

THE CHURCH IS THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

In Liturgy of the Church of the East

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Introduction

In our usual understanding of theology we consider faith to be the acknowledgment of a series of doctrinal truths. Also, these doctrines are not just theoretical and theological matters, but rather are necessary for the life of salvation, revealing to us the relationship that binds God to humankind. But as for the early East Syriac theology, theology is a different reality, as it usually avoids “determining”, considering that definitions put an end for the infinity that has no limit. The theology of the early syriac ecclesiastical fathers relied on metaphor and symbolic method. The bible has several images, which primarily appear in the Old Testament and recur in the New Testament. One of the main metaphors that used to clarify the relation between God and his People is that of marriage. The Bride of Christ is a symbol and metaphor used in Scripture to describe God’s relationship with his beloved bride, the church. Portrayed as the bridegroom in this relationship, God reveals Himself to be faithful, loving, and committed to a covenant union with his church, comprised of all who believe in Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and have received eternal life.

Before delving deeply into the liturgical feature in particular, we intend to display generally biblical and theological aspects. Even though the circle of ideas (church as bride) runs through the entire East Syriac liturgy, we yet can restrict ourselves to three sources for a systematic treatment. The first and most excellent of these three sources is book of Khudra Vol III, in which are the four weeks of church consecration, which conclude the church year in the East Syrian liturgy and fill in November.

Next to it is the Feast of the Epiphany in Vol I of Khudra book, which in its richness of thought, extends from the baptism in the Jordan River to the cleansing and sanctifying power that Christ's descent gives to the water. Naturally reached to the church that was thus purified and sanctified and therefore in shining decorations. Third is the East Syrian rite of the wedding ceremony,¹ which, according to its expressive words, is nothing more than an image of Christ's engagement to the church. Even though the greater part of the relevant texts that are borrowed from the prayer for the times of the day, we still find phrases here that we will not encounter anywhere else.

The Bible calls the Church the bride of Christ

God created humanity to unite with it in a spiritual union. This idea forms a thread linking the Book of Genesis to the Book of Revelation, passing through the prophets, and the wisdom books, on top of which is the Song of Songs. We can summarize the history of the Old Testament as the

¹ There are four editions of the book of the Order of the Marriage. The first is the Urmia edition (Mission Press of the Bishops of Canterbury - 1892), the second is the India edition (Saint Narsai Press - 1960), the third edition in America (in the modern Assyrian language – 1961), the fourth edition in Iraq (Church of the East Press - 1995). Editions 1, 2, and 4 have the same name, which is ܩܕܝܫܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ, Except for Edition 3, its title is! ܩܕܝܫܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ, This title has no Christian character and as well the term ܡܪܝܬܐ does not include the marriage rite as a whole .

dynamic of God's effort to unite with his human bride after losing her dignity as a free bride and falling into the bondage of sin represented by selfishness and the rejection of life-giving love.

God was the first to begin relationship with his people, the children of Israel in the Old Testament. A covenant was established with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and his descendants forever. As part of this contract, God agreed to be faithful and promised to set the nation of Israel apart as his holy people. In doing so, they were instructed to consecrate themselves to the Lord and serve Him alone. The people of Israel, however, repeatedly broke their vows and walked away from their covenant with God to serve other gods and follow their own interests. Despite every betrayal, God stayed loyal and never broke His promise to Israel in every betrayal. While God's covenant relationship with the Israelites remained, through His son, He formed a new covenant with all who believed in Jesus Christ and surrendered to His lordship. Those who believe are called the church.

Jesus became the living embodiment of the bridegroom who was willing to abandon his life until death on the cross in sake of the one he loved. Jesus Christ atoning sacrifice provided the only way for us to be cleansed and forgiven so that the church can dwell in God's presence eternally.. And as Christ promised to be faithful to the church, He described His expectations for the church's relationship as His bride. As well, when Christ returns in the prophesied Second Coming, he will celebrate with his bride in his kingdom where the two will be united forever.² Just as there was a betrothal period in biblical times during which the bride and groom were separated until the wedding, so is the bride of Christ separate from her Bridegroom during the church age. Her responsibility during the betrothal period is to be faithful to Him.³ The Lord is regarded as the bridegroom of Israel in the Old Testament, Jesus as the bridegroom of the church in the New Testament. The bride is chosen by the Bridegroom through the initiative of His Father. The Holy Spirit also works in the era of the Church as an agent for the Father to sanctify the bride.⁴

In Revelation 12: 1, Jesus symbolically portrays his church as a woman "clothed with the sun"," the moon under her feet" and a "crown with twelve stars".⁵ This image reminds us of the Book of Songs of Songs, which is a dialogue between the groom (Christ) and the bride (the church) in which the groom describes his bride as "beautiful as the moon, pure as the sun" and she is beautiful because she is like the moon, and the moon reflects the light of the sun, and the sun is a sign of Christ. As Christ is a light to the world (John 8:12), also the church is a light to the world (Matthew 5:14), and she derives its beauty from him, rather also she reflects his beauty. He is the secret of her beauty. She is as pure as the sun because she is covered with the sun. The moon reflects the light of the sun, and thus the saints are the light of the world as they reflect the light of Christ in them. It is very clear that by the woman clothed with the sun, she meant the Church, to whom provided the Word of the Father.

² The Bible, Revelation 19:7-8.

³ Ibid, Revelation 22:20.

⁴ John 15:16.

⁵ Revelation 12:1.

Theological perspective of the East Syrian Patristic

In the early Church, this image conveyed the purity of the true Church, the love and intimacy between Christ and the Church, and the Church as an eschatological reality. The Syriac tradition in general is rich in evidence in its talk about the relationship between God and the soul, and Christ with the Church. Awareness of the metaphor's ecclesiological importance started in the earliest periods with the following East Syriac fathers: The oldest remaining Syriac Christian action possibly is the Odes of Solomon of around between first century and second century, which was fully aware of the importance of marriage as union. The goal of using of the marital imagery is describing the intimate bliss relationship between Christ and the believers.⁶

In this framework, as well, in the third century syriac Didascalia⁷ employs the married figure of the bride to speak of the crowned glorification Church that symbolizes in her eschatological union with her Bridegroom, Christ.⁸ In same period it appears document that is the Acts of Judas Thomas, which makes use of the married imagery of the book of the song of the songs remind us of the allegoric interpretation of Israel as the Bride of God to tell of the union between Christ and the church. That is, Jesus is the true Bridegroom (ܩܕܝܫܐ), the Living One who gives life to the believers and through Him the faithful can participate (ܕܡܫܝܚܐ) with the Lord, in the union of His eternal love.⁹

In the fourth century, appears the theologian for the all apostolic churches, especially in the Assyrian church of the east. In his hymns, poems, and sermons, St. Ephraim states obviously the Christ relationship to the church as a Bride-groom relation through using symbolic language of conjugal union, based on the pure love and sacrifice his life in sake to his crowned Bride.¹⁰ In three passages of the New Testament (Math 9:15, John 3:29, Math 25:1-13) mentioned by implication the bridegroom to be identified as Christ. He writes commenting on Eph 5:21-33: "*This pure love, which was ordained from Adam down to our Lord, was symbol of our Lord's perfect love. Therefore, the Church has left idols and possessions, like father and mother below, and died for his Church, so that by his death he might give life to the Church which he loved, and might raise her up and bring her to his Kingdom*".¹¹

⁶Odes 2:16; 6:3; 7:10. For the English text see J.H. Charlesworth, ed. & trans., *The Odes of Solomon*, Oxford 1973.

⁷*Teaching of the Apostles* and the full title given in Syriac is: "*Didascalia, that is, the teaching of the twelve Apostles and the holy disciples of our Lord*" is a Christian treatise which belongs to the genre of the Church Orders. It presents itself as being written by the Twelve Apostles at the time of the Council of Jerusalem; however, scholars agree that it was actually a composition of the 3rd century, perhaps around 230 AD.

⁸A. Vööbus, *Didascalia apostolorum in Syriac*, CSCO 402 (Louvain, 1979), p.402.

⁹L. Edakalathur, *Theology of Marriage in the East Syrian Tradition*, 24.

¹⁰*Hymni de Epiphania* 3:22 in Des hl. Ephraem des Syrers, *Hymnen de Nativitate (Epiphania)*, ed. & German translation, E. Beck, CSCO 186/187 (Louvain, 1959); Edakalathur, *Theology of Marriage in the East Syrian Tradition*, p. 54.

¹¹Commentary on *Diatessaron* 5:8. English translation in R. Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom: A Study in the East Syrian Tradition* (Cambridge, 1975), p. 138.

According to his hymns, he considers that the human soul as Christ bride and our body, bridal chamber of heart where the soul meets Christ. The term ܡܠܟܘܬܐ refers to the kingdom in its eschatological dimensions or sometimes indicates to the kingdom on earth by individuals. He used the wedding imagery in the context of spiritual life from images of collective betrothed bride (Israel, Church) on to the individual Christian. The Divinity that resided on Mount Sinai, which was refused by the bride, Israel, now resides in the heart of the baptized. Israel is depicted as bride to God, this covenant taken place on Mount Sinai and the second model he sees the church as bride for Christ which taking place in Jerusalem. In the first bride rejects the bridegroom, God, when Israel committed adultery to worship the Golden Calf at Mount Sinai. But, in the second stage the bride is given a second chance and has been forgiven by the death and resurrection of the bridegroom, Jesus Christ. The movement from the image of Christ as the bridegroom is revealed at his baptism in the Jordan River to that of the Church as the Bride at Christian baptism.¹²

Therefore, the Baptism In the ancient rite of baptism the symbol of the conjugal crowning was used, because according to the theological concept, baptism constitutes the beginning of Christ's marriage to the soul. The reality of the bride-church is intimately related to Christ's marriage with each of the members of the church in baptism. As well, For Mar Aphrem, Christ is the true Bridegroom ܡܠܟܘܬܐ who made use of wine as the Eucharist symbol, the sign of joy of the church. In the Jordan Christ is betrothed to the church. Christ shall bring to the bride freedom and holiness. The Eucharist being the gift of the Bridegroom to his bride is the dowry of Christ to the church.¹³

An outstanding interpreter of the holy scriptures of our east Syriac tradition in round of the fifth century is Mar Theodore of Mopsuestia who considered the conjugal communion is the symbol of a supernatural mystery, the union of Christ with the church (Eph 5:32). And also in his commentary on Malachi2: 14-16 confirms that the married communion to be the sign of the marvelous holy mystery, the union of Christ with the church.¹⁴ In this manner, the Anonymous Author of the 9th century asserts that the marriage of Christ with the Church is the original, and that between man and woman is its image.¹⁵ According to Mar Narsai homily of Epiphany (502), he had considered the people of Israel the bride of Yahweh in the Old Testament, likewise, the church is the bride of the Christ in the new testament. Christ betrothed the church during his baptism and gave her the gift of

¹² Sebastian Brock, *The Luminous Eye, the spiritual world vision of Saint Ephrem the Syrian*, Kalamazoo, Michigan 1992, 115-130.

¹³ P. Yousif, *L Eucharistie chez Saint Ephrem de Nisibe*, OCA 224, Roma 1984, 244-245.

¹⁴ Theodore of Mopsuestia, *In Epistolas B. Pauli Commentarii*, I, ed., H.B. Swete (Cambridge, 1882), pp. 183-187; Edakalathur, *Theology of Marriage in the East Syrian Tradition*, p. 56- 58.

¹⁵ *Expositio II*, in *Anonymiauctoris expositio officiorum Ecclesiae Georgio Arbelensivulgo Adscripta. Accedit Abrahae Bar Lipheh interpretatio officiorum*, R.H. Connolly, ed., trans., CSCO 64, 71, 72, 76, Syr. 2, vol. 91 & 92 (Paris & Leipzig, 1911-12), 156.

his spirit. He adorned her with the inheritance of the heavenly kingdom. John the Baptist is described as the friend of Christ who prepared and introduced the bride to the bridegroom.¹⁶

For this essential-theologian reason which was mentioned above, Patriarch Timothy II (1318-1332) placed the sacrament of the marriage on the list of the seven sacraments. According to him, this marital union is a mystery of the union between Christ and the Church. He confirms in his commentary that the mystery of marriage is the symbol of Christ's love for the church.¹⁷ As well, the marital liturgy describes this eschatological union of the selfless and sacrificial love of Christ and perfect grateful love of the Church. This liturgy celebrates the eschatological union of Christ with Church. In 14th century, Rabban Brikk Isho' clearly describes this eschatological union between Christ and Church. *'The holy Church, the bride of Christ composed of the saints and the faithful will begin to receive with joy the true Bridegroom, our Savior Jesus, praising and glorifying him with all honor. He will receive his bride, the Church, and take her up with him to heaven: he will lead her into the eternal chamber and will seat her at his right, making her happy by his vision, and make her enjoy eternal and everlasting bliss. She will be pleased in him and together with the heavenly hosts will sing to him sweet songs.'*¹⁸

Church as the Bride in the East Syriac Liturgy

It is possible to understand the mystery of Christ and his Church by reviewing the ancient rites of marriage in the Church of the East, most of which still survive today. The Liturgy is the representation of the divine dispensation Mystery within framework time and place. In the book of Khudra (especially in the liturgical seasons of Epiphany and the Dedication of the Church) and marriage rite of east Syriac church, all the prayers sound that marriage is a combined act of the heavenly and earthly church. as matter of fact, the liturgical bridal texts seems to be more concerned with the betrothal of Christ and his church¹⁹ than with the actual marriage of the couple in presence. That means the theme of Christ and Church is dominant. This picture is interwoven with the adoration of Christ as the bridegroom of the Church.

1. The expressions for bride and groom

It is two words that excellently and usually denote the bride: **ܥܠܬܐ** and **ܥܠܬܐܝܬܐ**. The first expression literally indicates the wreathed one and goes back to the ancient, pre-Christian oriental habit of the bride and groom to wear wreaths **ܥܠܬܐ** at the wedding reception. As is well known, in the marriage rite of the East Syriac Church, these wreaths are so prominent that at least the second part of this rite is regularly named after them. The only striking thing is that always only the bride is referred with a formation from root **ܥܠܬܐ**, but never the groom. Because the actual and almost

¹⁶ F. Macleod, ed. & trans., Metrical Homilies of Narsai on the Nativity, Epiphany, Passion, Resurrection and Ascension, PO 40. 1, Brepols 1979, 95.

¹⁷ P.Yousif, "La célébration du mariage dans le rite chaldéen," in Farnedi, G., ed., *La celebrazione cristiana del matrimonio, simboli e testi*, SA 93 (Rome, 1986), pp. 228, 288.

¹⁸ J. Mateos, Lelya-Sapra: *les offices chaldéens de la nuit et du matin*, OCA 156, Rome, 1959, 2nd ed., 1972, 463-464.

¹⁹ Based on the old testament, the root of the term the church-**ܥܠܬܐ** in Hebrew is used to signify meeting, an assembly, the congregation of Yahweh (Ex. 12:3, Num. 27:17).

exclusive word for groom ܥܡܝܬܐ, whose root means Affinity, Smelting. The early Syriac ascetics called Christ ܥܡܝܬܐ signifying their intimate relationship with him. They look forward to full communion with their beloved at the Heavenly spiritual feast (ܡܫܬܥܝܬܐ) and finally in the eschatological chamber (ܚܡܝܬܐ).²⁰ From the treatment of the second expression for the bride: we have to refrain from doing so here, since we have to clarify the whole circle of ideas of the root ܡܚܕܐ below.

If we now ask the question who is the groom in our case, at first glance this seems to be quite unnecessary. For the texts continue to speak with an unmistakable clarity about the bride of Christ, the bride of Jesus, our Savior, and the high priest. It is all the more striking when we read in the Berlin manuscript:²¹

ܥܡܝܬܐ ܕܡܫܬܥܝܬܐ ܕܡܚܕܐ
 ܕܡܫܬܥܝܬܐ ܕܡܚܕܐ ܕܡܫܬܥܝܬܐ
Church, bride of the Most High,
taken from the Gentiles and given to his son

The term ܡܫܬܥܝܬܐ is used as referring to both Christ and the father. The church is also the bride of father analogically, and this is an oriental expression. Because God founded the church in Sinia and the son continued the word of the father. So this term means both bride and daughter in law.²² But the word ܡܚܕܐ which means bride is never employed to the father, but in reference to the son.²³ The following passages prove that this phrase is not an isolated poetic expression:

ܡܫܬܥܝܬܐ ܕܡܫܬܥܝܬܐ ܕܡܫܬܥܝܬܐ
 ܡܫܬܥܝܬܐ ܕܡܫܬܥܝܬܐ ܕܡܫܬܥܝܬܐ
Blessed are you the believing church
Bride of the father, king of kings.

A text from the ܡܫܬܥܝܬܐ of the 2nd church consecration Sunday offers the peak of this expression, which portrays the church as the bride of the father and the son:

ܡܫܬܥܝܬܐ ܕܡܫܬܥܝܬܐ ܕܡܫܬܥܝܬܐ ܕܡܫܬܥܝܬܐ
 ܡܫܬܥܝܬܐ ܕܡܫܬܥܝܬܐ ܕܡܫܬܥܝܬܐ ܕܡܫܬܥܝܬܐ
Blessed to you, you became the bride of the Father,
who has been engaged to the Son of God.

²⁰ R. Payne Smith, A Compendious Syriac-English Dictionary Founded upon the Thesaurus, Oxford 1979, 272.

²¹ Berlin Gazza manuscript. fol. 620, Berlin 1537, Fol. 97 A.

²² Payne smith, Dictionary, 216.

²³ Robert Murray, Symbols of Church and Kingdom: A Study in Early Syriac Tradition, Cambridge 1975, 132.

²⁴ We find out also the phrase (ܡܫܬܥܝܬܐ ܕܡܫܬܥܝܬܐ ܕܡܫܬܥܝܬܐ-Faithful church, betrothed of Christ) in unidentified liturgical fragment, probably for the Hallowing of the Church (ܡܫܬܥܝܬܐ), but matching text is not found in the printed Khudra. See: Erica C.D. Hunter and Mark Dickens, Verzeichnis der Orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland. Band V, 2, Syrische Handschriften Teil 2, Texte der Berliner Turfansammlung, Stuttgart, 2014, 119.

²⁵ Toma. Darmo, ܡܫܬܥܝܬܐ ܕܡܫܬܥܝܬܐ ܕܡܫܬܥܝܬܐ ܕܡܫܬܥܝܬܐ ܕܡܫܬܥܝܬܐ ܕܡܫܬܥܝܬܐ / t. darmo, ed. Ktābâ dqdām wdbātar w dhûdrâ w dkashkôl w dgazâ w qālâ d'ûdrânêc am ktābâ d mazmôrê, Trichur 1960–61. / Prayer book throughout the liturgical year, Hudra, III, 601.

²⁶ Ibid, 601.

Furthermore, by using the term **ܚܠܬܐ** the Syriac word denotes also the affinity between married woman and any near relation of her Husband. Certainly this thought cannot be dismissed; it is the habit of the Orientals to use expressions for the closest family relationship, also in a broader sense, all too well known.

We have to tackle the matter a little deeper. It can be seen from these texts ,the work of salvation Christ is certainly first and foremost the very own work of the second person in the divinity. But still in this sense our expressions should emphasize the special role of the father in the creation of the work of salvation. He took the decision that only in this form should salvation take place; he accepted Christ's salvation services and thereby ultimately made effective.

Therefore, the father who sanctifies the bride and leads her to his son; in this sense she is his bride who ultimately owes her existence as a bride only to him. Thus, the phrase bride of the father should be seen as something more than a mere analogous elocution. There is, of course, complete unanimity in the fact that the bride is not to be understood as the individual soul, but rather that which is higher is what is not always expressed in exactly the same sense. For one thing, this bride is only the Church as the totality of all believers in Christ. This is what it says in the hymn of **ܡܚܠܬܐ**:

**ܠܡܠܝܚܬܐ ܡܠܚܬܐ ܡܠܚܬܐ ܡܠܚܬܐ
ܡܠܚܬܐ ܡܠܚܬܐ ܡܠܚܬܐ ܡܠܚܬܐ
ܡܠܚܬܐ ܡܠܚܬܐ ܡܠܚܬܐ ܡܠܚܬܐ
ܡܠܚܬܐ ܡܠܚܬܐ ܡܠܚܬܐ ܡܠܚܬܐ.**²⁷

*The Baptizees sing a song of praise;
delight, rejoice in the bridegroom
with him the enjoyment of bliss up there in upper Jerusalem.*

Or in the same place:

**ܠܡܠܝܚܬܐ ܡܠܚܬܐ ܡܠܚܬܐ ܡܠܚܬܐ
ܡܠܚܬܐ ܡܠܚܬܐ ܡܠܚܬܐ ܡܠܚܬܐ.**²⁸

*You Holy Spirit children,
Praise the groom incessantly,
who puts wreaths on your heads.*

Here the Baptizees, the children of the Holy Spirit stand here unequivocally as Bride for the groom; He invited them to the heavenly kingdom of bliss. In this regard, the Bem hymn **ܡܠܚܬܐ ܡܠܚܬܐ** on the 2nd church consecration Sunday is very significant:

²⁷ Hudra, I, 669.

²⁸ Ibid, 699.

١. ٢. ٣. ٤. ٥. ٦. ٧. ٨. ٩. ١٠. ١١. ١٢. ١٣. ١٤. ١٥. ١٦. ١٧. ١٨. ١٩. ٢٠. ٢١. ٢٢. ٢٣. ٢٤. ٢٥. ٢٦. ٢٧. ٢٨. ٢٩. ٣٠. ٣١. ٣٢. ٣٣. ٣٤. ٣٥. ٣٦. ٣٧. ٣٨. ٣٩. ٤٠. ٤١. ٤٢. ٤٣. ٤٤. ٤٥. ٤٦. ٤٧. ٤٨. ٤٩. ٥٠. ٥١. ٥٢. ٥٣. ٥٤. ٥٥. ٥٦. ٥٧. ٥٨. ٥٩. ٦٠. ٦١. ٦٢. ٦٣. ٦٤. ٦٥. ٦٦. ٦٧. ٦٨. ٦٩. ٧٠. ٧١. ٧٢. ٧٣. ٧٤. ٧٥. ٧٦. ٧٧. ٧٨. ٧٩. ٨٠. ٨١. ٨٢. ٨٣. ٨٤. ٨٥. ٨٦. ٨٧. ٨٨. ٨٩. ٩٠. ٩١. ٩٢. ٩٣. ٩٤. ٩٥. ٩٦. ٩٧. ٩٨. ٩٩. ١٠٠.

The church says:

Above the angels, put me into the realm of light
Oh what a Mystery - the groom who took me as a bride
With water and spirit he sanctified me in his baptism.
And led my children into new life.

From the many other passages, only the following should be emphasized:

١. ٢. ٣. ٤. ٥. ٦. ٧. ٨. ٩. ١٠. ١١. ١٢. ١٣. ١٤. ١٥. ١٦. ١٧. ١٨. ١٩. ٢٠. ٢١. ٢٢. ٢٣. ٢٤. ٢٥. ٢٦. ٢٧. ٢٨. ٢٩. ٣٠. ٣١. ٣٢. ٣٣. ٣٤. ٣٥. ٣٦. ٣٧. ٣٨. ٣٩. ٤٠. ٤١. ٤٢. ٤٣. ٤٤. ٤٥. ٤٦. ٤٧. ٤٨. ٤٩. ٥٠. ٥١. ٥٢. ٥٣. ٥٤. ٥٥. ٥٦. ٥٧. ٥٨. ٥٩. ٦٠. ٦١. ٦٢. ٦٣. ٦٤. ٦٥. ٦٦. ٦٧. ٦٨. ٦٩. ٧٠. ٧١. ٧٢. ٧٣. ٧٤. ٧٥. ٧٦. ٧٧. ٧٨. ٧٩. ٨٠. ٨١. ٨٢. ٨٣. ٨٤. ٨٥. ٨٦. ٨٧. ٨٨. ٨٩. ٩٠. ٩١. ٩٢. ٩٣. ٩٤. ٩٥. ٩٦. ٩٧. ٩٨. ٩٩. ١٠٠.

Holy Church, sing praise to the groom,
who took you and led you into his chamber
and given you his mysteries as a deposit,
for forgiveness to your children.

Here we clearly find that the Church, in its real existence towards its children, is not only a group of believers, but also that it belongs to and is related an omnipresent being, our Lord. The community of believers constitutes the body and members of Christ. As our teacher Paul says, "But you are the body of Christ, and every one of you is a member of it" (1 Corinthians 12:27). Only now does it become completely understandable when we find her addressed as the Queen, the daughter of the king of the world, Daughter of light.³¹ We have here before us a real personification, such as were so familiar to the Jewish and Hellenistic Orient.³²

2. The phrase-١٣٥

- A. Money:** In the Oriental Semitic world, money has always played a major role in engagement. The bride was awarded by her father to the suitor for a certain sum of money. Therefore we are not surprised when we find a word for the expression: (take a bride) that originally means: (acquire at a price, buy): ١٣٥. This word also reflects a common Semitic background of buying and barter. It points to the oriental custom of buying the bride from her father. Therefore the terms ١٣٥ ١٣٥ come from the root ١٣٥, which commonly means to betroth or to marry. The noun form ١٣٥ means betrothal.³³

²⁹ Hudra, III, 605.

³⁰ Ibid, 612.

³¹ Ibid, 620.

³² See Paul, Heinisch, Personifikationen und Hypostasen im Alten Testament und im Alten Orient= Biblische Zeitfragen 9, 10-12, Münster 1921.

³³ Payne Smith, Dictionary, 216,272; R. Murray, Symbols of church and kingdom, Cambridge, 1975, p.132.

³⁴ **ܡܥܬܒܢܐ ܕܡܫܚܝܗ ܠܝܚܬܐ ܕܦܪܩܘܣܐ ܕܡܫܚܝܗ.**
Christ, who have betrothed his bride through his body and his precious blood.

Christ, who have betrothed his bride through his body and his precious blood.

Blessed are you, holy and glorious Church, the betrothed of Christ, who with his love wanted to give you his body and save you with his blood.

B. Christ's death on the cross: the moment of the actual completion of the work of redemption, emerges as the point in time and moment of the engagement. On the other hand, we are pointed in a completely different direction when we e.g. read the text on the Epiphany:

*Today he has betrothal his bride,
through the mediation of his groom's best man.*

Blessed be Christ who has betrothed you the church to himself from the waters of baptism.

9

Here the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan is plainly presented as the date of the engagement. The following passages reveal expressly that the engagement of the church, the bride of the heavenly king, took place when Jesus was baptized in the Jordan:

³⁹ܬܡܕܕܝܢ ܡܫܕܕܐ ܠܡܠܟܐ ܕܥܡܡܐ ܕܥܡܡܐ.
In the river Jordan the church was betrothed to her heavenly bridegroom.
⁴⁰ܡܡ ܡܠܟܐ ܡܠܟܐ.
From the water he made her his bride.

From these passages, one thing emerges with all obviousness: There is no longer any question of a price or a bride price. In contrast, the sharp emphasis is on the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan, or in the water in general, an impression which is exacerbated when we follow model of the close association between water and **ܡܡܕ** used at one point in Old Testament salvation history:

ܢܕ ܕܕܐ ܡܡܕ. ܕܕܐ ܕܕܐ ܕܕܐ ܕܕܐ.
 ܡܡܡܡܐ ܕܕܐ ܕܕܐ ܡܡܡܐ. ܡܡܡܐ ܡܡܡܐ ܕܕܐ ܡܡܡܐ.
⁴¹ܡܡܐ ܡܡܡܐ ܡܡܡܐ ܡܡܐ ܡܡܐ. ܡܡܐ ܡܡܐ ܡܡܐ ܡܡܐ ܡܡܐ.
At the well, Eliezer betrothed Rebekah to Isaac;
At the well Jacob betrothed Rachel;
Likewise, Moses betrothed Zipporah,
Also who gives us life took the church of the bride from the Jordan through the Mediation of John.

C. There is close connection between water and engagement, which a bath of the bride and groom prior to engagement would have merged with the word **ܡܡܕ** in the Conceptual unit: from the water take the bride. On the other hand, not only that a bridal bath is mentioned; that shows in the use of the Old Testament models, but also with them something happens at the water, at the well.⁴²

Christ baptism is his betrothal to the church, the moment when John the Baptist reveals the bridegroom to the expectant bride. The baptism of Jesus is an archetype of the baptism of Christians in which the believers become the bride to Christ. Which expresses in terms of spiritual marriage the intimate relationship between the faithful and Christ the heavenly bridegroom, which begins with baptism. The bridal bath of the church in the Jordan River has a special importance in the liturgy of the church of the East. For that reason, in East Syriac liturgy, as in all other Eastern Christian liturgies, the epiphany is primarily the feast of the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan. With this power granted to water, the Savior washes His Church to purify and sanctify it. We find this in the following text:

³⁹ Berlin Manuscript, 102 A.

⁴⁰ Ibid. 101 A.

⁴¹ Hudra, I, 645.

⁴² Odo, Casel, Die Taufe als Brautbad der Kirche, in Jahrbuch für Liturgiewissenschaft 5, 1925, 144-147.

[illegible]

٤٥
 حَبْشَةُ تَمَّ وَشَوْهَلُ سَمَّ. وَكَلْبُ دَمَسَ تَهْشَلُ.

11

The effect of this state of ugliness and depravity is, of course, the total inability to awaken a man's love. Abandoned, she sits there impotent to free herself from her bitter lot. Then the heavenly bridegroom comes out of sheer grace and love and descends into the waters of the Jordan, where he washes all her filth, takes away all other ugliness, everything repulsive, so that after this baptism she stands there in radiant purity and kindness in perfect holiness. So the bath of baptism is a necessary prerequisite for engagement. Because the heavenly bridegroom cannot take one as a bride, of which he should be ashamed. Therefore he feels compelled to first put the bride in a state worthy of him. This makes it completely understandable why water, baptism, could grow together with the term **ܡܚܕܐ** to form such a unity. That is why bridal bath has no ancient pagan background, but the series of thoughts described above that turned the Epiphany as the feast of the baptism of Jesus into the bridal feast of the church, which expressly states that the engagement of the church, the bride of the heavenly king, took place when Jesus was baptized in the Jordan.⁵⁰

Also besides Baptism water there is another source of cleaning and sanctification which is the blood of Christ. The process of purifying and sanctifying commenced in the baptismal water is continued through his suffering and death. Through his blood Christ washed away the saints and purified the church. His blood became the instrument of her liberation. By his suffering and death he liberated her bride from the yoke of sin and from the slavery of demons. This interpretation is also proven by the texts that speak of cleaning, of washing, but do not mention water with a single syllable:

ܕܒܕܝܫ ܕܚܝܬܐ ܡܚܕܐ ܡܚܕܐ ܡܚܕܐ.⁵¹

*By his living blood
he cleaned your stains (dirt).*

ܕܒܕܝܫ ܕܚܝܬܐ ܕܡܫܚܐ ܕܡܫܚܐ ܕܡܫܚܐ.

ܡܚܕܐ ܡܚܕܐ ܡܚܕܐ ܡܚܕܐ.⁵²
*By sacrificing himself, he cleansed and sanctified you
and made you the ornate bride for himself.*

As a source of purification, therefore, the one cited here is the one through which the water of Baptism first gets its purifying and sanctifying power: the redeeming death of Christ. Whether it is the **ܡܚܕܐ** from the water or through Christ's sacrificial death, it is always basically just one thought: Christ acquires his bride through the work of his redemption.

D. Christ gave his entire life as the bridal price for the bride. He purified her in the Jordan River and vested her with the robe of glory. The baptism in the Jordan River symbolically anticipates the

⁵⁰ The marriage ritual of the Church of the East, **ܬܐܣܐ ܕܐܡܝܪܐ ܕܡܫܚܐ ܕܡܫܚܐ ܕܡܫܚܐ ܕܡܫܚܐ**, *Taksā da-mekūrāyā-d-būrrākāyā-d-kūllālāyē-da-ḡtārgenōnāār* gen-on-a Urmia, at the press of the Archbishop of Canterbury's mission, 1892, 25.

⁵¹ Hudra, III, 628.

⁵² Ibid, 593.

sacrifice on the cross. The baptism of the Jordan, which Christ accepted, is a symbol of a second baptism. According to Luke 12,50 Jesus speaks of a death baptism on the cross. When he submerged in the waters of death, and after three days he raised victorious over life. There is a knot linking Jesus' first baptism in the Jordan and his second baptism in the Paschal Mystery consisting of the Cross, Death, Descent to Hell, and Resurrection. This necklace is a chain in which he crowns his fiancée, the church, as his wife.

The wedding of Christ in his baptism is a symbol that anticipates his death, which will take place on Golgotha, where the Church will be born from his side: The second Eve from the second Adam: blood and water came out, that is, the Church, which is built on the side of Christ. Therefore, the water and blood which flowed from his side is the symbol of baptism and the Eucharist that make the church. Just as it was with Adam, only his bride was taken from his side, since Adam's wife is his side, so the blood of our Lord is his church. From the side of Adam came death, from the side of our Lord life. To sum up, the event of the cross is the event of Christ's wedding with the Church. The second wedding of Adam with the second Eve that emerges from his pierced side is an authentic expression of the highest meaning of the death of the cross, which is an act that the Lord performs for us, for the sake of union with us, before it is an act for our sins. Therefore, the Christian in his baptism does not accept only the forgiveness of sins, as this was the content of John's baptism. The baptism of Christ goes further than that. It is the beginning of the betrothal with Christ. It is a participation in the first and second baptisms of Christ. St. Paul talks about it, saying: "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Galatians 3:27). There is confusion, union, mystical Qur'an in Christian baptism.

The church is aware of the bridal price that her bridegroom gave her in his love. As it was mentioned before, the bride needed a very special purification and sanctification in order to become reasonably worthy of the bridegroom's love. And Our Lord clothed his bride with joy and made her face shine with his heavenly glory. Her Beauty consists in her perfect compatibility with her bridegroom. Now that this purification has taken place, the texts never tire of singing about the beauty- **جمالها**, shine- **انوارها** and jewelry of the bride. And a word from the hymn proves that what is being said of her is not a little, from the **الصلوة** of the night service on the 4th church sanctification Sunday and the evening service of Tuesday of the 3th church sanctification week:

53. **خَبْرُ نِسْمٍ جَمْعُ خَبْرٍ**
يَخْبُرُ مَعْدُودًا خَلْفَ خَلْفٍ

*There is no other beauty like yours,
O Holy church, bride of king.*

٥٤
 تَدْعُكَ دِينُكَ حَقُّكَ
 مَخْرُجٌ جَلَسْتُ فِيهِ
 كَيْفَ لَمْ يَكُنْ مُعْتَبَرًا

*Thank the King Christ who made your shine great in his grace
and adorned you with all heavenly beauty in the spirit that he gave you.*

⁵³ Hudra, III, 625, 608.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 619.

But as it is already said in the Psalms that the whole beauty of the king's daughter is inner, also the songs emphasize the spirituality, that the supernatural of this beauty. This is how one of the Vespers sings on the first Sunday of the church sanctification:

⁵⁵ ܡܠܚܝܬܐ ܕܥܡܪܬܐ ܕܗܘܝܬܐ.

He has adorned them with spiritual beauty.

The same emphasis on the supernatural in the beauty of the bride is to be found in the expressions which attribute this beauty to the father as the divine originator:

ܡܠܚܝܬܐ ܕܥܡܪܬܐ ܕܗܘܝܬܐ ܕܡܠܚܝܬܐ ܕܥܡܪܬܐ ܕܗܘܝܬܐ

ܡܠܚܝܬܐ ܕܥܡܪܬܐ ܕܗܘܝܬܐ ܕܡܠܚܝܬܐ ܕܥܡܪܬܐ ܕܗܘܝܬܐ.

⁵⁶ ܕܡܠܚܝܬܐ ܕܥܡܪܬܐ ܕܗܘܝܬܐ ܕܡܠܚܝܬܐ ܕܥܡܪܬܐ ܕܗܘܝܬܐ.

church the queen clap your hands; sing praises;

Rejoice and delight, daughter of light;

For all her glory comes from her father.

This incomparable, heavenly beauty of the bride is enhanced by the jewelry-ܡܠܚܝܬܐ she puts on. First of all, her robe ܡܠܚܝܬܐ - ܡܠܚܝܬܐ should be mentioned as the most exquisite jewelry of the bride. In summary, ܡܠܚܝܬܐ from the ܡܠܚܝܬܐ of the Epiphany sings about it:

ܡܠܚܝܬܐ ܕܥܡܪܬܐ ܕܗܘܝܬܐ ܕܡܠܚܝܬܐ ܕܥܡܪܬܐ ܕܗܘܝܬܐ

ܕܡܠܚܝܬܐ ܕܥܡܪܬܐ ܕܗܘܝܬܐ ܕܡܠܚܝܬܐ ܕܥܡܪܬܐ ܕܗܘܝܬܐ

ܡܠܚܝܬܐ ܕܥܡܪܬܐ ܕܗܘܝܬܐ ܕܡܠܚܝܬܐ ܕܥܡܪܬܐ ܕܗܘܝܬܐ

⁵⁷ ܕܡܠܚܝܬܐ ܕܥܡܪܬܐ ܕܗܘܝܬܐ ܕܡܠܚܝܬܐ ܕܥܡܪܬܐ ܕܗܘܝܬܐ.

Christ, the true light,

who made his church happy in his baptism

and she dressed in a garment that never wears out,

as it is woven by the Holy Spirit.

After purifying his bride from filth, Christ clothed her anew in marvelous garments. This indicates her status as the children and the holiness given to them by the Holy Spirit. That means the clothing with which she is adorned is spiritual and immortal. This is the glorious and scarlet – ܡܠܚܝܬܐ garment woven by Christ. Also that is made out of fine gold. Her vestments show her likeness to Christ.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Hudra, III, 579.

⁵⁶ Ibid, 627.

⁵⁷ Hudra, I, 641.

⁵⁸ Toma. Darmo, The Ritual of betrothal, blessing, crowning and interweaving of the bridal chamber, Trichur, Mar Narsai Press, 1960, 63.

There are three things that are stated here about the garment: Garment of splendor, not wearing out, woven by the Holy Spirit. The first term **ܕܠܚܡܐ ܕܥܠܡܐ** is very common and what we just got to know under the heading of beauty: the sublime endowment of grace in the church, which is above any concept of earthly beauty. This supernatural endowment of grace is essentially eternal, immortal, since it is a participation in the divine nature. Therefore the garment of shine appears as never wearing out or as shining, immortal light.

ܕܠܚܡܐ ܕܥܠܡܐ ܕܥܠܡܐ ܕܥܠܡܐ ܕܥܠܡܐ ܕܥܠܡܐ.⁵⁹

He has wear on you a robe of the sparkle light that never wearing out.

This text includes a reference to the garment of glory that Adam lost, and the work of Christ which aims to re-clothe Adam with the garment of glory. The history of salvation is to some extent the re-dressing of humanity in the garb of glory that it lost among the trees of Eden.

Furthermore, according to St. Ephrem, Christ comes to earth wearing the garment of our humanity in order to restore in his incarnation the brilliance of glory that this humanity had lost by turning away from God. There is a relationship between the mystery of the Incarnation and the garment of glory, for Christ is the bridegroom who wore his wedding dress, which is ultimately our human body. The second reference is to the sanctity of our body, for the body is the dress of the incarnate Christ, so he says: “Let our bodies shine, which is your garment“. And this garment of glory is in fact the dress of the wedding feast of creation with its Creator. It is the garment that believers receive at Baptism and whose purity they must preserve Even the eschatological wedding at the coming of the Lord in glory.⁶⁰

This also corresponds when it is indicated that the garment was made by the Holy Spirit or when the king's son appears as the Maker elsewhere:

ܕܠܚܡܐ ܕܥܠܡܐ ܕܥܠܡܐ ܕܥܠܡܐ ܕܥܠܡܐ ܕܥܠܡܐ.

Praise the purple that the king's son wrought for you.

But something else surprises us about this text: the robe is referred to here as **ܕܠܚܡܐ** - Scarlet - purple. We find a similar text in the wedding ritual: Who is the one who goes all dressed in purple?⁶¹ We also find this color **ܕܠܚܡܐ** in liturgical commentary of Ishoyahb IV in question 104 regarding the cross that is placed on the altar, the purple coloring on the Cross is the likeness of the purple with which the priests⁶² covered our Savior when they brought him to be crucified.⁶³

⁵⁹ Hudra, III, 625.

⁶⁰ Sebastian Brock, *The Luminous Eye*, 85-97.

⁶¹ Heinrich Denzinger, *Ritus Orientalium, coptorum syrorum et armenorum in administrandis Sacramentis*, Vol. II, Würzburg 1864, Graz 1969, 449.

⁶² The writer is not very exact as regards the biblical data. For the priests and not the soldiers are mentioned here as mocking Jesus, against the testimony of the Gospels (27:28) that Jesus was put on the cross in his own clothes.

⁶³ Willem Cornelis Van Unnik, *Nestorian Question on the Administration of the Eucharist*, by IshoYahb IV. , New Jersey, 2006, 180.

Also Mar Isho dad of Merv (9th Century) in his commentaries of St. Matthew (27:28) says: Roman Soldiers dressed him with the form of a king's dress as mocking him and he called it the scarlet robe, king was only was authorized to wear the color of purple, as well the mystery of this was marked in the sprinkling and purification of the people, and in the thread on the hands of Zarah (Gen 38.30),⁶⁴ and in the thread that was in the window, instead of the robe (Josh. 2:18).⁶⁵ Likewise, the scarlet, which was used to consecrate the Egyptian and Greek kings, was given to the Maccabees in honor; the Priests took them and presented them before Pilate, saying, here are the crimson things that he prepared for himself (Jesus), pretending to the kingdom, and plotting to raise rebellion against Caesar. They unwillingly portrayed the reality of future facts, by means of the crimson, that he truly is king of the worlds.⁶⁶ We conclude from this that the scarlet color symbolizes that Christ is in the king of kings and also symbolizes the blood of salvation. The two symbols are centered in the Cross.

In Addition, According to Priest Abu Al-Faraj (11th Century), it was the custom of the Greeks and Romans that if the king sat, he would wear a scarlet robe. The soldiers did this to Jesus with sarcasm because they heard the Jews and Pilate say of him that he said I was the King of the Jews. And if they themselves took that out of mockery, then the divine and eternal mysteries are hidden in their work, because in reality he is the King of kings and Lord of lords, but his spiritual kingdom is on the hearts of those who believe in Him. His being stripped naked is a sign of the human race taking off the garment of sin which it had been wearing with Adam's fall into disobedience. And Jesus wore the scarlet robe, a sign of the return of the human race to the garment of splendor that God adorned in the past.⁶⁷

According to the martial liturgy, after blessing the wedding dress, the priest consecrates the colors that adorn the bride; this is intended to emphasize the elegance. Here bride stands in the place of the Church. Christ perfected the beauty of the church his bride. Her beauty increased like rose flowers and spring blossoms.⁶⁸ By blessing the bride's garments that symbolizes what God has dressed for man according to the Book of Genesis, and what he will wear for him in the coming world of the garments that do not wear out, as well as referring to the baptism of water and the spirit, and to the

⁶⁴ Zarah pulled out his hand, and the midwife tied his hand with a scarlet red thread, but he inserted his hand to get Perez out, and after him Zarah. Some fathers see in Zarah an example of the Jewish people, who should have been the firstborn. He extended his hand and received the law of blood sacrifices (the scarlet red thread), but he refused to believe in the Christ symbolized by the sacrifices, so he raised his hand again and lost the birthright that Perez had taken, the representative of the nations who had the firstborn of the spirit.

⁶⁵ The scarlet thread = the scarlet rope is the same rope that the two spies descended on from the window, and it is the same one that Rahab had to tie on it. And the scarlet thread refers to the blood of Christ, "For without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (Heb 9:22 + 1 Peter 1:18,19). The sign that was given was the "scarlet thread", referring to the blood of Christ, without which salvation is impossible. If we understand this, the rope with which the two spies escaped must be the same rope with which the house of Rahab and Rahab herself escaped, and the rope symbolizes the blood of Christ. This is the same as what happened to the people who were saved by the blood of the Passover lamb on the night of the Exodus from Egypt, when they put the blood on their gates. Note that whoever will be outside the house in both cases will perish, and the house symbolizes the church, so there is no salvation outside the church.

⁶⁶ The Commentaries of Ishodad of Merv, Bishop of Hadatha of Assyria (c.850 A.D.) on the New Testament, Volume I, the Gospel in English, Edited and Translated by Margaret Dunlop Gibson, Cambridge, 1911, 111.

⁶⁷ Priest Ibn Faraj, Interpretation of the four Gospels in Arabic, Cairo, 1908, 465-466. تفسير للاربعة اناجيل المشرقي اي القس ابو الفرج.

⁶⁸ Marriage Ritual, 31.

splendor and beauty that Christ gave to his church by his grace. Which expound two things: the renewal in life with the garment of immortality and the robe of love and peace put on.⁶⁹

The colored robe ⁷⁰ **ܠܚܝܬܐ** worn by the Bride was already used in previous centuries in churches, but, unfortunately, over time, this custom disappeared.⁷¹ The same is the case when the robe is shown to us as being decorated with fine gold:

ܡܠܚܬܐ ܠܚܝܬܐ ܕܡܠܚܬܐ ܕܡܠܚܬܐ.⁷²
Her robe is adorned with good gold.

This decoration of gold makes the beauty of the bride a sight for the eyes of angels and people:

ܝܬܬܡܠܬ ܡܠܚܬܐ ܕܡܠܚܬܐ ܕܡܠܚܬܐ.
⁷³ **ܠܚܝܬܐ ܕܡܠܚܬܐ ܕܡܠܚܬܐ.**
Your beauty was perfected in gold
In front of the Angels the upper world and lower world.

And according to what we have said above about the link between the beauty and adornment of the bride and her purification and sanctification, If we find at some time the time of the garment of the glorified garment, it did not take place in the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan, nor in his sacrificial death on prayer, but it will be done in his second coming of judgment:

ܡܠܚܬܐ ܕܡܠܚܬܐ ܕܡܠܚܬܐ ܕܡܠܚܬܐ.
⁷⁴ **ܡܠܚܬܐ ܕܡܠܚܬܐ ܕܡܠܚܬܐ ܕܡܠܚܬܐ.**
When he comes in great glory,
He wears her in a garment of splendor.

In addition to the robe, special attention is given to the crown- **ܡܠܬܐ** in the hymns, and sometimes also, **ܡܠܬܐ** as an ornament and piece of jewelry for the bride, which we get it in the hymn on the morning of the fourth Sunday of the Church sanctification:

⁶⁹ Marriage Ritual, the blessing of the bridal clothes, 22-28.

⁷⁰ It is a colorful garment that is placed on the bride. The content of prayer expresses the clothing of chastity given by God to human nature, the incorruptible vestments of eternal life in the new world. Unfortunately, it is no longer used at the present time, which was previously utilized. See: Bishop J. E. Manna, Chaldean-Arabic Dictionary, Beirut, 1975, 98.

⁷¹ The Rite of the Marriage, 15. We find this habit until now in the Orthodox churches, especially the Coptic Church, where the couple wear special ecclesiastical robe. Through prayers, we discover the spiritual treasures and spiritual blessings in them. We remember here parable the wedding banquet of the son of the king (Matthew 22: 2 - 14); In which the king found a man who was not wearing wedding clothes, so he ordered the servants to tie the feet and hands of this man and cast him into the outer darkness. These garments refer spiritually to the wedding garments that the Lord gave to the Church. So, in these garments there are spiritual gifts, which aid in salvation, and be a source of joy and cheerfulness, and lead to glory. The Lord asks us to prepare for the heavenly wedding by being on that day wearing wedding clothes. And the Church wants in her wonderful rite to raise our eyes to the heavenly wedding.

⁷² Hudra, III, 607. Remarkably, in the Coptic rite of marriage, we find that the priest prays on gilded clothes. It is a robe made of precious fabric, all decorated with crosses, often golden in color, and it is placed on the shoulders and covers the whole body from the front and the back. But it is open from the front and has no sleeves.

⁷³ Ibid, 601.

⁷⁴ Ibid, 612.

75
ܠܚܝܬܐ ܕܝܫܘܥ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ

He has adorned you with the crown of dignity.

The expression ܠܚܝܬܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ immediately highlights that characteristic of the wreath and the great emphasis in the beauty of the bride dress: ܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ, so we also meet here with still her garment was emphatically called: ܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ. This wreathed beauty derives from the glories of the Father it can be sufficiently noted in the following passage from the hymn at the ܡܫܝܚܐ Prayer of the Fourth Sunday of Sanctification of the Church:

ܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ

76
ܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ

*He wove crowns for her from the glosses,
Glories of light of his hidden father.*

Also remarkable here is the fact that there are several crowns when we come across a text on Epiphany, the groom lays wreaths on the heads of the individual Baptizers:

ܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ

77
ܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ

*Holy Spirit's sons, give praise to the bridegroom
who puts wreaths on your heads.*

God adorns the church with the utmost glory befitting His status. Here Christ the king decorates the Church like a queen. The glorious bridegroom espoused to the church is the one who puts on crowns and anoints priests and before whom all the kings with their crowns bowed their heads and adored him. Here the bride stands in the place of the Church. Christ perfected the beauty of the church as his bride. Her beauty increased like roses and spring flowers. After all, the church now deserves to stand on the side of the Lord.⁷⁸ There are many prayers in the east Syriac liturgy that describe the unique beauty of the Church as the bride.⁷⁹ There is no earthly splendor over the crown; it is heavenly and divine. As Christ himself is a reflection of the glory of the Father, also this brilliance of light is transmitted to all that Christ made and designed. In this sense there is another hymn ܡܫܝܚܐ:

⁷⁵ Hudra, III, 632.

⁷⁶ Ibid, 627.

⁷⁷ Hudra, I, 669.

⁷⁸ Marriage Ritual, 28. Also we find out practically that in the marital ritual, after all purification (Baptism), drinking the cup (salvation blood) and the blessing of the clothing and crowing, comes the bride to the side of the bridegroom on his right (church in Christ's right side), which was standing far from the bridegroom, and the evidence for that is when drinking wine from the blessed up. The rite commands that the priest is the one who gives the cup to the groom, but the deacon grants it to the bride because if the bride was next to the groom, it was from the plausible logic for a priest to give her the blessed cup to drink in same location.

⁷⁹ Marriage Ritual, 26.

ܕܥܕܬܐ ܡܥܪܥܬܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ

⁸⁰ ܕܥܕܬܐ ܡܥܪܥܬܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ.

With splendor and glory

Son of God crowned the church

That he chose to be his bride.

In addition to the unearthly luster that is appropriate to the bridal crown, the precious stone - **ܕܡܠܟܐ** is also occasionally highlighted with which it is decorated. Indeed, it is Christ himself who decorates the crown, just as he himself puts the bride's crown on the head:

ܕܡܠܟܐ ܡܥܪܥܬܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ

⁸¹ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܡܥܪܥܬܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ.

With fine, noble stones he has braided

the wreath of glory that he put on your head.

Robe and crown are the most exquisite jewelry of the bride. In addition, also appears occasionally their fragrance - **ܕܡܠܟܐ**. And her dignity is charming and fragrant like incense. We find in Madrasa-**ܕܡܠܟܐ** a meaningful hymn comes from the mouth of the church:

⁸² ܕܡܠܟܐ ܡܥܪܥܬܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ.

He filled me with his sweet fragrance and his saints embrace me.

As well, the hymn of **ܕܡܠܟܐ** on the 4th of church sanctification Sunday tells about it:

ܕܡܠܟܐ ܡܥܪܥܬܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ

⁸³ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܡܥܪܥܬܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ.

He made your smell fragrant

like pure incense before everyone.

In the above, we saw a close association between **ܡܠܟܐ** with three terms: purification and sanctification, beauty and adornment of the bride. By highlighting the interrelationships between these three areas, the clarification of the term **ܡܠܟܐ** in the area of bridal mysticism of the East Syrian liturgy is to have received significant support. East Syriac spirituality is the spirituality of the wedding. In writings from before the fifth century, the century of schisms, a special characteristic of East Syriac spirituality appears, which is its relationship with its Lord Jesus Christ. According to the anonymous interpretation of the ninth century on the Mysteries in his seventh treatise, the inner relationship in the celebration of the mysteries is revealed when it is interpreted according to a picture of the bridal mysticism, just as the acceptance of the sacraments is understood as a mystical and spiritual union with Christ.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ Hudra, III, 627.

⁸¹ Ibid, 627.

⁸² Ibid, 602.

⁸³ Ibid, 625.

⁸⁴ Idris, Emlek, Mysteriendeier der Ostsyrischen Kirche im 9. Jahrhundert, Die Deutung der göttlichen Liturgie nach dem 4. Traktat einer anonymen Liturgieerklärung, Band 30, München, 2004, 53.

Also, the term of monk in the Syriac language is ܡܢܚܚܐ, and the meaning of this word, which goes beyond the Greek word which means the hermit, that is, the solitary from the world in sake to search of God. According to the ancient Syriac theology, ܡܢܚܚܐ, He is "the only begotten Son", namely, Christ, the Son of the Father, and the monk is ܡܢܚܚܐ because, in the first place, he seeks to identify with and unite with Christ. Therefore, the purpose of the monastic life is not to escape from work and stoic isolation, rather, the union with the beloved.

In conclusion, another peculiarity in the use of the expression ܡܚܕܐ should be mentioned here. As we have already observed in various places above, ܡܚܕܐ is not only used by the bridegroom, but also by other persons who appear as ܡܚܕܐ, as the mediator. Now it is interesting to know the usefulness of this term in our field. The apostles appear as ܡܚܕܐ first:

⁸⁵ ܡܚܕܐ ܡܚܕܐ ܡܚܕܐ ܡܚܕܐ.
A virgin delivered to the apostles.

After the resurrection from the dead, Christ appeared to his disciples and asked the apostle Peter to take care his sheep (John 16:21). Christ emphasized the importance of preaching in his name repentance and forgiveness of sins to all nations, beginning in Jerusalem, and that they would be witnesses in their preaching of what they saw, heard and certain of. And he restored to them his promise to send them the Holy Spirit, which the Father also promised them, and commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem after his ascension, before this Spirit clothed them with power from the highest, and handed them his job in saying: As the Father sent me, I send you.

This use of the term ܡܚܕܐ for the apostles (St. Peter and St. Paul)⁸⁶ may come as a surprise at first; for one may take the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River or his sacrificial death on the cross as the date of the engagement, either way, it is difficult to know to what extent the apostles had to offer any help and mediation. Here we do not think of the ideal church as a personification, but of the real one as it is represented in its individual children. These children of the church must first win their groom (Christ), through preaching and instruction. And that is the mission of the apostles.⁸⁷

John the Baptist is considered the friend of Christ, the bridegroom, the mediator of the marriage of Christ and the church. The apostles are the agents in the betrothal of the church to Christ (2Cor 11:2). Moses is also as described as playing the role of betrothed and he is the mediator for the covenant between God and Israel. In a slightly different sense, John the Baptist is referred to as ܡܚܕܐ.⁸⁸ It was he who performed the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River and contributed in a unique way to the establishment of the bride's relationship between Christ and the Church as

⁸⁵ Hudra, III, 613.

⁸⁶ Ibid, 585.

⁸⁷ Also, the Persian sage Mar Afrahat talks about the Lord, describing him as "the bridegroom," while the apostles consider the "betrothals" – that is, one who prepares the bride for the groom – and considers the believers as the bride. See: The Demonstrations of Aphrahat, The Persian Sage, Gorgias Eastern Christian Studies, translated by Adam Lehto, NJ USA, 2010. See the Demonstrations, 14, 320-321.

⁸⁸ Hudra, III, 585.482; Marriage Ritual, 34.

Christ's friend, and bridal mediator.⁸⁹ Moses is also described as playing the role of mediator of the covenant between God and Israel. The law is a pure wedding party, in which a pure wedding ceremony was held in the desert and erecting chamber on Mount Sinai. In a fuller sense, Moses appears as **ܡܚܕܝܕܐ**. He is a true mediator between God and the people of Israel.

3. The Divine Proclamation through salvation **ܩܕܝܫܐ**

We now consider the acquisition of the bride through Christ's redemption- liberation (**ܩܕܡܐ-ܡܕܕ**). According to this conception; the bride is languishing in extreme captivity, in bitter fetters. Here comes Christ, pays a ransom, the highest imaginable, and the bride becomes free and is now completely his own.

ܡܕܕܐ ܡܕܕܐ ܡܕܕܐ ܡܕܕܐ
 ܡܕܕܐ ܡܕܕܐ ܡܕܕܐ ܡܕܕܐ
 ܡܕܕܐ ܡܕܕܐ ܡܕܕܐ ܡܕܕܐ
 ܡܕܕܐ ܡܕܕܐ ܡܕܕܐ ܡܕܕܐ
 ܡܕܕܐ ܡܕܕܐ ܡܕܕܐ ܡܕܕܐ

⁹⁰

*She is happy and dancing and cheering
 The church, the glorified bride;
 Sing praises from the mouth of her children to Jesus,
 The victorious king, who came and redeemed her with his cross.*

The yoke under which the bride is imprisoned is described as a fallacy - **ܩܕܡܐ**. Obviously, this means the fallacy of pagan idolatry. This complete equality of fallacies with the idolatry of paganism alludes to the missionary conditions in which by the messengers of faith encountered them in Mesopotamia. For them at that time it was all about winning souls to Christ for the first time, not about returning of any heresies.

ܡܕܕܐ ܡܕܕܐ ܡܕܕܐ ܡܕܕܐ
 ܡܕܕܐ ܡܕܕܐ ܡܕܕܐ ܡܕܕܐ

⁹¹

*He gave her freedom from the service of the Idols
 That was enslaved to the fallacy.*

⁸⁹As well we find out practically this theological perspective in Assyrian wedding customs, especially in some villages in province of Hakkari in the previous centuries that the Best man as the mediator has responsibility to bath the groom (Baptism) when a child enters with him to take a bath, a symbol of the Best man who was called (**ܡܕܕܐ**, **ܡܕܕܐ**). In addition, we also find the role of the Best man in going with the Groom to take Bride from her Home in a solemn celebration. In the same vein as well in the Jewish marriage ceremonies best man duty is to prepare and conduct marriage ceremonies and above all to lead the bride in the procession to the groom's house. The bridesmaids prepare the bridal bath and help to adorn the bride for wedding. See: L. Edakalathur, The Theology of Marriage, 177.

⁹⁰ Hudra, III, 579.

⁹¹ Ibid, 612, 615.

4. Gift-Deposit - ܩܕܝܫܐ ܕܥܡܝܢܐ

Christ mentioned his bride under very extraordinary circumstances: out of love and grace, he transforms the repugnant ugly into a wonder of beauty, which amazes everyone. It doesn't end there; he showered them with the most precious gifts. The East Syrian liturgy likes to use the word ܩܕܝܫܐ as a special expression for these bridal gifts, but here it has completely lost its old commercial meaning. Furthermore, has also lost a lot of the Pauline (deposit) and thus it has become almost synonymous with the simple bridal gift. As in ecclesiastical canon, the rite of betrothal is considered a formal contract that cannot be annulled, as the parties are considered binding, and they can only be separated by decision of the church, since our life on earth symbolizes a period of betrothal where the fiancée receives gifts from her fiancé as a symbol of eternal bliss. But after his second coming, the time of bliss comes between the believer and Christ in the eternal association in the Father's Kingdom. The law also mentions not having marital intercourse during the engagement period, because it symbolizes the time of bliss has not yet come, because the law compares it with the period of preaching salvation and the kingdom.⁹²

There are two categories of endowments that are preferred as bridal gifts:

- A. **The mysteries of the Lord Christ's Body and Blood as the Price to the Church**, both as an offering for us and as nourishment for us:

ܐܢܬ ܗܝ ܩܕܝܫܐ ܕܥܡܝܢܐ

ܩܕܝܫܐ ܕܥܡܝܢܐ ܕܥܡܝܢܐ.⁹³

He is the true bridegroom,

who gives his body to you as a deposit.

The essential element of marriage condition was the dowry-ܩܕܝܫܐ that the groom gives to the bride. It was a payment from the groom to the father of the bride and was an expression of the heart. In return, dowry-ܩܕܝܫܐ was a legal duty to give gifts to the bride. According to the custom of the Jewish Christians, and in the early centuries of Syriac Christianity, both the bride and bridegroom would exchange gifts after their engagement, regardless of gifts of relatives.⁹⁴ Also, in the spiritual relationship between Christ and the church, the groom offers the dowry to his bride. This dowry is incorruptible and eternal, which Christ paid to his bride in his body and blood with which she is nourished. Christ's Body and Blood as the dowry to the Church.⁹⁵ Christ the eternal bridegroom gave His dowry to the Church by shedding blood on the cross. In the 'ōnyāthā' of the betrothal service we pray:

⁹² Mar Odisho Brikha, Part II ܩܕܝܫܐ ܕܥܡܝܢܐ, 7 ܩܕܝܫܐ ܕܥܡܝܢܐ, 155-159.

⁹³ Hudra, III, 585.

⁹⁴ Ben-zion Schereschewsky, "Betrothal", in Encyclopedia Judaica IV, pp. 753-757.

⁹⁵ The Father offers a bride-price of great value, indicative of the value He places on the bride. The ܩܕܝܫܐ was required by the law (Rom 8:3, 4) and it was paid by the Christ (1 Pet 1:18, Rev 5:9). Christ the eternal bridegroom gave His Bride Price to the Church by shedding blood on the cross. The high price of the ܩܕܝܫܐ indicates the value the Father placed on the bride (cf. Jn 3:16).

ܕܡܝܢ ܦܫܬܐ ܕܝܚܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܕܢܝܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܕܢܝܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܕܢܝܐ.

⁹⁶ ܦܫܬܐ ܕܝܚܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܕܢܝܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܕܢܝܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܕܢܝܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܕܢܝܐ.
“Exult and rejoice O faithful Church, daughter of the king of the worlds, in the bridegroom who has espoused you and made you enter to his chamber and instead of dowry he gave you his precious body and blood and through the sacrifice of himself absolved you, sanctified you and made you a adorned bride for him.”

Furthermore, In the East Syrian marriage Rite the blessing of the cup and the participation by the couple has a Eucharistic character. This ritual of the chalice expresses in a significant manner the communion.⁹⁷ Through the influence of Jewish habits on the early syriac Christianity we find in East Syriac marriage ritual the source of the blessing of the cup as was the central element of the marriage Jewish ceremony, where the first of the seven blessings in the marriage ritual was the blessing of wine according to the Jewish context. Furthermore, according to the ancient marital Jewish customs, a man walks into a house where he has identified a girl whom he loves. He will bring with him a jar of wine and a cup. He will bring it out and drink from it and offer the cup to the girl as a proposal. The girl may take the cup and drink from it if she is willing. He may leave the cup on the table and go away to return and see if she has accepted the proposal. If she has taken the cup and drank from it, it is an acceptance of the proposal.⁹⁸

This is also a symbol of covenant relationship in the Jewish tradition; the couple drank from same cup of wine over which the betrothal had been declared. In that moment when the couple are drinking of wine from the common cup that on they will share everything in life, joys as well as sorrows.⁹⁹ The drinking from the same chalice by the spouses is a powerful symbol originating from the Eucharist. Through his suffering and death Christ feeds his bride with his body and blood as food and drink. This Eucharistic meal is itself the foretaste of the eschatological banquet which the church will eternally enjoy with her bridegroom and her children born of the spirit, as it was mentioned in book of khudra that also the Eucharist is called the kingdom table- ܡܠܟܘܬܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ as a gift to her bride.¹⁰⁰ In the context of the relationship between marriage and the blessing of Cup, St. Ephraim confirms that the marriage as a union taking place in the Eucharist. He said: In His wine the betrothed are wedded, by His oil the wedded are sanctified. By His wine is union and with His oil is sanctification.¹⁰¹

⁹⁶ Marriage Ritual, 8.

⁹⁷ Ibid, 17.

⁹⁸ Richard. Booker, Here Comes The Bride: Jewish Wedding Customs And The Messiah, Houston, Sounds of the Trumpet, 1995, 5.

⁹⁹ Isaac. Landman, ed., The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, Universal Jewish Encyclopedia Co., Inc. New York, 1948, 7, 373.

¹⁰⁰ Hudra, III, 593, 618. It is worth mentioning, according to the Assyrian wedding customs especially in Upper Tyari and Ashitha tribes that the groom family brings the bowl of pastry which is called Pathora-ܡܬܬܐ. After the completion of the marriage rite, all those present ate from it. Frankly, it is an antique heritage of bridal customs that has a theological – biblical merit.

¹⁰¹ Alexander. Roberts & James. Donaldson, Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. IV., Michigan, 1989, 48.

B. the new life in the mystery of baptism:

In the ancient rite of baptism the symbol of the bridal crown was used, because according to the theological concept, baptism constitutes the beginning of Christ's marriage to the soul. Moreover, the reality of the bride-church is intimately related to Christ's marriage with each member of the church in baptism.

ܒܫܬܬܐ ܕܫܬܬܐ ܕܢܬܐ ܕܢܬܐ
¹⁰² ܡܢ ܡܢܐ ܡܠܚܡܐ ܕܢܬܐ.

*He gave her new life as a deposit,
That comes from the water of baptism.*

Occasionally in this field is used as a synonym for ܕܫܬܬܐ that is borrowed from the Greek ܕܫܬܬܐ, as the following two texts clearly show:

ܕܫܬܬܐ ܕܫܬܬܐ ܕܫܬܬܐ
¹⁰³ ܕܫܬܬܐ ܕܫܬܬܐ ܕܫܬܬܐ.

*Instead of a dowry
He gave you his precious body and blood.*

Even more telling is a passage from the hymn of ܕܫܬܬܐ of the 4th church sanctification Sunday, which on the one hand offers both expressions for one and the same thing, , on the other hand is used simply ܕܫܬܬܐ instead of the body and blood of Christ, evidence of how clear this meaning is, it is proved as follows:

ܕܫܬܬܐ ܕܫܬܬܐ ܕܫܬܬܐ ܕܫܬܬܐ ܕܫܬܬܐ
¹⁰⁴ ܕܫܬܬܐ ܕܫܬܬܐ ܕܫܬܬܐ ܕܫܬܬܐ ܕܫܬܬܐ.

*At the memory of the dowry,
Which the king's son gave her in his love,
Priests, with Angel celebrate the dowry of life.*

In contrast, a few times with ܕܫܬܬܐ the concept of the certificate shines through clearly:

¹⁰⁵ ܕܫܬܬܐ ܕܫܬܬܐ ܕܫܬܬܐ ܕܫܬܬܐ ܕܫܬܬܐ.

Through Johannes he had written her dowry in the Jordan River.

In the Jordan River the church was betrothed to the heavenly bridegroom through John the herald of the Spirit who ministered the mystery of baptism. So in the New Testament, we got acquainted already that the role of mediator is for John as ܕܫܬܬܐ at the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan. In the time following the blessing of the chalice, the priest gives the bridegroom two-thirds of the chalice to drink, and then it is anointed upon the Best man's forehead with the wine that is in

¹⁰² Hudra, III, 582.

¹⁰³ Ibid, 598, 625, 630, 634.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 633.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 626.

church surrenders herself and gives her heart to Christ. The hymns try to place this spirit of loyalty in front of the souls of the believers again and again. We find this idea in Madrasa - ܡܕܪܫܬܐ on the 1st church sanctification Sunday:

ܐܢ ܕܝܗܘܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ
 ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ
 ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ
 ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ¹¹⁰

*O You, who are betrothed to Christ, seek not after another bridegroom,
 For he is the true bridegroom, who is from eternity forever.
 He has given you his body as pledge and his truth as faith;
 Do not exchange it for anything else, blessed is who does not leave it.*

6. The wedding Feast

When the bride was brought home, it was customary to hold a special banquet, the wedding feast (ܡܫܝܚܐ-ܡܫܝܚܐ). This custom also found a rich interpretation in the bridal mysticism of the East Syrian liturgy. Since we don't need to say a word about the host, we can go straight to look at the invited guests (ܡܫܝܚܐ-ܡܫܝܚܐ). In the festal banquet prepared by Christ, the first place, of course, dedicated to his bride the holy church:

ܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ¹¹¹
He has invited you to the chamber of his kingdom for the unending wedding feast.

Beside her appear as wedding guests: The Priests, the prophets, the apostles, the martyrs, the shepherds and teachers,¹¹² all baptized,¹¹³ yes all peoples,¹¹⁴ even the angels¹¹⁵ not excluded and all previous generation. One sees immediately with those invited, the wedding feast is understood to mean eternal bliss to everyone who is called to this happiness, or who is already enjoys it. Accordingly, the wedding garment with which they must appear is: the grace of the baptismal dress woven by the Holy Spirit:

ܐܢ ܕܝܗܘܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ
 ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ¹¹⁶

You who are invited to the chamber of the bridegroom on high and guests should be at that wedding feast, adorned you with the garment that the Holy Spirit woven.

¹¹⁰ Hudra, III, 585.

¹¹¹ Ibid, 602.

¹¹² Ibid, 627, 628

¹¹³ Ibid, 729.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 627.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, 630.

¹¹⁶ Berliner Hs.96 A.

In addition to the wedding dress, custom also requires a wedding present from the guest. It is interesting how a passage from then ܡܠܟܐ of the 4th church sanctification Sunday defines these gifts to some of the individual guests:

ܝܬܐ ܗܘ ܩܨܬܝܐ ܕܗܘܐ ܕܕܝܬܝܐ. ܡܠܟܐ ܕܕܝܬܝܐ ܝܬܐ ܕܕܝܬܝܐ.
ܕܕܝܬܝܐ ܕܕܝܬܝܐ ܕܕܝܬܝܐ. ܕܕܝܬܝܐ ܕܕܝܬܝܐ ܕܕܝܬܝܐ.
117 ܕܕܝܬܝܐ ܕܕܝܬܝܐ ܕܕܝܬܝܐ. ܕܕܝܬܝܐ ܕܕܝܬܝܐ ܕܕܝܬܝܐ.

*The priests came and gave their ranks,
the prophets gave their revelations,
the apostles bestowed their preaching,
the martyrs gave her the blood of their necks.
and on high multitudes with their holy calls, and the peoples with all their worship.*

Also about the food and drinks that are served in this meal. Under the influence of the wonderful food of the people of God on the journey through the desert manna, meat and quail¹¹⁸ (ܗܠܡܐ-ܡܗܠܐ) were named as food, and Also in the rite of marriage, the cup of heavenly wine is a symbol of the holy blood as a drink for the bride.¹¹⁹

ܕܕܝܬܝܐ ܕܕܝܬܝܐ ܕܕܝܬܝܐ ܕܕܝܬܝܐ ܕܕܝܬܝܐ.
120 ܕܕܝܬܝܐ ܕܕܝܬܝܐ ܕܕܝܬܝܐ ܕܕܝܬܝܐ ܕܕܝܬܝܐ.

*The crowds on high with the inhabitants of the earth were called to her wedding;
to be servants at her wedding feast.*

That is why the whole table is in bright festive joy and the holy songs of David resound joyfully.

ܕܕܝܬܝܐ ܕܕܝܬܝܐ ܕܕܝܬܝܐ ܕܕܝܬܝܐ ܕܕܝܬܝܐ.
ܕܕܝܬܝܐ ܕܕܝܬܝܐ ܕܕܝܬܝܐ ܕܕܝܬܝܐ ܕܕܝܬܝܐ.
121 ܕܕܝܬܝܐ ܕܕܝܬܝܐ ܕܕܝܬܝܐ ܕܕܝܬܝܐ ܕܕܝܬܝܐ.

*King David serves at their meal. With the singing of the songs and the festive Hymns:
All glorious is the princess is only inward;
it is also adorned with previous gold.*

According to the conception of the chamber up there, the bride sits in the upper houses¹²² (ܡܠܟܐ ܕܕܝܬܝܐ) and the meal lasts forever.¹²³ As well, Participation in the celebration of the consecration (sanctification) of the Church is considered participation in the heavenly wedding ceremony.¹²⁴ And even the invitation to the wedding supper is interpreted as an invitation to preach the Gospel.¹²⁵

¹¹⁷ Hudra, III, 627.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, 628.

¹¹⁹ Marriage Ritual, 35.

¹²⁰ Hudra, III, 627.

¹²¹ Hudra, III, 628; See also Psalm: 45:13

¹²² Ibid, 587. See also John 14:2.

¹²³ Marriage Ritual, 35.

¹²⁴ Hudra, III, 582.

¹²⁵ Marriage Ritual, 53.

That is why the bride abandoned her idols and possessions, such as the father and the mother; And Christ also died for the sake of his church, so that by his death he could give life to the church he loved, and so that he could lift it with him and carry it to his kingdom. And in eternity, believers will enter the heavenly city, that is, the New Jerusalem, which is also called the “holy city” in (Revelation 21:2). John sees in his vision of the end of time, the city coming down from heaven adorned with “like a bride,” meaning that it will be a glorious and radiant city, and the inhabitants of the city, who believe in the Lord, will be holy and pure, and clothed in white garments of righteousness and holiness. The believers in Christ are the bride of Christ, and we are waiting with great anticipation for the day when we are united with our Bridegroom, and until that time we remain faithful to Him and say “Come, Lord Jesus” (Revelation 22:20).

7. Taking a bride into the eternal kingdom.

After the wedding feast the bride is taken to the chamber of light which is spiritual and eternal. It is a joyful dwelling in heaven and is made by the Holy Spirit. As well, this spiritual place is called the heavenly Jerusalem; therefore the church is awaiting the second coming of her bridegroom when he will take her to the eternal bridal venue. The liturgical prayers describe the edifice of the church as a temple of God and a bridal chamber on earth which is prefiguration of the eternal partnership place.¹²⁶

Goal of this marriage between Christ and Church is the joy of the church is eternal and splendid, and glorifying our Lord. The church, the adorned bride, continuously praises, gives thanks and glory to her bridegroom who perfected her beauty. The bridal chamber of the church is filled with sweet smell of salvation. This union is completed in the Eucharistic liturgy. This bridal chamber symbolizes the church-edifice, particularly the sanctuary which is filled with the illumination of faith and prayers of the faithful. Thus, the sanctuary is a symbol of the heavenly chamber of the church with her bridegroom, where is the spiritual union the church with Christ.¹²⁷

A. The individual expressions and phrases

The marriage ceremony ends with a ceremonial tour for the bride, during which she is led into the Christ's kingdom. The terms commonly that are used when the bride enters the bridal chamber in our liturgical texts are: is **ܡܚܠܐ**, next to it **ܚܝܚܐ** and the term borrowed from Greek **ܡܝܬܚܐ**. A compilation of the various phrases for it is interesting. In addition to the simple verb **ܚܝܚܐ**,¹²⁸ there is often the poetic **ܡܝܬܚܐ**¹²⁹: plaiting or twining (braid from the wreath or the tabernacle)¹³⁰:

¹²⁶ Hudra, III, 579.

¹²⁷ R. Hugh. Connolly, *liturgical Homilies of Narsai*, Cambridge 1909, 54. H. Kruse, *Das Brautlied der syrischen Thomas-Akten*, OCP 50 (1984), 310.

¹²⁸ Hudra, III, 627.

¹²⁹ Ibid, 601, 627.

¹³⁰ It is worth to mention that Sukka-tent, in the Hebrew Bible, is the name for a hut made of branches, branches, foliage, straw and the like, which is usually used only for a limited time. It is a temporary hut constructed for use during

¹³² ܦܡܝܕܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ.
Our Lord made a bridal chamber for the church, a spiritual one.
 ܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ
¹³³ ܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ.
In the holy of holies that cannot be described
The king's son built a glorified bridal chamber for his bride.

B. The bridal chamber

In the more detailed description given by the hymns of the bridal chamber, there is one particularly noticeable characteristic that determines the location of the chamber. At the beginning just as we got to know the bridegroom as ܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ, this chamber appears to us here in many songs as ¹³⁴ ܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ. Which is meant by this becomes even clearer from the following passage:

ܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ
 ܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ
 ܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ
¹³⁵ ܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ.
Baptizes sing a song of praise;
delight, rejoice in the bridegroom
With him you will enjoy bliss there in the upper Jerusalem

From this passage, heaven is the place where Christ leads his church, the place of eternal partnership between baptized believers and Christ. This corresponds to a whole series of other

the week-long Jewish festival of Sukkot. It is topped with branches and often well decorated with autumnal, harvest or Judaic themes. The Book of Leviticus describes it as a symbolic wilderness shelter, commemorating the time God provided for the Israelites in the wilderness they inhabited after they were freed from slavery in Egypt. It is common for Jews to eat, sleep and otherwise spend time in the *sukkah*. In Judaism, Sukkot is considered a joyous occasion and is referred to in Hebrew as Z'man Simchateinu (the time of our rejoicing), and the sukkah itself symbolizes the fragility and transience of life and one's dependence on God. Also from the messianic perspective, the bridal chamber is the place for our meeting with Christ and our dependence on Him, and the place of eternal joy and rejoicing.

¹³¹ It means Bridal cover that extends on the side of the house, a place to be decorated for couple, and it also means paradise. It also means dedicated housing. See Bishop J.E. Manna, Chaldean-Arabic Dictionary, Beirut.1975, 113. In Assyrian custom, ܡܠܟܐ is a cross carved on a piece of cloth, on the wall above the bride's bed. Note the last psalm and its meanings, which pertain to focusing a person's gaze on the cross. Sight means its goal and purpose, which connects between ܡܠܟܐ for the Church and ܡܠܟܐ of her children who worship her Bridegroom. See the order of the marriage, 54.

¹³² Hudra, I, 645. See. Also the ritual of ܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ, 54, 55.

¹³³ Hudra, III, 618.

¹³⁴ Ibid, 602.

¹³⁵ Hudra, .I, 669.

expressions, such as the chamber is spiritual ¹³⁶ **ܕܗܫܢܐ**, not made with hands, ¹³⁷ **ܕܠܐ ܗܝܬ ܒܝܕܐ**, immortal ¹³⁸ **ܕܠܐ ܩܝܡܐ**, chamber of light ¹³⁹ **ܕܠܐ ܗܝܬ ܒܝܕܐ**, finally the most holy of holies, which cannot be described.¹⁴⁰

Besides these passages which clearly refer to heaven as the setting for the bridal chamber, the church appears here on earth as the wedding chamber:

ܕܗܝܬ ܕܝܫܐ ܕܝܫܐ ܕܝܫܐ ܕܝܫܐ
ܕܝܫܐ ܕܝܫܐ ܕܝܫܐ ܕܝܫܐ
ܕܝܫܐ ܕܝܫܐ ܕܝܫܐ ܕܝܫܐ
ܕܝܫܐ ܕܝܫܐ ܕܝܫܐ ܕܝܫܐ
ܕܝܫܐ ܕܝܫܐ ܕܝܫܐ ܕܝܫܐ
¹⁴¹ **ܕܝܫܐ ܕܝܫܐ ܕܝܫܐ ܕܝܫܐ**
Cheer up and rejoice in your wedding
Church, ornate bride;
behold, the ranks of your children
glorify their reverence for the Lord of all,
who sent his power from above and descended and dwelt in your temple.

The earthly house of God is precisely the special dwelling of the divine majesty of the divine majesty, the Holy of Holies, in which divine services are celebrated as an image of the heavenly liturgy also an image of the heavenly kingdom. Also the eternal chamber is compared to the tent representing the divine presence that Moses made on Mount Sinai. Here highlights on a place according to which neither heaven nor the earthly church on earth is the chamber; but namely is the tent that Moses built on Mount Sinai:

ܕܝܫܐ ܕܝܫܐ ܕܝܫܐ ܕܝܫܐ
¹⁴² **ܕܝܫܐ ܕܝܫܐ ܕܝܫܐ ܕܝܫܐ**
And was engraved her chamber on Sinai, the mountain,
By Amram's son (Moses), with great reverence.

The Tent of Revelation on Mount Sinai in the old covenant is the image of the new Christian house of God: the abode of divine majesty, in which the Lord enters into a covenant relationship out of absolute grace with the people of Israel, which prophets see as a marriage relationship.

¹³⁶ Hudra, I, 645.

¹³⁷ Hudra, III, 589.

¹³⁸ Ibid, 634.

¹³⁹ Ibid, 602.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, 425.429.

¹⁴¹ Ibid, 579.

¹⁴² Ibid, 628.

Likewise, this spiritual chamber is adorned with the Ten Commandments, the words of truth. In the scriptural meaning, truth may mean the will of god revealed through the Ten Commandments which people of Israel are admonished to write on the doorpost of their houses and their gates (Dt.6.9). Also within the Jewish tradition regarding the celebration of marriage, the task of the groomsmen was to lead the bride to the door of the groom's house.¹⁴³

C. Leading the bride to the heavenly Kingdom

The bridal liturgy includes one more ceremony called the chamber which took place usually one week¹⁴⁴ after the celebration of marriage because the nuptial banquet usually is prepared for three or seven days. If three, it symbolizes the mystery of trinity through which resurrection is completed. If seven, it appears the types of eternal joy which will stay continually as days of the weeks. The spouses have entered the bridal chamber signifies the doors of the heavenly room which will be closed when the bridegroom has entered (Mt 25:10).¹⁴⁵

The bridegroom now leads¹⁴⁶ ܠܝܬܝܗܝܐ his bride into this bridal chamber. The wedding rite puts a special invitation woven from psalm verses in the mouth of the Bridegroom: *You beautiful bride, bow your ear and hear my words, forget your father and mother and follow me: for I am your bridegroom.* To which the bride replies just as boldly: *O bridegroom, I am longing for your love, I give up the pictures of pagans and scorn their worship and I find refuge in your cross.*¹⁴⁷ As the bridal chamber is high, this home tour automatically becomes elevated, at which the bridegroom assigns his bride a place, at which the bridegroom assigns his bride a place that towers above that of the angels; yes, a place to the right of the father:

ܠܝܬܝܗܝܐ ܠܝܬܝܗܝܐ ܠܝܬܝܗܝܐ ܠܝܬܝܗܝܐ.

ܠܝܬܝܗܝܐ ܠܝܬܝܗܝܐ ܠܝܬܝܗܝܐ ܠܝܬܝܗܝܐ.¹⁴⁸

The church speaks: Above the angels, he has placed me in the realm of light, what a mystery.

The bridegroom who took me as bride.

¹⁴³ Kruse, Brautlied, 313-314.

¹⁴⁴In the book of interpretation of services, it is mentioned that the wedding takes place three or seven days. Therefore, on the seventh day of the wedding, which is called ܠܝܬܝܗܝܐ ܠܝܬܝܗܝܐ day, a popular day among the people of the tribes of Tiari and Ashitha. Which clearly means the beginning that is the beginning of the journey of marriage. The process of going to the bride's house is to confirm that the groom is satisfied with the fact that their daughter is chaste and pure . We find this custom still present in the Assyrian villages as an eyewitness. See more ܠܝܬܝܗܝܐ ܠܝܬܝܗܝܐ ,159. And HABBI, Joseph, مجامع كنيسة المشرق / mġām'knysṭālmšrq / Synods of the Church of the East, Beirut 1999, see: Mar Aba council 544 Canon 15, 279.

¹⁴⁵ *Expositio* II, 143.

¹⁴⁶ Hudra, III, 612, 625.

¹⁴⁷ H. Denzinger, Ritus Orientalium, II, 450.

¹⁴⁸ Hudra, III, 605.

D. Bliss of the bride

With this leading to the heavenly chamber, the time of bliss ܡܠܟܐ has started for the bride. Note this in the following hymns:

¹⁴⁹ ܡܠܟܐ ܡܠܟܐ ... ܕܡܠܟܐ ܡܠܟܐ ܡܠܟܐ
Blessed are you who enjoy the bliss in his bridal chamber.

As well, this bliss is so great and glorious to the extent that the angels long for it:

¹⁵⁰ ܡܠܟܐ ܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ
Blessed are you, even angels desire your wedding.

What wonder when the bride is cheering, dancing in front of friends and clapping her hands!

ܕܡܠܟܐ ܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ
¹⁵¹ ܡܠܟܐ ܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ
Delight and rejoice in your wedding, church, ornate bride.
ܡܠܟܐ ܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ
ܡܠܟܐ ܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ
¹⁵² ܡܠܟܐ ܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ
*Rejoice, church, at your wedding
and clap your hands on the day of your wedding supper.
Sing praises on the Guitar;
He has adorned you with the crown of the prestige.*

This delight never diminishes, this joy never ceases and that is why the bride glorifies and praises without ceasing her song of thanksgiving:

ܡܠܟܐ ܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ
¹⁵³ ܡܠܟܐ ܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ
*Church, Christ's bride....
decorate your soul in chastity
and reward with thanksgiving,
with a song of praise that never breaks off.*

The Aim of this relationship between Christ and Church is the joy of the church in the heavenly kingdom is eternal and splendid, and glorifying our Lord. The church, the adorned bride, continuously praises and gives thanks and glory to her bridegroom who perfected her beauty.

¹⁴⁹ Breviarium, Ritus Syrorum Orientalium id est Chaldaeorum, PARS III, Romae, 1938, 438. This text is not found in Book of khudra (Darmo edition), we find it in the book of Hudra according to Chaldean Edition.

¹⁵⁰ Hudra, III, 601.

¹⁵¹ Ibid, 579.

¹⁵² Ibid, 632.

¹⁵³ Ibid, 579.

Conclusion

The analogy of Christ marrying the church is the axial point in the nuptial liturgy which forms some of the richest hymns in the entire Christian repertoire. The church as bride is a favorite's topic in the ancient East Syrian tradition. A good number of patristic writings and east syriac liturgy describe the intimate connection between Christ and the church in bridal phrases. Christ is betrothed to the church at his baptism; Eucharist is the marriage banquet, a prefiguration of the eschatological wedding feast. So the image of the Church as bride in the East Syrian liturgy has emerged before our eyes according to its essential features. The bride of Christ composed of the saints and the faithful will begin to receive with joy the true Bridegroom, our Savior Jesus, praising and glorifying him with all honors. He will receive his bride, the Church, and take her up with him to heaven: he will lead her into the eternal kingdom and will seat her at his right (note also, according to the law of the East Syriac marriage rite, the bride must stand at the right of the groom),¹⁵⁴ making her happy by his vision, and make her enjoy eternal and everlasting bliss.

The qualities of the Church as the Bride of Christ must be, at the present time and up to the day of his coming, possessing these two characteristics, which are: vigil and transfiguration. The vigil is waiting for the return of the heavenly bridegroom; the church entails the bride to be watchful waiting for the bridegroom. Therefore, the vigil of the believers is the vigil of love, the vigil of the heart that says in the Song of Songs: "I was asleep, but my heart was awake." (Song of Solomon 5:2). The Transfiguration: God is stripped of His eternal glory in order to clothe Adam, who was stripped of the glory he received in the first creation. Christ wears our humanity so that we, in turn, can wear Him. As with the incarnation, also through baptism, there is a process of transformation that St. Ephrem talks about through the image of "mixing". With baptism, the human nature is mixed with the divine nature. The divine light descends and the human spirit rises, and the two are united in one love. How is this transfiguration and deification? The royal path is the prayer that is my wedding serenity. The pinnacle of prayer is the union with Christ in the bread and wine that transform into his body and blood to transform the Church into the bride of Christ, one body with her Groom.

¹⁵⁴ Also, according to the East Syriac marriage ritual law, the bride should stand at the right of the groom. See Marriage Ritual, 28.