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

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#### INTRODUCTION

The use of modern Assyrian<sup>1</sup> 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 16<sup>th</sup> century and then in Urmia in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> 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.

by Mar Abdisho of Nisibis (d.1318) reveals that 59 or about 40% are said to have composed poems and/or hymns.<sup>2</sup>

It is important to keep in mind that, at any given time, the majority of the people for whom this literature was written experienced it within the context of liturgical services in which hymns and homilies figure prominently. In considering this type of literature, we need to remember that this experience involves both an understanding of the content and literary qualities of the hymns as well as an appreciation of the music to which they are sung. Liturgical services in the Church of the East exist to address every indispensable sacramental need required by the Christian faith and every important life event experienced by the faithful as well as the need to praise and worship God and to teach the faithful about the significant events in salvation history throughout the year. Consequently, the faithful develop a strong emotional attachment to the services, hymns and tunes that permeate their lives.

#### SYRIAC AS A VERNACULAR AND LITURGICAL LANGUAGE

We now know that the view held by some scholars of the past that Syriac literature came to an end in the 14<sup>th</sup> century is far from accurate.<sup>3</sup> The devastation caused by the massacres and destruction of Tamerlane in the 14<sup>th</sup> century profoundly weakened but did not completely eradicate educational and literary activities in Syriac. What is not so clear is when Syriac ceased to be a language that was generally spoken and/or understood by the common people. Evidence that Arabic gradually replaced Syriac as the spoken language of some members of the Church of the East in some locations can be seen from the existence of bilingual Gospel lectionaries<sup>4</sup> and the fact that some writers, even an important writer and defender of the Syriac language such as Mar Abdisho of Nisibis, composed some of their works in Arabic.<sup>5</sup> In spite of the decline of Syriac as a spoken language, it continued to remain the literary language of the Assyrian people until the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and it remains the main liturgical language of the Church of the East among Assyrians until the present time.

ماهدا داسه به معتبا دخله ، حمقا لمجمعتا بحميا دمهيدا مدلينها دلك عددا أ دخدهالمان دلين لمحدد لمدن لمحرسها منهدههاليا دوريا: مورك أيُود: ف. ها ـ فهـ

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> For what has become a standard reference for later Syriac and Assyrian literature, see Macuch, Rudolf, *Geschichte der spät- und neusyrischen Literatur*, Berlin 1976.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> A photo of a Syriac-Arabic Gospel lectionary is shown on page 80 of Yohannan, Abraham, *The Death of a Nation or the Ever Persecuted Nestorians or Assyrian Christians*, New York, 1916

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> For details on the Arabic literature of the Syriac tradition, see Graf, Georg, *Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur*, Volumes 1-5, Vatican, 1944-53.

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 20<sup>th</sup> 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 19<sup>th</sup> century missionaries and travelers that the living Aramaic dialects were "debased" forms of Syriac is unfounded. 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 "comprehendible" 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

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> 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.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> 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.<sup>8</sup> 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 *durikyātā* by two 17<sup>th</sup> century writers, Israel of Algosh 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." 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.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> 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.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Mengozzi, Alessandro, *Israel of Alqosh and Joseph of Telkepe. A Story in a Truthful Language: Religious Poems in Vernacular Syriac (North Iraq, 17<sup>th</sup> 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)..." <sup>10</sup>

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." <sup>11</sup>

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. <sup>12</sup> 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

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Perkins, Justin, A Residence of Eight Years in Persia, among the Nestorian Christians with Notices of the Muhammedans, Andover, 1843, p. 26.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Perkins, p. 31.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> 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.

modern Assyrian. 13 The first hymnal appeared in 1843 and consisted of 48 pages. As the years went by, subsequent hymnals generally increased in size. The edition of 1898 consisted of 598 pages and 351 hymns. The vast majority of these hymns are translations of English language hymns. They include well known hymns such as Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty; What a friend we have in Jesus: Jesus loves me this I know and Onward Christian soldiers. 14 The Assyrians were delighted to see their spoken language in print and were intrigued with the language and tunes of the new hymns. Perkins relates:

"This evening we revised the beautiful evening hymn, commencing, "The day is past," - which I lately translated with Priest Abraham's assistance, for the use of our school. The priests appeared enraptured with the hymn, so much so that they could scarcely cease singing it to the tune to which I adapted the translation, though both were alike new to them."15

As early as 1840, the Assyrians suggested translating the services of the Church of the East into modern Assyrian. Perkins records in his diary:

"I received an urgent request from the priests and principal men of the village of Gĕog-tapá, that we should translate, or cause to be translated, the Nestorian Liturgy, from the ancient Syriac into their vernacular tongue. I recommended to the applicants that they should confer with their bishops on the subject. The application is encouraging, as it indicates a strong desire among the clergy and people, for religious knowledge and the diffusion of light."16

Given the fact that most of the clergy and people were cooperating with the Americans in their endeavors, it is not immediately clear why suggestions like this were never taken seriously. An examination of the attitudes of the Americans towards the Syriac language and its literature may provide an explanation.

The Americans appear to have held conflicting opinions on the value of the Syriac language and its literature. Syriac was clearly valued for its importance as a linguistic and literary resource for the modern Assyrian language:

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> 1843 (48 pp.), 1844 (137 pp.), 1847 (131 pp.), 1854 (242 pp.), 1860 (317 pp.), 1862 (51 pp.) – this is a hymnal for children for use in Sunday Schools, 1866 (213 pp.), 1874 (315 pp.), 1884 (464 pp.), 1898 (568 pp.), and 1912 (255 pp.).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> An interesting parallel of foreign language hymns translated into modern Assyrian from French and sung to French tunes can be seen in a hymn book published by the Lazarist Mission in Urmia in 1886 for the use of the Assyrians who were members of the Chaldean Catholic Church. One hundred and thirty hymns are printed in eighty-eight pages in extremely small type for use in schools and before or after regular church services. באבן כנסבט לפנים לפ وصدة الم محددها ب له له محدد من من حدد مسمعة الداه دمد: الكفه

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Perkins, p. 257.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Perkins, p. 418.

"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*." <sup>17</sup>

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." <sup>18</sup>

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. 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."<sup>23</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Perkins, p. 14.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Perkins, p. 14.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Darlow & Moule 8994

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Perkins, p. 446.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> 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.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> 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.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> 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."<sup>24</sup>

The services are often referred to as *mummery*<sup>25</sup> and a *senseless routine* of forms and the prayers as *chattering noise*.<sup>26</sup> And yet, we also find Perkins admitting that "The major part of their liturgy, however, is composed of unexceptionable, excellent matter."<sup>27</sup> 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." <sup>28</sup>

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.<sup>29</sup> 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.

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<sup>24</sup> Perkins, p. 187.
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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Perkins, p. 187.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> Perkins, p. 243.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> Perkins, p. 417.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> Perkins, p. 457.

 $<sup>^{29}</sup>$  See Anderson, Vol. 2, pp. 312-319 for an account of the specific incidents that let 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*. 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."<sup>31</sup>

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." <sup>32</sup>

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." <sup>33</sup>

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

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> 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.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> Perkins, p. 256.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> Perkins, p. 263.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> 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."<sup>34</sup>

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.<sup>36</sup>

"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..."<sup>37</sup>

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. <sup>38</sup> By 1918, the membership

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, *Report of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions*, Boston, 1857, p. 90.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup> American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, *Report of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions*, Boston, 1859, p. 81.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> 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."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> Anderson, Vol. 2, pp. 318-319.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup> 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 adherents<sup>39</sup>, or just about 19% of the population, if we can assume that the number of Assyrians in Urmia remained relatively constant.<sup>40</sup>

### 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.<sup>41</sup> 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."<sup>42</sup> 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."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> 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.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>40</sup> 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. (Wilmshurst, David, *The Ecclesiastical Organization of the Church of the East*, 1318-1913, Louvain, 2000, p. 362).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup> 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.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>42</sup> Macomber, William F., 'A List of the Known Manuscripts of the Chaldean Hudra', *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 36 (1970), p. 134.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup> Malech, George David, History of the Syrian Nation and the Old Evangelical-Apostolic-Church of the East, Minneapolis, 1910, p. 356.

Whether the funeral services were ever actually conducted in modern Assyrian is a question that is difficult to answer since it appears that no such translated service is preserved in print or in manuscript. There is, however, an interesting possible connection to the American hymnal of 1898 which contains modern Assyrian translations of three funeral *Madrashe* of the Church of the East. <sup>44</sup> The 1898 hymnal does not have an introduction, but the revised and shorter 1912 hymnal does and it refers to the inclusion of these translations as if they were new:

"The purpose of this book is not only for singing, but also for worship. We hope that the selected passages from the Bible and the Funeral Service of the Ancient Syrian Church will make it a treasury full of the spirit of worship." 45

Perhaps we must see this effort on the part of Protestant Assyrians<sup>46</sup> to finally include something of the tradition and culture of the Church of the East in their services as part of a wider effort to draw closer to their brethren in the face of the success of the Russian Orthodox mission and to reexamine the necessity of the spilt that had taken place so long ago.<sup>47</sup> In 1908 discussions about a possible re-union between the Protestant Assyrians and the Church of the East commenced.<sup>48</sup> In these discussions, the Americans and the Anglican missionaries served as intermediaries. Although nothing substantial came of the effort, the fact that it was considered at all indicates that the old attitudes of the Americans and their Assyrian converts, which viewed the Church of the East as spiritually dead, had softened considerably. There was a new generation<sup>49</sup> of American

حمية دوهدمه عدمية: نَفيه: ق. 521 ـ 528.

حميد دوهدمه عدمتا: كَيْمت: قدهمم م

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>46</sup> The introduction to the 1912 hymnal also mentions a few names of Assyrians who composed hymns in addition to the names of some of the American missionaries. The authors of the hymns are not indicated in the 1898 hymnal and it is not entirely clear if 'composed' means 'wrote' or 'translated'. The names of the Assyrians are Shamasha Yonan of Adah, Rabi Auraham of Digalah, Dr. Yokhannan of New York and Qasha Shmuel Dooman. The names of the Americans are Justin Perkins, Benjamin Labaree, Jeremiah Oldfather, and John Shedd.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>48</sup> Coakley, J. F., *The Church of the East and the Church of England: A History of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Assyrian Mission*, Oxford, 1992, pp. 287-288.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>49</sup> When the Anglicans were defending the establishment of their mission to the Assyrians that was finally established in 1886, they characterized the first generation of American missionaries (Perkins, Grant, etc.) as supportive of working within the Church of the East and opposed to fostering a split. I believe that this is only true in a technical sense and their argument must be seen as a way to justify another Protestant mission to the same people. I think that it is better to distinguish three generations of American missionaries. All of them would have preferred that the Church of the East become the type of church that we see in the Evangelical Assyrian Church, but it is really only among the last or third generation that we see any genuine effort to appreciate the

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." <sup>50</sup>

### 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."<sup>51</sup>

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.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>50</sup> Shedd, William A., 'Relation of the Protestant Missionary Effort to the Nestorian Church', *Missionary Review of the World* 8 (1895) p. 746.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>51</sup> 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.

Americans made some effort to continue their work among the Assyrians over the next decade or so, but the mission was never re-established at the level at which it had existed before the war. In general, the Assyrians of all denominations now had to rely primarily on their own efforts to maintain and preserve their religious and cultural life.

The Assyrian School and Press (1921-1934), established by Shamasha Yosip d'Bet Qelayta<sup>52</sup> in Mosul soon after the war, provided many necessary Syriac liturgical books for the Church of the East, in addition to its important work in maintaining education in modern Assyrian. The Mar Narsai Press of the Church of the East in India, established by Mar Abimalek Timotheus,<sup>53</sup> also made significant contributions in the area of liturgical books. This work continued under his successor, Mar Thoma Darmo,<sup>54</sup> who also printed a number of saints' lives and other historical works of the Church of the East, translated from Syriac into modern Assyrian.

Efforts to incorporate modern Assyrian into the worship services of the Church of the East during the period following WWI are practically unknown. Nine years after the arrival of His Holiness, Patriarch Mar Eshai Shimun, to the United States, he published a book that provided English translations of parts of the Eucharistic Liturgy along with the original Syriac, transliterated into Latin characters.<sup>55</sup> This effort was really aimed at helping the new generation of English speaking Assyrians to understand the church services. No similar effort for Assyrian speakers appears to have been seen as a necessity at that time. It was also explicitly stated in the book that it was only for the use of the faithful in the United States and Canada. Special permission was required to use it elsewhere. In 1964, he published a book of prayers for home use in modern Assyrian.<sup>56</sup> These included versions of the morning and evening prayers that are intended to be said by a congregation in church.<sup>57</sup> How this book was used at home or in church is not clear.<sup>58</sup> There is no evidence that it was widely used.

For his biography, see Mar Aprem, Mar Abimalek Timotheus: A Biography, Trichur, 1975.
 For his biography, see Mar Aprem, Mar Thoma Darmo: A Biography, Trichur, 1974.

<sup>55</sup> Mar Eshai Shimun, The Liturgy of the Holy Apostolic and Catholic Church of the East, Chicago, 1949.

حمية ديكمه عدمه عد يكه ودين وبي مهد، 1964. أ

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>57</sup> For an excellent description of the liturgy of the hours in the Church of the East, see Taft, Robert, *The Liturgy of the Hours in the East and West*, Collegeville, 1986, pp. 225-237.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>58</sup> I have been told that it was used for the morning and evening prayers in church by congregations in California.

#### THE HYMNS OF PATRIARCH MAR DINKHA IV59

His Holiness was born on September 15, 1935 in the village of Derbendoki in northern Iraq. <sup>60</sup> 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.<sup>62</sup>

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)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>59</sup> 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.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>60</sup> For his biography, see Mar Aprem, *Patriarch Mar Dinkha IV: The Man and His Message*, Trichur, 2004.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>61</sup> 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.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>62</sup> The names of women choir members, some of whom have become well know 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 four<sup>63</sup> 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, the collection is the 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+77+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+54+58+86+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

<sup>63</sup> 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 خ for خ. 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" 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:

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  $T\bar{u}rg\bar{a}me$  are not specific enough to serve as true commentaries of individual readings. The Syriac  $T\bar{u}rg\bar{a}ma$  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

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>64</sup> Mengozzi, p. 58.

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.

# ٨٥١ كُمَّهُ وَسُدَح يُوْمِكُمُهُ مُسْعَمُهُ لَجِلْمُ حَ

TÜRGĀMĀ BEFORE THE GOSPEL ON ORDINARY DAYS

-ئېمس ھەمھقى: حققى محدەقى: مدمشى دھمدىد: جەدب حققى: مجمدت طعمقى: حبحمت ھعبشى:

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

حَفِتَ مُحِدِسُدُ: جُمِ مُومِسِعِهُ ﴾: حَبِحَهُ كَ مُحَبِسُدُ: دِجْدَ بُرُكُوْدَ: كَجِحْرُه فِكِدُدَ: بُنِي جُدَدُجُهُ

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

> ۷ كەكەر دەم شە: مىجىلە ، مىلىشە: سەمداۋى ھەربىكەد: سىمەققە دىمەد: دىيىلە ، مىلالە ، ئىكىمەدبىكە:

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

> دُجب کِتبی: یه معبشته: می حک گهند: عجه د منجههد: مهدی کهدند: ۵۰ مدههنده

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

> ەپكىچى ھىكدىد: دېرەھە دىرەھە، ئىلا سېتى بىدىدد: ھەنس سىكىدىدىدى دېرىد كەمھە، ئىلا سېتى بىدىدد: ھ

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

ى ەئىم كائىنى: دەرە دىسى: ھسەتى دىجىنى: ئەسھە ، سەدتى: كچھ ئىلەد: ئىم سەت بىدەد:

Alas for the person who is distant from the love of Christ O children of the Church come near to God

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.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>66</sup> Nativity, Epiphany, Resurrection, Pentecost, Ascension, Transfiguration and the feast of the Cross

وَجَك كِتْهُ هُدْتُهُ (حَقْتُهُ دِذِجْهُ جُلُعُمْدُهُ)

COMFORT, O LORD

ر بُبَک کِتر هَدیر: کیدر دهیرمیر سیر: دهه که دهه کهکیهد: دهین دهید سیرد سیرد

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

> صهره مدبده: دم هده محبده: کور کهمهٔ دمجبهٔ: دمیده محبده: کور کهمهٔ دمجبهٔ: دمیده محبده: کور کهمهٔ دمجبهٔ: دمیدهٔ محبده:

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

> ح مدر محمد محبث: کهدد، محکد، مدید مخدید: دکدها مهدیده: مدید که محدید: دکدها مهدیده: مدید که محدید: دکتها: مدید که محدید، دکتها:

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

> ـ تحبیع درکیده کا تحمیه ماهدی دهره هٔ درکیده کا تحمیه ماهدی دهره هٔ درکیده کا تحمیه ماهده دهره ماهده کا تحمیه ماهده دهره ماهده کا تحمیه ماهده دهره داده کا تحمیه ماهده کا تحمیه کا تحم

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.

OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN

، تُنَّى دَبْعَمُنَّى: بَدِبِ بَجَنَّهِ: مُسَيِّس كِي دَهُوْس: يِكَب حَدِّهَكَنْدِيْ:

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

\_ ئەئى مېلىمەمى: ەمىلىقى سەدىدەمى: ئىك سىمەتى دىردەمى: سىكەدگەن، سىيىسەمى،

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

> ۲ چېکچس ميدوي: مې دېد څکه: دغيميم کېختېږي: دېسکه کسېټږي.

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

> د بعمٰد مذسقته: تقد مهٰدقته: علیتمی شبکته: قدّ، تهٔدته

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

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،
كجەد ۋسمى كىمەقى: دۆھەد محدودتىرى:
تحك نېھى كىمەقى: دۆھەد محدودتىرى:
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Have mercy upon the scattered children of Assyria In whichever country they are, let them be united

Sow love and peace among the children of our nation So they unite and distance themselves from division

#### SUMMARY OF THEMES

In these hymns, we can see some of the important themes that His Holiness wants the faithful to appreciate and understand. These include:

- A healthy respect and appreciation for the traditions of the Church of the East
  as exemplified in the use of its distinctive formulas and phrases. Examples of
  these include the Christological formula, the metaphor of the Incarnation, and
  the understanding of the real suffering of Christ in His human nature alone.
  Traditional phrases such as 'fasting and prayer' and the concept of the Cross
  as a guardian and refuge of the faithful are also to be noted.
- An appreciation of the specific history of the reception of the Christian faith by the members of the Church of the East as a distinct community. The Church of the East is part of the universal church, the Body of Christ on earth. But each community, church or nation has a history of the reception of the faith that serves as a source of inspiration for successive generations. References to Edessa and the Assyrians help to remind the faithful that they have a rich history that stretches back to the apostolic age and even beyond when we consider the strong identification with the Assyrians in the book of Jonah that is current among the faithful of the Church of the East.
- A deep concern for the current condition of the faithful as a nation. The majority of the present members of the Church of the East are Assyrian in nationality. In a very real sense, a large part of the surviving Church of the East community has become part of the Assyrian nation in modern times. By virtue of the fact that these hymns are written in modern Assyrian, they are intended for the use of that part of the faithful of the church. The tragedies that this nation has experienced in the past and continue to experience cry out for recognition in the prayers of the church.

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#### 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.<sup>67</sup> 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.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>67</sup> 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 complied by Rev. Lawrance Namato.

### **APPENDIX**

# 1. Tūrgāmā before the Gospel on Ordinary Days

Title	٨٥٤ كِيمَ دَهِدَم يُوْمَكُ لِهُ مِ دَيِيمَ لِمَ لَكِهِ مِنْ مُحَلِّمُ مُ
Tune (قک)	۵۰ <del>د که مخ</del> ځ
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 <b>2</b> to <b>o</b>
Use	Sung before the reading of the Gospel lection on ordinary days during the Eucharistic Liturgy

# 2. Comfort O Lord

Title	بتح کیا چوپ
Tune (ثنگة)	<b>ڊ</b> ښد ٨ <b>٨مب</b> ټر2
Stanzas	One refrain (ʿūnāyā) 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
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	ا پ نے دند مند
Tune (قکه)	خېد <b>خميد</b> چ
Stanzas	Six
Lines	Two per stanza
Meter	Two lines of two five-syllable units per stanza: 5+55+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	كه و ده د اه د بعد بعد بعد بعد بعد بعد بعد بعد بعد ب
Tune (عُكُلُ)	٢٠٠٠ ٢٠٠٠
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 2 to A
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	٬ مِرَيْمَةُ عَيْدٍاً.
Tune (عُكُلُ)	خد هلام بحضية خد هام بحضية
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
Acrostic	First word of each stanza begins with a letter of the alphabet in order from 2 to $\triangle$
Rhyme	Last words of each line within a stanza end in the same syllable with the exception of the second stanza which has instead of 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	يع بُسبُ حعوقٌ د حَدِيهِ ٤
Tune (شک	عنمخ عضم
Stanzas	Ten
Lines	Four per stanza
Meter	Four lines of one seven syllable unit followed by one four-syllable unit per stanza: 7+47+47+47+4
Acrostic	First word of each stanza begins with a letter of the alphabet in order from 2 to $\triangle$
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	كغرض عدم كعام كغيف للماء
Tune (ثنگ	عتته وهجرت
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 ${\bf 2}$ to ${\bf 4}$
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	فتينحه فقوعم لغمغ
Tune (ثنگ	۵۵ دېنت د دېکمه د به ۶
Stanzas	Twenty-two
Lines	Two per stanza
Meter	Two lines of two seven-syllable units per stanza: 7+77+7
Acrostic	First word of each stanza begins with a letter of the alphabet in order from 2 to 1 $\Delta$
Rhyme	Last words of each unit within a stanza end in the same syllable except the last word in the first unit of stanza $\Delta$ which uses $2\frac{1}{2}$ instead of $2\frac{1}{2}$
Use	Hymn suitable for any day

# 9. God the Hidden Being

Title	كېتعر ځــــــــــ ۲ څېځ ځــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــ
Tune (ئىكة)	المنيع بعوم معنير
Stanzas	Eleven
Lines	Four per stanza
Meter	Four lines of two seven-syllable units per stanza: 7+77+77+77+7
Acrostic	First word of each stanza begins with a letter of the alphabet in order from 2 to 5
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	नम्ब र्यू
Tune (عُنگ)	بُرِح فصف جَيْرَ
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
Acrostic	First word of each stanza begins with a letter of the alphabet in order from 2 to A
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	مەدگىقە دىندە يۈمۇلىم دىيەتدە دېگىدە
Tune (تنگه)	۵۹ د پُــــــــ
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 2 to $\checkmark$
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

# 12. The Feast of the Nativity is Blessed

Title	ية 1 دينه بكرة حذبكة
Stanzas	Six
Lines	Two per stanza
Meter	Two lines of two seven-syllable units per stanza: 7+77+7
Acrostic	None
Rhyme	Last words of each unit within a stanza end in the same syllable except the last word in the last unit of the first stanza which uses instead of and the last word in the third unit of the fourth stanza which uses instead of 2 %
Use	Hymn for the Feast of the Nativity

# 13. Today is the Feast of the Nativity

Title	يم يه کرد د کو کرد کام
Tune (شک	حلجف معمقة عمد جهة
Stanzas	Seven
Lines	Five per stanza
Meter	Three lines of one seven-syllable unit followed by one five-syllable unit; one line of two five-syllable units; one line of one seven-syllable unit followed by one five-syllable unit per stanza: 7+57+57+55+57+5
Use	Hymn for the Feast of the Nativity

# 14. We Have Hope and Joy

Title	عبده محك شده مده
Tune (ثنگ	
Stanzas	Ten
Lines	Two per stanza; the second line being the refrain which is common to all stanzas
Meter	Two lines of three four-syllable units per stanza: 4+4+4 4+4+4
Refrain	«كتمكيم: كتمكيم؛ كتمكيم
Acrostic	First word of each stanza begins with a letter of the alphabet in order from 2 to $\triangle$
Use	Hymn for the Feast of the Nativity

# 15. Today is the Feast of the Nativity

Title	ميد عيمهم عيد عيد عيد عيد المعاددة المع
Tune (عُكُلُ	يد ٤٨ سكت كه
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	ټښنجهه ډېرووء ستخه :سې ځخه :سې ځخه
Acrostic	First word of each stanza begins with a letter of the alphabet in order from ${\bf 2}$ to ${\bf A}$
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 which uses 🚣 instead of 🚣
Use	Hymn for the Feast of the Nativity

# 16. Jesus Christ the Craftsman

Title	7 بنعه ۲ معني 16
Tune (ثنگ	اه م الله م
Stanzas	Twenty-Two
Lines	Two per stanza
Meter	Two lines of two seven-syllable units per stanza: 7+77+7
Acrostic	First word of each stanza begins with a letter of the alphabet in order from 2 to A
Rhyme	Last words of each unit within a stanza end in the same syllable except the last word in the second unit of stanza which uses instead of in the last word in the second unit of stanza which uses instead of inst
Use	Hymn for the Feast of the Nativity

### 17. God Our Father

Title	1न्न् <b>र</b> ध् <u>र</u> ूरं
Tune (عُكُلُ)	هٔه حکی هلبیّه
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 2 to $\triangle$
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	2چکيز کنموند کيکوز کيکورن سانوارد
Tune (ثنگ	عَيْمُ دِيُو دِيدُ دِيدُهُ وَيُعَالُهُ وَيُعَالُونُ الْعَلَيْمُ الْعَلَيْمُ الْعَلَيْمُ الْعَلَيْمُ الْعَلَيْم
Stanzas	Seven
Lines	Two per stanza
Meter	Two lines of two six-syllable units per stanza: 6+66+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 $rac{}$ which use $rac{}$ instead of $rac{}$
Use	Hymn for the Feast of the Nativity

# 19. Today is the Feast of the Epiphany

Title	ميك كيوك وحبية مكن
Tune (ثنگ)	المتعادة
Stanzas	Seventeen
Lines	Two per stanza
Meter	Two lines of two seven-syllable units per stanza: 7+77+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 which uses instead of instead of instead of
Use	Hymn for the Feast of the Epiphany

# 20. This Holy Fast

Title	بم بحر مر بر با
Tune (شک	2بــه كې هجدّه هم وجگته
Stanzas	Nine
Lines	Two per stanza
Meter	Two lines of two seven-syllable units per stanza: 7+77+7
Acrostic	First word of each stanza begins with a letter of the alphabet in order from 2 to 4.
Rhyme	Last words of each unit within a stanza end in the same syllable
Use	Hymn for Lent

# 21. Church Shout Hosanna

Title	معسات بتديد ووينيون
Tune (عُكُد)	کچرخوح مح حجه ۶۶ عجم کوم ۲۶۶ عجم کوم ۲۶۶ عجم کوم ۲۶۶ عجم کوم ۲۶۶ عدم کوم کوم کوم کوم کوم کوم کوم کوم کوم کو
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	د خدید ۱۰ جدید ۱۰ جدید ۲۰ جدید ۲۰ مجده میر
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 which uses 25 instead of 1; the last word in the first unit of stanza which uses 25 instead of 25; and the last word in the first unit of stanza which uses 25 instead of 1.
Use	Hymn for the Feast of Hosanna

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

Title	بعسب بعسر بعد
Tune (ئىكة)	٤٠٨٤ ٤سچب مولقه
Stanzas	Twenty-two
Lines	One per stanza
Meter	One line of one four-syllable unit followed by one seven-syllable unit, followed by one seven-syllable unit, followed by one seven-syllable unit, followed by one four-syllable refrain per stanza: 4+7+4+7+4
Refrain	متحتح جيغامه
Acrostic	First word of each stanza begins with a letter of the alphabet in order from ${\bf 2}$ to ${\bf A}$
Use	Hymn for the Feast of Hosanna

# 23. You Have a Meek Spirit

Title	٤ٻـ٨٨٩ خوبـڳ٤
Tune (عُكُمْ)	حلجه ، جُمعَة عوجه جُعُه
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+57+57+57+55+57+5
Acrostic	First word of each stanza begins with a letter of the alphabet in order from 2 to 0
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	فح بمیاء بمیان فی استان می باشد بازی بازی بازی بازی بازی بازی بازی بازی
Tune (عُكُلُّ)	عدِّك ٧٩؋ و حدة خصة لا
Stanzas	One refrain ('ūnāyā) 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 على which uses من instead of عن المنافعة الم
Use	Hymn for Good Friday

# 25. Today He has Risen from the Grave

Title	الأحام المناهد المناهدة المناع
Tune (ئىگە)	شعفية ديميدة ديريثه ديمية
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 2 to A
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	۲ غونم <u>۲ څ</u> و ۲ ۲ ۲ ۲ ۲ ۲ ۲ ۲ ۲ ۲ ۲ ۲ ۲ ۲ ۲ ۲ ۲ ۲
Tune (شک)	كنْتْرْ هٰ٤
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 2 to •
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	مكِ ٤٤٩٤ تُمَامِ ٤٤٤
Tune (عُنگ)	يحتدني ومتدن
Stanzas	Twelve
Lines	Two per stanza
Meter	Two lines of two seven-syllable units per stanza: 7+77+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	"وهذِ س حبّ عبد
Tune (قنک	<u>ऽळेळ</u> रं वन्द्ररं,
Stanzas	Sixteen
Lines	Two per stanza
Meter	Two lines of two seven-syllable units per stanza: 7+77+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 $\downarrow$ which uses $\searrow$ instead of $\searrow$ instead of $\searrow$ instead of $\searrow$
Use	Hymn for the Feast of the Resurrection

# 29. This Day the Assembly Gathered

Title	يهنعه بمحمة بموت بمور
Tune (عُنگ)	بُرِح فصف جَيْرُ
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
Acrostic	First word of each stanza begins with a letter of the alphabet in order from 2 to 5
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	شذِس تَهُ حَفِّت كِدِمُهُ
Tune (عُكُلُ)	هَعَهُ عَلَيْهُ مِيْكُمُ وَحِيثُمُ
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 of which uses 💥 instead of 💥; and the last word in the fourth unit of stanza of which uses 💢 instead of 💢
Use	Hymn for the Feast of the Resurrection

# 31. Everyone Say with One Voice

Title	يعذب حبّ عبد عبد
Tune (عُنگ)	غضمغ معقرغ
Stanzas	Ten
Lines	Two per stanza
Meter	Two lines of two seven-syllable units per stanza: 7+77+7
Acrostic	First word of each stanza begins with a letter of the alphabet in order from $2$ to $\triangle$
Rhyme	Last words of each unit within a stanza end in the same syllable except the last word in the first unit of stanza 2 which uses 25 instead of 25
Use	Hymn for the Feast of the Ascension

# 32. Let Us Honor this Day

Title	مكسيسنم بموحي جمير
Tune (عُنگ)	يتعن متدح
Stanzas	Fifteen
Lines	Two per stanza
Meter	Two lines of two seven-syllable units per stanza: 7+77+7
Acrostic	First word of each stanza begins with a letter of the alphabet in order from 2 to
Rhyme	Last words of each unit within a stanza end in the same syllable except the last word in the first unit of stanza which uses instead of instead of the last word in the first unit of stanza which uses instead of instead o
Use	Hymn for the consecration of priests