

MODERN ASSYRIAN HYMNS: THE INTRODUCTION OF THE VERNACULAR IN THE LITURGICAL SERVICES OF THE CHURCH OF THE EAST

Mr. DAVID G. MALICK
(Chicago)

INTRODUCTION

The use of modern Assyrian¹ hymns in the worship services of the Church of the East is related to the larger issue of the use of the vernacular as a replacement for the Syriac language in which these services were originally composed and handed down over the centuries. The two known attempts to transform the vernacular of the Assyrians into a written language, first in and around Alqosh at the end of the 16th century and then in Urmia in the middle of the 19th century, involved the production of a significant amount of hymns in modern Assyrian. However, neither period resulted in a sustained use of the vernacular in the church services. The first successful effort to introduce modern Assyrian into the church services took place in the last quarter of the 20th century and was accomplished via the medium of a collection of hymns that were composed by His Holiness Mar Dinkha IV, the present Catholicos-Patriarch of the East.

SYRIAC HYMNS

It is well known that Syriac literature is rich in metrical poems and hymns. The fact that the bulk of the literary production of Mar Aprim the Great, one of the earliest and most important theologians of this tradition, consists of poems and hymns testifies to the importance of this type of literature in this tradition. Furthermore, a quick survey of the 150 Syriac language writers listed

¹ Also known as *Modern Syriac*, *Vernacular Syriac*, *Neo-Aramaic*, *Chaldean*, *Northeastern Neo-Aramaic*, and *Assyrian Aramaic*. For a variety of reasons, none of these names are entirely satisfactory because of their imprecision. The language is certainly a dialect (or dialects) of Aramaic. Since the term *Assyrian* is often used to describe the dialect of Akkadian used by the ancient Assyrians, I see no reason why their modern descendants cannot use *Assyrian* to describe the Aramaic dialect(s) that they use. For an interesting discussion of the subject as it relates to language and ethnicity, see Odisho, Edward Y., *The Sound System of Modern Assyrian (Neo-Aramaic)*, Wiesbaden, 1988.

A related issue that needs to be better understood is the use of Syriac as the language of worship among the members of the Church of the East in places such as India and Mongolia for whom it was clearly not a local spoken language. Certainly, the use of languages that are not spoken by the common people for religious services is not unique to the Church of the East and can be seen in other religions such as Judaism and Islam. We may presume that parts of the services, such as the readings from the Bible and sermons, were delivered in local languages as they certainly were for the Assyrian members of the Church who spoke Arabic or other living Aramaic dialects.⁶ Unfortunately the scanty remains of Church of the East literature in other languages do not help us have a clear picture of the relationship between Syriac and local languages. If we consider the example of India, the one non-Assyrian part of the Church of the East that has survived until the present time, we see the full use of Syriac in the church services. The attachment to Syriac survived the forced detachment of the Church in India from the rest of the Church of the East by the Portuguese and remained strong until the early part of the 20th century. I am unaware of any evidence of Malayalam translations of church services prior to this time.

These considerations help cast some light on the question of what it means to *know* a language. For example, can we assume that all the members of the Church of the East that lived in Mesopotamia spoke or understood Syriac as a living language while it remained a living language? We know that Syriac was replaced by Arabic as a spoken language in certain places. But was Syriac replaced in the same way by other living Aramaic dialects such as the ones that have collectively become what we today call Modern Assyrian? We know that the often made assumption of 19th century missionaries and travelers that the living Aramaic dialects were “debased” forms of Syriac is unfounded.⁷ Is it then possible that in many times and places, *knowing* Syriac in order to intelligently participate in church services, even for speakers of other Aramaic dialects and even while Syriac remained a living language, involved a different kind of knowledge than the ability to speak Syriac or understand it as a spoken language?

I believe that it takes much more than the use of a living language in order to ensure that the church services are “comprehensible” to its hearers. It will always require a sound education in the Christian faith and a clear understanding of how the words and actions of those services function to make the

⁶ To this day, the reading from the Gospel in the Eucharistic Liturgy is performed from a Gospel lectionary in Syriac. In most cases, the reading is extemporaneously translated into Assyrian by the celebrant.

⁷ For an excellent discussion of the relationship of these dialects to Syriac, see Kahn, Geoffrey, ‘The North-Eastern Neo-Aramaic Dialects’, *Journal of Semitic Studies* LII/1 (Spring 2007), pp. 8-13.

truths of the faith a reality for its participants. It is difficult for me to understand the historic success of the spread of the Church of the East in Asia among so many different cultures and peoples, so completely unaided by the coercive power of state support, and in the Syriac language, unless we take into account the ability of the church to successfully make the truths of the Christian faith intelligible to these people in ways that involve more than the use of their spoken language in the church services. Perhaps this partly explains the endurance of Syriac as the liturgical language of the Church of the East. To the modern mind, it may seem absurd to pray in a “dead” language, but that opinion does not appear to have had as much currency in the past as it does today.

MODERN ASSYRIAN LITERATURE IN THE NINEVEH PLAINS

The earliest evidence that we possess that attests to the existence of other living Aramaic dialects among the members of the Church of the East dates to the end of the 16th century. Within the context of a general revival of educational and literary activities in Syriac among the inhabitants of the villages of the Nineveh Plains, the first surviving examples of literature in the local Aramaic vernacular were created.⁸ Perhaps not surprisingly, metrical poems and hymns constitute a large part of the surviving examples. Although this body of literature is not large in comparison with later similar developments that took place in Urmia, it is significant because it was created through the efforts of the people themselves and the content and forms are generally inspired by those of Syriac literature. Alessandro Mengozzi, who has produced a valuable study, edition and translation of six hymns or *durikyāā* by two 17th century writers, Israel of Alqosh and Joseph of Telkepe, notes (citing Pennacchietti) that these hymns “can indeed be described as a ‘translation in Neo-Aramaic dress’ of the Classical Syriac liturgical tradition.”⁹ Although these hymns fit well within this tradition, the impetus which led to their creation did not extend to attempts to completely replace Syriac with the vernacular in the church services. Moreover, this experiment with writing in the vernacular appears to have had only a local influence and was largely unknown in other areas such as Urmia.

⁸ See Murre-van den Berg, H. L., ‘A Syrian Awakening: Alqosh and Urmia as Centres of Neo-Syriac Writing’, René Lavenant, S.J. (ed), *Symposium Syriacum VII*. (*Orientalia Christiania Analecta* 256), Rome 1998, 499-515 for an excellent survey of the development of this literature in comparison to the later development in Urmia.

⁹ Mengozzi, Alessandro, *Israel of Alqosh and Joseph of Telkepe. A Story in a Truthful Language: Religious Poems in Vernacular Syriac (North Iraq, 17th Century)*, Louvain, 2002 (CSCO 590, *Scriptores Syri* 231), p. 14.

MODERN ASSYRIAN LITERATURE IN URMIA

The development of modern Assyrian literature based on the Urmia dialect some two hundred and forty years later was initiated by the efforts of the missionaries of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. The strategy of the American Board in launching their mission to the Assyrians (the *Nestorian Mission*) in 1835 was to work among the native *nominal* Christians to improve their educational and spiritual status so that they could serve as effective missionaries to their Muslim neighbors. Their initial impressions of the Church of the East were quite favorable. The Assyrians were praised for

“...their extreme liberality toward other sects – their ideas of open communion, and their entire rejection of auricular confession, (that efficient police system of the other old churches)...”¹⁰

Other aspects of the beliefs of the Assyrians such as their rejection of the title “Mother of God”, the absence of religious pictures and statues in their churches and their reverence for the Bible led the Americans to refer to them as *Protestants of the East*. The instructions of the Board to the first missionary, Justin Perkins, stated that:

“A primary object which you will have in view, will be to convince the people, that you come among them with no design to take away their religious privileges, nor to subject them to any foreign ecclesiastical power.”¹¹

The Assyrians welcomed the American missionaries and cooperated with them in their efforts to learn Assyrian, establish schools, create a written language based on the vernacular, preach the Gospel and print books.¹² Assyrian churches were opened to the missionaries for preaching in modern Assyrian. This preaching often took place following the traditional Assyrian religious services of morning and evening prayers and the Eucharistic Liturgy.

Among the many books that were published by the American Mission press over the life of the mission, we find no less than eleven editions of hymnals in

¹⁰ Perkins, Justin, *A Residence of Eight Years in Persia, among the Nestorian Christians with Notices of the Muhammedans*, Andover, 1843, p. 26.

¹¹ Perkins, p. 31.

¹² A good comprehensive modern history of the American Mission to the Assyrians is yet to be written. For the period covering its inception until its transfer from the American Board to the Presbyterian Church, see Anderson, Rufus, *History of the Missions of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions to the Oriental Churches*, 2 vols., Boston, 1872. For an excellent modern study of the creation of the modern Assyrian literary language, see Murre-van den Berg, Heleen, *From a Spoken to a Written Language: The Introduction and Development of Literary Urmia Aramaic in the Nineteenth Century*, Leiden, 1999. For details about the establishment of the American Mission Press, see Coakley, J. F., ‘Edward Breath and the Typography of Syriac’, *Harvard Library Bulletin* 6/4 (1995), 41-64.

“We have, from the first, been fully impressed, in attempting to reduce this spoken dialect to writing, with the high importance of shaping it, so far as practicable, to the very perfect model of the ancient Syriac; and we strenuously urge on the Nestorians the continued study of the latter, as a *learned language*.”¹⁷

Although Syriac was often referred to as a *dead* and *obsolete* language, we occasionally find complimentary references to its literature:

“Of the venerable ancient Syriac, once so highly and extensively cultivated and so rich in its literary treasures, we now find, as of the unfortunate people who use it, little more than its ashes.”¹⁸

In the early period of the mission the Americans did print some books in Syriac. The very first book that they started to print when their press arrived in 1840 was a liturgical Psalter according to the usage of the Church of the East.¹⁹ Perkins explicitly states that this book fulfilled an earlier promise to the Assyrian clergy that it would be the first product of their press.²⁰ The complete text of the New and Old Testaments in Syriac, with modern Assyrian translations in parallel columns, soon followed.²¹ A later pocket edition of the Psalms and New Testament in Syriac appeared in 1874.²² Beyond these biblical texts, the American mission never printed any other work of Syriac literature.

In the course of listing arguments for including the Syriac text in the 1852 edition of the Old Testament, one of the missionaries, A. H. Wright, states:

“It ought to be printed to furnish the Nestorians with a classic in their venerable language; which they may study to the exclusion of works that abound among them, of a very objectionable character.”²³

¹⁷ Perkins, p. 14.

¹⁸ Perkins, p. 14.

¹⁹ Darlow & Moule 8994

²⁰ Perkins, p. 446.

²¹ The New Testament appeared in 1846 (Darlow & Moule 8996 and 9029). The modern Assyrian translation that it contains was made from the Syriac Peshitta version. The Old Testament appeared in 1852 (Darlow & Moule 8999 and 9030). The modern Assyrian translation in this case was made from Hebrew. The missionaries in Urmia had to face some opposition from the American Bible Society back home to their desire to translate the New Testament from the Syriac and to include the Syriac in their edition of the Old Testament. In both cases, the missionaries on the ground argued that to do otherwise might cause the mission to become suspect in the eyes of the Assyrians. For details of the dispute and how it was resolved, see Dirksen, Piet, ‘The Urmia Edition of the Peshitta: The Story Behind the Text’, *Textus: Studies of the Hebrew University Bible Project* XVIII (1995), 157-167.

²² The Old Testament in Syriac was never reprinted by the Americans. Darlow & Moule 9004 appears to be a mistake as there is no evidence of a Syriac edition of the complete Bible being printed in the Eastern script in New York in 1874 or at any time thereafter. The Syriac of the 1852 Old Testament edition was reprinted photographically by the Trinitarian Bible Society in London in 1913 under the guidance of Shamasha Yosip d’Bet Qelayta.

²³ Dirksen, p. 165.

The liturgical texts and services of the Assyrians likewise receive both a measure of praise and scorn from the missionaries. Speaking of the Eucharistic Liturgy, Perkins states that:

“Though the whole service was far more simple than the disgusting routine of ceremonies which attend it in the other oriental churches, still, it was but too evident a heartless form.”²⁴

The services are often referred to as *mummery*²⁵ and a *senseless routine of forms* and the prayers as *chattering noise*.²⁶ And yet, we also find Perkins admitting that “The major part of their liturgy, however, is composed of unexceptionable, excellent matter.”²⁷ Fifty pages later, Perkins states:

“The very prominent places which this wonderful Psalm [Psalm 51] and other portions of Scripture of like import, hold in the Nestorian Liturgy, have often strongly impressed me with the former comparative purity of this ancient church, and the general excellence of the matter embodied in their church service. At the same time, there is more or less that is exceptionable in it, which ought never to be translated.”²⁸

Although many of the missionaries had studied Syriac, it seems that they were not very well acquainted with its literature as their comments often appear to reflect a fear and loathing of the unknown. It may also well be the case that they simply did not appreciate Syriac literature. Perhaps they avoided translating Syriac prayers and hymns into the vernacular because their potential desire to edit out parts they considered objectionable could have caused resentment among the Assyrians.

THE SEPARATION OF THE EVANGELICAL ASSYRIANS

After thirty-five years of missionary activity within the Church of the East, the Americans and some Assyrians came to the conclusion that the church was beyond reform. Starting in 1870 a separate Assyrian Protestant church organization was formed.²⁹ However inevitable this formal separation may have appeared to the parties at the time, and to their present day descendants, it is important to understand that it did not take place overnight. The process of separation was gradual and appears to have involved conflicting attitudes concerning the administration of communion.

²⁴ Perkins, p. 187.

²⁵ Perkins, p. 187.

²⁶ Perkins, p. 243.

²⁷ Perkins, p. 417.

²⁸ Perkins, p. 457.

²⁹ See Anderson, Vol. 2, pp. 312-319 for an account of the specific incidents that led to the separation.

With the advantage of hindsight, it is easy to see that the Americans' preaching of the Gospel, accompanied by scripture readings and the singing of hymns constitutes a typical Protestant worship service. For many years, these services co-existed with the worship services of the Church of the East. Although the Americans had praised the open communion policy of the Assyrians, they did not practice open communion in the same way. Their interpretation of scripture (1 Corinthians 11:27-29) caused them to admit to their communion services only those that had been examined and had given evidence of being *pious*.³⁰ They did not take the communion of churches that did not adhere to a similar practice. Following an episode in which Perkins successfully avoided taking communion at an Assyrian service, he expressed the following wish:

"May they become Christians in heart and life, as well as in name; and then what a privilege will it be to unite with them at the table of our Lord."³¹

In March of 1836, the curiosity of some Assyrians in the American form of communion service prompted the Americans to allow their participation:

"We accordingly in this instance admitted him, and the bishops and priests who live in our families, to partake with us. Though we have much reason to fear that they are still in the bondage of sin, we dared not close the door of the Lord's table against their earnest importunity – regularly professing Christians as they are, while their outward conduct is in general unexceptional."³²

By 1853, the Americans had begun to regularly admit a select group of *pious* Assyrians to their communion services:

"An interesting fact in the history of this mission is the admission, during the last year, of Nestorian converts to the Lord's table with the missionaries, apart from others. About seventy on one occasion, and nearly one hundred on another, including Mar Yohannan and Mar Elias, thus partook of the communion in the chapel on the mission premises, the ordering of the services being such as the missionaries have been accustomed to when by themselves. Reformatory movements, in regard to what is objectionable in the usages of the Nestorian church, gain strength."³³

As time went on, the number of converts steadily grew. In the annual report for 1856, an explanation is given concerning the selection process:

"Though separate churches have not yet been organized, none but pious Nestorians, for the last two or three years, have been admitted to communion with the mission church. There has been a careful personal examination of each individual with a

³⁰ It goes without saying that this practice of examination seems ironically similar to the practice of auricular confession which the Americans had so vehemently ridiculed and condemned.

³¹ Perkins, p. 256.

³² Perkins, p. 263.

³³ American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, *Report of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions*, Boston, 1855, p. 87.

view to this. About two hundred have thus communed with the mission; and it is thought that from one hundred and fifty to two hundred more, among the whole people, are worthy of a place at the Lord's table."³⁴

The participation of Assyrians in the American communion services gradually led some to withdraw from participation in Church of the East services:

"Without any rending severance, most of these communicants quietly withdraw from their old organization in the observance of the ordinances, which in most cases there are very heartless and indiscriminate; and a clear distinction between the "holy and the vile," is thus becoming well understood by all classes."³⁵

The series of incidents that appear to have provoked the formal separation in 1870 involved the exposure of some Assyrian *converts* to the Anglican Protestant tradition. Within this tradition they were able to discern a high regard for liturgical services and an Episcopal form of church government that was similar to their own tradition. This led to a revival of sorts among the Assyrians in which they asserted their traditional worship services and practices. The American response to this was quite negative.³⁶

"He [Qasha Yokhannan of Geog Tapa] and others are now administering the communion every few weeks to the whole people, without distinction of character. They also enjoin the fasts and saints' days, resume the use of the liturgy in ancient Syriac, burn incense daily, bow before the altar, and make the sign of the cross; ... With the return of these old superstitions, there is also a painful throwing off of moral restraint..."³⁷

The Assyrians valued the positive contributions that the Americans had made in the areas of education and in the creation of a written language out of their vernacular. They also appreciated their efforts and concern for their spiritual growth and well being. However, for the majority of Assyrians, the complete abandonment of their own traditions and cultural expressions of the Christian faith was simply too high a price to pay in return for the benefits they had received. At the time of the formal separation, the Assyrian population of Urmia was estimated at about 30,000 people. The members of the newly organized Assyrian Protestant church amounted to 730 people.³⁸ By 1918, the membership

³⁴ American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, *Report of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions*, Boston, 1857, p. 90.

³⁵ American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, *Report of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions*, Boston, 1859, p. 81.

³⁶ Even an early and long faithful friend of the Americans such as Mar Yokhannan, who's marriage can be attributed to indirect Protestant influence, received a share of condemnation for his "Old Churchism" and his piety which was characterized as "never entirely satisfactory."

³⁷ Anderson, Vol. 2, pp. 318-319.

³⁸ Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America, *The Annual Report of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America*, New York, 1872, p. 60.

had grown to 2,746 communicants and 2,994 catechumens and adherents³⁹, or just about 19% of the population, if we can assume that the number of Assyrians in Urmia remained relatively constant.⁴⁰

USE OF MODERN ASSYRIAN FOLLOWING THE SEPARATION

As with all such ecclesiastical splits, time has a way of healing old wounds and we must not imagine that the Assyrians who separated from each other remained entirely estranged. Many Assyrians still attended the American village and secondary schools and read the products of their press. However, the split does seem to have had a chilling effect on efforts to incorporate the use of modern Assyrian into the worship services of the Church of the East.

Preaching and scripture readings continued to be delivered in the vernacular, as they had before the arrival of the Americans.⁴¹ A few hints have survived here and there that point to what may have been efforts to introduce modern Assyrian into the worship services on a wider scale. Harvard Syr 144 is, according to William F. Macomber, "...a translation into vernacular Aramaic of the chants for scattered Sundays and feasts arranged without order."⁴² Unfortunately we know nothing certain about the date or purpose of this effort at producing a modern Assyrian translation of the *Khudra*.

In 1900, the *Patriarchal Church Committee* was founded by a group of Assyrians, including Shamasha Yosip d'Bet Qelayta, to work to preserve the Church of the East in Urmia in the face of the recent success of the Russian Orthodox Mission which had attracted the majority of the Assyrians from all denominations. In one of their meetings they specifically state that the funeral service:

"...must be performed in accordance with the teachings of the fathers, and the whole service must be conducted in the modern Syriac so that all who are present may understand, and a sermon must be preached at the close."⁴³

³⁹ Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America, *The Annual Report of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America*, New York, 1918, p. 293.

⁴⁰ For the sake of comparison, the number of Catholic Assyrians in Urmia in 1913 amounted to 7,800 persons. However, these retained the bulk of their traditions in the worship services of the Chaldean Catholic Church. (Wilmschurst, David, *The Ecclesiastical Organization of the Church of the East, 1318-1913*, Louvain, 2000, p. 362).

⁴¹ Although it is probable that what passed for preaching before the Americans arrived was not comparable to that of the Americans in style and content. The incorporation of a modern style sermon in the services of the Church of the East may be seen as an example in which the Assyrians were positively influenced by the Americans without having to give up anything of their own valued tradition.

⁴² Macomber, William F., 'A List of the Known Manuscripts of the Chaldean Hudra', *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 36 (1970), p. 134.

⁴³ Malech, George David, *History of the Syrian Nation and the Old Evangelical-Apostolic Church of the East*, Minneapolis, 1910, p. 356.

missionaries in charge; a number of whom had been born in Urmia and grew up speaking Assyrian, as well as English, as their native language. One of these was William A. Shedd, the last head of the American mission to the Assyrians as such. In an article he wrote in 1895, the sentiments he expressed are remarkable in contrast to those of the earlier missionaries:

“We need a fuller knowledge of the old church and a deeper sympathy with its peculiar trials and dangers. Superstitions, old customs, and traditions are elements in the life of the people which we need to understand. Furthermore, we are losing in some measure an influence of the highest importance in not making more use of the past as an incentive to present achievement. Martyrology, in spite of its extravagances, has been a power in the Church everywhere. Such a martyr history as that of Mar Shimon bar Saba’ee, killed by the Sassanian king Shapor, is too precious to be forgotten. Scholarship is fostered by the memories of former scholars, and this nation has many honorable names. We have no more right to doubt God’s providence in the past than in the present, and the history of one’s own nation is a book of God to him.

It may seem to be a strange Providence that has brought us children of the New World, even by our Old World ancestry only a few centuries removed from barbarism, to be the guides of this old apostolic Church and ancient people. May God give us the wisdom to lead them aright, and to be warned and encouraged by the lessons of the past. May we and our generation be worthy of those who once before gave the Gospel to these lands, often sealing their testimony with their blood.”⁵⁰

THE GENOCIDE OF 1915-1918 AND AFTER

Unfortunately the opportunity for the Church of the East and the Americans to come to a better understanding in their ecclesiastical relationship became a victim of the horrendous destruction, loss of life and displacement suffered by the Assyrians during WWI. Once again in their long history, the Assyrian people were called upon to “seal their testimony” to their religious beliefs and now their national existence “with their blood.”⁵¹

In the immediate aftermath of the Genocide of 1915-1918, the Assyrians were naturally occupied with matters of physical and national survival. The work of the foreign missions in Urmia was also a victim of the Genocide. The

history and traditions of the Church of the East and possibly reconsider the wisdom in allowing a separation in the first place.

⁵⁰ Shedd, William A., ‘Relation of the Protestant Missionary Effort to the Nestorian Church’, *Missionary Review of the World* 8 (1895) p. 746.

⁵¹ Here it must be remembered that William A. Shedd himself was a victim of the Genocide. For his life and the circumstances of his death while providing selfless service to the Assyrians on the exodus from Urmia, see Shedd, Mary Lewis, *The Measure of a Man: The Life of William Ambrose Shedd, Missionary to Persia*, New York, 1922.

THE HYMNS OF PATRIARCH MAR DINKHA IV⁵⁹

His Holiness was born on September 15, 1935 in the village of Derbendoki in northern Iraq.⁶⁰ He received his ecclesiastical education from his grandfather, Qasha Binyamin, and from the learned and saintly metropolitan Mar Yosip Khnanisho. He was ordained a deacon on September 12, 1949 and a priest on August 15, 1957. Shortly afterwards, he was sent to serve as a priest in Iran. He was consecrated a bishop for the diocese of Iran on February 11, 1962 by His Holiness Mar Eshai Shimun. On October 17, 1976, he was consecrated Catholicos-Patriarch of the East.

In considering the inspiration for the collection of hymns that His Holiness has composed, we are on safe ground when we consider that his teacher and mentor, Mar Yosip Khnanisho, was a well known writer of hymns in Syriac.⁶¹ That they are composed in modern Assyrian is probably partly to be attributed to the influence of the 19 years he served as priest and bishop of the diocese of Iran. These years chiefly coincide with the remarkable flowering of modern Assyrian literature associated with the activities of the *Assyrian Youth Cultural Society*.

Although His Holiness began to compose hymns while he was still bishop of Iran, they were not published or introduced for general use within the Assyrian speaking parishes of the Church of the East until after he became Patriarch. Like Mar Aprim the Great before him, His Holiness introduced the hymns via a program that encouraged the establishment or reinvigoration of choirs in each parish that specifically targeted the involvement of youth and women.⁶²

Details of the thirty-two hymns that have been published and are in regular use are given in the appendix. The edition of the texts that has been used for this analysis is that which is contained in the book *Liturgy, Hymns and Songs of the Assyrian Church of the East* (Milpitas, California, 1997). This edition carries the approval and authorization of the Patriarch. It includes the Assyrian texts along with transliterations into the Latin alphabet; musical notation for all of the hymns by the famous Assyrian composer Rabi Alexander (Shoora)

⁵⁹ Here I would like to express my grateful appreciation for the help that I have received from Rev. Antwan Bet Lachin who graciously took time from his busy schedule to answer general questions about the hymns and to Mr. Raymond W. David for making the initial translations of the three hymns presented here.

⁶⁰ For his biography, see Mar Aprem, *Patriarch Mar Dinkha IV: The Man and His Message*, Trichur, 2004.

⁶¹ For two of his hymns, see Michaelian, Alexander and Dinkha, Rev. Samuel, *Liturgy, Hymns and Songs of the Assyrian Church of the East*, Milpitas, 1997, nos. 65 and 77.

⁶² The names of women choir members, some of whom have become well known popular singers include Linda George, Marlene Khoshaba, Mona Khoshaba, Juliet David, Suzie Binyamin, Silvia Auraha, Shamiram Auraham and Nadia Khoshaba.

Michaelian; an outline of the Eucharistic Liturgy showing the parts of the choir in relation to those of the priest and deacons; a number of hymns in Syriac (including two by Mar Yosip Khnanisho); and modern Assyrian versions of four⁶³ Syriac hymns translated by the editor of the book, Rev. Samuel Dinkha.

Most of the hymns are composed for different occasions that take place within the liturgical year. Seven are for the Feast of the Nativity; one for the Feast of the Epiphany; one for Lent; three for the Feast of Hosanna or Palm Sunday; one for Good Friday (or the Friday of Sadness as it is called in the Church of the East); six for the Feast of the Resurrection; one for the Feast of the Ascension; and seven are suitable for use on ordinary days. One has been composed for use on the occasion of the consecration of priests. All of these hymns are sung while the laity are receiving communion. Since the Church of the East administers communion under both species, it can often take a considerable length of time for everyone to communicate. Therefore it is important to have a large body of such hymns available for use.

Of the remaining hymns, two are *Tūrgāme* which are sung before the reading of the Gospel of the day. One of these is for ordinary days and the other is for the Feast of the Nativity. The remaining two hymns are also used within the main body of the Eucharistic Liturgy and these will be examined in greater detail below.

The hymns are metrical compositions that are composed to be sung to traditional tunes that are used for the Syriac hymns of the Church of the East. In a few cases, the tunes have been slightly modified to fit the new texts and in a couple of examples the tunes are not identifiable. The tunes, or *qale*, are indicated by the titles of the Syriac hymns that they are modeled upon. Most of the tunes that are used have only one example of a hymn in the collection. Five have two examples each, one has three examples each and one, **ܕܢܝܢܐ ܕܡܝܚܐ**, has five examples.

A variety of syllabic patterns for the stanzas of the hymns are employed. The most often used patterns are two lines of three four-syllable units per stanza (4+4+4 4+4+4), which is sometimes called *Narsaita* after Mar Narsai, and two lines of two seven-syllable units (7+7 7+7) per stanza which is called *Aprimaita* after Mar Aprim the Great. An example of a hymn that employs a more complex syllabic pattern is number 26 which consists of two lines of one four-syllable unit followed by one five-syllable unit; one line of two eight syllable units and one line of two six-syllable units in each stanza (4+5 4+5 8+8 6+6).

Special literary features include the use of alphabetic acrostics in which the first letter of the first word in a stanza begins with a letter of the alphabet in order. 21 hymns exhibit alphabetic acrostics, 7 of which extend to the full 22 letters of the alphabet. Rhyme is achieved by having the last word of each

⁶³ Nos. 28, 57, 97 and 120.

line or unit in a stanza end in the same syllable. 6 hymns have the lines within each stanza end in the same syllable. 19 hymns have the units within each stanza end in the same syllable. Occasionally, the rhyme is achieved with syllables that are not written with the same letters but are close in sound. The most common substitution is **ج** for **ك**. Hymn 29 features concatenation in which the last unit of each stanza is the same as the first unit of the following stanza.

The language of the hymns is generally simple and direct as befits their popular and devotional purpose. The literary features that are employed enhance the experience of the worshipers and the choice of vocabulary ensures the comprehension of their messages. The “acrobatic use of lexical and stylistic resources” that “severely compromise the reading and understanding of the text”⁶⁴ is appropriately absent from these compositions. Two hymns (4 and 16) are supplied with short vocabularies giving modern Assyrian explanations for Syriac words. However, some of these seem unnecessary: **ܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ** - **ܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ** - **ܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ**.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ - الْحَمْدُ

A closer look at three of these hymns will help to understand their function and appreciate their appeal.

TŪRGĀMĀ

The literal meaning of the word is ‘interpretation’ or ‘translation’. *Tūrgāme* are hymns that are sung before the reading of the Gospel of the day during the Eucharistic Liturgy. Many of them were composed by Mar Abdisho of Nisibis. 40 examples are found in the liturgical book which takes its name from this type of hymn.⁶⁵ One of these 40 *Tūrgāme* is actually appointed to be sung before the reading of the Epistle, but this has long been obsolete in the Church of the East. Of the remaining 39, one is used for ordinary days and the others are for special days, such as the feasts of the Lord, the Sundays in Lent, and certain commemorations of Saints.

It is sometimes said that these hymns originated as a replacement of a homily that was given before the reading of the Gospel. It is difficult to accept this explanation because the *Tūrgāme* are not specific enough to serve as true commentaries of individual readings. The Syriac *Tūrgāma* that is used for ordinary days serves as an invitation to the believers to listen to the words of God in the reading and places the specific message that they are about to hear into a general framework of salvation through Jesus Christ.

The ceremony that accompanies the reading of the Gospel in the Church of the East is elaborate and full of symbolism. With great ceremony, the celebrant

⁶⁴ Mengozzi, p. 58.

⁶⁵ One of the more recent editions of this book was published by Daniel Benjamin in 1996:

ՀԱՅԻ ՆԱԾՈՑԱՆ ԱՇԽԱՏԱԿԱՆ ԴԱՋԱՐԱՆԱԿԱՆ ԵՎ ՀԱՅԻ

takes the Gospel from the altar and holds it up with the Cross of Blessing placed over it. The Gospel and the Cross are the most important symbols of Jesus Christ. The sanctuary represents heaven and the lectern on the *bema*, which was originally in the nave, represents earth. The action of taking the Gospel and the Cross and holding them up, singing Hallelujah; blessing the people and proceeding to the lectern for the reading represents the descent of Jesus from heaven to earth to bring the message of salvation to mankind.

ܐܘܕܢܐ ܕܕܥܕܐ ܠܗܘܝܬܐ ܕܨܬܐ ܕܟܬܐ

TŪRGĀMĀ BEFORE THE GOSPEL ON ORDINARY DAYS

ܠ

ܠܒܐܬ ܡܬܗܡܬܝܝܢ: ܕܬܝܠ ܡܕܥܬܐ: ܡܕܥܬܐ ܕܡܡܕܝܝܢ:
ܕܥܕܐ ܚܝܝܝܢ: ܡܬܥܕܐ ܡܡܥܝܝܢ: ܕܥܬܐ ܡܬܥܝܝܢ:

We are believers in the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit
Jesus Christ in two natures and two *qnome*

ܕ

ܕܬܝܬ ܡܕܥܝܝܢ: ܕܡܬܥܝܝܢ: ܕܥܬܐ ܡܬܥܝܝܢ:
ܕܥܕܐ ܕܥܬܐ: ܕܥܬܐ ܕܥܬܐ: ܕܥܬܐ ܕܥܬܐ:

The children of the East believed in Jesus Christ
The Son of God Who clothed Himself in a human body

ܕ

ܕܥܬܐ ܕܥܬܐ: ܕܥܬܐ ܕܥܬܐ: ܕܥܬܐ ܕܥܬܐ:
ܕܥܬܐ ܕܥܬܐ: ܕܥܬܐ ܕܥܬܐ: ܕܥܬܐ ܕܥܬܐ:

The Apostles planted a spiritual garden in the city of Edessa
The children of Assyria rushed and received baptism

ܕ

ܕܥܬܐ ܕܥܬܐ: ܕܥܬܐ ܕܥܬܐ: ܕܥܬܐ ܕܥܬܐ:
ܕܥܬܐ ܕܥܬܐ: ܕܥܬܐ ܕܥܬܐ: ܕܥܬܐ ܕܥܬܐ:

O Christian cleanse your heart from every injustice
Do penance and draw near to the compassionate Lord

ܐ

ܕܥܬܐ ܕܥܬܐ: ܕܥܬܐ ܕܥܬܐ: ܕܥܬܐ ܕܥܬܐ:
ܕܥܬܐ ܕܥܬܐ: ܕܥܬܐ ܕܥܬܐ: ܕܥܬܐ ܕܥܬܐ:

O children of the Church let us engage in fast and prayer
And ask the Lord to protect our Assyrian Nation

[illegible]

This modern Assyrian *Tūrgāma* for ordinary days retains the opening confession in the Trinity that is found in the Syriac version. This is immediately followed by a traditional Church of the East Christological formula. Here ‘Jesus Christ’ stands in place of ‘one person’. The language that is used to describe the Incarnation (“clothed Himself with a body like a human”) is also a favorite metaphor of the Church of the East. The next two stanzas recall the specific historical circumstances of the reception of the Christian faith among the members of the Church of the East. ‘Children of the East’ can be seen as a somewhat general but traditional reference that is similar to the word ‘Easterners’ often found in earlier literature of the Church to describe itself. The identification of Assyrians with Edessa represents an updated historical understanding of our ancestry. The reality that we are being brought into close contact with our Savior in hearing His words accounts for the plea for repentance via the time honored methods of fasting and prayer and provides the faithful an opportunity to make a special request for the protection of ‘our Assyrian Nation’.

COMFORT, O LORD

The next hymn under consideration is composed along the lines of a funeral *madrasha*. It is sung during the Eucharistic Liturgy while the celebrant is saying the *kushapa* for the departed. A *kushapa* is a supplication said by the celebrant in a low voice. The *kushapa* of the departed is only said when one or more of the departed faithful are being remembered during the service. The prayer cannot be said on any of the seven feasts of the Lord.⁶⁶

While the celebrant is quietly reciting the *kushapa*, the choir sings this hymn. The tune is very sad and is well known to members of the church from its use in the funeral service. The hymn is a beautiful prayer for the living, asking God to relieve their grief and reminding them that while the grave is the ultimate fate for all there is hope in the resurrection of Christ. Of particular note is the last stanza where we can again see something of the traditional theology of the Church of the East which stresses that the real suffering of Jesus on the cross was in His human nature alone.

⁶⁶ Nativity, Epiphany, Resurrection, Pentecost, Ascension, Transfiguration and the feast of the Cross.

ܐܝܬܝܚܝܬܝܢ ܡܕܢܝܢ (ܡܡܬܝܢ ܕܕܒܝܒ ܐܠܡܝܬܝܢ)

COMFORT, O LORD

ܐܝܬܝܚܝܬܝܢ ܡܕܢܝܢ: ܕܠܒ ܕܡܝܬܝܢ ܡܢ:
ܡܡܬܝܢ ܕܡܡܬܝܢ ܕܡܡܬܝܢ: ܡܡܬܝܢ ܡܡܬܝܢ ܡܢ:

Comfort, O Lord, those who are mournful
Seated in sorrow because of the death of their beloved one

ܡܡܬܝܢ ܡܕܢܝܢ: ܕܠܒ ܕܡܝܬܝܢ ܡܢ:
ܡܡܬܝܢ ܡܕܢܝܢ: ܡܡܬܝܢ ܡܕܢܝܢ: ܡܡܬܝܢ ܡܕܢܝܢ:
ܡܡܬܝܢ ܡܕܢܝܢ: ܡܡܬܝܢ ܡܕܢܝܢ: ܡܡܬܝܢ ܡܕܢܝܢ:
ܡܡܬܝܢ ܡܕܢܝܢ: ܡܡܬܝܢ ܡܕܢܝܢ: ܡܡܬܝܢ ܡܕܢܝܢ:

Bitter death has broken the body
Guarded in the grave until the coming of Christ
There it awaits the resurrection of the dead
To be praised for good conduct

ܡܡܬܝܢ ܡܕܢܝܢ: ܡܡܬܝܢ ܡܕܢܝܢ: ܡܡܬܝܢ ܡܕܢܝܢ:
ܡܡܬܝܢ ܡܕܢܝܢ: ܡܡܬܝܢ ܡܕܢܝܢ: ܡܡܬܝܢ ܡܕܢܝܢ:
ܡܡܬܝܢ ܡܕܢܝܢ: ܡܡܬܝܢ ܡܕܢܝܢ: ܡܡܬܝܢ ܡܕܢܝܢ:
ܡܡܬܝܢ ܡܕܢܝܢ: ܡܡܬܝܢ ܡܕܢܝܢ: ܡܡܬܝܢ ܡܕܢܝܢ:

Jesus Christ, remove the dark veil
From the saddened heart of our earthly nature
Lord accept this offering
That is offered by your servants O compassionate One

ܡܡܬܝܢ ܡܕܢܝܢ: ܡܡܬܝܢ ܡܕܢܝܢ: ܡܡܬܝܢ ܡܕܢܝܢ:
ܡܡܬܝܢ ܡܕܢܝܢ: ܡܡܬܝܢ ܡܕܢܝܢ: ܡܡܬܝܢ ܡܕܢܝܢ:
ܡܡܬܝܢ ܡܕܢܝܢ: ܡܡܬܝܢ ܡܕܢܝܢ: ܡܡܬܝܢ ܡܕܢܝܢ:
ܡܡܬܝܢ ܡܕܢܝܢ: ܡܡܬܝܢ ܡܕܢܝܢ: ܡܡܬܝܢ ܡܕܢܝܢ:

Jesus the Savior You sacrificed yourself
And accepted suffering in your human nature
And drank the bitter cup of death
You taught us hope in the resurrection

The final hymn under consideration is sung at the commencement of the rite of fraction and consignation which involves the breaking of the bread and the commingling of the bread and the wine. The rite symbolizes the breaking of the body and the shedding of the blood of Jesus on the cross. Since the purpose of the sacrifice of Christ is the forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with God, the faithful are called upon to focus on forgiveness and reconciliation in preparation to receiving the sacrament.

The hymn is loosely modeled on the Lord's Prayer in the first three stanzas. The requests of this prayer include guidance to be good Christians, forgiveness of sins and protection. In addition, a prominent place is given to a request for the unity of the Assyrian Nation and concord among its members.

ܬܬܝܕ ܕܒܬܬܬܝܕ (ܬܬܝܕ ܕܕܕܐܒ ܕܕܐܒܝܐ)

OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN

ܬܬܝܕ ܕܒܬܬܬܝܕ: ܬܬܝܕ ܕܒܬܬܬܝܕ:
ܡܫܝܝܬ ܕܐܕܐܡ: ܡܫܝܝܬ ܕܐܕܐܡ:

Our Father in heaven Holy in your nature
Guide us to be good Christians

ܬܬܝܕ ܕܒܬܬܬܝܕ: ܬܬܝܕ ܕܒܬܬܬܝܕ:
ܬܬܝܕ ܕܒܬܬܬܝܕ: ܬܬܝܕ ܕܒܬܬܬܝܕ:

May your kingdom come; spread your blessings
Upon the children of your church; guard them with your righteousness

ܬܬܝܕ ܕܒܬܬܬܝܕ: ܬܬܝܕ ܕܒܬܬܬܝܕ:
ܬܬܝܕ ܕܒܬܬܬܝܕ: ܬܬܝܕ ܕܒܬܬܬܝܕ:

All of us, in one voice, beseech of you
To forgive our faults and pardon our sins

ܬܬܝܕ ܕܒܬܬܬܝܕ: ܬܬܝܕ ܕܒܬܬܬܝܕ:
ܬܬܝܕ ܕܒܬܬܬܝܕ: ܬܬܝܕ ܕܒܬܬܬܝܕ:

Compassionate Jesus, saving Father
Your mighty cross is a guardian for us

CONCLUSION

The appropriateness of the use of the vernacular in the church services seems self evident. For the Indian and American members of the Church of the East this has already taken place. The Assyrian members have been somewhat behind in this effort. I believe that this is largely due to their reverence for the Syriac language and its literature, even when most Assyrians do not have the skills to understand that language or literature. The fear of loss of an important heritage, which has been diligently preserved and handed down by our forefathers, and the preoccupation with matters of basic survival have engendered a cautious approach to the introduction of the vernacular.

The body of hymns that His Holiness has composed in modern Assyrian and the program that he employed for their introduction can be seen as a modest, but nonetheless groundbreaking, effort at renewal within the Church of the East. I believe that they have been successful for a number of reasons. They employ the vernacular, but they are modeled on Syriac hymns with regard to their metrical composition, tunes and their function within the church services. The themes that are employed touch the hearts of their hearers in a very deep way. Pride in our history and respect for our identity are important to Assyrians. Equally important is the concern and love for our nation and its future. The entirely appropriate desire to pray for the well being of the nation is welcomed by the faithful. In recognition of this effort, His Holiness well deserves the honor of the title of the *Assyrian Harp of the Holy Spirit*.

The success of this effort has inspired others to compose hymns in Assyrian and to translate Syriac hymns into Assyrian and even into English. It has also initiated a process by which other parts of the services, principally the Eucharistic Liturgy, are being translated and celebrated in modern Assyrian today. His Holiness has given approval to a translation of the Eucharistic Liturgy into modern Assyrian which appeared in 2001.⁶⁷ The printed edition of this effort is not complete, but there are efforts underway to bring out a complete authorized edition in modern Assyrian as well as in English. Whether these efforts to incorporate the use of modern Assyrian into the worship services of the Church of the East will result in the complete abandonment of Syriac remains to be seen.

⁶⁷ *The Order of Holy Qurbana for the Use of the Faithful*, San Jose, 2001. This edition includes the Syriac text as well as translations into English and Assyrian. It also includes transliteration of the Syriac into Latin characters. Unfortunately it is marred by presenting an incomplete text. For the complete Syriac text with an English translation and transliteration of the Syriac into Latin characters, see *The Order of the Holy Qurbana According to the Liturgy of Mar Addai and Mar Mari, the Blessed Apostles (For the use of the Faithful)*, San Jose, 2004 which was compiled by Rev. Lawrance Namato.

APPENDIX

1. *Tūrgāmā before the Gospel on Ordinary Days*

Title	ܐܘܕܝܬܐ ܕܬܘܪܓܡܐ ܕܥܝܠܐ ܕܫܬܝܠ ܕܟܠܝܐ
Tune (ܩܠܝܢܐ)	ܐܘܕܝܬܐ
Stanzas	Six
Lines	Two per stanza
Meter	Two lines of three four-syllable units per stanza: 4+4+4 4+4+4
Acrostic	First word of each stanza begins with a letter of the alphabet in order from ܐ to ܝ
Use	Sung before the reading of the Gospel lection on ordinary days during the Eucharistic Liturgy

2. *Comfort O Lord*

Title	ܐܘܕܝܬܐ ܕܬܘܪܓܡܐ ܕܥܝܠܐ ܕܫܬܝܠ ܕܟܠܝܐ
Tune (ܩܠܝܢܐ)	ܕܬܘܪܓܡܐ ܕܥܝܠܐ ܕܫܬܝܠ ܕܟܠܝܐ
Stanzas	One refrain (‘ūnāyā) and three stanzas (bātē)
Lines	Two in the refrain and four in each stanza
Meter	Two lines of two five-syllable units in the refrain: 5+5 5+5 Four lines of two five-syllable units in each stanza: 5+5 5+5 5+5 5+5
Rhyme	Both lines in the refrain end in the same syllable and each line within a stanza ends in the same syllable
Use	Sung while the celebrant is saying the Kūshāpā of the Departed during the Eucharistic Liturgy

3. *Our Father in Heaven*

Title	ܩܠܝܢܐ ܕܬܘܪܓܡܐ ܕܥܝܠܐ ܕܫܬܝܠ ܕܟܠܝܐ
Tune (ܩܠܝܢܐ)	ܕܬܘܪܓܡܐ ܕܥܝܠܐ ܕܫܬܝܠ ܕܟܠܝܐ
Stanzas	Six
Lines	Two per stanza
Meter	Two lines of two five-syllable units per stanza: 5+5 5+5
Rhyme	Each line within a stanza ends in the same syllable except for the third and sixth stanzas.
Use	Sung while the celebrant is saying the Qānōnā following the Epiclesis and the closing of the sanctuary veil during the Eucharistic Liturgy

4. *Assyrians of the City of Urhai*

Title	ܐܬܬܐܢܝܢ ܕܥܝܪܗܝ ܡܕܝܢܬܐ
Tune (ܬܗܠܝܠ)	ܬܚܕܕܕܐ ܝܬܝܠ
Stanzas	Twenty-two
Lines	Two per stanza
Meter	Two lines of two eight-syllable units per stanza: 8+8 8+8
Acrostic	First word of each stanza begins with a letter of the alphabet in order from ܐ to ܝ
Rhyme	Last words of each of the four units within a stanza end in the same syllable
Use	Hymn suitable for any day

5. *The Fathers Gathered*

Title	ܐܬܬܐܢܝܢ ܕܥܝܪܗܝ ܡܕܝܢܬܐ
Tune (ܬܗܠܝܠ)	ܬܚܕܕܕܐ ܝܬܝܠ
Stanzas	Ten
Lines	Five lines per stanza
Meter	Five lines of two five-syllable units per stanza: 5+5 5+5 5+5 5+5 5+5
Acrostic	First word of each stanza begins with a letter of the alphabet in order from ܐ to ܝ
Rhyme	Last words of each line within a stanza end in the same syllable with the exception of the second stanza which has ܕܝܝܢ instead of ܕܝܢ in two places and the final stanza in which only the second and third lines share the same syllable and the fourth and fifth share a different syllable.
Use	Hymn suitable for any day

6. *We Also are the Children of the Church*

Title	ܐܢܝܢ ܕܝܚܝܬܝܢ ܕܝܥܕܬܐ
Tune (ܩܠܝܢ)	ܫܡܝܐ ܕܝܚܝܬܝܢ
Stanzas	Ten
Lines	Four per stanza
Meter	Four lines of one seven syllable unit followed by one four- syllable unit per stanza: 7+4 7+4 7+4 7+4
Acrostic	First word of each stanza begins with a letter of the alphabet in order from ܐ to ܝ
Rhyme	Last words of each line within a stanza end in the same syllable
Use	Hymn suitable for any day

7. *We Have Hope and Pride*

Title	ܐܡܝܢ ܕܝܚܝܬܝܢ ܫܡܝܐ ܕܝܥܕܬܐ
Tune (ܩܠܝܢ)	ܫܡܝܐ ܕܝܚܝܬܝܢ
Stanzas	Nine
Lines	One per stanza
Meter	One line of two eight-syllable units per stanza: 8+8
Acrostic	First word of each stanza begins with a letter of the alphabet in order from ܐ to ܝ
Rhyme	Last words of each unit within a stanza end in the same syllable
Use	Hymn suitable for any day

8. *We are Christian Children*

Title	ܐܢܝܢ ܕܝܚܝܬܝܢ ܫܡܝܐ ܕܝܥܕܬܐ
Tune (ܩܠܝܢ)	ܫܡܝܐ ܕܝܚܝܬܝܢ ܫܡܝܐ ܕܝܥܕܬܐ
Stanzas	Twenty-two
Lines	Two per stanza
Meter	Two lines of two seven-syllable units per stanza: 7+7 7+7
Acrostic	First word of each stanza begins with a letter of the alphabet in order from ܐ to ܝ
Rhyme	Last words of each unit within a stanza end in the same syllable except the last word in the first unit of stanza ܐ which uses ܐ instead of ܐ
Use	Hymn suitable for any day

9. *God the Hidden Being*

Title	ܐܠܗܐ ܠܗܝܬܐ ܠܗܝܬܐ
Tune (ܬܢܐ)	ܐܠܗܐ ܠܗܝܬܐ ܠܗܝܬܐ
Stanzas	Eleven
Lines	Four per stanza
Meter	Four lines of two seven-syllable units per stanza: 7+7 7+7 7+7 7+7
Acrostic	First word of each stanza begins with a letter of the alphabet in order from ܐ to ܝ
Rhyme	Last words of each unit within a stanza end in the same syllable
Use	Hymn suitable for any day

10. *We Have Hope*

Title	ܐܠܗܐ ܠܗܝܬܐ ܠܗܝܬܐ
Tune (ܬܢܐ)	ܐܠܗܐ ܠܗܝܬܐ ܠܗܝܬܐ
Stanzas	Twenty-two
Lines	Four per stanza
Meter	Four lines of three four-syllable units per stanza: 4+4+4 4+4+4 4+4+4 4+4+4
Acrostic	First word of each stanza begins with a letter of the alphabet in order from ܐ to ܝ
Rhyme	Last words of each line within a stanza end in the same syllable
Use	Hymn suitable for any day

11. *Tūrgāmā before the Gospel on the Feast of the Nativity*

Title	ܐܠܗܐ ܠܗܝܬܐ ܠܗܝܬܐ ܠܗܝܬܐ
Tune (ܬܢܐ)	ܐܠܗܐ ܠܗܝܬܐ ܠܗܝܬܐ
Stanzas	Nine
Lines	Two per stanza
Meter	Two lines of three four-syllable units per stanza: 4+4+4 4+4+4
Acrostic	First word of each stanza begins with a letter of the alphabet in order from ܐ to ܝ
Rhyme	Last words of each line within a stanza end in the same syllable
Use	Sung before the reading of the Gospel lection on the Feast of the Nativity during the Eucharistic Liturgy

15. *Today is the Feast of the Nativity*

Title	ﻳﻮﻣﻪ ﻓﻪ ﻳﻪﺩﺩ ﺩﺟﻨﺪ ﻣﻠﻴﻪ
Tune (ﻧﻐﻤﻪ)	ﻳﻴﺪﻯ ﻣﻠﻜﻲ ﻛﻴﻪ
Stanzas	Twenty-Two
Lines	Three per stanza
Meter	One line of three seven-syllable units; one line of one twelve-syllable unit; and one line (the refrain) of two three-syllable units and one six-syllable unit per stanza: 7+7+7 12 3+3+6
Refrain	ﻳﻴﺪﻯ ﻣﻠﻜﻲ ﻳﻴﺪﻯ ﻣﻠﻜﻲ ﻳﻴﺪﻯ ﻣﻠﻜﻲ ﻳﻴﺪﻯ ﻣﻠﻜﻲ ﻳﻴﺪﻯ ﻣﻠﻜﻲ
Acrostic	First word of each stanza begins with a letter of the alphabet in order from ﺍ to ﺯ
Rhyme	Last words of each of the units of the first two lines within a stanza end in the same syllable except the last word in the first unit of stanza ﻣ which uses ﺟﻲ instead of ﺩﻯ
Use	Hymn for the Feast of the Nativity

16. *Jesus Christ the Craftsman*

Title	ﻳﻮﻣﻪ ﻧﻌﺘﻲ ﺑﻌﺪ ﻣﻨﺘﻴﺲ
Tune (ﻧﻐﻤﻪ)	ﻳﻮﻣﻪ ﻧﻌﺘﻲ ﺑﻌﺪ ﻣﻨﺘﻴﺲ
Stanzas	Twenty-Two
Lines	Two per stanza
Meter	Two lines of two seven-syllable units per stanza: 7+7 7+7
Acrostic	First word of each stanza begins with a letter of the alphabet in order from ﺍ to ﺯ
Rhyme	Last words of each unit within a stanza end in the same syllable except the last word in the second unit of stanza ﺍ which uses ﺟﻲ instead of ﺩﻯ; the last word in the second unit of stanza ﺯ which uses ﺩﻯ instead of ﺟﻲ; and the last word in the fourth unit of stanza ﺯ which uses ﺩﻯ instead of ﺟﻲ
Use	Hymn for the Feast of the Nativity

17. *God Our Father*

Title	ܒܘܕܐܝܬܐ ܕܐܬܐ
Tune (ܩܠܝܢܐ)	ܐܘܐ ܕܐܬܐ ܕܐܬܐ
Stanzas	Ten
Lines	One per stanza
Meter	One line of four five-syllable units per stanza: 5+5+5+5
Acrostic	First word of each stanza begins with a letter of the alphabet in order from ܐ to ܬ
Rhyme	Last words of each line end in the same syllable
Use	Hymn for the Feast of the Nativity

18. *Let's Go to the Church Quickly*

Title	ܕܐܝܬܐ ܕܐܬܐ ܕܐܬܐ
Tune (ܩܠܝܢܐ)	ܕܐܝܬܐ ܕܐܬܐ ܕܐܬܐ
Stanzas	Seven
Lines	Two per stanza
Meter	Two lines of two six-syllable units per stanza: 6+6 6+6
Rhyme	Last words of each unit within a stanza end in the same syllable except the last words in the third and fourth units of stanza ܬ which use ܬܐ instead of ܬܐ
Use	Hymn for the Feast of the Nativity

19. *Today is the Feast of the Epiphany*

Title	ܕܐܝܬܐ ܕܐܬܐ ܕܐܬܐ
Tune (ܩܠܝܢܐ)	ܕܐܝܬܐ ܕܐܬܐ ܕܐܬܐ
Stanzas	Seventeen
Lines	Two per stanza
Meter	Two lines of two seven-syllable units per stanza: 7+7 7+7
Rhyme	Last words of each unit within a stanza end in the same syllable except the last word in the last unit of stanza ܬ which uses ܬܐ instead of ܬܐ or ܬܐ
Use	Hymn for the Feast of the Epiphany

20. *This Holy Fast*

Title	٢٥ ٢٥ ٢٥ ٢٥ ٢٥ ٢٥ ٢٥ ٢٥ ٢٥
Tune (٢٥)	٢٥ ٢٥ ٢٥ ٢٥ ٢٥ ٢٥ ٢٥ ٢٥ ٢٥
Stanzas	Nine
Lines	Two per stanza
Meter	Two lines of two seven-syllable units per stanza: 7+7 7+7
Acrostic	First word of each stanza begins with a letter of the alphabet in order from ٢ to ٢٥
Rhyme	Last words of each unit within a stanza end in the same syllable
Use	Hymn for Lent

21. *Church Shout Hosanna*

Title	٢٥ ٢٥ ٢٥ ٢٥ ٢٥ ٢٥ ٢٥ ٢٥ ٢٥ ٢٥ ٢٥ ٢٥
Tune (٢٥)	٢٥ ٢٥ ٢٥ ٢٥ ٢٥ ٢٥ ٢٥ ٢٥ ٢٥ ٢٥ ٢٥ ٢٥
Stanzas	Twelve
Lines	One per stanza
Meter	One line of three seven-syllable units followed by one twelve-syllable unit and one thirteen-syllable refrain per stanza: 7+7+7+12+13
Refrain	٢٥ ٢٥ ٢٥ : ٢٥ ٢٥ ٢٥ : ٢٥ ٢٥ ٢٥
Rhyme	Last words of the first three units within a stanza end in the same syllable except the last word in the first unit of stanza ٢٥ which uses ٢٥ instead of ٢٥; the last word in the first unit of stanza ٢٥ which uses ٢٥ instead of ٢٥; and the last word in the first unit of stanza ٢٥ which uses ٢٥ instead of ٢٥
Use	Hymn for the Feast of Hosanna

22. *We Have Only (One Hope in Jesus Christ)*

Title	ܠܒܗܝܬ ܠܫܝܒ
Tune (ܬܟܠܐ)	ܬܟܠܐ ܕܬܟܠܐ
Stanzas	Twenty-two
Lines	One per stanza
Meter	One line of one four-syllable unit followed by one seven-syllable unit, followed by one four-syllable unit, followed by one seven-syllable unit, followed by one four-syllable refrain per stanza: 4+7+4+7+4
Refrain	ܥܡ ܬܠܐ ܠܝܥܝܬܐ
Acrostic	First word of each stanza begins with a letter of the alphabet in order from ܐ to ܐ
Use	Hymn for the Feast of Hosanna

23. *You Have a Meek Spirit*

Title	ܠܒܗܝܬ ܕܗܝܬ ܬܚܝܒܐ
Tune (ܬܟܠܐ)	ܬܟܠܐ ܕܬܟܠܐ ܕܬܟܠܐ
Stanzas	Six
Lines	Five per stanza
Meter	Four lines of one seven-syllable unit followed by one five-syllable unit (lines 1,2,3 and 5) and one line of two five-syllable units (line 4) per stanza: 7+5 7+5 7+5 5+5 7+5
Acrostic	First word of each stanza begins with a letter of the alphabet in order from ܐ to ܐ
Rhyme	Last words of each unit within a stanza end in the same syllable
Use	Hymn for the Feast of Hosanna

24. *It is Sad Friday*

Title	ܠܒܗܝܬ ܕܝܬܐ ܬܚܝܒܐ
Tune (ܬܟܠܐ)	ܬܟܠܐ ܕܬܟܠܐ ܕܬܟܠܐ
Stanzas	One refrain (ʿūnāyā) and sixteen stanzas (bātē)
Lines	Two in the refrain and two in each stanza
Meter	Two lines of two five-syllable units in the refrain and in each stanza: 5+5 5+5
Rhyme	Last words of each unit within a stanza end in the same syllable except the last word in the third unit of stanza ܐ which uses ܬܠܐ instead of ܬܠܐ; the last word in the third unit of stanza ܐ which uses ܬܠܐ instead of ܬܠܐ; and the last word in the third unit of stanza ܐ which uses ܬܠܐ instead of ܬܠܐ
Use	Hymn for Good Friday

25. *Today He has Risen from the Grave*

Title	ܐܕܡܬܐ ܫܒܥܐ ܡܨܝܒܕܐ
Tune (ܬܗܠܐ)	ܬܥܬܐ ܕܥܬܐ ܕܥܬܐ ܕܥܬܐ
Stanzas	Twenty-Two
Lines	Two per stanza
Meter	Two lines of two six-syllable units in each stanza: 6+6 6+6
Acrostic	First word of each stanza begins with a letter of the alphabet in order from ܐ to ܬ
Rhyme	Last words of each unit within a stanza end in the same syllable
Use	Hymn for the Feast of the Resurrection

26. *They are in the Morning*

Title	ܐܬܢܐ ܫܒܥܐ
Tune (ܬܗܠܐ)	ܐܬܢܐ ܫܒܥܐ
Stanzas	Six
Lines	Five per stanza
Meter	Two lines of one four-syllable unit followed by one five-syllable unit; one line of two eight syllable units and one line of two six-syllable units in each stanza: 4+5 4+5 8+8 6+6
Acrostic	First word of each stanza begins with a letter of the alphabet in order from ܐ to ܦ
Rhyme	Last words of each line within a stanza end in the same syllable
Use	Hymn for the Feast of the Resurrection

27. *Today is the Great Feast*

Title	ܐܕܡܬܐ ܫܒܥܐ ܡܨܝܒܕܐ
Tune (ܬܗܠܐ)	ܐܬܢܐ ܫܒܥܐ
Stanzas	Twelve
Lines	Two per stanza
Meter	Two lines of two seven-syllable units per stanza: 7+7 7+7
Rhyme	Last words of each unit within a stanza end in the same syllable
Use	Hymn for the Feast of the Resurrection

28. *Everyone Sing With One Voice*

Title	ܐܘܠܝܢܐ ܕܝܠܕܐ ܕܡܕܢܐ
Tune (ܡܢܐ)	ܐܘܠܝܢܐ ܕܝܠܕܐ
Stanzas	Sixteen
Lines	Two per stanza
Meter	Two lines of two seven-syllable units per stanza: 7+7 7+7
Rhyme	Last words of each unit within a stanza end in the same syllable except the last word in the last unit of stanza ܐ which uses ܕܡܢܐ instead of ܡܢܐ; and the last word in the first unit of stanza ܐ which uses ܐܘܠܝܢܐ instead of ܐܘܠܝܢܐ
Use	Hymn for the Feast of the Resurrection

29. *This Day the Assembly Gathered*

Title	ܐܘܠܝܢܐ ܕܝܠܕܐ ܕܡܕܢܐ
Tune (ܡܢܐ)	ܐܘܠܝܢܐ ܕܝܠܕܐ
Stanzas	Eleven
Lines	Four per stanza
Meter	Four lines of three four-syllable units per stanza: 4+4+4 4+4+4 4+4+4 4+4+4
Acrostic	First word of each stanza begins with a letter of the alphabet in order from ܐ to ܟ
Rhyme	Last words of each unit within a stanza end in the same syllable
Use	Hymn for the Feast of the Resurrection

30. *Be Joyful O Children of the Church*

Title	ܐܘܠܝܢܐ ܕܝܠܕܐ ܕܡܕܢܐ
Tune (ܡܢܐ)	ܐܘܠܝܢܐ ܕܝܠܕܐ ܕܡܕܢܐ
Stanzas	Eight
Lines	Two per stanza
Meter	Two lines of two six-syllable units in each stanza: 6+6 6+6
Rhyme	Last words of each unit within a stanza end in the same syllable except the last word in the first unit of stanza ܐ which uses ܐܘܠܝܢܐ instead of ܐܘܠܝܢܐ; and the last word in the fourth unit of stanza ܐ which uses ܐܘܠܝܢܐ instead of ܐܘܠܝܢܐ
Use	Hymn for the Feast of the Resurrection

31. *Everyone Say with One Voice*

Title	لَهُدَّسْ حَكْ تَبَدَّ فَكْ
Tune (فَكْ)	لُجَّيْجَه بُصَقَّيْجْ
Stanzas	Ten
Lines	Two per stanza
Meter	Two lines of two seven-syllable units per stanza: 7+7 7+7
Acrostic	First word of each stanza begins with a letter of the alphabet in order from ل to ط
Rhyme	Last words of each unit within a stanza end in the same syllable except the last word in the first unit of stanza ل which uses فَكْ instead of فُكْ
Use	Hymn for the Feast of the Ascension

32. *Let Us Honor this Day*

Title	لُجَّسْ لُجَّسْ مَنَبَدَّيْسِكْ
Tune (فَكْ)	لُجَّيْجَه بُصَقَّيْجْ
Stanzas	Fifteen
Lines	Two per stanza
Meter	Two lines of two seven-syllable units per stanza: 7+7 7+7
Acrostic	First word of each stanza begins with a letter of the alphabet in order from ل to هـ
Rhyme	Last words of each unit within a stanza end in the same syllable except the last word in the first unit of stanza ل which uses لُجْ instead of لُجَّ; and the last word in the first unit of stanza هـ which uses هُجْ instead of هُجَّ
Use	Hymn for the consecration of priests