), *West Syrian Liturgical Theology*, 92.

<sup>189</sup> Varghese, (2004), *West Syrian Liturgical Theology*, 92.

<sup>190</sup> Moses Bar Kepha was a writer and one of the most celebrated bishops of the Syrian Orthodox Church of the ninth century. He was born in Balad in Nineveh, now in Iraq, about the year AD 813 and died in 903. A biography of him, written by an anonymous Syriac writer, is preserved in one of the Vatican manuscripts, extracts from which are given by Asemani in his *Bibliotheca Orientalis* (II, 218f.). He was a monk and afterwards became bishop of three cities, Beth-Ramman, Beth-Kionaya and Mosul on the Tigris, assuming the name of Severus. For ten years he was the patriarchal vicar of the Diocese of Tagrit where he acquired a great fame and reputation. He was buried in the monastery of St. Sergius, situated on the Tigris, near his native city.

joy.” Thus ‘idto denotes the gathering of believers worthy of good deeds, an image of the gathering of the heavenly Church.<sup>191</sup>

Moses Bar Kepha goes on to provide an explanation of the derivation of the word ‘Church’ and he includes a few points of what interpreters think of the word ܥܕܬܐ ‘idto. He says that some of them believe it has Jewish roots. Since in Hebrew it is called קהילה *knuyishwothe*, (literally means “gathering”), while in Syriac it is ܩܢܫܬܐ, *knushto*, (church) and in Greek ἐκκλησία *ekklēsia*, which in Syriac means ܩܪܝܬܐ *qroyto* (calling, invitation), as in the one that was called from peoples and nations.<sup>192</sup> Yet he also explains that ‘Idto derives from ܥܕܬܐ ‘ido and from ܥܡܬܐ *sawbo* (assembly). Furthermore, he claims that *knushto* derives from ܩܢܫܬܐ *knushyo* (gathering) and from *sawbo*. However, he emphasises that neither ‘idto and nor *knushto* denote houses made of planks of wood or stones, rather it refers to the grouping of people gathered in them.<sup>193</sup>

All churches are dedicated primarily to God alone. Sometimes for convenience we speak of dedicating a church to a saint, but in reality the church is dedicated to God in memory of a martyr, apostle or saint. St. Augustine of Hippo said, “To the saints we appoint no churches, because they are not with us as gods, but as memorials as unto dead men, whose spirits with God are still living.”<sup>194</sup> The naming of the churches after saints, apostles and martyrs is either because in their ministry they pleased God by displaying some rare effects of His power,<sup>195</sup> or as a result of their martyrdom which they embraced due to their testimony to Jesus Christ. The places where they died became venerable and so virtuous and godly people referred to their names for the purpose of intercession and recommended them as role models.

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<sup>191</sup> The Syriac Manuscripts in the British Museum Add 21210 (fols.132-34) of AD 1242 is about 10 inches high consisting of 232 leaves. Some of these are much stained and torn, especially fol. 1,121,122,154, 155, 178, 202, 203, and 232; whilst others have been retouched and repaired by more modern hands. The quires, signed with letters, are 23 in number, but the last is imperfect. There are from 21 to 35 lines on each page. This manuscript, which seems to be written by three hands, is dated A. Gr. 1553, AD 1242. It contains: 1. The Festal Homilies of Moses Bar Kepha, or Mar Severus, with some other discourses by the same writer. In fol. 132, we find the dedication of a church. The translation of this portion is mine. See Wright, (1871), Catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts in the British Museum, 876-879.

<sup>192</sup> Cf. Jeremiah 23:3.

<sup>193</sup> British Museum Add 21210 (fol.132-34) of AD1242.

<sup>194</sup> De Civitate Dei, Lib. Xxii. 10. See Muncey, (1930), *A History of the Consecration of Churches and Churchyards*, 3.

<sup>195</sup> Hooker & McGrade, (eds.), (2013), *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, 35.

The consecration of a church building is a complex service filled with much profound symbolism. Many Biblical elements taken from the Old Testament such as the consecration of the Tabernacle (Exod. 11:1-11), of Solomon's temple (I Kings 8; 2 Chron. 7, Jn. 10:22), of the Temple under Zerubbabel (Ezra 6: 16-17), and of the building of the Temple and rebuilding of the altar when Judas Maccabeus had driven out the Seleucids (1 Macc. 4; 2 Macc. 10) are employed in the consecration service.

### 1.6. Annual Feast of Dedication in the Syrian Orthodox Church

A dedication festival is the annual commemoration<sup>196</sup> of the day of a church's original consecration (though not held on the actual date of consecration) and is therefore to be distinguished from the patronal festival which is in honour of the patron saint.<sup>197</sup> The calendar of the Church starts with *Qudosh 'idto* Sunday which means 'dedication of the church Sunday.' According to the liturgical calendar, October 30<sup>th</sup> or 31<sup>st</sup> or the first Sunday of November marks the beginning of the Syrian Orthodox Church liturgical year<sup>198</sup> and the feast of *Qudosh 'idto*. Regarding the annual cycle in the Syrian Orthodox and the Chaldaean traditions Cassingena-Trévedy says:

But the difference between the two cycles lies especially in their starting-point: while the East Syrians have the year begin in December with the series of Advent Sundays, the West Syrians make it begin in November with the Sundays of Dedication (which the former place at the end of the cycle). The (Feast of) Dedication ... appears to be the one great variation in the oriental cycles ...<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>196</sup> In 2 Maccabees 10:5-6 says that, "They rededicated the Temple on the twenty-fifth day of the month of Kislev, the same day of the same month on which the Temple had been desecrated by the Gentiles. And they kept eight day celebration with joy, like the feast of tabernacles, in every year.....". Kislev is the ninth month of the ecclesiastical year on the Hebrew calendar.

<sup>197</sup> Cross & Livingstone, (eds.), (1997), *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 465.

<sup>198</sup> The liturgical year of the Syrian Churches may have also a link with the Hebrew Calendar. In the Hebrew calendar, Kislev is the ninth month of the ecclesiastical year.

<sup>199</sup> Cassingena-Trévedy, (2006), "L'organisation du Cycle Annuel", 28.



This feast is to be celebrated, strictly speaking, only in consecrated churches. The first recorded observance of such a feast is that of the dedication of the Church of the Anastasis in Jerusalem, described by Egeria<sup>200</sup> who wrote:

The date when the church on Golgotha (called the Martyrium, or Holy Sepulchre) was consecrated to God is called Encaenia,<sup>201</sup> and on the same day the Holy Church of the Anastasis was also consecrated, the place where the Lord rose again after His passion. The Encaenia of these holy churches is a feast of special magnificence, since it is on the very date when the Cross of the Lord was discovered. So they arranged that this day should be observed with all possible joy by making the original dedication of these holy churches coincide with the very day when the Cross had been found. You will find in the Bible that the day of Encaenia was where the House of God was consecrated, and Solomon stood in prayer before God's altar, as we read in the Book of Chronicles (2 Chron.6: 12).<sup>202</sup>

The Christian feast of the dedication of a church building may be a copy of the Jewish festival of *Hannūkah*. This Feast of Dedication, once also called the 'Feast of the Maccabees',<sup>203</sup> was a Jewish festival observed for eight days from the 25<sup>th</sup> of Kislev (usually in December, but occasionally late November, due to the luni-solar calendar).<sup>204</sup> Cassingena-Trévedy says:

The Syrian Dedication ... with its thematic and contrastive debt which attaches it to the Jewish (Feast of) *Hannūkah*, gives especially to the cycle an ecclesiological ballast and twist which has no parallel, it seems, in the other liturgical traditions:

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<sup>200</sup> Sometimes referred to as Etheria or Aetheria or Silvia. She is the writer of the earliest Christian narrative by a woman pilgrim to the Holy Land in AD 381-386. See Cross & Livingstone (eds.), (1997), *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 386.

<sup>201</sup> "Dedication or "Encaenia" was kept for eight days like Solomon's dedication of the Temple, to which Egeria refers. Wilkinson, (trs.), (1981), *Egeria's Travels to the Holy Land*, 79.

<sup>202</sup> Wilkinson, (trs.), (1981), *Egeria's Travels to the Holy Land*, 48.1, 146.

<sup>203</sup> In 2 Maccabees 10:5-6 it says that, "They rededicated the Temple on the twenty-fifth day of the month of Kislev, the same day of the same month on which the Temple had been desecrated by the Gentiles. And they kept eight day celebration with joy, like the feast of tabernacles, in every year..."

<sup>204</sup> A lunisolar Calendar is a calendar used in many cultures whose dates indicate both the moon's phase and the time of the solar year. See Stern, (2001), *Calendar and Community: A History of the Jewish Calendar, Second century BCE-tenth Century CE*.

through the visible building and abstraction drawn from the original significance of the Feast, there is a real celebration specifically of the mystery of the Church.<sup>205</sup>

Judas Maccabeus instituted this festival in the year 165 BC in commemoration of the re-consecration of the Temple in Jerusalem, after it had been desecrated in the persecution under Antiochus Epiphanes (168 BC).<sup>206</sup> Moses Bar Kepha describes this as follows:

When Antiochus vanquished the Jews, he killed forty thousands of them, and forty thousand he exiled. The rest who remained, he forbade them from entering Jerusalem. They remained out of Jerusalem three years. And they built for themselves towers outside of Jerusalem. And a dense forest grew up in the Temple and other places. Afterwards, the Maccabees made war and were victorious and they entered Jerusalem and renewed the temple. And they made a festival for eight days and this they did year after year.<sup>207</sup>

This eight day festival (also called *Hannūkah* or the Feast of Lights) celebrated the rededication of the Temple in December 164 BC.<sup>208</sup> Josephus refers to the festival in Greek simply as “lights”. “And from that time to this we celebrate this festival, and call it ‘Lights’. I suppose the reason was, because this liberty beyond our hopes appeared to us; and that thence was the name given to that festival.”<sup>209</sup>

The Feast of Dedication is also referred to in John 10:22 which mentions Christ being present at the Jerusalem Temple during the Feast of Dedication. Bar Kepha indicates:

That is the time when Jesus was there at the renewal of the temple, the day when the temple construction was completed. When they returned from Nebuchadnezzar’s exile, it was the same day on which the temple’s reconstruction was completed. It is this holy day, many people gathered from many regions. This renewal was the day in which the temple was completed. It was built after their return from Babylon. The temple that Solomon built was destroyed. Thus this renewal of the city and temple

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<sup>205</sup> Cassingena-Trévedy, (2006), “L’organisation du Cycle Annuel”, 44-45.

<sup>206</sup> Cross & Livingstone, (eds.), (2005), “Jewish Feast of the Dedication”, 465.

<sup>207</sup> British Museum Add. 21210 (fols.132-34) of AD1242.

<sup>208</sup> Köstenberger, (2004), *John*, 309.

<sup>209</sup> Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, 391.

happened after the destruction by King Antiochus and his return to Rome and the Jews return from exile of the Macedonian kings. They again renewed the city and temple. Henceforth, this day of triumph and reconstruction they called it the festival of renewal. They affixed it on the twenty-fifth day of *Konun Kadim*. Because in it the Maccabees were victorious. In which we also celebrate the birth of Christ.<sup>210</sup>

However, Bar Kepha appears to be slightly confused, making too clear a distinction between the rebuilding after the exile and the re-dedication after Antiochus IV.

Jews gave importance to celebrating special occasions such as victories, as well as the times when God protected them and saved them. A better example of such a celebration is when Yahweh saved them during the time of Esther. During that time, they renewed and re-dedicated their relationship with God, and instituted a new festival, that of Purim. Jews celebrate the Purim feast on the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> of the 12<sup>th</sup> month (Adar) - during late February or early March in commemoration of the re-dedication. Similarly, Christians re-dedicate their churches as a day of renewal, submission, and dedication.

As part of the liturgical calendar, the Church celebrates *Hudoth 'idto* on the Sunday succeeding the Sunday of *Qudosh 'idto*. The Syriac term *Hudoth 'idto* means 'The Renewal of the Church'. Bar Kepha informs us about the reason of this celebration in his writing as follows:

The evangelist John says that: The reason for the celebration of the consecration of the church is because of the celebration of renewals in Jerusalem. It occurs in winter. Thus, just as there are no fruits in winter, likewise, they [the Jews] lacked faith. And just as winter existed, so did the renewals exist. And this is the reason for the renewals.<sup>211</sup>

### **1.7. The Reason for the Celebration of the Consecration of a Church**

The Syrian Orthodox liturgical texts present the Church as a liturgical assembly, a community that prays. The *Shehimo* often says of the Church: 'Behold she sings praise'. The

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<sup>210</sup> British Museum Add. 21210 (fols.132-34) of AD 1242.

<sup>211</sup> British Museum Add. 21210 (fols.132-34) of AD 1242.

theme is further developed in the offices of the Consecration of the Church. The Night prayer of the Church speaks of the praying Church in vivid terms: “The Church is like a gathering of chirping birds. With the mouth they sing praise, and with the tongue they offer thanksgiving”.<sup>212</sup> The Church offers true worship and invites the whole of humanity to be united with her to worship God. It is through the liturgical gathering that the Church manifests herself as the beloved of Christ, and she proclaims his good news to the world.

Bar Kepha stated that through the consecration of the church, the faithful receive a blessing from God and they will all be spiritually renewed. By celebrating the consecration of the church (*Qudosh ‘idto*) every year, the Church is expected to renew and rededicate itself as a community bearing the beacon of light to the society around, which fumbles in the darkness of evil. It is the time though prayer and hard work that the community strive to be as good as Christ in rendering selfless service to fellow-beings and to live a holy life to the glory of God and in tune with His statutes. Jesus Christ prayed to His Father to sanctify His disciples and His Church: “Sanctify them in the truth; Your Word is truth. As you did send me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake I consecrate myself, and they also may be consecrated in truth” (Jn. 17: 17-19). Thus, in *Fenqitho*, the evening prayer of the dedication of the church is as follows:

Make to cease in your churches rivalries and disunity, that peace and tranquillity may abound in them, in every place, Lord, and strengthen them by Your Cross, that in their assemblies they may praise you with joy.<sup>213</sup>

The liturgy of consecration informs us that the feast day is to be a reminder, to be a day of rest, to be an occasion of giving thanks, to be a time to repent, and to be a day of reading the Scripture.<sup>214</sup> On the consecration day, the clergy request the Lord to “protect her [the Church] communities and guard her children; widen her borders and establish her foundation with the supports of your firm knowledge”.<sup>215</sup>

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<sup>212</sup> Renovation of the Church Night Vigil in Acharya (trs.), (1982), *Prayer with the Harp of the Spirit*, Vol. II, 43.

<sup>213</sup> Acharya, (trs.), (1982), *Prayer with Harp of the Spirit*, Vol. II, 18.

<sup>214</sup> Acharya, (trs.), (1982), *Prayer with Harp of the Spirit*, Vol. II, 28.

<sup>215</sup> BAV Borg. Siriaco 57, fols. 30B and 31A.

The liturgy of sanctification reminds and instructs the faithful to purify themselves, and to reconfirm their relationship with God. The believer dedicates himself to inner renewal, growing spiritually, as well as renewing relationships with his Christian brethren. That is to say, the gifts of the Holy Spirit are used to develop our faith to love our fellow humans.<sup>216</sup> The gifts of the Spirit should not be abused for our own glory, but they are seen as building blocks to construct the Kingdom of God.<sup>217</sup>

Again Bar Kepha says:

Spiritually, the church is like the soul, which should always be renewed with virtues. Not just once a year, rather daily. This is why the church Fathers set this holy day of consecration of church to be performed every year so that our salvation is renewed always. The church is not in need of many consecrations every year. But rather by this commemoration we will be spiritually renewed and consecrated by the divine grace and holiness. When God commanded Moses to go down and make the tabernacle to serve in the mystery of the church for a period of time. When He reckoned all its colours, He told him, [make it] in the shape, I show you on Mount Sinai. That is to say, Moses saw the church with his eyes, built and completed on the mountain, and he descended and made it like it. He wanted an old custom for those who design churches, and that they will be able to say something beneficial. They may go to the centre to provide to the hearers, with wisdom and knowledge, which they possess.<sup>218</sup>

When the construction of a church was complete there were inauguration activities, consecration, dedication and great public ceremonies. But it did not end there. The inauguration of a church could also be re-enacted on an annual basis. According to the Syrian Orthodox Church, the purpose of *qudosh 'idto* is not only for the church building to be sanctified, but also for the faithful, who are to maintain the sanctification by following the Word of God, both by caring for individual and collective responsibilities.<sup>219</sup>

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<sup>216</sup> *The Service Book of M'adh'dhono*, (1992), (Order of Pentecost, first service), 414.

<sup>217</sup> *The Service Book of M'adh'dhono*, (1992), (Order of Pentecost, first service), 414.

<sup>218</sup> British Museum Add 21210 (fols.132-34) of AD1242.

<sup>219</sup> *The Service Book of M'adh'dhono*, (1992), (Order of Pentecost, first service), 415.

Traditional theology says that the Church is the body of Christ and not merely an association or incorporation of people. Christ sanctified her by His sacrifice and continues with the sanctification process. On the *qudosh 'idto* Sunday the faithful work together, by putting away their differences to glorify His Name through words and deeds with the help of His Holy Spirit.

### **1.8. The Development of the Ritual of the Consecration of a Church**

Solomon's dedication of the Temple (1 Kings 8:63) eventually provided the model for the consecration of churches by Christians, but no special rite was developed at first. Gregorios Bar Hebraeus explains the passage in 1 Kings 8:63 as "And they dedicated" (i.e., they consecrated) "the House of the Lord, the King."<sup>220</sup> The Syriac verb he used for consecration or dedication is ܠܚܢܐ which literally means 'to renew.' The sanctifying of the Tabernacle and its furniture and ornaments (Exod. 40), the dedication of Solomon's Temple (1 Kings 8) and the Second Temple by Zerubbabel (Ezra 6), its rededication by Judas Maccabaeus and the dedication of the temple of Herod the Great<sup>221</sup> are all examples of such dedication. It seems likely then that the custom of dedicating or consecrating buildings for Christian worship are of Jewish origin.<sup>222</sup>

There is no clear evidence as to how the consecration ceremony took place before the 11<sup>th</sup> century. The only outstanding manuscript dates from the time of Michael the Great in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Due to lack of any other written records, it is uncertain what dedication ceremonies and rites were carried out in the buildings of Christian worship in the early Christian era. In the second and third centuries the Church was a comparatively private community and its worship took place in private homes (Col. 4:15), markets and hired halls (Acts 20:8).

From a historical perspective we can see that the conversion of the Roman Emperor Constantine the Great (reigned AD 306-337) marks a watershed in the patristic period.

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<sup>220</sup> Assad, (trs.), (2003), *Gregory Bar-Hebraeus's Commentary on the Book of Kings from His Storehouse of Mysteries*, 283.

<sup>221</sup> Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, XV. c. xi. 6.

<sup>222</sup> Jews also dedicated their private houses and walls of their cities, when they were complete. See 1 Kings 8. The title of the Psalm 30, which is inscribed, "A Psalm or Song at the dedication of the house of David" and in Nehemiah 12:27f, of the dedication of the walls in Jerusalem.

Eusebius recorded that in Constantine's reign after the persecution of Diocletianic many churches were built and also dedicated. He says:

After this was seen the sight which had been desired and prayed for by us all; feasts of dedication in the cities and consecrations of the newly built houses of prayer took place, bishops assembled, foreigners came together from abroad, mutual love was exhibited between people and people, the members of Christ's body were united in complete harmony.<sup>223</sup>

From the second half of the fourth century onwards, the Church borrowed much from the civil magistracy: the basilican building,<sup>224</sup> the clothes, the processions, the lights, the incense.<sup>225</sup> Constantine's declaration of religious tolerance throughout the empire greatly increased the Christians' need for larger churches. They could now build churches on a grander scale to accommodate large numbers of Christians as well as make the churches uniquely identifiable to the public. These churches now reflected the changed status of Christianity.

Archaeologists and historians have noted a number of peculiarities in the construction and particularly the ground-plan of a number of ancient churches in Mesopotamia and North Syria,<sup>226</sup> for example the two churches in North Syria, the Church of Julianos<sup>227</sup> (dated AD 345 or later) and the Church of Masechos.<sup>228</sup> Both had simple plans. The nave of the Church of Julianos had ten bays, each of which was separated from the adjoining one by arches which spanned seven metres and which were supported by piers that projected 75 metres from the walls. The presbyterium was a semi-circular apse, almost as wide as the nave,

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<sup>223</sup> Eusebius, H.E., Book 10 chapter 3, 370.

<sup>224</sup> Basilica is a term in Roman times applied to a large public building in which business and legal matters were transacted. Vaughan Hart argues, "Theologians studied Solomon's Temple as a prototype of the early primitive Christian church, from whose 'basilica' drew their inspiration". See Hart, (2002), *Nicholas Hawksmoor: Rebuilding Ancient Wonders*, 96.

<sup>225</sup> Jones, (1992), *The Study of Liturgy*, 63.

<sup>226</sup> Rouwhorst, (1997), "Jewish Liturgical Traditions in Early Syriac Christianity", 74; See for a survey of the available evidence and the relevant secondary literature, Taft, (1968), "Some Notes on the Bema in the East and West Syrian Traditions", 326-359.

<sup>227</sup> The Church of Julianos is a large building in the village of Brad, in North Syria. See Wilkinson, (2002), *From Synagogue to Church*, 138.

<sup>228</sup> Church of Masechos at Umm al-Jimal is situated very near the border between Jordan and Syria. Umm al-Jimal means 'Mother of Camels' in Arabic. See Butler, (1913), "Ancient Architecture in Syria", 174.

separated from the nave by an arch, five metres wide, and carried by two deeply projecting piers.<sup>229</sup> The Church of Masechos had an undivided nave of six bays separated by arches which had a span of over six metres and were carried on projecting wall piers. There was also a deep-set semi-circular apse between long, narrow side chambers, and a colonnaded porch of four bays, closed at one end and open at the other, making up the simple plan of the church.<sup>230</sup>

In Constantine's time, churches observed the memory of martyrs and celebrated seasonal festivals.<sup>231</sup> Churches were erected in many places and dedicated in the presence of bishops and the Emperor. Eusebius<sup>232</sup> describes the dedication of a Christian church at Tyre in AD 314. This is the earliest recorded instance of a dedication of a church. As Eusebius records, "He (Constantine) rendered honour to the memory of the martyrs, and consecrated his city church to the martyrs' God."<sup>233</sup>

Another source on consecration is the *Clementine Recognitions*<sup>234</sup> which describes the use and perhaps renovation of a house to a church. In 10.71, we read that "Theophilus, who was more exalted than all the men of power in the city, with all eagerness of desire consecrated the great palace of his house under the name of a church, and a chair was placed in it for the Apostle Peter by all the people; and the whole multitude assembling daily to hear the word, believed in the healthful doctrine which was avouched by the efficacy of cures".<sup>235</sup> Rufinus

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<sup>229</sup> Butler, (1913), "Ancient Architecture in Syria", 174

<sup>230</sup> Butler, (1913), "Ancient Architecture in Syria", 176-77.

<sup>231</sup> Eusebius says that, A statute was also passed, enjoining the due observance of the Lord's Day, and transmitted to the governors of every province, who undertook, at the emperor's command, to respect the day commemorative of martyrs and duly to honour the festal seasons in the churches." (Eusebius, The life of Constantine, Book 4 chapter 23, 545).

<sup>232</sup> Eusebius, HE, Book 10 chapter 2, 370-78. Also see in Cross & Livingstone, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 386.

<sup>233</sup> Eusebius, *The Life of Constantine*, Book 3 chapter 48, 532.

<sup>234</sup> *Clementine Recognitions*, a third-century narrative originally written in Greek and extant only in Rufinus of Aquileia's Latin translation. Rufinus died in AD 411, but he finished the translation sometime after 407, and dedicated it to Gaudentius of Brescia. See Hammond, (1977), "The Last Ten Years of Rufinus' Life and the Date of his Move South from Aquileia", 393, though he probably did not complete the translation until after 410 CE.; Murphy, (1945), *Rufinus of Aquileia, His Life and Works*, 113 dated the translation to 404 CE.

<sup>235</sup> *Clementine Recognitions* 10.71, Rehm (ed.), (1965), *Die Pseudoklementen II: Rekognitionen in Rufins Übersetzung*, Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 371; 2-6: *Theofilus, qui erat cunctis potentibus in civitate sublimior, domus suae ingentem basilicam ecclesiae nomine consecraret, in qua Petro apostolo constituta est ab omni populo cathedra, et omnis multitudo cotidie ad audiendum verbum conveniens*. See Sessa, (2009) "Domus Ecclesiae: Rethinking a Category of Ante-Pacem Christian Space", 97-98.



(d. AD 411)<sup>236</sup> indicates that up to about AD 400 Western churches had not yet developed any special material process or sanctifying ritual to convert existing spaces into churches.<sup>237</sup>

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, which Constantine built over Christ's tomb, was consecrated at a full synod of all the bishops of the East (AD 335).<sup>238</sup> Eusebius gives an account of the extensive sermons and dissertations delivered by the bishops during the dedication and we know that the Church was formally dedicated with an oration by him.<sup>239</sup> Egeria tells us that on the occasion of the dedication many bishops were present among the visitors, a tradition perhaps going back to the assembly of bishops organized by Constantine at the original dedication of the buildings at Golgotha.<sup>240</sup> The church however was not completed until a few years later.<sup>241</sup>

Eusebius' contemporary, St. Athanasius I of Alexandria (AD 296-373), also known as the "Pillar of the Church," gives an account of the consecration of a Church in Antioch, called *Dominicum Aureum*, in AD 341.<sup>242</sup> Athanasius, defends himself in an apology to Constantius after he had been charged with having used a building for public worship before it was dedicated and consecrated by the emperor, on the grounds of necessity.<sup>243</sup> St. Athanasius says he had celebrated the Holy Eucharist prior to its consecration.

According to Socrates' Ecclesiastical History, a synod of bishops was assembled in AD 360, for the purpose of dedicating the Church of St. Sophia in Constantinople.<sup>244</sup> The church was dedicated and was called "the Megali Ecclesia" or, in English, "the Great Church".<sup>245</sup> The

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<sup>236</sup> See footnote 402 above

<sup>237</sup> Sessa, (2009), "Domus Ecclesiae: Rethinking a Category of Ante-Pacem Christian Space", 97-98; Duchesne, (1903), *Christian Worship: Its Origins and Evolution*, 399-418.

<sup>238</sup> Eusebius, *The Life of Constantine*, Book 3, 527. See Bingham, (2005), *The Antiquities of the Christian Church*, Vol. I.2, 325.

<sup>239</sup> Cameron, (1993), *The Late Roman Empire*, 16.

<sup>240</sup> Wilkinson, (trs.), (1981), *Egeria's Travels to the Holy Land*, 48.1, 79; See Eusebius, *The life of Constantine*, Book 4, 551; Migne (ed.), (1912), *Patrologiae cursus completus accurante*, 1193.

<sup>241</sup> Lewin, (2005), *The Archaeology of Ancient Judea and Palestine*, 62.

<sup>242</sup> Hook, (1854), *A Church Dictionary*, 245; Socrat. Lib 2.c.8; Bingham, (2005), *The Antiquities of the Christian Church*, 325.

<sup>243</sup> Hook, (1854), *A Church Dictionary*, 245.

<sup>244</sup> Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History* II, 43; See Downey, (1959), "The Name of the Church of St. Sophia in Constantinople", 37-38.

<sup>245</sup> Xantheas, (1995), "Istanbul: Hagia Sophia", 343.

church did not stand for long and was burned to the ground in AD 404, by a mob protesting the exile of John Chrysostom, archbishop of Constantinople.<sup>246</sup>

Another trait seen among the early Christians was their veneration of remains or relics of martyrs and saints, some examples being the relics of St. Peter along with St. Paul at the Basilica Romana of Milan, dedicated by St. Ambrose. This dedication has been dated to before AD 386.<sup>247</sup>

A major contributor to the church's growth in Ravenna was the Empress Galla Placidia, who reigned after the death of the Emperor Honorius in AD 423. She built and consecrated three churches, one dedicated to the Holy Cross, another a monastic church in honour of Zacharias, and another dedicated in honour of John the Evangelist, in thanksgiving for her narrow escape from death when crossing the Aegean.<sup>248</sup>

The separate rite for the consecration of altars is provided for by Canon 14 of the Council of Agde in AD 506, and by Canon 26 of the Council of Epaone in AD 517, the latter containing the first known reference to the practice of anointing the altar with chrism during the consecration of the church.<sup>249</sup> Columbanus, who died in AD 615, has been credited with the first use of holy water and chrism in the consecration of a church.<sup>250</sup>

Roman architecture heavily influenced the newer church buildings from about AD 326.<sup>251</sup> The reason for this was that the traditional temple style buildings were reminiscent of pagan worship with statues of gods and animals in the interior. Christians preferred large churches because such structures were ideal places for the congregation to assemble in its open central space as well as for the clergy to preach, pray and celebrate the Holy Eucharist at the front. The symbolic raised platform for the altar was present at the end of the church, opposite to the entrance doors of the long hall.

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<sup>246</sup> Xantheas, (1995), "Istanbul: Hagia Sophia", 343.

<sup>247</sup> Ambr., Ep. Xxii; Cf. Paulinus Vita Ambr., XXXIII.

<sup>248</sup> Agnellus, *Liber Pontificalis Ravennatis Ecclesiae*, c. 79, The reliability of Agnellus's account in this instance is confirmed by an inscription from a wall in the Church of St. John the Evangelist. See Dessau, (ed.), (1892), *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae*, 818.1; Palardy, (2004). *The Fathers of the Church: Selected Sermons*, 4.

<sup>249</sup> Strabo, *Vita Sancti Galli*, Lib.I., cap.6.

<sup>250</sup> Strabo, *Vita Sancti Galli*, Lib.I., cap.6.

<sup>251</sup> Boin, (2010), "Church Buildings", 119.

There are unique and obvious differences between modern churches and churches from earlier times. Modern churches are often made up of a single, freestanding structure. On the other hand earlier churches, especially those dating from the fourth century, consisted of extensive church compounds. These compounds contained buildings for various purposes, to store clothing and grain for the poor, buildings for baptisms, residential buildings for the clergy and the bishop as well as the church building for worship. Churches in Ravenna are examples of this type of building. The Chaldean church compound in Erbil, Iraq, recently in the news, provides a good contemporary example.

### **1.9. Manuscripts relating to the Consecration of a Church**

A brief outline of the Syriac manuscripts related to the Consecration of the Church is included below. The Vatican Library and the Bibliothèque Nationale de France have provided some of these photocopies. The text and translation in the second chapter of this thesis are based upon these copies.

#### **1.9.1. Vatican Manuscripts**

The Syriac manuscripts of the *Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana* are a collection that extends to over 850 manuscripts, including the collection of 181 formerly at the Borgian Museum.<sup>252</sup> Vatican Syriac 51 was first dated 1572 by Assemani,<sup>253</sup> but an earlier dating was subsequently proposed. On the margin of folios 394 and 396 there is written: “The requirements [prayers] were completed by Behenam, the feeble. Whoever reads shall pray for him in the name of the Lord. This collected book, which contains all the orders of the holy Church arranged briefly, has been renewed and bound together. The writing is of the late Monk Abu al-Faragh, who mentioned in it that he wrote it from the copy and order belonging to the house of Saint Mor Michael the Great<sup>254</sup>, in the year of the Greeks 1483, for the

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<sup>252</sup> For Vatican Library’s Syriac collection see, Desreumaux, and Briquel-Chatonnet, (1991), *Répertoire des Bibliothèques et des Catalogues de Manuscrits Syriaques*, 198.

<sup>253</sup> See Assemanus, (1758), *Bibliothecæ Apostolicæ Vaticanæ Codicum Manuscriptorum Catalogus*, Vol. 2, 327-328.

<sup>254</sup> Michael the Great or Michael the Syrian, was born in 1126 at Melitene (in modern Turkey) and became a Syrian Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch from 1166 until his death in 1199. He is the author of the most extensive of all Syriac world Chronicles covering the period from the Creation to 1195. The *Chronicle*, in twenty-one books, is partly set out in columns dealing with secular events, religious matters and mixed events. He also revised the Syrian Orthodox Pontifical, removing errors and omissions for the sake of liturgical uniformity and accuracy.

treasury of books of the Patriarchal library, and his brother, least amongst bishops. May the Lord spare the compiler, writer, and restorer”.<sup>255</sup> The manuscript was, according to this, written in the year AD 1172 by the Monk Abu al-Faragh.

However, the writing of the year number, 1483 (1483 - 311 = AD 1172), is ambiguous.<sup>256</sup> It could be 1883 (1883 - 311 = AD 1572). Against this later dating we may note that Michael the Great was not alive in AD 1572. Also, on folio 80, the Syrian Jacobite (Orthodox) Bishop Dionysius wrote in his own hand that he had ordained deacons and priests for the churches of the island of Cyprus in the years of the Greeks 1765 and 1768, i.e. in the years AD 1455 and 1457. So this manuscript had already been produced before AD 1572. There is thus an error in the Latin epigraph prefixed to the beginning of the manuscript, which reads as follows: “The Pontifical or Book of Syrian Jacobite [Orthodox] ordinations, produced in the Syriac language and script, in the year of Alexandar 1883, i.e., the year AD 1572, and it contains besides the Ordinations, several Consecrations as well as Blessings according to the Rite of the Jacobite Church”.<sup>257</sup> It does in fact date to 1172, as Kaufhold (who produced additional arguments) concludes.<sup>258</sup> The manuscript contains forty liturgical services and various prayers. It is damaged and the text is unreadable in many places.

The Vatican Borgia Syriac 57<sup>259</sup> was copied from Vatican Syriac 51.<sup>260</sup> Bishop Athanasius Safar of Mardin and Nisibis<sup>261</sup> noted in the *Garshuni*<sup>262</sup> epigraph on folio one that this manuscript is a copy of Manuscript 51 made for the Library of the College of Propaganda Fidei in Rome in the year AD 1686: “I the humble Athanasius Safar Bishop of Mardin and Nisibis have written out the whole exact copy of this manuscript, and I have deposited it in the library of the Propaganda Fidei in Rome, in the year of the Greeks 1998, which

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<sup>255</sup> Assemanus, (1758), *Bibliothecæ Apostolicæ Vaticanæ Codicum Manuscriptorum Catalogus*, 327.

<sup>256</sup> See Kaufhold, (1993), “Ueber Datum und Schreiber der Handschrift Vaticanus Syriacus 51”, 273.

<sup>257</sup> Assemanus, (1758), *Bibliothecæ Apostolicæ Vaticanæ Codicum Manuscriptorum Catalogus*, 327.

<sup>258</sup> Kaufhold, (1993), “Ueber Datum und Schreiber der Handschrift Vaticanus Syriacus 51”, 273.

<sup>259</sup> Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Mss Borg. Siriaco (Syriac) 57.

<sup>260</sup> Kaufhold, (1993), “Ueber Datum und Schreiber der Handschrift Vaticanus Syriacus 51”, 273.

<sup>261</sup> Bishop Athanasius Safar was born in Mardin in 1637. He was educated by the famous scholar Basil Ishaq Jbeir who had studied in Rome. After his ordination to the priesthood he traveled to Iran as an interpreter for the papal nuncio over there. In 1675, he was consecrated bishop by the Syrian Catholic Patriarch Peter VI for the Diocese of Mardin and Nisibis. He died on April 4, 1728. For details see Graf, (1951), *Geschichte der Christlichen Arabischen Literatur*, Vol. 4, 52.

<sup>262</sup> *Garshuni* is a name for Arabic text written with Syriac letters.

corresponds to the year of Christ 1686”<sup>263</sup>. This copy is today Manuscript Borg. Syr. 57. I referred to Vatican manuscript Borgia Syriac 57 in my research because of the great difficulty in reading the Vatican manuscript Syriac 51.

### 1.9.2. Bibliothèque Nationale de France

At the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, the Paris Syriac manuscript 113, folios 1-4 (incomplete) includes details of the consecration of a church and folios 6-16, the consecration of a *tablito*.<sup>264</sup> The catalogue<sup>265</sup> says it is 15<sup>th</sup> century, or a little earlier. There is another fairly early manuscript in Paris containing the services. Paris Syriac Manuscript 110 contains among its many folios dealing with matters such as the rite of confession, the consecration of an altar (ff. 249-74) and the consecration of a church (ff. 274-297).

### 1.9.3. Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate Manuscript

This is the Syrian Orthodox Pontifical which includes the consecration of the church. It was compiled and edited by the late Metropolitan Yuhanon Dolabani of Mardin with completion in 1947.<sup>266</sup> The text consists of two sections: (1) the ordination of clergy from cantors to Cor-episcopos (2) the consecration of Myron, the oil, the church, *tablito*, and the hierarchs. The manuscript is now located at the Syrian Orthodox Archdiocese of the Netherlands, and used for ordinations and consecration services in the Church.<sup>267</sup>

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<sup>263</sup> Assemanus, (1758), *Bibliothecae Apostolicae Vaticanæ Codicum Manuscriptorum Catalogus*, 327; Kaufhold, (1993), “Ueber Datum und Schreiber der Handschrift Vaticanus Syriacus 51”, 273.

<sup>264</sup> A wooden tablet consecrated by the bishop or patriarch on which the paten and chalice are placed on the altar. The *tablito* is functionally equivalent to the Byzantine rite *antimension* and the Ethiopian *tabot*. The modern Byzantine *antimension* is a lined oblong cloth imprinted with the image of Christ laid out for burial. The *antimension* should contain relics, and is usually consecrated by being used to wipe the oil with which an altar is anointed when it is consecrated. The bishop signs the *antimension* and issues it to a priest as his authority to celebrate the Divine Liturgy. In current use, the chalice and paten are always placed on an *antimension* during the liturgy. Essentially the *antimension* is a substitute altar, which allows celebration of the liturgy where no consecrated altar exists. See Izzo, J.M., (1975), *The Antimension in the Liturgical and Canonical Tradition of the Byzantine and Latin Churches: An inter-Ritual Inter-Confessional Study*.

<sup>265</sup> Zotenberg, (1874), *Catalogue des Manuscrits Syriaques et Sabéens de la Bibliothèque Nationale*, 69.

<sup>266</sup> Aydin, (2011), *Comparing the Syriac Order of Monastic Profession with the Order of Baptism both in External Structure and in Theological Themes*, (Unpublished dissertation).

<sup>267</sup> Aydin, (2011), *Comparing the Syriac Order of Monastic Profession with the Order of Baptism both in External Structure and in Theological Themes*, Princeton, New Jersey. (Unpublished dissertation).

#### 1.9.4. Knanaya Manuscripts

This manuscript, here called ‘The Knanaya<sup>268</sup> manuscript’ is an ordination book of Mor Severios.<sup>269</sup> It contains *Omologió*,<sup>270</sup> ordinations of *samrono* (singer), *kooroyo* (reader), *efidiyakno*, (sub deacon), deacons, archdeacons, ordinations of priests, Cor-episcopos, monks and nuns, consecration of churches, *tablitho*, etc. Father Geevarghese Mangachalil copied this manuscript in the early twentieth century. It might have been copied from the book of Patriarch Ignatius Abdulla,<sup>271</sup> who stayed in India for almost two years in 1909-1911. It contains more than 500 pages and the folio dimension is 8 1/2 X 6 1/2 inches.

#### 1.10. Conclusion

Syriac literature played a vital role in the history of Syriac Christianity in its early period. It is important to remember that Syriac literature served as an important channel for other literature, and many great contributions were made to Syriac literature from the fourth century onwards. The vast majority of the Jewish traditions attested in Syriac literature reached Syriac writers before the end of the fourth century and these travelled by different ways which became incorporated into the Peshitta, by way of the Psalms in liturgy, the Apocrypha and so on.

Syriac literature covers all categories of writing, especially those of hymn writing, commentaries, letters and inscriptions, astrology, science etc. The Syrians did not write much

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<sup>268</sup> The Knananya Christians are a very distinct ethnic and religious community, which migrated from Edessa to India in AD 345. Considering their ethnicity, Patriarch Ignatius Abdulla created a separate diocese for Knanaya Christians in 1910 under the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch.

<sup>269</sup> Geevarghese Mor Severios was the first Metropolitan consecrated by Patriarch Ignatius Abdulla on August 28, 1910.

<sup>270</sup> The Greek word *homologia* (*Omologió*) means an agreement. During the time of ordination the candidate reads an oath of obedience in the presence of the bishop, clergy and the faithful gathered there. It affirms that he is accepting the faith and doctrine of the Church, the teachings of the Church fathers, the Church’s teaching about the Holy Trinity and the authority of the bishop. If he stands against any doctrines of the Church or against the Church hierarchy he will be stripped of his priesthood.

<sup>271</sup> Patriarch Ignatius Abdulla, also known as Patriarch Abded-Aloho II, was born in 1833 at Sadad. He became a monk at an early age, and later was ordained priest. He was consecrated as bishop of Jerusalem in 1872 by Patriarch Peter IV and accompanied the Patriarch to England and India from 1874 to 1877. After the death of Patriarch Abded-Mshiho II in 1903, Bishop Abdulla was elected and consecrated as the Patriarch in 1906. In 1909 he came to India and returned on 14 October 1911. He died on 9 December 1915 and was buried at St. Mark’s Monastery, Jerusalem.

about natural history because their interest was directed to religious studies. The writing of history constitutes an essential part of Syriac literature during this period. The main Syrian historians should be considered trustworthy, especially because they mainly restricted themselves to events that they themselves had witnessed. Early writings, such as the 'Doctrine of Addai' and the story of King Abgar, shed light on the beginnings of Christianity in Edessa, even though many interpolations in their texts were made afterwards.

The tradition of two readings from the Bible during the Eucharistic celebration of the Syriac liturgy have a similarity to the Jewish pattern and may have been adopted from the synagogue liturgical system. The Anaphora of St. James the Apostle is a notable one because it is the first and primary anaphora of the Syrian Orthodox Church. West Syrian liturgy gives great importance to the daily prayers which are arranged in the form of seven hours of prayers.

The early Christians in the first three centuries had house churches for worship. However, because of the fear of persecution, the Christians refrained from exercising their acts of worship in public. Many times during the persecutions house churches were confiscated, but then later ordered to be restored. For example the Emperor Gallienus, in the year 260, revoked an edict of his predecessor Valerian (AD 253-260) by ordering that all places dedicated to divine worship by the Christians be restored to them.<sup>272</sup> Christians happily received the churches erected for them by the emperor Constantine. Constantine provided public support for the church buildings, granted various immunities and privileges to the clergy, strengthened church law and attempted to settle a theological dispute by summoning a church council at Nicaea in AD 325.

Churches built over special sites or holy places were often marked by a unique architectural shape. Justinian's churches of saints Sergius and Bacchus, later to be followed by his monumental Hagia Sophia also at Constantinople, used the idea of a cross - shaped - floor plan set under a central dome.

The Consecration of a church is the service of sanctification and solemn dedication of a building for use as a church. The Consecration ceremony was normally performed with a great deal of religious solemnity, since before performing religious services in it, the church

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<sup>272</sup> Ziolkowski, (1986), *The Consecration and Blessing of Churches*, 5.

building had to be separated and dedicated to God. From the first three centuries no definite document referring to the dedication of churches, or of the places used for worship survives. However, there is no reason to deny that there was some sort of dedication of places used for worship.

For Syrian Christians, the church building has always been the centre of all religious activity, especially because the holy Eucharist is celebrated there. In the Syrian Christian church buildings Christ lives and remains within the great sacrament of the Holy Eucharist.



## 2.1. Text of Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana Mss Borg. 57, fol. 27A-36B

- 276 S. Sey.

حصة صا ووهسا مبعها. حصة حلا حمتا وحتو. احملا وولا له كها وسليلا. نعم حر حمتا م  
لعتسلا ولا حلا: ضها..

[illegible][illegible]

9      وسمي هذا الله مع حبالا وكبر مبعدا. حلا انا يا وهبى حله تتحلا هوة ولا. حلا ههلا  
مهيمه لا مهلا ولا سفا لا الهام. من جلمة خفيا حملها حبرجلا صيفكلا والاحدلا  
خمس حامها ههلا..

10 سبحان من جعلنا لا ندو، ومن قبله حبلى، وحبه تال، ومحبى حنينا، الله! جـ منم اهل صلاه كذا، وال  
واقصه، وفكاهة. احبا وحسبا، فعمدا بفصلا، ومنه صلا لؤى، حق هولا صوما. نعم جـ  
لمحتلها ولا محسا. حنى هلاله ...

[illegible]

12 هذه؛ وحللا مع حبار من مخرجهم قلا، وحلقة لا منكم؛ أوهمف مستكلا، وبهتج لهوا  
 وقمتبسي الاستا. وأمم مني؛ لضمه حسا أمة لا منكم؛ أو مني؛ هة ص. وحص  
 كهمه حسا أمة لا منكم؛ أو مني؛ هة. لهف حب هة والهمف منكم؛ أو مني؛ هة

[illegible]

[illegible]

67



אחא. מהד מביסל ומביסלל סממס לביטול סלל ואל סס. סממס סללסס  
 סללסס. סססל מביסל מביס סלל<sup>280</sup>.

18 נססלל וממסלל. סס נלל נכלל חבילל סססל אביס סס מלסס סללססס. אסס  
 סללל סלל נסל. סל ואל נלל אלא חסלל ומלל סללל. סללסס נלל נלל סס סללל  
 ומלל. סללל סלל סללל. סללל סללל חסל. מלל ומלל נסלל. סס סללל סס סלל  
 סללסס ומלל סלל סלל סללל. סלל אסס סללל. סלל אלא סלל סלל  
 סללסס. מלל ולא סללל חבילל מל סלל וסלל סללל סלל אולל ומלל סללל  
 סללסס. סלל ומלל סללל סללל סלל סלל. אסס אולל מל סללל וסלל מל סלל  
 סללל סללסס. סס סלל סלל סללל סלל. סללל סללל ומלל סלל סללל. אלא סלל  
 סלל סללל. סס סלל סלל סלל.

19 נססלל וסללל סלל סללל ולא סללל. אסס<sup>281</sup> וסלל סלללל ולא סלללל וסללל  
 סללל וסללל. סלל מל סללל וסלללל. אסס סללל אלא סללל ומללל סללל סלל  
 סללל סלללל סלללל. מלל וסללל סלללל סלללל. סללל סללל סלללל. סססל  
 וסלל סלללל. לא סללל ולא סללל. סלל סלללל מלל ולא סלללל. מלל וסלללל  
 סללל. סללל וסלללל סללל לא סלללל. מלל וסלללל סלל סללל. סלל סלללל סללל  
 סלללל סללל וסללל. מלל וסללל סללל סלללל. סללל סללל סללל וסללל. סללל  
 סללל סלללל. סללל סללל סללל סללל. סללל סללל סללל וסללל. סללל  
 סללל וסלללל. [29B] סלללל סללל סללל. סללל סללל סללל סללל. סללל  
 סללל וסללל סלללל סלללל.

20 סלללל וסללל מל אלא וסלל: סללל אלא סלללל אלא סלל מל סלל  
 אלא סלל אלא. לא סללל סלל ולא סללל אלא סללל. אלא וסללל אלא סלל. סללל

<sup>280</sup> The Manuscript reads סללל סלללל.

<sup>281</sup> The Manuscript reads אססלל.

فَهُوَ حَمْدٌ وَأَمَّا وَيُحْمَدُ لِلْحَمْدِ

21

22 אוֹתִיכֶם וְחַדָּשׁ בְּ יָמֵיכֶם מִעַם לְאֻמּוֹת וְיִשְׁתַּחֲוּהוּ. מִגִּלְגָּלִים הָיָה חֲלָקְתִּיכֶם  
 וְכֵן בְּ אֲנִי. כִּי־נִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה אֲנִי וְאִמִּי כִּי־נִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה. וְכֵן מִיָּמַי הָיָה  
 נִכְחָדְתִּי. אֲשֶׁר בְּ אֲנִי וְכֵן אֲנִי. אֲנִי כִּי־נִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה. וְכֵן אֲנִי וְכֵן  
 אֲנִי וְאִמִּי. בְּ יָמַי בְּ מִצְרַיִם פְּלִיטָה אֲנִי. אֲנִי אֲמַלְכֵם מִיָּמַי כִּי־נִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה. וְכֵן  
 בְּ יָמַי מִיָּמַי אֲנִי. לְהַחֲדִיל אֲמַלְכֵם מִצְרַיִם. כִּי־נִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה. וְכֵן אֲנִי. אֲנִי אֲנִי  
 וְכֵן אֲנִי. אֲנִי אֲנִי וְכֵן אֲנִי. וְכֵן אֲנִי. וְכֵן אֲנִי. וְכֵן אֲנִי. וְכֵן אֲנִי. וְכֵן  
 וְכֵן. וְכֵן אֲנִי. וְכֵן אֲנִי. וְכֵן אֲנִי. וְכֵן אֲנִי. וְכֵן אֲנִי. וְכֵן אֲנִי. וְכֵן אֲנִי. וְכֵן  
 חָלָה אֲנִי. וְכֵן אֲנִי. וְכֵן אֲנִי. וְכֵן אֲנִי. וְכֵן אֲנִי. וְכֵן אֲנִי. וְכֵן אֲנִי. וְכֵן אֲנִי.

23 וְכֵן אֲנִי. וְכֵן אֲנִי. וְכֵן אֲנִי. וְכֵן אֲנִי. וְכֵן אֲנִי. וְכֵן אֲנִי. וְכֵן אֲנִי. וְכֵן אֲנִי.  
 כִּי־נִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה. וְכֵן אֲנִי. וְכֵן אֲנִי. וְכֵן אֲנִי. וְכֵן אֲנִי. וְכֵן אֲנִי. וְכֵן אֲנִי. וְכֵן אֲנִי.  
 וְכֵן אֲנִי. וְכֵן אֲנִי. וְכֵן אֲנִי. וְכֵן אֲנִי. וְכֵן אֲנִי. וְכֵן אֲנִי. וְכֵן אֲנִי. וְכֵן אֲנִי.  
 וְכֵן אֲנִי. וְכֵן אֲנִי. וְכֵן אֲנִי. וְכֵן אֲנִי. וְכֵן אֲנִי. וְכֵן אֲנִי. וְכֵן אֲנִי. וְכֵן אֲנִי.  
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24 וְכֵן אֲנִי. וְכֵן אֲנִי. וְכֵן אֲנִי. וְכֵן אֲנִי. וְכֵן אֲנִי. וְכֵן אֲנִי. וְכֵן אֲנִי. וְכֵן אֲנִי.  
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<sup>283</sup> The Manuscript reads וְכֵן אֲנִי.





[illegible]

29. הלא מדה חללה וחשעו אלהים מהי; תשמע לאלהיהם וזהו; וזאת להן. והן  
הנה האנשים האלו. והחיים האלו הם.

30 حاصل اُصمى

[illegible]

32 سَلَفٌ ذُو الْعِرْكِ الْمَمْدُودِ<sup>284</sup> فِي مَقَامٍ مَعْدُودٍ ۖ [31B] بِحَدِّ

33 **سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ كَمَا مَكَرْتُمْ وَمَا بَلَا وَهَمٌّ مِمَّنْ لَبِثُوا**

34 اَوَىٰ مَلِكُ حَمْدًا اِلٰهًا مَعَهُ مَلِكُهُ مَلِكُنْ سَعْدًا مَعَهُ مَلِكُنْ اَحَدًا

35 اٰمَنَّا وَبَعَثْنَا فِيْهِمْ رُسُلًا مِنْ بَيْنِنآ اُنْزِلَ فِيْهِ الْقُرْاٰنُ بِالْحَقِّ وَهُوَ الْخُلَاسُ ۝۳۵

<sup>284</sup>  $\frac{1}{2} \frac{1}{2}$ , would be more correct.

36    هج، مغبو؛ ده نیکه مغبهیا. حلال الله ویتها. حسه ویا ولحقا وتلاط. محصل سسه-م  
ولاحسله سرفاهیه. حسه نسبه ده با بحر حبنا حکم.

[illegible]

38 سَدَف سَمَلَا سَلَا سَوَمَعَدَا وَقَام سَحَلَا سَحَف سَحَا وَامْتَعَدَا: مَلَمَ سَمَلَامَا مَع مَدَا  
سَحَا

39 سَلَفَ دَوْلَتِ مُمَيَّنًا، وَهَذَا حَقُّهُ فَمَنْعَهُ. هَذِهِ مَكْنُوزُهُ وَحَقُّهُ مَعَهُ مِنْهَا بَحْدًا.

40 **سَلِّحْ جِبَالَ مِيعَادِ مَلَأَهِ خَيْمٌ مَحْسُورًا. وَنَحْنُ هَقَّةٌ وَأَوْحَا سَحَابٌ خَافِقَةٌ. حَمَّ**  
**مِيعَادُ مَمْنُونٍ وَوَدَّاهُ حَمَلٌ لَحْنًا بِلَهْفٍ ❖**

41  
 لِحَبِيبِهَا وَمُحَمَّدٍ هَذَا صَدَاقُ نَبِيِّ اللَّهِ مُحَمَّدٍ. وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّبِعُونَ هَذَا هَدًى  
 مَعْتَبَرًا وَمِنْهَا مَعْرِفَتُهُ. وَتَعْرِفُونَ أَنَّهُ نَبِيُّ اللَّهِ. وَتَعْرِفُونَ أَنَّهُ  
 نَبِيُّ اللَّهِ وَتَعْرِفُونَ أَنَّهُ نَبِيُّ اللَّهِ وَتَعْرِفُونَ أَنَّهُ نَبِيُّ اللَّهِ

[illegible][illegible]

وَسَاءَ مَا كَذَبَ الْفُتَيَاءُ  
فَمَنْ يَمْنُنْ فَاصْبِرْ وَاصْبِرْ  
فَمَنْ يَمْنُنْ فَاصْبِرْ وَاصْبِرْ

[illegible]

45 حَمَلًا أُنْثَىٰ ۖ فَصَحَّ ۖ فَهَلْ أَحْبَبْتَ ۚ حَمَلًا ذَكَرًا ۚ وَهَلْ كَرِهْتَ ۚ

46

أَفَقَدْ جِئْتُمْ بِشَيْءٍ كَبِيرٍ، وَهُوَ كَذِبٌ أُولَئِكَ يُجْعَلُونَ لِلْكَافِرِ أَلْسِنَةٌ حَسِيصَةٌ وَلَهُمْ فِيهَا آهٌ وَآهِ لَاحِقَةٌ. لَقَدْ جِئْتُمُوهَا وَأَنْتُمْ مُكَذِّبُونَ. هَؤُلَاءِ الَّذِينَ هُوَ قَوْلُهُمْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَهُمْ يَكْفُرُونَ. وَإِن يَرَوْا كِسْفًا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ جُثَّةً مِنَ الْمُهَلِّبِينَ إِذْ يَخْرُجُونَ فِي الْأَسْطِثَاءِ يَقُولُونَ سَحَابٌ مُمِيزٌ. لَقَدْ جِئْتُمُوهَا وَأَنْتُمْ مُكَذِّبُونَ. هَؤُلَاءِ الَّذِينَ هُوَ قَوْلُهُمْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَهُمْ يَكْفُرُونَ. وَإِن يَرَوْا كِسْفًا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ جُثَّةً مِنَ الْمُهَلِّبِينَ إِذْ يَخْرُجُونَ فِي الْأَسْطِثَاءِ يَقُولُونَ سَحَابٌ مُمِيزٌ. لَقَدْ جِئْتُمُوهَا وَأَنْتُمْ مُكَذِّبُونَ. هَؤُلَاءِ الَّذِينَ هُوَ قَوْلُهُمْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَهُمْ يَكْفُرُونَ. وَإِن يَرَوْا كِسْفًا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ جُثَّةً مِنَ الْمُهَلِّبِينَ إِذْ يَخْرُجُونَ فِي الْأَسْطِثَاءِ يَقُولُونَ سَحَابٌ مُمِيزٌ.

47 هَلَا فَكَيْفَ أَحْيَا وَجِبْ مَا جَعَلْتُمْ حَيَاتِهِمْ مَيِّتًا. هَذِهِ مِثْلُ الْآيَاتِ. حَيَاتِهِمْ وَآيَاتِ وَمِثْلُ  
مِثْلِ الْآيَاتِ. لَمْ يَكُنْ مِثْلُ الْآيَاتِ نَحْمُ كَيْ أَحْيَا هَذِهِ مَيِّتًا. هَذَا مِثْلُ الْآيَاتِ

48 [32B] سَوْبِي اَصْلًا وَمَبْنِي مَفْرُوعِي. سَوْعَدَا لَاحِي مَعُوذِي حِيه فَيَطَا حَالًا. مَعَدَا وَرَجِيحًا. مَعْقَلًا مَعْتَسَا سَوْدَا اَزَلِي خَم اَصْفَا حِي مَلْعَنِي لَحْجَبِيَا وَمَعُوذِي مَعُوذِي..  
 مَبْنِيَا: مَعْنَا اَصْفَاة خَلَا فَرَجَا حَقِيَا سَا مَبْنِيَا. مَعْمَار رَجِيحًا حَالًا اَصْلًا سَوْبِي  
 نَعْد حَايِيَا حَلَلَا وَمَعُوذِي. سَوْبِي نَعِي حَالًا حَايَا وَيَجِيَا. سَوْمَر حَايَا حَصَا وَمَعُوذِي  
 وَرَجِيحًا مَعِيَا حِي اَنْدَا سَا. مَعْمَا اَلَا وَمَحِي. حَرَقَا سَا وَمَعْتَسِي مَعْنَا سَوْبِي خَلَا

49 حملا اُصم

51 هَذِهِ مَلِكُهُ أَتَى لِحَضْرَتِهِ بِمِصْبَحٍ فَدَلَّهَا وَمُخَصَّ مَخْفٍ.

[illegible]

76

وَحَصَّه حَيِّ قَالَا لِمَعَّة هَانَا. حَم وَهَسِي مَبْعَا. هَلْخَا هَمَّيْبَا هَنْجَحْب تَسَا هَمَا حَيِّ حَاهَمَا  
هَنْعَا هَحْخَا حَحْخَب.

54 هَنْبِي بَعْد اِفْبَق حَلَا حَنَاه بِي مَهْوَه هَوَّم حَفَلَهوَا حَهَمَمَا وَنَجْبَا حِي اَنْدِي هَالَمَا  
وَمَهْوَه هَفَا مَلْهَلَهوَا نَبْعَسِي اَلَا اَلَا مَر هَمَه هَبِي نَحْب لَمَكَلَا نَكْبَا اَدَاوَا وَحَلَا لُحَلْهَلَا  
حَلَاوَه مَمَمَا وَحَصَّهْوَه وَغَم حَنَاه وَا مَهْوَه حَلَهوَا وَفَلَهوَا تَسَا حَلَهوَا وَوَهَمَمَا وَنَجْبَا حِي  
اَنْدِي حَلَا نَحْب مَهْوَه هَوَمَا اَلَاوَمَر هَالَمَمَس هَالْمَبِي هَالْهَح هَالَسَلَم. فَلَهوَا هَلَا وَحَلَهوَا  
سَلَمَحَه مَهْوَمَا اَلَا تَا هَوَمَا وَاسَا. حَمَمَا وَاطَا اَمَبِي.

55 هَلَه حِي اَنَا حَلَا نَكْبَا مَرَحَا حِي اَنْدِي. حَمَمَا وَحَا اَمَبِي.

56 هَلَه حِي اَنْدِي حِي حَبْبَا لَحَبْلَا حَمَمَا وَهَسَا مَبِي حَسْتَا<sup>286</sup> وَحَلَم خَلَصِي اَمَبِي.

57 هَبِي مَرَحَا حَه حَبْبَا حَلْهَبْلَا هَفَا هَوَمَا اَنْدِي حَلْهَبْلَا هَالَمَا هَوَمَا وَوَا هَوَمَمَا  
وَالْحَبْلَهوَا نَبْعَا لَهَمَا حَاهَمَا. هَلَمَمَا هَحْنَا وَحَبْلَا مَبِي وَاَلَا.

58 هَبِي اِفْبَقَمَمَا هَمَقَمَا حَبْبَا مَرَحَا هَمَقَمَا حَلَهوَا لُحَلْهَلَا هَمَمَا وَاسَا وَهَمَا  
مَمَمَمَا مَحَبْر حَهْلَهوَا نَعَم مَمَمَا مَمَمَا مَمَمَا.

59 مَمَمَا اَلَا وَحَلَا. هَوَه وَحَصَّهوَا خَمَمَا هَحَصَّهَلَا نَاوَا. هَحَمَمَا نَاوَا. هَوَه وَهَمَمَا هَوَمَمَا  
هَوَمَا مَمَمَا وَاسَا وَهَلَهوَا هَحَصَّه مَمَمَمَا حَه. هَالَمَمَا وَحَمَمَا حَهْلَهوَا مَمَمَمَا مَمَمَا  
وَمَمَمَا نَعَم اَسَا. حَمَمَا.

60 هَوَه وَحَلَا اَمَمَا مَمَمَا حَمَمَا هَلَا مَمَمَا مَمَمَا اَسَا. هَلَه حَمَمَا وَحَلَا مَمَمَا مَمَمَا  
اَسَا. هَمَمَمَا اَسَا حَمَمَمَا خَمَمَا.

61 هَوَه وَحَمَمَمَا مَمَمَا اَسَا. وَحَلَا وَحَمَمَمَا وَحَبْبَا اَمَمَا مَمَمَا مَمَمَا مَمَمَا.

<sup>286</sup> S. Sey.

63 **وَقَدْ** **وَمَرَّ** **أَمْلَهُ** **مَعَهُ** **لَا** **يَعْلَمُ** **حَالَهُ** **وَسَمِعَ** **إِسْمَهُ** **مَرَّ** **وَحَبَّ** **أَتَمَّ** **وَاللَّهُ**  
[33B] **لَمَحَمَلٍ** **أَمْلَهُ** **مَنْعَهُ** ..

[illegible]

65 سَلَفُ حَالِ الْإِسْلَامِ وَدَهْ حَالِ الْعَصْرِ مَعَ جَدِ فَيْضِ وَدَهْ إِلَ وَهْتِئَا وَهْتِئَا وَدَهْ ١ حَسْبِ..

66

سکھ اے۔ ویچلدا حلا ایڈا ہونجی، ودھیوہالا دھ ماسھے۔ ووسو۵ چر حد فوجندا۔  
سوگھ اے۔ ویچلدا وسارا فارماںر حصلا ایڈا۔ مکدو۶ مقنلا وتسی۔ سوگھ اے۔ برفرا ص  
مکہ اوچار پلا ہوئسم خچی۔❖

[illegible]

68 اَمَّا وَالَّذِي حَصَلَا مِنْهُ وَالْحَدِثُ الْحَدِيثُ الْحَقِيقِي وَالْمَحْضُ قَبِيحًا. اَمَّا اَنْ هُوَ وَهُوَ  
يَتَقَلَّبُ وَهُوَ قَبِيحًا. مَحْضًا كَلَامًا غَيْرًا. هُوَ حَقِيقِي الْحَقِيقِي مَحْضًا

69 رَبِّهِ لَوْ كَانَ مِنْهُ مَخْشَاءٌ. فِي مَذْهَبِهِ هُوَ نَعْمَ لِحَدِّهِ فِي تَجَرُّسِ حُدُودِهَا هُوَ مُعْتَدِلٌ أَصَحُّ  
وَنَعْمَ فِي تَجَرُّسِهَا وَفَحْدِهَا هُوَ حَقٌّ وَهَذَا وَزَادَ نَعْمَ فِي تَجَلُّسِهَا  
فَلَمْ يَنْفَعِ أَنْفَعُ أَصَحُّهَا نَعْمَ لَهَا وَمَنْ حَرَّمَ لَهَا هُوَ وَتَجَرُّسِهَا هُوَ وَفَحْدِهَا







[illegible]

71 هَكَذَا مِنْهَا يَا ابْنِ آدَمُ كُلْ مِنْ كُلِّ ثَمَرٍ إِلَّا هَذَا الْبَاغَ الَّذِي فِيهِ هَذِهِ الشَّجَرَةُ الَّتِي فِيهِ الْفِتْنَةُ وَالْأُصْحَابُ السَّافِلُونَ

[illegible]

73 **فَمِنْهُمْ نَذِيرٌ لِلْمُهْلِكِينَ، وَلِأُولَئِكَ آيَاتٌ لِّئَلَّا يُهْمُوا**

74 اَلْاَوَّلُ هَتَمَالِ اَمَلِ دِهْ اَحْمَدِ فَكْسِ مَدَوَسِهْ مِ اَزْكِسْ اَمَنَسْ مِ فَحَسْبَالِ هَوَسْمِ



78 اَمَّا وَاللّٰهُ فَنَسَم حَتَمًا. بَغِي حَمَاهُ اَهْلًا وَحَكَم حَبْلَهُ اِيَّاهُ. سَلَحَم سَامِي اَتَا اَقَم  
مَهْمَا لَمَعَهُ

[illegible]

80 هَلَا فَكِدْه مَدِيَّةً وَجِئْتُكَ أَمْلَسُ مَعِيَ قَسْمًا لَقَدْ أَهَنَّا فِيكُمْ وَمَنْحَ حَبْرٍ هَلَا فَيَا هَقَّ  
هَامِنًا هَلْ يَسْتَفْهِمُونَ مَا لَهُمْ بِهَا مِنْ خَبَرٍ

[illegible]

82 حملا اصبه اصبه حملا اصبه

83 حَمَلًا هَلِيسًا مَقَمَ حَمَلًا وَمَعِي

[illegible]

[illegible][illegible][illegible]

88 حَمَلًا أَمْسَى أَفْقًا مَلَمَّا جَلَلَهُ حَمَلًا هَدَاهَا وَمَلَكٌ

89  
 اَفَقَدْ جِئْتُمُوهُ فَعِيلٌ اَلَا اِنَّهُ فَبَعَثَ مَوْحِيْتًا جَدِيْدًا ۝۵۱ ۝۵۲ ۝۵۳ ۝۵۴ ۝۵۵ ۝۵۶ ۝۵۷ ۝۵۸ ۝۵۹ ۝۶۰ ۝۶۱ ۝۶۲ ۝۶۳ ۝۶۴ ۝۶۵ ۝۶۶ ۝۶۷ ۝۶۸ ۝۶۹ ۝۷۰ ۝۷۱ ۝۷۲ ۝۷۳ ۝۷۴ ۝۷۵ ۝۷۶ ۝۷۷ ۝۷۸ ۝۷۹ ۝۸۰ ۝۸۱ ۝۸۲ ۝۸۳ ۝۸۴ ۝۸۵ ۝۸۶ ۝۸۷ ۝۸۸ ۝۸۹ ۝۹۰ ۝۹۱ ۝۹۲ ۝۹۳ ۝۹۴ ۝۹۵ ۝۹۶ ۝۹۷ ۝۹۸ ۝۹۹ ۝۱۰۰ ۝۱۰۱ ۝۱۰۲ ۝۱۰۳ ۝۱۰۴ ۝۱۰۵ ۝۱۰۶ ۝۱۰۷ ۝۱۰۸ ۝۱۰۹ ۝۱۱۰ ۝۱۱۱ ۝۱۱۲ ۝۱۱۳ ۝۱۱۴ ۝۱۱۵ ۝۱۱۶ ۝۱۱۷ ۝۱۱۸ ۝۱۱۹ ۝۱۲۰ ۝۱۲۱ ۝۱۲۲ ۝۱۲۳ ۝۱۲۴ ۝۱۲۵ ۝۱۲۶ ۝۱۲۷ ۝۱۲۸ ۝۱۲۹ ۝۱۳۰ ۝۱۳۱ ۝۱۳۲ ۝۱۳۳ ۝۱۳۴ ۝۱۳۵ ۝۱۳۶ ۝۱۳۷ ۝۱۳۸ ۝۱۳۹ ۝۱۴۰ ۝۱۴۱ ۝۱۴۲ ۝۱۴۳ ۝۱۴۴ ۝۱۴۵ ۝۱۴۶ ۝۱۴۷ ۝۱۴۸ ۝۱۴۹ ۝۱۵۰ ۝۱۵۱ ۝۱۵۲ ۝۱۵۳ ۝۱۵۴ ۝۱۵۵ ۝۱۵۶ ۝۱۵۷ ۝۱۵۸ ۝۱۵۹ ۝۱۶۰ ۝۱۶۱ ۝۱۶۲ ۝۱۶۳ ۝۱۶۴ ۝۱۶۵ ۝۱۶۶ ۝۱۶۷ ۝۱۶۸ ۝۱۶۹ ۝۱۷۰ ۝۱۷۱ ۝۱۷۲ ۝۱۷۳ ۝۱۷۴ ۝۱۷۵ ۝۱۷۶ ۝۱۷۷ ۝۱۷۸ ۝۱۷۹ ۝۱۸۰ ۝۱۸۱ ۝۱۸۲ ۝۱۸۳ ۝۱۸۴ ۝۱۸۵ ۝۱۸۶ ۝۱۸۷ ۝۱۸۸ ۝۱۸۹ ۝۱۹۰ ۝۱۹۱ ۝۱۹۲ ۝۱۹۳ ۝۱۹۴ ۝۱۹۵ ۝۱۹۶ ۝۱۹۷ ۝۱۹۸ ۝۱۹۹ ۝۲۰۰ ۝۲۰۱ ۝۲۰۲ ۝۲۰۳ ۝۲۰۴ ۝۲۰۵ ۝۲۰۶ ۝۲۰۷ ۝۲۰۸ ۝۲۰۹ ۝۲۱۰ ۝۲۱۱ ۝۲۱۲ ۝۲۱۳ ۝۲۱۴ ۝۲۱۵ ۝۲۱۶ ۝۲۱۷ ۝۲۱۸ ۝۲۱۹ ۝۲۲۰ ۝۲۲۱ ۝۲۲۲ ۝۲۲۳ ۝۲۲۴ ۝۲۲۵ ۝۲۲۶ ۝۲۲۷ ۝۲۲۸ ۝۲۲۹ ۝۲۳۰ ۝۲۳۱ ۝۲۳۲ ۝۲۳۳ ۝۲۳۴ ۝۲۳۵ ۝۲۳۶ ۝۲۳۷ ۝۲۳۸ ۝۲۳۹ ۝۲۴۰ ۝۲۴۱ ۝۲۴۲ ۝۲۴۳ ۝۲۴۴ ۝۲۴۵ ۝۲۴۶ ۝۲۴۷ ۝۲۴۸ ۝۲۴۹ ۝۲۵۰ ۝۲۵۱ ۝۲۵۲ ۝۲۵۳ ۝۲۵۴ ۝۲۵۵ ۝۲۵۶ ۝۲۵۷ ۝۲۵۸ ۝۲۵۹ ۝۲۶۰ ۝۲۶۱ ۝۲۶۲ ۝۲۶۳ ۝۲۶۴ ۝۲۶۵ ۝۲۶۶ ۝۲۶۷ ۝۲۶۸ ۝۲۶۹ ۝۲۷۰ ۝۲۷۱ ۝۲۷۲ ۝۲۷۳ ۝۲۷۴ ۝۲۷۵ ۝۲۷۶ ۝۲۷۷ ۝۲۷۸ ۝۲۷۹ ۝۲۸۰ ۝۲۸۱ ۝۲۸۲ ۝۲۸۳ ۝۲۸۴ ۝۲۸۵ ۝۲۸۶ ۝۲۸۷ ۝۲۸۸ ۝۲۸۹ ۝۲۹۰ ۝۲۹۱ ۝۲۹۲ ۝۲۹۳ ۝۲۹۴ ۝۲۹۵ ۝۲۹۶ ۝۲۹۷ ۝۲۹۸ ۝۲۹۹ ۝۳۰۰ ۝۳۰۱ ۝۳۰۲ ۝۳۰۳ ۝۳۰۴ ۝۳۰۵ ۝۳۰۶ ۝۳۰۷ ۝۳۰۸ ۝۳۰۹ ۝۳۱۰ ۝۳۱۱ ۝۳۱۲ ۝۳۱۳ ۝۳۱۴ ۝۳۱۵ ۝۳۱۶ ۝۳۱۷ ۝۳۱۸ ۝۳۱۹ ۝۳۲۰ ۝۳۲۱ ۝۳۲۲ ۝۳۲۳ ۝۳۲۴ ۝۳۲۵ ۝۳۲۶ ۝۳۲۷ ۝۳۲۸ ۝۳۲۹ ۝۳۳۰ ۝۳۳۱ ۝۳۳۲ ۝۳۳۳ ۝۳۳۴ ۝۳۳۵ ۝۳۳۶ ۝۳۳۷ ۝۳۳۸ ۝۳۳۹ ۝۳۴۰ ۝۳۴۱ ۝۳۴۲ ۝۳۴۳ ۝۳۴۴ ۝۳۴۵ ۝۳۴۶ ۝۳۴۷ ۝۳۴۸ ۝۳۴۹ ۝۳۵۰ ۝۳۵۱ ۝۳۵۲ ۝۳۵۳ ۝۳۵۴ ۝۳۵۵ ۝۳۵۶ ۝۳۵۷ ۝۳۵۸ ۝۳۵۹ ۝۳۶۰ ۝۳۶۱ ۝۳۶۲ ۝۳۶۳ ۝۳۶۴ ۝۳۶۵ ۝۳۶۶ ۝۳۶۷ ۝۳۶۸ ۝۳۶۹ ۝۳۷۰ ۝۳۷۱ ۝۳۷۲ ۝۳۷۳ ۝۳۷۴ ۝۳۷۵ ۝۳۷۶ ۝۳۷۷ ۝۳۷۸ ۝۳۷۹ ۝۳۸۰ ۝۳۸۱ ۝۳۸۲ ۝۳۸۳ ۝۳۸۴ ۝۳۸۵ ۝۳۸۶ ۝۳۸۷ ۝۳۸۸ ۝۳۸۹ ۝۳۹۰ ۝۳۹۱ ۝۳۹۲ ۝۳۹۳ ۝۳۹۴ ۝۳۹۵ ۝۳۹۶ ۝۳۹۷ ۝۳۹۸ ۝۳۹۹ ۝۴۰۰ ۝۴۰۱ ۝۴۰۲ ۝۴۰۳ ۝۴۰۴ ۝۴۰۵ ۝۴۰۶ ۝۴۰۷ ۝۴۰۸ ۝۴۰۹ ۝۴۱۰ ۝۴۱۱ ۝۴۱۲ ۝۴۱۳ ۝۴۱۴ ۝۴۱۵ ۝۴۱۶ ۝۴۱۷ ۝۴۱۸ ۝۴۱۹ ۝۴۲۰ ۝۴۲۱ ۝۴۲۲ ۝۴۲۳ ۝۴۲۴ ۝۴۲۵ ۝۴۲۶ ۝۴۲۷ ۝۴۲۸ ۝۴۲۹ ۝۴۳۰ ۝۴۳۱ ۝۴۳۲ ۝۴۳۳ ۝۴۳۴ ۝۴۳۵ ۝۴۳۶ ۝۴۳۷ ۝۴۳۸ ۝۴۳۹ ۝۴۴۰ ۝۴۴۱ ۝۴۴۲ ۝۴۴۳ ۝۴۴۴ ۝۴۴۵ ۝۴۴۶ ۝۴۴۷ ۝۴۴۸ ۝۴۴۹ ۝۴۵۰ ۝۴۵۱ ۝۴۵۲ ۝۴۵۳ ۝۴۵۴ ۝۴۵۵ ۝۴۵۶ ۝۴۵۷ ۝۴۵۸ ۝۴۵۹ ۝۴۶۰ ۝۴۶۱ ۝۴۶۲ ۝۴۶۳ ۝۴۶۴ ۝۴۶۵ ۝۴۶۶ ۝۴۶۷ ۝۴۶۸ ۝۴۶۹ ۝۴۷۰ ۝۴۷۱ ۝۴۷۲ ۝۴۷۳ ۝۴۷۴ ۝۴۷۵ ۝۴۷۶ ۝۴۷۷ ۝۴۷۸ ۝۴۷۹ ۝۴۸۰ ۝۴۸۱ ۝۴۸۲ ۝۴۸۳ ۝۴۸۴ ۝۴۸۵ ۝۴۸۶ ۝۴۸۷ ۝۴۸۸ ۝۴۸۹ ۝۴۹۰ ۝۴۹۱ ۝۴۹۲ ۝۴۹۳ ۝۴۹۴ ۝۴۹۵ ۝۴۹۶ ۝۴۹۷ ۝۴۹۸ ۝۴۹۹ ۝۵۰۰ ۝۵۰۱ ۝۵۰۲ ۝۵۰۳ ۝۵۰۴ ۝۵۰۵ ۝۵۰۶ ۝۵۰۷ ۝۵۰۸ ۝۵۰۹ ۝۵۱۰ ۝۵۱۱

90 احمد، محمد، وحنان، وحنان، وحنان ❖

[illegible]

92      ୨୦୦୮ ମସିହା

93 مہم ہوا لکھا ہوا ہے ح سہما و ح د.

## 2.2. Translation of Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana Mss Borg 57, fol. 27A-36B

- 1 Rite of Church Consecration
- 2 [27A] Again by the true hope of Divine Support, we begin writing also the Rite of Church Consecration.
- 3 They must keep watch in prayer at night in the church to be consecrated. And, after Morning Prayer, the bishop dresses according to his order, and the priests and deacons dress according to their order, as much as possible, and they stand at the sanctuary around the table. The bishop begins the Opening Prayer, and they say ‘*enyono*<sup>289</sup> *Have mercy on me*, of church consecration and sing the psalms of the third hour. And then they recite the canon<sup>290</sup> of church consecration. The bishop prays all these prayers.
- 4 Opening Prayer: Lord God, make us worthy to renew and establish Your holy Church by spiritual praises; and to seal with the sign of Your holy Cross, and to anoint it with the sweet fragrance of Your divine Myron, and to sanctify it with the sanctification of Your gift; and to crown it with the gifts of the Holy Spirit; and in it, we may always glorify You, and Your Father, and Your Holy Spirit, now...<sup>291</sup>
- 5 The prayer after *Rahem ‘lay Aloho*: Protect Lord, by the strength of Your victorious Cross, the walls of the renowned Zion, the holy Church, that You bought with Your precious blood, and encircle it with the protection and care of the holy and heavenly armies, so that when it rejoices and celebrates in the gathering of its children, it shall sing praise and thanks to You, and Your Father, and Your Holy Spirit...
- 6 Prayers [recited] between *Marmyotho*<sup>292</sup> of Psalms and canonical prayers: [27B] Lord, the Sea<sup>293</sup>, which is abundant with presents and rich with good, indescribable gifts, decorate and

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<sup>289</sup> The liturgical response.

<sup>290</sup> Apostolic Tradition

<sup>291</sup> This is an abbreviation of the standard Syriac liturgical ending, ܡܠܟܝܢ ܕܡܠܟܝܢ ܕܡܠܟܝܢ “now, and always, and forever”.

<sup>292</sup> ܡܪܡܝܘܬܗ is a subdivision of the Psalter containing one to four psalms. See Smith, (1903), *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary*, 302.

<sup>293</sup> The depiction of Christ as the Sea indicates the firm conviction that Christ is the source, meaning and the final goal of all symbols of both nature and the Scripture. Ephraim writes: “therefore, the sea is Christ who is

adorn your entire holy Church with gifts of the Holy Spirit, with wealthy gifts from You, so that we shall, without stain of sin, richly uplift to You unceasing praises, now...

- 7 Lord God, support with Your strong right hand and with Your powerful arm, Your holy, universal and apostolic Church that You gained with Your precious blood. And cut off and make perish from its opposite, those who preserve empty religions, that is to say, demonic religions, and give it to rejoice and be glad in Your salvation and to offer glory to You, and to Your Father ...
- 8 God, may Your peace, which You granted to the world by Your only-begotten Son, rule and remain in the entire world, and in all its corners. And may it increase and expand in the churches and monasteries, and destroy every high place which is not obedient and make [it] humble under the feet, because Your name is holy with that of Your only-begotten Son and of Your Holy Spirit, now...
- 9 Lord God, push away from Your holy Church every kind of heresy, filled with destructions and confusions, and all perturbations and pagan godless criticisms, and decorate it with peace and security, and in complete knowledge of the Trinity, equal in *Ousia* [substance], now...
- 10 Lord God, establish eternal love and indivisible peace in Your churches and monasteries, while taking away from them all kinds of dividing heresies, so that with one equal breath of orthodox and blameless faith, we may uplift to You ceaseless praises, Our Lord and our God...
- 11 Lord God, elevate Your Church with Your supports, and Your people with Your gifts, and the sheep of Your flock with the hymns of Your Holy Spirit, so that You are glorified in manifold ways on this day of its sanctification. Give it more of the treasures of Your mercy, and the riches of the abundance of Your gifts, now...
- 12 Destroy and cause to cease from Your Church and flock, doubts, divisions and all destroying heresies that are alien to the truth of Your divine commandments, and raise and preserve its assemblies in one accord and the orthodox faith, so that its choirs cry in one accord and the

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able to receive the sources and springs and rivers and streams that flow forth from within scripture" HVir.9:12, McVey, (trs.), (1989), *Ephrem the Syrian: Hymns*, 303.

orthodox faith, so that it may raise up glory to You, and to Your Father, and to Your Holy Spirit, now...

- 13 When they complete the canon the archdeacon gives the incense to the bishop and says *Stawmen qalos*, and the bishop offers *Sedro* with this *Promion*: [28A] Glory to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, to the One who renews worlds, who always renews His holy Church by His grace; and completely decorates and honours it by His holy gifts, and victoriously sanctifies it by His spiritual decorations, and completely enriches it with divine honours, and invites peoples and nations to it, and gathers the dispersed to its bosom. And they uplift angelic praises to Him and uplift constant praise in it to the Father, who betrothed it to His only-begotten, and they bow to the Son, who redeemed it by His blood, and they praise the Holy living Spirit, who dwells in it, and sanctifies it, at this time...
- 14 *Sedro*: Glory and thanks to You, Jesus Christ, the rock, that is to say, the true and unshakable stone upon which the holy Church was established. It was not put on the weakness of sand, but on a choice main corner-stone. This symbolises the stone of Moses from which twelve rivers for irrigation were supplied for the people Israel.<sup>294</sup> This the spiritual streams and right teaching in the hymns of the Holy Spirit were teaching and causing to rejoice, this of which David was singing, which was decorated and made splendid internally, in a spiritual way, not like that shadowy tent established by the Law, made of haircloth and dyed-red and sky-blue skin, but with a glorious and princely robe, and with holy and mysterious baptism. Not with threads of dark blue or of white, but with spiritual chains, and victories of the Holy Spirit, not with benches, and with pillars of bronze and of metal, but with prophets, visionaries of invisible things, and apostles, preachers of true things, and martyrs, walkers in the footsteps of Christ. Not with a shadowy altar, sprinkled with blood of little goats and lambs, but with a spiritual and divine table, which is offered with the blood of the blameless lamb. This is not lit with seven lamps, like the synagogue, but in the name of righteousness, and the stars of early dawn, inspired by the Holy Spirit. This which the prophets were pictured and the seers were demonstrated. Moses, head of the prophets and of the Hebrews, drew it as a symbolical tent. Solomon, sea of wise things, was imagining it. Isaiah, glorious amongst prophets uttered

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<sup>294</sup> This tradition of the twelve paths across the Red Sea is of Jewish origin and is found in the Palestinian Targum fragments from the Cairo Genizah (cf. Klein, (1986), *Genizah Manuscripts of Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch*, 230, 232, 278, 330; Brock, (2006), "Two editions of a new Syriac Apocalypse of Daniel", 18.

towards it, “Stand up and light up, for your light has arrived”,<sup>295</sup> and he proclaimed “The glory of the Lord shall shine on you”.<sup>296</sup> [28B] David said “Forget your people and your tribe, and leave the house of your father”, and he recognised that “the King of kings desires your beauty”. This is the one that many precious things were spoken about. This is the one whose face is bright and its eyes glisten, its cloth is splendid and its glorifiers are many, and its architects are wise, its buildings are great, and its mysteries are hidden, its symbols are astonishing, and also its treasures are hidden. The Lord of the worlds is its bridegroom, John its sponsor, the prophets its foundations, the apostles its attendants, the martyrs its guests, and its betrothal is unlike that of the daughter of the Hebrews, which was betrothed in darkness and obscurity. It was betrothed [and] this one is made blessed in the Father; proud in the Son, and preserved in the Holy Spirit. For this reason, peoples sing in it, and with them, also we shout and say: remember, Lord, Your holy Church, and raise the horn of its salvation. Increase in it constant peace, and make rule in it prosperous peace, while You grant, by Your grace, vigilance to its blessed shepherds, and diligence to its leaders, justice to kings, uprightness to judges, concord to priests, purity to deacons, acceptable repentance to sinners, good memory of purity to the departed faithful, so that You may be praised by all, and with Your Father and Your Holy Spirit, now...

- 15 And they say the hymn from church consecration rite, and he prays this prayer after *Pirmo*: Accept, Lord God, this incense and the nice smell of fragrant things presented to You, in our weakness on this day of consecration, that is to say, renewal of Your holy Church. And we ask from Your mercy that You should make rejoice its children in salvation, and gladden its sinners with pardon, and give healing to the sick, and return to the scattered and those in error, and comfort to the miserable and distressed of heart; and cause to cease from it all conflicts and opposing divisions, and grant forgiveness and absolution to those who departed from it in true faith, so that we may thank and praise You, now...
- 16 And they say the psalm: Lord, You have made Your Church the foundation for Your seat.
- 17 And they instantly read these readings, firstly from the Creation, the second book of the Pentateuch: “The Lord spoke with Moses and said, Tell the Israelites to bring me an offering. You are to receive the offering for me from everyone whose heart prompts them to give.

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<sup>295</sup> Isaiah 60:1.

<sup>296</sup> Isaiah 60:1.



Gold, silver and bronze; blue, purple and scarlet yarn and fine linen; goat hair, [29A] ram skins dyed red, and acacia wood, olive oil for the light, spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense, and stones of pearls to the ephod and breast-piece. And have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them. Make this tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly according to the pattern I will show you.”<sup>297</sup> “Then the Lord said to Moses, Set up the tabernacle, the tent of meeting, on the first day of the first month.”<sup>298</sup> “Take the anointing oil and anoint the tabernacle and everything in it; consecrate it and all its furnishings, and there shall be an altar, the holy of holies.”<sup>299</sup>

- 18 The prophecy of Samuel: “And when the king was settled in his house and the Lord had caused him to rest from all his enemies, the king said to Nathan the prophet, See I am, living in a house of cedar, while the ark of God remains in a tent of hair. Nathan, the prophet, said to the king, Whatever you have in your heart, do it, for the Lord is with you. But that night the word of the Lord came to Nathan, saying: Go and tell my servant David, you are not to build me a house to dwell in, since I have not dwelt in a house from the day I brought the Israelites out of the land of Egypt to this day.”<sup>300</sup> “When your days are complete and you have rested with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who will come forth from your loins, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me”.<sup>301</sup>
- 19 The prophecy of Isaiah: “Praise, barren woman, who never bore a child; burst into song, shout for joy, you who were never in labour; because more are the children of the desolate woman than of her who has a husband.” The Lord says, “Enlarge the place of your tent, stretch your tent curtains wide, do not hold back; lengthen your cords, strengthen your stakes. For you will increase to the right and to the left; your descendants will dispossess nations and settle in their desolate cities. Do not be afraid; you will not suffer shame. Do not fear disgrace; you will not be humiliated. For you will forget the shame of your youth and remember no more the reproach of your widowhood. For your Lord has made you like this -

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<sup>297</sup> Exodus 25:1- 9.

<sup>298</sup> Exodus 40:1-10.

<sup>299</sup> Exodus 40:1-10.

<sup>300</sup> 2 Samuel 7:1-6.

<sup>301</sup> 2 Samuel 7:12-14.

the Lord Almighty is his name - the Holy One of Israel is your redeemer. Though the mountains will be humbled and the hills lowered, yet my grace for you will not pass away; and nor will the covenant of your peace pass, says the Lord. O afflicted city, lashed by storms and not comforted, I will build you with stones of turquoise, your foundations with sapphires. I will make your battlements of rubies, your gates of sparkling jewels, [29B] and all your walls of precious stones. All your sons will be taught by the Lord, and great will be your children's peace, and in righteousness you will be established.”<sup>302</sup>

- 20 The Acts of the Apostles, from the letter of John: “My beloved, you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you are determining it for all men. I did not write to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it and because no lie comes from the truth. Who is the liar? It is the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a man is the antichrist. Whoever denies the Father also denies the Son. Whoever denies the Son, does not believe and does not acknowledge the Father. Whoever acknowledges the Son, also acknowledges the Father. If what you have heard from before remains in you, also you will remain in the Father and in the Son. And this is the promise he promised, eternal life. I wrote these things to you about those who lead you astray. As for you, if the anointing you received from him remains in you, you do not need anyone to teach you. But as the anointing is from God, it will teach you everything, and is genuine, and has no lie. As he taught you, remain in him. When he appears, we will not be ashamed of him.”<sup>303</sup>
- 21 Paul the Apostle, from the Letter to the Hebrews: “My brethren, the first tabernacle was set up, which had in it a lampstand, the tables and the bread of the presence; this was called the holy place. For there was an inner tabernacle inside of the second door, called the most holy place, which had in it, the place of incense and the gold-covered ark of the covenant, and in it, there was a pot of gold, and in it, was the manna and staff of Aaron that had sprouted, and the tablets of the covenant. And, above it were the cherubim of glory, overshadowing the Mercy Seat. There is no time to discuss each one of these things that were thus built. The priests entered regularly into the outer tabernacle to carry out their service. The high priest only entered the inner tabernacle once a year, and with blood, which he offered for himself and on behalf of the ignorance of the people. By this, the Holy Spirit was indicating that the

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<sup>302</sup> Isaiah 54:1-14.

<sup>303</sup> 1 John 2:20-28.

path of saints had not yet been disclosed as long as the first tabernacle was still standing. However, Christ, the high priest, came, who performed good things. He entered the great and perfect tabernacle, that is not made by hands and it is not of [30A] these created things. He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are unclean and sanctify themselves for the participation of their flesh. How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from dead acts, so that we may serve the living God.”<sup>304</sup>

- 22 The Gospel of Matthew: “When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, who do people say the Son of Man is? They replied, some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets. But what about you? He asked. Who do you say I am? Simon Peter answered; you are the Christ, the Son of the living God. Jesus replied, blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of sheol will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”<sup>305</sup>
- 23 And after the Gospel, the bishop recites a *Sedro* with the *Promion* Glory, and etc.: Heavenly bridegroom, who betrothed the holy Church to Himself by the passion of His person, and placed His living cross in her for the protection of souls, wise architect, who built His Church and surrounded His Church and priestly flock with a wall of confidence, and also built fortified towers of redemption for mankind, so that they may defend it from the attacks of the harsh and bitter fury of tyrants, and cause to pass from it stormy waves of opposition, to Him is due glory...
- 24 *Sedro*: Christ our God, who is gloriously and spiritually praised by the fiery and spiritual ranks, You are blessed by flaming wings with great fear; You are offered triple holiness by immaterial servants in the the Church of the first-born, who are inscribed in heaven. You who wished by Your grace to be blessed by the earthly ones, and to be exalted and praised in Your

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<sup>304</sup> Hebrews 9:2-14.

<sup>305</sup> Matthew 16:13-19.

glorious abode, in the holy Church, which You foretold in the tabernacle of Israel<sup>306</sup> which Moses built for Your glory, and decorated it with all types of images and You have portrayed a symbol to Your holy Church, [30B] which through You was decorated with You as a true bridegroom, and it was built with the bones of Your loved ones,<sup>307</sup> and was established on the truth of Your beloved ones. Your prophets and foreseers have previously portrayed this Church: one of them<sup>308</sup> made a burnt offering as an acceptable fragrance for his escape from the flood, demonstrating the mystery of Your holy altar. Another one<sup>309</sup> climbed the mountain of the Amorites<sup>310</sup> and sacrifice his only son, raising an icon of Your Church. And one<sup>311</sup> anointed the stone of Bethel,<sup>312</sup> and offered vows and tithes on it, and by this he demonstrated in advance mysterious offerings that are presented to You here in the church. Another,<sup>313</sup> an altar was built on Mount Carmel, and he elevated foreshadowing sacrifices on it. Another spoke of the glory of the eastern house.<sup>314</sup> One proclaimed that good things were spoken about the city of the Exalted one.<sup>315</sup> Another,<sup>316</sup> built an altar for Your honour, because he was saved from the Midianites. One, almost slaughtered his only-begotten, (daughter)<sup>317</sup> and drew a symbol of the holy Church. And one, said that the house of the Lord should be established on the top of the mountain,<sup>318</sup> and proclaimed: nations shall flow to it.<sup>319</sup> And another said that the Lord had decorated Jerusalem in beautiful ornaments, and another offered a sacrifice in the field of Araunah, the Jebusite,<sup>320</sup> and through it he withdrew

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<sup>306</sup> Numbers 2:2.

<sup>307</sup> In the Book of Common Prayer we read: "Today let the bones of the blessed martyrs exult and let the Church rejoice, which celebrates the day of their festival; when Christ the King appears in his great glory, they will enter with him the marriage chamber full of joy". The Book of Common Prayer, Lilio on Friday, 778-779.

<sup>308</sup> Genesis 8:20.

<sup>309</sup> Genesis 22:2.

<sup>310</sup> The Amorites were descendants of Canaan: Genesis 10:15-16; 1 Chron. 1:13-14. Deut. 1:7,19-20.

<sup>311</sup> Genesis 28:18.

<sup>312</sup> Lit. God's house.

<sup>313</sup> I Kings 18:32.

<sup>314</sup> (Gideon) Ezekiel 43:4.

<sup>315</sup> Isaiah 25: 1-2.

<sup>316</sup> Judges 6:28.

<sup>317</sup> Reference is to Jephtha's daughter (Judges 11:30-39).

<sup>318</sup> Isaiah 2: 2.

<sup>319</sup> Isaiah 2: 2

<sup>320</sup> 1 Chronicles 21: 18.

the plague from his people. One preached, “the Lord will establish his house above all principalities and authorities,”<sup>321</sup> Another was saying to the Church, “open your walls and make wide your windows.”<sup>322</sup> One cried joyfully, “Let the temple of the Lord be built and may it be for the glory of Israel.”<sup>323</sup> And another, “after the exile and the coming-out from Babylon, a house was built for Your name”. One prophesied, “may the Lord make right His altar, and the evil one be ashamed.” And another was singing, “a myriad of nestlings are beside Your altar, O Lord.”<sup>324</sup> And thus by the Church, You have demonstrated the truth to the enigmas that were preaching about it. Therefore, we beseech You, Christ our God, by the fragrance of this incense that You visit Your holy Church, and thus fulfilling for it Your promise, “Behold I shall be with you till the end of the world.”<sup>325</sup> Visit her by Your mercies, and fill her with the treasure of Your compassion. Deliver her from uproar and disturbances. And free her from all perils and difficulties. Firmly set her foundations and strengthen her ties. Organise her choirs and order her ranks with songs of the Holy Spirit. Protect her communities [31A] and guard her children, widen her borders and establish her foundation in the houses with the supports of Your firm knowledge. Raise up for her true teachers, shepherds, priests and deacons who keep Your laws, and make the kings and leaders worthy to obey Your commandments. Support the elders, adorn the youth with humility and come to the help of the orphans and heal the sick. Free those who are touched by the devil and give rest to the souls of our fathers and brothers. And we offer glory to You...

- 25 And they sing antiphon, “Holy one, who made to settle his dwelling”, and the rest of the verses. Thus at the end of each verse “Settle Your presence on Your Church...”
- 26 Prayer of *Pirmo*: Heavenly bridegroom, You who from Your sweet and spiritual fragrance – which befits Your Godhead - fill those who accept You. Fill us now with the fragrance of this incense offered to Your Divinity, strength, wisdom, and holiness dwelling with us, and in Your holy Church, help and support us now, until the end of the world, and now...
- 27 And the bishop proclaims: We believe in one God...

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<sup>321</sup> Isaiah 2:2; Psalm 103.19; Isaiah 9:7.

<sup>322</sup> Song of Songs 2:9.

<sup>323</sup> Ezra 1:2-3.

<sup>324</sup> Psalms 84:3.

<sup>325</sup> Matthew 28:30.

- 28 And when they finish, the bishop silently prays this prayer: O Lord, God of the heavenly powers, who have granted us to perform this service and who know people's minds, and search out the hearts, and inner parts, hear us by the multitude of Your mercies and purify us from all physical and spiritual infirmity. Make our sins vanish like a cloud and our wickedness as fog. Fill us with Your strength, and with the grace of Your only-begotten Son, with the efficacy of Your Holy Spirit in everything. Enable us to be servants of Your New Testament, so that we may offer praise to Your Holy Name as in fitting, to stand before You to serve and minister for Your divine mysteries.
- 29 And he raises his voice: For You are kind and very compassionate to all those who call You. And honour and praise and power to You, and to Your Son, and to Your Holy Spirit. Now...
- 30 People: Amen.
- 31 The archdeacon makes this proclamation: Let us all pray at this time for this house that is being consecrated, so that the God of all may, by His mercy, send to it His grace. May He establish His altar in it and firmly fix its foundations. May He also make it a refuge for penitents and harbour of rest for the afflicted. May He, likewise, hear the intercessions of those who pray in the orthodox faith in it, granting them all that is good for their salvation and for the repose of their faithful departed. We beseech the Lord...
- 32 That the Lord may be pleased with us and with our service, [31B] we ask earnestly ...
- 33 That we may be able to complete this consecration performed by the Holy One, we ask...
- 34 Again for this house and its completion, we earnestly beseech the Lord.
- 35 So that the Lord, who dwells on high and watches all lowly things, may be satisfied with this abode and chooses it for Himself. May He fill it with His divine grace and the heavenly gifts to become a ready habitation for His Divinity. From the Lord...
- 36 And when He sends forth to it His sanctifying power, in the protection of the Cherubim and the company of angelic ranks, may He declare it to be a dwelling place for His Holiness and glory, and make it His resting place forever.
- 37 So that when He renews it by His Holy Spirit, He may complete it for the renewal and salvation of souls and bodies, [and] also the forgiveness of sins, thus blotting out of

transgressions, and the purification of the hearts of those who, with true penitence, repent. Also for the consolation, refreshment and full healing of those, who are afflicted with different types of adversity and serious illnesses, who will plead to the Lord in it. Also for the redemption and safety of all the people who are faithfully gathered in it by faith. From the Lord we ask.

- 38 For this bishop, and the head priest, who stands in prayer on our behalf, and for deed of his hands, more earnestly, we ask from the Lord.
- 39 For the honoured priests who are standing here with him, and for all the clergy and the faithful people. We ask from the Lord.
- 40 For the holy, universal and apostolic Church, which is in all corners of the earth, also for its peace and support, and that of all the people, we beseech the Lord.
- 41 The holy, glorified and ever-virgin, the Mother of God, Mary, and the holy apostles, prophets, martyrs of good victory, righteous ones, confessors, preachers, evangelists, and all those who were pleasing to God, we remember, so that by their prayers and intercessions in this present service, which is offered and we will be strengthened in all these offer things.
- 42 All of us, our brothers, who are present on our behalf and for each other, and for this house that is being consecrated, and for those who built it for the glory of God, and the honour of the good victory [of] holy *Mor*<sup>326</sup> *N*. We beseech the Lord.
- 43 Then the head priest prays this prayer silently: Lord, God, of all the perceptible and visible creation, the Creator of the heavenly things and earthly things, and of what is beneath the earth. You who have filled the earth with Your churches, like the types of the first-born that are inscribed in the heavenly Church [32A] and serve You, with Your only-begotten Son, and Your all-Holy Spirit, and now see fit to overshadow this place, and sanctify it for the worship of Your all-honoured name, so that those who call You in it with good deeds, and offer sacrifices, and ascribe the finest things may seek health, and find redemption, and may be resealed from sins, and enlightened with incorruptible knowledge, and may learn and teach and be delighted in the Holy Spirit and put [away] difficulties and receive purity, and do good

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<sup>326</sup> Lit. My Lord. It is also used as a title for saints. See Smith, (1903), *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary*, 301.

deeds in it, and be inscribed in heaven, so that all people will see Your coming as King in this place, and may they worship You in it, while truly understanding that You are God...

44 And he raises his voice: Yes, we ask and supplicate You, complete the word of our mouth, and fulfill the promise of Your all-Holy Spirit, so that the word of Your Gosepl might dwell, act run, and care in every deed and word that happens in this place, by the grace, mercy and love of humanity of Your only-begotten Son, our Lord, God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, with whom glory, honour and power is due to You, with Your all-Holy and good Spirit...

45 People: Amen. Bishop: Peace be with you all. People: And with your spirit...

46 The bishop thus [prays] silently: Saviour King, holy one, and creator of all, who in our nature have planted the seed of wisdom according to the discovery of crafts, trades and useful skills of life, You who have saved us from irrational and animalistic habits and You have granted us the wisdom to escape from the harm of cold and heat, accept those who in the establishment of this house praise Your name, so that prayers, praises and priestly services might be completed for Your nature which lacks nothing, which does not will these from us of necessity or need, but for the expansion and the increase of those things which are always given by You, who threw the spirit of wisdom on Bezalel so that he would build a dwelling for Your holy name, while he disciplined Your people of Israel on the path of the desert, sanctify, establish, confirm, warn and protect by Your high and powerful hand this holy and priestly house, which is for You and the utterance of praises to You.

47 And he raises his voice: So that when we delight in Your priestly law and divine hymns, with the bringing forth of Your fearful and heavenly sacraments, we may offer to You, Father, praise and thanksgiving, and [to Your] Son and Holy Spirit, now and always...

48 [32B] Then according to the order, the head priest carries the Myron in the dish on the ephod. And the overseer [carries] the cross, the deacons, the fans and candles, antiphons go with the bishop, while they chant antiphon of *the Blessing of Myron*. The bishop firstly begins behind the altar, on the eastern side, and he puts the cross on the wall, and then takes in his hand the bottle of Myron and applies it to his right thumb, and he signs the place with Myron, the symbol of the sacred cross and says thus: Christ, our God, by the prayers of Your holy apostles and Your Mother of God, Mary, and *Mor N*, the saint, in whose name this house is built, bless and sanctify this altar, and us, because You are blessed, with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, now...



- 49 People: Amen.
- 50 The bishop applies the Myron to his thumb again, and makes a cross on the place, and says the prayer. And he completes three crosses.
- 51 And then the clergy say the antiphon, beginning with the words where they left off.
- 52 Until they arrive to the western side of the altar, not going outside the church, but the bishop signs three times on the wood, or on the stone, and he says this prayer and completes it.
- 53 And again they recite from the antiphon until they arrive to the south, the northern side of the altar, and there he signs as on the other sides. When the walls of the sanctuary are signed on the four sides and they are anointed with holy Myron, the bishop comes to the table of life, which is new, and holding it and with him the priests and deacons, according to what is written in the canons<sup>327</sup> of the holy apostles, the bishop must fix the table of life,<sup>328</sup> and the others are not allowed to fix the altar without the bishop, except in case of necessity. Thus the bishop prays this prayer of fixing the altar: Lord, who by Your indescribable love towards mankind have filled the entire earth with Your knowledge and called us to You, and made us to leave idolatrous error and the emptiness of demons, and worship You, who are true God, we ask You now, to grant us Your grace and support that we might serve You according to Your will with those Your mercies which You have granted us. And may this altar, which we are building and establishing, to offer divine sacrifices and sacramental offerings upon it for the glory of Your sacred and holy name, receive, by Your mercies, sanctification and firmness, and the gift of Your Holy Spirit. [33A] And by the power given by You to us let us be worthy in true faith, and in holiness of soul and body, and by keeping of Your holy commandments, may we stand before You and offer You acceptable offering and beseeching supplications for our sins and the sins of Your people and find mercy and salvation for our souls through Christ Jesus our Lord, with whom glory and honour are due to You, with Your Holy Spirit, good and sacred and life-giving and equal to You in *Ousia*, now and always forever.
- 54 Then the bishop takes on his thumb from the Myron and draws the sign of the cross on the altar and says the *hallelujah* of the Myron, and the saying, “For this reason God, Your God,

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<sup>327</sup> Apostolic Tradition.

<sup>328</sup> Altar

anointed you,” and makes three crosses as on the *tablito*. After the anointing with the Myron, he draws with his thumb without Myron on the table of life three crosses when saying thus on each of them: It is signed, anointed, sanctified, immersed, and sealed, this table of eternity, on which divine offerings and sacramental sacrifices may be offered in the name of the Father, Amen.

- 55 And he repeats it on the middle cross saying thus: In the name of the Son, Amen.
- 56 And again he says on the third cross: In the name of the Holy Spirit for eternal life, Amen.
- 57 And when he decorates the altar with the clothing and the face and the belt he says: For the glory, honour, splendor and praise of the Holy Trinity equal in *Ousia* and for the peace of the building of the holy Church of God.
- 58 And when the bishop and priests decorate the altar and put the *tablito* on it, and the rest of the things, the archdeacon proclaims the litany: Let us all stand, orderly and etc...
- 59 Christ our God, who resides on high and looks at the lowly places and sees into the depth, whose throne is heaven and earth is the footstool under His feet, and all things are subject to Him, and consider all those who approach You with faith [in] your temple. We ask...
- 60 You who find us physically together in this visible house, unite us in the faith of hope in You, and confirm it in our souls. We ask...
- 61 You who stand in the middle of those who gather in the temple made by hands for Your name we ask...
- 62 You who establish Your sanctuaries on truth, and souls on faith build a true and unshakable rock, we ask...
- 63 You who are everywhere, and are not contained by all, because of Your love for man, who have seen fit to make Your grace descend on the temple made by human [33B] We call....
- 64 You who have established temples made by human hands as for your dwelling, and have fixed a symbolic altar in it, which is the likeness of the crib that received You, we call...
- 65 For this house and for those who are gathering in it for Your holy name, in the likeness of the heavenly ones and the powers in them, we ask...

- 66 So that this house and those who in faith are gathered in it may be worthy to become an abode to You, and so that we may be worthy to see your beauty in this house all the days of our life, and so that we will be delivered from all difficulty and necessity, we ask...
- 67 For the peace, conciliation and concord of the entire world, so that the Lord may bestow His peace and harmony on His people and on His Church, and on the four corners of the world, so that God may remove from this city and this place and its inhabitants all afflictions and the rods of wrath. Also, for her good remembrance, “who is praiseworthy from the tribes of the earth”, the holy, glorious, ever-virgin Mary, the Mother of God. For the good remembrance of the prophets, the apostles, the confessors, the holy fathers and the orthodox doctors. For the good remembrance of our pious fathers: Our blessed Patriarch Mor... and our prelate Mor... along with the rest of the Orthodox bishops. And for the remembrance of all the faithful departed. Let us cry out and say *Kyrie Eleison*.
- 68 See fit to descend on this house, built for the glory and worship of Your holy name, and make us worthy to become temples of the Holy Spirit, Christ, our true God. Let us cry and say thrice *Kyrie Eleison*.
- 69 Then again they begin with saying the antiphons, while walking and going out from the sanctuary to the Church, and the bishop begins and anoints from east and west and north and south. While he anoints each place he desires, when they reach it, the chanters go quiet, and the bishop says: Christ our God, by the prayers of Your holy apostles, Your Mother and St. *N* in whose name this house is built and established, bless and sanctify this church and us, because You are glorified with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now...
- 70 Taking Myron three times on his thumb, he anoints and signs three crosses, while praying this prayer on each cross. Then again they recite from the antiphon while walking and going to another place. And thus he signs and anoints the four sides, and if the church is large he anoints in many places in the corners, etc. And if there are pillars and they are of stone, he shall anoint accordingly and as many doors as there are in it. [34A] The treasury and the rest all of them he anoints and signs with Myron above the lintels. Thus he prays the prayer in every place he anoints. And when the entire church is anointed, they go out from the western door if it has one, or whatever side the door is and when they stand at the door and are facing and looking at the church they say the psalms, and the bishop reads this prayer, which is that of Solomon: And when the priests withdrew from the sanctuary, the cloud filled the house of

the Lord, and the priests could not stand and perform their service because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled the Lord's temple. And Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord, in front of the whole assembly of the people, and he spread out his hands towards heaven and prayed and said: "Lord God, there is none like You in heaven above or on earth below and You maintain graciousness towards Your servants who walk before You in truth with all their hearts and souls. Look towards the prayer, which Your servant is praying. May Your eyes be open towards this temple day and night, in the place You said, 'My Name shall be there', so that You may hear the prayer Your servant prays before You in this place. Hear the supplication of Your servant and of Your people when they pray before You, in this place. O God, hear from the high place and forgive our sins and those of all your people and whoever has participated in the building of this church. Cause to pass from him blows and rods of wrath and may Your blessing dwell in his house and bless his work and property, and guard all that he owns through your love for humanity. And enter not into judgment with him, and for the accuracy of deeds. And bless this city or village and its inhabitants and remove from it, and from all its people, all war, devastation and pains and diseases. Strengthen the old, support the weak, help the anguished, console the orphans and the widows. And if a man wrongs his friend and requests him to take an oath for his charge, and they come to this church, then hear from heaven and act and judge Your servants, condemning the guilty and punishing him and giving victory to the innocent, and to give him according to his righteousness. When your people sin and anger You, and You leave them to be defeated by their enemies, so that they may return and repent, let them pray and request from you in this church, and You will hear from heaven and forgive the sins of Your servants and of your people to cause them to return back to you. "When the heavens are held back and there is no rain because your people have sinned against you, let them pray in this church and give praise to your name [34B] and turn from their sins, then listen from heaven to their voices and forgive the sins of Your servants, teaching them the good path to walk on, and You may provide rain on the land. And when famine or plague comes to the land, or blight or mildew, locusts or grasshoppers, or, whatever diseases or disasters, each prayer and each plea made by anyone, let them each be aware of the affliction of their own heart, and spread out his hands before You in this church. And You will hear from heaven from Your dwelling place. Forgive, cause to pass, and provide to a man according to his ways and You will know his heart. For you alone know the hearts of all humans, so that they may fear You all days they are alive on earth. And also for the alien who is not of Your people, and comes from a distant land because of Your name, when they hear of Your great name and Your mighty

hand and high arm, let them come and pray before You in this church. Hear from heaven, Your dwelling place. Act according to his call to you, so that all nations of the earth may know Your name, and to fear You like your holy people, and so that they may know that Your name has been called down on this church. When Your people go to war against their enemies, and they pray before you in this church, which You have chosen, and this place which You built for Your Name, may You hear their prayer and their plea from heaven, and their judgement when they sin against You, for there is no one who does not sin. And when You become angry with them you hand them before their enemies, and they take them captive to their own lands, far away or near, let them reconsider in their heart in the land where they have been taken captive, and repent and ask You in the land of their captors and say, ‘We have sinned, we have wronged, we have acted wickedly’; and let them return to you with all their heart and soul in the land of their enemies who took them captive. And let them pray before and You, hear your will from heaven, from the dwelling of your kingdom, their prayer and plea, and exercise judgement for them, and forgive Your people, all it has sinned against you, and also all their offences they have committed against You, and cause their captors to have mercy on them, for they are Your people and your inheritance. May Your eyes be open to Your servants’ plea and hear in all they call out to You, for You singled them out as Your inheritance. May the Lord, our God, be with us, as he was with our fathers; and may He never leave us nor forsake us, to return us all towards Him, to walk on his paths, [35A] to keep his commands, judgements, decrees and laws which He commanded our fathers. And may these things I have requested from You, Lord, be near You day and night, to effect the judgement of His servants and the judgement of His people, so that the nations of earth may know that You are the God of all and the Lord of lords...

- 71 And after this reading they say the verse, *Halleluiah*, in this sentence: For the bird that found a house, and the dove a nest.
- 72 The bishop reads this gospel, the preaching of Luke the evangelist: “And when he entered and was passing through Jericho, a man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax-collector and was wealthy. He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short in height he could not see over the crowd. Thus he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since he was coming pass it. When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today. So he came down at once and received him gladly. When they saw this, they all began to mutter, saying: He

entered to rest with a sinner. Thus Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord: Lord, behold, I give half of these things to the poor; and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount. Jesus said to him, today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”<sup>329</sup>

73 Then he signs the sign of the cross above the door with his thumb, without *Myron* three times, and he makes three crosses, when with each cross he says this prayer first: Christ our God, and etc...

74 If the church has many doors, they go to each one. When they go they recite the antiphon and he signs above each one. And if there is an opportunity they go around from outside and the bishop signs the walls on the four sides. When they return and enter the church, they ascend to the *bema*, if there is one, and if not, into the sanctuary, and they say *halleluia*h, and the bishop reads the reading of the Gospel of John: “Then came the Festival of renewal at Jerusalem. It was winter and Jesus was walking in the temple in Solomon’s porch. The Jews there gathered around him, saying to him, how long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly. Jesus answered, I did tell you, but you do not believe. The works I do in my Father’s name [35B] testify about me, but you do not believe because you are not my sheep. As I said to you, my sheep listen to my voice, and I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hands. For my Father who gave them to me is greater than all; and no man can snatch them from my Father’s hand. I and my Father are one. And the Jews picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus said to them, I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of them do you stone me? The Jews say to him, we are not stoning you for any good work, but because you are blaspheming, when you are a man, making yourself God. Jesus answered them, is it not so written in your law, that “I said you are gods”? If he called them gods, which is whom God said to them, the Scripture cannot be set aside. To the one whom the Father sanctified and sent to the world, you say “you are blaspheming” because I said to you, I am the Son of God. Do not believe me unless I do the works of my Father. But if I am doing them, even though you do not believe in me, believe in the works; so that you may know and believe that the Father is in me and I am in my Father.”<sup>330</sup>

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<sup>329</sup> Luke 19:1-10.

<sup>330</sup> John 10:22-38.

- 75 Then he returns to the table of life and read this prayer silently: We thank You good Lord, and praise Your holy name, which is above all names forever, for these favours which You do for us. You have now made us worthy to stand in Your presence, and to consecrate this priestly house and the altar which is in it to be for Your glorious love of men and for our consolation. Therefore, we beseech and plead with You Lord to make this place, and ourselves who praise You inside it, an abode for Your Holy Spirit, so that, as we renounce worldly wickedness and delights, we may live justly, in purity and in the fear of God. May we also have a share among those who take refuge in You.
- 76 He raises his voice: Because You are the God of deliverance, we offer praise to You and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now...
- 77 The archdeacon calls out: On behalf of those who had a share in the building of this house, and those who laboured in it, we diligently ask...
- 78 So that God, who loves mankind may grant them everlasting mansions in His kingdom, let us cry and say three times *Kyrie Eleison*.
- 79 The head priest says silently: [36A] Remember, O Lord, all those who made offerings and laboured in this place for Your name and reward them with rich gifts. Keep them among the hosts of the angelic powers, while preserving them from the snares of the devils and the harm which befall human beings. Bless them and the labour of their hands, and multiply all they have, their goings in and their going out and all that leads to pleasing You. Deliver from them from all sickness and infirmity, and protect them and us in the true faith and obedience to Your holy commandments until our last breath.
- 80 He raises his voice: Because you are good and very compassionate to all who call You. And to You glory and honour and to Your Holy Spirit, now...
- 81 And if it is a building of a monastery and if the labour was by the brothers, he adds and says, Make worthy our brothers who have laboured, to always offer the fruits of righteousness to You, so that they may all together raise glory and thanksgiving to You, now...
- 82 People: Amen. Bishop: Peace be with you.
- 83 People: And with spirit... Deacon: To the Lord, our heads...

- 84 The Bishop, with hands stretched out: We thank You Lord, for making us worthy to stand before You in this place, to call upon Your holy name. We appeal to You and ask You to deliver us from all the treachery of the enemy. Bless this house with Your blessings which come from You. Protect it with the eminence of Your glory of praise, so that we may delight in Your divine law and Your spiritual service. Make us worthy of Your fearful and heavenly mysteries and, just as You have built it to be a holy temple, and have established it for the glory of Your name, likewise, and dwell in it, protecting it vigilantly, and be a wall for it by the power of Your Holy Spirit, by the prayers of these priests, who stand and pray with us beseeching You. May Your precious name be blessed, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, now...
- 85 Then if they have bones of saints, the bishop takes them and puts them in their place. Thus the censers and candles go before them, and they say one of the antiphon which is appropriate. And after the antiphon they begin and say *Quqaliyon* of the Saints. And the bishop says an appropriate *sedro*, and they recite a hymn, and he prays this prayer of *Pirmo* and they say *Bo'utho*.
- 86 Then the bishop prays this prayer silently: Lord, Lord Jesus Christ, the high priest of our souls, who granted us support through Your victorious martyrs, make us worthy of the installation of these bones, [36B] praises and spiritual hymns, let us with joyful lips spiritually honour and commemorate and fulfill their memories.
- 87 He raises his voice: Yes God, who fullfils the will of those who fear You and hear their request grant that they may perform, by the grace of Your Holy Spirit, miracles and healings, and expel demons, and may heal all sufferings and ailments in this place too. May they cause to cease all hatred through Your holy name, because Your name is the stability of salvation and sanctification for all those who call on You. You are glorified with Your Father and the Holy Spirit, now...
- 88 People: Amen. The bishop: Peace be with you. People: And with your spirit.
- 89 The Bishop, with hands stretched out: God, who is holy and pleased with the saints, the glory of the prophets, the pride of the apostles, the crown of the martyrs, the joy of the righteous, and the hope of those who if old have pleased You, grant us Lord, that we may spiritually perform the memorials of Your saints, and love those who loved You, and that we may emulate their zeal in fearing You. Yes God, who praises those who glorify You, accept them and make them ambassadors and suppliants on our behalf. Grant that we may have a share,



portion, and inheritance with them in the heavenly kingdom, because You, Lord, are compassionate and the lover of mankind, and to You befits glory, honour and dominion, now...

90 Lord, our Lord, may our service be for Your pleasure.

91 And immediately, if the bishop wishes to explain the mysteries of the Church, and to reward the people with prayers according to what he is given by grace at that time, or if he desires to read over them these prayers which are written above in the order of the *Myron Consecration*.

92 And thus we shall seal.

93 This Rite has ended. Pray for the sinner who wrote this.

### 2.3. Text of Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Syriac 110, fol. 274A – 296B

- 1  
2  
3  
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<sup>331</sup> This long note is written on the margin beginning on the left side of the text, continuing on the bottom of the page below the text, and finishing on the right side of the text.

- 6 רָחֵלָה וְיִסְרָאֵל מִתְּחִלָּה וְעָמָר מִסֵּס לְמַחְתָּלָה וְעֵשָׂא [275A] וְשֵׁם מִנָּה לְאֵלָה מִן חֶבְלָה וְכִי  
מָ. חָלָה אֵלָה וְאִתְּשֵׁי מַחְתָּלָה תַּחְלָה מְוָדָהּ. וְחָלָה מִתְּחִלָּה מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל מִהֲלָהּ וְעָמָר תִּשְׁעָה לָא  
לְאֵלָה<sup>332</sup>. מִן חֶבְלָה חֶסֶל מַחְתָּלָה מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל וְלִחְלָהּ לָא בְּעָמָר חֶסֶלָה: מִהֲלָהּ
- 7 וְלֵאמֹר לְאֵלָה: מִן חֶסֶלָה וְעָמָר וְחֶבְלָה לָא בְּעָמָר חֶסֶלָה וְעָמָר חֶסֶלָה. מִהֲלָהּ וְעָמָר  
וְאִתְּשֵׁי: חֶסֶלָה
- 8 מִן חֶסֶלָה בְּעָמָר חֶסֶלָה וְעָמָר חֶסֶלָה. בְּעָמָר חֶסֶלָה וְעָמָר חֶסֶלָה: חֶסֶלָה
- 9 מִן חֶסֶלָה וְעָמָר חֶסֶלָה [275B] מִתְּחִלָּה לְעָמָר. חֶבְלָה מִחֶסֶלָה לְעָמָר. מִהֲלָהּ חֶסֶלָה מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל
- 10 מִן חֶבְלָה לָא בְּעָמָר חֶסֶלָה. חֶסֶלָה מִחֶסֶלָה מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל<sup>333</sup>. מִחֶסֶלָה מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל וְעָמָר
- 11 חֶסֶלָה וְעָמָר חֶבְלָה מִן חֶסֶלָה. חֶבְלָה וְעָמָר חֶסֶלָה. חֶסֶלָה וְעָמָר חֶסֶלָה
- 12 רָחֵלָה מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל לָא מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל וְעָמָר חֶבְלָה חֶבְלָה מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל וְעָמָר חֶבְלָה. חֶסֶלָה מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל  
חָלָה אֵלָה וְאִתְּשֵׁי וְכִיִּשְׂרָאֵל. אֵלָה וְעָמָר חֶסֶלָה מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל וְעָמָר חֶסֶלָה. מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל  
חֶסֶלָה מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל וְעָמָר חֶסֶלָה
- 13 [276A] [...]
- 14 מִן חֶסֶלָה מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל: חֶבְלָה מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל. מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל חֶסֶלָה מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל וְעָמָר חֶסֶלָה. מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל  
לְעָמָר
- 15 חֶסֶלָה מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל חֶבְלָה. מִן חֶסֶלָה מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל חֶסֶלָה מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל. מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל חֶסֶלָה  
לְעָמָר
- 16 מִן חֶסֶלָה חֶבְלָה מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל. חֶסֶלָה מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל. מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל חֶסֶלָה  
חֶסֶלָה

<sup>332</sup> לְאֵלָה?

<sup>333</sup> S.sey.

- [illegible]

27 رحمة الله عليه؛ وجعلنا من حجار من حجار حقا فحقة الله عليه؛ أوتهم مستكبرا وبصيرة  
 لهم؛ وهم يتنصرون الله تعالى. [278A] لحنه حسبا له الله عليه؛ أوتهم مستكبرا وبصيرة  
 له

[...] 28

29 مہما، وانہٗ حاصلہ  $\llcorner$  ۛ؛ ہند ۛۛۛۛۛۛ۔ انہٗ حاصلہ  $\llcorner$  حبار ۛۛۛۛۛۛ۔

30 **لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ حَقَّقْتَ مَا كُنْتَ تُعِدُّ لِمَنْ كَفَرَ مِنْهُمْ مِنْ قُلُوبِهِمْ وَأَمَلُهُمْ فِي هَؤُلَاءِ أَنْ يَكُونُوا صَافِينَ**

31 ذنب و جوفه فقلا مختلًا { جلدہ الحباریہ سملانہ مء . ہنم دہ مرحسا مسعسا حلقۃ - و اور ♦

32 حَسْبُ وَحَسْبُ نَعْمُهُ مَعْنَاهُ. فَمِنْهُ حَبَابُهُ مَعْنَاهُ لِحَمَلِهِ وَفُلَانُهُ. أَمَّا خُتْبَتُهُ فَمَعْنَاهُ مَع  
مُحَلِّقُهُ

33 نَبِيٌّ مِنْ حُرِّهِمْ. كَذَبُوا قَوْلَهُمْ وَمَنْعُوا عَنْهُمْ. مَعَهُمْ سِتْرٌ. هَذَا خُتْبَةُ حُكْمِهِ هَذَا  
لِغَضَبِهِ ❖

[...][278B] 34

35 اٰحِبُّوا نَحْسًا رَّحِمًا . مَا مَهْدِيْهِ لِحَبْلٍ مَّعًى . وَمَعْنَى اُنْسُوْهُ وَحَلِّا بِنُفْسِهِ . وَسَدَّدَا وَجْهَكَ لِا  
مَالِكِ

36 فليس لي وحي ولا رسالة، لا كلام ولا جامعة. وكله، قلط حالته. محققا ج.

انذره هـ.

37 لَوْ حَصَّ حَبُّ الْمَاءِ مِثْرًا وَمِلْءَهُ وَحْدًا؛ وَحَمَّ حَصَّ. هَلَا حَصَّ لَاتِحِي هَلَا اِهْتَصَّ. وَمِنْهَا حَصْبٌ لَحْمٌ يَهْوَى؛

38 حصصاً منه: ٥ حصصاً للحمل، ١ حصصاً لنبات، ١ حصصاً لفلحاً ممد، ٥ حصصاً لملحاً، و٢ حصصاً

39 لَوْ حَبَسَ حَبِإٌ مُّذَمَّراً، وَمِنْهَا يَخْصَكُ مَذْمُورٌ، زَجَلٌ لَّحْتَنٌ، وَجَامِلٌ، وَنَهْمٌ، هَـ لَحْنٌ، لَاحِظٌ،

40 [279A] [وله صهه]: ملا وائل انه اخذ حبال ولا ينسلا انما مع جعل. وهه<sup>334</sup> وملا تتمم كـ  
 هـ الله لا غل الا ونصب.

41 مەھسۇس دىنلا ئەمەس، بەلكى مەھسۇس ئىشقا. ۋەزىيەتتە مەھسۇس مەھسۇس، تەبىئەت.

42 جَاءَ مَعَهُ اَصْحَابُ هَاقِ احْمَرُ مَحْمَد. وَضَعِي تَلْبُحُ احْمَرُ مَحْمَدُهَا جَلَالُ اَمْرِ

43 مَكْلًا فَامْلًا وَمُجَمَّعًا سَلَامًا وَحَيًّا. يُحْيِي تَحْيِيحًا حَامِدَةً اُصْحَامًا هَلَالًا

44 حَمَلٌ مَحْلٍ وَمَهْوَ حَبْلٌ مَهْوٌ. لَاجِزٌ هَمْزٌ وَلَوْ أَنَّ أَحْمَسًا وَآهَ وَحَصٌّ

45 خَيْرٌ مِّنْ حَرْبٍ لَّجَالِ مَعُوذَةٍ مِّنْهُ وَمِنْهُ حَالُ امْتِحَانٍ مَّتَعَدٍّ ۖ

[illegible][illegible]

334 S.sey.

[illegible][illegible]

49 لَوَحَدِ اَوْ لَحَدٍ حَبًا مَعَهَا مَدَمَقَر. وَحَسَا لِحَا مَعَهَا. هَم مَعَهَا وَحَدٌ نَبَلًا مَدَم. مَعَهَا  
وَمَعَهَا لَا نَسْج. غَلَامَةٌ مَعَهَا حَسَكَا. فَحَدٌ اَحَدٌ مَعَهَا حَسَكَا. اَمَامًا لَهَا  
وَمَا حَبَدًا. وَحَدًا مَعَهَا [283A] وَحَدًا حَبًا حَكَم.

50 فَيُحْيِيهِمْ حَتَّىٰ قَعَمَ لَهَا لُحْمًا يُذْكَرُ. وَهُمْ فِي فَيْجٍ جَسَدِيٍّ. هَؤُلَاءِ جَسَدِيٍّ. قَعَمَ  
مَقْلَعًا. هَؤُلَاءِ لَهَا زَهْرًا وَمَقَرًا. وَنَسَفَ حَلَّ مَقْرَحَةٍ. لَهَا وَجْهٌ فَيُحْيِيهِمْ. وَهَؤُلَاءِ  
خَلَّاهُ. وَهَؤُلَاءِ لَهَا زَهْرًا وَمَقَرًا. وَنَسَفَ حَلَّ مَقْرَحَةٍ.

51 **فَمِنْ مَذُنٍ**. **جَبَّارٌ طَارِقٌ فَتَلَّاهُ**. **وَجَلَّاهُ مَدِينَةً فَقَلَّاهُ**. **مَهْمُومًا حَتْمًا مَسْتَبَلًا**. **مَهْجِعًا تَكْبِيرًا**  
**لَحِيحَةً حَمْدَةً**. **دَمْعَةً وَمِنْوَالًا**. **هَامِصَةً دَهْ قَحْمَالًا**. **وَوَحْشَةً لَهْ أَسْرَ رَحِصَةً**. [283B] **مَهْجِلًا مَحْلَلًا**  
**وَمَهْجِيًّا يَمْكَلِي دَهْ حَمَلًا كَحْلَمَ**.

[illegible]

53 هه‌مانێ ئه‌مدا به‌خاوه‌ی حه‌بای مازا که‌بار هه‌مان مه‌تا و نه‌ختا هه‌مه‌یه‌

هه‌لله‌ هه‌سه‌له‌:

54 اَمَقَّ فَاَمَّ هَبْوَا حَبْ فَنَهَمَهْ ۝ نَا دَهه سَلَا ۝ وَهَمَا وَهَمَا ۝ دَه حَبَا مَبْعَلَا ۝ حَبْعَا ۝  
وَمَعْمَعَا ۝ هَمَّ دَه اَمْعَه نَبَا كَهْلَا ۝ بَعْقَلَا ۝ اَوْحَلَا سَحَلَا ۝ حَلَا ۝ اَسْبُو حَبْلَا ۝ مَحْنَحَلَا ۝  
هَمَا ۝ اَلَهَكَلَا ۝ اَلَامَ اَلِئَعَلَا ۝ فُجَّيَلَا سَعْتَلَا ۝ وَهَمَا ۝ وَهَمَهْ ۝ نَهْنَه ۝ دَه مَ تَلَا ۝ مَعْلَا ۝  
مَعْلَا ۝ مَحْنَلَا ۝ وَلَهْمَلَا ۝ اَفْ فُحْنَه مَحْ ۝ حُتَلَا مَحْتَلَا [284B] ۝ وَوَحْمَلَا ۝ دَه نَالَه

[illegible]



[illegible]

أما. لاكن [287B] ومع هذا ما يصح نبؤ. هانس حقهلا وأدعت هوانت: هنعف حر  
هق:

56 ۵/۱۲۳ مبعث و ۱۲۴ هجری: ۵۰۰ سال از انقضای این مصلحت ۱۱۰۰ سال از انقضای این مصلحت ۱۱۰۰ سال از انقضای این مصلحت

57 رَحْمَةً وَفَتْحًا يُدْعَى بِهَا مُسْتَمْسِكًا وَيُنَاسِئُ وَفِى الْقُلُوبِ نَقِصَةٌ أَصْحَابُهَا يُدْعَوْنَ إِلَى أَنْ تُخْرَجَ مِنْهَا خُبْرَةٌ وَهُمُ الْغَافِلُونَ .

58 مَبْنِيًّا أَصِفْ مَدَامَ مَحَلِّهِ حَسْبُ الْكَلَامِ

[illegible]

60      הלא מזה נחלקו ונפסקו אמרי מעלינו קטנה חכמה וזאת חכמה גדולה  
האמירה והדבר הזהים ביניהם: שהכל אמת

[illegible]

62 سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ وَبَرَكَاتُهُ

63 سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ وَبَرَكَاتٌ كَثِيرَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ وَبِخَيْرِ الْمَوَاقِفِ ﴿٦٣﴾

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[illegible][illegible][illegible]

75 حملا اُمى اصف حملا حملا حملا

76  
 اَصْفَ صَ رَاحَ فَلَاحَ فَنَومَا مَمْبَعَا مَخَعُوا مَخَمَا وَمَا. وَحَصَا وَجَ . اَوْحَا وَصَحَا  
 اَوْحَا. حَا مَحَا وَاَوْقَعَا اَوْقَعَا مَتَحَا مَعَاوَسَا وَسَا. وَهَ وَجَ وَهَجَا لَا مَحَا مَسَمَا  
 اَوْمَا حَ . وَهَ وَصَحَا جَحَا بَحَا حَ . اُحَا وَجَ هَعَفَا وَجَمَا مَوْسَمَا بَحَمَا .  
 فَحَا كَحَا وَحَامَا وَحَا مَا [292B] مَفْحَصَا حَمَصَا . اُحَا وَرَقَا مَامَحَا  
 مَامَحَمَا مَمَتَا مَعَمَلَا حَمَصَا لَا مَمَمَا . وَهَ وَجَ مَحَا مَمَمَمَا مَمَمَمَمَا خَا  
 كَحَا مَحَا . اَلَا كَحَمَمَمَا مَحَا وَحَا وَكَحَا وَاحَمَامَا مَحَا مَمَمَتَا . وَهَ وَجَحَامَا

<sup>335</sup> It seems necessary to add , before **وَمِنْ**,

[illegible]

77 هه‌لا مکه احمدا وچ [293A] مخجهصص حصعهي ده‌سا. ده‌دهتار لاکتا. حصعه‌ها و آتس  
وستا دهعتتا. لهعة سه‌کله‌مه‌لا نهف کب اح ده‌دار ده‌سه‌م. ده‌ها

[illegible]

79 حصہ اول

80 [...] مَنَحَ، جَعَلَ، سَلَّحَهُ، وَهَيَّأَهُ. [293B] هَدَاهُ، جَعَلَ، مَحَلَّ [...]

81 مَخْبَرُ الْحَمَلِ حَمْلُهُ وَهِيَ حَمَلٌ مَحَلٌّ [...]

82 حَبْلًا وَنُفُوسًا كَافَّةً مَدْحُومًا جَبَلًا بَعْمًا لَحْزًا مَعْمًا. أَلَا حَبْلًا مَعْمًا. أَوْ حَبْلًا حَافًا.  
وَمَعْمًا أَصْفًا صَعْمًا؛ أَلَا حَبْلًا أَصْفًا.<sup>336</sup> هَكَذَا حَبْلًا مَعْمًا [...] ]

83      حبملا ونهلهم لحسلا ححسلا ومده ونبحسا. هلمح ونم صعه وه) ده حبملا لحا احص  
 ده ححلا ححلا [...] [294A]

84

<sup>337</sup>

[...]

85 لِّلّٰهُ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْاَرْضِ ۗ لَئِنْ سَأَلْتَهُ مَا شِئْنٌ لَّا يُعْطِيكَ ۚ ۭ

336 S.sey.

337 S.sey.

- 86 **וְעַתָּה מִנְּהָא וְעַתָּה מִנְּהָא וְעַתָּה מִנְּהָא וְעַתָּה מִנְּהָא**  
**חַבְלֵהּ**
- 87 **וְעַתָּה מִנְּהָא וְעַתָּה מִנְּהָא וְעַתָּה מִנְּהָא וְעַתָּה מִנְּהָא**  
**חַבְלֵהּ**
- 88 **וְעַתָּה מִנְּהָא וְעַתָּה מִנְּהָא וְעַתָּה מִנְּהָא וְעַתָּה מִנְּהָא**  
**חַבְלֵהּ**
- 89 **וְעַתָּה מִנְּהָא וְעַתָּה מִנְּהָא וְעַתָּה מִנְּהָא וְעַתָּה מִנְּהָא**  
**חַבְלֵהּ**
- 90 **וְעַתָּה מִנְּהָא וְעַתָּה מִנְּהָא וְעַתָּה מִנְּהָא וְעַתָּה מִנְּהָא**  
**חַבְלֵהּ**
- 91 **וְעַתָּה מִנְּהָא וְעַתָּה מִנְּהָא וְעַתָּה מִנְּהָא וְעַתָּה מִנְּהָא**  
**חַבְלֵהּ**
- 92 **וְעַתָּה מִנְּהָא וְעַתָּה מִנְּהָא וְעַתָּה מִנְּהָא וְעַתָּה מִנְּהָא**  
**חַבְלֵהּ**

338 S.sey.

339 S.sey.



101 نه وحصحلا فام اء. وامح وءءملا وءء اءءلا مءر مءصمء ءءءء

102 نه وءءمءلا



## 2.4. Translation of Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Syriac 110, fol. 274A-296B

### 1 Rite of Church Consecration

2 [274A] Again by the power of God we write the Rite of Church Consecration.

3 They must keep watch in prayer at night in the church to be consecrated. And after the morning prayer, the bishop dresses according to his order, and the priests and deacons dress according to their order, and they stand in the sanctuary around the table, and the bishop begins the Opening Prayer, and they say '*enyono, Have mercy on me*, of the consecration of a church, with the bishop chanting all the prayers, and they sing the psalms of the third hour, and they recite the canon of the consecration of a church [...] of the church that is completely ruined and built again, it should be consecrated. And the one which is not entirely ruined, but some parts of it have fallen down, should only be rededicated, so that the places which have fallen and been rebuilt shall be signed with crosses without Myron, just like the human body which is only once baptised, and if it happens that a hand or leg is cut off from it, the sanctification of Baptism is not at all removed from it. So also the church, if one wall or more is ruined in it and it is rebuilt, its former holiness is not removed from it. Even if it is a sanctuary, the likeness of the head of the church, that is ruined and rebuilt, the holiness is not removed from it, but due to the hearts of the simple and of those [...] in the knowledge of the mysteries [...] of the dedication of the church [...] in it [...] with the Cross [...] Myron to those places which have fallen down and been renewed.

4 Lord God, make us worthy, to renew and establish Your holy Church with spiritual praises, [274B] and to seal with the sign of Your holy Cross, and to anoint it with the sweet fragrance of Your divine Myron, and sanctify it with the sanctification of Your gift; and crown it with the gifts of the Holy Spirit; and in it, we may always glorify You, and Your Father and Your Holy Spirit, now...

5 The prayer after *Rahem 'layan*. Protect Lord, by the strength of Your victorious Cross, the walls of the renowned Zion, the holy Church, that You bought with Your precious blood, and encircle it with the protection and care of the holy and the heavenly armies, so that when it rejoices and celebrates in the gathering of its children, it shall sing praise and thanks to You, and to Your Father, and Your Holy Spirit...



- 16 Rejoice and be happy holy Church in Christ, your betrothed groom, who dwells in you and sanctifies you, and He caused the world to rejoice at your wedding.
- 17 Bow and thank, O holy Church, Christ who betrothed you in His love, and cry praise to Him, with [276B] your children on this day of your festival.
- 18 My Lord, preserve the holy faithful Church with Your cross, and seal its children with Your cross, so that they may thank You for Your grace.
- 19 God abundant in mercy, encircle it with walls of mercy, and drive away from it through Your mercy, evil divisions and controversies.
- 20 Prayer: Lord God, elevate Your Church with Your supports, and Your people with Your gifts, and the sheep of Your flock with the hymns of Your Holy Spirit, so that You are glorified in manifold ways on this day of its sanctification. Give it more of the treasure of Your mercy, Now...
- 21 Praise the Lord [277A] a new praise: *Yawmono*: In the high heaven of heavens, the bridegroom established Your bridal chamber, O Church, and He elevated you and sat you on his right side, as He promised, above all heresies and powers and high orders.
- 22 Glory to you, O holy Church, the betrothed of Christ, who wished by His love to give you His body and by His blood, and saved you He cleansed your impurity by His baptism, and sanctified you by His grace.
- 23 Today, in the glorious festival of your consecration, O holy Church, let us sing glory with the spiritual and corporeal ones to the One who wished by His love to sanctify and save you by His Cross.
- 24 Hence the heavenly and earthly ones are rejoicing, on the day [277B] of your consecration, O Church, the betrothed of the King, for which Christ suffered and we are raising up glory and thanks to the bridegroom who redeemed you.

- 25 Today, the high and low ones, are rejoicing and happy, the bride is happy and her bridegroom is rejoicing, the children are crying out and shouting praise<sup>342</sup> of thanksgiving to the Son who redeemed it [the Church].
- 26 Today, in Him who was nailed on the Cross, the church takes pride; His passion gave it life, His death hope, His burial strength, and His resurrection salvation to its children. Glory to the one who sent Him.
- 27 Prayer: Destroy and cause to cease from Your Church and flock, doubts, divisions and all destroying heresies that are alien to the truth of Your divine commandments, and raise [278A] and preserve its children in one accord and orthodox faith, so that it raise up glory to You ...
- 28 [...]
- 29 The holy One, who caused to dwell His presence on Mount Sinai and blessed it, make to dwell Your presence in Your Church and consecrate it.
- 30 Good One, who entrusted His apostles with the power over the high and the low, bring down Your glory upon the Church and consecrate it.
- 31 Blessed is He who through heavenly types decorated His Church and filled it with glory, and put an altar of forgiveness in it for the children of Adam.
- 32 Blessed is He who through His passion and death saved His Church from the error of the idol. Make its children worthy to stand at your right side.
- 33 Preserve, O our Lord, by Your cross the holy faithful Church from divisions and controversies, so that its children may at all times call out glory to Your name.
- 34 [278B] [...]
- 35 Isaiah the chosen prophet, called out and preached the news of the holy Church, “Stand up and shine for your light has arrived”, for the bridegroom who betrothed you does not die.

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<sup>342</sup> Lit. ܡܠܚܝܬܐ, one of the twenty sections into which the Syrians divide the Psalms; a chanting after a psalm or portion of a psalm.

- 36 Open your doors, and let them not be closed, not in the night, nor in the day, may the kings enter it with their crowns, and peoples singing glory.
- 37 Blessed are you, O faithful Church, for the voice of the Son resounds in you, and your foundations do not shake, for the Lord is your keeper.
- 38 A wall keeps a city, and the Church, the living Cross; a King governs a city, and the Church, the King of kings.
- 39 Blessed are you, O faithful Church, for the Lord has completed your blessing. Decorate your children righteously so that they raise up glory to His lordship.
- 40 [279A] [Blessed are they,] *Mo dothe at*: The Church says, I do not fear evil, for high walls surround me and God dwells in me. Remember me...
- 41 Get up, O daughter of the light, confess and praise your God, who dwells in you, and is glorified by all your children.
- 42 holy Church, sing glory to your Sanctifier, who gathered your children to your bosom, and filled them with holiness.
- 43 pure bride, whom the bridegroom, who betrothed you, sanctified, invite your children to His glory night and day.
- 44 On this day of your consecration, O holy Church, let us sing glory and thanksgiving to Christ who made you great.
- 45 Bless Our Lord, with Your cross, Your holy Church, and strengthen its walls in Your holy hands.
- 46 [279B] When they complete the canon and the *Anyone*, the bishop offers *Sedro* with this *Promion*: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, to the One who renews worlds, who always renews His holy Church by His grace; and completely decorates and honours it by His holy gifts, and victoriously sanctifies it by His spiritual decorations, and completely enriches it with divine honours, and invites peoples and nations to it, and gathers the dispersed to its bosom. And they uplift angelic praises to Him and uplift constant praise in it to the Father, who betrothed it to His only begotten; [280A] and they bow to the Son, who

redeemed it by His blood, and they praise the Holy living Spirit, who dwells in it, and sanctifies it, at this time...

- 47 *Sedro:* Glory and thanks to You, Jesus Christ, the rock, is to say, the unshakable stone upon which the holy Church was established. It was not put on the weakness of sand, but on a strong main corner-stone. This symbolises the stone of Moses from which twelve rivers for irrigation were supplied for the people Israel. This spiritual streams and right teachings in the hymns of the Holy Spirit were teaching and causing to rejoice, this of which David was singing, which was decorated and made splendid internally, in [280B] a spiritual way, not like that shadowy tent established by the Law, made of haircloth and dyed-red and sky-blue, but with a glorious and princely robe, and with holy and mysterious baptism. Not with threads of dark blue or of white, but with spiritual chains, and victories of the Holy Spirit, not with benches, and pillars of bronze and metal, but with prophets, visionaries of invisible things, and apostles, preachers of true things, and martyrs, walkers in the footsteps of Christ. Not with a shadowy altar, sprinkled with the blood of little birds and lambs, but with a spiritual and divine table, which is offered with the blood of the blameless lamb. This one is not lit with seven lamps, [281A] like the synagogue, but in the name of righteousness, and the stars of early dawn, inspired by the Holy Spirit. This one which the prophets pictured and the seers were demonstrated. Moses, the head of the prophets and of the Hebrews, drew it as a symbolical tent. Solomon, sea of wise things was illuminated it. Isaiah, glorious amongst prophets uttered towards it, “Stand up and light up, for your light has arrived”, and he proclaimed “The glory of the Lord shall shine on you.” David said “Forget your people and your tribe, and leave the house of your father,” and he recognised that “the King of kings desires your beauty.” [281B] This is the one that many precious things were spoken about. This is the one, whose face is bright and its eyes glisten, its cloth is splendid and its glorifiers are many, and its architects are wise, its buildings are great, and its mysteries are hidden, its symbols are astonishing, and also its treasures are hidden. The Lord of the worlds is its bridegroom, John its sponsor, the prophets its foundations, the apostles its attendants, the martyrs its guests, and its betrothal is unlike that of the daughter of the Hebrews, which was betrothed in darkness and obscurity. It was betrothed [and] this one is made blessed in the Father; proud in the Son; and preserved in the Holy Spirit. For this reason, peoples sing in it, and with them, [282A] also we shout and say: remember Lord Your holy Church, and raise the horn of its salvation. Increase in it constant peace, and make rule in it prosperous peace, while You grant by Your grace, vigilance to its blessed shepherds, and diligence to its

leaders, justice to the kings, uprightness to the judges, concord to the priests, purity to the deacons, acceptable repentance to sinners, good memory of purity to departed faithful, so that You may be praised by all, with Your Father and Your Holy Spirit. Now...

- 48 And they say this hymn from the church consecration rite, in the tune of *Tubayk 'idto*: Rejoice [282B] greatly and be happy O faithful holy Church, since, a table is built in you, the body and blood of Christ, and hence, a holy head priest, like Peter and Paul and priests, in the type of angels, surround the holy altar, and the Holy Spirit dwells in you, and sanctifies you and your children.
- 49 Blessed are you, O faithful holy Church, for the good and heavenly shepherd has placed the bridegroom, your Lord, before you, and he mixed wine for your wedding that its drinkers have not tasted before. Take and eat fire in the bread, and drink Spirit in the wine. In the fire and the Spirit of the [283A] holy, you will be decorated forever.
- 50 Moses made a Tabernacle for the daughter of Israel, and he put an altar in it for forgiveness, and he offered whole burnt-offerings on it, and the Holy Spirit did not descend to brood upon the sacrifices. Into this holy sanctuary, however, which is the house of God, the Holy Spirit enters and broods upon the sacrifices.
- 51 Make peace, our Lord, in Your Church in the four corners, and cause divisions to cease from it, and evil separations and disputes and gather its children to its bosom in true faith and raise in it shepherds that lead it according to Your will. [283B] Let calm and peace from You rule in it forever.
- 52 Prayer of *Pirmo*: Accept, Lord God, this incense and the nice smell of fragrant things presented to You, in our weakness on this day of the consecration, that is to say, renewal of Your holy Church. And we ask from Your mercy that You should make rejoice its children in salvation, and gladden its sinners with pardon, and give healing to the sick, and return to the scattered and those in error, and comfort to the miserable and distressed of heart; and cause to cease from it all conflicts and opposing divisions, and grant forgiveness and absolution to those who departed from it in true faith, so that we may thank [284A] and praise You, now...

- 53 And they say the psalms “You made, O Lord Your Church the foundation for Your seat.” And they read the readings from the prophets,<sup>343</sup> the Acts,<sup>344</sup> Paul<sup>345</sup> and the Gospel.<sup>346</sup>
- 54 The bishop recites a *Sedro* with this *Promion*: Heavenly bridegroom, who bethrothed the holy Church to Himself by the passion of His person, and placed His living cross in her for the protection of souls, wise architect, who built His Church and surrounded His Church and flock with a wall of confidence, and also built strong fortified towers of redemption for mankind, so that they may defend it from the attacks of the harsh and bitter fury of tyrants, and to cause to pass from it stormy waves [284B] of opposition, to Him is due glory...
- 55 *Sedro*: Christ, our God, who is gloriously and spiritually praised by the firey and spiritual ranks, You are blessed by flaming wings with great fear; You are offered triple holiness by immaterial servants in the Church of the first-born, who are inscribed in heaven. You who wished by Your grace to be blessed by the earthly ones, and to be exalted and praised in Your glorious abode, in the holy Church, which You foretold in the tabernacle of Israel which Moses built for Your glory, and decorated it with all types of images [285A] and have portrayed a symbol to Your holy Church, which through You was decorated with You as a true bridegroom, and was built with the bones of Your loved ones, and was established on the truth of Your beloved ones. Your prophets and foreseers have previously portrayed this Church: one of them was a burnt offering as an acceptable fragrance for his escape from the flood, demonstrating the mystery of Your holy altar. Another one, climbed the mountain of the Amorites and sacrifice his only son, raising an icon of Your Church. And one anointed the stone of Bethel,<sup>347</sup> [285B] he offered vows and tithes on it, and by this he demonstrated in advance mysterious offerings that are presented to You here in the church. Another, an altar was built on Mount Carmel, and he elevated foreshadowing sacrifices on it. Another spoke of the glory of the eastern house. One proclaimed that good things were spoken about the city of the Exalted one. Another, built an altar for Your honour, because he was saved from the Midianites. One, almost slaughtered his only begotten, (daughter) and drew a symbol of the holy Church. One, [286A] said that the house of the Lord should be established on the top of

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<sup>343</sup> Isaiah 54: 1-14.

<sup>344</sup> I John 2:20-28.

<sup>345</sup> Hebrews 9:2-14.

<sup>346</sup> Matthew 16:3-19.

<sup>347</sup> Lit. God's house.



the mountain, and proclaimed: nations shall flow to it. And another said that the Lord had decorated Jerusalem in beautiful ornaments, and another offered a sacrifice in the field of Araunah, the Jebusite, and through it he withdrew the plague from the people. One preached, “the Lord will establish his house above all principalities and authorities.” Another was saying to the Church, “open your walls and make wide your windows.” One cried joyfully, “Let the temple of the Lord be built and may it be for the glory of Israel”. And another, “after the exile and the coming-out [286B] from Babylon, a house was portayed for to Your name”. One prophesised, “may the Lord make right His altar, and the evil one be ashamed.” And another was singing, “a myriad of nestlings are beside Your altar, O Lord.” And thus by means of the Church, You have demonstrated the truth to the powers that were preaching about it. Therefore, we beseech You, Christ our God, by the fragrance of this incense that You visit Your holy Church, thus fulfilling for it Your promise, “Behold I shall be with you till the end of the world.” Visit her by Your mercies, and fill her with the treasure of Your compassion. [287A] Deliver her from uproar and distrubances. And free her from all perils and difficulties. Firmly set her foundations and strengthen her ties. Organise her choirs and order her ranks with songs of the Holy Spirit. Protect her communities and guard her children, widen her borders and establish her foundation in the houses with the support of Your firm knowledge. Raise up for her true teachers, shepherds, priests and deacons who keep Your laws, and make kings and leaders worthy to obey Your commandments. Support the elders, adorn the youth with humility and come to the help of orphans and heal the sick. [287B] Free those who are touched by the devil, and give rest to the souls of our fathers and brothers. And we offer glory to You...

- 56 And they sing “Holy One, who made to rest His presence” and in every verse they say, “Make to rest You presence on Your Church so that it is sanctified.”
- 57 Prayer of *Pirmo*: Heavenly bridegroom, You who from Your sweet and spiritual fragrance – which befits Your Godhead - fill those who accept You. Fill us now with the fragrance of this incense offered to Your Divinity, strength, wisdom, and holiness, dwelling with us, and in Your holy Church, help and support us now, until the end of the world, and now...
- 58 The bishop begins: We believe in one God...
- 59 And when they finish, the bishop prays [288A] silently. O Lord, God of the heavenly powers, who have granted us to perform this service and who know people’s minds, and search out

the hearts, and inner parts, hear us by the multitude of Your mercies and purify us from all physical and spiritual infirmity. Make our sins vanish like a cloud and our wickedness as fog. Fill us with Your strength, and with the grace of Your only begotten Son, with the efficacy of Your Holy Spirit in everything. Enable us to be servants of Your New Testament, so that we may offer praise to Your Holy Name as is fitting, to stand before You to serve and minister for [288B] Your divine mysteries.

- 60 And he raises his voice: For You are kind and very compassionate to all those who call You. And honour and praise and power to You, and to Your Son, and to Your Holy Spirit. Now... Amen.
- 61 The archdeacon proclaims: Let us all pray at this time for this house that is being consecrated, so that God all may, by His mercy, send to it His grace. May He establish His altar in it and firmly fix its foundations. May He also make it a refuge for penitents and harbour for rest for the afflicted. May He, likewise, hear the intercessions of those who pray in the orthodox faith in it, granting them [289A] all that is good for their salvation and for the repose of their faithful departed. We beseech the Lord.
- 62 That we may be able to complete this consecration performed by the Holy one, we ask.
- 63 That the Lord may be pleased with us and with our service, we ask earnestly.
- 64 Again for this house and its completion, we earnestly beseech the Lord.
- 65 So that the Lord, who dwells on high and watches all lowly things, may be satisfied with this abode and chooses it for Himself. May He fill it with His divine grace and the heavenly gifts to become a ready habitation for His Divinity. From the Lord...
- 66 And when He sends forth to it His sanctifying power, [289B] in the presence of the Cherubim and the company of angelic ranks, may He declare it to be a dwelling place for His Holiness and glory, and make it His resting place forever.
- 67 So that when He renews it by His Holy Spirit, He may complete it for the renewal and salvation of souls and bodies, [and] also for the forgiveness of sins, thus blotting out of transgressions, and the purification of the hearts of those who, with the true penitence, repent. Also for the consolation, refreshment and full healing of those, who are afflicted with different types of adversity and serious illnesses, [290A] who will plead to the Lord in it.

Also for the redemption and safety of all the people who are faithfully gathered in it by faith.  
From the Lord we ask.

- 68 For this bishop, and the head priest, who stands in prayer on our behalf, and for deed of his hands, more earnestly, we ask from the Lord.
- 69 For the honoured priests who are standing here with him, and for all the clergy and the faithful people. We ask from the Lord.
- 70 For the holy, universal and apostolic Church, which is in all corners of the earth, also for its peace and support, and for all the people, we beseech from the Lord.
- 71 [290B] The holy, glorious and ever-virgin Mother of God, Mary, and the holy apostles, prophets, martyrs of good victory, righteous ones, confessors, preachers, evangelists, and for all those who were pleasing to God, we remember, so that by their prayers and intercessions in this present service, which is offered and we will be strengthened in all these offer things.
- 72 All of us, our brothers, who are present on our behalf and for each other, and for this house that is being consecrated, and for those who built it for the glory of God and the honour of good victory [of], *Mor N* [291A]. We beseech the Lord.
- 73 Then the head priest prays silently: Lord, God, of the all perceptible and visible creation, the Creator of the heavenly things and earthly things, and of what is beneath the earth. You who have filled the earth with Your churches, like the types of the first-born that are inscribed in the heavenly Church and serve You, with Your only-begotten Son, and Your all-Holy Spirit, and now see fit to overshadow this place, and sanctify it for the worship of Your all honoured name, so that those who call on You in it with good deeds, and offer sacrifices, and ascribe the finest things may seek health, and find redemption, and may be released from sins, and enlightened with incorruptible knowledge, [291B] and may they learn and teach and be delighted in the Holy Spirit, and put [away] difficulties and receive purity, and do good deeds in it, and be inscribed in heaven, so that all people will see Your coming as King in this place, and may they worship You in it, while truly understanding that You are God....
- 74 And he raises his voice Yes, we ask and supplicate to You, complete the word of our mouth, and fulfill the promise of Your all-Holy Spirit, so that the word of Your Gospel might dwell, act run, and care in every deed and word that happens in this place, by the grace, mercy and

love of humanity [292A] of Your only- begotten Son, our Lord, God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, with whom, glory, honour and power is due to You, with Your all-Holy and good Spirit...

75 People: Amen. Bishop: Peace. People: And to the spirit...

76 The bishop thus [prays] silently: Saviour King, holy one, and creator of all, who in our nature have planted the seed of wisdom according to the discovery of crafts, trades, and useful skills of life, You who have saved us from irrational and animalistic habits and You have granted us the wisdom to escape from the harm of cold and heat, accept those who in the establishment of this house [292B] praise Your name, so that prayers, praises and priestly services are might be completed for Your nature which lacks nothing, which does not will these from us of necessity or need, but for the expansion and the increase of those things which are always given by You, who threw the spirit of wisdom on Bezalel so that he would build a dwelling for Your holy name, who disciplined Your people of Israel on the path of the dessert, sanctify, establish, confirm, warn, and protect by Your high and powerful hand this holy and priestly house, which is for You and the utterance of praises to You.

77 And he raises his voice: So that when we delight [293A] in Your priestly law and divine hymns, with the bringing forth of Your fearful and heavenly sacraments, we may offer to You, Father, praise and thanksgiving, and [to Your] Son and Holy Spirit, now...

78 [...] the bishop, while they chant the hymn of *Myron*: like the oil. And the bishop approaches and begins behind the altar, on the eastern side, and thus he makes three crosses, and takes the bottle of *Myron* and puts it on this right thumb, and signs with it a cross and says: Christ, our God, by the prayers of Your holy apostles and Your Mother, the Mother of God, Mary, and Mor N, the saint, in whose name this house is built, bless and sanctify this altar, and us, because You are blessed, with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, now...

79 People Amen.

80 [...] and he makes a second cross in the place, [293B] and prays this prayer [...]

81 And he makes a third cross in the place, and prays this prayer [...]

82 Until they arrive at the western side not exiting the sanctuary, but on the wood, or on the stone, the bishop signs with *Myron* three times, and prays this prayer [...]

- 83 Until they arrive to the northern side of the altar, and there he signs that place three times with *Myron*, and prays the prayer [...] [294A]
- 84 And there also, he signs that place with *Myron* three times while he prays the prayer: And thus they are being signed [...]
- 85 He comes towards the altar, which is new, and the bishop prays [...] altar
- 86 Understand well, O learned one, that an old altar should be signed once. It may not be anointed again when the church is being consecrated.
- 87 And again understand that when it is necessary in some place regarding the altar, and the bishop cannot go there, it is for priests to fix in position an altar and administer to the people the holy sacraments.
- 88 And later, when the bishop is ready to go there, he should say these prayers on it, and anoint it with *Myron*. When the altar is not established nor sanctified, the bishop may authorize and establish it by means of a priest. Then, he will say a prayer upon it and anoint it with *Myron*. Thus after the prayers he begins with *hulolo*, and signs the type of the cross from east to west on the northern side. And again he begins with *hulolo*, and takes from the *Myron*, and makes another sign from north to south from the eastern side, on top of the altar. And he completes one cross.
- 89 And again he will say the sentence “For this [294B] Your Christ, God, your God, *hallelujah*”. And he takes from the *Myron* on his thumb and draws the sign of the second cross, in the middle, from east to west.
- 90 And again he says another sentence “May the oil of joy and happiness serve You by means of those You gave us in Your mercy, friends more than partners, *hallelujah*”. And he takes from the *Myron* and makes the second sign of the second cross in the middle of the altar from north to south.
- 91 And again he says “Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, *hallelujah*”. And he takes from the *Myron* on his thumb, and makes the sign of the third cross, from east to west on the south side.

- 92 And again he says “Forever and ever, *hallelujah*”. And he takes from the Myron on his thumb,  
and anoints the second sign of the third cross from north to south on the north side.
- 93 [...] [295A] Lord, who by Your indescribable love towards mankind have filled the entire earth with Your knowledge and called us to You, and made us to leave the idolatrous error and emptiness of demons, and to worship You, who are true God, we ask You now, to grant us Your grace and support that we might serve You according to Your will with those Your mercies which You have granted us. And may this altar, which we are building and establishing, to offer divine sacrifices and sacramental offerings upon it for the glory of Your sacred and holy name, receive, by Your mercies, sanctification and firmness, [295B] and the gift of Your Holy Spirit. And by the power given by You to us let us be worthy in true faith, and in holiness of soul and body, and by keeping of Your holy commandments, we may stand before You and offer You acceptable offering and beseeching supplications for our sins and the sins of Your people and find mercy and salvation for our souls through Christ Jesus our Lord, with whom glory and honour are due to You, with Your Holy Spirit, and good...
- 94 [...] [296A] [...] And after he seals it with Myron he makes [...] It is signed, anointed, sanctified, stamped, and sealed, this table of eternity let divine offerings, and sacramental sacrifices be offered in the name of the Father, Amen.
- 95 [...] the second while saying, in the name of the Son, Amen.
- 96 [...] the third saying, in the name of the Holy Spirit, Amen.
- 97 [...] For the glory, honour, splendor and praise [296B] of the Holy Trinity equal in *Ousia*, and for the peace of the building of the holy Church of God.
- 98 And the headpriest proclaims: Let us all stand orderly and etc...
- 99 Christ our God, who resides on high, and looks at the lowly places and sees into the depth, whose throne is heaven and earth is the footstool under His feet, and all things are subject to Him, and consider all those who approach You with faith [in] Your temple. We ask.
- 100 You who find us physically together in this visible house, unite us in the faith of hope in You, and confirm it in our souls. We ask.

101 You who stand in the middle of those who are gather in the temple made by hands for Your name. We ask....

102 He who to the temples ...

## 2.5. Comparative Study

The following table summarises the main differences between the two manuscripts, Vatican Borg. Syriac 57 and Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Syriac 110. The numbers correspond to the paragraphs in the respective manuscripts.

BAV Borg. 57	BNF Syriac 110
2. “Again by the true hope of Divine Support, we begin writing also the Rite of Church Consecration”.	2. “Again by the power of God we write the Rite of Church Consecration”.
3. Short rubrics of Church Consecration.	3. Detailed rubrics of Church Consecration.
6. Prayers between <i>Marmyotho</i> : “A long prayer starting with: Lord, the Sea, which is abundant.....”	6. Prayers between <i>Marmyotho</i> : “A short prayer starting with: Lord God, push away from Your holy Church.....”
7. A prayer starting with “Lord God, support with your.....”	Omitted.
8. A prayer starting with “God, may your peace.....”	Omitted.
9. A prayer starting with “Lord God, push away.....” (which can be seen at § 6 in BNF Syriac 110).	
Omitted.	7. A hymn starting “My God My God... <i>Haw d’uhdono</i> :.....” (which continues until § 11).
10. A prayer starting with “Lord establish eternal .....” (which can be seen at § 12 in BNF Syriac 110).	
11. A prayer starting with “Lord God, elevate your church.....” (which can be seen at § 20 in BNF Syriac 110).	



12. A prayer starting with “Destroy and cause to .....” (which can be seen at § 27 in BNF Syriac 110).	
	12. A prayer starting with “Lord establish eternal .....” (which can be seen at § 10 in BAV Borg. 57).
Omitted.	14. A hymn “Glory to You O King, Christ....” (which continues until § 19).
	20. A prayer starting with “Lord God, elevate your church.....” (which can be seen at § 11 in BAV Borg. 57).
Omitted	21. A hymn “Praise the Lord a new praise: <i>Yawmono</i> :.....” (which continues until § 26).
	27. A prayer starting with “Destroy and cause to .....” (which can be seen at § 12 in BAV Borg. 57).
Omitted.	29. A long hymn “The holy One, who caused to dwell...” (which continues until § 45).
15. The manuscript mentions the hymn for the church consecration rite, but does not include it.	48. “And they say this hymn from the church consecration rite, in the tune of <i>Tubayk idto</i> : Rejoice greatly and be happy.....” (which continues until § 51).
17. “And they instantly read these readings, firstly from the Creation, the second book of the Pentateuch: The Lord spoke with Moses.....”	53. The readings are not included in the Manuscript. Instead the manuscript says: “And they read the readings from the prophets, the Acts, Paul and the Gospel”.
18. The prophecy of Samuel	Omitted.
19. The prophecy of Isaiah	Omitted.

20. The Acts of the Apostles, from the letter of John	Omitted.
21. Paul the Apostle, from the Letter to the Hebrews	Omitted.
22. The Gospel of Matthew	Omitted.
25. Antiphon: wordings are slightly different from BNF Syriac 110.	56. Antiphon: wordings are slightly different from BAV Borg. 57.
32. Litany: “That the Lord may be pleased with us and with our service, we ask earnestly ...”	62. Litany: “That we may be able to complete this consecration performed by the Holy one, we ask”.
33. Litany: “That we may be able to complete this consecration performed by the Holy One, we ask...”.	63. Litany: “That the Lord may be pleased with us and with our service, we ask earnestly”.
34. Litany: “Again for this house and its completion, we earnestly beseech the Lord.”	64. Litany: “Again for this house and its completion, we earnestly beseech the Lord”.
48. The head priest carries the Myron. The rubrics are almost the same. However, the wordings are slightly different. But the prayer at the end is the same as in BNF Syriac 110.	78. The head priest carries the Myron. The rubrics are almost same but the wordings are slightly different. The prayer at the end is the same as in BAV Borg. 57.
50. The rubrics say: “The bishop applies the Myron to his thumb again, and makes a cross on the place, and says the prayer. And he completes three crosses”.	80. The rubrics in this manuscript are not readable, but the text says: “[...] and he makes a second cross in the place, and prays this prayer [...]”
52. Regarding the western side, the manuscript reads “Until they arrive to the western side of the altar, not going outside the church, but the bishop signs three times on the wood, or on the stone, and he	82. Regarding the western side, the manuscript reads “Until they arrive at the western side not exiting the sanctuary, but on the wood, or on the stone, the bishop signs with <i>Myron</i> three times, and prays

says this prayer and completes it”.	this prayer [...]”. (Some is not readable).
53. The manuscript describes two important things: 1) According to the Apostolic tradition the bishop must fix in position the table of life (altar). 2) A prayer for the fixing in position of the altar.	The prayer is mentioned in § 93.
Omitted.	86 and 87. The rubric says “Understand well, O learned one, that an old altar should be signed once. It may not be anointed again when the church is being consecrated. And again understand that when it is necessary in some place regarding the altar, and the bishop cannot go there, it is for priests to fix in position an altar and administer to the people the holy sacraments”.
54. Anointing of the <i>tablito</i> .	Omitted.
	88, 89, and 90, 91, 92. Instruction on anointing with Myron on altar which is mentioned in BAV Borg. 57 § 53 with slight changes.
57. Decoration of the altar with clothing.	No rubrics regarding altar clothing appear, but prayer is mentioned in § 97.
	94. A prayer mentioned here can be seen in BAV Borg. 57 § 54.
BAV Borg. 57 § 58- 93 continues.	102. BNF Syriac 110 is incomplete.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Anointing with Oil in the Syrian Orthodox Tradition**

#### **3.1. Introduction**

Anointing with oil was a common Biblical practice and one which continues today in many Churches. In its ritualised form it was connected with ritual baths, baptisms, and the anointing of the sick. Anointing is very important in the Syrian liturgical tradition and there are many different types of anointing with oil in the Syrian Orthodox Church. The purpose of this chapter is to explain the use of oil (or anointing with oil) in the Syrian liturgy and especially its importance during the consecration of a church.

Firstly I describe the different types of anointing in the Syrian Orthodox Church tradition. Then there is a short description of the use of Myron oil in the Eastern and Western Churches. This is followed by a discussion of the consecration of Myron oil, and the use of oil for anointing in Mesopotamia and in the Bible. Next I consider the symbolism of oil in the Syriac tradition, and provide an explanation of the use of Holy Myron in the Church and its importance and significance during the consecration of a church. I also review the teachings by the Church Fathers about the anointing of the altar with Myron and discuss the theological significance of the use of Myron.

#### **3.2. Types of Anointing**

To anoint is to pour or smear with oil, a process employed ritually by many religions. The faithful and objects are anointed to symbolise the introduction of a divine influence. There are four main types of anointing in the Syrian Orthodox Church: (a) anointing with specially blessed oil<sup>348</sup> at the time of Baptism, (b) anointing of the sick with blessed oil, (c) anointing of the dead, and (d) anointing with Myron oil during Baptism. In the Syrian Orthodox Church Myron is not used in ordination services.

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<sup>348</sup> This Oil is blessed and consecrated by the Bishops with liturgical prayers and is distributed to the churches for Baptism and anointing of the sick.

### 3.2.1. Anointing with Blessed Oil during Baptism

Baptism is one of the seven Sacraments in the Church and Baptism signifies death and resurrection along with Christ (Rom. 6:4). It involves the immersion and the washing of a person in water.<sup>349</sup> There is a Baptismal custom of removing one's clothing before being immersed and of being re-clothed with a white garment<sup>350</sup> after emerging from the water. According to the *Jerusalem Catechesis*<sup>351</sup> "as soon as the chosen had been brought in and had removed their clothes, they were anointed with exorcised oil from the hair on the top of their head to the lower extremities...This anointing puts to flight every trace of hostile power."<sup>352</sup> Through Baptism, the faithful are sealed with the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 1:13; 4:30); the Book of Revelation (Rev. 7:3f) describes this sealing of the servants of God as being on their foreheads. The Book of Common Prayer states that, "Those who are sealed with the seal of Christ, who ate His Holy Body and drink His propitiatory Blood, shall be raised up by Him from the earth and shake off the dust and shall be clothed in a garment of glory."<sup>353</sup>

Anointing was in practice during the ritual of Baptism among the early Christians. Through anointing they received divine grace and obtained the courage to fight evil. The use of oil in the liturgy of Baptism probably originated in the early third century. According to Hippolytus (AD 170 – 235), "at the time determined for Baptism, the Bishop shall give thanks over the oil and put it into a vessel and call it the oil of thanksgiving. And he shall take other oil and perform exorcism over it, and call it the oil of exorcism."<sup>354</sup> In AD 416, Pope Innocent I wrote a letter to Bishop Decentius, the bishop of Gubbio, in reply to the bishop's request for advice and clarification regarding the text of James 5:14-15<sup>355</sup> which suggests that the elders

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<sup>349</sup> The Syriac noun for baptism is *mamodito* ܡܡܕܝܬܐ. The root ܡܡ means to dip in under water, to bath, to wash etc. Smith, (1903), *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary*, 416.

<sup>350</sup> The Robe of Glory is the Syriac sacramental theology. See Brock, (1992), "Clothing metaphors as a means of theological expression in Syriac tradition", 11-38.

<sup>351</sup> Cyril of Jerusalem (AD 313-386) wrote a series of 24 lectures which are commonly known as the *Jerusalem Catechesis*. See Gifford, E. H., (1994), "The Catechetical Lectures of S. Cyril"; Walsh, (ed.), (1991), *Butler's Lives of the Saints*.

<sup>352</sup> Cyril of Jerusalem, *Mystagogical Catecheses* II: 3, Sources Chretiennes 126, p.106-108; Also see Martimort, (1984), *The Church at Prayer*, 39.

<sup>353</sup> Griffiths, (trs.), (2005), *The Book of Common Prayer*, Noon on the day of Resurrection, 169.

<sup>354</sup> Sykes (trs.), (2001), *On the Apostolic Tradition*, 111.

<sup>355</sup> Swiss, (2002), "The Administration of the Sacramental Anointing of the Sick by Non-Ordained Ministers: A Historical Argument" in <http://eapi.admu.edu.ph/content/administration-sacramental-anointing-sick-non-ordained-ministers-historical-argument>

of the Church may anoint the sick person but it is not clear whether this is the same oil as that used in baptism. In his response Pope Innocent I uses Chrism as a name both for the oil with which newcomers were anointed and for the oil of the sick.<sup>356</sup>

The sign of the cross made with oil on the forehead is a sign of membership, in the same way as a soldier has the sign of his leader,<sup>357</sup> which should be evident and obvious. The forehead, which is hardly ever covered, is the most visible part of the human body. Therefore the person who is anointed with oil on the forehead, shows publicly that he is a Christian. There was another reason for marking or sealing the candidates with the sign of the Cross. In antiquity, slaves and soldiers were marked on their foreheads or on their hands as a sign that they owed allegiance to those whom they served.<sup>358</sup> Augustine (354-430) exhorted those who were preparing for baptism to understand the significance of the cross. “When you first believed, you received the sign of Christ on your forehead, the home of your shame. Remember your forehead and do not be afraid of another man’s tongue...”<sup>359</sup> Catechumens were thus signed to indicate that they belonged to Christ and his cross. The cross was signed on the forehead once again at the completion of their initiation. In ‘The Spiritual Commentary on Baptism’, Severus (AD 512- 538), Patriarch of Antioch, explains the reason for the sign on the forehead as, “... because it is the honourable part; and because he has become fearful in appearance to the demons; continually so, as happened in Egypt, for the destroyer feared to approach the doors on which there was the type of the cross.”<sup>360</sup>

### **3.2.2. Anointing of the Sick with Blessed Oil**

In primitive Christianity, anointing with oil was used in the pastoral care of sick people. Unction of the sick<sup>361</sup> is one of the Sacraments of the Syrian Orthodox Church for the healing of not only the body, but also the soul and spirit, through the repentance of the individual and

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<sup>356</sup> See Cabié, (1973), “La lettre du pape Innocent I à Décentius de Gubbio”, 24, 30.

<sup>357</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, James J. Cunningham, (ed.), (2006), 217.

<sup>358</sup> Birmingham, (1999), *Word & Worship Workbook*, 237.

<sup>359</sup> Sermon 215.5: Migne, (ed.), *Patrologia Latina*, 4. See Birmingham, (1999), *Word & Worship Workbook*, 237.

<sup>360</sup> British Museum, Add. 14496 & 14538 translated by Brock, (1980), “Some Early Syriac Baptismal Commentaries”, 39.

<sup>361</sup> The Sacrament of anointing of the sick is the Church’s specific prayer for healing. The primary purpose of this is for bodily healing as well as the forgiveness of sins. It is not the last rites as is sometimes thought but it is for spiritual, physical, and mental healing of a faithful sick person. See *The Service Book of Kandilo*.

the forgiveness of sins. The Epistle of St. James<sup>362</sup> explains this practice, which confirms that this custom was practiced by Christians from ancient times. The Church Order of Hippolytus says that, “the anointing .....is derived from the ancient belief in the curative powers of oil, from which its use in religious healing (Mark 6:13, James 5:14) was developed.”<sup>363</sup> John Chrysostom urged the Christians of Antioch to lavishly anoint their whole bodies with holy oil from the tomb of the martyrs,<sup>364</sup> for moral as well as physical benefit: “for through its pleasant smell the oil reminds you of the martyrs’ contests, and bridles and restrains all wantonness in considerable patience, and overcomes the diseases of the soul”.<sup>365</sup> This not only confirms that the sacrament of anointing the sick took place but was performed in combination with repentance and confession.<sup>366</sup>

The oil designed for use on sick people is consecrated by the bishop and is one of the services of the Syrian Orthodox Church known as the “Consecration of the Oil for anointing the sick.” Sanctified oil is considered to be a weapon to fight against Satan. During the anointing of the sick, the blessed oil is rubbed on the skin of the sick person, usually in the area of the pain or discomfort as a means of healing.

In the service of the anointing of the sick in the Syriac Orthodox Church, the celebrant recites some initial prayers and there are hymns, and the readings from the books of the apostles and the Gospels. After these, the celebrant places his hand over the head of the sick person, and prays “to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, I am placing my humble hand over the head of this sick person in Your Name so then the mighty, powerful, loving, helping hand of yours can be placed/invoked on this sick person.”<sup>367</sup> Then the celebrant recites further prayers and places the blessed oil on the forehead, chest, and knees of the sick person. After this the

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<sup>362</sup> “Is anyone among you sick let him call for the elders of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord” (James 5:14).

<sup>363</sup> Easton, (trs.), (1934), *The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus*, 91; Hauler, (1900), *Didascalia Apostolorum Fragmenta Ueronensia Latina*; Vööbus, (1968), *Liturgical Traditions in the Didache*.

<sup>364</sup> In Syria, the bones of saints were generally held in stone reliquaries, coffers in the shape of small sarcophagi. Oil was poured into a hole pierced in the cover slab and, once sanctified by contact with the relics, drained out through another hole at the bottom of the coffer. This Holy oil collected at the tombs of saints was carried back home by pilgrims. See Bartlett, *Archaeology and Biblical Interpretation*, 161.

<sup>365</sup> Mayer and Allen, (trs.), (2000), *John Chrysostom*, “Homily on the Martyrs”, 96; Harvey, (2006), *Scenting Salvation*, 75.

<sup>366</sup> Tyneh, (2003), *Orthodox Christianity*, 116.

<sup>367</sup> *The Service Book of the Sacraments*, (2005), 194.

celebrant recites prayer this prayer: “In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, may you be purified and be free of all the sins that you may have committed knowingly or unknowingly. May all the sinful evil deeds and thoughts be removed from you”,<sup>368</sup> then he places the oil on the eyes, nose, mouth, tongue, ears, arms, legs, and the umbilicus.

It should be noted here that the specific type of oil called ‘Myron’ is not used for the anointing of the sick.

### **3.2.3. Anointing of the Dead**

The anointing the dead with blessed oil is a practice from the ancient Orient, and in the Syrian Orthodox Church tradition. This anointing in the course of the Middle Ages came to be confined to departed bishops, priests and deacons.<sup>369</sup> The present practice is for the family of the deceased to form a funeral a procession to carry the coffined body from the house to the church, where the body is laid in the nave and the clergy perform the service of the funeral. At the end of the service the one of the priest (or a bishop, if he is present) anoints the body of the dead with blessed oil and says:

...Grant through this oil which is poured on the body, that he may become slippery and not seized by the hostile armies and the camps of the enemies who lie in ambush to fight against the souls of men. Lead him to the abodes of light and exaltation with the saints. For the relief from pain, for repose from misery, and for felicity with the saints; in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the living Holy Spirit this oil is poured for eternal life.<sup>370</sup>

During baptism the person had been anointed with blessed oil which ‘stripped off his former dress’ and allowed him to wear ‘the robe of glory’. The anointing with blessed oil after death signifies that in the combat with evil the person has won a victory.

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<sup>368</sup> *The Service Book of the Sacraments*, (2005), 196.

<sup>369</sup> See De Vries, (1940), *Sakramententheologie bei den syrischen Monophysiten*, 213-14; Brock, (1993), “Anointing in the Syriac Tradition”, 98.

<sup>370</sup> *The Service Book of the Funeral*, (1997), 71-72.



### 3.2.4. Anointing with Myron Oil

There is another specific type of anointing, which uses special oil - the so-called Myron. Myron oil is different from the blessed oils mentioned above. The word Myron<sup>371</sup> is from the Greek word *Myrōn* which means “unguent, ointment, perfume, sweet oil, and chrism”.<sup>372</sup> In Syriac it is called ܡܝܪܝܢܐ (ܡܝܪܝܢܐ) (“the Holy Myron or Myron”) or ܡܝܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܝܪܝܢܐ (“Anointing Oil”).<sup>373</sup> The term ‘Holy Myron’ is also used as the name of the Sacrament of Holy anointing, or confirmation. The details of anointing with Myron during Baptism are given in section 3.8.1.

The local priests usually obtain from the diocesan bishop a sufficient quantity of the above mentioned three oils (Myron, Oil for Baptism, and Oil for anointing sick), to meet the needs of their respective churches. In each parish church these consecrated oils are kept with great care and reverence, being enclosed in suitable bottles, which are preserved in a locked box or a safe, affixed to the wall of the sanctuary.

### 3.3. The Myron Oil in Eastern and Western Churches

The Myron oil is used in only one of the Holy Sacraments in the Eastern Church through which the faithful receive the seal of the Holy Spirit. The name of this Sacrament in the Eastern Churches is Anointing with Myron or Chrismation, and in the Western Churches it is called Confirmation or Chrism.

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<sup>371</sup> Dionysius Bar Salibi in his ‘Treatise on Myron’ (Mingana Collection MSS 25, fol. 9r-15r) says: “(The word) ‘myron’ is translated in the Syriac language as ‘muro’. Etymologically (the word) *muro*-with which the dead are embalmed- signifies mortality. Thus it signifies the mortality of our Lord for our sake. Solomon also called Him ‘Oil of Myrrh’ (Songs 1:2). The Greeks too called it Myron in the Greek language. There are two ways in which term Myron is used. First, (because of) the fragrance. Every (kind of) oil composed from many fragrant plants is called myron”. See Varghese (trs.), (2006), *Dionysius Bar Salibi: Commentaries on Myron and Baptism*, 10; Julius, (trs.), (1974), *Hudayacanon*, 25-26. Secondly *Myron* is one of the seven sacraments of the Syrian Orthodox Church. It is called confirmation because it confirms the Christian in his faith and strengthens him fight against evil. *Myron* gives to the faithful the Holy Spirit’s gift to stand firm in true faith and to grow spiritually. For specific studies on this Sacrament, see Strothmann, (1977-78), *Das Sakrament der Myron-Weibe in der Schrift De ecclesiastica hierarchia des Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita*; In the Bible See 2 Cor. 1:21-22; Eph. 1: 13; Exo. 28:41, 30:30; 1Sam. 10:1-2, 16:12-13. See Vööbus, (1975), *The Synodicon in the West Syrian Tradition*, 367.

<sup>372</sup> Watts, (2000), *The Oxford Greek Dictionary*, 298.

<sup>373</sup> In Syriac the word Myron is derived from the Greek and the Greek word has a Semitic origin, possibly in Aramaic.

In the East, it is the normal practice for a priest to administer the Sacrament of Baptism followed immediately by the Sacrament of Chrismation. In this practice, in both the Eastern and Western churches, the link to the Bishop is maintained because the priest can only confirm with Myron which has been consecrated by the Patriarch. In the Eastern Churches, the three Sacraments of initiation are administered at the same time during the Baptism service. The person (usually an infant) receiving the Sacrament is baptised, confirmed or chrismated, and receives Holy Communion, all in the same ceremony.

In the West, the term Confirmation suggests that this Sacrament both confirms and strengthens Baptismal grace. Confirmation is normally separate from Baptism and is always conducted by a Bishop or a specified priest. This is because the Bishop is a symbol of the wider Church. However, in case of need the Bishop may delegate the administration of Confirmation to a priest. There is a gap between Baptism and Confirmation in the West, but often children are still quite young when they are confirmed.

In the western churches, Chrism is specifically associated with confirmation. Significantly, post-baptismal anointment seems to have been unknown in the Syriac tradition prior to the very end of the fourth century.<sup>374</sup> Eventually the West Syrians also took up the use of Myron for post-baptismal anointing, whereas the East Syriac tradition used only olive oil. Only from the thirteenth century onwards did the West Syrians adopt the practice from the Copts of adding multiple spices to the Myron.<sup>375</sup>

In the West, anointing began to be used in connection with ordination in imitation of the Old Testament practice of the anointing of the high priest.<sup>376</sup> On the same scriptural basis, Christian emperors and kings were anointed at their coronation. Chrism can also be used in both confirmation and in the non-sacramental rites such the consecration of a church and sacred vessels, baptismal fonts, etc.<sup>377</sup>

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<sup>374</sup> Harvey, (2006), *Scenting Salvation*, 264.

<sup>375</sup> Brock, (1998), *The Holy Spirit in the Syrian Baptismal Tradition*, 47.

<sup>376</sup> For more details see Gibson, (ed.), (2002), *Anglican Ordination Rites: The Berkeley Statement*.

<sup>377</sup> Bradshaw, (2005), "Anointing", 14.

### 3.3.1. The Holy Myron Oil

In the Syrian Orthodox Church, mixed oil<sup>378</sup> becomes the Myron oil when the Holy Spirit hovers over it as the Patriarch conducts special canonical liturgies, which sanctify the oil - The Sanctification of the Myron. “It is consecrated at the third<sup>379</sup> hour, for it indicates Christ, who (Himself) indicates the Trinity: the Father who anoints, and the Son who is anointed and the Spirit who fulfils the role of oil.”<sup>380</sup>

The use of Myron oil in post-baptismal anointment and in the consecration of churches, altars, altar stones (*tablito*) and vessels,<sup>381</sup> indicates the presence of God in these places or objects. This oil perfects the indwelling of the Holy Spirit<sup>382</sup> in a person, when they are anointed with it.

Myron oil is usually kept in a special casket in the ‘Holy of Holies’ (*Madbeho*) in the church for use at baptism ceremonies.

### 3.4. The Consecration of the Myron Oil

The Myron oil is consecrated in the longest ceremony of the Syrian Orthodox Church. It is consecrated by the Supreme Head of the Church, the Patriarch,<sup>383</sup> assisted by the Bishops, who sanctify the Myron oil and distribute it to all churches.

It is believed that the Myron oil was made and used for the first time by the Apostles.<sup>384</sup> The Eastern Church Father Mar Abdiso<sup>385</sup> says, “The oil of unction is an apostolic tradition,

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<sup>378</sup> Oil composed from many fragrant plants. See footnote 456.

<sup>379</sup> According to the liturgical tradition of the Syrian Orthodox Church each day and hour has a dominant theme. The third hour (9 a. m.), sixth hour (12 p.m.) and ninth hour (3 p.m.) are associated with fall and salvation. They are decisive moments in the history of salvation. Third hour prayers are included in the morning section.

<sup>380</sup> Varghese, (trs.), (2006), *Dionysius Bar Salibi: Commentaries on Myron and Baptism*, 56; See Strothmann (ed. and tr.), (1977-78), *Syrische Hymnen zur Myron-Weihe*, Gottinger Orientforschungen I, See review of this article by Brock, (1979), *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 561-562.

<sup>381</sup> Julius, (trs.), (1974), *Hudayacanon*, 13-14, 20. Refer *The Service Book of the Holy Sacraments*, (2005), 49.

<sup>382</sup> Dionysius Bar Salibi in his ‘Treatise on Myron’ (Mingana Collection MSS 25, fol. 9r-15r) says: “...the Holy Spirit taught the apostles to make the Myron, when He descended upon them in the form of the tongues of fire”. Again he says, “Myron depicts the Spirit, what David says: Like the oil that descends upon the head and upon the bread (Ps. 133:2), calling the Holy Spirit ‘the oil that descends upon the head’, that is upon Christ in (His) Baptism. See Varghese (trs.), (2006), *Dionysius Bar Salibi: Commentaries on Myron and Baptism*, 16, 20.

<sup>383</sup> Julius, (trs.), (1974), *Hudayacanon*, 24-25.

originating from the oil consecrated by the Apostles, and which by succession has been handed down in the Church of God to this day.”<sup>386</sup> Among the Church Fathers, Ignatius of Antioch (AD 35-107) is the first to use the particular term “ointment”<sup>387</sup> and Cyril of Jerusalem<sup>388</sup> is the first among the fathers to give a long and profound exposition of the Holy Oil. In one of the orations, “Lectures on the Mysteries”<sup>389</sup>, Cyril explicitly refers to the gift of the Holy Spirit in and through the Myron. For Cyril the anointing communicates the Holy Spirit in a manner similar to the consecrated bread of the Eucharist communicating Christ:

But be sure not to regard the Myron merely as ointment. Just as the bread of the Eucharist after the invocation of the Holy Spirit is no longer just bread, but the body of Christ, so the holy Myron after the invocation is no longer ordinary ointment but Christ’s grace, which through the presence of the Holy spirit instils his divinity to us.<sup>390</sup>

Cyril points out that in the Eucharist the bread and wine are transformed by the Holy Spirit. When a Christian receives Holy Communion, he/she becomes a bearer of Christ. The sacrament benefits the body and the soul in different ways. In the same way, Myron is applied to the forehead with a symbolic meaning. The body is anointed with visible ointment, and the soul is sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>384</sup> The *Didascalia Apostolorum* mentions diaconal anointing and Episcopal anointing. Gibson, (trs.), (1903), *The Didascalia Apostolorum*, Chapter 16.

<sup>385</sup> He was a monk and Bishop of Sinjar-Shiggar and Beth Arabaye for five years and later in 1290 he became the Metropolitan of Nisibis and Armenia. He died in the year 1318 shortly after the Synod of Timothy II the then Patriarch. See King, (1948), *The Rites of Eastern Christendom*, 271.

<sup>386</sup> Adishoo, (1965), *The Book of Marganitha (the pearl) on the Truth of Christianity*, 53. The book of Marganitha on the Truth of Christianity, English translation by Mar Eshai Shimun, Ernakulam, 1965. The Latin translation with some omissions was published in 1838 in Rome by Cardinal Mai and the full text appeared in Mosul in the year 1924. Also see Arangassery, (1992), “The Baptism and the oil of unction according to Mar Abdiso,” 96.

<sup>387</sup> “The Lord accepted the ointment upon His head for this reason: that he might breathe incorruptibility upon the church.” Ignatius, To the Ephesians, (17.1), Holmes, (trs.), (2008), *The Apostolic Fathers*, 197. Church believes that this ointment is Myron.

<sup>388</sup> Cyril was Bishop of Jerusalem from about 350 until his death in 387.

<sup>389</sup> Ferguson says, “The third of Cyril’s *Lectures on the Mysteries* concerns the unction with Myron (a perfumed oil, different from the pre-baptismal oil of exorcism) given immediately after baptism. Ferguson, (2009), *Baptism in the Early Church*, 479. See Gifford, (1994), “The Catechetical Lectures of S. Cyril,” Vol.7; Doval, (2001), *Cyril of Jerusalem, Mystagogue: The Authorship of the Mystagogic Catecheses*, 110-149; Varghese, (1989), “Les Onctions baptismales dans la tradition syrienne”, 78-80.

<sup>390</sup> Mystagogical Catechesis 3.3, See Wainwright and Tucker, (eds.), (2006), *The Oxford History of Christian Worship*, 91; Doval, (2001), *Cyril of Jerusalem, Mystagogue: The Authorship of the Mystagogic Catecheses*, 93.

The *Hudaya Canon*<sup>391</sup> recommends that the Myron consecration ceremony to be conducted on Holy Thursday<sup>392</sup> and cites the reasons for this. It can, however, be conducted on any day during the Great Lent when the Holy Eucharist can be celebrated. The long drawn out preparation and prayers for the consecration has made the Great Lent a natural time for the ceremony.<sup>393</sup> It can however, also be held during any other Lenten period.

The consecration of the Myron is the most sacred and magnificent ceremony of the Church. The historical precedent for the right of a Bishop<sup>394</sup> to consecrate the Myron is derived from a description given by Jacob of Edessa (AD 640 -708) who speaks about a bishop who needed to ordain a deacon in an outlying location which did not have a church or an altar, or Myron

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<sup>391</sup> The Nomo-Canon is the Canon Law of the Syrian Orthodox Church. These laws are also known as *Hudaya Canon*. It is in Syriac and was compiled by Bar-Hebraeus, the Catholicos of Tigris in the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>392</sup> The letter of venerable Mar Jacob of Edessa, the teacher, answering a question asked by Johannan, “Why is the Myron consecrated only on the fifth day of the mystery?” says: “About this even the great Dionysius Areopagita, who has taught about all the daily orders, has said nothing. Nor have the other teaches of the holy Church who have transmitted to us this holy liturgical or sacramental and holy service, taught us that it is not permitted on other days. Nor did they tell us that it would be forbidden in case anyone of the chiefs of the priests should want this matter if necessity should require the act. I know one of the bishops of our (own) days to whom it happened, who while travelling on the road (came) to one of the towns of the barbarian pagans. He lodged with a Christian man who was there and he was a deacon. And as he was constrained to complete (the promotion) of this deacon and make him a presbyter, but since he was travelling on the road, he did not have an altar and no holy oil in order to anoint the altar and to perform the offering of the body and blood of God, and then to complete him for a priest. At one night, feeling himself obligated, he consecrated the holy oil, anointed and consecrated the altar and at once sacrificed on it the offering of the holy mysteries, and he made that deacon, the owner of the place, a priest. These did this man who was a chief of the priests. It was not that he trespassed or despised the laws of the church that he consecrated that mystical oil on a day other than the fifth day which is called by us the mystical day. So then, as I said, it is neither allowed nor hindered when sometimes it is made necessary for the chiefs of the priests to consecrate this holy oil. However, it has been ordered to be done in the week of the passion in order to be close (to the time) of the passion of Christ. Even as He (Himself) has said about that woman who anointed Him that, “She did this for my burial.” (Mk. 14:8) And also, that the oil be ready for those who are to be baptized during the holy feast.” See Vööbus, (trs.), (1975), *The Synodicon in the West Syrian Tradition*, 216-17.

<sup>393</sup> Great Lent is the season of spiritual preparation. The word ‘fast’ means not eating all or certain foods. Fasting also means limiting the number of meals and/or the type of food eaten. The purpose of fasting is to remind us that the needs of the body are nothing compared to the needs of the soul. It teaches us to depend on God fully. Lent is a time of soul-searching and repentance in preparation for the celebration of Christ’s death and resurrection on Good Friday and Easter. When Sunday was kept in honour of the resurrection it was only natural that Friday should be considered the appropriate day of commemorating the passion and death of Christ, and hence the early Christians met for prayer on Fridays. There was also a reunion on Wednesdays, the origin of which cannot be satisfactorily accounted for. The Wednesday and Friday meetings were known to Tertullian by the name of stations. It appears to have been the custom to celebrate the holy Eucharist on the station days. Everywhere these were days of fasting, although the fast lasted only until the ninth hour. “But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face” (Matt. 6:17). During the fasting seasons of the Church, the hymns call the faithful to wash and anoint their faces. See Herbermann, Pace, Pallen, (eds.), (1913), *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, 195.

<sup>394</sup> Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches states (Can. 693), “Holy Myron, which is made from the oil of olives or other plants and from aromatics, is confected only by a bishop, with due regard for particular law which reserves this power to the Patriarch.” Refer to *Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches*, (1992), 347.

to anoint an altar. Accordingly, he sanctified the Myron, anointed an altar, and immediately celebrated the Holy Mysteries, and made the deacon a priest, whom he put in charge of the place, all in one night.<sup>395</sup> The Myron oil is consecrated by the power of the sign of the cross and the faculty of the priesthood. The sign of the cross is used because it is necessary in every priestly prayer and in every service of the sacraments, because through it the sacraments of the Church are perfected.

It is important to distinguish two developments in the Syrian Orthodox tradition. First, Syrian Orthodox writers produced a series of discourses and commentaries on the consecration of the Myron.<sup>396</sup> Until the thirteenth century, Syrian Orthodox bishops consecrated the Myron on Holy Thursday. In contrast to the elaborate composition of Byzantine Myron, they used only olive oil and balsam, in a combination often described as representing the composition of Christ's human and divine natures, united in his incarnate Person.<sup>397</sup> For a time it appears these discourses were written to be delivered as homilies in the day of consecration but after the eighth century this practice of presentation seems to have stopped.<sup>398</sup> The earlier commentary by Dionysius the Areopagite was strongly influential, but not determinative for these writers.<sup>399</sup>

Secondly, Jacob of Edessa produced one of the discourses on the Myron in the late seventh century. For Jacob, anointing with Myron oil was an image for understanding the relationship between the human and divine. Myron allowed baptism to make real the joining of the believer to God by anointing them with the Holy Spirit.<sup>400</sup> Myron also stands for the incarnation by which God united himself with a human nature: "The oil with which [Christ] was anointed is the human body which he united to himself; he described it as '[oil] of joy' because he voluntarily united it to his divinity in the hypostatic union and not as the result of

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<sup>395</sup> Vööbus, (trs.), (1975), *The Synodicon in the West Syrian Tradition*, 216.

<sup>396</sup> For primary texts and their features, see Brock, (1979), "Jacob of Edessa's Discourse on the Myron", 20-22.

<sup>397</sup> Harvey, (2006), *Scenting Salvation*, 145; On the consecration of the Myron in the Byzantine tradition, see Petit, (1899), "Du pouvoir de consacrer le Saint Chrême", 1-7, and "Composition et consécration du Saint Chrême", 129-42.

<sup>398</sup> Harvey, (2006), *Scenting Salvation*, 145.

<sup>399</sup> See Strothmann, (1977-78), *Das Sakrament der Myron-Weibe in der Schrift De ecclesiastica hierarchia des Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita*.

<sup>400</sup> Brock, (1979), "Jacob of Edessa's Discourse on the Myron", 31.

compulsion”.<sup>401</sup> Commenting on the consecration rite, Jacob said that “on the one hand, [Myron] is consecrated as is humanly befitting: on the other, it consecrates and perfects everything, as is divinely fitting”.<sup>402</sup> Jacob speaks of Myron as “perfecting churches as houses of God and appointing altars as holy and divine”.<sup>403</sup>

The Syrian Orthodox Church tradition gives the Myron particular importance in the commentaries devoted to its consecration and meaning. At the present time, the right of consecration of the Myron is the right of Patriarch, and not of the Bishops.<sup>404</sup> Canon Law<sup>405</sup> gives the right to carry the Myron only to priests. Only a Bishop has the right to use the Myron for consecrating a church<sup>406</sup> (1 Jn. 2:20-27).

### 3.5. Anointing with Oil in Ancient Mesopotamia

Anointing with oil is a very ancient practice. In ancient Mesopotamia, oil was considered to be one of the necessities of life and symbolised wealth, power and royalty.<sup>407</sup> In the religious cults of Mesopotamia, temples were lighted with oil lamps and the statues of deities were anointed with oil. In addition, oil was used in the sacrificial offerings, in particular with offerings which were burned.<sup>408</sup> In ancient Mesopotamia anointing consisted of either rubbing or pouring various types of oil on to a person, a divine statue, or an object

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<sup>401</sup> Brock, (1979), “Jacob of Edessa’s Discourse on the Myron”, 32; Harvey, (2006), *Scenting Salvation*, 145.

<sup>402</sup> Brock, (1979), “Jacob of Edessa’s Discourse on the Myron”, 34.

<sup>403</sup> Brock, (1979), “Jacob of Edessa’s Discourse on the Myron”, 36.

<sup>404</sup> In most Churches also the right is reserved for the head of the Church. The authority to consecrate the Holy Myron is vested with the Patriarch because it shows his authority over the Church. But the Hdayo Canon bestows the right to bishops as well.

<sup>405</sup> Julius, (trs.), (1974), *Hdayacanon*, 25-29.

<sup>406</sup> Julius, (trs.), (1974), *Hdayacanon*, 12-13. The first definite reference to the use of Myron or Chrism in the consecration of a church is in Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, 4:12. This book is dated AD 470-500, and therefore this evidence is not clear. There are reference to the consecration of Egyptian churches are worthy of attention on the subject. In the Berlin MS before the part of the text which contains the order of consecration, there occurs another reference to the consecration of a church. The Berlin MS p. 247, gives in red, as a title, “What is set forth as to the order of the Consecration of the Church”, then in black, “From the holy Canons: let the Bishop sanctify the *haicolo*; (The Syriac word *hayklo* – ܬܠܬܐ literally means a palace or temple. *Haykala* is the Arabic name for the place in which the altar stands.) and let there be with him seven presbyters; and he shall sign them with the *myron* which is the oil of gladness, even the seal of the Lord”. The British Museum MS 1331, pp.36b, 37a, after giving a description of a church, continues, “Let the Bishop consecrate the *hayklo*, and let there be with him at the time of the consecration seven presbyters; and let him sign with *myron*, which is the oil of gladness. See Horner (1902), (edited with translation from a Coptic and Arabic Manuscript of AD 1307), *The Service for the Consecration of a Church and Altar according to the Coptic Rite*, vi-vii.

<sup>407</sup> Frankel and Teutsch, (1992), *The Encyclopedia of Jewish Symbols*, 122.

<sup>408</sup> Mitchell, (1966), *Baptismal Anointing*, 25.

representing or intimately connected with a person or a deity.<sup>409</sup> As mentioned by Dalley, fragmentary cuneiform texts distinguished four types of anointing:

First, in the context of washing and dressing, oil is rubbed into the flesh. Second, in the context of sacrificing, oil is rubbed upon divine statues and cult objects. Third, in the context of eating and drinking, oil is rubbed into the flesh when a legal contract is concluded, probably on the occasion of oath-taking, in which the oil together with the food and drink may contain a spell or potential curse on perjurers. Finally, in the context of marriage, oil is poured on to the head of the chosen person by the selector, perhaps to make selection; this category can also be applied to the selection of vassal kings.<sup>410</sup>

Other texts state that, stone slabs, statues and inscriptions of important men should be regularly anointed.<sup>411</sup> Shamshi-Adad I (King of Assyria c. 1800 BC), wrote “whoever among the kings my descendants renovates this temple, may he anoint my clay inscriptions and my steles with oil, make a sacrifice, and return them to their places”.<sup>412</sup> Anointing with oil was then an established practice in the Mesopotamian region. They used oil for different activities such as washing and dressing as part of the toilette of mortals; to purify and nourish the statues of deities, anointing foundation of a building, enthronement and so on. Other people such as the Israelites probably adopted these practices.

### 3.6. Biblical References to Anointing with Holy Oil

The Myron is considered to be one of the essential elements of the consecration of the church. The Myron is essentially no different from any other olive oil, but it is made special by being set aside specifically for God’s purposes. The Syriac word for oil is *meshkho* (ܡܫܚܐ). In Aramaic, oil is *meshkha*, and one who is anointed with oil is *meshikha*.<sup>413</sup> The English word ‘Messiah’ derives from the Hebrew word *masiah*, meaning ‘anointed one’. It was

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<sup>409</sup> Dalley, (1993), “Anointing in Ancient Mesopotamia”, 19.

<sup>410</sup> Dalley, (1993), “Anointing in Ancient Mesopotamia”, 19.

<sup>411</sup> Meneley, (2008), “Oleo-signs and Quali-signs: The Qualities of Olive Oil”, 15.

<sup>412</sup> Dalley, (1993), “Anointing in Ancient Mesopotamia”, 20.

<sup>413</sup> Missick, (2006), *The Words of Jesus in the Original Aramaic*, 146.



translated into Greek as *christos*, meaning ‘anointed’, hence Christ.<sup>414</sup> The term Messiah and Christ have the same basic meaning of ‘the anointed one’.

Two kinds of words for oil are present in the Old Testament. The first one is called *yīshār*, which denotes the fresh or new oil produced by treading out the newly picked olives and thus the denominative verb means ‘to press oil’ (Job 24:11).<sup>415</sup> In Numbers 18:12, it is described as ‘the best of the oil’ because it was the most highly valued of the products of olive. This oil was ritually used for the lampstand that stood in the Jerusalem temple (Exod. 27:20; Lev. 24:2). The second word of oil is *šemen* and it is actually a compound of aromatic species, with oil as the base (Exod. 30:23-24).<sup>416</sup> *Šemen* is described as ‘the anointing oil’ (Exod. 29:7, 21; Lev. 8:2,12,30, 21:10), or ‘the holy anointing oil’ (Exod. 30:25) and this oil was used in the offerings used to purify those who had been healed of leprosy (Lev. 14:10, 12, 15-18, 29). A layperson was forbidden to apply this oil to his body because it was holy oil (Exod. 30:32-33). For the Israelites, a plentiful supply of oil, along with corn and wine, was a sign of God’s favour. Oil was highly valued and was extensively used by them. It was not only an item of food, but God commanded that it should be used for sacred and holy purposes (Exod. 30: 22f).

The use of sacred oil is described in the Old Testament (Exod. 39) where God ordered Moses to prepare a compound of anointing oil comprised of myrrh, cinnamon, cassia, and sweet calamus mixed with pure olive oil.<sup>417</sup> It was used in the anointing of kings - (Jud. 9: 8ff; 1 Sam. 15: 1; 16: 12; 1 Kings 1:34; 19:15ff), prophets, priests - (1 Kings 19: 16; 1 Chron. 16: 22; Ps. 105:15), the Tent of the Tabernacle - (Exod. 30: 25ff, 40:9ff), and its furniture. This oil is analogous to the Myron oil. It is the oil that God told Moses to make after the exodus from of Egypt (Exod. 30: 22-25). The Tabernacle that was anointed by Moses was analogous to the stone that Jacob had set up and had poured oil on in order for it to be dwelling place of God (Gen. 28: 18).

In the Old Testament oil was made use of in various types of anointing. The people of ancient Palestine anointed themselves in the time of gladness (Ruth 3: 3), and after a period of grief

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<sup>414</sup> Lasor, Hubbard, Bush, (eds.), (1996), *Old Testament Survey*, 689.

<sup>415</sup> Porter, (1993), “Oil in the Old Testament”, 35.

<sup>416</sup> Porter, (1993), “Oil in the Old Testament”, 36.

<sup>417</sup> Malaty, (1992), *Dictionary of Church Terms*, 27.

(2 Sam. 12: 20; Dan. 10: 3); it was used for cosmetic and medical purposes as well (2 Sam. 14: 2; 12: 20; Isa. 1:6; Mich. 6:15; Ruth 3:3). Priests were anointed before they assumed office (Exod. 40:13-15); the rite symbolised their consecration (Lev. 8: 12). Some of the prophets were anointed also (Elisha, I Kings 19:16). Twice in the Old Testament God's people are said to be the anointed ones (1 Chron.16: 22; Ps. 105:15). It was important that Israel's kings be anointed as a symbol of dedication, thus signifying royal competence: Saul (1 Sam. 10:1), David (1 Sam. 16: 13), Solomon (1 Kings 1:39). Oil was also used for the anointing of weapons (2 Sam. 1: 21; Isa. 21: 5).

Anointing with oil was also a common practice in early Christian period. Christian Churches probably adopted the use of oil from both pagan and Jewish practices from very early times. It was a sign of joy and thanksgiving associated with feasts (Ps. 23:5), but also to be used when fasting (Matt. 6:17). Oil was used as an emollient in healing (Lk. 10:34); such an anointing is portrayed as an outward symbol of the miraculous healing power of the divine name (Mk. 6-13; James 5:14). When Mary anointed Jesus' feet, it may have been an indication of her love and recognition of Jesus' kingship and priesthood, as well as a symbolic preparation of his burial (Jn. 12:1-8; Mk. 14: 3-8). The women brought sweet spices and perfumes<sup>418</sup> to anoint Jesus' body as a token of final respect (Mk. 16:1; Lk. 23-56). The concept of the Lord's anointed is applied to Jesus, the 'anointed one', who was a prophet, priest and king; this was viewed as the fulfilment of the promised messiah (Jn. 20:31, Acts 5: 42, Heb. 1: 9 quoting Ps. 45: 7). Jesus announced that the Holy Spirit had anointed him (Lk. 4: 18). The term 'anointed' is used by the apostles in Acts 4: 26 (quoting Ps. 2: 2).

### **3.7. The Symbolism of Oil in the Syrian Tradition**

In the early West Syrian literature and in the writings of the early Syriac fathers, oil is considered to be the visible mark of identification of the faithful who belonged to the flock of Christ in order to distinguish them from those who did not belong to the fold. The Odes of Solomon state: "He anointed me with His perfection; and I became as one of those who are near Him"<sup>419</sup>. In the Acts of Thomas, the baptismal anointing is considered as a mark to

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<sup>418</sup> Childers, (trs.), (2013), *The Syriac Peshitta Bible with English Translation: Luke*, 197.

<sup>419</sup> Odes 36:3. See Barker, (2003) *The Great High Priest*, 131.

distinguish the chosen ones and as a sign to differentiate them from among the number of God's flock.<sup>420</sup>

For Aphrahat and Ephrem, the symbol of oil designates Christ as the source of sacraments.<sup>421</sup> Aphrahat states in Demonstration XXIII that glittering olive oil symbolises "the mystery of life, by which Christians are perfected, as well as priests and kings and prophets. It illuminates the darkness, anoints the sick, and leads back penitents in its secret mystery".<sup>422</sup> For Ephrem, oil is a source of protection,<sup>423</sup> a symbol of Christ (bridegroom) the saviour of the Church<sup>424</sup>, a symbol of life<sup>425</sup>. In the Commentary on the Diatessaron where we read:

The olive tree [symbolises] the mystery of Christ, from which spring forth milk, water and oil; milk for the children, water for the youths and oil for the sick. The olive tree gave water and blood through its death, [just as] the Messiah gave these through his death.<sup>426</sup>

Oil is presented both as a symbol of liberty that frees man from his sins, and as a symbol of the liberator, Christ;<sup>427</sup> moreover, it separates the 'Sons of the mystery' from strangers.<sup>428</sup>

From this we can see that liturgy and tradition consider holy oil as the gift of the power of the Holy Spirit. The holy oil is a symbol of the power of the Holy Spirit and has sanctifying power. Holy oil is used in various rituals and liturgical rites in the Syrian traditions. As well as its use in the service of consecration of a church, the holy oil is used in the service of baptism as well.

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<sup>420</sup> Klijn, (1962), *The Acts of Thomas*, 135.

<sup>421</sup> Murray, (2006), *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 116.

<sup>422</sup> Demonstration XXIII, Gwynn, (1898), "Hymns and Homilies of Ephrem the Syrian and from the Demonstrations of Aphrahat the Persian Sage"; Duncan, (1945), *Baptism in the Demonstrations of Aphraates the Persian Sage*, 110.

<sup>423</sup> Hymns on Virginité 7:9; McVey, (1989), *Ephrem the Syrian*, 295.

<sup>424</sup> Hymns on Virginité 5:9-12; McVey, (1989), *Ephrem the Syrian*, 284.

<sup>425</sup> Hymns on Virginité 7:10-12; McVey, (1989), *Ephrem the Syrian*, 295-296.

<sup>426</sup> McCarthy, (trs.), (1993), *Saint Ephrem's Commentary on Tatian's Diatessaron* 21:11, 322-323; Brock, (1978), "The Mysteries Hidden in the Side of Christ", 462-472; Thomas, (2004), *Blessed is He who has brought Adam from Sheol*, 240.

<sup>427</sup> Hymns on Virginité 7:12; McVey, (1989), *Ephrem the Syrian*, 295-296.

<sup>428</sup> Schaff & Wallace (eds.), (1898), "Hymns for the Feast of the Epiphany", 269.

### 3.8. The Uses of the Myron Oil in the Church

Myron oil is only used in specific services and for consecrating certain sacred objects in the Church. Naturally, the question arises as to why the Myron is used and what it indicates? The liturgical use of Myron oil is in ceremonies such as baptism, confirmation and consecrations. As in many other practices, the Church has retained and made use of the rituals which were employed in Judaism. In the Old Testament, we see that whenever God sets apart somebody for a special vocation, they are anointed with blessed oil to indicate that separation.<sup>429</sup>

#### 3.8.1. The Use of the Myron in Baptism

The Syrian Orthodox tradition has two main baptismal Ordos;<sup>430</sup> the first one is attributed to Timothy of Alexandria (Aelurus?) (454-477), and the second one is attributed to Severus of Antioch.<sup>431</sup> Timothy of Alexandria's has the same structure as that of Severus of Antioch, and they have a number of prayers in common. According to Brock, the former could date from the sixth or seventh century but the earliest manuscript of Severus seems to be dated to the eighth century, although he suggests that the rite is not inconsistent with a sixth century date.<sup>432</sup> The manuscripts of Severus show some considerable variations in the content of the prayers and especially in the blessing of the water and the rite is divided into two parts, Part 1 and Part 2, the former having once been separated from the latter.<sup>433</sup> In the modern rite the two are entitled "the first and second services" and the consecration of the water is in the second service. Myron oil is poured into the baptismal water while the celebrant says: "We [officiating clergy] pour the Holy Myron into this water of baptism that the old person be regenerated".<sup>434</sup> The pouring of Myron into the baptism water represents the incarnation of the Word and the Holy Spirit brooding over the waters. After pouring the Myron into the

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<sup>429</sup> Exodus 28:41; 40:13; 1 Samuel 10:1; 16:13; 1 Kings 19:16.

<sup>430</sup> The Syrian Orthodox Church developed several baptismal ordos, suggesting regional differences, and these are attributed to Timothy of Alexandria, Severus of Antioch and for emergency use, Philoxenus of Mabbug.

<sup>431</sup> Spinks, (2006), *Early and Medieval Rituals and Theologies of Baptism*, 80.

<sup>432</sup> Brock, (1970), "A New Syriac Baptismal *Ordo* attributed to Timothy of Alexandria", 367-370; Samuel, (1974), *The Sacrament of Holy Baptism According to the Ancient Rite of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch*.

<sup>433</sup> Brock, (1971), "The Consecration of the Water in the Oldest Manuscripts of the Syrian Orthodox Baptismal Liturgy", 317-323.

<sup>434</sup> *The Service Book of the Holy Sacraments*, (1999), 44; See Spinks, (2007), "Eastern Christian Liturgical Traditions: Oriental Orthodox", 349.

water the priest flutters his right hand and waves it over the water saying: “This water is blessed and sanctified that it may be for the divine washing of rebirth”.<sup>435</sup>

The priest then invites the candidate to descend into the baptismal font; the priest stands at the East end facing the West while the candidate faces to the East. Then the priest places his right hand on the head of the person to be baptised and with his left hand takes the baptismal water first from the front and pours it over the candidate’s head, then he takes from behind and pour it over his head, and then takes from the left and right sides together and pours it over the head of the candidate. The priest then lifts up the candidate and hands them over to their godfather or godmother. After a hymn and a short prayer the priest dips his thumb into the Myron and makes a sign on the forehead in the form of a cross and say:

By the Holy Myron, which is the sweet fragrance of Christ, the sign and seal of the true faith and the perfection of the gift of the Holy Spirit is sealed in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the living Holy Spirit unto life everlasting.<sup>436</sup>

Then the priest anoints the baptised person from the head to toe – the entire body - with Myron.

The anointing with Myron on the forehead signifies the sanctification of the mind and thoughts and on the chest means the sanctification of the heart and desires. On the eyes, ears and lips it indicates the sanctification of the senses. On the hands and feet it shows the sanctification of good deeds and of walking in the way of God’s Commandments.<sup>437</sup> Through being anointed with Holy Myron, the person is sealed with the Holy Spirit.

Moses bar Kepha uses the biblical passages Roman 6:1-3, and Matthew 6:9 to explain baptism. He considers why Christ baptised with water and the Spirit but not with oil and the Spirit? Bar Kepha says that water is easily accessible in all places to rich and poor alike. He

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<sup>435</sup> *The Service Book of the Holy Sacraments*, (1999), 45.

<sup>436</sup> *The Service Book of the Holy Sacraments*, (1999), 47.

<sup>437</sup> Butler, (1884), *The Ancient Coptic Churches of Egypt*, 269-272; “Rituals of the Sacraments,” published by Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States, 2006.

goes on to give biblical citations<sup>438</sup> and also quotes from Basil who suggests that the water symbolises mortality by being sealed with Myron:

A sweetness, perfection and reception of the Spirit, a token of Christ, that demons may fear, that his organs are sealed from evil, that it is a mark like that of Passover, that the heart is sealed, and that his joints may be instruments of righteousness.<sup>439</sup>

Bar Kepha believed this grace as having taken place in the water, since Myron was mixed with the water. When the Myron is mixed with baptismal water, it means that the person baptised ‘dies and is buried with Christ’ (Rom. 6:4). Just as the bread and wine of the Holy Eucharist becomes the Body and Blood of Christ, so the Myron represents the life and self of Christ. Justin Martyr says:

Those who believe wholeheartedly that what we have taught and explained to them is true begin by professing that they can live in accordance with it; they are then taught to pray and to ask God, amid fasting, for the forgiveness of their past sins; we ourselves pray and fast with them. Then we bring them to a place where there is water, and they are reborn with the same kind of rebirth with which we ourselves have been reborn. They are then bathed in the water in the name of God, the Father and Master of the universe, and of our saviour, Jesus Christ...<sup>440</sup>

In his writings Justin gives a complete account of the practice of Baptism although he does not use the word baptism. He uses the words ‘bath’ and ‘wash.’ He claims that the explanation for the practice comes from the Apostles. In John 3:5-8, baptism is a birth event and it makes one a child of God, capable of calling God “Father” (Jn. 1:17). The *Didache* says:

Now concerning baptism, baptize as follows: after you have reviewed all these things, baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit in running water. But if you have no running water, then baptize in some other water; and if you

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<sup>438</sup> The firmament in the midst of the waters (Gen. 1: 6-8), Naaman the Syrian (2 Kings 5:1-19; Lk. 4:27), the torrent of Ezekiel amongst other (Ezek. 47:10-12).

<sup>439</sup> Aytoun, (1973), “The Mysteries of Baptism by Moses bar Kepha compared with the Odes of Solomon”, 9; Spinks, (2006), *Early and Medieval Rituals and Theologies of Baptism*, 87.

<sup>440</sup> The First Apology of Justin Martyr Chapter 61: 2-3; Refer Dods, Reith and Pratten, (trs.), (1867), *The Writings of Justin Martyr and Athenagoras*. Refer also Chap. 65:1 and 66:1.

are not able to baptize in cold water, then do so in warm. But if you have neither, then pour water on the head three times in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. And before the baptism let the one baptizing and the one who is to be baptized fast, as well as any others who are able. Also, you must instruct the one who is to be baptized to fast one or two days beforehand.<sup>441</sup>

These quotations from Justin and the *Didache* indicate that baptism was a common practice in the second century among the Christians.

According to Ephrem, for Christians the Old Testament custom of circumcision was abolished and was replaced by baptism.<sup>442</sup> In his Hymns on Virginity he says about circumcision: “Types and symbols ceased. With hidden circumcision visible circumcision was abolished.”<sup>443</sup> Ephrem combined the anointing with oil and immersion in water and mentioned that, “The hidden mark of the Spirit is imprinted by the oil on bodies anointed in baptism and sealed in the dipping.”<sup>444</sup> Bishop Mar Johannan says, “Without the sacred oil, i.e., without the divine Myron, baptism is not completed.”<sup>445</sup>

The third of Cyril’s “Lectures on the Mysteries” concerns the anointing with the Myron given immediately after Baptism and is the fullest exposition of the post-Baptismal anointing in the Fathers.<sup>446</sup> “Four ideas associated with the act: anointing with the Holy Spirit and participation in the anointing of Jesus at the Jordan, protection against Satan and preparation for combat against him, permitting the giving of the name Christian, and a royal and priestly anointing.”<sup>447</sup> The ‘kingly priesthood’ attributed to the Christians by St. Peter (1 Pet. 2:9) and St. John (Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 20:6) is not a kind of metaphor, and the Christians have even less right to call it a ‘priesthood’, because: “We are rightly called priests because we are anointed with oil of the Holy Spirit and the anointing of Christ.”<sup>448</sup> It is a mystical reality that cannot

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<sup>441</sup> *Didache* 7:1-4 in Holmes, (2008), (ed. & trs.), *The Apostolic Fathers*, 355.

<sup>442</sup> Ferguson, (2009), *Baptism in the Early Church*, 501.

<sup>443</sup> Mcvey, (trs.), (1989), *Ephrem the Syrian Hymns*, 301.

<sup>444</sup> Mcvey, (trs.), (1989), *Ephrem the Syrian Hymns*, 294.

<sup>445</sup> Vööbus, (trs.), (1975), *The Synodicon in the West Syrian Tradition*, 202.

<sup>446</sup> Doval, (2001), *Cyril of Jerusalem*, 110-149. See Ferguson, (2009), *Baptism in the Early Church*, 479.

<sup>447</sup> Varghese, (1989), “Les onctions baptismales dans la tradition syrienne”, 75-77.

<sup>448</sup> Lubac, (1986), *The Splendor of the Church*, 134.

be surpassed or further deepened by any additional institution or consecration, or by any other priesthood.<sup>449</sup>

The term Myron is only used for the post-baptismal anointing; prior to the 5<sup>th</sup> century the Antiochene baptismal rite only had a pre-baptismal anointing with *meshha*, known as the *rushma*. After c.400 a post-baptismal anointing was introduced in addition, and it took over a lot of the symbolic meanings of the original *rushma*.<sup>450</sup> The pre-baptismal anointing by blessed oil (*mešho*) on the forehead was supplemented by a second pre-baptismal anointing to the entire body with Myron in the tradition of the Syrian Orthodox Church.

From the time when the pre-baptismal anointings were nevertheless kept, a certain amount of ambiguity arose over the meaning and symbolism attached to the different anointings.<sup>451</sup> In the early Syriac texts, the term Myron was unknown and exclusively reserved for the post-baptismal anointing.<sup>452</sup> According to Brock, after Christianisation in the fourth century, there was a growing desire to conceal the Jewish origins of Christianity in favour of Hellenistic culture. In such situations, the baptism-circumcision paradigm clearly had to be reinterpreted. There was a tendency to ascribe the conferral of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, first to the water itself, then to the emerging post-baptismal anointing with Myron. The pre-baptism anointing remained a kind of “purification and exorcism”.<sup>453</sup>

In a sermon on the Baptism of Christ Patriarch Ignatius Zakka says:

We believe what happened at the river Jordan when the Lord Jesus was baptized is happening in an unseen and unheard way to every believer when they are baptized in

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<sup>449</sup> St. Isidore of Seville [(c. 560-636), a bishop and scholar who helped the Catholic Church preserve its own traditions, and the heritage in the early middle ages] says: “On the orders of the Lord, Moses made up an ointment of Chrism with which Aaron and his sons were anointed and signed with their holy priesthood. Then kings were consecrated with the same chrism; and for that reason they were called christs. But at that time, this anointing of kings and priests was figurative of Christ. After our Lord, true King and eternal Priest, had been sanctified by his heavenly Father with a mystical unguent, not only priest and kings but the whole Church was consecrated with the unction of holy chrism, inasmuch as all in her are members of the eternal King and Priest. Thus, because we are a royal and priestly race, we are anointed after baptism and take the name of Christ”. See Knoebel, (trs.), (2008), St. Isidore of Seville, *De Ecclesiasticis Officiis*, Book 2, Chapter 26; Lubac, (1986), *The Splendor of the Church*, 134-135.

<sup>450</sup> See Brock, (1981), “The Transition to a post-baptismal anointing in the Antiochene Rite”, 215-225.

<sup>451</sup> Brock, (1981), “The Transition to a post-baptismal anointing in the Antiochene Rite”, 215-225.

<sup>452</sup> Brock, S., (1993), “Anointing in the Syriac Tradition”, 94.

<sup>453</sup> See Brock, S., (1981), “The Transition to a post-baptismal anointing in the Antiochene Rite”, 215-225.



the name of the Holy Trinity by the hand of a legal priest, even to the children who are baptized according to the faith of their parents and god parents ... Christ has made us one in the spiritual family when we all were born of one mother that is baptism and he granted us to be living members in his holy sacramental body, the Church.<sup>454</sup>

### **3.8.1.1. The Sacrament of the Myron/Confirmation**

Through the Sacrament of Myron (Exod. 30:23), the Church believes that the Myron gives the faithful the strength of the Holy Spirit to fight against Satan.<sup>455</sup> (Dan. 9:24) When one is anointed with Myron oil in the baptism ceremony, the Myron confers the Sacrament of Myron. It perfects the baptism and is a permanent seal. The Sacraments confer benefits only when carried out by ordained priests in the proper way as prescribed by the Church. Baptism, the Myron and priesthood are received only once in a lifetime and cannot be repeated. They put a permanent mark of spiritual blessing on the person who is receiving them. The early Church took time to come to this understanding.<sup>456</sup> According to the faith and Canons of the Church we say in the Nicene Creed “We confess one Baptism for the remission of sins” – the baptism which is completed with the anointment of Myron; Christians believe that because of these two Sacraments they get a permanent seal.

The Sacrament of Myron is then a sealing with Myron oil and represents the safeguarding by the Holy Spirit of the graces conferred at Baptism. St. Paul wrote, “But it is God who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us, by putting His seal on us and giving us His Spirit in our hearts as a first instalment” (2 Cor. 1: 21-22). The Church uses Myron oil because she follows St. Paul’s understanding and teaching.

The effect of Confirmation therefore roots the faithful more deeply in the divine relationship and unites them more firmly to Christ because Confirmation perfects Baptism.

### **3.8.2. The Use of the Myron in the Consecration of a Church**

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<sup>454</sup> Zakka, (1994), “The Baptism of the Lord Jesus”, 2-7.

<sup>455</sup> The Syriac word *ܡܚܝܬܐ* denotes ‘Satan’. The word *ܡܚܝܬܐ* literally means, ‘the eater of morsel.’ In Smith, (1903), *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary*, 16 translated it as ‘accuser’, ‘slanderer’ and ‘adversary.’ Bar Hebraeus explaining why Satan is called the Accuser says “God knows that, because he know that when you eat it you will be like gods” (Gen. 3:5). See Cicek, (ed.), (1977), *Bar Hebraeus’ Lamp of Sanctuaries*, 557.

<sup>456</sup> Adishoo, (1965), *The Book of Marganitha (the pearl) on the truth of Christianity*, 46.

The consecration of a church means that a particular “church” community identifies a building as one in which members of the community gather to listen to the scriptures, to pray together, to celebrate the sacraments, and to participate in the Eucharist. But the physical structure of the church is also a sign of the living Church formed by the people and reflects the community of the baptised. Every church building is both a gathering place or place of assembly and a place of encounter with God. The unity of these two ideas is also achieved when a new church is dedicated.

The act of anointing was believed to perfect churches and altars as holy and divine; the practice of anointing the body is translated to the ‘body’ of the church. When we perform the rite of consecration of a church, we are stamping a permanent seal on it with the Myron oil in the same way as a person is ‘sealed’ in baptism. Once a church, has been consecrated with Holy Myron it should not in principle be consecrated again.<sup>457</sup> Sanctification of the altar is very important in the church consecration ceremony. Just as a person receives the Holy Spirit through Baptism and anointment with Holy Myron, the church receives renewal and eligibility for God to dwell in it. Likewise, after the prayer of dedication, the bishop anoints the altar and the *tablito* with Myron. Then he anoints the walls of the church (signifying both the building and the people) just as people are anointed with Myron during baptism. The idea is that every church building is a gathering place for the people and simultaneously a place of meeting with God. The consecration of a church reminds the faithful that the physical church building is a sign of the transient nature of the people and reflects the church dwelling in heaven.<sup>458</sup> As people journey through life, they are nourished by the sacraments and find security in the church until they reach their heavenly home, the dwelling place of God.

Only bishops have the right to consecrate a new church building; priests are prohibited from blessing the Chrism, altars and churches by the second Council of Braga<sup>459</sup> (AD 563),<sup>460</sup> the

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<sup>457</sup> BNF Syriac 110, fol. 274A.

<sup>458</sup> Boyer, (2004), *The Liturgical Environment*, 6.

<sup>459</sup> This Council is not recognised by the Syrian Orthodox Church, even though this is the earliest available document regarding the use of Myron only by bishops.

<sup>460</sup> Can. Xix. Item placuit, si quis presbyter, post hoc interdictum, ausus fuerit chrisma benedicere, aut ecclesiam, aut altarium consecrare, a suo officio deponatur: Nam et antique hoc canones vetuerunt. *Mansi Concilia*, Vol. VI, 441. [“Also, it was decided, if a man be a priest, and after this interdict, shall have dared to bless the chrism, or the church, or to consecrate the altar, let him be deposed from their office: For the ancient, and the canons of the Twelve Tables forbade this”]. See Bingham, (2005), *The Antiquities of the Christian Church*, 326 and Muncey, (1930), *A History of the Consecration of Churches and Churchyards*, 21.

justification being that the same prohibitions were also in previous canons. The next chapter explains the church consecration ceremony in detail.

### **3.9. Reflections by the Church Fathers on Anointing with Myron Oil**

Right from the beginning, the Church's reflection on Christ led it to see in the altar as in St Paul's letter to the Hebrews as a reference to Christ: "We have an altar (Christ) from which those who officiate in the tent (or tabernacle) have no right to eat" (Heb. 13:10). The Church Fathers<sup>461</sup> also identified Christ with the altar using the Pauline allegory of Christ as the rock (1 Cor. 10:4) and the meaning of the name "Christ" as "Anointed".

#### **3.9.1. Ephrem the Syrian**

St. Ephrem is the also first who informs us of the importance of oil and its use for anointing of the altar before celebrating the Holy Eucharist. In his *Hymn On Virginity*, he writes:

Oil is the sceptre for old age and the armour for youth.  
It supports sickness and is the bulwark to health.  
It is one, but it is many in its uses: it gives Chrism for altars,  
and they bear the offering of reconciliation.<sup>462</sup>

Scripture talks of Jacob's stone (Gen. 28: 11) being anointed with oil. The oil was poured only on the surface of the stone, indicating that the Christ was anointed only externally, and thus in humanity only.<sup>463</sup> This is a type or symbol of Christ because he is called "a choice stone, a corner stone, precious, and set for the foundation of Zion by God the Father (Isa. 28: 16; Ps.118: 22). Ephrem wrote:

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<sup>461</sup> Ephrem the Syrian writes; "Chrism for altars, and they bear the offering of reconciliation". See Rahmani, (1889), *Testamentum Domini Nostri Jesu Christi*, 156; See Chupungco, (2000), *Handbook for Liturgical Studies*, 343.

<sup>462</sup> Hymns on Virginity 4:10; McVey, (1989), *Ephrem the Syrian*, 278.

<sup>463</sup> McKinion, (2000), *Words, Imagery, & the Mystery of Christ*, 39.

Christ has many facets, and the oil acts as a mirror to them all:  
from whatever angle I look at the oil,  
Christ looks out at me from within it.<sup>464</sup>

For Ephrem oil is a symbol which depicts the name of Christ, in both his divine and human natures. Oil is an example of a symbol that is shared by both Scripture and Nature. Ephrem discovers symbols everywhere in the world around him. He wrote a series of hymns on holy oil in which he explored multiple images for baptismal anointing as well as the anointing of the sick.<sup>465</sup> He mentioned that oil could be mixed with many spices to constitute different medicines,<sup>466</sup> and when he cites the anointing of Christ's feet by the sinful woman he attributes exceptional power to the scent wafting from her ointment.

### 3.9.2. Pseudo-Dionysius

In the second half of the fifth century Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite attests that the anointing of the altars was a rite regularly prescribed both canonically and liturgically: "The rubrics for the most holy sacraments lay down that the divine altar must be consecrated with sacred outpouring of the ointment".<sup>467</sup> The explanation Pseudo-Dionysius gives for the anointing of the altar with oil is in the same context as the body's initiation as a Christian. At the time of Christian initiation, the anointing with oil called the one to be initiated into sacred battle; now the oil which is poured out proclaims that the deceased, having fought that sacred fight, has died victorious.<sup>468</sup> Pseudo-Dionysius wrote that the rich mixture of fragrance in the Myron was appropriate for the diverse congregation that would perceive the Myron's smell: "The ointment is made up of a mixture of fragrant substances. It has within itself fragrance of rich quality. Now the participants receive these fragrances, but they do so in proportion to their capacity to have a share of this fragrance".<sup>469</sup> He says that the divine holy oil is used for the consecration of everything that is sacred, thereby clearly showing that, as scripture tells

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<sup>464</sup> Hymns on Virginity &:13-14, Brock, (1985), *The Luminous Eye*, 59.

<sup>465</sup> Hymns on Virginity 4-7; McVey, (1989), *Ephrem the Syrian*, 295.

<sup>466</sup> Hymns on Virginity 4, 5-6; McVey, (1989), *Ephrem the Syrian*, 295

<sup>467</sup> Luiheid, (trs.), (1987), *Pseudo-Dionysius*, 232.

<sup>468</sup> Rutherford, (1990), *The Death of a Christian*, 22.

<sup>469</sup> Farina, (ed.), (1987), *Pseudo-Dionysius*, 447C, 228.

us, he who consecrates the consecrated remains forever the same<sup>470</sup> through all his works. He continues “For this reason the most divine consecration with the ointment completes the perfecting gift and grace of the divine birth”.<sup>471</sup> He is clear in his view saying “one may explain that rite at the purifying of the baptistery when the hierarch pours the ointment in drops to form a cross”.<sup>472</sup>

### 3.9.3. Dionysius Bar Salibi

Bar Salibi wrote a commentary on the consecration of Myron.<sup>473</sup> In the Syrian tradition, the twofold composition of the Myron (olive oil and balsam) came to be understood as representing the two natures of Christ. In his commentary Bar Salibi explains why Myron is made from Balsam and olive oil. He says that it symbolises the divinity and humanity of Christ<sup>474</sup> and that bishops consecrate altars, tablets, churches, and baptismal water with Myron.<sup>475</sup> He added “Myron is consecrated so that things might be anointed with it, and so that churches as well as baptismal water might be consecrated, the baptized might be signed with it, and (so) be distinguished from the non-baptized”.<sup>476</sup> He says:

The operations of the Myron precede the *Qurbana*<sup>477</sup> for without Myron, the church is not consecrated, not the altar, nor the baptism, the *Qurbana* nor the priests and these are the fundamental operations. The operations of the *Qurbana* are the final and complete, because the church that is consecrated with Myron, if *Qurbana* is not offered in it, is not completed.<sup>478</sup>

Bar Salibi claims that *Qurbana* and Myron are two elements but connected to each other. He considers that the sanctification of a new church building is completed only after anointing it with Myron and celebrating the Holy Eucharist in it.

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<sup>470</sup> John 17: 19; Hebrews 2: 11; 13: 8.

<sup>471</sup> Farina, (ed.), (1987), *Pseudo-Dionysius*, 484B, 231.

<sup>472</sup> Farina, (ed.), (1987), *Pseudo-Dionysius*, 484B, 231.

<sup>473</sup> Mingana 25, fol. 9r-15r. For the English translation See Varghese, (2006), *Dionysius Bar Salibi*.

<sup>474</sup> Varghese, (trs.), (2006), *Dionysius Bar Salibi*, 26.

<sup>475</sup> Varghese, (trs.), (2006), *Dionysius Bar Salibi*, 58, 64.

<sup>476</sup> Varghese, (trs.), (2006), *Dionysius Bar Salibi*, 70.

<sup>477</sup> Eucharist.

<sup>478</sup> Varghese, (trs.), (2006), *Dionysius Bar Salibi*, 72.

### 3.9.4. Bar Hebraeus

The description given by Bar Hebraeus<sup>479</sup> (1225-1286) of the consecration of a church agrees in many points with present day practice of the anointing of the altar and walls with Myron, as well as the walls of the sanctuary and the nave. In the Canon he states that a person becomes a member of the Church only after receiving the Myron. A person receives the Holy Spirit in the same way as the apostles received the Holy Spirit in the form of fire on the day of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit purifies the churches, perfects and completes all the sacraments, and makes baptism perfect. A person or believer receives the Holy Spirit with these characteristics during the sacrament of Myron.<sup>480</sup>

### 3.9.5. Byzantine Rite

The rite of consecration of the altar in the Byzantine rite is found in a manuscript of the second half of the eight century.<sup>481</sup> In the Byzantine rite it clearly states that the bishop should consecrate and anoint the church.<sup>482</sup> Myron is used in the Byzantine tradition for the consecration of a church, the altar and the interior walls as well as the coronations of the Byzantine emperors as a seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit.<sup>483</sup> “Consecrate every church that you build and sign it with the seal of the Lord, which is the Holy Myron and the unction of joy”.<sup>484</sup> Using holy Myron, the bishop traces three crosses on the altar table, at the centre and the two sides, and then with his thumb anoints with oil the entire surface of the table and its pillars, to the accompaniment of Psalm 132.<sup>485</sup> Then the bishop takes the altar cloth and sprinkles it with holy water and vests the altar while reciting Psalm 92. Then the bishop takes the censer and censes the altar, the sanctuary and the walls of the church. Two priests follow the bishop, one sprinkling the walls of the church, the other anointing the walls of the church with chrism.

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<sup>479</sup> Bar Hebraeus, *Nomocanon*, 10.

<sup>480</sup> Julius, (trs.), (1974), *Hudayacanon*, 20.

<sup>481</sup> Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Codex Barberinianus Graecus 336, folios 1-263. For more details of the rite of consecration in Byzantine rite see De Meester, (1930), *Rituale-Benedizionale Bizantino in Studi di Rito Bizantino*.

<sup>482</sup> Beal, Coriden and Green (eds.), (2000), *New Cmmentary on the Code of Canon Law*, 1075.

<sup>483</sup> Grisbrooke, (1993), “Blessings of Oil and Anointings: The Byzantine Rite”, 214.

<sup>484</sup> Rahmani, (1929), *Les Liturgies Orientales & Occidentales*, 46.

<sup>485</sup> Chupungco, (2000), *Handbook for Liturgical Studies*, 347.

In the Byzantine era as many as fifty two species of plants were used in the oil consecrated by the Patriarch of Constantinople.<sup>486</sup> The Chrism used in the Byzantine rite for the post-baptismal anointing and in the consecration of a church is a strongly aromatic substance obtained from heating together oil and perfumes, the perfumes being added to the oil in two successive heatings.<sup>487</sup> The uses of holy Myron in the Byzantine tradition clearly have a specific significance and all usage has a common sacramental purposes. The principal and primary use of Myron is in the sacrament of Chrismation, which immediately follows baptism, for infants as well as for adults.<sup>488</sup>

### 3.9.6. East Syrian Rite

In the East Syrian rite, the rite of consecration of church and altar is ascribed to Patriarch Isho'yahb III of Adiabene (AD 649-659).<sup>489</sup> Although the Chronicle of Seert<sup>490</sup> indicates that the rite of consecrating altars did in fact exist prior to Isho'yahb's time, it does not specify whether the altar was consecrated with or without oil.<sup>491</sup>

In this rite, Myron is a blend of pure olive oil mixed with aromatic fragrances, which the bishop consecrates annually on Holy Thursday. On the day of the consecration of a church the bishop anoints the altar, walls and doorpost of the sanctuary with this oil. A ritual washing of the altar takes place on Holy Saturday.<sup>492</sup> In the East Syrian rite, the liturgy of the Word is found only in the rite of the consecration of a new altar, in which there is a Gospel reading (Matt. 12: 16-20), followed by a hymn and diaconal litany.<sup>493</sup>

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<sup>486</sup> Nichol, (1976), "Kaiserabung. The Unction of Emperors in Late Byzantine Coronation Ritual", 37-52; Walter, (1976), "The Significance of Unction in Byzantine Iconography", 53-74; Harvey, (2006), *Scenting Salvation*, 264.

<sup>487</sup> Parenti and Velkovska, *L'eucologio Barberini gr.*, 140; Chupungco, (2000), *Handbook for Liturgical Studies*, 385.

<sup>488</sup> Grisbrooke, (1993), "Blessings of Oil and Anointings: The Byzantine Rite", 213.

<sup>489</sup> Macomber, (1990), *Final inventory of the Microfilmed Manuscripts of the St. Mark's Convent, Jerusalem*. <https://archive.org/stream/MacomberSMC/Macomber>

<sup>490</sup> *The Chronicle of Seert* is an ecclesiastical history written in Arabic by an anonymous Nestorian writer in between 9<sup>th</sup> and the 11<sup>th</sup> century. See Wood, (2013), *The Chronicle of Seert: Christian Historical Imagination in Late Antique Iraq*.

<sup>491</sup> Scher, (ed.) and Pierre, (trs.), (1908), *Chronicle of Seert*, Vol. 5, 256.

<sup>492</sup> Kelaita, (ed.), (1928), *The Liturgy of the Church of the East*, 475.

<sup>493</sup> Rahner, (ed.), (1975), *Encyclopedia of Theology*, 462.

### 3.9.7. Armenian Tradition

The development of Armenian literature unfolded on the back of an unprecedented corpus of translated patristic literature from both the Alexandrian and Cappadocian schools between the years 405 and 460.<sup>494</sup> The Armenian Ritual Book (known as *Mashtots*) has three formats: Small Mashots (*P'ok'r Mashtots*) which include the sacramental and rites performed by the priest such as baptism, confirmation, marriage, burial etc.; Mother Mashtots (*Mayr Mashtots*) containing the rites performed by the bishops such as ordination, consecration of churches, burial of priests etc.; Father Mashtots (*Hayr Mashtots*) comprising catholical rites, consecration of bishops, the blessing of the Holy Myron, consecration of Catholicos.<sup>495</sup>

In the Armenian tradition, the consecration of the church building is much more than the consecration of the altar. Particularly, intriguing is the emphasis given to the washing and anointing of the eastern wall and the remaining walls and columns preceding the consecration of the altar and the language of the consecratory prayers referring to the whole space or to the whole sanctuary.<sup>496</sup> After an offering of incense, the singing of Psalms 22 and 23, and a long litany with incense, the altar is signed three times with Myron, “we consecrate this altar with the name of the Virgin (or of the saint) with this holy Myron, in the name of the Father...”<sup>497</sup> followed by a total chrismation of the altar and its clothing.

### 3.9.8. Coptic Tradition

The Coptic liturgy was derived from the ancient Alexandrian liturgy.<sup>498</sup> In Coptic tradition the consecration ceremony service commences with vespers on a Saturday evening and lasts through most of the night, the act of consecration being reserved for Sunday morning.<sup>499</sup> A Berlin Manuscript, which is the main source describes the church consecration as follows: “From the holy Canons: Let the bishop sanctify the haicals; and let there be with him seven presbyters; and he shall sign them with the Myron which is the oil of gladness, even the seal

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<sup>494</sup> Nersessian, (2012), “The Armenian Tradition”, 44.

<sup>495</sup> Nersessian, (2010), “Armenian Christianity”, 38.

<sup>496</sup> Ervine, (ed.), (2006), *Worship traditions in Armenia and the Neighboring Christian East*, 251.

<sup>497</sup> See Coquin, (1964), “La Consecration des eglises dans le rite Copte: Ses relations avec les rites syrien et byzantine”, 155; Ervine, (ed.), (2006), *Worship traditions in Armenia and the Neighboring Christian East*, 251.

<sup>498</sup> Hyvernât, (1909), “Coptic Church”, 361.

<sup>499</sup> Butler, (1884), *The Ancient Coptic Churches of Egypt*, 338.



of the Lord”.<sup>500</sup> Another manuscript in the British Museum states: “let the bishop consecrate the haicals, and let there be with him at the time of the consecration seven presbyters; and let him sign with the Myron, which is the oil of gladness. Since it is the seal of the Lord, let it be worthy that he should celebrate at it [the altar]; and let him read over the altar the gospel of John the divine; and let him not celebrate at it the first time unless with the assembly of presbyters and their chief, and all the deacons”.<sup>501</sup> At the end of the ceremony a vessel of Myron is carried before the bishop, who seals the altar, walls, columns, etc. making the sign of the cross with Myron; the marks of the consecration are sometimes recorded by the incising the crosses.<sup>502</sup>

### 3.10. The Theological Significance of the Myron

Myron has a very important role in the theology of the Syrian Orthodox Church. The Myron affirms the continuation of the Church tradition established during the time of the Apostles.<sup>503</sup> The Church acknowledges only one faith, seven sacraments, and one form of worship, and has only one leader – Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit abides in the Church and guides the Church.<sup>504</sup> The Church is set apart for the glorification of God. Each sacrament is always an event within the Church, by the Church and for the Church<sup>505</sup> and each sacrament transcends its particularity and leads to a resounding catholicity. The symbolic action of Myron assures a complete divine life with the Lord. Thus by anointing the whole body with Myron “so that when the evil one sees that his whole body has been arrayed with divine armour, he will flee and depart”.<sup>506</sup>

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<sup>500</sup> Berlin Ms. p. 247. See Horner, (1902), *The Service for the Consecration of a Church and Altar According to the Coptic Rite*, vii.

<sup>501</sup> The British Museum Manuscript 1331, folios 36b and 37a. See Horner, (1902), *The Service for the Consecration of a Church and Altar According to the Coptic Rite*, vii.

<sup>502</sup> Butler, (1884), *The Ancient Coptic Churches of Egypt*, 340.

<sup>503</sup> Vööbus state that the revised edition of the ointment prayer in the Apostolic Constitution confirms it introduces the Myron in the rubric and then, in the prayer itself, it identifies the material of the sacrament as ‘the fragrance of the myron’. See Vööbus, (1968), *Liturgical Traditions in the Didache*, 48.

<sup>504</sup> See Sedro, second service of Pentecost, *The Service Book of M’adh’dhono*, (1992), 414.

<sup>505</sup> Evdokimov, (2001), *In the World, of the Church*, 243.

<sup>506</sup> Varghese, (trs.), (2006), *Dionysius Bar Salibi*, 142.

Secondly, Myron confers the strength of the Holy Spirit and it imprints a permanent spiritual mark, giving the confirmed person the power and the authority to profess faith in Christ.<sup>507</sup> In the same way, the consecration of a church with Myron makes the building a holy place and a dwelling place of God. The faithful become more firm in their faith after receiving the Myron. The Myron gives strength to the believer so that he/she can profess their faith and stand for truth and prosperity. We pray “because of the sweet fragrance of Myron may he/she become free from the rule of the hostile power and henceforth not be afraid the rules of darkness. They will walk in the light of your commandments that they may be worthy to become the son/daughter of your light and by following the light they may reach your holy presence.”<sup>508</sup>

Thirdly, the faithful receive the Holy Spirit through the Myron during Baptism. The Holy Spirit purifies the church building through the anointing Myron during the consecration of a church.<sup>509</sup> The grace that every one of the faithful received through Baptism is strengthened and multiplied by anointing with the Myron. The faithful renew their life during Baptism. But the faithful and the Church receive strength to fight evil forces through anointing of the Myron.<sup>510</sup> The believers get cleansed during Baptism. But through the Myron, they gain the strength to lead a holy life in the Church. “Being signed is the acknowledgement of the will of the person being baptized, and it is the imprint of the Heavenly King which is put on the spiritual soldier.”<sup>511</sup> In the *Sedro* prayer during the Baptism, the Church prays to God to give her children a new life, to help them to face temptations, and to help them to achieve salvation.<sup>512</sup>

Myron recalls the pleasant smell of Jesus Christ,<sup>513</sup> the symbol and seal of the true faith and the completion of the spiritual blessings. “The employment of perfumed oil (Myron) was

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<sup>507</sup> *The Service Book of the Holy Sacraments*, (1999), 30.

<sup>508</sup> *The Service Book of the Holy Sacraments*, (1999), 50.

<sup>509</sup> See *Sedro*, third service of Pentecost, *The Service Book of M'adh'dhono*, (1992), 452.

<sup>510</sup> Varghese, (trs.), (2006), *Dionysius Bar Salibi*, 142.

<sup>511</sup> British Museum, Add. 14496 & 14538 translated by Brock, (1980), “Some Early Syriac Baptismal Commentaries”, 37.

<sup>512</sup> *The Service Book of the Holy Sacraments*, (1999), 10.

<sup>513</sup> Dionysius Bar Salibi in his ‘Treatise on Myron’ (Mingana Collection MSS 25, fol. 9r-15r) says: “Why is Christ called Myron? We say that as the Myron possesses fragrance, the Word also has holiness and fragrance naturally. Whenever the Myron is hidden in a vase and not revealed and not known, it does not give out fragrance. But when it is revealed and seen, it gives out fragrance. Similarly, when God the Word was hidden in

encouraged by the theological ideas associating the Holy Spirit and Christ with a sweet perfume of Heavenly aroma.”<sup>514</sup> The Old Testament typology<sup>515</sup> concerning incense may help to understand the secret of this fragrance. This is the background to Paul’s claim<sup>516</sup> that the heavenly perfume of Christ is spread wherever He leads humanity. This fragrance of life from heaven, is satisfying to the Father and a blessing to men.<sup>517</sup> Paul speaks of this cloud of sweet smelling incense being diffused in every place (2 Cor. 2: 14-15). Christ’s fragrance is the apostolic ministry and the Christians are the winning forces who triumph through the hearing of the Word of God. The knowledge of Christ and the redeemed lives of believers are manifested as a sweet aroma before God and humans (2 Cor. 2: 14-16).

Thus the use of Myron oil as a sign and a seal both in the consecration of a person in baptism and in consecration of a church building is a fundamental part of the Syrian Orthodox Church’s liturgy.

### 3.11. Conclusion

The concept of anointing is very important in Scripture and in Syriac tradition. Anointing with Holy Oil was also a common practice in Mesopotamia. The first reference in the Old Testament is in Exodus 25:6. The word translated as “anointing” is from the Hebrew word *mishchah*, the root word means ‘to rub with oil’ or ‘to anoint’. It implies a consecration that is affirmed and sealed by covering the object or the person with holy oil.

The Greek word for Christ is *Christos*, which means the “anointed one” and the Greek word for ‘anointing’ is *chrisma*. From the perspective of the New Testament, the act of anointing in the Old Testament was a type, a symbolic act which implied a deeper spiritual reality. The oil itself was symbolic of the Holy Spirit coming upon and covering a person or a thing with the power to carry out the ministry for which they had been anointed.

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His Father, He was concealed and hidden.” See Varghese, (trs.), (2006), *Dionysius Bar Salibi: Commentaries on Myron and Baptism*, 22-23.

<sup>514</sup> Ferguson, (2009), *Baptism in the Early Church*, 575.

<sup>515</sup> Exodus 30: 34-37.

<sup>516</sup> 2 Corinthians 2:14-15.

<sup>517</sup> Varghese, (trs.), (2006), *Dionysius Bar Salibi*, 140.

The practice of administering the Myron is a continuation of the Church tradition, which was established during the time of Apostles. Paul's reference to God putting his seal on the believers in 2 Cor. 1:21ff is a mark denoting possession or belonging, the claim of the owner over the thing owned. In the same way the sealing with Myron became part of the baptismal rite marking the person's belonging to the Church. In Judaism circumcision was generally called as seal, denoting membership of God's people and Paul himself also called it a seal in Rom. 4:11. It was a mark of belonging to God's people. So for the early Christians a sign on the forehead was a mark of redemption and salvation.

The use of the Myron is practiced in both Eastern and Western churches. The link to the bishop is still maintained in the Eastern and Western churches even though the priest administers the Holy Myron. This is because the priest confirms with the Myron which is consecrated by the Patriarch/Bishop.

In this chapter we have seen that baptism involves anointing with blessed Oil. During this the faithful receive the divine grace and courage to lead a Christian life. The Myron, as a permanent seal, helps the faithful to develop and be renewed and gives them the strength to profess the faith. So too, it helps the church building to be purified. The faithful and the Church receive strength to continue the Christian faith despite evil forces through the anointing of the Myron. The Holy Spirit comes to the faithful in a special way and enables them to profess their faith as true Christians. It gives them strength to profess their faith even under difficulties. It helps them to show good example to others. The Holy Spirit gives them the power to grow from infancy to adulthood in a life of grace. The child gets the fruits of the Holy Spirit.<sup>518</sup> The child gets the Holy Spirit to fight temptation. Paul states that we are established in Christ through Baptism and are anointed and sealed in the Spirit through Chrismation. People who received the seal of the Holy Spirit have responsibilities. We are to work, not for personal gain and luxury, but in order to serve. "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption" (Eph. 4:30). Because Myron is the permanent seal of the Holy Spirit it is to be received only once in the lifetime of a person. The sick get anointed with blessed Oil for the healing of their body, soul and spirit. Anointing with the Holy Myron gives the faithful a divine influence. It

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<sup>518</sup> The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5: 22-23).

is only used in baptism and the consecration of a church (including the altar and the *tablito*) and cannot be repeated.

The consecration of a church using Myron is modelled on the rite of baptism. It is an analogy to the biblical image of Christ's being anointed with the Spirit. They remain separate things but are intimately connected with each other. In his "Hymn on the Epiphany", Ephrem explains: "Christ and Chrism are conjoined, the secret with the visible is mingled: the Chrism anoints visibly; Christ seals secretly, the lambs new born and spiritual, the prize of His twofold victory; for He engendered it of the Chrism, and He gave it birth of the water."<sup>519</sup> The Myron represents Christ and Holy Spirit in the Syriac tradition.

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<sup>519</sup> Schaff, and Wallace, (eds.), (2007), *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. XIII, 269.

## Chapter Four

### The Structure and Practice of the Consecration of a Church

#### 4.1. Introduction

The consecration of a church is a ritual performed to sanctify the building as God's House, the place where God dwells. The Order of Consecration is divided into different services, which are: the consecration of the sanctuary, the consecration of the altar and the consecration of the church building. These services of consecration are administered together one after the other. The oldest available manuscript regarding church consecration in the Syrian Orthodox tradition is the Vatican Manuscript mentioned in chapter One. Through this manuscript we learn how the consecration ceremony was conducted in the 12th century. The Church follows almost the same structure and prayers up to today.

In this chapter I will first discuss how the construction of a church building is begun, then the importance of praying towards the east in the Syriac tradition, followed by the structure of a Syrian church and what it symbolises. Next, I will review the important items inside the church building and the paraphernalia used for the foundation stone laying ceremony and give a detailed description of the laying of the foundation stone. The final part of this chapter provides a detailed explanation of the consecration of a church building. Here I will also include the consecration of the *tablito* because a *tablito* is considered as an alternative altar in Syrian Orthodox tradition. I have divided the consecration ceremony into two sections and included some prayers from the church consecration manuscripts.

#### 4.2. The Construction of a Church Building<sup>520</sup>

The 'ground-breaking ceremony' precedes the starting of construction work, with a blessing and the laying of a stone.<sup>521</sup> The construction site is marked out and a trench is dug at the

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<sup>520</sup> The usual practice of the Syrian Orthodox Church is for a group of families located in a place without an established church to approach the bishop for a new parish. They can begin with the process of buying land for that purpose after getting authorisation from the Bishop. The Bishop will appoint a priest to oversee the project and to meet the needs of the faithful.

<sup>521</sup> Laying a stone in the ground is a practice of the Syrian Orthodox church before beginning construction of a new church building.

place where the stone is to be laid and the stones and mortar are prepared. This includes carving a cross on a stone of one square foot (Figure 4.1 left).

After all the preparations have been made, the bishop or the assigned priest comes with clergy and deacons to where the stone is to be placed. On arriving at the construction site, the celebrant leads the prayer and after the prayer he blesses the stone in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Then he goes to the trench where the laying of the stone is to take place and lays the stone in the trench and put mortar on the stone (see Figure 4.1 right). Thereafter the workmen may begin the construction of the church.



**Figure 4.1:** Foundation Stone with Cross and Foundation Stone with mortar.

St. James Knanaya church, Houston

### 4.3. The Significance of the East

There are reasons for the fact that Orthodox and other Christians always turn towards the east when they pray and for the fact that the altar in the Orthodox and other churches is placed at the east side. The sun rises from the east and casts its rays in the same way as Christ shines as the light of the world. He is the Son of righteousness that shines every day. Therefore, the east is the direction that is assigned to His worship. The song of the sun in Psalm 19:5-6 is interpreted as a song about Christ when it says: “[the Sun] comes forth like a bridegroom leaving His chamber ....Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of them”.<sup>522</sup> Cardinal Ratzinger pointed out that “Christians interpret it in terms of Christ, who is the living Word, the eternal Logos, and thus the true light of history, who came forth in

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<sup>522</sup> Ratzinger, (2000), *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 68.

Bethlehem from the bridal chamber of the Virgin Mother and now pours out His light on all the world”.<sup>523</sup>

In addition Christ himself said “For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man” (Matt. 24:27). Christ however did not say “pray towards the east”, so why do Orthodox Christians face east when they pray? Firstly, in the early Church, prayer toward the east was regarded as an apostolic tradition. The *Didascalia* emphasises the need to pray facing towards the east:

The Apostles, therefore, established: pray towards the East, because ‘as the lightning which lightens from the east, and is seen even to the west, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be’, that by this shall we know and understand that He appears from the east suddenly.<sup>524</sup>

The Syrian and other Christians follow the apostolic tradition of facing the east, both in the building of churches and in the celebration of the liturgy and in baptism. In the baptism ceremony in the Syrian Orthodox tradition, when a child is baptised, the godfather or godmother carries the child and first they face the west and renounce Satan through the prayers of exorcism, after this they must turn towards the east and declare that they are united with Christ; after this they recite the Nicene Creed.

Secondly, “for the Christians of the first millennium or so, the east had a very distinctive theological and liturgical significance: facing the east in prayer embodied their lively hope for the second coming of the risen and ascended Christ in glory, to judge the living and the dead”.<sup>525</sup> In this we find second coming of Christ gives another reason for praying toward the east. It reflects the eschatological hope of the early Church which awaited the imminent return of the Lord with the prayer *maranatha*<sup>526</sup>. The *Didascalia* speaks of the abode of God in the east: “Indeed, it is required that you pray toward the East, as knowing that which is

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<sup>523</sup> Ratzinger, (2000), *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 68.

<sup>524</sup> Vööbus, (ed. & trs.), (1979), *The Didascalia Apostolorum in Syriac*, 36-37. “Towards the East” is found only in Syriac translation. See Lamsa, (1957), *The Holy Bible from the Ancient Eastern Text*.

<sup>525</sup> Lang, (2009), *Turning Towards the Lord*, 103.

<sup>526</sup> Aramaic for ‘Our Lord, come!’: An early Christian prayer for the return of Christ, used by Paul in 1 Corinthians 16: 22. See Staniforth, (1987), “The Didache 10”, 195.



written: ‘Give glory to God, who rides upon the heaven of heavens towards the East’” (Ps. 68:33).<sup>527</sup>

Origen, who wrote *On Prayer* around AD 235 in answer to a request from two friends to help them better understand prayer,<sup>528</sup> suggests that the proper direction to face should be toward the east “since this is a symbolic expression of the soul’s looking for the rising of the true light”.<sup>529</sup> He states that all worship should be directed towards the East, in order to indicate that the soul is looking towards the dawn of the true light, the Sun of justice and of salvation, Christ.<sup>530</sup>

Clement notes that sometimes people pray in silence, knowing that God knows the thoughts of the mind and hears the desires of the heart. He also recommends praying toward the east, “and since the dawn is an image of the day of birth and from that the light which has shone forth at first from the darkness increases, there has also dawned on those involved in darkness a day of the knowledge in truth”.<sup>531</sup> Referring to the tradition that Eden lay to the east, Basil of Caesarea explains, “We all look to the east at our prayer, but few of us know that, in doing so, we seek our own old country, Paradise, which God planted in Eden, in the east”.<sup>532</sup>

Accordingly the first act in the consecration of a church is the consecrating of the east wall of the sanctuary with Myron. This procedure signifies the importance of the eastern orientation. More information on this procedure can be found in the section 4.5.4.

#### **4.4. The Structure of a Syrian Orthodox Church**

Syrian churches are always built to face east.<sup>533</sup> The entrance to a church is from the west. There may be an entry porch west of the nave but when one is not provided, the entrance is through the large west door. The door is made of heavy timber and is adorned with ornamental carvings, floral brass studs, hinges and a built-in lock. The door opens into the

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<sup>527</sup> Vööbus, (ed. & trs.), (1979), *The Didascalia Apostolorum in Syriac*, 131

<sup>528</sup> Origen, “Origen: An Exhortation to Martyrdom, Prayer and Selected Writings”, II.I, 82

<sup>529</sup> Origen, “Origen: An Exhortation to Martyrdom, Prayer and Selected Writings”, XXXII, 168.

<sup>530</sup> Origen, “Origen: An Exhortation to Martyrdom, Prayer and Selected Writings”, II.I, 82

<sup>531</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, chap. 6, 534; 7.7, ANF, 2. 525.

<sup>532</sup> Basil of Caesarea, *On the Holy Spirit* 27.66, NPNF, 8:42.

<sup>533</sup> Pothen, (1963), *The Syrian Christians of Kerala*, 79.

nave, or main body of the church, which is the place where people stand or sit during church services. The lack of furniture in churches could also be an influence of other religious traditions, though small mats, are provided for the worshippers.<sup>534</sup> However today, many churches do provide furniture for the comfort of the worshippers.

Normally two or three steps<sup>535</sup> lead to the sanctuary from the chancel, which is joined to the nave by an arch, the walls and roof of which are higher than the rest of the church building. This is the most sacred part of the Syrian church. The sanctuary is screened off from the nave by a curtain<sup>536</sup> (see Figure 4:2) hung on a rod running across the arch which can be drawn by cords. The curtain conceals the altar from the worshippers except at those points in the liturgy when the curtains are opened such as in Morning Prayer and other service. The curtain of the sanctuary is not to be removed without a lighted candle on the altar during the prayer or worship time.



**Figure 4.2:** The Curtain. St. Thomas Knanaya Church, New Jersey

In the centre of the sanctuary, with one step leading up to it is the high altar; this is a built-up masonry structure about six feet by two or three feet in width and four feet in height. The front of the altar facing the congregation is ornamented, either by a carved wooden frontal or draped with an embroidered silk altar cloth.<sup>537</sup> On it stands a wooden cross<sup>538</sup> with

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<sup>534</sup> Nowadays, instead of mats, many churches use silk carpets, rugs, coir carpets etc.

<sup>535</sup> Some churches may have only one step. It is dependent upon the size of the church building and sanctuary.

<sup>536</sup> There is no specific colour for the curtain but red is normally used and in the middle of the curtain, an embroidered cross is also attached.

<sup>537</sup> For details see section 4.4.2.3, 'The Chithol'.

<sup>538</sup> For details see section 4.4.2.1, 'The Wooden Cross'.

candlesticks on either side. No crucifixes or images are normally found in any of the Syrian Orthodox churches, except in ones following the Syrian Catholic tradition. The Syrian Orthodox uses a plain or a decorated cross because the church celebrates the resurrection rather than the suffering of Christ. Secondly, the use of images is contrary to Exodus 20:4 which stated that “you shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that in the water under the earth”.

The church is generally rectangular in plan with a single longitudinal nave or a nave and two side aisles. The traditional layout (see Figure 4.3) of a Syrian Orthodox church is: (1) the *Madbeho*<sup>539</sup> ‘the altar’ (there may be three or more altars in a large building), (2) the bishop’s chair, (3) the *Beth qudsho* or ‘Sanctuary’ or ‘holy place’, (4) the curtain, (5) the Gospel stand - a special lectern located in front of the large curtain and (6) the two *Gude* - two lecterns for prayers and readings chanted by two choirs in alternation (they are in the area for the choir and deacons) within (7) the *Qestrumo*, or choir one step above the nave, (8) the *Gurno dma’moditho* or ‘Baptismal font’, and (9) the *Hayklo*, or ‘nave’ - the standing place for the faithful. In ancient Syrian churches, a platform is situated in the middle of the nave extending from the *qestrumo* which is sometimes elevated, where certain readings and chants were performed.<sup>540</sup> This elevated platform is known as the bema.<sup>541</sup> The long curtain<sup>542</sup>, that is often decorated, separates off the sanctuary as mentioned above (see also Figure 4.2).

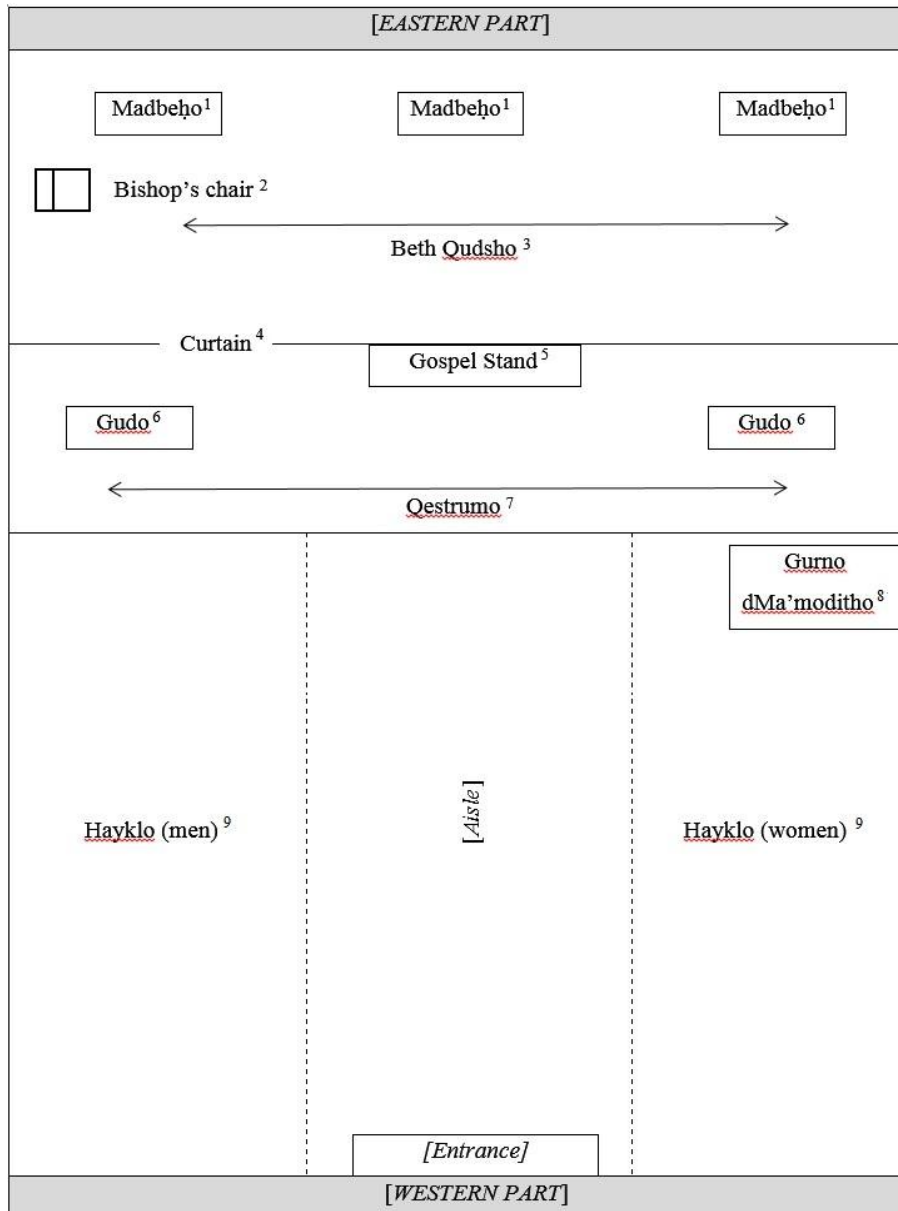
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<sup>539</sup> The word *Madbeho* - مذبحة - means an altar. See Smith, (1957), *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary*, 251.

<sup>540</sup> Chaillot, (2006), “The Ancient Oriental Churches”, 155.

<sup>541</sup> More details of bema see footnote 273.

<sup>542</sup> In every Syrian church there is a ‘veil’ drawn across the sanctuary, representing the veil in the temple of Jerusalem (2 Chron. 3: 14). The purpose of the veil is that it shall “separate the holy place from the most holy” (Exodus 26:33).



**Figure 4.3:** Traditional plan of a Syrian Orthodox Church

#### 4.4.1. The Sanctuary

*Beth qudsho* is translated as the “sanctuary” (ܬܝܒܬܐ) <sup>543</sup> which means holy place and *Madbeho* (ܡܕܒܬܐ) means “altar or place where the altar is”. <sup>544</sup> *Beth qudsho* and *Madbeho* can refer equally to the ‘sanctuary’. The sanctuary is also called the Holy of Holies (Heb. 9: 3-5).

<sup>543</sup> Smith, (1903), *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary*, 50.

<sup>544</sup> Smith, (1903), *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary*, 257.

The sanctuary represents Mount Calvary, where Christ sacrificed Himself. It also represents Mount Sinai where God descended and also symbolises heaven, where God's glory prevails.<sup>545</sup>

The sanctuary is a specific place where God continues to reveal His Will to His people. "For the Israelites the sanctuary was the source of their life as a nation, representing the fulfilment of the covenant promise that God would dwell among the people of Israel and would be their God (Exod. 29:45)".<sup>546</sup> God met Moses at the holy place and the sanctuary symbolises that holy place in Christian churches.

#### 4.4.2. The Altar

In the Syrian Orthodox tradition, as in all traditional Christian traditions, the altar is the central point of the church building. The main altar is built in the middle of the sanctuary and it is called the Table of Life (ܦܬܠܝܬܐ ܕܚܝܐ) in Syriac. It represents the Throne of the Lord which was seen in the vision of Isaiah (Isa. 6:1) and in John (Rev. 4:5, 7:10-11). In the Syrian Orthodox Church, the chief celebrant normally celebrates the Holy Eucharist at the central altar while other celebrants using those on either side. The altars often have one or more tiers, where the cross, the candles and other furnishings are placed (see Figure 4.4).

The altar and *tablito* also symbolise the tomb of the Lord. It is not permissible to celebrate more than one Holy Eucharist on an altar and *tablito* on the same day<sup>547</sup> because Christ was crucified only once, so Holy Eucharist on an altar is allowed only once in a day. This single use also references the entombment of the Lord in a cave where no one else had been buried (Jn.19: 41). Similarly, as a new-born baby He was put in a manger where no one else had been put,<sup>548</sup> and on Palm Sunday He rode on a donkey which no one else had ridden till then (Mk.11: 2) So, the Holy Eucharist must be offered on a *tablito* where no other Eucharist has

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<sup>545</sup> Isaiah 6:1; Psalm 11:4; Hebrews 2:20.

<sup>546</sup> Rodriguez, (1986), "Sanctuary Theology in the Book of Exodus", 138.

<sup>547</sup> Julius, (trs.), (1974), *Hudayacanon*, 34.

<sup>548</sup> See Samuel, (1984), *M'adh'dhono*, especially *promion* of the evening prayer of Nativity.

been offered.<sup>549</sup> The fasting prior to the reception of the holy mysteries insisted by the holy Church is in relation to this concept.<sup>550</sup>

In Holy Communion, the faithful partake in God's economy of Salvation. It is meaningless to repeat the Holy Eucharist again on the day on which it has been offered. This is because the Holy Eucharist is heavenly Manna and in the Old Testament we read that Manna was given for each day and nothing was to be left for the next day (Exod. 16:19).



**Figure 4.4:** The Furnished altar with candles, cross and decorated cloths.

St. Thomas Knanaya church, New Jersey

The bishop's chair is placed at the northern side of the altar. This is in reference to Psalm 45:9 where the queen stands at the right side of the king. Similarly if a person stands in front of the altar facing the congregation, then the right hand of this person is on the north side.

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<sup>549</sup> This is currently a subject of debate in the Church today.

<sup>550</sup> Varghese, (trs.), (1990), *Dionysius Bar Salibi: Commentary on the Eucharist*, 2.

The altar is always properly furnished with decorated cloths<sup>551</sup> (see Figure 4.4). The body and blood of Christ, also called the Holy Mysteries, are placed on the altar and it is very important that the altar should be furnished before the beginning of the Holy Eucharist.

In the prayers for the consecration of the altar, reference is made to the Holy of Holies, to the stone altar of Jacob (Gen. 33:20), to the place which the blood of Abel was sprinkled (Heb. 12:24), to the spot where Isaac was to be immolated (Gen. 22: 13-14), and to the altar on which Melchizedek offered sacrifice (Gen. 14:17-18; Heb. 5:6). It therefore recalls the places of sacrifice on which the figurative sacrifices were offered up.<sup>552</sup>

The following is a brief description of the items necessary for furnishing the altar are:-

#### 4.4.2.1. The Wooden Cross

The cross is placed on the altar in the middle of the eastern edge of the top tier of the altar. The cross may be plain or ornamental, but not with a graven image on it.<sup>553</sup> It is essential that it is made of wood.<sup>554</sup> The wooden cross is removed only when it is placed on the *mnortho*<sup>555</sup> (ܡܢܪܬܐ) (see Figure 4:5) on the middle day of Lent<sup>556</sup> until the feast of the Ascension of the

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<sup>551</sup> The reason of clothing the altar is explained in section 4.4.2.3. The *Chithol*.

<sup>552</sup> Gühr, (1902), *The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass*, 243.

<sup>553</sup> Syrian Orthodox Christians never used the cross with a graven image on it. See Paul, (1959), *The Jacobite Syrian Liturgies*, 88.

<sup>554</sup> The Wooden cross represents the cross on which Jesus was crucified. The church fathers beautifully narrated the weeping of the wood which is used for the crucified Christ. "The wood said: woe is me, what has happened to me? On me they crucified the Lord of creation, who nourished me with rain and dew, and I gave Him an evil return; woe to you, you Jews, who crucified the Lord of all". See *Lilio* (night) of the Resurrection, Griffiths, (trs.), *The Book of Common Prayer*, 93.

<sup>555</sup> The Hebrew word *mnortho* means a lamp-stand. In the Syriac tradition *mnortho* is raised in the middle of the church on the day of mid-day Lent and is symbolic of the raising of the bronze serpent by Moses in the middle of the Israelite camp. The Israelites complained and rejected the God who liberated them from slavery and provided them with everything they needed. They talked against Moses and Aaron. Because of their thanklessness, as a punishment God sent poisonous serpents to their midst and many died being bitten by the serpents (Numbers 21:5-7). The people became frightened and realized their mistake and repented for their sin and looked up to God. Moses pleaded to God on behalf of the people. God asked Moses to raise a bronze serpent in the middle of the camp and said that who ever looked up to the serpent with faith and repentance would be saved (Numbers 21:8). In John 3: 14 we read, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up." The relationship between the bronze serpent and Jesus is evident here. Just as Moses pleaded for the Israelites, Jesus pleads on behalf of us. *Mnortho* is a wooden stand in cross shape and in its middle there should be a cross with candles on both sides. A red cloth covers it from the middle day of Lent until Palm Sunday and from Palm Sunday to Easter the colour of the cloth should be black.

<sup>556</sup> The 25<sup>th</sup> day in the Great Lent is known as middle day Lent. The raising of the cross in the middle of the church on a wooden stand to keep the cross elevated is the special celebration connected with this special day. Just as when the Israelites who were bitten by the serpents looked up to the bronze serpent and were saved so

Lord. On the feast of Ascension it is placed back on the altar to denote that the resurrected Jesus Christ has ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.<sup>557</sup>



**Figure 4.5:** The *Mnortho*. St. Thomas Knanaya church, New Jersey

#### 4.4.2.2. The Candles

The candles used on the altar area must be of pure beeswax, and not any other type of candle. Candles made of animal fats are never used in the Syrian Orthodox tradition. This is because with the sacrifice of Christ, animal sacrifices (which would be implied in the use of candles made from animal fat) were put to an end.<sup>558</sup> The lighted candles symbolise the lightening during the presence of God on the mountain. The lighted lamp before the cross indicates the presence of God in the fire, and the priest stands before the lamp like Moses before God (Lev. 9:24).

Usually twelve candles<sup>559</sup> are placed on the altar to denote the number of disciples. All twelve candles are lit as soon as the Holy Eucharist begins but until then only one candle is

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looking up to the cross on which Jesus was crucified will save the Church, which is the new Israel. For Jesus was brought back the people to God through the cross. The middle day of Lent is an occasion to look back to our Lent and see our shortcomings and to be more steadfast in the rest of Lent.

<sup>557</sup> Matthew 20:23; Acts 2:23

<sup>558</sup> Barnabas, (1994), *Visudha Kurbanayude Dhyana Padhanam*, 43.

<sup>559</sup> It is not necessary to always keep twelve candles on the altar, but is a custom followed by many parishes.



lit. The curtain of the sanctuary is not to be removed without a lighted candle on the altar during prayer or worship. During the *Sūtoro*<sup>560</sup>, the prayer which is said after evening prayer, the deacon lights two candles on both sides of the altar. They denote that we are asking God for the protection of the angels.

#### 4.4.2.3. The *Chithol*

The cloth which is used to cover the altar is known as the *Chithol*<sup>561</sup> (see Figure 4.6) and a white cloth is also placed on the surface of the altar. The *Chithol* is a beautiful cloth cover decorating the altar. The white cloth represents the winding sheet in which the body of Christ was wrapped at the time of the burial.<sup>562</sup> The altar cloth is fine linen of high quality, with a lot of artwork on it and is usually divided into three sections representing the Holy Trinity, each with artwork on them. When the altar is anointed with Myron, it is done three times to represent holy Trinity.



**Figure 4.6:** Altar covered with *Chithol*. St. Peter's Knanaya Church, Yonkers, New York

Another interpretation regarding the use of the *Chithol* is that for the last supper, Christ asked His disciples to prepare a furnished room. It is written in Mark 14:15, “He will show you a large room upstairs, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there.” Just as the last

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<sup>560</sup> Night Vigil. *Sūtoro* (ܣܘܬܘܪܐ) means protection and the prayer is said in preparation for sleep.

<sup>561</sup> See Varghese, (1998), *The Living Sacrifice*, 19; Samuel, (1967), *The Anaphora according to the Rite of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch*; David, (1995), *The Holy Qurbana: An Interpretation*, 10.

<sup>562</sup> Tchiflianov, (2012), *Our Orthodox Faith*, 71.

supper was celebrated in a furnished room so during the Holy Eucharist, the body and blood of Christ is celebrated on the altar and that altar must be furnished with a decorated cloth.

#### **4.4.3. The Gospel Stand**

The Gospel stand is usually kept to the front west side of the sanctuary. This is a specially shaped table (lectern) covered with a colourful cloth (see Figure 4.7). Its top part is cut so as to hold the Gospel open in a position for reading. After reading the Gospel, the lectern is brought to the south side of the altar and is brought back to the front west side of the sanctuary at the end of the Holy Eucharist. When the faithful enter the church, generally they go to kiss the Gospel book.



**Figure 4.7:** Lectern covered with a colourful decorated cloth.  
Knanaya Centre, Pomona, New York

During the reading of the Gospel deacons (or priests if the bishop reads the Gospel) always hold lighted candles, one on the left and the other on the right side of the Gospel stand. The shape of the Gospel lectern table is understood to symbolise the heights of Mount Sinai from where God spoke to Moses and handed him the stone tablets (Exod. 34:1-5). It also reflects the fact that Christ went up a mountain to preach the Gospel to the multitudes (Matt. 5:1).

#### 4.4.4. The Gude and Qestrumo

The Syriac word *gudo* has several meanings such as ‘company, rank, choir, or band’.<sup>563</sup> The choir is very important in the Syrian Orthodox tradition but it is not like the choir in western churches. Usually the deacons and the priests chant the songs together in two groups around the *gude*<sup>564</sup> during the prayer times and all the participants join in during the divine liturgy and other sacraments. According to Jacob of Serugh, “The Church is empty of their [priests] sweet songs and the sanctuaries are left desolate of their pleasant voices; the choir of the priests [and deacons]...on earth shall offer fair praise to you in sweet tones with *hallelujah*”.<sup>565</sup> In modern times many parishes have started their own choirs often with accompaniments of musical instruments.

The *qestrumo* stood in between the sanctuary and the *hayklo*<sup>566</sup>, being one step above the latter. In essence, the *qestrumo* is an extension of the foot of the sanctuary. There is sometimes a small wooden railing or low stone wall about three feet in height towards the east end of the nave which encloses a space just before the sanctuary called the *qestrumo* or chancel step.<sup>567</sup> There may also be smaller altars on either side of the *qestrumo* for occasional Eucharistic services.

The whole area where the *gude* stand is known as *qestrumo*, which represents Paradise. Ephrem developed a theme on paradise from his reflections on the Scripture. His paradise is a mountain with rivers,<sup>568</sup> guarded by angels,<sup>569</sup> and in it, believers are portrayed as joyfully dressed.<sup>570</sup> In his paradise angels are always singing hymns and praising their creator. This is similar to what the prophet Isaiah describes when he says “I saw the Lord is sitting on a

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<sup>563</sup> Smith, (1903), *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary*, 68.

<sup>564</sup> The *gudo* are small tables placed on either side of the *Qestrumo*. The liturgical books are placed on the table and the deacons and priest stand around the table and sing.

<sup>565</sup> Griffiths, (trs.), (2006), *The Book of Common Prayer*, (Third hour on Saturday), 965.

<sup>566</sup> The Syriac word *hayklo* – ܬܬܝܠܐ literally means a palace or temple. In Syriac tradition it is a section of a church building which is for the people. It is called the nave in English. See Smith, (1957), *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary*, 103.

<sup>567</sup> <http://www.nasrani.net/2008/01/26/the-syrian-christian-church-an-architectural-overview>

<sup>568</sup> Brock, (1990), *St. Ephrem the Syrian: Hymns on Paradise* 11.11; McVey, (ed.) (1994), *St. Ephrem the Syrian: Selected Prose works: Commentary on Genesis* 2.6.

<sup>569</sup> Brock, (1990), *St. Ephrem the Syrian: Hymns on Paradise* 4.1.

<sup>570</sup> Janiszewski, (2014), “The Paradise in the Qu’ran and Ephrem the Syrian”, 7.

throne, and one called to another and said: ‘Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts...’(Isa. 6:1-3). According to Ephrem angels are in paradise so the Church interprets *qestrumo* as representing paradise because it is a place for singing praise to God.

An oral tradition of the Syrian Orthodox Church says that Ignatius of Antioch (d.117) had seen in a vision two ranks of angels praising and singing to Almighty God alternately and hence he established the system of Church choirs singing in two groups.

#### **4.4.5. The *Hayklo***

The church building is divided into two main sections: the eastern part is the sanctuary and *qestrumo* and the western part is the *hayklo* or nave. In the Syrian Orthodox tradition, the *hayklo* is divided into two different spaces for men and women. The sanctuary faces east and the northern part of the *hayklo* is for the men and the southern part is for women. The *hayklo* is the body of the church, in which the faithful gather, symbolising the spiritual journey towards the sanctuary - the heavenly place. The *hayklo* is treated as the valley of Mount Sinai where the people of Israel waited as God gave the Ten Commandments to Moses (Exod. 19). The faithful gather in the *hayklo* to hear the Word of God and also to worship Him.

#### **4.4.6. *Gurno dMa'moditho***

The word *gurno* (ܓܘܪܢܐ) means ‘a large vessel or a stone bath’.<sup>571</sup> The word *ma'moditho* means baptism,<sup>572</sup> so *gurno dMa'moditho* means baptismal font. The baptismal font (see Figure 4.8) is located in the south-eastern in the corner of the *hayklo*.<sup>573</sup> To the Syrian Orthodox, baptism is the mystery of the second birth by water and the Holy Spirit for the washing away of sin and endowment with the life of grace and the inheritance of everlasting life and the kingdom of God.<sup>574</sup> And it is here that a candidate is born to a new life. In some churches, in the south side of the sanctuary a special room is built for the baptismal font

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<sup>571</sup> Smith, (1903), *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary*, 72.

<sup>572</sup> Smith, (1903), *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary*, 289.

<sup>573</sup> Julius, (trs.), (1974), *Hudayacanon*, 20.

<sup>574</sup> Meno, (2008), “Syrian Orthodox Church”, 284.

known as the baptismal room. If the baptism font is not being used it is closed either with a cloth or a cover of wooden or other material.<sup>575</sup>



**Figure 4.8:** Baptismal Font, without cover and with cover.  
St. Mary's Syrian Orthodox Church, Bergenfield, New Jersey

#### 4.5. The Consecration Ceremony

The Synodicon in the West Syrian Tradition states that “It is not right for a priest of our fellowship to officiate at (an altar) table which has not been consecrated by an Orthodox head of the priests.<sup>576</sup> It is also not right for a presbyter to dare to anoint or consecrate an altar.”<sup>577</sup>

The Canon of the Syrian Orthodox Church decrees that a prelate must perform the ceremony of consecration of a church.<sup>578</sup> The consecration of the church must be conducted by a cleric in the Episcopal hierarchy according to the rite of the consecration of the church traditionally

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<sup>575</sup> Southgate, (1844), *Narrative of a visit to the Syrian (Jacobite) Church of Mesopotamia*, 85.

<sup>576</sup> Bishop, Archbishop, Catholicos, or Patriarch.

<sup>577</sup> Vööbus, (trs.), (1975), *The Synodicon in the West Syrian Tradition*, 169.

<sup>578</sup> Julius, (trs.), (1974), *Hudayacanon*, 12.

found in the Syrian Orthodox pontifical, which is the liturgical book containing the rites and ceremonies normally conducted by a bishop.<sup>579</sup>

The rubrics of the consecration of a church state that if a church is completely demolished and is being reconstructed, it must be consecrated again. However, if the church has not been completely demolished and only certain parts of it have fallen, only these parts should only be rebuilt or renovated and sealed with the sign of the cross without Myron. This is like the human body which can only be baptised once and if a hand or leg is cut off, the sanctification of the baptism is not invalidated. Similarly, if one or more walls of a church have collapsed and they are restored, it does not drive away the initial sanctity of the church. So too the if the altar, which is similar to the head, is ruined and rebuilt, its sanctity is not driven away, but for the sake of the hearts of the simple ones and those who know the sacraments, the parts which were ruined and then rebuilt may be signed by Myron.<sup>580</sup>

There is no particular day or dates for the consecration of a church building. However, the consecration of a new church may not take place on days such as Christmas, Epiphany, during the great Lent, Easter day, Ascension and Pentecost and other Lent days.

The consecration ceremony of a church is divided into two parts: the first section of the consecration is without the use of Myron and the second section of the consecration involves the use of Myron.<sup>581</sup> But as we have seen before, there is another ceremony known as the laying the foundation stone.<sup>582</sup> This is additional to the anointing of the foundation stone described in section 4.5.2 above. It is compulsory that the bishop<sup>583</sup> conducts the rite of the laying the foundation stone by anointing it with Myron. Usually this is performed before the first section of the consecration ceremony.

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<sup>579</sup> Julius, (trs.), (1974), *Hudayacanon*, 8.

<sup>580</sup> BNF Syriac 110, fol. 274A.

<sup>581</sup> I have divided the consecration ceremony into two parts for this study. It is not divided in the manuscript or in the present-day book of the consecration of a church in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

<sup>582</sup> Job 38:6, Isaiah 28:16, Ephesians 2:20. 1 Peter 2:6. The foundation stone ceremony can be performed at any time in the morning or evening before the construction of the church building or before the construction of the altar or after the construction of the church building. But it should be done before the consecration of the church building. But nowadays this ceremony is performed on the evening of the first day, before the church consecration.

<sup>583</sup> Severios, (1983), *Susrusha Samvidhanasahai*, 217. “God drew the model of the Tabernacle and gave it to Moses” (Exodus 29:36; 30:26; 40:10; Leviticus 8:11). Since the Tabernacle symbolises the Church, the high priest represents Jesus Christ.

When all building works have been completed<sup>584</sup> and before the consecration begins, the symbolic ceremony of the laying the foundation stone is held. This is not a part of the consecration ceremony but nowadays, the foundation stone laying ceremony is conducted on the first day of the consecration of a church. There is no rubric in any of the manuscripts that such a ceremony should be held along with the church consecration service but as it is conducted at the same time as the consecration the foundation stone laying ceremony should be conducted first. A description is given here regarding the rites and the paraphernalia used for it.

#### **4.5.1. Paraphernalia used in Ceremony of the Laying Foundation Stone**

In the Syrian Orthodox tradition different objects are used in a foundation stone ceremony. All these paraphernalia have a symbolic meaning and the prayers of church consecration are primarily focused on Christ as the rock or foundation stone (for example 1 Cor. 3:11; Eph. 2:20).

##### **4.5.1.1. The Stone**

In the ceremony of the laying of the foundation stone, one big stone<sup>585</sup> and twelve small stones<sup>586</sup>, which stand for Jesus Christ and twelve the Apostles are used.<sup>587</sup> Normally the stone is square in shape with a hole in the middle for a small silver pot<sup>588</sup>. The stone is then shaped into a cross by cutting out the corners. Each of these four corners is then cut into three pieces and a cross is marked on the top of each piece. These twelve pieces (3x4 =12) are cut in an artistic way and square shaped so as not to disfigure of the stone (see Figure 4.9).

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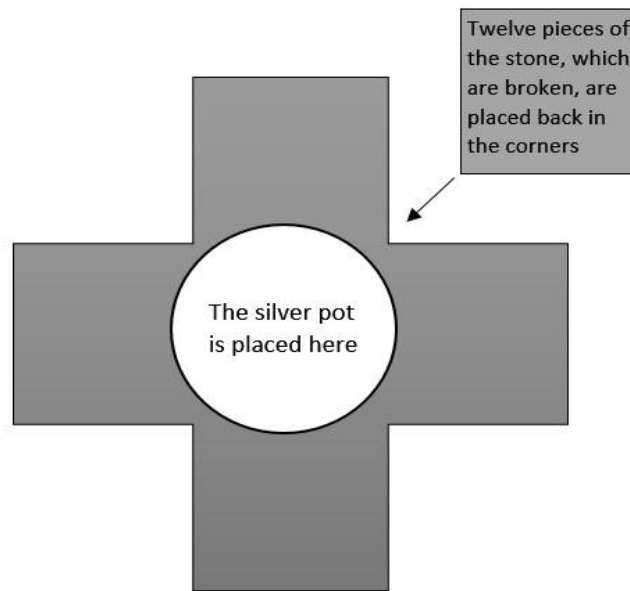
<sup>584</sup> At the time of the beginning of the initial works of a new church building, a stone is laying on the foundation but it is not foundation stone. A stone with a sign of the cross on it is blessed by a priest and laid as the first stone and start of the foundation work. Myron is not smeared on this stone.

<sup>585</sup> This reminds us that the stone was laid by the tribal father Jacob at Bethel (Genesis 35:14).

<sup>586</sup> For more details of twelve stone see next section 4.5.1.2. The Twelve Stones.

<sup>587</sup> Severios, (1983), *Susrusha Samvidhanasahai*, 217.

<sup>588</sup> Yahweh's words were as pure as silver refined seven times (Ps. 12:6). The first mention of silver in the Bible is in Genesis 13:2, where it says that Abraham was rich in cattle, in silver and gold. It was largely used in the fittings of the Tabernacle (Exodus 26) and later of the Temple (2 Chronicles 2). In the New Testament, reference should be made especially to Acts 19:24; James 5:3; Revelation 18:12. For details see section 4.5.1.3. The silver pot.



**Figure 4.9:** A schematic drawing of a Foundation Stone

Although the Vatican Borg.manuscript does not give the ritual for blessing the foundation stone, one of the prayers in church consecration rite says that Christ is the true and unshakeable stone upon which the Holy Church was established.<sup>589</sup> The stone or rock always symbolised Christ from the very beginning of Christianity. In *Fenqitho*, the evening prayer for a Tuesday, is as follows: “Blessed is He who built the Holy Church on the palm of His hand and placed as her foundations”.<sup>590</sup> The evening prayer on the day of the dedication of a church reads: “Lord God, make to dwell in Your Church unbroken peace and undisturbed tranquillity, and establish her immovably on You, Christ, the rock of truth.”<sup>591</sup> Christ is the rock of truth because He is the Son of God and the foundation of the Church.

Aphrahat’s *Demonstration on Faith*, again refers to Christ as the stone: ‘He builds His building on the Stone, which is Christ’.<sup>592</sup> Here Aphrahat is referring to 1 Corinthians 3: 10-11, where St. Paul speaks of Christ as the foundation of our faith. Aphrahat and Ephrem see in Jacob’s anointing of the stone at Bethel a type of Christ’s anointing believers who include

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<sup>589</sup> BAV Borg. Siriaco 57, fol. 28A.

<sup>590</sup> Acharya, (trs.), (1982), *Prayer with the Harp of the Spirit*, Vol. I, 74.

<sup>591</sup> Acharya, (trs.), (1982), *Prayer with the Harp of the Spirit*, Vol. I, 17.

<sup>592</sup> Gwynn, (1969), “Hymns and Homilies of Ephrem the Syrian and from the Demonstrations of Aphrahat the Persian Sage”, *Demonstrations I*, 4; 346.



Gentiles.<sup>593</sup> This is in reference to 1 Peter 2:4-8 where the Christians are described as ‘living stones’ built into the spiritual house of the Church.<sup>594</sup>

In Exodus 17:6, the Lord told Moses, “I will be standing there in front of you on the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it, so that the people may drink”. Just as the Israelites had experienced the guidance, protection and presence of God under the cloud<sup>595</sup> of glory, the believer in Christ has also been blessed. In 1 Corinthians, Paul says “the rock was Christ”.<sup>596</sup> The rock provided sufficient water for the Israelites who were travelling towards the Promised Land.

Ephrem explains the vow of Jacob in his Commentary on Genesis thus<sup>597</sup> “In the rock the mystery of the Church is also represented, for it is to her that the vows and offerings of all the nations were soon to come”.<sup>598</sup> Again Ephrem comments, “because of the name of the Shepherd,”<sup>599</sup> who would soon lead [His flock] into the barren desert to the ‘rock’ that gave life to all Israel when they drank from it.”<sup>600</sup>

Christ is also seen as the rock which sent forth the twelve rivers of water for the twelve tribes of Israel.<sup>601</sup> The stone laid in the sanctuary represents Christ. The Church becomes the river, which satisfies the thirst of the believers. Ephrem’s *Homily on Our Lord* contains great Christological and Trinitarian teachings. He says “For your God lives and has revealed Himself to you in living testimony: .....water flowed from the rock, and they drank from its streams.”<sup>602</sup> Murray points out “The rock, with which the Nation journeyed in the midst of the desert, is compared to the Word of God, creating all from nothing, as the rock sent forth

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<sup>593</sup> Aphrahat, Dem. IV, 145: 1-25; Ephrem the Syrian, *In Genesim et in Exodum Commentarii*, R. R. Tonneau (ed.) (1955), 26: 2-3 (CSCO 152, Syr. 71, p.89)

<sup>594</sup> Murray, (2006), *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 208.

<sup>595</sup> Exodus 40:34-35.

<sup>596</sup> 1 Corinthians 10:4.

<sup>597</sup> Genesis 28:19.

<sup>598</sup> McVey, (ed.) (1994), *St. Ephrem the Syrian: Selected Prose works*, 174.

<sup>599</sup> Genesis 49:24, Peshitta.

<sup>600</sup> McVey, (ed.) (1994), *St. Ephrem the Syrian: Selected Prose works*, 207.

<sup>601</sup> *The Service Book of Holy Eucharist (Anaphora)*, (2010), 126.

<sup>602</sup> McVey, (ed.) (1994), *St. Ephrem the Syrian: Selected Prose works*, 319.

water though there was none within.”<sup>603</sup> The water from the rock is the type of the water and blood coming from Christ’s side on the cross which provides eternal drink. In his commentary on 1 Corinthians 10:4<sup>604</sup> Ephrem remarks as follows: “*From the hand of the Mighty One....*” [is] because of the very name of the Son who was called by the Apostle “the Rock who walked with Israel in the desert.”<sup>605</sup>

The bishop places a stone that has been blessed in the sanctuary to symbolise the Church being founded on Christ the rock and the cornerstone.<sup>606</sup> In the book of Isaiah, the Lord says, “See, I am laying in Zion a foundation stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation.”<sup>607</sup> The cornerstone is the starting point of all buildings.

#### **4.5.1.2. The Twelve Stones**

The twelve stones cut from the foundation stone represent the twelve tribes of Israel, each headed by one of the twelve sons of Jacob (Gen. 35:22; 49:28). When the prophet Elijah summoned all Israel to decide who the real God was, the first thing he did was to restore the altar of God from twelve stones which represented the twelve tribes of Israel (1 Kings 18:25).

In Jesus’s selection of twelve apostles a direct relationship to the twelve tribes of Israel is intended (Matt. 19:28; Lk. 22:30). In the Book of Revelation, the fruit of the tree of life (Rev. 22: 2) is related to the tribes of Israel (Rev. 21:12f).

In ancient Israelite religion it was common practice to preserve the memory of important events (Gen. 8:20; 12:7; 35:7). After crossing the Jordan River Joshua built an altar for God, who specified that twelve stones were to be used to represent the twelve tribes of Israel. Piling up stones was often a covenant ritual in the ancient Near East.<sup>608</sup> It symbolised a landmark in the history of Israel, namely that they had safely crossed the Jordan River.<sup>609</sup> The twelve stones placed on the altar commemorate this event because God protects the church

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<sup>603</sup> Murray, (2006), *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 209.

<sup>604</sup> Murray, (2006), *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 209.

<sup>605</sup> McVey, (ed.) (1994), *St. Ephrem the Syrian: Selected Prose works*, 211; 1 Corinthians 10:4

<sup>606</sup> Mark 12:10; Ephesians 2:20.

<sup>607</sup> Isaiah 28:16.

<sup>608</sup> Livingston, (1974), *The Pentateuch in its Cultural Environment*, 157.

<sup>609</sup> George, (2011), *Beautiful are you O Holy Church*, 32.

building from the first day of its construction until the day of its consecration. The members of the Church overcome all turmoil and reach a safe place where God dwells.

The Book of Revelation (Rev. 21:10-15) also shows the symbolic nature of the twelve stones. It describes the city (the New Jerusalem) as surrounded by a great wall with twelve gates and “twelve foundations and on them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb”. Again the twelve tribes of Israel are mentioned along with the twelve apostles. The twelve gates (Eze. 48:31-34; Rev. 21:12) and twelve foundations of the holy city (Rev. 21:14) are all tied to the twelve tribes and the twelve apostles. Therefore, the Church is understood as a city whose walls stood on twelve foundation stones which bore the names of the twelve apostles. The combined use of both the tribes of Israel and the apostles show that Israel and the Church are in one eternal state with God, but still distinct in their identities.<sup>610</sup> God used each of those names in an integral way to form the foundation of either the Israelite nation or the Church.

#### **4.5.1.3. The Silver Pot**

The silver pot is a small vessel made from silver especially for the purpose of the ceremony (see Figure 4:10). It is positioned in the middle of the foundation stone and represents the faithful being guarded from all the destructive powers of Satan. It contains a small golden<sup>611</sup> cross symbolising purity, incense symbolising the faithful and Myron, which symbolises the Holy Spirit.



**Figure 4.10:** A silver pot ready to be used in a foundation ceremony

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<sup>610</sup> Walvoord, (2001), *Revelation*, 334.

<sup>611</sup> Christians always considered Gold as a sacred metal. Gold has been used to signify purity and beauty. It has a symbolic meaning and denotes love, happiness and prosperity. Gold of Ophir is several times used as an expression for fine gold. (1 Chronicles 29:4; Job 28:16; Psalm 45:9; Isaiah 13:12). In Job 22:24 the word Ophir by itself is used for gold of Ophir, and for gold generally.

A golden pot was placed in the Ark of the Covenant (Exod. 16:33) (Heb. 9:4) filled with Manna<sup>612</sup> which had come from heaven. Manna offered food for the physically hungry body. The bread of Life (the Word) offers spiritual food for the hungry. The pot of Manna was placed in the Ark of the Covenant to commemorate the heavenly bread, which had sustained the Israelites in the wilderness.

The silver pot symbolises the pot which contained Manna and was kept in the Ark of the Covenant. Aaron was commanded to collect a unit of Manna in a pot and place it inside the Ark (Exod. 16:33). By providing Manna, God revealed that He was able to meet and sustain the physical and spiritual needs of the faithful and in the same way the body and blood of Christ is provided as eternal food and drink to the Church. So the silver vessel used in the church consecration signifies that Christ is the bread of life who came down from Heaven.

The Tabernacle prefigured the Church. Paul stated that the Church is “a Holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling - place for God” (Eph. 2:21-22). “The temple was holy and set apart for God’s service; likewise, the Church is holy and consecrated to His service.”<sup>613</sup> The Church holds all her faithful and entire creation together by the power of the Holy Spirit and leads them to Christ. The Church always cares for the entire creation and prays for them. In the Eucharistic Service we pray that “Here at this fiery place - standing in front of the fiery chariot - I beg for pardon of offences for the whole flock and absolution for your entire creation”.<sup>614</sup>

#### **4.5.1.4. Incense**

Incense is used in the laying of the foundation stone. Incense has a very important place in the Holy Sacraments and other liturgical services of the Syrian Orthodox tradition perhaps more than in other Churches. During the Eucharistic service incense is offered more or less all the time.

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<sup>612</sup> *Manna* was the food provided by God for the children of Israel during their forty years of wandering in the wilderness. It is also known by other names in the Bible: “bread from heaven” (Exodus 16:4); “angel’s food” (Psalm 78:25); and “light bread” (Numbers 21:5).

<sup>613</sup> Levy, (2003), *The Tabernacle: Shadow of the Messiah*, 20.

<sup>614</sup> *The Service Book of Holy Eucharist (Anaphora)*, (2010), 47.

In the Old Testament<sup>615</sup> we read that God told Moses that he should offer incense every morning and evening. It was a common practice in the Israelite and later Jewish religion. Later this tradition came to Christianity and Christians offered incense during their worship (Phil. 4:18; Rev. 5:8; 8: 3-5). After the 4<sup>th</sup> century, the honorific use of incense to venerate the relics of saints, altars, holy places and persons was initially the most common reason for its usage.<sup>616</sup> We also read in the Old Testament that incense was offered to get rid of the plague, to remove the foul smell of sin, to please God with complete dedication and to keep the commandments (Num.16: 46-50; 1 Kings 9: 25; 2 Chron. 2:4; Mal. 1:11).

The incense is a sign of the true adoration and worship of God by the Church. This idea later comes into the liturgical prayer of the Church.<sup>617</sup> This prayer is known as the prayer of the incense or in Syriac *Etro*.<sup>618</sup> The *etro* prayer of the day of Pentecost asks: “May we also be worthy that this sweet incense, which we have offered before you, be acceptable. May we be washed and whitened from our evil deeds”.<sup>619</sup> Incense is a symbol of prayer which goes up to God as the smoke goes upward. “Burning incense is an important means of communication between the divine and the human: its odor and its spiralling smoke, a stairway to the celestial abode of God. Incense on an altar or in a burner protected suppliants from divine wrath, and carried their prayers Heavenward.”<sup>620</sup> Incense placed in the silver pot symbolises the believers who embraced Christ as their Messiah.

#### 4.5.2. The Ceremony of Laying of the Foundation Stone

The foundation stone laying ceremony of a new church can be conducted in the morning or in the evening. If the ceremony is conducted in the evening, it should start before the Nicene

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<sup>615</sup> “Aaron shall offer fragrant incense on it; every morning when he dresses the lamps he shall offer it, and when Aaron sets up the lamps in the evening he shall offer it, a regular incense-offering before the Lord throughout your generations” (Exodus 30: 7-8). Also see Exodus 3: 1-10; 30:34-38, Leviticus 10:1; 16:12-13; Numbers 16: 5, 41-50, 1 Samuel 2:28.

<sup>616</sup>See Fragomeni, (1990), “Incense Uses of”, 595-596; McGarraghy, (1967), “Incense”, 417-18; Atchley, (1909), *History of the use of Incense in Divine Worship*, 81-83.

<sup>617</sup> The incense used in the liturgy is also representing the smoke on the mountain (Exodus 19:18).

<sup>618</sup> *Etro* literally means smoke. In liturgical service books ‘*etro*’ denotes a prayer over incense. In a 15<sup>th</sup> century manuscript ‘*etro*’ is also called *firno*. See Wright, (1870), *Catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts in the British Museum*, (Brit. Lib. Add.14736), 301.

<sup>619</sup> Samuel, (1984), *M’adh’dhono*, 339.

<sup>620</sup> Finn, (1999), “Incense”, in *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, 568.

Creed in the evening prayer and if in the morning, before the third hour of prayer.<sup>621</sup> On the day of the consecration of a church, the priest and the faithful of the parish receive the bishop at the gate of the church.<sup>622</sup> The bishop, who is received with a lighted candle, opens the church and lights a candle inside the church. The idea here is that the church belongs to the bishop who represents Christ when he said, “I am the light of the world”<sup>623</sup> and so brings light to His Church.

The bishop, after the evening prayer and before the Nicene Creed, enters the sanctuary, puts on the ceremonial dress and starts the opening prayer. After the initial prayer, everyone then recites Psalm 51. The meaning of the hymn reflects the joy which the world, especially the bride of Christ, the Church, receives from this consecration ceremony. After the hymn we have the *promion*<sup>624</sup> and *sedro*<sup>625</sup> followed by hymns and a special prayer with incense. Then there is an invocation hymn inviting the Holy Trinity to descend to the church and make it holy by their presence.

After the readings from the Old and New Testaments, the chief celebrant (the bishop) reads the Gospel.<sup>626</sup> Then he recites a prayer in silence followed by a prayer in an audible voice. He blesses the big and small stones together in the name of the Holy Trinity and marks the sign of a cross with Myron on the twelve small stones. The small stones marked with Myron are then placed near to the big stone (see Figure 4.9 above). The silver pot is placed in the stone and covered with another piece of stone. At this point, all the stones are placed in a wooden box and the celebrant raises the box toward each of the four corners of the sanctuary and blesses the sanctuary using the sign of the Cross. Then the wooden box is placed in the name of the patron saint of the church, in a special space beneath the altar. After this the final prayer is said, followed by the Nicene Creed and the intercession to Virgin Mary and the saints.

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<sup>621</sup> Severios, (1983), *Susrusha Samvidhanasahai*, (Mal), 218.

<sup>622</sup> It is practice among the Syrian Orthodox Church, when the Bishop visits the parish faithful, the vicar and the faithful receive him in the traditional way with lighted candles.

<sup>623</sup> John 8:12, 9:5

<sup>624</sup> *Promion* means the propitiatory prayer.

<sup>625</sup> The Syriac word ‘*sedro*’ means order or series and it contains the series of the prayer in English.

<sup>626</sup> Matthew 16: 13-19.

#### 4.5.3. First Section of the Rite of Consecration of a Church

The first part of the consecration can be done during the morning of the first day, after the laying of the foundation stone. The Vatican Borg. manuscript provides details of what has to be done before the consecration of a church. It reads, “They [clergy] must keep watch in prayer at night in the church to be consecrated. And, after Morning Prayer, the bishop dresses according to his order, and the priests and deacons dress according to their order, as much as possible, and they stand at the sanctuary around the table. The bishop begins the opening prayer”.<sup>627</sup> Then the bishop starts with an opening prayer, saying:

Lord God, make us worthy to renew and establish your holy Church by spiritual praises; and to seal with the sign of your holy Cross, and to anoint it with the sweet fragrance of your divine Myron, and to sanctify it with the sanctification of your gift; and to crown it with the gifts of the Holy Spirit; and in it, we may always glorify you, and your Father, and your Holy Spirit, now...<sup>628</sup>

This same prayer is found in the opening prayer of the consecration of *tablito* in the Paris Manuscript<sup>629</sup> indicating that these two services, i.e., consecration of a church and a *tablito*, have almost the same pattern.

The sealing with the sign of the cross comes to mean the equivalent of completion or perfection, in the sense of an act which completes and sums up a process.<sup>630</sup> The church is praying to God to anoint and seal the house of the Lord with Myron. Ephrem says “The hidden seal of the Spirit is imprinted by oil on the bodies of those who are anointed in baptism: thus they are marked in the baptismal mystery...”.<sup>631</sup> In the same way the Holy Spirit seals the church building by the sign of cross with Myron.

After the initial prayer, the antiphon *drahem 'layin* is recited, which is not in the Vatican and Paris manuscript although it is cited in the service book<sup>632</sup> of the consecration of a church.

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<sup>627</sup> BAV Borg. Siriaco 57, fol. 27A.

<sup>628</sup> BAV Borg. Siriaco 57, fol. 27A.

<sup>629</sup> BNF Syriac 110, fol. 249b-250a.

<sup>630</sup> Lampe, (1951), *The Seal of the Spirit*, 8

<sup>631</sup> Brock, (trs.), (1984) “Hymns on Virginity” 7.

<sup>632</sup> The current Service Book of Consecration of the Church according to the Syrian Orthodox Church.

After the antiphon a short prayer is read by one of the clergy assembled for the consecration as follows:

Lord, the sea, which is abundant with presents and rich with good, indescribable gifts, decorate and adorn your entire holy Church with gifts of the Holy Spirit, with wealthy gifts from you, so that we shall, without stain of sin, richly uplift to you unceasing praises, now...<sup>633</sup>

In the Paris Manuscript we see this same prayer in the consecration of a *tablito*.<sup>634</sup> In the depiction of Christ as the sea we see the firm conviction that Christ is the source, the meaning and the final goal of all symbols in both nature and Scripture. Ephrem writes: “therefore, the sea is Christ who is able to receive the sources and springs and rivers and streams that flow forth from within scripture”.<sup>635</sup> (This is discussed further in Chapter Five, section 5.5.).

There are many short prayers after this, which mostly acknowledge salvation history and prayers for the peace of the world and a prayer against heresies are said. These prayers are very important at the time of consecration because the building is going to be dedicated to God for worship. The Church needs peace, security and protection from God; it upholds the faith and teaching of the Church for its members and avoids all kinds of divisions caused by the heresies.

After the prayers, the *promion* and *sedro* are read by one of the clergy. Then the deacon reads from the Book of Exodus 25: 1- 9 and 40: 1-10, followed by 2 Chronicles 7: 1-6 and 12-14. Before reading 1 John 2: 20-28, the deacon reads Isaiah 54:1-14 7:44-53, followed by Hebrews 9:2-14. The chief celebrant reads the Gospel of Mathew 16: 13-19. In Mathew 16: 13-19, Jesus asks His disciples the opinion of the people about Him. He also asks about their own opinion about Him, in reply to which Simon Peter affirms their faith that Christ is the only begotten Son of God the Father. And in reply Jesus proclaims to Peter that he is the rock upon which he will build the Church. (A detailed discussion regarding the Rock is found in

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<sup>633</sup> BAV Borg. Siriaco 57, fol. 27B.

<sup>634</sup> BNF Syriac 110, fols. 250B-251A.

<sup>635</sup> McVey, (trs.), (1989), *Ephrem the Syrian*, Hymns on Virginitv 9:12, 303.



the next chapter in section 5.2). The same reading is read on New Year's Day<sup>636</sup> known as '*Qudosh 'idto*'.<sup>637</sup> After the Gospel, the bishop reads the *promion*.

The *promion* prayer is referring to the divine-human relationship, exemplified in the relationship of Christ and the Church. This prayer may have a relation with 1 Cor. 3:10, Paul's description of a 'wise architect' may mean that others will build upon the foundation and warns, let each person take care how God build upon the foundation. The metaphor of the Church as God's building is allegorised along the lines of foundation.

After the *promion*, one of the clergy reads a beautiful *sedro*. This *sedro* is the proclamations of the prophets regarding the New Testament Church. In the New Testament, apostles added their testimonies to those of the Old Testament prophets in the revelation they communicated concerning Christ and the Church. This *sedro* is full of metaphor, pointing to the future Church saying "this [is] which the prophets were pictured and the seers were demonstrated. Moses, head of the prophet and of the Hebrews, drew it as a symbolical tent".<sup>638</sup>

After the *promion* the deacons and the priests sing antiphon and after the song there is a prayer of incense<sup>639</sup> followed by the Nicene Creed. During this time the chief celebrant completes a prayer in silence "...Fill us with your strength, and with the grace of your only-begotten Son, with the efficacy of your Holy Spirit in everything. Enable us to be servants of your New Testament...".<sup>640</sup> Through this prayer the celebrant is asking the Lord to make him worthy to do His will in the New Testament Church which was established by Jesus Christ. Following the silent prayer the chief celebrant raises his voice and reads a short prayer.

After this while the archdeacon follows with a general supplication, the chief celebrant reads a prayer in silence and beseeches God "...and now see fit to overshadow this place, and

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<sup>636</sup> The New Year's Day is the beginning of the liturgical calendar year of the Syrian Orthodox church. The prayers for Sundays and feasts days throughout the year are written in a book, known as *Fenqitho*. The Syriac word *Fenqitho* (فنيثو) means a volume or book. The prayer cycle begins with *qudosh 'idto* Sunday.

<sup>637</sup> For a detailed description of *qudosh 'idto* see Chapter 1.

<sup>638</sup> BAV Borg. Siriaco 57, fol. 28A.

<sup>639</sup> The use of incense for liturgical prayer ritual is a Syriac tradition. Ephrem the Syrian refers to Bishop Abraham of Nisibis using incense, although he does not tell us whether the context was liturgical or in private prayer. See Ephrem, Hymns on Nisibis 17.4.4-6. Incense was also used for the transference of relics from one city to another; memorial prayers at the tombs or shrines; public ceremonies involving ecclesiastical leaders such as the visitation of a bishop or consecration of a church. See Harvey, (2006), *Scenting Salvation*, 75.

<sup>640</sup> BAV Borg. Siriaco 57, fol. 31A.

sanctify it for the worship of your all-honoured name.....”<sup>641</sup> Then he raises his voice and reads a prayer and asking the grace and mercies of God, who loves the humanity.

Again he reads a prayer silently and during this time the clergy say the *kyrie eleison*. In the silent prayer he prays “...you, who threw the spirit of wisdom on Bezalel so that he would build a dwelling for your holy name...”<sup>642</sup> This section is the fulfilment portion of the Lord’s words to Moses in Exodus 31:1-6 about the divine appointment of Bezalel and Aholiab and others as the tabernacle craftsmen. Here we can see an emphasis on God’s sovereign choice and God’s honouring of those who will preside over the tabernacle’s construction. Through this prayer the celebrant is asking God to “sanctify, establish, confirm, warn and protect, by your high and powerful hand this holy and priestly house, which is for you and the utterance of praise to you.”<sup>643</sup> Then the chief celebrant reads a prayer in a loud voice.

#### **4.5.4. The Second Section of the Consecration of the Church with Myron**

The second section of the church consecration mainly focuses on the anointing. The bishop draws a cross: the first line is with his right thumb from the north side of the altar near the eastern edge and the second line from the upper edge on the left to the south (See Figure 4:12 below) and says, “It [altar] is signed, anointed, sanctified, immersed, and sealed, this table of eternity, on which divine offerings and sacramental sacrifices may be offered in the name of the Father”<sup>644</sup>.

The second sign of the cross is drawn on the middle of the altar from east to west and the second line is drawn at the middle of the altar from north to south (See Figure 4:14 below). He repeats the same prayer for the second cross and after he says, “in the name of the Son”<sup>645</sup> and for the third time “in the name of the Holy Spirit for eternal life”<sup>646</sup> and he drawn the first line on the right side of the altar from east to west and second line is drawn from north to south (See Figure 4:15 below).

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<sup>641</sup> BAV Borg. Siriaco 57, fol. 32A.

<sup>642</sup> BAV Borg. Siriaco 57, fol. 32A.

<sup>643</sup> BAV Borg. Siriaco 57, fol. 32A.

<sup>644</sup> BAV Borg. Siriaco 57, fol. 33A.

<sup>645</sup> BAV Borg. Siriaco 57, fol. 33A.

<sup>646</sup> BAV Borg. Siriaco 57, fol. 33A.

The reason for drawing with the sign of the cross on the altar is because God the Father initiated the establishment of the Church by sending His only begotten Son to the world to redeem the world, and by sending the Holy Spirit to sustain the world. This is why the church building is anointed with three crosses in the name of the Holy Trinity.

Before starting the consecration ceremony with Myron, the bishop takes the Myron container from the priest who is holding it<sup>647</sup> and raises it three times and says, *hallelujah*.<sup>648</sup> At this time, the church bells and all the other instruments are sounded, giving heavenly serenity to the occasion and emphasising its importance. Then the bishop and clergy start the procession, and a senior priest holds a tray holding the container of Myron. The cross goes first, carried by a priest then the deacons with candles and *marwahto*<sup>649</sup>, (See Figure 4:11) followed by the priests and the bishop. During this time they chant the hymn of Myron.<sup>650</sup>



**Figure 4.11:** The *Marwahto*. St. Thomas Knanaya church, New Jersey

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<sup>647</sup> The Myron bottle or container should be covered and a priest should hold it. The reason for it being covered is because the divine virtue of Christ were covered and hidden from the public.

<sup>648</sup> Three *hallelujah* signify that the things of the Old Testament are united to those of the New Testament.

<sup>649</sup> The Syriac word *marwahto* (ܡܪܘܚܬܐ) means “fan”. See Smith, (1903), *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary*, 300.

*Marwahto* is a particular instrument disc shaped, eight inches in diameter and fitted with chimes surrounding it and has a face of an angel etched on it. This instrument is also used at times of important occasions during the Holy Eucharist and other services. The deacons normally carry it on both sides of the celebrant (North and South side.) It denotes the presence of angels.

<sup>650</sup> The hymn is not in the Manuscripts but mentioned only as “while they chant hymn of Myron.”

#### 4.5.4.1. Consecration of the Sanctuary with Myron

The bishop approaches the middle part of the eastern wall<sup>651</sup> behind the altar and, holding the container of Myron in his left hand, wets his right thumb with Myron and says, “Christ, our God, by the prayers of your holy apostles and your Mother of God, Mary, and Mor . . . , the saint, in whose name this house is built, bless and sanctify this altar, and us, because you are blessed, with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, now...”.<sup>652</sup> Then he begins to draw the sign of three crosses with Myron (one on the middle, then left and right) on the wall in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. When he draws each cross he repeats the same prayer mentioned above. After the completion of the drawing of the cross on the eastern wall the clergy go towards the western wall of the sanctuary, and commence signing the cross and saying the same prayer. Then they move to the northern and southern walls of the sanctuary and draw the cross with Myron. The northern side symbolises the showbread placed in the Tabernacle and the southern wall where the lamp is placed typifies the candlestick or Menorah.

#### 4.5.4.2. Consecration of the Altar with Myron

The Syriac word for altar is *Madbeho* which indicate sanctuary or the holy place where the altar stands. Therefore *Madbeho* is the place of the Holy of the Holies<sup>653</sup> where the Holy sacrifice of the Lord is offered. The *Madbeho* is usually separated from the *qestrumo* by a curtain. When the curtain is moved it represents the opening of heaven. In a sanctuary there is one altar for celebrating the Holy Eucharist. At least one altar is necessary for each church and the number of altars varies with the size of the church.

Once the four walls of the sanctuary have been consecrated and anointed with Myron, the celebrants proceed toward the new altar. There are some rules regarding the consecration of the altar.<sup>654</sup> Anointing the altar with Myron makes the altar a symbol of Christ, who is called

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<sup>651</sup> Cf. the anointing the eastern wall of the holy of holies because the ark of the Tabernacle was placed there, which symbolised the mystery of the Godhead.

<sup>652</sup> BAV Borg. Siriaco 57, fol. 32B.

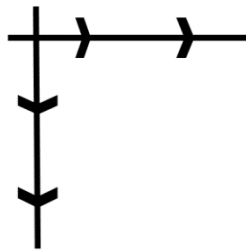
<sup>653</sup> The term the Holy of Holies (Exodus 26:33) refers to the inner sanctuary of the tabernacle (Exodus 25:8-9) and later where the Ark of the Covenant (Exodus 19:20, 24:18; 2 Samuel 6:12-16, 20: 22, 1 Chronicles 15) was kept.

<sup>654</sup> The Synodicon in the West Syrian tradition clearly mentions that a consecrated altar should not be consecrated again without a valid reason. “Concerning altars in the churches and monasteries that were

‘the anointed one’. God the Father anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and constituted Him the high priest so that on the altar of His body he might offer the sacrifice of His life for the salvation of all.<sup>655</sup>

#### 4.5.4.2.1. The First Sign of the Cross with Myron

The bishop draws the first line with his right thumb from the north side of the altar near the eastern edge with Myron and says “this is why God, your God, anointed you with the oil of gladness above that of your friends, *hallelujah*”.<sup>656</sup> Again he draws the second line from the upper edge on the left to the south and these two lines as in Figure 4:12. The lines the bishop draws on the altar are a symbol of the cross.



**Figure 4.12:** The First sign of the Cross made on the altar with and without Myron

The hymn which is sung at this time is Psalm 23. A special mention needs to be made of verses 5 and 6, “You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the House of the Lord forever.” The significant verse implying the magnificence and Holiness of the Church as being the House of the Lord is apt for the occasion. The sign which was drawn on the altar is also drawn on the *tablito* which is

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devastated by the barbarians, but about which one does not know whether they have been anointed or not. If they are of wood, material that is found in every country, they shall be placed in the sacristy with honour in order to deposit (the sacred) garments there or to place chalices, cups and other vessels of the cult there – but one shall never offer on them. If they are of marble which cannot be found in all countries, they should be anointed. The bishop who anoints says: We anoint this altar, if it has not been anointed, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit”. See Vööbus, (trs.), (1975), *The Synodicon in the West Syrian Tradition*, 159.

<sup>655</sup> Lysil, (1999), *The Liturgical Documents: A Parish Resource*, 327.

<sup>656</sup> Psalm 45:7. *The Service Book of the Consecration of the Church*, 35.

also consecrated at this time. If there is more than one *tablito*, all of them are consecrated in the same way.

After this, the chief celebrant swings the censer (see Figure 4.13) toward the altar, the *tablito* and the faithful. After putting incense into the censer,<sup>657</sup> the chief celebrant, waves the censer at the holy things on the altar and on all the corners of the altar and the Gospel table and at the priest and at the faithful in the church. Incense burning and swinging toward the altar signifies that Christ's sacrifice, perpetuated there in mystery, ascends to God with a sweet smell and also signifies that the people's prayers rise up pleasingly and are acceptable, reaching the throne of God (Rev. 8: 3-4)<sup>658</sup> Swinging the censer toward the *hayklo* and towards the faithful indicates that the dedication makes it a house of prayer, but the people of God need to be incensed first because they are the living temples in which each faithful member is a spiritual altar.<sup>659</sup>



**Figure 4.13:** The Censer. Knanaya centre, Pomona, New York

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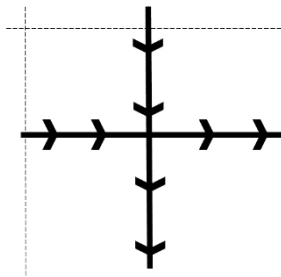
<sup>657</sup> The censer had a cup as its base, which is suspended by three chains. The lid can be lifted with another chain that goes down between the other three chains. The three chains that are connected to the lid pass through the base of the hook and ends in a ring large enough to slip a finger in in order to adjust the position of the lid. The four chains have three bells each, symbolizing the twelve apostles whose joyful sounds represent the transmission of the Good News. The four chains together have a total of seventy-two links to represent the seventy-two messengers. The first chain stands for God the Father, the second and the third together for the Son- the union of His Divine and Human nature- the fourth stands for the Holy Spirit. There are two interpretations of the censer. In the first, the censer represents the Virgin Mary the Mother of Jesus, and the fire in it represents God who is fire and came and stayed in the Virgin's womb. The conjoining of the chains on the circular disk on the top with the hood represents the unity of the Trinity. In the second, the cup of the censer represents the heavens and the lower one the earth. The carbon or charcoal in it are the sinners. Fire signifies the Holy Spirit, by whose contract the black coal shines and glows.

<sup>658</sup> Lysil, (1999), *The Liturgical Documents: A Parish Resource*, 328.

<sup>659</sup> Lysil, (1999), *The Liturgical Documents: A Parish Resource*, 328

#### 4.5.4.2.2. The Second Sign of the Cross with Myron

The second sign of the cross, also with Myron, is drawn on the middle of the altar as shown in the diagram (see Figure 4:14). The first line is drawn with the right thumb of the bishop from east to west (or top to bottom) at the middle of the altar. He says “*Hallelujah*, this is why God your God, anointed you with oil of gladness above your friends”.<sup>660</sup> The second line is drawn at the middle of the altar from north to south or left to right. This makes a cross in the centre of the altar. It signifies that Christ is the centre point of the universe and all blessings flow from Him. The altar is the place where His body and blood are broken and shared for all and all the faithful are given the privilege of partaking in it.



**Figure 4.14:** Second sign of the Cross made on the altar with and without Myron

Again the same is repeated on the *tablito*. At this time the clergy and the faithful recite Psalm 26 and the chief celebrant utters a silent prayer asking God to fill the church building with all blessings and also to protect it from the eternal foe as well as from wicked people. He ends the invocation by giving praise to the Holy Trinity.

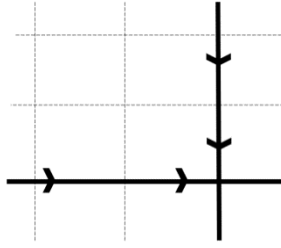
#### 4.5.4.2.3. The Third Sign of the Cross with Myron

The third sign is made after the prayer in the following manner on the south side of the altar. The first line is drawn on the right side of the altar from east to west (or top to bottom) and the second line is drawn from north to south or left to right of the altar near the western edge (see Figure 4:15) and bishop says “glory to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, *hallelujah*”.<sup>661</sup>

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<sup>660</sup> *The Service book of the Consecration of the Church*, 36.

<sup>661</sup> *The Service book of the Consecration of the Church*, 36.



**Figure 4.15:** Third sign of the Cross made on the altar with and without Myron

And when the bishop decorates the altar with the clothing the archdeacon proclaims the litany: “Christ our God, who resides on high and looks at the lowly places and sees into the depth, whose throne is heaven and earth is the footstool under His feet, and all things are subject to Him, and consider all those who approach you with faith in your temple. You who establish your sanctuaries on truth, and souls on faith build a true and unshakable rock.”<sup>662</sup>

During the service of consecration the bishop draws the sign of the cross three times on the altar to consecrate it. He draws the first sign of the cross on the north side of the altar, the second on the middle, and the third on the south side. As shown in figures 4:12, 4.14 and 4:15 it does not look like a complete cross except in figure 4:14. The rubric says from East to West and from North to South giving the direction for the drawing of the cross. The crosses can also be drawn like a normal cross as the one in the middle. The rubric only clearly specifies the direction (east to west + north to south) and the place (north side, middle, and south side of the altar) where the crosses should be drawn.<sup>663</sup> Even if the crosses depicted in Figures 4.12 and 4.15 do not look like a cross, it is understood to be a drawing of a complete cross.

This process of drawing the first three signs of the cross without Myron and the subsequent drawings of the cross with Myron is completed and becomes meaningful when the altar is anointed in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit<sup>664</sup> and the three crosses indicate the three persons in the Trinity. So to say this is the most important moment in the consecration of the church is no exaggeration.

<sup>662</sup> BAV Borg. Siriaco 57, fol. 33A.

<sup>663</sup> *Fenqitho* of Consecration, According to the Rite of the Syriac Orthodox Church of Antioch, 199-201.

<sup>664</sup> Severios, (1983), *Susrusha Samvidhanasahai*, (Mal), 225.



#### 4.5.5. Consecration of the *Tablito*

The word *tablito* is derived ultimately from the Latin word *tabula* for “tablet”. The *tablito* is otherwise called the moving altar upon which the holy mysteries are placed. No priest is allowed to offer the service without a *tablito*. A *tablito* is a piece of wood consecrated at the same time as the consecration of an altar and the procedure of consecration of a *tablito* and an altar is the same. The wooden *tablito* signifies the cross of Christ on which His body is broken; His blood is shared and then kept upon it. It also signifies Christ who is called ‘wood’ and ‘tree of life’.<sup>665</sup>

The Synodicon in the West Syrian tradition points out the general rules regarding the *tablito* which are, “If a tablet that is consecrated is placed on an (altar) table which is not consecrated and (the sacrifice) is offered on it, the table does not thereby become consecrated. It is proper, however, that the table also shall be consecrated. A tablet which is painted shall not be consecrated.”<sup>666</sup> Each altar needs one *tablito* for celebrating the Holy Eucharist on for any one day. If more *tablito* are consecrated, they are kept in the bishopric and given to priests and churches when they are needed for celebrating the Holy Eucharist.

In the Syrian Orthodox tradition, there is a separate order for the consecration of a *tablito*<sup>667</sup> if it is consecrated separately. The manuscript says, “The consecration of *tablito* takes place on the Thursday of the mysteries,<sup>668</sup> and every Thursday between the Resurrection and the feast of Ascension, of special chosen wood, - this is to say - finest boards and stones of the finest marble etc. Thus the tablet is made and a commemoration is written on it, as it is written on the margin<sup>669</sup> of the page. The bishop puts the *tablito* on the altar, not on the *tablito* which already exists, but at the other side of it. And, if there is more than one tablet to be consecrated, or three, or five, or as many as he wishes, he arranges and places them one on the other”.<sup>670</sup> In the present day, because of the long preparation and commitment of time this

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<sup>665</sup> Varghese, (trs.), (1990), *Dionysius Bar Salibi: Commentary on the Eucharist*, 38.

<sup>666</sup> Vööbus, (trs.), (1975), *The Synodicon in the West Syrian Tradition*, 160.

<sup>667</sup> See BNF Syriac 110, folios 249A-274A.

<sup>668</sup> Holy Thursday of the holy week.

<sup>669</sup> The Holy Trinity sanctified this *tablito* by the hands of .....Metropolitan...on....at.....

<sup>670</sup> BNF Syriac 110, fol. 249A.

ceremony is usually conducted along with the consecration of a church building. The manuscripts explain the consecration of the *tablito* as follows:

Then the bishop takes blessed Myron on this thumb, and signs and anoints the first sign of the first cross from the east to the west, on the northern side and from the north to the south, he draws while saying the hallelujah”. And after these, the bishop takes the Myron on his thumb and begins the sentence: This is why God, your God, anointed you hallelujah. And he draws the second cross in the middle of the tablet from the top to the bottom, i.e. from the east to the west and from north to south, and thus the second cross with the Myron is completed. And again, he takes Myron on his thumb and says: Glory to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, hallelujah. And he makes the third cross from up to down, this is, from east to west, on the southern side and from north to south. And, thus three Crosses are completed with Myron and if there are many *tablito*, he anoints them the same way, every one.<sup>671</sup>

The reason for anointing with Myron is that when Jacob built the altar with stones, he poured oil upon it and prayed and he requested God to make it His dwelling place (Gen. 35:7f).

#### **4.5.6. Decorating the Altar with Garments**

The altar is decorated with garments specifically meant for it. All new equipment meant for use on the altar is blessed and consecrated by the bishop. Decorating the altar with cloths he says, “for the glory, honour, splendor and praise of the Holy Trinity equal in one *ousia* and for the peace and growth of the holy Church of God”.<sup>672</sup> The altar wrapped with colourful cloth symbolizes the swaddling clothes with which Christ was wrapped after his birth,<sup>673</sup> and the white cloth symbolises the winding sheet in which his body was wrapped after his crucifixion.<sup>674</sup> As the bishop and the clergy dress the altar with all the furnishings, the archdeacon recites the litany. Then the clergy leave the sanctuary and proceed towards the *hayklo* of the church building.

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<sup>671</sup> BNF Syriac 110, fols. 269B, 270A, 270B.

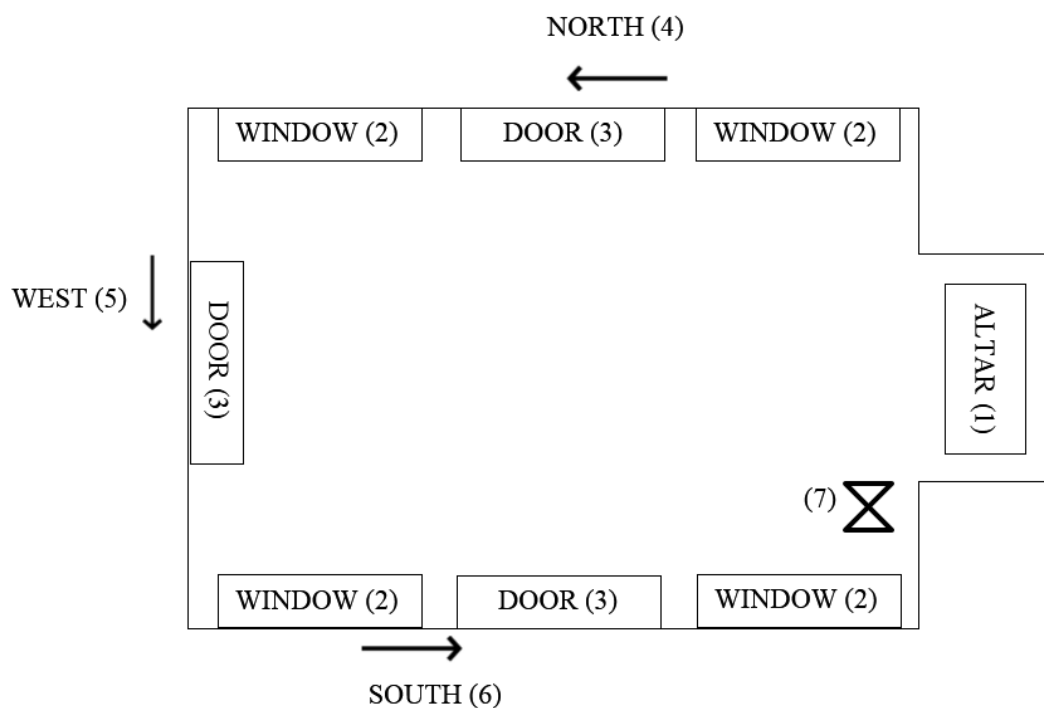
<sup>672</sup> BAV Borg. Siriaco 57, fol. 33A.

<sup>673</sup> Luke 2:7.

<sup>674</sup> John 19:40.

#### 4.5.7. The Consecration of the Church Building

After decorating the altar (1) (See Figure 4:16) with cloths, the chief celebrant and the clergy move towards to the *hayklo* with the gospel book, candles, censor, *marwaḥto*, and the container of Myron to anoint the church building. The bishop seals above the windows (2) and doors (3) with three signs of the cross with Myron. They proceed from the north side (4), to the west side (5), then to the south side (6), and then he seals the baptismal font (7) with Myron in the same way. The prayer he says during the anointing is “Christ our God, by the prayers of your holy apostles, your mother and saint [Mor<sup>675</sup>]. . . . . in whose name this house is built and established, bless and sanctify this church and us, because you are glorified with the Father and the Holy Spirit.”<sup>676</sup> If the church is very large, the prelate consecrates as many places as he deems fit. He also seals above all the doors and windows and stone columns.



**Figure 4.16:** Description of where to sign Myron on the *hayklo*

<sup>675</sup> The Syriac word Mor literally means ‘my Lord.’ It is also used as a reverential title for saints and ecclesiastical dignitaries. See Smith, (1903), *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary*, 298.

<sup>676</sup> BAV Borg. Siriaco 57, fol. 33B.

When the anointing is finished the bishop and the clergy go to the sanctuary and the bishop takes a wooden cross and starts blessing with the cross, which is called ‘*haw dmalakhe*’ (ܚܐܘܕܡܠܐܟܗ).<sup>677</sup> The prelate holds the cross and chants *haw dmalakhe* while making three signs of the cross on each of the four sides of the sanctuary. First he faces to the east then west and then north and south. Then he places the wooden cross on the top of the new altar.

#### **4.5.8. The Celebration of the Holy Eucharist**

The celebration of the Holy Eucharist is also most important and necessary for the consecration of a church. After completing the consecration ceremony, the bishop begins preparation for the Holy Eucharist on the new altar. If there is more than one altar, the priests who take part with him in the rite of consecration will conduct the Holy Eucharist on those altars. The main Anaphora of St. James will be used on this occasion because it is the first and foremost anaphora of the Syrian Orthodox church.<sup>678</sup>

#### **4.5.9. Conclusion**

The church is the House of God. The church building is divided into different sections with each having a unique symbolic meaning. A church building is compared to the image of Christ on the cross. The sanctuary is holy and is considered as the Holy of Holies. God reveals His presence in the Sanctuary. The altar is the Throne of the Lord. The decorations, the cloth and cross used on the altar also all have symbolic meaning.

The consecration of a church is important in the Syriac tradition. The foundation stone is compared to the altar stone established by Jacob at Bethel. It corresponds to Christ who is the corner stone, alongside the twelve stones representing the twelve disciples. The ceremonies begin by reciting prayers and chanting hymns. After that, the church building is anointed with Myron and the church becomes an integral part of the life of a Christian because the Church is the bride and the groom is Christ.

In the same way that a believer receives a permanent seal or a sign during Baptism with Myron in the Syrian Orthodox tradition, the church receives a permanent seal or a sign during

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<sup>677</sup> *haw dmalakhe mshamsheen le* (ܚܐܘܕܡܠܐܟܗܡܫܡܫܝܢܠܗ) means the one whom the angels are serving.

<sup>678</sup> For more details see chapter one, section 1.4.3.

its consecration and this ceremony cannot be repeated. Thus the consecration ceremony of a church is also called the Myron anointing ceremony of a church. The most important part of the ceremony during the consecration is the purification and sanctification of the Altar. Through this the church building becomes holy and becomes eligible to be a dwelling place for God, just as a believer receives these qualities during the baptism ceremony. Just like a child is made a son or daughter of God through baptism, a church is made God's house through anointing with Myron.

The anointing with Myron in baptism and in church consecration are linked. According to the Nicene Creed, there is only one baptism. Baptism cannot be undone. In the same way consecration cannot be undone if it involves anointing with Myron. Through baptism children become Christian and eligible to be called the children of God. Through consecration, a church becomes pure and can be called the house of the Lord.

The Myron is applied to the body of a child during the baptism after bathing the child in the baptismal water. Thus the body of the child is cleansed first. Then the Myron is applied first on the forehead of the child, then it is applied from the head to the toe on the right side of the baptised child. Subsequently the Myron is applied similarly on the left side of the child. In the book of Ezekiel 9:4 we read, "put a mark on the foreheads of those who groan in torment over all the abominations and evil doings that are being performed in the city". During baptism, a cross on the forehead of the person with Myron symbolises protection against the forces of evil.

In the consecration of a church building Myron is applied to protect from evil as well as for gladness and purification. The Myron is applied first on the east wall of the sanctuary. The altar is sanctified only after the sanctification of the sanctuary in a process similar to that used in baptism, where the Myron is applied on the child only after the child is cleansed with baptismal water. When Myron is applied on the north side of the nave it is consecrated before the south side, just as in the process in baptism where the Myron is applied on the right side of the child before the application on the left side of the child.

The first and second sections of the consecration ceremony are full of symbolism from the Old and the New Testament. The sanctuary and the church building get sanctified with Myron and it is then possible to conduct the sacraments in that sanctuary and in that church building. The same relationship between the bridegroom and bride in the Song of Solomon

can be seen in Christ and the church. Most of the hymns chanted during the consecration ceremony of a church include a description of Christ as the groom and Church as the bride. These and other allegories form the subject of the next chapter.

## Chapter Five

### The Allegory of the Church in the Syrian Orthodox Tradition

#### 5.1. Introduction

Jesus Christ made a promise to Peter, “And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church” (Matt. 16:18).<sup>679</sup> Christ created the Church according to the will of His Father, who ordered Him to do the same. The Church started functioning when Jesus summoned the twelve apostles. Paul confirmed that there was no other foundation any man could lay than that which is already laid – Jesus Christ.<sup>680</sup> In his Epistle to the Ephesians he refers to this “And you are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the corner stone of the building.”<sup>681</sup> There is also evidence of the symbolic meaning of the Church in the consecration manuscripts.

In this chapter, I shall demonstrate the significance and importance of the allegory of the Church on the basis of the manuscripts which describe the consecration of a church as well in liturgical and other sources. I also refer to the significance of the Church in the writings of the Acts of Thomas, the so-called Hymn on the Church of Edessa, in Aphrahat, Ephrem and Jacob of Serugh.

#### 5.2. Christ is the Rock and the Corner Stone of the Church

The *sedro* prayer of the Consecration of the Church reads, “Glory and thanks to you, Jesus Christ, the rock, this is to say, the true and unshakable stone upon which the holy Church was established. It was not put on the weakness of sand, but on a strong main corner-stone.”<sup>682</sup> Here we can see that the Church is founded on Jesus Christ - The rock of truth. Rock is a common word used for both Christ and the apostles. Murray says:

The word is particularly striking in Syriac both because it is the precise word by which Christ calls Peter, and because in the Peshitta the word *kepha* plays a much

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<sup>679</sup> BAV Borg. Siriaco 57, fol. 30A.

<sup>680</sup> 1 Corinthians 3:11.

<sup>681</sup> Ephesians 2:20.

<sup>682</sup> BAV Borg. Siriaco 57, fol. 28A.

more dominant part than any one word for rock or stone in either the Hebrew, the LXX or the Greek New Testament.<sup>683</sup>

In the letter to the Ephesians (2:20) Paul describes the believers as a household built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Jesus Christ as the cornerstone. This passage uses a building analogy that is carried on in Ephesians 4:11-13 where Paul uses the phrase ‘building up.’ The phrase in Ephesians 4:12 is from the same Greek word, *oikodomē*<sup>684</sup> that he used in Ephesians 2:20. In Ephesians 2, apostles and prophets are the foundation, with Christ being the cornerstone. Here Paul means that Christ is the cornerstone holding it together and the apostles and prophets to whom Christ gave authority, constitute the foundation. The New Testament theologian Bruce wrote:

Apostles and prophets constitute the foundation ministries in the Church, not only in Ephesians but in 1 Corinthians: ‘God has appointed in the Church first apostles, second prophets . . .’ (1 Cor. 12:28). Apostles and prophets, then, might well be viewed as the first stones to be laid in the new building.<sup>685</sup>

The apostles and prophets are foundations of the Church because on them Christ, the cornerstone, built His Church. In other words, Christ is the cornerstone and His apostles and prophets continue His mission to all the corners of the world and strengthen the Church through Christ, the cornerstone. Lossky writes,

The Church is founded on a two-fold divine economy: The work of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit, the two persons of the Trinity sent into the world. The work of both persons forms the foundation of the Church.<sup>686</sup>

It is clear that it is universally believed that the Church was started by Christ and founded through Christ, who is the cornerstone. The Church is built outward and upward from this cornerstone, and each stone finds its proper place in reference to Him (Matt. 16:18). By

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<sup>683</sup> Murray, (2006), *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 205-207; George, (2011), *Beautiful are you O Holy Church*, 44.

<sup>684</sup> *Oikodomē* means the act of building, building, and edification. See <http://blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon>.

<sup>685</sup> Bruce, (1984), *The Epistles to the Colossians, To Philemon, And to the Ephesians*, 304.

<sup>686</sup> Lossky, (1973), *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 156; Brian, (1982), “The Spirit and the Church in Syriac Theology”, 91-97.



imitating Christ and sacrificing their lives, the apostles, prophets and martyrs nurtured the Church. In *Fenqitho*, the evening prayer for the dedication of the church, is as follows:

Christ our God, who called your Church through the prophet, and through the apostles made her reach out to the end of the earth, and through your Holy Spirit made her radiant with the love of your saints, strengthen us for the spiritual service which the world expects from us.<sup>687</sup>

Another hymn sung on the commemoration day of Peter and Paul reads:

Blessed are you, Rock of truth, foundation of the Holy Church, Simon, head of the apostles, fisher of men, who by the teaching of the cross cast your net and gathered humankind into it and baptized people and nations according to the message of the Gospel.<sup>688</sup>

Likewise in one of the Vatican Borg. manuscripts we read that Simon, the head of the apostles, was called the ‘foundation’ by the architect,<sup>689</sup> Jesus Christ, who also gave him power over the “heights and the depths”. Christ called Simon ‘the rock’, and first gave the keys of the Kingdom of heaven to him, at the time of his great confession of faith (Matt. 16:16-19). It is quite clear that the foundation of the Church is put on Peter by Christ. In the Greek New Testament we can see a play on words in that *petros* is Peter and *petra* is a rock.<sup>690</sup> When Peter confesses his faith Christ says that ‘he is Peter (*petros*)’ and He will build His Church “on this rock” (*petra*) (Matt.16: 15-18). But in the Syriac, *kepha* is used for both Peter and the rock. Murray comments on that:

Peter (Kepha) is a functional title given by Christ to Simon. As Christ the Chief shepherd made Simon the chief shepherd in His place, so Christ the Kepha, foretold by prophesy and type, made Simon the kepha in His place, and said that on that kepha He would build His Church, and the ‘bars of Sheol’ would be powerless against it.<sup>691</sup>

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<sup>687</sup> Acharya, (trs.), (1982), *Prayer with harp of the Spirit*, Vol. 2, 23.

<sup>688</sup> Acharya, (trs.), (1982), *Prayer with harp of the Spirit*, Vol. 4, 527.

<sup>689</sup> The word denotes Christ. See Vatican Borg. Syr. 57,p.4.

<sup>690</sup> Ray, (1999), *Upon This Rock*, 35.

<sup>691</sup> Murray, (2006), *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 206.

So too, the passage in Isaiah “Behold I lay in Zion a foundation stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone” (Isa. 28:16) is interpreted as referring to the rock, the cornerstone of the world, situated on Mount Zion. This laying of the foundation stone in Zion is seen as referring to the building of the future temple.<sup>692</sup> The meaning of the foundation and corner stone is the same everywhere they occur.

In the laying the foundation of a building, a large stone is generally placed at one of the angles or corners where two walls meet to hold them together. In the same way Peter exhorts the early Christians to come together as “living stones” to build a (spiritual) church based on the specifications and principles taught by the prophets in the Old Testament, and the apostles in the New Testament (1 Pet. 2:4-6). That is why we read in the Vatican Borg.manuscript “The prophets its foundations, the apostles its attendants, the martyrs its guests.”<sup>693</sup>

### **5.3. The Church as the Bride of Christ**

In Ephesians 5:23 Paul says that, “For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church: and he is the saviour of its body”. Here Paul tells us that the relationship between a husband and his wife is an analogous to Christ’s relationship to His Church. In early Syriac Christianity, the image of the Church as a bride was very important. The Church submits to Christ in all things because Christ always cherishes and provides for the needs of His bride, the Church. This same theme appears in Ezekiel in relation to Israel,<sup>694</sup> where Yahweh speaks of Israel as an unfaithful bride. There is a relation between Ezekiel 16 and Ephesian 5. In the Old Testament Yahweh prepares His bride, Israel, for her wedding but in the New Testament Jesus is preparing His Church to be His bride. As Jacob of Serugh says “The bride, the Church, marvelled at the royal bridegroom because in his baptism the height and the depth were reconciled”.<sup>695</sup>

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<sup>692</sup> Dekker, (2007), *Zion’s Rock-Solid Foundations*, 58.

<sup>693</sup> BAV Borg. Siriaco 57, fol. 28B.

<sup>694</sup> “I pledged myself to you and entered into a covenant with you, says the Lord God, and you became mine. Then I bathed you with water and washed off the blood from you, and anointed you with oil. I clothed you with embroidered cloth and with sandals of fine leather; I bound you in fine linen and covered you with rich fabric. I adorned you with ornaments: I put bracelets on your arms, a chain on your neck, a ring on your nose, ear-rings in your ears, and a beautiful crown upon your head. You were adorned with gold and silver, while your clothing was of fine linen, rich fabric, and embroidered cloth” (Ezekiel 16:8-13).

<sup>695</sup> Kollamparampil, (trs.), (1997), *Jacob of Serugh: Select Festal Homilies*, 161.

He describes how Christ loves His Church and provides for her and protects her by giving Himself up for the Church. He says that the bride was perfumed and then dressed in bridal garments reserved for the wedding occasion.<sup>696</sup> Regarding the bride he continues:

O Church, from the beginning, I betrothed you to this Bridegroom;  
in the hope of this One I have helped you from the time I came.  
The Church learned from John as well as from David and she  
became assured that He is the bridegroom to whom she is betrothed.<sup>697</sup>

Thus we see Christ presenting the Church as His bride. Cyprian said that the true bride “guards the sanctity of the one bed-chamber and seals us for God.”<sup>698</sup> In Psalms (45:13-14) we read, “The princess is decked in her chamber with gold-woven robes; in many-coloured robes she is led to the king.” We read in the *promion* during the marriage ceremony of the Syrian Orthodox Church:

Glory to the Heavenly bridegroom who betrothed to Himself the daughters of the Gentiles, as a Church, and by His victorious blood did purify and cleanse her, making her a glorious bride for Himself, and invited the prophets, the apostles, and the martyrs to her chamber<sup>699</sup>

In the New Testament, Christ, the bridegroom, has sacrificially and lovingly chosen the Church to be His bride (Eph. 5:25-27). During the betrothal period, the bride and groom are separated until the wedding.<sup>700</sup> The responsibility of the bride during this period is to be faithful to Christ (2 Cor. 11:2) and at the second coming of Christ, the Church will be united with the bridegroom at the wedding ceremony (Rev. 19:7-9; 21:1-2).<sup>701</sup> Jacob of Serugh explain this as:

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<sup>696</sup> Kollamparampil, (trs.), (1997), *Jacob of Serugh: Select Festal Homilies*, 170.

<sup>697</sup> Kollamparampil, (trs.), (1997), *Jacob of Serugh: Select Festal Homilies*, 170-171.

<sup>698</sup> Bromiley, (2000), *Historical Theology: An Introduction*, 56.

<sup>699</sup> *The Service Book of the Holy Sacraments*, 71.

<sup>700</sup> Longman III, (2013), *The Baker Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, 292.

<sup>701</sup> Longman III, (2013), *The Baker Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, 292.

You have seen that He went and you will also see Him when He comes;<sup>702</sup>  
and in His second coming His manly power will shine forth.<sup>703</sup>

In Revelation 19: 7-8, we read “let us be glad and rejoice, and give glory to Him: for the time of the marriage feast of the Lamb has come, and His bride has made herself ready. And it was given to her that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for fine linen is the righteousness of the saints.” Oecumenius says that when the Church becomes one spirit with Christ, as a husband becomes one body with his wife, then will the marriage be perfected.<sup>704</sup> He continues “therefore, the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride, the Church, is presented as ready to receive those ineffable gifts that come by union with Christ.”<sup>705</sup> Bede considers that by always persisting in the works of righteousness, the Church has shown herself worthy of the spiritual banquet and the eternal kingdom.<sup>706</sup>

#### **5.4. Christ as the Bridegroom of the Church**

In the Church consecration manuscripts, Christ is symbolised as the bridegroom.<sup>707</sup> The indication of Christ as the bridegroom goes back to the Old Testament. Israel is considered as the bride of God (Hos. 2: 19-20; Isa. 54:5, 62:5). The New Testament also pictured Christ as the bridegroom.<sup>708</sup> In the letter to the Ephesians (5:23-30), Paul describes the relationship of Christ to the Church, using the analogy of the bridegroom and the bride, the husband and the wife. John also used the analogy of the bridegroom and bride in his Gospel.<sup>709</sup> Jacob of Serugh expands richly in his writings on the symbolism of Christ as the bridegroom, and the Church as the bride:

She herself was casting her eyes for a moment upon many  
so that she might perceive among them the Only-begotten to whom she is betrothed.

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<sup>702</sup> Acts. 1:1.

<sup>703</sup> Kollamparampil, (trs.), (1997), *Jacob of Serugh: Select Festal Homilies*, 346.

<sup>704</sup> Oecumenius, *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, 175.

<sup>705</sup> Oecumenius, *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, 175.

<sup>706</sup> Bede, *Explanation of the Apocalypse*, 302.

<sup>707</sup> BAV Borg. Siriaco 57, fol. 28B, 30A, 30B, 31A.

<sup>708</sup> Matthew 9:15; 25; Mark 2:19; Luke 5:34; John. 3:29; Revelation 18:23.

<sup>709</sup> John 3:29 “He who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom’s voice.”

The Church gathered herself and was present in the desert with John  
fixing (her eyes) upon the wedding guests to see who is the bridegroom.  
The comely woman stood looking for the bridegroom, when He would come,  
in order to enter with Him into the womb of the waters to be sanctified.<sup>710</sup>

Jacob describes the baptism of Christ in the Jordan, (also known as the Epiphany in the Syrian Orthodox Church), as an important staging post in the betrothal of the bridegroom. It is because of the immeasurable love for His bride - the Church - that the only begotten Son of God embraced death on the cross and the piercing of his side.<sup>711</sup> It was John the Baptist who was chosen to adorn the bride with spiritual garments. By the washing in the waters of baptism, the bride became purified and assumed the robe of glory;<sup>712</sup> through the splendour of the robe she could frighten the evil enemy and put him to flight. Jacob of Serugh explains this as:

Christ, the bridegroom prepared the marriage feast for the church of the nations  
and the world became aware of the wedding feast He had furnished for her [the  
Church]

The Royal Son wished to betroth the afflicted one [the Church]  
and He sent her to go to the fountain to wash away her dust.<sup>713</sup>

In the Consecration manuscripts we read, “The Lord of the worlds is its [the Church’s] bridegroom.”<sup>714</sup> In another place it says, “heavenly bridegroom, you who from your sweet and spiritual fragrance – which befits your Godhead.”<sup>715</sup> According to Paul, God, the Father,

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<sup>710</sup> Kollamparampil, (trs.), (1997), *Jacob of Serugh: Select Festal Homilies*, 166.

<sup>711</sup> See Brock, (1993), “Wedding Feast of Blood on Golgotha, an unusual aspect of John 19:34 in Syriac tradition”, 121-134.

<sup>712</sup> The image of ‘putting on and putting off clothing’ is used by the early Syriac writers in order to depict various stages in the history of salvation, especially by Ephrem. See Brock, (1985), *The Luminous Eye*, 85-97.

<sup>713</sup> Kollamparampil, (trs.), (1997), *Jacob of Serugh: Select Festal Homilies*, 162.

<sup>714</sup> BAV Borg. Siriaco 57, fol. 28B.

<sup>715</sup> BAV Borg. Siriaco 57, fol. 31A.

had selected the bride for His Son before the foundation of the world.<sup>716</sup> Jacob expands on the idea of Paul as follows:

His Father portrayed the bride of light in the cloud of light,  
for she is the only one whom the symbols betrothed affectionately to the One [the  
Son]  
For the daughter of light the Father set the signet-ring of light  
and he betrothed her to His Son because the bridegroom as well is wholly light.<sup>717</sup>

The Church looks at Christ when He is baptised and sees Him as the bridegroom entering into a covenant with His children, so that the Church becomes His dwelling place, where the faithful could come and worship Him.

In the order of the sacrament of marriage in the Syrian Orthodox Church, it is very common that Christ is presented as the bridegroom and the Church as bride. “You have betrothed her with water and spirit and made her your bride.”<sup>718</sup> In another prayer the following is said: “O Lord, the bridegroom of truth and justice, to whom the souls of pure virgins are betrothed...”<sup>719</sup> In the order of the parable of the Ten Virgins, we sing “behold, the bridal chamber is prepared, awaiting those whose lamps are lit, so that when the bridegroom comes to enter, they will enter the bride feast with Him.”<sup>720</sup> Each believer in the bridegroom is His bride, which is the Church and the theme of the bridegroom and the bride suggests a perfect unity and relationship between Christ and the Church.

## 5.5. Christ as the Sea

As mentioned in Chapter four, section 4.5.3 relating to the consecration of a church we see that in the Vatican Borg. manuscript the depiction of Christ as the Sea<sup>721</sup> stands on the firm conviction that Christ is the source, meaning and the final goal of all symbols of both nature

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<sup>716</sup> Ephesians 1: 3-4 “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the Heavenly places, just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before Him in love.”

<sup>717</sup> Kollamparampil, (trs.), (1997), *Jacob of Serugh: Select Festal Homilies*, 230.

<sup>718</sup> *The Service Book of the Holy Sacraments*, (1999), 73.

<sup>719</sup> *The Service Book of the Holy Sacraments*, (1999), 80.

<sup>720</sup> Samuel (ed.), (1984), *Ma'dh'dhono*, 157.

<sup>721</sup> BAV Borg. Siriaco 57, fol. 27B.

and Scripture.<sup>722</sup> The reference to the sea and river may refer to the cosmic river referred to in passages such as: Ezekiel 47:1 and Zechariah 14:8, that river which nourishes the Holy city. The Church fathers see Him as the Lord of symbols and the Sea of symbols. The whole of the Old Testament with its symbols of the kings, priests and prophets, was pouring into Christ, the Sea of symbols.<sup>723</sup> Therefore, Ephrem writes:

This stream of symbols was unable to cleave the sea into which it fell and to flow toward another, since the Sea of truth received it. Since it is a wondrous gulf, all creatures cannot fill it. It confines all of them but is not confined by them. The prophets poured into it their glorious symbols. Priests and kings poured into all of it. Christ was victorious and rose up. By his explanations for symbols, by his interpretations for similes, he, like the sea, will receive into himself all the streams. Consider that if all the kings willed to turn aside all the rivers so that they would not come to the sea, the rivers would still come to it by force. Therefore, the sea is Christ who is able to receive the sources and springs and rivers and streams that flow forth from within Scripture. No other sea could ever contain such depths from all the rivers that poured into it. And no one else to whom you referred the Scriptures would ever be able to fulfil its histories in Himself. For it is Christ who perfects its symbols by His Cross, its types by His body, its adornments by His beauty and all of it by all of Him.<sup>724</sup>

All the prophesies of the Old Testament were fulfilled in the life of Jesus Christ and He contained all the symbols that referred to him. All those symbols were fulfilled and He himself bore witness to it on the cross, in saying “it is fulfilled” (Jn. 19:29). Again Ephrem explains that all the living water which had flowed from different sources for centuries, were stored in the sea. With the depiction of Christ as the Sea the conviction that Christ is the source, meaning and the final goal of all symbols of both nature and the Scripture is strengthened.<sup>725</sup>

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<sup>722</sup> Kollamparampil, (2001), *Salvation in Christ According to Jacob of Serugh*, 418.

<sup>723</sup> Kollamparampil, (2001), *Salvation in Christ According to Jacob of Serugh*, 419.

<sup>724</sup> Hymns on Virginit .9:7-15, McVey, (trs.), (1989), *Ephrem the Syrian: Hymns*, 303; McGuckin (ed.), (2009), *Ancient Christian Doctrine*, 13.

<sup>725</sup> Hymns on Virginit .9:7-15, McVey, (trs.), (1989), *Ephrem the Syrian: Hymns*, 303; McGuckin (ed.), (2009), *Ancient Christian Doctrine*, 13.

Jacob of Serugh adopts many of the insights of Ephrem in his homily ‘on the Baptism of our Redeemer’.<sup>726</sup> He visualises Christ as an ocean (*ūqyānos*) into which all mysteries flow as streams and rivers.<sup>727</sup> The sea is the source and sustenance of the streams. And in the same way the mysteries run to Christ,<sup>728</sup> who is the source and sustenance of all symbols and mysteries. “Therefore, the sea is Christ, who is able to receive the sources and springs and rivers and streams that flow forth from within Scripture. No other sea could ever contain such depths, from all the rivers that poured into it.”<sup>729</sup>

Both the scriptures and the natural world are witnesses to God and His activities. They are the two channels of divine self-revelation. The mysteries shown in the Scripture, nature and history, which are called ‘sources’, ‘springs’ and ‘streams’ by Ephrem, were flowing towards Christ as to the true ‘harbour’.<sup>730</sup> All these types and symbols have their existence only because of their roles as witnesses to the Lord.

## 5.6. The Church as the Tabernacle

The Tabernacle was very important in the history of Israel. It was moved from place to place when the Israelites wandered in the wilderness. The Tabernacle foreshadows the Church. In the Vatican Borg. manuscript we read: “you who wished by your grace to be blessed by the earthly ones, and to be exalted and praised in your glorious abode, in the holy Church, which you foretold in the tabernacle of Israel, which Moses built for your glory”.<sup>731</sup> The Tabernacle was built according to God’s command and He gave all the details for its construction to Moses (Exod. 25: 8-9). God tells Moses, “And have them make me a sanctuary, so that I may dwell among them” (Exod. 25:8). Ephrem comments on this as:

The symbol of Paradise  
was depicted by Moses

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<sup>726</sup> Bedjan, (1905), *Homiliae Selectae Mar Jacobi Sarugensis*, Vol. I, 167-193; Kollamparampil (trs.), (1997), *Jacob of Serugh: Select Festal Homilies*; Kollamparampil, (2001), *Salvation in Christ According to Jacob of Serugh*, 420.

<sup>727</sup> Kollamparampil, (2001), *Salvation in Christ According to Jacob of Serugh*, 420.

<sup>728</sup> Kollamparampil, (trs.), (1997), *Jacob of Serugh: Select Festal Homilies*, 505-524.

<sup>729</sup> Hymns on Virginity, 9:7-15, McVey, (trs.), (1989), *Ephrem the Syrian: Hymns*, 303; McGuckin (ed.), (2009), *Ancient Christian Doctrine*, 13.

<sup>730</sup> Hymns on Virginity, 4.4., McVey (trs.), *Ephrem the Syrian*.

<sup>731</sup> BAV Borg. Siriaco 57, fol. 30A.



who made the two sanctuaries,  
the sanctuary and the Holy of Holies".<sup>732</sup>

Methodius<sup>733</sup> says that "the Tabernacle was a symbol of the Church, as the Church is a symbol of heaven. And since this is so, and the Tabernacle, as I have said, is taken as type of the Church, the altars too must represent something within the Church".<sup>734</sup> Ephrem's vision is beautifully expressed as:

He planted the fair garden,<sup>735</sup> He built the pure Church;<sup>736</sup>  
upon the Tree of Knowledge He established the injunction.<sup>737</sup>  
He gave admonition, but they were unafraid,  
In the Church He implanted the Word  
Which causes rejoicing with its promises,  
Which causes fear with its warning  
He who despises the Word, perishes, he who takes warning, lives.<sup>738</sup>

In Ephrem's thinking the Church has many features. He considers paradise as a type of the present Church. In his imagery of paradise, a fence separates the lowest part from the middle (in the church building we call this part *hayklo*). The Tree of Knowledge he sees as the fruit (Eucharist) and the gate is the curtain that hides the sanctuary where the Tree of Life or the Holy of Holies is.<sup>739</sup>

The Tabernacle symbolises the Church because it was the centre of worship for the Israelites in which God dwelt; the Church is also a place of worship where the believers gather and offer their sacrifices to God. God lives among the faithful when they gather together for worship (Matt. 18:20; 1 Cor. 3:16; Eph. 2:22). Moses kept the Tablets in the place that God

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<sup>732</sup> Brock, (1990), *St. Ephrem the Syrian: Hymns on Paradise*, 96.

<sup>733</sup> Methodius also known as Ebulius was one of the early church fathers who lived in Greece. Socrates in his *Ecclesiastical History* 6.13, mentions Methodius as a 'bishop of the city in Lycia named Olympus'. See Musurillo, (trs.), (1958), *The Symposium: A Treatise on Chastity*, 4.

<sup>734</sup> Musurillo, (trs.), (1958), *The Symposium: A Treatise on Chastity*, 89.

<sup>735</sup> Genesis 2:8.

<sup>736</sup> Cf. Ephesians 2:19-22.

<sup>737</sup> Genesis 2:16-17.

<sup>738</sup> Brock, (1990), *St. Ephrem the Syrian: Hymns on Paradise*, 111.

<sup>739</sup> Brock, (1990), *St. Ephrem the Syrian: Hymns on Paradise*, 96.

resides. In the Church the Tablets are replaced by the Gospel, which is the Word of God. Ephrem writes:

Moses carried down tablets of stone which His Lord had inscribed; Joseph escorted this chaste ‘tablet’ in whom the Creator’s Son has resided: the old tablets have been left behind now that the whole universe has been filled with Your teaching.<sup>740</sup>

In the same way as the Tabernacle prefigures the Church, so the Gospel replaces the Tablets of the Ten Commandments. When God sent His only Son, He gave a new commandment: the Word of God became flesh and dwelt among the people.

### 5.7. The Church as the ‘Way’ to the Kingdom

The final destination of the Church is the Kingdom. Ephrem elaborated the theme of the ‘way’ as a figure of the Church.<sup>741</sup> For Ephrem, ‘The Way’ is neither a moral figure nor a title of the Church. In the *Hymn of Fide*, he says the Way is called the ‘way of life’ and He is the way ‘of truth’.<sup>742</sup> In the *Liber Graduum*<sup>743</sup> the Church is described as a true temple because the Holy Spirit resides in it. “It is the Church in truth, the blessed mother which brings up all children, and the body and the heart in which our Lord dwells; and because of the Spirit which abides in it, it is in truth a temple and altar, because our Lord dwells there”.<sup>744</sup>

Ephrem says that there are milestone and inns on the Way, which is built by truth and love.<sup>745</sup> Then he explains that the milestones are the prophets, and the inns the Apostles,<sup>746</sup> again, the

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<sup>740</sup> Lamy, (1886), *Sancti Ephraem Syri Hymni et Sermones II*, 519-590; Brock, (1994), *Bride of Light*, 24.

<sup>741</sup> Murray, (2004), *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 246.

<sup>742</sup> Beck, (ed.), (1955), *Des Heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Hymnen de Fide*, 25. 1-3, 8-9, 25.3; Murray, (2004), *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 247.

<sup>743</sup> The anonymous collection of late 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> century Syriac sermons known as the *Liber Graduum* or Book of Steps (*ktovo demasqotho*). See Kitchen, (trs.), (2009), *The Syriac Book of Steps: Syriac Text and English Translation*.

<sup>744</sup> Murray, (2004), *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 265.

<sup>745</sup> Beck, (ed.), (1955), *Des Heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Hymnen de Fide*, 22.8; 25.1; 26.3; 66.23; Murray, (2004), *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 247.

<sup>746</sup> Beck, (ed.), (1955), *Des Heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Hymnen de Fide*, 65.1.

milestones are the names of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, the sacraments and Scriptures.<sup>747</sup> Ephrem states:

For the sake of the fruit he laid the Way  
which [runs] from the Tree right to the Cross;  
it extended from the wood to the wood  
and from Eden to Zion,  
from Zion to Holy Church  
and from the Church to the kingdom.<sup>748</sup>

In the Old Testament the City of David was called Zion. (1 King 8:1; Zech. 9:13). The route from Eden to Zion and from Zion to the Church are ‘Ways’, as is Christ’s shedding of His own blood on the cross, by which we build the Church. In the manuscript we read:

Protect Lord, by the strength of your victorious cross, the walls of the renowned Zion, the holy Church, that you bought with your precious blood, and encircle it with protection and care of the holy and heavenly armies, so that when it rejoices and celebrates in the gathering of its children, it shall sing praise and give thanks to You, and Your Father and Your Holy Spirit.....<sup>749</sup>

Ephrem says that heretics build false and crooked ways to the left of the Way of Life and in order to establish their way they have stolen the milestone of the Scriptures and sacraments<sup>750</sup>, but Christ’s precious blood encircles the Church and protects it by the high and heavenly armies. The Church is the Way which leads all to the heavenly kingdom, towards the King and his gifts, to see the glory of the Father.<sup>751</sup>

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<sup>747</sup> Beck, (ed.), (1955), *Des Heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Hymnen de Fide*, 27.3-4; Murray, (2004), *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 246.

<sup>748</sup> Beck, (ed.), (1957), *Des Heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Hymnen contra Haereses*, 26.4; Murray, (2004), *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 246.

<sup>749</sup> BAV Borg. Siriaco 57, fol. 27A.

<sup>750</sup> Ephrem, Hymns on Nativity 22.8; 25.7-10; 27: 2-3; Murray, (2004), *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 249.

<sup>751</sup> Beck, (ed.), (1955), *Des Heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Hymnen de Fide*, 66.24; Murray, (2004), *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 249.

## 5.8. The Church as Mount Moriah

The Church is also compared to Mount Moriah (Gen. 22:1-18). In the Old Testament Mount Moriah is said to be the site of Solomon's temple (2 Chron. 3:1). Abraham is told to go to a place where God will direct him to offer sacrifice. So too, Israel is to offer its sacrifices at the place which Yahweh chooses for them (Deut. 12:5-6, 13-14). Moberly says that:

The 'land of Moriah' is a symbolic name, comparable to the 'land of Nod' (Gen. 4:16), that is, the land of wandering (nod) where Cain will fulfil his destiny of being a wanderer (Gen. 4:12, 14). The mountain of Moriah, where the temple stands, has a symbolic significance comparable to that of other holy mountains in the ancient world – a 'centre of the world' where Heaven and earth meet, and 'intersection of the timeless with time'.<sup>752</sup>

In Christian theology, the sacrifice of Isaac (Gen. 22: 1-19) is interpreted allegorically.<sup>753</sup> Christ is prefigured by Isaac who was brought to the mountain for sacrifice. Abraham becomes a symbol or spiritual prototype of God the Father.<sup>754</sup> Isaac then becomes a type or symbol for Christ's resurrection.<sup>755</sup> Like Isaac, the Son of God carried the wood of the cross to Calvary. The Church building is compared to Mount Moriah because it is where the faithful offer their sacrifices before God.

## 5.9. The Church as Mount Sinai

Elsewhere the Church is compared to Mount Sinai, where God visits and stays (Ps. 15:1; 24: 3; Exod. 19:1-25). The feast of *Qudosh* 'idto commonly treats Mount Sinai as the image of the Church: "The holy One, who caused to dwell His presence on Mount Sinai and blessed it, make to dwell Your presence in Your Church and consecrate it."<sup>756</sup>

Here the faithful request God to come and bless the church building just as He came down to Mount Sinai. *Fenqitho*, the night vigil of the dedication of the Church, reads as follows:

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<sup>752</sup> Moberly, (2000), *The Bible, Theology and Faith*, 111.

<sup>753</sup> McGrath, (2011), *Christian Theology*, 131.

<sup>754</sup> Huizenga, (1974), *The New Isaac*, 70.

<sup>755</sup> Huizenga, (1974), *The New Isaac*, 67.

<sup>756</sup> BNF Syriac 110, fol. 278A.

On Sinai Moses saw the Holy Church like a building all adorned, standing high, an image of all the nations. And when he descended and as he was commanded, he made a temporary tabernacle in its likeness for the priests, the children of Aaron. The tabernacle came to an end, but the Church sings praise.<sup>757</sup>

The church building is compared to Mount Sinai because God revealed himself to Moses on Mount Sinai and He will reveal Himself during the Divine Liturgy celebrated in church by the faithful.

### **5.10. The Church as Bethel**

The Church is also considered to be like Bethel where Jacob dreamed of angels ascending and descending a ladder that reached to heaven (Gen. 28:10-20). The ladder and the ascending and descending angels seems to be a visual example of the connection between Heaven and the particular place at which Jacob was sleeping. He said, “This is none other than the House of God, and this is the gate of Heaven” (Gen. 28:17). Caesarius of Arles says that the ladder touching heaven prefigured the cross; God leaning on the ladder (Genesis says He is above the ladder (v.13)) is seen as Christ fastened to the cross. The angels ascending and descending are understood to be the apostles, apostolic men and all doctors of the Church.<sup>758</sup> In a church the steps at the entrance of the sanctuary signify this ladder.<sup>759</sup>

The angels going up and down, show the connection between heaven and earth and the divine protection which God promised to Jacob in his dream. The Vatican Borg. manuscript says “[Jacob] anointed the stone of Bethel, and offered vows and tithes on it, and by this he demonstrated in advance mysterious offerings that are presented to you here in the church”.<sup>760</sup> With regard to this anointing, Ephrem says “In the oil that he poured upon the stone, he was depicting the mystery of Christ who was hidden inside it”.<sup>761</sup> The faithful believe that the hidden presence of Christ is always in churches that have been consecrated. Ephrem interprets this as follows:

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<sup>757</sup> Acharya, (trs.), (1982), *Prayer with the Harp of the Spirit*, Vol. II, 26

<sup>758</sup> Sheridan, (2002), *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, 192.

<sup>759</sup> Moolaveetil, (1976), *Yakobinte Anaphora Oru Padanam*, 17-20; Martimort, (1987), “Structure and Laws of the Liturgical Celebration”, 202-207.

<sup>760</sup> BAV Borg. Siriaco 57, fol. 30B.

<sup>761</sup> McVey, (ed.), (1994), *St. Ephrem the Syrian: Selected Prose works*, 174.

In the rock the mystery of the church is also represented, for it is to her that the vows and offerings of all the nations were soon to come.<sup>762</sup>

### 5.11. The Church as the Ark of Noah

The Church is symbolised as the ark of Noah because the ark saved Noah and his family from the great flood (Gen. 6:13-28). In *Fenqitho*, the *sedro* of the night vigil of the dedication of the church, the text is as follows:

She [Church] was signified by the fathers and the patriarchs from generations in many and various ways: Noah by the ark, Abraham by the altar which he made on the top of the mountain, Jacob by the stone which he anointed, Moses by the earthly tabernacle and Solomon by the house which he built for God.<sup>763</sup>

In the descriptions of Isaiah,<sup>764</sup> the flood is the eschatological salvation of Israel.<sup>765</sup> In Chapter 24:5-6 Isaiah tells why the eschatological destruction has come upon the earth<sup>766</sup>. Through typological interpretation we see that though Isaiah has prophesied worldwide destruction, he does not foresee the righteous remnant being swept away in the flood of God's wrath.<sup>767</sup> The Lord will guard his faithful through the coming tribulations. "The prophet describes this safeguarding in terms intended to remind the reader of how God sheltered Noah and his family from the worldwide flood".<sup>768</sup>

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<sup>762</sup> McVey, (ed.), (1994), *St. Ephrem the Syrian: Selected Prose works*, 174.

<sup>763</sup> Acharya, (trs.), (1982), *Prayer with the Harp of the Spirit*, Vol. II, 27.

<sup>764</sup> "This is like the days of Noah to me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so have I sworn that I would not be angry with you nor rebuke you" (Isa. 54:9).

<sup>765</sup> The "flood of mighty waters overflowing," Isa 28:2; "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you;..." (Isa. 43:2); God's "overflowing wrath," (Isa. 54:8); and the "windows of Heaven" (Isa. 24:18).

<sup>766</sup> "The earth is polluted by its inhabitants, for they transgressed laws, violated statutes, broke the everlasting covenant. Therefore, a curse devours the earth, and those who live in it are held guilty". Polaski, (2001), *Authorizing an End: The Isaiah Apocalypse and Intertextuality*, 94.

<sup>767</sup> Streett, (2007), "As it was in the Days of Noah: The Prophets' Typological Interpretation of Noah's Flood", 45.

<sup>768</sup> Streett, (2007), "As it was in the Days of Noah: The Prophets' Typological Interpretation of Noah's Flood", 45.

The early Christians employed the ark of Noah as a figure of the Church. St. Jerome, alluding to 1 Peter 3:20,<sup>769</sup> speaks of “the ark which the apostle Peter interprets as a figure of the Church”<sup>770</sup> and again St. Augustine says, “No one amongst us has any doubt but that the Church was typified in the ark of Noah”.<sup>771</sup> The passage in 1 Peter 3:20-21 thus confirms that “the one ark of Noah was a type of the one Church”.

The salvation of Noah and his family in the ark through the waters of the flood is paralleled in the New Testament by an eschatological salvation connected with baptism by water (1 Pet. 3:18-22). The salvation offered in baptism echoes the message that Christians have been born again through Christ’s resurrection. This offered hope of eschatological salvation for those who remained faithful.

## **5.12. The Church in Early Syriac Writings**

The early Syriac writers gave much importance to symbolic thinking. The peculiarities of symbolic vision are powerful enough to indicate aspects of divine-human relationships. The early writers use of allegorical explanations and imagery has religious motives and influenced the people in different ways. We will see below some of the allegorical explanations in both anonymous texts and in the writings of Church Fathers.

### **5.12.1. The Acts of Thomas**

The *Acts of Thomas*, an early third century document, was composed in Syriac and has often been associated with Edessa.<sup>772</sup> The *Acts of Thomas* provides an understanding of liturgical practices in the Syrian Churches and also describes the beliefs and aspirations of early Christianity of the Roman Empire. Klijn reminds us that the Acts of Thomas were written in a Jewish-Christian-Hellenistic environment.<sup>773</sup>

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<sup>769</sup> “...When God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight people, were saved through water”. (1 Peter 3: 20)

<sup>770</sup> Jerome, Letters 123, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 234.

<sup>771</sup> Augustine, *De unitate ecclesiae*; online at [www.ccel.org](http://www.ccel.org).

<sup>772</sup> Brock, (2004), “The Earliest Syriac Literature”, 167.

<sup>773</sup> Klijn, (1962), *The Acts of Thomas*, 20.

### 5.12.1.1. The Church as the Bride of Christ

The bridal hymn<sup>774</sup> in *Acts of Thomas* is essentially a celebration of the heavenly marriage. This concept of the heavenly marriage preached in the *Acts of Thomas*, with its imagery of Christ as the bridegroom and the Church as the bride of Christ clearly has its basis in the New Testament.<sup>775</sup> Early writers almost uniformly accepted the identity of the Church as a bride of Christ.<sup>776</sup> As a bride, the Church is cleansed through baptism, sprinkled with Christ's sacrificial blood, and sealed with the Myron of the Holy Spirit. The hymn below expands an allegory of the Church.

My Church is the daughter of light;  
the splendour of kings is hers.  
.....  
Her garments are like unto flowers,  
the smell thereof is fragrant and pleasant.  
On her head dwells the King  
and He feeds those who dwell with him beneath.  
.....  
The twelve Apostles of the Son,  
and the Seventy-two resound in her.  
Her tongue is the curtain,  
which the priest raises and enters in.  
Her neck is the lofty flight of steps  
which the first architect did build.  
Her hands, both of them,  
proclaim the place of life;

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<sup>774</sup> Hunt says that there is evidence suggest that the bridal hymn (6-7) and the hymn of the pearl, which appears later in *Acts of Thomas* (108-113) circulated separately and were probably even composed independently. Hunt, (2003), *Christianity in the Second Century*, 158. Drijvers has argued convincingly that the redactor of the *Acts of Thomas* has incorporated the hymn in such a way that it is an intergral part of the narrative, and that the *Acts of Thomas* should be considered as a literary unit. See Drijvers, (1992), "The Acts of Thomas", 327. Murray, who states that the use of bridal imagery in the Acts of Thomas is an expression of personal devotion rather than of teaching about the Church. Murray (2004), *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 132.

<sup>775</sup> Hunt, (2003), *Christianity in the Second Century*, 158.

<sup>776</sup> Harvey, (2006), *Scenting Salvation*, 124.



and her ten fingers  
have opened the gate of Heaven.<sup>777</sup>

The unknown author of this ancient hymn is referring to the Church in general and especially describing the church building itself. According to Murray, “The allegory evidently owes much to the Song of Songs, but to some extent the feminine figure is subordinate and the imagery is primarily that of the temple or baptistery”.<sup>778</sup> It is interesting to note that the imagery in the hymn refers to the body which is apparently that of a female, whereas the ‘King’- a male - stands at the head (the sanctuary) where he lives and feeds those who live with him below (the *hayklo*). So too, her tongue is described as the curtain, and her neck the steps to the sanctuary. The idea of a veil covering the heavenly mysteries seems already to have been known in Judaism<sup>779</sup> and the New Testament speaks about the veil between heaven and earth (Heb. 6: 19-20).

In the Vatican Borg. manuscripts we read, “...and its [the Church’s] betrothal is unlike that daughter of the Hebrews, which was betrothed in darkness and obscurity. It was betrothed [and] this one is made blessed in the Father; proud in the Son, and preserved in the Holy Spirit”.<sup>780</sup> Jacob of Serugh explains that the unfaithful behaviour and idolatry of the Hebrew nations is twofold. It is a double debt because of the refusal to praise and because of the silencing of the praisers by casting gloom over them.<sup>781</sup> He shows that as the miserable bride was intoxicated and burning with lust, she became addicted to her shameful Egyptian idols (Ezek. 8:14; 16; Exod. 32:2; I Kings 11: 5-7).<sup>782</sup> She became aggrieved that her groom had come, and she did not open the gates to the King, the royal bridegroom, who was betrothed to her in her youth in Sinai.<sup>783</sup> He says that Adam caused humanity enter upon the path of darkness but people like Enoch, Noah, Abraham and Moses fought against darkness and lived

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<sup>777</sup> Klijn, (2003), *The Acts of Thomas*, 28-29; Murray, (2004), *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 133-34.

<sup>778</sup> Murray, (2004), *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 134.

<sup>779</sup> Goodenough, (1953-68), *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period*, Vol. 1, 268; Klijn, (2003), *The Acts of Thomas*, 33.

<sup>780</sup> BAV Borg. Siriaco 57, fol. 28B.

<sup>781</sup> Kollamparampil, (2001), *Salvation in Christ According to Jacob of Serugh*, 161-62.; Kollamparampil, (trs.), (1997), *Jacob of Serugh: Select Festal Homilies*, 107-108.

<sup>782</sup> Kollamparampil, (2001), *Salvation in Christ According to Jacob of Serugh*, 161.

<sup>783</sup> Kollamparampil, (trs.), (1997), *Jacob of Serugh: Select Festal Homilies*, 82-102.

in the light. He believes that their existence and functions were due to Christ, the light that enlightens all. The hymn continues as follows:

Her bridal chamber is lighted up,  
and full of the sweet odour of salvation.

.....

The living are in attendance upon her,  
and they look to their Bridegroom who shall come,  
and they shall shine with his glory,  
and shall be with Him in the kingdom  
which never passes away.<sup>784</sup>

The hymn, which may be using the parable of the wise virgins in the Gospel of Matthew 25: 1-13, speaks about Christ who is the bridegroom and the Church which is the bride. This unending relationship, or marriage feast, brings everlasting happiness and peace. As explained in the hymn, the participation in the marriage relationship brings hope to a Christian believer.

The Church father, Irenaeus says “Thy Church may dwell in this bridal chamber forever”.<sup>785</sup> The deep and intimate love of the bride and bridegroom is shared in the bridal chamber. It is a symbol of delight and joy. Christ, the bridegroom of light, appeared as the daylight to betroth the bride of light at Jordan.<sup>786</sup> Therefore, the marriage between Christ and the Church in the bridal chamber is eternal spiritual communion.

### 5.12.2. The Sugitho on the Church of Edessa

The Syriac hymn<sup>787</sup> known as the *sugitho*<sup>788</sup> on the church of Edessa was composed for the dedication of the cathedral church there. The church was reconstructed in the reign of the

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<sup>784</sup> Klijn, (2003), *The Acts of Thomas*, 29. Klijn, (2003), *The Acts of Thomas*, 28-29;

<sup>785</sup> Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, I 33: 3; Klijn, (2003), *The Acts of Thomas*, 34.

<sup>786</sup> Kollamparampil, (2001), *Salvation in Christ According to Jacob of Serugh*, 331.

<sup>787</sup> The hymn is found in two manuscripts: A thirteenth century collection of hymns at Vatican Syriac 95 (ff. 49-50) and an eighth or ninth century collection of hymns attributed to Ephrem the Syrian, Isaac of Antioch and Jacob of Serugh at the British Museum Add. 17, 141 (ff. 109b-110a). See Goussen, (1925), “Über eine Sugith auf die Kathedrale von Edessa,” 117-136; Mcvey, (1983), “The Domed Church as Microcosm: Literary Roots of an Architectural Symbol”, 91-121; Palmer, (1988), “The Inauguration Anthem of Hagia Sophia in Edessa: A

Byzantine Emperor Justinian by bishop Amidonius<sup>789</sup> of Edessa.<sup>790</sup> An anonymous author around AD 540 - 550 composed the hymn.<sup>791</sup> The *sogitho* has been received as a significant text and given a great deal of attention due to the fact that it describes, in cosmological terms, the significance of an extremely early domed church. This hymn shows a church that has features typical of Byzantine architecture but also seems also to be describing West and East Syrian<sup>792</sup> liturgical architecture.

The hymn describes the church as parallel to the Tabernacle giving interpretive Christian theological meaning to each of its parts: “Exalted are the mysteries of this Temple in which heaven and earth symbolize the most exalted Trinity and our saviour’s dispensation”.<sup>793</sup> McVey analyses this by pointing to the choice of the Syriac word for temple, *hayklo*, contending that opening the poem with this particular word reflects an allusion to the *Heikhalot* literature<sup>794</sup> of early Jewish mysticism.<sup>795</sup>

There are symbolic references to the Tabernacle, to Bezalel,<sup>796</sup> to the Cosmos, and to heaven and the earth throughout this hymn. There is no doubt that it relies on the same Tabernacle and Cosmos imagery found in the *Christian Topography*.<sup>797</sup> Aphrahat, Ephrem and Jacob of

New Edition and Translation with Historical and Architectural notes and a Comparison with a Contemporary Constantinopolitan Kontakion”, 117-167.

<sup>788</sup> The Syriac word ܣܘܓܝܬܐ, means ‘song’ or ‘canticle’ (a hymn or chant, typically with a biblical text, forming a regular part of a church service).

<sup>789</sup> “And Amidonius and Asaph and Addai built a glorious Temple for You in Urha”, see McVey, (1993), “The Sogitha on the Church of Edessa in the Context of Other Early Greek and Syriac Hymns for the Consecration of Church Buildings”, 356.

<sup>790</sup> Loosley, (2003), *The Architecture and Liturgy of the Bema in Fourth – to Sixth Century Syrian Churches*, 68.

<sup>791</sup> McVey, (1993), “The Sogitha on the Church of Edessa in the Context of Other Early Greek and Syriac Hymns for the Consecration of Church Buildings”, 329.

<sup>792</sup> Mcvey, (1983), “The Domed Church as Microcosm: Literary Roots of an Architectural Symbol”, 96-109; King, (1948), *The Rites of Eastern Christendom*, 92-102.

<sup>793</sup> McVey, (1993), “The Sogitha on the Church of Edessa in the Context of Other Early Greek and Syriac Hymns for the Consecration of Church Buildings”, 358.

<sup>794</sup> The theme of the ascent to the divine realm is well represented in Jewish sources of late antiquity and in some rabbinic discussions and in so-called *Heikhalot* Literature, written sometime between the third and the eighth centuries. See Idel, (2005), *Ascension on High in Jewish Mysticism*, 28

<sup>795</sup> Laderman, (2013), *Images of Cosmology in Jewish and Byzantine Art*, 239.

<sup>796</sup> “Bezalel constructed the Tabernacle for us with the model he learned from Moses”. See McVey, (1993), “The Sogitha on the Church of Edessa in the Context of Other Early Greek and Syriac Hymns for the Consecration of Church Buildings”, 356.

<sup>797</sup> The *Christian Topography* is one of the earliest essays in scientific geography written by Cosmas Indicopleustes around AD 550. See Laderman, (2013), *Images of Cosmology in Jewish and Byzantine Art*, 239.

Serugh all wrote about Exodus and referred to the cosmological meaning of the Tabernacle and its parallelism with creation, as described in Genesis. The Tabernacle is a type of the Temple and the description of the construction of the Tabernacle (Exod. 25-27) served as a cosmological speculation for Jews and Christians<sup>798</sup>. In this way the hymn contributes to the understanding of the church as the image of heaven and the representation of the entire cosmos.

In his commentary on Exodus, Ephrem mentions that God says to Moses, “‘you shall make everything according to the model of the tabernacle that I will show you’ (Exod. 25: 9). He first called it a model and a temporal tabernacle, to indicate that it was transitory and that it would be replaced by the church, the perfect prototype which lasts forever, and so that they would esteem it because of its likeness to the heavenly tabernacle.”<sup>799</sup>

According to the *sugitho*, the church is the dwelling place of Being itself, which is applicable only to God.<sup>800</sup> “Oh Being itself who dwells in the holy Temple, whose glory naturally [flows] from it, Grant me the grace of the Holy Spirit to speak about the Temple that is in Urfa”.<sup>801</sup> The *sugitho* on the church of Edessa shows the church as a revelation of the Trinity. It notes that each sector has one frontage,<sup>802</sup> and one light shines from the three open windows in the sanctuary.<sup>803</sup> The light that comes through the many windows of the three sectors of the structure represents the apostles and Lord, the prophets, martyrs and confessors.<sup>804</sup> The Church is the eschatological gathering of God’s people and forms his household and His family.

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<sup>798</sup> McVey, (1983), “The Domed Church as Microcosm: Literary Roots of an Architectural Symbol”, 97.

<sup>799</sup> McVey, (ed.) (1994), Mathews, E. G., and Amar J. P., (trs.), *St. Ephrem the Syrian: Selected Prose works*, 261.

<sup>800</sup> Goussen, (1925), “Über eine Sugith auf die Kathedrale von Edessa,” 118; Mcvey, (1983), “The Domed Church as Microcosm: Literary Roots of an Architectural Symbol”, 96.

<sup>801</sup> Urfa is the Semitic name of the city, Edessa, Edessa being a Hellenistic Greek name.

<sup>802</sup> Goussen, (1925), “Über eine Sugith auf die Kathedrale von Edessa,” 119; Mcvey, (1983), “The Domed Church as Microcosm: Literary Roots of an Architectural Symbol”, 95.

<sup>803</sup> Goussen, (1925), “Über eine Sugith auf die Kathedrale von Edessa,” 119; Mcvey, (1983), “The Domed Church as Microcosm: Literary Roots of an Architectural Symbol”, 95.

<sup>804</sup> Goussen, (1925), “Über eine Sugith auf die Kathedrale von Edessa,” 119; Mcvey, (1983), “The Domed Church as Microcosm: Literary Roots of an Architectural Symbol”, 95.

### 5.12.3. The Church in the Writings of Aphrahat

Aphrahat is known through his twenty-three *Demonstrations* written between AD 336 - 345.<sup>805</sup> The first *Demonstration* of Aphrahat is about faith and he proposes his theme under the figure of “the true stone, our Lord Jesus Christ, is the foundation of all our faith”.<sup>806</sup> Quoting from Psalms 118:22 Aphrahat says, “For in ancient times David said concerning Him: The stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the building”.<sup>807</sup> Christ was the stone rejected by the builders, but became the cornerstone of the building, which is the Church. “He is the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone” (Acts. 4:10-11). Aphrahat is saying “by these things they rejected the stone which is Christ”.<sup>808</sup> Aphrahat claims in *Demonstration I*, almost carelessly, that Christ is the foundation on which the house of faith is raised, as if indicating something taken for granted, He calls Simon *Kepha* - both the foundation and even the building of the Church.<sup>809</sup> Aphrahat says that it is by faith that the Church was built on the stone that is Christ. He explains:

Concerning the structure [the Church] that is reared up upon the stone<sup>810</sup> ... first a man believes, and when he believes, he loves. When he loves, he hopes. When he hopes, he is justified. When he is justified, he is perfected. When he is perfected, he is consummated. And when his whole structure is raised up, consummated, and perfected, then he becomes a house and a temple for a dwelling-place of Christ.<sup>811</sup>

Again he added “on Him, on the stone, is faith based, and on faith is reared up all the structure”.<sup>812</sup> Aphrahat believes that Christ abides in those who believe in Him, and that He is

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<sup>805</sup> Gillman and Klimkeit, (1999), *Christians in Asia Before 1500*, 45.

<sup>806</sup> Gwynn, (1969), “Hymns and Homilies of Ephrem the Syrian and from the Demonstrations of Aphrahat the Persian Sage”, *Demonstrations I*, 2, 6, 345-46.

<sup>807</sup> Gwynn, (1969), “Hymns and Homilies of Ephrem the Syrian and from the Demonstrations of Aphrahat the Persian Sage”, *Demonstrations I*, 6, 347.

<sup>808</sup> Gwynn, (1969), “Hymns and Homilies of Ephrem the Syrian and from the Demonstrations of Aphrahat the Persian Sage”, *Demonstrations I*, 6, 347.

<sup>809</sup> Murray, (2004), *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 214.

<sup>810</sup> Gwynn, (1969), “Hymns and Homilies of Ephrem the Syrian and from the Demonstrations of Aphrahat the Persian Sage”, *Demonstrations I*, 3, 346.

<sup>811</sup> Gwynn, (1969), “Hymns and Homilies of Ephrem the Syrian and from the Demonstrations of Aphrahat the Persian Sage”, *Demonstrations I*, 3, 346.

<sup>812</sup> Gwynn, (1969), “Hymns and Homilies of Ephrem the Syrian and from the Demonstrations of Aphrahat the Persian Sage”, *Demonstrations I*, 4, 346.

the foundation on which the whole Church is built. Here he is referring to 1 Cor. 3:10, which describes Christ as the wise architect who laid the foundation [of the Church].<sup>813</sup>

Aphrahat, in his *Demonstration XII*, hints at the Holy Spirit living in the Church.<sup>814</sup> He described the Israelites' tabernacle as temporal because it served only for a limited time, but the Christian tabernacle he called the Temple of the Holy Spirit, which lasts forever. Therefore he writes: "the Church is the authentic fulfilment of the former people [Israel]".<sup>815</sup>

Aphrahat speaks of Christ as a stone, in *Demonstration I*, 8.9. The New Testament speaks of Christians as living stones, who are built up as a spiritual house (1 Peter 2:5). So in this way Aphrahat sees the believers in Christ as living stones, like Christ is the stone. The spiritual house into which believers are being built is God's building.<sup>816</sup> Aphrahat is led by typology to see the members of the Church in the stones of Jacob's cairn at Bethel:

Our Father Jacob too did this before in symbol, that the stone would receive anointing. For the people who believed in the anointed (Messiah) will be anointed as John said about them, "God can raise up children for Abraham from these stones" (Lk 3:8). For the mystery of the calling of the Nations is manifested before through the prayer of Jacob.<sup>817</sup>

Aphrahat develops the image of a building at length, but always as the structure of faith, laid on the foundations of Christ the rock.<sup>818</sup> He observes the temple in terms of spiritual architecture rather than physical architecture.<sup>819</sup> He associates faith symbolically with the church building: "For it is like a building that is built up of many pieces of workmanship and so its edifice rises to the top".<sup>820</sup> For him Christ is the true stone that is the foundation of the temple: "For when anyone is brought nigh unto faith, it is laid for him upon the stone that is

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<sup>813</sup> Gwynn, (1969), "Hymns and Homilies of Ephrem the Syrian and from the Demonstrations of Aphrahat the Persian Sage", *Demonstrations I*, 5, 347.

<sup>814</sup> *Demonstration XII*, 524. 18, 525. 1-4; Murray, (2004), *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 71.

<sup>815</sup> Wright, (1869), *The Homilies of Aphraates: The Persian Sage*, *Demonstration I*, XXIII, 462.

<sup>816</sup> Lee, (1986), *The Conclusion of the New Testament*, 1171.

<sup>817</sup> Valavanolickal, (1999), *Aphrahat Demonstrations I*, 68.

<sup>818</sup> Murray, (2004), *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 218.

<sup>819</sup> Murray, (2004), *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 219.

<sup>820</sup> Gwynn, (1969), "Hymns and Homilies of Ephraim the Syrian and from the Demonstrations of Aphrahat the Persian Sage", *Demonstrations I*, 2, 345

our Lord Jesus Christ”.<sup>821</sup> Aphrahat insists that Christ is the foundation on which the house of faith is raised.

#### 5.12.4. The Church in the Writings of Ephrem

Ephrem the Syrian<sup>822</sup> was born in Nisibis around 306 and served the Church of Nisibis as deacon and died in Edessa in 373; he is acclaimed as the ‘harp of the spirit’, the ‘pillar of the church’, and ‘the prophet of the Syrians’.<sup>823</sup> He is one of the most prominent theologians and exegetes and, above all, a famous religious poet of early Christianity.<sup>824</sup> He is the most outstanding figure of Syriac literature of the fourth century and large number of works are attributed to him in Syriac, Greek and Armenian.

In a complex meditation in the collection *De Ecclesia*, Ephrem sees the replacement of the tablets of the law, which Moses broke in anger, as a type of replacement at three levels: a) in the redemption of fallen men, b) in the fulfilment of types, and c) in the Church which succeeded the Synagogue.<sup>825</sup> Ephrem explains:

Hear again another type  
with another sense:  
how in new tablets for old  
the law clothed itself,  
to represent by the tablets  
the two assemblies.<sup>826</sup>

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<sup>821</sup> Gwynn, (1969), “Hymns and Homilies of Ephraim the Syrian and from the Demonstrations of Aphrahat the Persian Sage”, *Demonstrations I*, 2, 346.

<sup>822</sup> Brock, (1985), *The Luminous Eye: The Spiritual World Vision of St. Ephrem*; Beck, (1960), Ephrem le Syrien; McVey, (1989), *Ephrem the Syrian*; Hogan, (1999), *The Sermon on the Mount in St. Ephrem's Commentary on the Diatessaron*; Narinskaya, (2010), *Ephrem, a Jewish Sage: A comparison of the Exegetical writings of St. Ephrem the Syrian and Jewish Traditions*.

<sup>823</sup> Barsoum, (2003), *The Scattered Pearls*, 283.

<sup>824</sup> Brock, (1985), *The Luminous Eye*, 8-9.

<sup>825</sup> Beck, (ed.), (1960), *Des Heiligen Ephrem des Syrers Hymnen De Ecclesia*, (Hymns on the Church), 113; Murray, (2004), *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 59.

<sup>826</sup> Beck, (ed.), (1960), *Des Heiligen Ephrem des Syrers Hymnen De Ecclesia*, (Hymns on the Church), 113; Murray, (2004), *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 59.

The image of putting on clothes is here applied first to the Law, which Moses broke and then to the new tablet. The replacement of the tablets is like the Church replacing the former assembly, which is the Synagogue, and the figure of clothing is applied to God's election of the Church; and finally to the incarnation and resurrection. It is also seen as an antitype of the old and new tablets. The two assemblies are the former Synagogue and the Church.<sup>827</sup>

#### **5.12.4.1. The Image of the Church as Bride and Mother**

In Ephrem's comment on the marriage at Cana, Christ is presented as the heavenly bridegroom. The marriage of Christ and his Church is a frequent theme in his hymns. He addresses a further New Testament passage (Jn. 2) into which he introduces the theme of Christ the bridegroom, and the wedding feast at Cana.<sup>828</sup> This theme is found in his *Hymns on Virginity* 16:2:

Blessed are you, Cana,  
for it was the Bridegroom from on high  
whom your bridegroom invited, whose wine ran out;  
he invited the guest who himself invited the Nations  
to a wedding feast of joy and life in Eden.<sup>829</sup>

Brock says, "Ephrem moves very freely from the collective to the individual, from the Church to the individual Christian, and then back from the individual to the collective".<sup>830</sup> Ephrem considers the Church as Christ's bride and as enjoying his jealous love. In the *Hymn on Nisibis*, he wrote:

Be jealous for me, for I am thine,  
and to thee, Lord, am I betrothed!  
The Apostle who betrothed me to thee  
told me that thou art the Jealous One.

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<sup>827</sup> Murray, (2004), *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 59-60.

<sup>828</sup> Brock, (1985), *The Luminous Eye*, 123.

<sup>829</sup> Brock, (1985), *The Luminous Eye*, 123.

<sup>830</sup> Brock, (1985), *The Luminous Eye*, 123.



A bulwark to chaste wives  
Is the jealousy of their husbands...<sup>831</sup>

In Ephrem's thought, the Virgin Mary is seen very much as a model for the ideal pattern of relationship between the human individual and God.<sup>832</sup> Ephrem marks Mary as a type of the Church. In the *Hymn on Crucifixion*:

Mary who saw him  
is a type of the Church, which first  
is to see the sign of his coming.<sup>833</sup>

The typology depends on the interchangeable roles and attributes of individuals and corporate personalities, of Mary and Israel, and of Mary and the Church. If Mary is portrayed by Luke as the daughter of Zion, then she is also by intrinsic continuity, a type of the Church. The strongest biblical support for the typology remains in Revelation 12. Here the woman represents both Mary and the Church. Ephrem was the first known witness to the idea of Mary's spousal union with Christ, and he appears as the first to express the idea that Mary was a type of the Church.<sup>834</sup>

#### 5.12.4.2. The Image of the Church as Paradise

The Church, imagined as Paradise,<sup>835</sup> encloses fruitful trees within its walls, and whatever does not produce good fruit is cut off and cast into the fire.<sup>836</sup> Ephrem describes paradise as a type for the Church. The clearest usage of this idea is found in his *Hymns on Paradise*:

A symbol of the divisions  
in that Garden of Life  
did Moses trace out in the Ark  
and on Mount Sinai too;

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<sup>831</sup> Beck, (1961), *Hymn on Nisibis*, 22; Murray, (2004), *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 141.

<sup>832</sup> Brock, (1985), *The Luminous Eye*, 126.

<sup>833</sup> Beck, (1964), *Hymn on Crucifixion*, 59; Murray, (2004), *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 147.

<sup>834</sup> O'Carroll, (1990), *Theotokos*, 347.

<sup>835</sup> Deuteronomy 4:24.

<sup>836</sup> Donna, (1964), *The Fathers of the Church: St. Cyprian Letters 1-81*, 274.

he depicted for us the types of Paradise  
 with all its arrangements;  
 harmonies, fair and desirable in all things -  
 in its height, its beauty,  
 its fragrance, and its different species,  
 here is the harbour of all riches,  
 whereby the Church is depicted.<sup>837</sup>

The Church is portrayed as Paradise, mainly with the Tree of Knowledge as a symbol. In obedience to the commandment “you will not eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil” (Gen. 2:17), Adam and Eve were acting out of their own volition submitting to the life “flowing forth from the throne of God” (Rev. 22:1) and they were maintaining a relationship to God. The eschatological Paradise rewards those who have fulfilled the commandment of Christ. Ephrem explains that God did not place Adam in paradise until he was fully made, body and soul.<sup>838</sup> Harvey argues “Together body and soul had entered paradise, together they had left after the fall, together they would enter again in the resurrection”.<sup>839</sup> Ephrem pictured the souls of the dead encamped at the gates of paradise, awaiting their reunion with their bodies so that they could enter and together give praise to their Saviour.<sup>840</sup>

Ephrem explains that in paradise the body, healed and glorified in its resurrected state, will be robed in a “garment of glory” that replaces its former “garment of shame”.<sup>841</sup> In Ephrem’s view the soul and body depend upon each other for existence. Even in the world and without body, the soul would not be able to conceive of paradise.<sup>842</sup> He says:

I imagined that he was already there,  
 But then I considered  
 I considered  
 how the soul cannot

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<sup>837</sup> Brock, (1990), *St. Ephrem the Syrian: Hymns on Paradise*, 89.

<sup>838</sup> Harvey, (2006), *Scenting Salvation*, 232.

<sup>839</sup> Harvey, (2006), *Scenting Salvation*, 232.

<sup>840</sup> Brock, (1990), *St. Ephrem the Syrian: Hymns on Paradise*, 8. 9-10.

<sup>841</sup> See Brock, (1992), “Clothing metaphors as a means of theological expression in Syriac tradition”, 11-38; Anderson, (2001), *Genesis of Perfection: Adam and Eve in Jewish and Christian Imagination*, 117-134.

<sup>842</sup> Harvey, (2006), *Scenting Salvation*, 237.

have perception of Paradise  
without its mate, the body,  
its instrument and lyre.<sup>843</sup>

The sweetness of life in paradise can be seen in the Eucharistic service of the Church. The air in paradise acts much like the Eucharist, in Ephrem's figuring. The comparison of the Church with paradise has many eschatological and ecclesiological features in Ephrem's thinking.<sup>844</sup> For Ephrem the paradise imagery related to present features of the Church.<sup>845</sup> He considers the dignity and beauty to which man is raised, and God's love shown in planting paradise.<sup>846</sup> He says:

God planted the fair garden,  
He built the pure Church;  
upon the Tree of Knowledge  
He established the injunction.  
He gave joy, but they took no delight,  
He gave admonition, but they were unafraid.  
In the Church He implanted the Word  
which causes rejoicing with its promises,  
which causes fear with its warnings;  
he who despises the Word, perishes,  
he who takes warning, lives.<sup>847</sup>

The symbolism expressed by the titles 'rock', 'kepha', 'temple', 'bride', 'groom', 'ark', and 'paradise' are the terms used by the Church fathers to represent the Church in their writings in order that the faithful will be able to understand easily.

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<sup>843</sup> Brock, (1990), *St. Ephrem the Syrian: Hymns on Paradise*, 132.

<sup>844</sup> Buck, (1995), "Sapiential *Theōsis*: A New reading of Ephrem the Syrian's *Hymn on Paradise*", 125.

<sup>845</sup> Murray, (2004), *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 257.

<sup>846</sup> Murray, (2004), *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 259.

<sup>847</sup> Brock, (1990), *St. Ephrem the Syrian: Hymns on Paradise*, 111.

### 5.12.5. Jacob of Serugh's view on the Church

Jacob of Serugh's birth and early life are unknown. He studied at the school of Edessa between AD 466-473<sup>848</sup> and he was appointed as Cor-episcopos during the year AD 502-503, and was later consecrated as the Metropolitan of Batnan in Serugh at the age of 68 in June 519. He died in AD 521.<sup>849</sup> He was active between AD 451- 521, a period that witnessed unsettled theological controversies, especially after the Council of Chalcedon in AD 451 and he was born an heir to the early Syriac Christian tradition.

#### 5.12.5.1. The Church as a Harbour

According to Jacob, the Church in the world is a great harbour.<sup>850</sup> A harbour is universally understood as a place where ships may shelter from the weather or are kept safe. In the same way, people come to the Church for protection and peace. The Church is a place to rest from all the evil things. Jacob calls to the people who are wandering after worldly things, "...you lovers of the world, come in from wandering in the evil world, and rest in the inn that is full of comfort to him that enters it".<sup>851</sup> Christ prepares his ship, the Church, with everything needed to get his children across the sea of life in to the safe harbour of heaven. He fills the galley with food (the Word) for the crew. He gives his Church the Holy Spirit that is not only the preserver life, but also throws out those who are drowning in their sea of sin.

The identity of the Church is well founded in its relationship to the incarnate Son. Baptism and Eucharist play central roles in the life of the Church and for that matter, in the life of the individual Christian. According to Jacob, Baptism makes one enter into Paradise and the Eucharist is the fruit of the Tree of Life that one eats to acquire life or salvation.<sup>852</sup> According to Jacob the Church in the world is a great harbour, full of peace for "those who come in and

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<sup>848</sup> Barsoum, (2003), *The Scattered Pearls*, 312.

<sup>849</sup> Barsoum, (2003), *The Scattered Pearls*, 312.

<sup>850</sup> Connolly, (trs.), (1908), "A Homily of Mar Jacob of Serugh on the Reception of the Holy Mysteries", 279.

<sup>851</sup> Connolly, (trs.), (1908), "A Homily of Mar Jacob of Serugh on the Reception of the Holy Mysteries", 279.

<sup>852</sup> Kollamparampil, (trs.), (1997), *Jacob of Serugh: Select Festal Homilies*, 14.

rest at her table.<sup>853</sup> Her doors are open, and her eye is good, and her heart is wide. Her table is full, and sweet is her mingled (cup) to them that are worthy”.<sup>854</sup>

Jacob says that “life flows from the service of the house of God and mercy has brought you in to this house that is full of profit”.<sup>855</sup> He likens the apostles to the four rivers of Eden who went out into the four corners of the world and watered the church.<sup>856</sup> As we read in the Vatican Borg. manuscripts “This [the Church] symbolises the stone of Moses from which twelve rivers for irrigation were supplied for the people Israel. This the spiritual streams and right teaching in the hymns of the Holy Spirit...”<sup>857</sup> Jacob’s allegory of Church as a harbour is because those who come that are afflicted can take rest in the harbour, though he says “think it not loss if you remain long herein”.<sup>858</sup> In the prayer of consecration we read, “May he establish his altar in it [the Church] and firmly fix its foundations. May he also make it a refuge for penitents and harbour of rest for the afflicted”.<sup>859</sup>

#### **5.12.5.2. The Church as a Tabernacle**

The Tabernacle and its furnishings have great symbolic significance, showing that God is willing to meet with human beings on earth. The Lord told Moses, “I will show you, he said, what is in the likeness of what is on the mountain top. He ascended to show him in the clouds the church, which was built there. Jerusalem was a freeborn lady above, whom he saw there”.<sup>860</sup> According to Jacob of Serugh, the Lord ordered Moses to make the Tabernacle, which foreshadowed the Church,<sup>861</sup> which is the house of God.

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<sup>853</sup> The table is the cross of Jesus Christ on which His body is broken; His blood is shared and kept upon it. The Table is the altar for it signifies Jesus Christ who is called ‘wood’ and ‘tree of life’. See Varghese, (trs.), (1990), *Dionysius Bar Salibi: Commentary on the Eucharist*, 38.

<sup>854</sup> Connolly, (trs.), (1908), “A Homily of Mar Jacob of Serugh on the Reception of the Holy Mysteries”, 279.

<sup>855</sup> Connolly, (trs.), (1908), “A Homily of Mar Jacob of Serugh on the Reception of the Holy Mysteries”, 280.

<sup>856</sup> Connolly, (trs.), (1908), “A Homily of Mar Jacob of Serugh on the Reception of the Holy Mysteries”, 280.

<sup>857</sup> BAV Borg. Siriaco 57, fol. 28A

<sup>858</sup> Connolly, (trs.), (1908), “A Homily of Mar Jacob of Serugh on the Reception of the Holy Mysteries”, 280.

<sup>859</sup> BAV Borg. Siriaco 57, fol. 31A.

<sup>860</sup> Bedjan, (1905), *Homiliae Selectae Mar Jacobi Sarugensis*, Vol. I, 37.

<sup>861</sup> Bedjan, (1905), *Homiliae Selectae Mar Jacobi Sarugensis*, Vol. I, 36.

Jacob says “the Church in the world is like a scribe to men; and she teaches and makes them wise, and binds up the sores of all who come to her”.<sup>862</sup> Jacob calls to the people as follows: “come, enter you foolish [ones], that were stained with lusts, and furbish your lives with the doctrine of the daughter of light.”<sup>863</sup> In Syriac literature, the Church is more than once called ‘daughter of light’.<sup>864</sup> Jacob views the whole history of salvation through the imagery of light. Truth is the dignity of the daughter of light and in Syriac the daughter of light is identified with the Church.<sup>865</sup> In the homilies on the consecration of a church he said:

The Church was drawn secretly by Moses  
and since it was a symbol, it was called “tabernacle”.  
In truth, he did not build her because he is not her Lord  
but he symbolized her secretly and he left her and passed on  
The elect church was built since eternity  
and Moses who saw her example on Mount Sinai witnesses.  
My thoughts did not rush and create this answer,  
but the truth signalled to me: this is the truth that you shall describe.  
Moses saw the age of the church on the mountain,  
so he came down and drew inside the camp it to confirm it.  
When he was ordered to prepare the tabernacle  
he truly had seen the symbol of the church.<sup>866</sup>

Jacob aimed to show that Moses conceived the Church accurately in all its forms:

In the tabernacle he depicted the throne of the bride.  
And in the holy of the holies he depicted the beautiful altar of the mysterious bride.  
He depicted the seventy rulers of the people with the apostles  
And with the twelve the heads of the tribes that he chose.<sup>867</sup>

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<sup>862</sup> Connolly, (trs.), (1908), “A Homily of Mar Jacob of Serugh on the Reception of the Holy Mysteries”, 281.

<sup>863</sup> Connolly, (trs.), (1908), “A Homily of Mar Jacob of Serugh on the Reception of the Holy Mysteries”, 281.

<sup>864</sup> Jacob of Serugh, “Gedicht über die Decke vor dem Antlitz des Moses”, 348; Klijn, (2003), *The Acts of Thomas*, 30.

<sup>865</sup> Klijn, (2003), *The Acts of Thomas*, 38.

<sup>866</sup> Bedjan, (1905), *Homiliae Selectae Mar Jacobi Sarugensis*, Vol. I, 36.

<sup>867</sup> Bedjan, (1905), *Homiliae Selectae Mar Jacobi Sarugensis*, Vol. I, 37.

In the *Homily on the Transfiguration of our Lord*, Jacob says that one tabernacle alone was made. The Father commanded the Church, the bride, to hear his Son.

The Father taught him through the single tabernacle of light that He made,  
that one is the Church, and one is the Cross that is ministered in it.  
There were no tabernacles but a tabernacle for the one Only-begotten,  
because there are not churches but a Church for the Son of God.  
He designated the Church in the single cloud of great light  
And the Father commanded her to give heed to His Son, to all that He says to her.<sup>868</sup>

For Jacob the Tabernacle was existed symbolically before the Church and it was built, as instructed by God. The tabernacle has several names, including Sanctuary (Exodus 25:8); House of the Lord (Exodus 23:19); and Tent of the Testimony (Numbers 9:15).

#### **5.12.5.3. The Church as a Bride**

In the vision of Jacob, the betrothal of the heavenly bridegroom to the earthly bride, the Church, takes place in various stages. Jacob says, “The bridegroom is coming down to see the bride betrothed to Him”.<sup>869</sup> The bridegroom comes down through the incarnation and receives the bride, the daughter of lights.<sup>870</sup> Jacob explains that the Lord came down to the poor bride and lived with her thirty years in order to make her learn his ways and then become betrothed to her.<sup>871</sup> At the betrothal the bride is given the robe of glory from the water of baptism.

The idea of the profound union between Christ and the Church through the imagery of the betrothal and marriage feast, the perfect reconciliation between God and humanity in Christ, is reflected in the Jacob’s hymns.<sup>872</sup> The bridegroom conferred the joy of joys on his bride by his resurrection. The bride has been rescued by God from her demise, just as Adam and Eve

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<sup>868</sup> Kollamparampil, (trs.), (1997), *Jacob of Serugh: Select Festal Homilies*, 229-230.

<sup>869</sup> Connolly, (trs.), (1908), “A Homily of Mar Jacob of Serugh on the Reception of the Holy Mysteries”, 282.

<sup>870</sup> Kollamparampil, (trs.), (1997), *Jacob of Serugh: Select Festal Homilies*, 236.

<sup>871</sup> Bedjan, (1905), *Homiliae Selectae Mar Jacobi Sarugensis*, Vol. III, 331, 7-16; Kollamparampil, (2001), *Salvation in Christ According to Jacob of Serugh*, 236.

<sup>872</sup> Bedjan, (1905), *Homiliae Selectae Mar Jacobi Sarugensis*, Vol. I, 186, 21; Kollamparampil (trs.), (1997), *Jacob of Serugh: Select Festal Homilies*, 236

have been awakened, healed, and return to their home in Eden.<sup>873</sup> In *Fenqitho*, the evening prayer of the consecration of the church, the text is as follows:

O Holy Church, sing glory to the Bridegroom who in His love espoused you and saved you by His Cross of Life, and placed in you His Holy body and His blood, the chalice of salvation in pardon for all believers.<sup>874</sup>

In his prose homily '*On the Sunday of Hosannas*', Jacob says "The royal bridegroom who betrothed her at Sinai came to his bride in order to celebrate the marriage feast. Yet she rejected him".<sup>875</sup> In the homily '*On the Ascension of our Lord to Heaven*' Jacob says that the bride saw the glory of the bridegroom; he describes how the slaughtered one clothed himself in power, how he conquered death in its cave and returned to his Father. As the truly beloved of the bridegroom, the bride, the Church, came to the mountain, longing to ascend with him. Instead she was given the assurance that he would come again 'in his valiant powers'.<sup>876</sup>

The Church is the perfect bride of the perfect lamb (Rev. 22:17; Eph. 1:4; 5:27). The Bridegroom has broken his body and shed his blood and made himself into food and drink. The Church, his bride, takes her delight in it. The theme of Christ as bridegroom of the Church was prefigured by the prophets and announced by John the Baptist (Jn. 3:29) and the Lord referred to himself as the "bridegroom" (Mk. 2:19).

### 5.13. Conclusion

The Church as the spouse and the body of Christ is prefigured and represented in divine ways by the people and events of the Old and New Testaments. The Syrian Church fathers seek to discover the figure of the Church everywhere and this indicates the importance which they attribute to it. The Church is compared to Mount Moriah, Mount Sinai, Mount Tabor, Bethel, the Ark of Noah, the rock, the Tabernacle, the Way, spiritual Zion, etc., all of which are considered as foreshadowing signs.

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<sup>873</sup> Harvey, (2012), "Including the 'Despised Woman': Jacob of Serugh at the Nativity Feast", 8.

<sup>874</sup> Acharya, (trs.), (1982), *Prayer with the Harp of the Spirit*, Vol. II, 18.

<sup>875</sup> Kollamparampil, (trs.), (1997), *Jacob of Serugh: Select Festal Homilies*, 261, 269.

<sup>876</sup> Kollamparampil, (trs.), (1997), *Jacob of Serugh: Select Festal Homilies*, 330.



The Syrian liturgy is a monument of love and enthusiasm of the Syrians for the Church, the bride of Christ and the mother of the children of God. There are many rich and poetic materials showing how the Syrian fathers conceived the intimate essence of the Church. These are particularly found in the office of the dedication of the church, the Epiphany, in the liturgy of baptism, ordination, and so on. The deep essence of the Church can be found in the literature but can also be seen in the liturgical sources, though the liturgy itself is not a theological study.

The Church is often praised in hymns and in prayers in rich language, words and images, such as that of the bride of Christ united by ardent love to her heavenly spouse, decorated by him with all imaginable ornaments. The West Syrian liturgy, like other liturgies, suggests the mystical union of Christ and of his Church in comparison with the marital relationship of earthly spouses. Christ wins his bride, the Church, by sacrificing his blood for it, by shedding it on Calvary. The Church is polluted by sin and is in need of purification. This purification she finds in baptism which owes all its strength to the redemptive sacrifice of her bridegroom on the cross. The significant moment of betrothal of Christ and the Church is consequently seen in the crucifixion. The Church was formed from the blood and water which flowed from the side of Christ. Ephrem says, “the water cries that Christ has been killed, and the blood proclaims that He is living by nature”.<sup>877</sup>

The West Syrian liturgy also gives to the Church the title of mother, and it very often speaks about the children of the church. Through baptism, the children are born to a new life as the children of the Church, the mother.

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<sup>877</sup> Mingana, (1931), “*Woodbrooke Studies*”, 517.

## **General Conclusion**

This thesis set out to examine the rite of consecration of a church in accordance with the Syrian Orthodox tradition. The Syrian Orthodox Church traces its roots back to the Church in Antioch in the mid first century AD but there is little direct information about the rites related to the consecration of a church. In fact, as we have seen, the earliest documentary evidence is the Vatican Borg. and Paris Manuscripts in Syriac, dating to the twelfth century. Although the rites and orders described in these manuscripts are used in church consecration today, this is the first time that these manuscripts have been translated into English and placed in a context pieced together from early Syriac literature, liturgy and the scriptures.

From time immemorial the need to worship God has been a notion prevalent among human beings. People started to build dedicated and consecrated centres for worship that were suited to their particular ways of life and social circumstances. Their understanding of the importance of God's role in their lives and how vital it was to please God led to different customs and patterns of worship.

In 1 Chronicles 17:1 we see King David's concern: "Here I am living in a palace of cedar, while the Ark of God remains in a tent", prompted the desire to build a permanent temple for God. This wish was fulfilled by David's son Solomon. The temple that Solomon built for God was most beautiful. The essence of Solomon's prayer at the time of dedication of the temple was "This is the place where God lives." - a dedication echoed in the consecration of Christian Churches. After the destruction of the Temple and while the Israelites were in Babylonian captivity, the synagogues took on an important but different function in the lives of the people. All of these things proved to be very influential in the formation of Christian liturgies and symbolism as well as physical churches, though with some fundamental differences.

The early Christians, who initially had no distinct liturgy or places of worship, continued to worship God in synagogues in the traditional way while at the same time assembling in private houses where they prayed and broke bread. The Jewish liturgy continued to play a prominent role in the lives of the early Christians and proved to have a significant role in the liturgical development of early Christian liturgies. During the persecution Christians continued to worship in houses, market places and halls and these were later known as house

churches. The best surviving examples of house churches are at Dura Europos and Peter's house in Capernaum. Churches as we understand them were not built until Constantine's reign.

As implied above the conceptual roots of the idea of building and dedicating a church as a place for God to live in goes back to prehistoric times though here we were more concerned with the Old Testament and the erection of the Tabernacle and the Temple and the Holy of Holies for the Ark. For the Christians though the altar was at the centre of the sanctuary instead of the ark.

In Chapter one I focussed on the major characteristic features of Syriac literature and liturgy which played a vital role in the growth of Syriac Christianity. The predominant influence of the Peshitta Bible and the Psalms can be witnessed in the writings, hymns and commentaries of contemporary Syriac writers. From my review of Syriac liturgical development we saw that it was strongly influenced by Jewish liturgical patterns including the readings from the Peshitta Bible. Indeed we saw in section 1.5.1 that the word 'Church' as defined by Moses Bar Kepha, an influential Syrian Orthodox writer, was developed from Semitic roots and that the Jewish festival of *Ḥannūkah* and the Christian feast of dedication of a church are closely related. Moses Bar Kepha expands on this in his writings and, importantly for this thesis, elucidates how the faithful of a church receive blessings from God and are spiritually renewed as a result of consecration of a church.

Once Christianity was officially recognised by the emperor Constantine churches were constructed and consecrated in many places and there are descriptions of churches constructed in and around Jerusalem and their consecrations, but there is no mention of a Syrian church or its consecration in any of the early documents. It is not until the Vatican manuscript, compiled in the 12<sup>th</sup> century and the Paris manuscript which was copied from it, that the order of Syrian church consecration and how it should be conducted was documented. From this it can be assumed that several Syrian Orthodox churches might have been consecrated using these orders or similar ones and this was explored in this thesis. The order of the consecration of a church followed by the Syrian Orthodox Church today can be rightly called a copy of the Vatican manuscript. However, these, to my knowledge, have never been translated into English and so I have offered a translation in chapter two. In my study of these manuscripts and other writing from early Syriac literature and liturgy I have

tried to use them to gain a deeper understanding of the meaning of the various actions and artefacts deemed necessary for the rite of consecration of a Church in the Syrian Orthodox tradition.

Like most Christian Churches the ‘worship’ of the Syrian Orthodox Church is held mainly in the church building. Celebration of the Holy Eucharist, which is known as the “Queen of Sacraments,” is normally held only in a consecrated church but in certain compelling circumstances it may be celebrated on a *tablito* which is treated as an alternative altar. The rite of consecration makes a church holy and suitable as the place where God dwells. All the rites conducted in it are believed to be for remission of sins and God’s blessings.

Part of the consecration rite involves the anointment with Myron oil. The practice of anointing is known from ancient times, as attested in the Mesopotamian cuneiform tablets as well as in the Old Testament, where we clearly see that the Israelites had a system of anointing using oil. This anointment with oil, as many other Jewish practices, became part of Christian tradition.

In the Syrian Orthodox tradition there are several occasions for anointing with oil, but special Myron oil is used only on three occasions, namely (a) baptismal anointing, (b) the anointing of the church building and altar and (c) the consecration of a *tablito*. This anointing is to be understood as a sealing of the body - the body of the person and the body of the church building - as the abode of the Holy Spirit. This interestingly echoes Pauline theology in the claim that the human body is the true temple of God. The baptised person becomes the house of God full of the fragrance of the gift of the Holy Spirit. As a community, the people of God become the house of God with the same fragrance and gifts of the Holy Spirit. This is embodied in the rite of consecration of a church because it marks a significant moment in the life of a parish community just as the mystery of baptism marks a significant point in an individual’s spiritual life. The building symbolises also the Church as the body of Christ. Hence the Myron is applied on both the body of the individual human person and the body of the Church as represented by a material structure. It may not be used for anything else in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

Today oil is used for baptism and anointing the sick and the dead in eastern and western churches. Myron oil or Chrism is considered as the most important among the oils because it is used in rites like Baptism, ordination and consecration of churches in different rites. This

Myron oil derives its importance from the herbs used in producing it, the importance given to its consecration and the pivotal position churches confers on it. Myron is used in the Syrian Church as the “sweet fragrance of Christ, the sign and seal of true faith and the perfection of the gift of Holy Spirit”.<sup>878</sup> According to Murray “the fragrance of paradise descended on the apostles at Pentecost, and this fragrance of the Holy Spirit can fairly certainly be taken as an allusion to the Chrism use in pre-baptismal anointing in the Syrian churches”.<sup>879</sup>

All traditional Christian denominations consider the consecration of a church to be a very important religious rite. As a result of the consecration the church as a whole as well as all the utensils and decorative articles that are consecrated become holy and suitable for God's worship. In the fourth chapter I describe the structure and consecration of a Syrian Orthodox church, the different utensils and materials used in worship and their symbolic meanings along with biblical references.

The ceremony of the anointing performed by the bishop with and without the Myron, similar to the practice in Baptism, the church becomes holy and eligible for conducting the Holy Eucharist and other rites. The second part of the consecration (consecration of the altar and *tablito*) corresponds to baptism. Varghese notes that the consecration, unlike baptism, has preserved the “litanies” which appear in the consecration of Myron: “Thus the structure of the consecration of the church seems to be an adaptation of that of baptism, with the addition of elements taken from the Divine Office, the Eucharist and the consecration of *Myron*”.<sup>880</sup>

In short through the anointing of Myron conducted during the consecration ceremony a church is purified and obtains eligibility as a worship place. “So far as the consecration of the church is concerned in the Syrian Orthodox tradition, it is the baptismal liturgy which provided the model, as in other liturgical traditions”.<sup>881</sup> The pairing of the consecration of a church with the baptism of a person and the use of Myron oil in both these ceremonies (and only in these ceremonies) is clearly very significant and meaningful for the Syrian Orthodox Church.

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<sup>878</sup> *The Service Book of the Holy Sacraments*, (1999), 50.

<sup>879</sup> Murray, (2004), *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 261.

<sup>880</sup> Varghese, (2006), “La structure des liturgies sacramentelles”, 168.

<sup>881</sup> Varghese, (2006), “La structure des liturgies sacramentelles”, 166.

The fifth chapter was concerned with the relationship between the Church and Christ and its different symbolic and allegoric aspects as seen in the Bible and the writings of the Church Fathers. Here we saw that the Church is founded and constructed on the corner stone - Christ and that the Tabernacle, Zion, Mount Moriah, Mount Sinai, Bethel, the Ark of Noah, etc. are symbols of the Church. We also saw that the Church fathers considered the church as the bride of Christ, as paradise and as a harbour. The Church fathers exhort the faithful to consider the Church holy because Christ had regained it with his blood. Through the ceremony of consecration a church building is bathed and cleansed from all her impurities and sanctified in exactly the same way as a person is in baptism. Through consecration the church is wedded to Christ the bridegroom and the bride behaves according to the wishes of the bridegroom and becomes a place of worship where hymns are sung in his praise.

The same relationship between bride and bridegroom which is described in the Song of Solomon also exists between the Christ and the Church. The songs that are used in the consecration of a church refer to Christ as the bridegroom and the church as the bride. The New Testament describes the Church as the bride of Christ (Rev. 19:7-8; 21:9; 22:12; Eph. 5: 23-32). Psalm 45 vividly portrays this bridal imagery, providing a prophetic glimpse of the Christ's future relationship with his the bride. The New Testament describes the Church as Christ's bride, which conveys other strong and fascinating ideas of love, intimacy and the trust between Christ and his Church.

We have seen that there are many signs, symbols and allegories (often with ancient allusions) contained in the ceremony of consecration of a church in the Syrian Orthodox faith. Christ is the chief protagonist of the mysteries of the Church. These mysteries are revealed through signs and symbols. It is necessary to understand them in order to understand the theological basis of the rite of consecration of a church and its people.

To the best of my knowledge there has been no previous research or detailed studies, even by the Church, regarding the consecration of a Syrian Orthodox Church. This research was conducted on the basis of the two manuscripts and rites and rituals practiced in the Church today and whatever bits and pieces I could collect from the rites and references from Syriac literature, including a small commentary written by Moses Bar Kepha about church consecration.

I feel that in my research it has not always been possible to give full justice in explaining the

symbolic meanings of the rituals and liturgies associated with church consecration and I hope that this will open the doors for new studies on the subject of church consecration from the point of view of the Syrian Orthodox Church. I have no doubt that the different chapters of this research or different elements referred to here may tomorrow form the themes of new research. I hope this work will be an inspiration to those who wish to do research in this subject. At the same time I sincerely hope that the clergy and faithful of the Syrian Orthodox Church can get a deeper understanding of the meanings and intention of each step in the process of consecration, and their symbolic significance by reading this work and so strengthen their own understanding and appreciation of the rite and of the Church.

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