

The Presence of the True Body of Christ in the Eucharist according to the Fathers of the Church of the East

Rev. TOWER ANDRIOUS

the Introduction

The word Eucharist, in its original meaning in the Greek language, means thanksgiving, which is one of the seven ecclesiastical Mysteries in the Church of the East that the Lord established, because it contains stability (John 6:56). It is a reminder of the last supper that Jesus ate with his disciples on the eve of his passion. The community of believers celebrates the Eucharist, because it is the visible expression of the Church, as they see the presence of Christ in a special way in the church ritual, but they differ from each other regarding the manner and nature of Christ's presence in it.

Some believers, say that the sacrament of the Eucharist is only a remembrance of the Last Supper, it is not a real body nor a real blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is to say, the bread does not turn into the actual body of the Lord, and the juice of the vine does not turn into the real blood of the Lord, but it is only a memory because it is written, "Do this in remembrance of me". Through this research, I will explain this mystery that it is the true body and blood of the Lord Christ according to the Fathers of the Church of the East.

We believe that the words of the Lord Jesus Christ are accurate on the verbal level. The Lord clearly took bread. It appears to be bread to the eye, but through the mystery of sanctification rite, it turns into what the Lord of Glory said about it verbally and in truth. So, when he said that this bread through the Eucharist was transformed into the real body of the Lord Jesus Christ, we must believe the words of Christ and not consider them unacceptable words from the pure mouth of the Lord Jesus Christ. Whoever eats from the body of Christ in the sacrament of the Eucharist remains in him and becomes

Christ in his attributes. Christ's death becomes our death for the world and our redemption, and his life becomes eternal life for us, and steadfastness here is the steadfastness of the body of Christ in man.

The Liturgy of the Eucharist has occupied an important place in the liturgical life of the Church of the East since the Apostolic era. Many members of the Church think that the church liturgy is only a set of ceremonies recited with prayers or fasting that are practiced by believers. Rather, it is first and foremost an acknowledgment that God is the Lover of mankind, because the Eucharist is the mystery of union with God. In this sacrament, the Church does not stop at singing songs of thanks and praise, but rather offers her life to be crucified with her Bridegroom and fulfill him, and at the same time she accepts from her Father the body and blood of her Bridegroom, given as a divine gift, with which she lives a Eucharistic life. Through it, the Church finds in the mystery of the Eucharist her debt to God increases without limits, as she thanks God through the bloodless sacrifice, the memory of the sacrifice of the only Son. At the Last Supper, the Lord entered His Church secretly into the depths of the Cross and offered it His life, His body and His blood, as a true sacrifice. The Church continued to enjoy the sacrifice of the Cross secretly during the Eucharist. The Lord offered one sacrifice that was accomplished in basic interconnected stages in the life of Jesus Christ, especially the mystery of death and resurrection. It is one sacrificial act on a supernatural level and specific mental ability, present among his people in the church, and not repeated. Therefore, the liturgy of the Church of the East is a drama of redemptive salvation and participation in the Kingdom of Heaven. The liturgy reveals the intentions of the Eucharist and is didactic regarding the doctrine that lies behind it. It begins with the transition from heaven to earth, and ends with the transition from earth to heaven.

Many Christian researchers, whether in the West or the East, have written about the Eucharist from the historical development and liturgical aspects, but through this research, under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, I would like to delve deeper into this mystery from the realistic, living aspect through the thought of the Fathers of the Church of the East, so that we may meet our Lord, touch His love, and understand his work of salvation, and we taste union with Him and share with Him the divine glories, because in the mystery of the body of Christ, either the church rises to heaven or earth, and heaven becomes in His true presence, embracing His bride, whom He loved and died for, and bestowed upon her the Kingdom of Heaven.

The Eucharist in the Bible

In the Old Testament

In the Old Testament, there are signs, allusions, and symbols that were only understood in light of the New Testament. Therefore, we can see some symbols that indicate the mystery of the Eucharist, including: Abraham and Isaac (Genesis 22/1-13). That is why we read in the Epistle to the Hebrews: By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac. He was offering up his only son, the one who had received the promises... and so he returned and got his son, and in that is a symbol of Christ's sacrifice and resurrection (Hebrews 11/17-19). Likewise, the sacrifice of the Passover lamb with His blood saved the children of Israel from slavery and death. Also, the sacrifice of manna as spiritual food coming from heaven Numbers 11, Psalm 105:40) was a clear symbol of the Lord's body (John 6:58,47), as well the unique offering that King Melchizedek presented with bread and the wine for Abraham (Exodus 14) refers to Christ's sacrifice of bread and wine in the Eucharist (Hebrews 7). Likewise, a live coal that the angel placed on the lips of the prophet Isaiah touched Isaiah's lips, and his iniquity was taken away from him and his sin was atoned for (Isaiah 6: 1-7). It is a symbol of partaking of the holy thing that It is given for the forgiveness of sins (Matthew 26:28).

The Eucharist in the New Testament

The Lord Jesus speaks clearly about His true presence in the Holy Eucharist in His sermon about the bread of life that came down from heaven, which is His body for the life of the world (John 6/48-59, 66-69). The sacrament of the Eucharist (the sacrament of thanksgiving) is the submission of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself to His disciples. At the last Passover supper, Christ took the bread and wine and said, “This is my body” and “this is my blood.” This sacrament was instituted by Christ himself as a memorial of his death and resurrection (Matthew 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:19-20; 1 Corinthians 11). /23-25). That is, the main founder of this mystery is the Lord Jesus Christ, so whoever eats the body of the Lord and drinks from his blood abides in the Lord (John 6:56) and obtains eternal life by the power of the true body coming down from the heaven, and through his redeeming blood he gains salvation and enlightenment because it contains the power of forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:14). The Lord told the apostles as they gathered with him in the upper room to perform this sacrament in memory of him (Luke 22:19).

Therefore, the Eucharistic sacrament is considered a spiritual altar where the death of Jesus and the sacrifice he made for salvation are reminded. Saint Paul also emphasizes when he addresses this matter that the cup of blessing is the participation in the blood of Christ, and the bread that is broken is the communion in the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 10:16). He said, “We bless and break” as an indication of the action. He also said, “is it not the communion in the blood of Christ?” An indication of the sanctity of this matter, it is a sacred and divine sacrament. Also, in this letter to the Corinthians, here the Apostle confirms that whoever eats this bread and cup without merit is guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. Therefore, the sacrament of the Eucharist has a strong foundation in the Holy Bible, as it was established and confirmed by Christ himself The Apostles in their writings.

The Eucharist according to the Fathers of the Church of the East

The sacrament of the Eucharist is the sacrament of the Church's union with the Savior through partaking of His sacrificed body and blood. This mystery is of great importance in the life of the Church of the East, as it is considered the “mystery of mysteries” and the greatest of the church sacraments. The idea of the Church Fathers about the Eucharist is to leave this world in order to enter and delve into the mysteries of heaven as a journey to another world, which is the mystery of Christ. Therefore, the faith of the Church Fathers is based primarily on the Eucharist and participation in it. The church lives in the body of Christ, justified, and those redeemed by his blood have become members of his body, from which they were born and to him through baptism.

Let us discuss the thought of the Fathers of the Church of the East about the mystery of the Eucharist as follows: According to Mar Aphrahat (280-345), the Old Testament Passover for the Jews was a harbinger symbol of the “Passover of the Truth,” the true and correct Passover, which is the Eucharistic Christ himself. For Aphrahat, Christ is the true Lamb (ܕܥܘܕܘܕܐ ܕܥܘܕܘܕܐ) who instituted the sacrament of the Eucharist in his memory. The idea of the sacrificial institution through Christ is clearly evident when he says: "Jesus our Savior made the Passover with his disciples in Jerusalem, the city that he had cursed... and gave the offering there the Bread of Life “(ܕܥܘܕܘܕܐ ܕܥܘܕܘܕܐ)”.¹ In light of subsequent spiritual trends in Eastern theology, the realistic aspect of Saint Aphrahat's teachings on the Holy Eucharist deserves special attention. When Christ offers his own flesh and blood to his disciples as food, by this gesture he bloodlessly sacrifices himself before his crucifixion. Aphrahat's ideas about the enjoyment of the sacraments within liturgical celebration are similarly realistic. And whoever accepts the body and blood of Christ allows the Son of the Heavenly King to enter into him.² This mystery

¹ Aphrahat, Demonstration 11,12: Patrologia syriaca I,504.5-6: Burns 296.

² Ibid, Dem. 3,2; 9,10.

encounter with Christ unconditionally obligates a person to live a life of moral purity and holiness. The Eucharist is not only spiritual food, but also a means of blessing. Man blesses the senses, especially the eyes, with the body of Christ to cast out demons.³

The Eucharist, the rising sacrifice in the Church of God, constitutes the New Testament counterpart to the Jewish slaughter of the Passover lamb. Thus, it is roasted over fire, referring not only to the method of preparing the bread, but also to the descent of the Holy Spirit on the offering elements.⁴ For the Eucharist, the Eucharistic community presupposes an ecclesiastical community. The church is the only house of God where Easter of the New Testament is properly enjoyed. ⁵ Receiving the sacrament leads to forgiveness of sins and gives communion with the true people of God. Whereas the feeding miracles of the Old Testament had only the functions and character of the type (model) and were strictly limited to the people of Israel, the Eucharist has a universal character because the Church of God constitutes itself as the people of all nations.⁶

He describes in a reverential way the way to receive Communion, that the believer should be standing with the head bowed and holding it with the right hand covered with a velvet cloth or communion cloth, and the cup is never touched with bare hands. This Syriac tradition later emerges from the apostolic communion.⁷ Aphrahat's reference to the entry of the king's son and the taking of his body is also reminiscent of the decrees of the Persian court, where care was taken not to pollute anything and not to insult the royal majesty. Everyone who entered the audience hall had to cover his mouth with a white linen cloth so as not to contaminate the sacred elements and the royal presence.⁸ From the Judeo-Syriac context of Adiabene and the

³ Aphrahat, Dem. 20,8.

⁴ Ibid, Dem 4,1; Dem. 12,9 with reference to Exodus 12:11.

⁵ Ibid, Dem. 12,9.

⁶ Ibid, Dem. 4,19; 12,9; dem. 21, 10. 15. 18.

⁷ Francis Joseph Reine, *The Eucharistic Doctrine and Liturgy of the Mystagogical Catecheses of Theodore of Mopsuestia* (like note. 30),182-186 with Fig. IV. (like note. 30),182-186 with Fig. IV.

⁸ A. Christensen, *L Iran sous les Sassanides*, Kopenhagen 1944, 383-415. Esp. 400-401.

pagan environment of the Sassanians, the Church of the East had a keen sense of religious purity, which could not be separated from moral purity. Therefore, Aphrahat's teaching stressing the strict warning against sins of the tongue (anger, lying, blasphemy) that offend the presence of the Heavenly King in the offering has its origins here.⁹

Mar Ephrem the Syrian also liked to talk about the Eucharist as the medicine of life and the door to entering Paradise. Therefore, the Eucharist now brings us into Paradise, which is the life of God: "The spiritual bread of the Eucharist make light and causes to fly. the peoples have been wafted up and have settled in Paradise. By means of the spiritual bread everyone becomes an eagle who reaches as far as Paradise. Whoever eats the living bread of the Son flies to meet him in the very clouds".¹⁰

Saint Ephrem the Syrian (306-373) sees the Eucharistic body of Christ in dynamic continuity with the actual body of the historical Jesus. As the Body of Christ, the Eucharist partakes of the full historical and eternal reality of Christ in all its complexity – divine and human, corporeal and immaterial, glorified and earthly, and, of course, flesh and blood. In other words, for St. Ephrem, the Eucharist is nothing less than the whole eschatological mystery of Christ taking place here and now in history: "Your bread killed insatiable death which had made us its bread. Your cup put an end to death which gulped us down. Lord, we have eaten and drunk you, not to exhaust you, but to have life in you".¹¹ Although St. Ephrem never used the Greek word "Eucharist," he had much to say about the Lord's body and blood in the bread and wine that the church daily offers to God. (ܥܘܚܪܝܫܬܐ) is the Syriac word that Saint Ephrem used to refer to the liturgical act that we call the Holy Eucharist. It has the meaning of

⁹ Aphrahat, Dem. 9,10.

¹⁰ Sebastian Brock, *The Luminous Eye*, Kalamazoo, Michigan 1992, 101.

¹¹ Mar Ephrem, Hymn on Faith, No. 10.

"sacrifice", a reference to the sacrifice associated with the Jewish Passover and Christ's sacrifice on the cross.

Also, for Saint Ephrem, the Last Supper and its table symbolize the first church and the first altar, and therefore they represent all churches and all altars. Therefore, in his madrashe hymn (ܡܕܪܫܬܐ), Mar Ephrem often draws attention to preconceptions about the Eucharist and its symbols in the Old Testament narratives. In his estimation, they all find their ultimate focus in the Last Supper and its completion on the cross, when blood and water flowed from the pierced side of Christ (John 19:34). These represent the sacraments of the Eucharist and Baptism respectively, and thus the beginning of the Church Age. St. Ephrem sees a direct link between Baptism and the Eucharist when he declares: "Once this womb [the baptismal font] has given birth, the altar suckles and nurtures them: her children eat straight away, not milk, but perfect Bread!".¹²

Mar Theodore of Mopsuestia (5th. Century) saw in the mystery of the Eucharist a symbol of Christ's death and resurrection, and that its goal was to achieve salvation. Therefore, Mar Theodoros considered the celebration of the ritual mysteries as an icon of the saving work that culminates in death and resurrection, that is, to some extent, the celebration of the Eucharist in the church is a remembrance of Christ's true sacrifice on the cross. In his interpretations of the mysteries, he attempted to express the theology of the presence of salvation through symbolic speech (typology). This is a type of interpretation that stems from the real relationship between the two texts, where the literal meaning refers to a deeper reality, which contradicts the metaphorical interpretation. Mar Theodore pointed out the correspondence between the historical events of salvation and the symbolic Eucharistic rituals, which do not depict an imaginary relationship between matters. Therefore,

¹² Hymn on Virginitly, No. 7; see more: <http://fatherdavidbirdosb.blogspot.com/2014/10/the-eucharist-in-syriac-tradition-by.html>.

according to St. Theodore, he uses typological science to distinguish between two stages: the historical stage and the fixed stage. That is, he uses two words: the first, the historical one (symbol - typos - bread), referring to the symbolic ritual celebration, and the second, symbolized by it (anti-typos - the body), referring to the historical, salvific reality. He distinguishes between the symbol that refers to the external side, and the mystery that refers to the deep inner truth by the power of the activity of the Holy Spirit.

St. Theodore gave two sermons on the Eucharist (15-16). According to him, the Eucharist is a memorial of Christ's historical work of salvation, the presence of his saving power in the ritual celebration and an effective symbol of eschatological truths. The Eucharistic sacrament is not just a memory, but a real and essential presence in the bread and wine. The Spirit of Life transforms these elements into the Body and Blood of Christ. The body and blood mix and the priest brings them together on the altar, because they are two and one and inseparable. He draws the sign of the cross with one of them over the other, indicating with his movement that they are truly his body and blood and not just a symbol. They received life through the Holy Spirit who descended through the prayer of the priest, so they became the living food of immortality by the grace of this spirit, which itself granted immortality to the body of Christ buried in the grave. Christ is present in every piece of bread for the one who enjoyed the new birth only. The ritual celebration completes the remembrance of the sacrifice that Christ suffered during the Passion. He calls the bread his body and the cup his blood because the Passion causes the breaking of the bread and the shedding of blood, based on 1 Corinthians 11:26. Saint Theodore understood the mystery of the Eucharist primarily according to its relationship to the Passion as the sacrifice of salvation. In the Mystery of the Eucharist, the historical biblical interpretation is not ignored, meaning that the symbols of the saving events in the Mystery of the Eucharist express the reality of salvation present in it symbolically. The mystery of the Eucharist

refers to unseen things that a person cannot express in a language that is limited in its sublimity and too impossible to speak of, except through effective symbols that carry within them the experience of the power of the mysteries. Therefore, the sacrament is a sign with symbols of unseen things that are beyond expression. That is, under the cover of visible symbols, the mystery contains the power of salvation. The symbol has two dimensions: it is covered by the mystery and at the same time expresses its presence.¹³

The sacrament of the Eucharist corresponds to truth

The church teaching of the Church of the East since the first centuries believes that the bread and wine that are on the altar after the sacrament of sanctification are the sacrament of the true body and blood of Christ. We will prove this through the interpretations of the fathers in the Church of the East. Biblically, the Lord confirmed the divine truth by saying: "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats this bread, he will live forever, and the bread that I give is my body, which I will give for the life of the world" (John 6:51). It is worth mentioning in this area and it is striking that Jesus, as a man, was born in Bethlehem and the word (ܕܡܥܝܢ) in Syriac means bread because he is the living bread that the Heavenly Father gave us as imperishable spiritual food so that we may eat his body and drink his sacred blood.

Therefore, when the Lord Jesus revealed for the first time the truth about the Mystery of eating His holy body and drinking His holy blood, the Jews asked among themselves, saying: "How can this man give us his flesh to eat? they asked. Jesus said to them, "I am telling you the truth: if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you will not have life in yourselves. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them to life on

¹³ The commentary of the Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Lord Prayer, Baptism and the Eucharist, trans. By A, Mingana, Cambridge 1933, 70-123.

the last day. For my flesh is the real food; my blood is the real drink. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood live in me, and I live in them. The living Father sent me, and because of him I live also. In the same way whoever eats me will live because of me. This, then, is the bread that came down from heaven; it is not like the bread that your ancestors ate, but then later died. Those who eat this bread will live forever." (John 6:52-59).

In the upper room where the Lord Jesus ate the Jewish Passover with his disciples and washed their feet. Then he established the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, that is, the bloodless sacrifice symbolized by the sacrifice of Melchizedek, king of Salem, that is, the King of Peace, who offered bread and wine to God as an offering, unlike the previous priests who preceded Moses and those who were contemporary with him, and the priests from the descendants of Aaron who came after Moses, who used to offer animal sacrifices that indicate Its symbolism is to the atoning sacrifice of Christ on the cross. The Lord concluded the bloody animal sacrifices by eating the Jewish Passover lamb with His disciples on the night of Maundy Thursday. He abolished the offering of sacrifices and burnt offerings of the Old Testament and established the sacrifice of the New Testament. Before surrendering Himself by His will, He established the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, the bloodless sacrifice that derives its power from His divine sacrifice through his suffering and death on the cross is redemption for all humanity.

There is no doubt that the Fathers of the Church of the East have at all times shared the belief of the Apostolic Churches that in the Holy Eucharist we enjoy the Body and Blood of Christ in the true sense. Let us first see a series of testimonies of the Fathers in the east Syriac faith about His real presence in the images of bread and wine. In the report on the martyrdom of Mar Shimon Bar Sabbae and his companions during the reign of Shapur III (4th. Century), who died for the faith, we read: "Come, let us celebrate his memory with joy and gladness with the body and blood of the Lamb of God who takes

away the sin of the world. To teach us that the sacrament of the sacrifice of His body is not offered by the Jews, but by His holy servants in the churches”.¹⁴

St. Narsai (5th. Century) also writes: “Because he was going to a place far from our eyes, he wanted to strengthen us with his body and blood until his coming, and because he could not give his body and blood to his church, he commanded us to fulfill this sacrament with bread and wine. In the bread and wine, the body and blood of the king appear”.¹⁵ He wants to say that Christ could not give us his body and blood in their natural form. But he strengthens us with his body and blood, that is, in the sacrament of bread and wine. He writes elsewhere: They take it for granted that the king's body dwells in the visible bread. The priest also says when he receives it: the body. The wine mixed in the cup is called blood. The priest gives bread and says: The body of Christ the King. He gives wine, and in the same way says: The blood of Christ. Mar Narsai believes that bread and wine are the body and blood of Christ. He also confirms that the eyes of the physical senses see bread and wine, and the powers of the soul see a hidden and invisible force. Let us honor them as the body and blood of the King.¹⁶

Likewise, the teaching of St. Theodore Bar Konai (8th. Century) confirms that the bread and wine on the altar are the sacrament of the body and blood of our Lord.¹⁷ Mar Theodore Bar Konai answers the objection regarding if the Holy Eucharist is a sacrifice, it must be burned. He says: “But here we cannot burn the sacraments because they are an image of the body of Christ that lives in heaven. Otherwise, we burn Christ”.¹⁸ But here the figures are not just an image of the body of Christ, because he speaks more clearly

¹⁴ Braun Oskar, *Ausgewählte Akten persischer Märtyrer*, Kempten-München 1915, 41-42.

¹⁵ *The liturgical homilies of Narsai*, trans. By R. H. Connolly. Cambridge 1909, Homily XXII, 69; Homily XVII, 16.

¹⁶ *Mar Narsai, the liturgical Homilies of Narsai*, translated by R.H. Connolly. Cambridge 1909, Homily XXI, 60.

¹⁷ *Theodore Bar Koni, the book of schools*, Syriac text edited by Addai Sher, 2 volumes. Paris 1910-1912 (CSCO Scr. Syri Series II, t. 65 and 66), 185.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, II, 250; also, we find same idea in the question about the altar. See: Van Unnik, 165, Q. 21,22. 164, Q. 20.

elsewhere about the reality that corresponds to the mystery of the Eucharist by saying: “Christ said: This is my body and this is my blood, and he did not say: These are symbols of my body and my blood, so that we do not see the divine mysteries as simple things. Instead, as we draw near to them, we should believe that we are embraced by our Lord Himself, that we are mixing His body with our own.”¹⁹

Also, according to Ishoyahb I (6th. Century), when the offering is broken the priest says: “I praise you, O Lord God... you have made me worthy by your grace... in offering the awesome, holy, and divine mysteries of the body and blood of your anointed one”.²⁰ Ishoyahb I describes how the priest receives the sacrament at the Divine Liturgy: “he prostrates and worships the body of majesty”.²¹ In addition, Mar Babai the Great (7th. Century) says: “In bread he gave the holy mysteries as a memorial of his death”.²² He confirms this by saying that the entire body of Christ is also present in every small portion of the Eucharistic bread.²³

In this regard, Abdisho Bar Brikha (14th.Century) explains at length about the sacrament of the sacrifice: “The sacrifice is a service that the simple people offer to the great in material forms in the hope of forgiveness of sins and in response to their prayers. The sacrifices of the ancients consisted of dumb animals and bodily diseases. As for us, our sacrifice is the one and only God who took the form of a servant and offered himself as a sacrifice to his Father in order to give life to the world. That is why John called him the Lamb of God who bears the sins of the world. Christ presented himself as a living and speaking offering to his Father for all creatures and reconciled the world with his power and achieved salvation for angels and humans

¹⁹ Theodore bar koni, II, 130; Ishodad of Merv, Commentaries I, 104: where literally the same is found: Theodore of Mopsuestia, Commentary on Matthew, PC 66, c. 713 B and Mingana VI, 210 (trans. 75).

²⁰ Chabot J. B., *Synodicon Orientale ou recueuil de synods nestoriens*, Paris 1902, 428-429.

²¹ *Ibid*, 430.

²² Babai the Great, *Book of the Union*, 180.

²³ *Ibid*, 19.

when it was not possible for him to do so His sacrifice on the cross itself was offered without change for the sake of the salvation of everyone in every place and time and for everyone who, with his mercy and compassion and his sublime wisdom, saw to it that on the night in which he was betrayed for the life of the world, he took bread with his two holy and pure hands and blessed it and broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying: This is my body which He gives for the life of the world. Then he gave thanks and blessed the cup and gave it to them, saying: This is my blood for the new covenant, which is poured out for the forgiveness of sins. Take and eat from this cup, all of you, and drink from this cup whenever you gather in remembrance of me. Thus, the bread is transformed by the commandment of the Lord into his holy body and wine to His precious blood, to be for forgiveness of sins, purity, light, righteousness, and the great hope of resurrection from the dead, inheritance of the heavenly kingdom, and new life for all who partake of it with firm faith. As we progress through these mysteries, we meet Christ. We carry it in our hands and kiss it. By partaking of Him, we become united with Him and with Him, His holy body and pure blood mix with ours. As we know from faith, it is one body, the same in heaven and in the church, and it was given under the forms of bread and wine to make them more consistent with the body and blood. As for the image, he gave it by his living word and by the coming of the Holy Spirit.”²⁴

Likewise, Mar Abdisho Bar Brikha says in the book (ܡܕܘܢܬܐ ܕܡܪ ܒܪܝܟܗܐ): “Whenever we are nourished by this mystery, we rush towards Christ himself, and we carry him in our hands and accept him, and by accepting it we unite with him. We know and profess by faith that the one in heaven and the one in the church are the same body”.²⁵ And in another place, he says: The name ‘the mysteries’ refers to the divine gifts that our Savior gave us in bread and wine, that is, the

²⁴ Abdisho Bar Brikha, Marganitha, 52-53.

²⁵ Ibid, IV, 333.

immortal body and the cup of the precious blood for purification, atonement, and union with Him”.²⁶

Also, Mar Yokhanna Bar Abgar (10th. Century) strictly emphasizes in his laws the treatment of particles of the sacrificial bread so that nothing of the holy body falls to the ground and is trampled on. The Patriarch orders that a Christian who says that the Holy Eucharist is just a ritual must be prevented from receiving Holy Communion as a punishment until he repents and declares in faith that the Holy Eucharist is the body and blood of Christ, in which sins are erased. Also, disrespect in Communion is considered a sin against the Body and Blood of the Lord.²⁷

Mar Elijah of Nisibis (11th. Century) praises the fathers of the Church of the East for their reverence for the Holy Eucharist.²⁸ He writes elsewhere: “Christ has given us something upon which we can lay our hands and call His body and blood. He made them bread, water, and wine, for these are the most essential means that God has created to meet human needs, even when we hold them in our hands—that is, the body of Christ that He died and rose for us, and a firm conviction arises in our hearts that we will thus gain safety from annihilation after death.”²⁹

Youkhannan Bar Zobi (13th. Century) explicitly declares that bread and wine are not merely symbols: “Before the descent of the Holy Spirit they are symbols, but after the descent of the Holy Spirit they actually became the body of our Lord. We must not look at the sacraments after sanctification as before, but rather look at them with the eyes of faith.”³⁰ And he truly calls them the body of our Lord.” And also in another place, Saint John says: “Since our Lord called the bread and wine His body and blood, it would be a sin to

²⁶ Abdisho Bar Brikha, *The Order of the Judgments*, 93.

²⁷ BO III, can. 8, 241, 254, 245; Van Unnik W. C., *Nestorian Question on the administration of the eucharist*, by Ishoyahb IV, Haarlem 1937, 191.

²⁸ Elijah of Nisibis, *Proof of the Truth of Faith*, 102 ff.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 93.

³⁰ Yohannan bar Zobi, *Explanation of all divine mysteries*, Borg. Syr. 90, f. 46 a, 53a.

believe that they are not. So let us accept them with firm faith, and consider them the body of our Lord Jesus. When believers take on the body of our Lord Jesus, they must think that they are They embrace and kiss Christ Himself. We mix His body with our bodies in faith and His blood with our blood in truth”.³¹

Mar Georgis Warda (13th. Century) in his hymn for the martyrs confirms the truth of the Lord's body where he says: "I do not drink wine; I drink of the blood of Jesus." ³²Saint Isaac of Nineveh (7th. Century) recites a hymn for the monks during the night prayer vigil: "Every day we accept you and carry you in your mystery. So, honor us so that we may obtain in us the hope of resurrection... By the grace of your baptism, you have hidden your treasure in our bodies."³³ It is also worth noting in the history of the monks of Kublai Khan (13th. Century) that on the tomb of Saint Shimon in the Church of Saint Raban Hormizd, an inscription was engraved in which the Patriarch declared his faith. Here he says: I partake of his body and his blood.³⁴ The liturgy of the Church of the East clearly bears witness to the belief in the reality of the body of Christ in the mystery. When the priest grants the Holy Eucharist to the believers, he says: "The pure body of our Lord for the believer for the forgiveness of sins..., the Precious Blood for the forgiveness of sins, a spiritual feast in eternal life".³⁵ That is, there is no doubt that belief in the reality of the body and blood of Christ in the sacrament of bread and wine was vital and effective for the fathers of the Church of the East in all ages and up to the present day.

³¹ Yohannan bar Zobi, f. 54 a.

³² H. Hilgenfeld, *Ausgewählte Gesänge des Giwargis von Arbel*, Leipzig 1904, 78.

³³ G. Bickell, *Ausgewählte Schriften der syrischen Kirchenväter*, Kempten 1874, 402.

³⁴ E. A. Wallis Budge, *The monks of Kublai Khan, Emperor of China*, London 1928, 41.

³⁵ Joseph De Kelaita, *The Liturgy of the Church of the East*, 50.

True transformation does not occur in the nature of offering

The Fathers of the Church of the east affirm that the transformation from bread and wine into the body and blood of the Lord occurs through the power of the Holy Spirit, not in terms of an external or accidental transformation of matter, but rather a fundamental internal transformation. Likewise, the offering is transformed (تبدل) into the body and blood of our Savior Lord Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit for the sake of our salvation, which cannot be seen with the naked eye, but rather through living faith full of trust (إيمان). This was also confirmed by Saint Ephrem the Syrian (4th. Century), who saw that the spiritual eyes of faith are able to penetrate shadows and shapes and reach reality, using his poetic talents in an attempt to express his theological views in a hymn like the following: “For when I see this outer form of you before my eyes, the hidden form remains Overshadowing my mind, O Holy One.”³⁶ The Fathers of the church of the east were aware that in the Eucharist we are dealing with a great mystery that can only be comprehended by faith.

According to the doctrine of the Church of the East, the sanctification of the elements of bread and wine and their transformation into the body and blood of Christ in the Mass is completed by the prayer calling for the coming of the Holy Spirit. As a sacrament, the Eucharist is closely linked to baptism: baptism represents our birth, but the Eucharist is the spiritual nourishment of our life of faith. The Eucharist has sacramental signs (the offering), namely bread and wine, which gain power beyond their nature through the action of the Holy Spirit. The mystical sign, the bread and wine, is not only a type of food in that blessed world, but it is also, according to the words of foundation, the body and blood of the Lord. Calling the two Mystery elements body and blood makes it clear that they are not actually two elements, but rather one element,

³⁶ Mar Ephrem the Syrian, Hymn of Nativity 10.

because the body and blood of every human being are one. Also, Christ's founding words are not merely symbolic.

When teaching a true transformation of nature (material existence), they often deny the presence of the true body of Christ in heaven in the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. We can cite a number of patristic texts from all previous centuries. For the Church Fathers, the true body of Christ is exclusively the body of Christ in its natural appearance in heaven. On the other hand, they know nothing about the true way of existence of the Body of Christ. The true presence of Christ in the Eucharist must be confined within the framework of (personal) faith, and not be mixed with natural existence. The Real Presence in the Eucharist is the embodiment of a more universal presence in the form of bread and wine. The Fathers of the Church of the East affirm that the Holy Eucharist is the Mystery of Christ's true presence today in the same capacity, just as his historical presence was the Mystery of his presence on earth. Christ wanted to embody this same presence for all future generations, in a material reality (bread and wine), but it was different from his natural, concrete, historical presence. Since there was no development in the Eucharistic doctrine in the Church of the East in the second millennium, the word transubstantiation is not a term used by the Church to describe what happens in the elements of bread and wine in the change prayed for in the rite of sanctification. When referring to the elements of bread and wine, the language of the ritual is very matter-of-fact throughout. From the time the offerings are made on the altar onward they are referred to as the body and blood of Christ. Throughout the ritual of the Mass, the true presence of Christ in the Eucharist is confidently announced to the faithful. It is useful to look into what parents think about this topic.

Through his diligent translation work, Mar Narsai (5th. Century) brought the results of Greco-Antiochene studies into the circle of Syriac-Persian culture, thus laying the foundations for the doctrine of the Oriental Mysteries beyond the borders of the Roman Empire. Just like his teacher, Mar Theodore Al-Masisi, he adheres to the literal interpretation of the founding story, but at the same time he adopts the science of sacramental symbols. According to Narsai, the presence of Christ in the Eucharist depends primarily on the Holy Spirit; Based on Christology, the unity of the bread on the altar and the heavenly body of the Savior is absolutely essential.

Mar Theodore of Mopsuestia emphasizes the enjoyment of the Lord's body and blood in the Eucharist by saying as follows: "We receive eternal spiritual nourishment from the body and blood of our Lord."³⁷ Mar Theodore also speaks a lot about the transformation of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ. This happens through the descent of the Holy Spirit. "The food of the Holy Eucharist is first placed on the altar as just bread and wine mixed with water, but with the coming of the Holy Spirit it turns(متحولاً) into flesh and blood as spiritual and eternal food." ³⁸ Therefore, Mar Theodore stresses, according to the interpretation of the Gospel of Matthew, that Christ did not say: This is a symbol of my body, but rather: This is my body, through which he wanted to teach us that the offering have turned into his body and blood. We also find a very similar passage in the Christian teaching on the sacrament of baptism: "When the Lord gave the bread, He did not say appropriately: This is a symbol of my body, but: This is my body, because He wanted us to look at them not according to their nature, since they had received grace and the coming of the Spirit, but rather that We receive them as the body and blood of our Lord."³⁹

³⁷ A. Mingana, Woodbrooke studies. Cambridge, t. V, Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Lord's prayer and on the sacraments of baptism and the eucharist, 1932, VI, 242.

³⁸ Ibid, VI, 260.

³⁹ Ibid, VI, 210.

Accordingly, the Eucharist also is not just an empty symbol, but a symbol that gives us a real guarantee of future immortality. The thought of Mar Theodore adopts that the call of the Holy Spirit leads to a transformation in the essence of the Eucharistic Offering. Just as the human nature of Christ does not have the gift of immortality on its own, but only through the fundamental change after the Resurrection, so the Eucharistic bread does not have salvific power from its own nature, but only through the descent of the Holy Spirit.⁴⁰ Regarding the mystery of the Eucharist, Mar Theodore opposes a purely symbolic interpretation when determining the content of the concept of the symbol and emphasizes the identity of the sacred elements with the body and blood of Christ: “When he gave us the bread, he did not say: This is the symbol (ܦܫܘܬܐ) of my body, but rather this is my body. Likewise, he did not say about The cup: This is a symbol of (ܦܫܘܬܐ) My blood, but this is My blood because He wanted us, once they (the bread and wine) received this grace and the coming of the Spirit, not to look at their nature, but to accept them as the body and blood of our Lord because even the body of our Lord was not His (ܦܫܘܬܐ) immortality and the gift of immortality, but it was the Holy Spirit who gave him, and by resurrecting from the dead he attained connection with the divine nature (ܕܢܘܨܬܐ ܕܗܘܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ) and became immortal and the originator of immortality for others.”⁴¹ It is clear that Mar Theodore is interested in ensuring that his concept of the term symbol is purely superficial. Because the specificity of the term symbol does not mean an empty sign, but rather a hidden heavenly reality beyond human reach.

⁴⁰ Mingana, catechetical Homilies of Theodore of Mopsuestia, Hom. 15,11-12.

⁴¹ P. Bruns, Theodore von Mopsuestia. Katechetische Homilien I-II, Freiburg. 1994-1995, Hom. 15,10, 393-394.

So, what does change or transformation mean for Mar Theodore? In his teaching sermons,⁴² the bishop offers the fascinating theory that the call of the Holy Spirit brought about a transformation in the nature of offering. Certainly, the issue of fundamental transformation (essential becoming) relates to the nature of offering and also attributes eternal and unchanging existence to it. According to Antiochian theology, the relationship between existence and becoming (transformation) makes Mar Theodoros's doctrine on the Eucharist follow the opposite path from mortal nature to immortal nature, and from the substance of the mystery to heavenly truth.

With the move of the Oriental School from Edessa to Nisibis, the focus of Antiochene theology shifted entirely to the East in the second half of the fifth Century. The following authors belong to the classical period of classical theology from the beginnings until the Islamic conquest.

Like Mar Theodore of Mopsuestia, Mar Narsai teaches the spiritual presence of Christ in the Eucharist. The transformation of offerings takes place primarily through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit: “In this sign the Son of the Highest confessed to his Father, and these words he said when he gave up his body and his blood: This is my body, which I gave for the world; and also: This is my blood, which I was willing to shed for sins.” Whoever eats my flesh in love and drinks my blood will live forever and abide in me and I in him. And this is what you do in remembrance of me in the midst of your churches. By faith you take my body and my blood and offer bread and wine as I taught you, and I will complete them and make them body and blood. I make the bread and the wine body and blood and the work of the Holy Spirit (ܐܘܢܝܢܐ ܕܗܘܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ) thus spoke the Bringer of life to the worlds to his disciples. His body and blood are what he calls bread and wine, and he did not call them a symbol or a type (ܐܝܢܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ), but rather a body, a body specifically (accuracy), and

⁴² Theodore of Mopsuestia, Hom. 15, 10.

blood in truth. Although their nature is far removed from Him, in strength and unity they are one body. Angels and men always acknowledge you, O Lord, Christ, our hope, who gave yourself for us. The body that the priests break in the church (ܩܕܝܫܐ ܕܥܝܪܐ ܕܥܩܕܝܫܐ ܕܥܝܪܐ ܕܥܩܕܝܫܐ) is as powerful as that body sitting in glory on the right (ܩܕܝܫܐ ܕܥܝܪܐ ܕܥܩܕܝܫܐ ܕܥܝܪܐ ܕܥܩܕܝܫܐ), and just as God is united with the first fruits of our race (ܩܕܝܫܐ ܕܥܝܪܐ ܕܥܩܕܝܫܐ ܕܥܝܪܐ ܕܥܩܕܝܫܐ), so Christ is united with the bread and wine that are on the altar."⁴³ Here the reference is clear and self-evident to Mar Theodore. It is already clear in the introduction to this quote.⁴⁴ Therefore, Mar Narsai, the biblical interpreter, emphasizes in his literal interpretation of the Eucharist, which he poetically paraphrases that the Eucharist is not a symbol or a proverb, but is therefore real body and blood in accuracy and truth. Therefore, he clearly realizes the unity of the bread on the altar with the heavenly body of the Lord.

Mar Narsai describes Christ's words at the Last Lord's Supper metaphorically as follows: "Offer bread and wine as I taught you, and I will complete them and make them body and blood. I make body and blood out of bread and wine through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth". He also writes elsewhere: "Look carefully at the bread and wine placed on the table, which the power of the Holy Spirit transforms into the body and blood of the Lord. Look at the external things with the senses of your external organs, and look at the hidden, invisible things with the powers of your spirit (that is, by faith)."⁴⁵ Likewise, elsewhere in his article, Mar Narsai believes with certainty that the king's body resides in the apparent bread. Therefore, the bread remains even after sanctification.⁴⁶

⁴³ Connolly, Hom. XVII: Mingana I, 285, 9-286,7.

⁴⁴ Connolly, Liturgical Homilies (as note 58), 16-17, note 1 at p. 17, and Introduction, lxix.

⁴⁵ Ibid, Hom. XVII; 17; Hom. XXI, 56.

⁴⁶ Ibid, Hom. XXI, 60.

Regarding this subject, as well, Mar Narsai explains as follows: “Thus spoke the eternal Giver of Life to his disciples, calling the bread and wine body and blood. A kind or similarity, but it is a specific body and a true blood, and although their nature is immeasurably distant from his nature, the nature of the body is one in power. And unity. The body that the priests break in the church is one in power with the body sitting in glory on the right, and just as the God of all is united with the first fruits of our race, Christ is united with the bread and wine that are on the altar. Therefore, the bread is the body of our Lord, and the wine is his blood, in a way True and true, and thus he commands those who participate in his Mystery to eat his body, and thus he commands his household to drink his blood. Blessed is he who believes in him and abides in his word, because if he dies, he will live, and if he lives, he will not die in his sins. With this sign (the sign of the cross), the one who receives communion approaches, so he says to him is the priest who gives him: “The body of our Lord.” He receives into his hands the body of the temple, the Lord of all, and embraces it and kisses it with love and tenderness. He places the leaven of life in the temple of his body and hides it, so that his body may be sanctified by receiving the body of our Lord, forgive debts, cleanse defects, heal diseases, and wash and purify stains. Which are worthless in the hyssop of his mercies.”⁴⁷

In this passage Mar Narsai insists that the bread has become precisely flesh, and that the wine has truly become blood, even though their nature is immeasurably distant from flesh and blood. Drawing on the language of the Deophysians,⁴⁸ his understanding is that the nature of the bread and wine does not change in essence; However, Christ is present in strength and unity, and he mysteriously becomes one with the bread and wine. Therefore, the

⁴⁷ Pro Oriente, Syriac Dialogue, sixth non-official consultation on dialogue within the Syriac tradition, Vienna 2004,40-41.

⁴⁸ Dyophysitism (Greek: δυοφυσιτισμός, from δύο (dyo), meaning "two" and φύσις (physis), meaning "nature") is the Christological position that two natures, divine and human, co-exist in the unique person of Jesus Christ God.

bread is precisely the body of our Lord, and the wine is his blood, correctly and truly.

Mar Narsai, following Mar Theodore (5th. Century), asserts that Christ did not call them a model or likeness, but rather true flesh and blood. However, in practice, symbolic language continued to be used. Narsai explains the transformation of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, of which he speaks, in a way that seems to negate not only the real transformation of nature, but also the real presence of the body of Christ in heaven.

When the power of the Spirit dwells in the bread, it acquires the ability to give life: “The priest asks the invisible (God) to send him a hidden power, so that he may send divine power into the bread and wine, to give life to those who partake. The power of the Holy Spirit descends and resides in the bread and sanctifies it with his power.” The priest invites the divine spirit to dwell and dwell in the visible bread and wine without change, and to make them the body and blood of the King Christ, thus completing the mystery of our Lord’s resurrection from the dead, and giving strength to life.⁴⁹

When it is said here that the Holy Spirit makes the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, it is difficult to understand this in the strict sense of the word. The effective, life-giving power of the Holy Spirit resides in the bread and wine, and in this way they share the attributes of the Risen One.

Also in this regard, Mar Babai the Great (6th. Century) says: “Through the recitation of the sacred priestly words, the Holy Spirit descends in an incomprehensible way and completes these mysteries on the altar everywhere and makes them one body of Christ”.⁵⁰ Mar Babai the Great asserts elsewhere that we do not eat his natural body which is in heaven, but rather bread. The glorified body of Christ naturally exists in heaven, and His image exists on earth. However,

⁴⁹ Narsai, Hom. XXI, Connolly, 56-59; Hom. XXXII, 67; Hom. XVII, 20.

⁵⁰ Babai the Great, The Book of Union, 18.

Mar Babai explicitly rejects the change in the nature of offerings, that is, the change in the nature of bread and wine is unacceptable to him, However, they were endowed with supernatural power through the descent of the Holy Spirit. Although the Eucharistic bread remains bread even after the Divine Mass, it is united with the heavenly body of Christ so that its reconciling power becomes effective on the earthly altar, because in the end it can only be one body.⁵¹

Mar Babai also strongly rejected the idea that the body of Christ was slaughtered and eaten, and considered it blasphemy. We have here only one image of the body of Christ. Mar Babai does not believe that the body of Christ can have another way of existing other than its natural way of existing. Mar Babai the Great says: “This bread is bread according to its nature, but by the power of the Holy Spirit it is sanctified and the body becomes a model of the body of the Lord united (مستجسد) in heaven, and it is for us one body with one name in one sanctity and protective power. According to its nature it is truly bread, but by virtue of atonement. And the sanctification that he gained by the coming of the Holy Spirit is one body of Christ. O evil man, it is not this body of the Lord that we break and kill on the altar daily.... That which we take is not his body according to nature, but rather it is a commemoration of his death. Behold, the children of the earth Do not eat the nature of God, you wicked, but this bread, which He blessed and made into a body, not according to nature, but by the power of atonement and a pledge of life, one body.”⁵² Therefore, according to him, bread remains bread according to nature even after it is sanctified. But the rite of sanctification, which is concluded with the prayer of the descent of the Holy Spirit, makes the bread on the altar unite with the body of Christ in heaven and share in its saving power.

⁵¹ Babai the Great, 126.

⁵² Ibid, 229-230.

Babai affirms the same thing in this regard: “One is Person (ܐܘܢܐ ܘܚܕܐ), the body of Christ and the consecrated bread. Behold, it is not the natural body which is in heaven that we eat, but we eat the bread, which by power and descent (the Holy Spirit) is one bread, and we drink the wine of the drink which is sanctified by the bread; They are the body and blood of Christ in power, pardon, and forgiveness of sins.”⁵³ Again, he says: In nature (it is) bread, but in power (it is) for forgiveness and sanctification, which it acquires by the descent of the Holy Spirit, because it is one body of Christ, and this we receive is not in the nature of His body, but in the memory of His suffering and death.⁵⁴

According to Abraham Bar Lipeh (7th. Century), the true body of Christ and the Eucharistic body are related to each other like the king and his image. Likewise, Theodore Bar Koni (8th. Century) presents the same comparison in his statement as follows: “Christ is one for us in heaven. But this one (the one in the Eucharist) is an image. If not, then tell me, are the king and his image two kings? If the image of the king and the king are not counted as two kings, then how can Christ and his mystery be called two?⁵⁵ And elsewhere, like Mar Narsai, he speaks about the power of the spirit in bread: “In the bread is the mystery of the body, and in the blood is the mystery of its soul, not as if they are capable of sanctification according to their nature. Rather, it is the spirit that mixes with the bread”.⁵⁶

Mar Timothy I (8th. Century) agrees with Mar Narsai and Mar Babai in saying that after sanctification, the bread becomes the body of Christ and the wine becomes his blood because it is united with the heavenly Christ without changing its nature.⁵⁷ Mar Ephrem of Elam (8th. Century) denies the identification of the body of Christ in the

⁵³ Babai the Great, 154-155.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 284.

⁵⁵ Theodore Bar Koni, the book of schools, Syriac text edited by Addai Sher, 2 volumes. Paris 1910-1912 (CSCO Scr. Syri Series II, t. 65 and 66), 250.

⁵⁶ Theodore Bar Koni, the book of schools, 185.

⁵⁷ Timothy I., Epistles, ed. Oscar Braum, CSCO, Paris, 1914, 175-176.

mystery with the body of Christ in heaven in his saying: “But when the bread of the church and the body of heaven are recognized as a hypostasis, they dissolve.⁵⁸ Therefore, this bread that is in the church is the body.” Heavenly, but not in essence, but in divine power and power. The anonymous author (9th. Century) explicitly opposes those who say that the mysteries are in the natural sense the body and blood of Christ, and not merely a sacrament of body and blood.⁵⁹

Mar Ishodad of Merve (9th. Century) comments on the promise letter in the chapter (6) of the Gospel of John: “The Lord taught here about the bread of the mysteries, and not about the hypostasis of His body (ܕܒܫܘܬܗ). For even if we eat, we do not eat His own body, but the body of the mysteries. Which he calls the heavenly bread that came down from heaven (the body) and was mixed with it.⁶⁰

Thus, the Eucharistic body is clearly distinguished from the true body of the Lord, which is in the heaven. In another place, he is also compared to the image of the king as follows: Just as the image of the king means the king himself, and just as the king and his image are not called kings, so also this holy body in heaven, with this sacrament in the church, is the body of Christ.⁶¹ We also find this comparison in Mar Youhanna Bar Zobi teaching.⁶²

Ibn al-Bultan (11th. Century)⁶³ was interested in the dialectical discussion of the issue of the material of offerings. He had no predecessors in oriental literature. His notes are based on the Arabic interpretation of the Gospels by his academic teacher Ibn al-Tayyib,⁶⁴

⁵⁸ Aphrem of Elam, Letter to Gabriel Bar Bokhtisho on the question of whether one may receive the Eucharist of the Melkites. Borg. Syr 81, f. 362 v.

⁵⁹ Anonymen, II, 61.

⁶⁰ Ishodad of Merv, Commentaries I, 237-238.

⁶¹ Ibid, 104.

⁶² Yohannan Bar Zobi, Explanation of all divine mysteries, Borg. Syr. 90, f. 48 b.

⁶³ Ibn Butlan came from Baghdad, was a general practitioner and taught medicine and philosophy. The meeting with specialist colleagues was served by an extensive study trip, which Ibn Butlan began in 1047.1048 and which took him to Mosopotamia and Syria (Aleppo). Via Lataqia and Antioch he reached Cairo in Egypt and from there to Constantinople. After a year's stay, he returned to Antioch, where he lived in monastic seclusion only for asceticism and writing.

⁶⁴ Graf, Geschichte der chrsitlichen arabischen Literatur. Bd.II, Rome 1947,160-177.

the commentary given under the name of the unknown, and, of course, the treatises of Mar Theodore of Mopsuestia and Mar Babai the Great. From them he also adopted the idea of the typical body, which is considered an image or likeness of the heavenly body of Christ. Ibn al-Bultan regards the question which was so hotly debated in Constantinople as to whether the Lord used leavened or unleavened food at the Last Supper, which he regards as idle chatter and which can safely be set aside here. Important for our context are the Incoming phrases from the third chapter of the Epistle, in which, after a lengthy etymological discussion of the concept of Passover, he takes a concrete position on the question of transformation: “The appropriate issue is to realize that the superiority of the sacrifice (offering) is not that it is unleavened or leavened, but In its similarity to the body of Jesus Christ, our Savior, but this attribute cannot be attained except through the rite of sanctification through the priests, because after the Lord broke the bread and blessed, He said, “This is my body,” and after He blessed the wine, He gave it its effect, but before that it was bread And wine. Whatever the wine was, and whatever the bread was, leavened or unleavened, it was sanctified by the priest on the altar. Whoever has true faith was certain that it was the body and blood of Christ with divine power, not intangible to the senses, and thus it is in fact his body and blood. The sacrifice is truly the body and blood of the Lord, for by His word of the Highest: my body is food and my blood is drink in truth. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him. Some disagree with this opinion and say: There are many words in the Gospel that the Lord said in a symbolic way”.⁶⁵

It is clear from the previous section that Ibn al-Bultan understands the change in the strict sense of the Antiochian thought. The rank of consecration gives bread a specific feature, as in the Theodorian sense, which is to grant immortality and stability in the future age.

⁶⁵ Ibn Butlan: G. Graf, Die Eucharistielehre des nestorianers Al- Mukhtar Ibn Butlan. In: Oriens Christianus, Bund 35 (III. Serie, Band XIII), 1938, 178-179.

In his explanation of the Lord's Supper, Ibn al-Bultan joins those who call for a more symbolic interpretation. However, according to Ibn al-Butlan, in rite of sanctification the offerings is given a divine power (سُدَّة) which they do not possess naturally and according to which the change depends on the true faith of the priest performing the ceremony. In this way, according to the Antiochian approach Ibn al-Bultan summarizes the words of the Lord metaphorically. Because he refuses to explain the heavenly presence of Christ personally at the moment of Communion. However, at most, he recognizes the existence of a certain divine power inherent in the bread, and for this reason one can talk about the true body of Christ from the perspective of faith. Therefore, through his statements, he excludes any change in the nature of matter.

Ibn al-Bultan confirms that through the ritual of sanctification, bread loses its quality as bread.⁶⁶ He also denies transformation formally: Likewise, the Lord took the bread, broke it, and blessed it, and when he gave it to his disciples to eat, he became flesh by divine power, and not by outward change. Also, Ibn al-Tayyib (13th. Century), in his interpretation of the Gospels, does not intervene in detail on the issue of the changing nature of offerings. He suffices to say that the bread and wine, when blessed by the priest, become the body and blood of the Lord, “by the divine power descending on them”.⁶⁷ In addition, Youssef Al-Samani⁶⁸ cites testimony from the Interpretation of Faith by Patriarch Elijah III (twelfth Century). It is said that the essence of bread and wine is transformed into the essence of the body of Christ.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Graf, Ibn Butlan, 179.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 51.

⁶⁸ Joseph Simon Assemani (July 27, 1687–January 13, 1768) was a Syriac bishop and a Maronite scholar, known for his activity in collecting and translating Syriac Christian manuscripts in the Middle East. He was also the first supervisor of the Vatican Library. For his efforts, and his encyclopedic knowledge, he earned the nickname "The Great Assemani".

⁶⁹ Assemani J. S., *Bibliotheca Orientalis, Romae* 1725, III, 2, 291.

Let us delve deeper into the thought of Ibn al-Bultan (11th. Century), who presented a comprehensive study regarding the mystery of the Eucharist,⁷⁰ where he talks about two points of view on the issue of the Holy Eucharist: Some believe that the Holy Eucharist is in fact the body of the Lord. They rely on the words of Christ: “My flesh is food and my blood is drink” (John 6:56). On the other hand, others interpret these words metaphorically. Ibn al-Bultan denies the special natural presence of the Lord in the offering. However, it confirms that the nature of bread and wine is different from the nature of the body and the nature of blood, because the Gospel does not talk about a transformation of matter. He also said: If the Lord had given them his body for food and his blood for drink, his nature would have been invalidated immediately, because he would no longer be a perfect human being just as he is a perfect God. In one of his arguments, he says: The Lord can give them his blood either in a real way or in a metaphorical way. But blood is something forbidden in His (Christ’s) law, and it is not his intention to compromise on forbidden matters. So, all that remains is that this happened sacramentally by the power of the Holy Spirit. He also says in one of the arguments: If Christ gave his own body for his disciples to enjoy it, then what was raised on the cross? And if he gave them his blood to drink in truth, then it would not come out of his side. When pierced with a spear? He also proves his idea as follows: In general, the contact of two bodies in one place is impossible, and it is absurd for a body to be in two places (at the same time). There is no escape from all these doubts except the belief that the word of Christ on this subject must be understood in a mystery, spiritual way.⁷¹

⁷⁰ Ibn Butlan: G. Graf, Die Eucharistielehre des nestorianers Al- Mukhtar Ibn Butlan. In: Oriens Christianus, Bund 35 (III. Serie, Band XIII), 1938, 44-70; 175-191.

⁷¹ Ibid, 181.

Then Ibn al-Bultan gives another opinion in his statement as follows: “The bread became flesh and blood when the disciples ate it. As is the case with the dirt on which the Lord spat, it became clay, and when He placed it in the place of the blind man’s eye, it became an eye that sees. Likewise, the Lord took the bread, broke it, and blessed it. And when he gave it to his disciples to eat, he became flesh by divine power, not by natural transformation, as the followers of nature say: These are indeed works that transcend nature, but why does this not happen, because who does this is the creation of nature.⁷² Therefore, according to Ibn Butlan, he rejects the term transformation in terms of nature, but rather by divine power, the bread becomes the body of the Lord and the wine the blood of the Lord, which we do not see with the naked eye, but rather with the eyes of true faith.

Mar Abdisho Bar Brikha (14th. Century) clearly teaches us that bread turns into his body and wine into his precious blood. We must believe that the bread was transformed (تبدل) into the body of Christ, and that the cup was transformed into the blood of Christ.⁷³ Abdisho’s idea of the Eucharist as spiritual nourishment reminds us of the mentality of Mar Theodoros of Mopsuestia, who provides nourishment and growth to the spiritual life he received in the sacrament of baptism. For Abdisho, the Mass is a true sacrifice. Sacrifice is the service through which material things are offered by the earthly to the heavenly in the hope of forgiveness of sins and answers to requests. Christ offered a unique sacrifice on Calvary to atone for sins as the Lamb of God. However, this can be celebrated anywhere and at any time, which he established the night before his death. By the command of the Lord, Abdisho cites the Institution words: “The bread will be transformed into His holy body, and the wine into His holy blood.” Unfortunately, our author did not explain more about what this transformation (تبدل) looks like. According to

⁷² Ibn Butlan, 183-185.

⁷³ Abdisho Bar Brikha, the order of judgments, 100, see. Borg. Syr. 88, 399.

the third article, transformation does not occur in nature, but rather is inhabited on the basis of prosopon revelation. The body of the Lord in heaven and the mystery on earth are united prosopon when he says: "Because whenever we approach these mysteries, we meet Christ, hold him in our hands, kiss him, and unite with him through Communion. His holy body is mixed with our body, and his precious blood is mixed with our body. Because it is one body that we realize by faith that it is the same in heaven. And in the church."⁷⁴

Mar Timothy II (14th. Century) also talks about how bread is not made of flesh and wine is not made of blood, but they are called flesh and blood. Saint Timothy II addressed the issue of the Eucharist mainly in the fourth chapter. In its basic points, he follows the spiritual father, Saint Theodore of Mopsuestia, who is present in the thought of the Church of the East. He quotes the concept of symbol (ܩܘܕܫܐ). The full truth of the sacramental signs is not given to the present, but is only expected for the future: "For up to now we have presented the symbol of the sacramental truths (ܩܘܕܫܐ ܕܗܘܢܐ ܩܘܕܫܐ), but its perfection (ܩܘܕܫܐ ܕܗܘܢܐ ܩܘܕܫܐ) has not yet been achieved."⁷⁵ That is, the believer participates in the sacramental truth through symbols, and this is done thanks to the grace of the Holy Spirit. In the mysteries, the believer participates in future realities through faith, hope, and love. The mystery of the Eucharist does not only mean that it is the symbol or image of his body, but it also means the symbol contains the truth that it symbolizes. For him, the mystery of the Eucharist is a real presence, an effective nourishment, and a pledge of future immortality, based on the symbols that symbolize the entire mystery of the divine plan of salvation and represent the eternal heavenly ceremony. He thus confirms that whoever is nourished by the sacrament of the sacred body and blood has a blessed life within him,

⁷⁴ A. Mai, *Scriptorum veterum nova collectio e vaticanis codicibus* X, Rom 1838, syr. 317-341; lat. 342-366, 333b.

⁷⁵ Timothy II, III., 16: Vat. Syr. 151, fol. 70r.

now symbolically (ܠܫܝܘܢܐ), but eventually becoming fully real (ܚܘܒܘܬܐ) when he rises from the dead.⁷⁶

Mar Timothy II also sees, above all else, the Holy Eucharist as a true sacrifice for Jesus Christ, because it is the mystery of the One who offered his Father as a sacrifice for us. But it is also a sacrifice for the church, as its priests offer body and blood to God in bread and wine according to the order of Melchizedek (ܕܡܠܟܝܕܝܢ ܡܠܚܝܙܝܕܝܩ).⁷⁷ The Holy Sacrifice essentially includes the bread, the wine, the altar, the priest, and his priestly prayers. For him, the substance of the Eucharist is bread, a symbol of the body, while the image of wine, insofar as it represents the blood of Christ, therefore, according to semitic and biblical thought, is the soul of the Savior.⁷⁸ Mar Timothy's theory of transformation is dyed by the power of the prayer of the coming of the Holy Spirit when he says, for example, that the Holy Spirit transforms the sacraments through His descent (ܕܗܝܫܘܬܐ) into the body and blood and completes them, They became immortal and unchangeable in their nature, as the body of our Lord became at the time of resurrection.⁷⁹

This parallel between transformation and resurrection is due to the statements of Saint Theodore. As elsewhere he says: “Let us believe that the bread was transformed (ܠܫܝܘܢܐ) and became the body of Christ, and that the cup was transformed and turned into the blood of Christ.” It also becomes clear how insignificant this is, a transformation of nature from the following passage: “By the bread, we refer to the mystery of His body (ܦܝܫܘܬܐ ܕܗܝܫܘܬܐ), and by the wine to the mystery of His soul (ܦܝܫܘܬܐ ܕܢܦܫܐ), not as if they were capable of sanctification according to their nature (ܠܫܝܘܢܐ), but by the power of the grace (ܕܗܝܫܘܬܐ ܕܗܘܝܫܘܬܐ) of the Holy Spirit comminute (ܠܫܝܘܢܐ) with bread

⁷⁶ Timothy II, IV, 5: Vat. Syr. 151, fol. 88r-v.

⁷⁷ Ibid, I, 6: Vat. Syr. 151, fol. 16rv.

⁷⁸ Ibid, IV, 5: Vat. Syr. 151, fol. 87r. There is also a reference to the glowing coal of the prophet Isaiah as a Eucharistic symbol.

⁷⁹ Ibid, IV, 5: Vat. Syr. 151, fol. 88r.

and wine ".⁸⁰ Meaning, the bread and wine remain as such even after sanctification, but in a prayer of invocation the power of the Holy Spirit mixes with them, as was said elsewhere. The bread on the altar and the body of the Lord in heaven are different in nature. Therefore, Saint Timothy II, like Saint Babai, refuses to talk about two bodies of Christ: "But as for the bread not of flesh, and the wine not of blood, they are called flesh and blood, so we say this: Since Christ's human nature is called God, not by nature, but by reason of His union (ܡܕܘܢܐ) with the divine nature, likewise this bread and this wine are not by nature (ܡܡܢ) body and blood, but by the grace of the Spirit dwelling (ܡܘܨܒܐ) upon them they are called the body and blood of Christ."⁸¹

In addition, the Eucharistic bread helps us achieve immortality. He does not do this by His own nature, but by the Spirit dwelling within Him, just as the body of our Lord, of which this is a symbol, attained immortality by the power of the Holy Spirit and gave this immortality to others, while it cannot be obtained in any way by nature. Therefore, Change happens through the prayer of the Holy Spirit. The bread and wine, which were previously merely symbols of the suffering Christ, now became symbols of the risen Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, and were able to confer immortality and were considered in a true sense to be the body and blood of Christ.⁸²

The body of our Lord, which is our nature, was previously mortal by nature, but was transformed by resurrection into an immortal and unchangeable nature. Saint Theodore also explains that the offering (bread and wine) is the body and blood of Christ, which became so with the coming of the Holy Spirit, and that it became immortal through Him, just as the body of our Lord was anointed and received the Spirit. In the same way, when the Holy Spirit came, the bread and wine received something like an anointing with grace that came

⁸⁰ Timothy II, IV, 15: Vat. Syr. 151, fol. 116r.

⁸¹ Ibid, IV, 3: Vat. Syr. 151, fol. 84v.

⁸² W. de Vries, Der Nestorianismus, Theodors von Mopsuestia in seiner Sakramentallehre, *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, Roma 1941, 138.

upon them; Therefore, we believe that they are body and blood, immortal, incorruptible, incapable of pain, and unchangeable by nature, just as the body of our Lord was after the Resurrection.⁸³

In the physical symbol of the mystery, we do not realize the divine truth. The physical symbol and divine life seem as separate as human nature and divine nature in Christ. The mysteries give us entitlement to future and afterlife glory through faith, but this does not mean true participation in the divine life, because God and man cannot come together to form a true unity. Theodore's teaching on the sacraments appears to be similar in its essence to his Christology. The Mystery of raising humanity to true participation in God's nature cannot be understood rationally because it is a mystery. The truth of the divine life given to us in the sacrament dissolves under the hands of this rationalist, just as the fundamental truth of all Christianity is that God has become truly man.

Everything that is natural is no mystery. Everything that is mystery is not natural. The bread and wine are the body and blood in union and mystery. By nature, they are bread and wine. To preserve natures and create mystery in unity. Therefore, bread and wine are not by nature body and blood, but rather they are sacramentally body and blood. But it is also the mystery of the joy of the Kingdom of Heaven. Transforming bread and wine into holy, immortal matter is like transforming humanity Christ and our human nature into immortal life: the Holy Spirit gives them something beyond nature. Matter or nature remains, but events are changed by the Holy Spirit. And also, Christ, whom Theodore parallels, as we have seen, in this regard with the Eucharistic element. By becoming immortal and immutable, he did not attain a different nature, but rather remained a human and will return to judgment as a human. Certainly, this change should not be understood as an external process, but rather as an essential process that affects the nature of the gifts offered by the power of the Holy Spirit, by his coming the sacramental signs

⁸³ W. de Vries, *Der Nestorianismus*, 138.

have the power to create life like the original body and blood of Christ.⁸⁴

On this path, Youkhannan Bar Zobi (13th. Century) writes on this subject as follows: “After the priest blesses the bread and wine, they become body and blood by the grace of the Holy Spirit. They do not become body and blood living in nature, but in love, faith, and reality.”⁸⁵ Mar Youkhannan Bar Zobi uses the following comparison to explain the Eucharistic mystery: “When they make the sign of the cross on the sacramental table, they see there the union of the bread with the body. Just as the cross is united with the body and is not separated from it, so the body above is united with the bread below.”⁸⁶

Likewise, Mar Abdisho Bar Brikha (14th. Century) expresses in a realistic way the presence of the body of Christ in the sacrament, so we also find the opinion that the power of the Holy Spirit is mixed with the bread and wine, giving them the ability to sanctify. By this divine command of Christ, the bread turns into His holy body, and the wine into His precious blood. Whenever we approach these mysteries, we meet Christ Himself, carry Him in our hands, and accept Him. By partaking of them, we are united with Him. His holy body is mixed with our bodies, and his innocent blood is mixed with our blood. Through faith, we know that He who is in heaven and He who is in the church is one body. The change is not material, but rather the power inherent in this holy sacrament to forgive the sins of those who share in it the true faith. The change, though not in substance, is accomplished through prayer and faith in Him, and the bread and wine are declared to be the body and blood of Christ. He is present to the believer, is dealt with by believers, and is presented to the believer, so he becomes one with him. There is no doubt about the change that is taking place, although the bread and wine

⁸⁴ Theodore of Mopsuestia, Hom. Cat. 16, 22f; Hom. Cat. 15, 12.

⁸⁵ Yohannan Bar Zobi, Explanation of all divine mysteries, Borg. Syr. 90. F. 48b.

⁸⁶ Ibid, f. 64 a.

continue to appear, He says: “We present with bread the sacrament of his body, and with wine the sacrament of his soul, not as if they could be sanctified by their nature, but by the power of the Holy Spirit that is mixed with the bread and wine.”⁸⁷

We find the same idea in Mar Timothy II. Teaching, where he affirms that the holy sacraments are only body and blood in their effectiveness. The Holy Spirit transforms the sacraments so that they become effective in the body and blood.⁸⁸ He said: “We believe that the bread was changed and became the body of Christ, and that the cup was changed and became the blood of Christ.”⁸⁹ He confirms that the Holy Spirit, upon its descent, has an effective power to transform the Mysteries of our salvation into the body and blood of Christ.⁹⁰

But it is wrong to conclude from the aforementioned texts that the bread and wine, according to the Church Fathers, are merely an image of the Lord’s body and blood, which is not consistent with any truth. However, this is not the case, as it is clear from a passage by Mar Narsai (5th. Century): “He (Christ) did not give you a symbol or an example, but rather a body in reality and blood in reality.”⁹¹ We have previously cited above the texts of Theodore Bar Koni and Ishodad of Merv, in which they confirm, following the example of Theodore of Mopsuestia, that Christ said: (This is my body), and not: (This is the image of my body). The anonymous author explains that the charcoal with which the Seraphim cleansed the lips of the Prophet Isaiah was a form of holy sacrifice. In the Eucharist we have the truth, not a shadow of something else.⁹² Ishodad of Merv confirms that the Eucharistic bread is not ordinary bread.⁹³ In questions

⁸⁷ J.M. Vosté, *Regulation of Ecclesiastical Judgements, Ordo Iudiciorum Ecclesiasticorum, collectus, dispositus, ordinatus a Mar Abdisho Metropolita Nisibis et Armeniae* (S. Congregazione per la Chiesa Orientale, *Fonti, Serie II*, fasc. xv; 1940). (LT), 101; See more. *Borg. Syr.* 88, 400; Theodore von Mopsuestia, *Mingana VI*, 212 (trans., 77).

⁸⁸ Timothy II, IV., 15, f. 112.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, IV, 5, f. 88 r; IV, 15, f. 113 v.

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, IV, 3, f. 84 v.

⁹¹ Narsai, *Hom. XVII*, Connolly, 17.

⁹² *Anonymen*, I., 117.

⁹³ Ishodad of Merv, *Commentaries V*, 2, 36; I Cor. 11, 29.

relating to the altar service, consecrated bread is clearly distinguished from merely blessed bread.⁹⁴ Here we can return again to all the texts that we cited above from the authors of the Fathers of the Church of the East to prove that, according to their opinion, we enjoy the body and blood of Christ in the Holy Eucharist in the true sense.

Also, according to the liturgy of the Church of the East, through the prayer of the descent of the Holy Spirit (ܐܘܠܘܗܐ, ܐܘܠܘܗܐ) into the fountain of Saint Addai and Saint Mari (the order of sanctification), the priest does not pray for a change in the elements (matter), but only for the achievement of spiritual benefits by receiving them by the power of the Spirit.⁹⁵ As it was also stated in the Anaphora of Saint Theodore of Mopsuestia: “May the grace of the Holy Spirit come upon us and upon the offering, and settle and settle on the bread... May this holy bread be the body of our Lord Jesus Christ, and this cup the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ... and everyone who eats it.” With true faith this bread and drinking from this cup will have forgiveness of trespasses and sins and the great hope of resurrection from the dead and salvation for his body and blood and for the living and praise forever and ever....”⁹⁶ As we will see below, we will talk about the ritual sanctification in the ritual sense and how this bread becomes the body of the Lord.

It is completely unlikely from the beginning that the fathers of the Church of the East would embrace the idea of a real change in the nature of offerings. The true presence of Christ in the Eucharist must be confined within the framework of personal faith and not be mixed with natural presence. That is, in the process of transformation (ܐܘܠܘܗܐ) a distinction is assumed between essence and appearance. Visual evidence shows that the appearance of the bread remained the same. Bread and wine, which are nothing but material food, became,

⁹⁴ Van Unnik, 176, Frage 81.

⁹⁵ Liturgy of the church of the east, 34.

⁹⁶ Ibid, 74.

as a result of their sanctification in the Mass, factors for the true existence of Jesus Christ. There has been a shift from essence to essence. That is, the shift in the thought of the fathers, which has a biblical dimension, as we mentioned previously, has a completely different meaning than what we understand from the general perspective. As we will see below, we will talk about the interpretation of the Eucharistic transformation through parallels with the East Syriac theological concept of the mystery of the Incarnation.

Interpreting the mystery of Christ's presence through the perspective of the mystery of the incarnation

The Holy Eucharist is the mystery of Christ's true presence today in the same capacity, just as his natural and historical body was the mystery of his presence on earth two thousand years ago. Christ, who embodied his presence in a body of flesh throughout the thirty-three years that he lived on earth, wanted to embody this same presence for all future generations, in “a material reality, that is, bread and wine,” but it is different from his natural, concrete, historical presence.

We have already seen how the fathers of the Church of the East thought confines that the power of the Holy Spirit resides in the bread and wine during sanctification. Thus, the Eucharistic elements participate in the power of the Body of Christ, and are in a sense the Body of Christ. Their view of the mystery of the incarnation gave the Fathers of the Church of the East another reasonable solution to the apparent contradiction between faith and insight. Just as Jesus Christ is called the Son of God through union with the eternal Word, and it is somehow without God actually becoming human, so the Eucharistic Bread is in a real sense the Body of Christ through its union with the true Body of Christ in heaven.

For the fathers of the Church of the East, the mystery of the incarnation is the culmination of God's plan for creation. God, in His love for us, became one of us in order to save us. Saint Ephrem the Syrian (4th. Century) believes that the humanity of Christ is the instrument of salvation. For him, that body through which Christ healed and resurrected humans gave us a mystery to heal us, integrate us into the church, and give us a pledge of his resurrection, which is the mystery of the divine presence in the bread and wine. Thus, Saint Ephrem compares the divine work at the incarnation and at the Eucharist in the Hymn of Faith/No. 10: "In the womb that carried you is fire and the spirit, fire and spirit in the river in which you were baptized, fire and spirit are present in our baptism as well, and in the bread and the cup there is fire and spirit."⁹⁷

In a simple ascetic way, Mar Aphrahat (4th. Century) teaches the real presence of Christ at the New Testament Passover, without speculating in detail about how or why. He is also the first author in the Syriac language to establish the concept or term (*Raza-ܠܚܝܒ*) in the doctrine of the Holy Mysteries as a technical term. With the great Antiochian theologian Mar Theodore of Mopsuestia, the symbolic understanding of the Eucharist was found to gain greater status among the East Syriac Fathers, based on the doctrine of dual nature Christology. Although the doctrine of the Eucharist also emphasizes the duality of earthly symbols and heavenly reality, there is still a relationship between them.⁹⁸

As with all the Antiochian Fathers, the two-nature⁹⁹ Christological scheme constitutes the correct interpretive framework for the doctrine of the Eucharist. Just as the taken man is in reality the Son of God through union with the eternal Word and is worshiped in this way, so the Eucharistic Bread is in a real sense the Body of Christ

⁹⁷ Sebastian Brock, *The Luminous Eye*, Faith/No. 10.17, 94.

⁹⁸ Aphrahat, *Demonstration 11,12*: *Patrologia syriaca* I,504.5-6: Burns 296.

⁹⁹ When Mar Theodore thinks about two natures, he considers them as subjects with their free individual actions, and therefore the divine qualities cannot be attributed to the human nature, or the human qualities to the divine nature.

through the mystical union with his heavenly model. With this idea, he adopted the older Antiochene models (Mar Theodore) and had a decisive influence on later developments (such as Mar Babai the Great). However, the medieval East Syriac authors do not provide any new insights in terms of content. They stand entirely on the shoulders of the forefathers of the Syriac patristic period.

According to Saint Theodore, the concept of the symbol builds the bridge from the Eucharist to the doctrine of the Incarnation. Here and there, the doctrine of the two natures provides the correct framework for interpretation. The relationship between the mystery as an external sign and the truth of salvation depicted in it is similar to the relationship between human and divine nature. Both are clearly distinguishable but vaguely connected. Just as Christ's human nature does not receive the gift of immortality on its own, but only through a fundamental change after His resurrection from the dead by the power of His divine nature, so the Eucharistic bread does not have the power of redemption from its own nature, but only through the indwelling of the holy Spirit, as Theodore affirmed several times in his teaching sermons.¹⁰⁰

Successively and based on the sermon of Mar Theodore, Mar Narsai (5th.Century) describes the rite of sanctification and the rite of Communion and urges the believers to turn their attention away from what is visible to the invisible mystery of faith: “After chant the Holy One and praising Him, the eyes of their soul are drawn to the offering. At the same time, they rush with their senses and feelings to approach the bread and the wine that contain forgiveness of sins. By faith they gain the ability to see what is hidden, and they, like the king, hold the sanctuary in the middle of their hands with reverence, believing that the body of the king (ܕܡܠܟܐ ܩܝܡܐ) has been revealed in the visible bread, and in it the resurrection of the dead is announced to whoever eats it, and the priest who gives it says Also a body, and he calls the blood the wine mixed in the cup. He offers the bread and

¹⁰⁰ Mingana, Hom. 15, 11-12.

says the body of the King Christ, and offers the wine to be drunk in the same way: the blood of Christ. He believes that the body and the blood are the bread and the wine, certainly for the giver and also for the recipient. Thus, he announces the forgiveness of sins and the resurrection of the dead, and although it has not been announced, they are awaited by faith. Faith reveals to the soul the hidden vision (ܐܘܪܘܚܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܡܘܨܐܝܬܐ), and teaches it not to doubt what is seen (ܐܘܪܘܚܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܡܘܨܐܝܬܐ). The bread and wine can be seen with the naked eye (ܐܘܪܘܚܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܡܘܨܐܝܬܐ), but the feelings of the soul are the victorious power of concealment (ܐܘܪܘܚܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܡܘܨܐܝܬܐ). We must look with our feelings at the mystery of our salvation (ܐܘܪܘܚܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܡܘܨܐܝܬܐ), and let faith set a goal for our thoughts. (ܐܘܪܘܚܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܡܘܨܐܝܬܐ).¹⁰¹

In the Christology of Mar Narsai, the concept of (dwelling) is known: The eternal Word resides in the man Jesus as in the temple. In a very similar way, we should think about the indwelling of the heavenly body of Christ in the visible bread. Narsai emphasizes the equality of essence between bread and wine and the body and blood of the Lord, which is understood from the compatibility of the doctrine of the Eucharist with the doctrine of the two natures. The bread and wine on the one hand, and the body and blood on the other hand, are separated by nature, unless their union is hypostatic or essential. Regarding the relationship between the spiritual, faith-based reality of the Eucharist (the body and blood of Christ) and the visible appearance of the bread and wine, Narsai expresses his reflections as follows: “Let us take the bread and be certain that it is able to take away iniquity, and let us drink the wine and acknowledge that its drink gives life. Let us honor them as the body and blood of the king (ܐܘܪܘܚܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܡܘܨܐܝܬܐ), and let them lead us to the glories of the royal house. Let us believe that they are able to give us life in our death. Let us extend our minds to contemplate that hope that is within us.

¹⁰¹ Narsai, Hom. XXI, Mangana I, 354, 12-355, 4, Connoly, 60.

Let us look with the hidden mind at the things that are seen (ܘܚܝܒܢ ܕܘܚܝܒܢܐ), and we do not doubt the renewal that is in apparent things. The viewer should not look at the bread nor the wine, but rather at the power (ܘܚܝܒܢܐ) that makes the bread and wine holy. The bread and wine were set as a sign for the eyes of the body (ܘܚܝܒܢܐ ܕܘܚܝܒܢܐ), so that he may participate with his mind in what is not apparent (ܘܚܝܒܢܐ ܕܘܚܝܒܢܐ). So that the body cannot see what is hidden in the mind, and it cannot see what is hidden like thoughts. For his sake, a gift was given through bread, so that we may gain hope in what is hidden in the apparent. The hidden Joy in the mystery was promised to him and to souls (ܘܚܝܒܢܐ ܕܘܚܝܒܢܐ ܕܘܚܝܒܢܐ), and obvious food and drink were enough to console him."¹⁰²

Likewise, according to Mar Narsai, in his ritual interpretations regarding the parallel between them, Christ called them (the bread and wine) not as a symbol or a type, but rather as flesh in reality and blood in truth: “And even if their nature is immeasurably far from Him, by strength and union the body is one, the body that the priest breaks in the church, with that body that sits in glory on the right. Yes, just as the God of all was united with the first fruits of our race, so Christ was united with the bread and wine that are on the altar. Therefore, the bread is the very body of our Lord, and the wine is in fact his blood.”¹⁰³ Therefore, Mar Narsai insists that we truly possess the body and blood of Christ in the Holy Eucharist. But bread, by nature, is far from it, except that through union with the body of Christ similar to the union of his humanity with the divine Word, the bread becomes the body of Christ.

We also find the idea of parallelism in the theology of the Eucharist of Mar Babai the Great (7th. Century): “But the body united in heaven is human in nature. But, after the descent of the Holy Spirit, the bread was sanctified and became one body, and there is one body,

¹⁰² Narsai, Hom. XXI: Mingana I, 355, 5-16.

¹⁰³ Narsai, Hom. XVII, Connolly, 17.

one power, and one atonement, and there are not two bodies. There is no addition to the nature of the Lord's body in heaven, but by uniting with Him it becomes one body. Therefore, sonship, atonement, and power belong to God the Word from eternity and naturally, but through union in one cohesion, they also belong to His humanity with Him in one sonship, in one virtue. Just as the body of the one united in heaven did not receive an addition from this body that is broken every day on the altar, but it is the same in one body in two natures, likewise no addition to the Trinity was made due to the union that took place between humanity and divinity, just as there are no two sons. Rather, one Son forever, because the Word took that man to appear in him, and just as the Son is eternal in his nature as a son, but through the union with his humanity, he is also one son with him, and through his humanity, a complete human being according to nature, and because of the union of divinity with that human being, he is also called the Son of Man. In the name of the union, it is said that the son descended, because he became a human being and was united. This is how we should feel about the bread, because by the coming of the Holy Spirit it became the body of our Lord by union and power, and not according to nature".¹⁰⁴ We find that he sometimes explains the mystery of the Incarnation by comparing it to the Holy Eucharist, and at other times the Eucharistic transformation by comparing it to the mystery of the Incarnation.

In his book of Union, Mar Babai objects to the claim of opponents, referring to Paul of Antioch (3rd Century), Bishop of Samosata,¹⁰⁵ that the theory of the abstract man (Christ) is not a true communion with God: "You claim that we do not receive the body and blood of God (ܕܘܢܝܢܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ), but the flesh and blood of man (ܕܘܢܝܢܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ). Indeed, you wicked people! God is an infinite spirit and light from light (ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ), but in any case, the body by nature.

¹⁰⁴ Babai the Great, the Book of Union, 181, 232-233.

¹⁰⁵ Samosata is a small town in the Adiyaman Province of Turkey, situated on the upper Euphrates River.

Tell me, this body of God, how do you know it? Do you eat the nature of God, or rather because of the dignity of the body, which, because of the memory of the sufferings of the Archetype (ܕܡܫܘܒܐ ܫܘܬܐ ܕܡܫܘܒܐ ܡܫܘܒܐ), which is the man of our Lord (ܕܡܫܘܒܐ ܕܡܫܘܒܐ), This bread in power and atoning power (ܡܫܘܒܐ ܕܡܫܘܒܐ ܕܡܫܘܒܐ) is the body of the Son of God by the sanctifying descent of the Holy Spirit? So, you dead people, do not eat the nature of God. How can it be possible? See, it is by nature bread, and by the sanctification of the Holy Spirit, it is the symbolic body for the body of the Lord (ܡܫܘܒܐ ܕܡܫܘܒܐ ܕܡܫܘܒܐ) who is united in heaven (ܡܫܘܒܐ ܕܡܫܘܒܐ ܕܡܫܘܒܐ). It is one body for us, with sanctification, and preserving power. By nature, it is bread, but by the power of the sacred atonement acquired by the coming of the Holy Spirit, it is the one body of Christ. So, look O dead ones, we do not break and kill this body of the Lord who is in heaven every day on the altar. For this was broken once on the cross and entered into His glory according to what He taught and what His apostles made clear”.¹⁰⁶

Christology of Antioch is concerned with distinguishing between the two natures, that is, distancing divinity from human sufferings, and preserving the two natures, even after their union, from any mixing. Mar Babai also repeatedly points out that Christ’s words about eating his body and drinking his blood, as well as the words of interpretation in the upper room, do not target his divinity, just as some Christological sovereign titles can be referred to divinity or humanity: “Then it is called bread for two reasons: the first because it gives life and perpetuity. Secondly: Because he gave in the bread the holy mysteries (ܡܫܘܒܐ ܕܡܫܘܒܐ ܕܡܫܘܒܐ), which are a symbol of his body and blood, a memorial of his death, as it was said:¹⁰⁷ He took the bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it. He said to the disciples: This is my broken body for the salvation of the world. This is what you do whenever you gather to remember me. Behold, the one who

¹⁰⁶ Babai, the book of Union, VII: CSCO 79, 283, 22-284, 13. Mar Babai also here witnesses the daily Eucharist.

¹⁰⁷ John 6.51-52; 1Cor 11.23-24.

called him bread never came down from heaven, but was assumed by the blessed Mary, formed and conceived by the Holy Spirit, as the book says. Because the bread that is placed on the altar and broken by nature (ܐܚܘܒܝܢ) is from grains of wheat, and through priestly prayer, supplication, and the descent of the Holy Spirit (ܐܘܪܘܚܢܐ ܕܩܘܕܫܐ) it attains power and the body of our Lord becomes in strength and ability to make atonement and forgive sins, with the body of the Lord in heaven one body in union, but not by nature (ܐܘܪܘܚܢܐ ܕܩܘܕܫܐ ܐܘܪܘܚܢܐ ܕܩܘܕܫܐ), but because bread is preserved by nature, it is bread by union (ܐܚܘܒܝܢ). Just as the eternal Son is a son in his divine nature, so his humanity is also a son with him through union. His humanity is a human being by nature, and his divinity is called the Son of Man by virtue of his union with him, as it was said: The Son of Man who is in heaven. It is said about the Prosopon union (ܐܘܪܘܚܢܐ ܕܩܘܕܫܐ) that he descended and became a human being and united with him; So, it is with the bread, for through the descending it became the body of our Lord by union, in power, but by no means by nature. (ܐܘܪܘܚܢܐ ܕܩܘܕܫܐ) means that the bread came down from heaven, not by changing (place) in any way, but by being in a human being (ܐܚܘܒܝܢ ܕܩܘܕܫܐ). The bottom line: Bread is body by union, not by nature, and the body is bread by union, not by nature. God the Word, with His humanity assumed as his own person, is the Son of man in union, and not by nature.”¹⁰⁸

So, for Mar Babai, the doctrine of the Eucharist is based on the dualism of the messianic nature. Just as the divine word is united with the humanity of Christ in a prosopon union and not in nature, similarly, the unity between the heavenly body and the bread on the altar can be understood in a prosopon manner. Note: Just as the divine Word is present in the man Jesus, and therefore, in the strict sense of the word, he does not become a man, so the body of Christ, exalted in heaven, is present in the bread on the altar. For him, there

¹⁰⁸ Babai, the Union, VI,20: CSCO 79, 222,14-223,29.

cannot be a change in nature, but rather Impanation, that is, the indwelling of the Word in bread.

The Eucharistic bread is an image of the heavenly archetypal, the mystical union with the heavenly body of Christ. Mar Babai also sheds light on this union through identification or analogy with the mystery of the incarnation, which takes place mainly through the prayer of the Holy Spirit's descent. That is, the doctrine of the two-nature incarnation provides a model for interpreting the Eucharistic unity by saying as follows: "Rather, the body is human by nature (جسد), which exists united in heaven. Through the descent of the Holy Spirit, on the basis of the assumption, like that holy bread, it is one body, and one power, and one power of atonement, but not two bodies in any way, and in no way is it an addition to the nature of the body of the Lord that exists in heaven, rather, this is one body with the other (heavenly) through union. Because just as it was not an addition to the body of the Lord that exists united in heaven from this body that we break daily on the altar - but rather it is the same body in two natures - so it was not an addition to the Trinity due to the union that took place between humanity and God, since there are not two sons, but a son. One forever. There are neither two loaves nor two bodies, but the body is bread, bread is body, one body, one bread, and bread and body are one; While preserving bread and body; They both give and take to each other."¹⁰⁹

Although Mar Babai does not speak of a hypostatic union in connection with the incarnation, he still formally adheres to the unity of Christ and does not want to divide it into two sons. In accordance with the Eucharist, it does not talk about two bodies of Christ. The body of Christ is one in heaven and on earth. The intellectual difficulty he sees coming from the incarnation in the presence of Christ in the sacred offering elements, he tries to solve through

¹⁰⁹ Babai, The Union, IV, 16: CSCO 79, 153, 16-154, 15.

overlap or alternation.¹¹⁰ Just as the two natures continue to exist even after union, so, according to Babai, there is a mutual give and take, as a kind of interpenetration. The power that brings the two together in their essence is the divine spirit. In this regard, the interpenetration appears to be the result of the prayer of the coming of the Holy Spirit, which makes the sacramental intertwining between the Body of Christ and the Holy Bread.

Abraham Bar Lipeh (7th. Century) writes as follows: “And as the priest recites and blesses the bread and wine, by the grace of the descent of the Holy Spirit they become the body and blood of Christ, not by nature, but by true faith and reality. It is not as if Christ had two bodies, one in heaven and the other on earth; Rather, just as the king and his image do not constitute two kings, and just as the humanity of Christ, taken from us, and the divine Word do not constitute two sons, but rather the one Son of God, united to humanity, so this body also is one body of Christ with Him who is in heaven”.¹¹¹ Mar Ephrem of Elam (8th. Century) says: “This bread in the Church is the body of the One who is in heaven, but not in nature, but in power and strength. Just as the two natures and hypostases, divine and human, constitute only one Son, despite their difference in nature and hypostasis”.¹¹²

The anonymous author (9th. Century) generally explains the relationship between the sacraments and the thing that represents the sacrament through a parallel with the mystery of the Incarnation. This general teaching also applies to the Eucharist: “We also call Christ Son and Christ. But if we were asked more precisely how the

¹¹⁰ Perichoresis (from Greek: περιχώρησις, "rotation") is a term referring to the relationship of the three persons of the triune God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) to one another. It was first used as a term in Christian theology, by the Church Fathers. The noun first appears in the writings of Maximus Confessor (d. 662) but the related verb perichoreo is found earlier in Gregory of Nazianzus (d. 389/90).[3] Gregory used it to describe the relationship between the divine and human natures of Christ as did John of Damascus (d. 749), who also extended it to the "interpenetration" of the three persons of the Trinity, and it became a technical term for the latter.

¹¹¹ Anonymus II, 162; Johannan Bar Zobi, Explanation of all divine mysteries, Borg. Syr. 90. F. 48b – 49a.

¹¹² Ephrem of Eliam, Letter to Gabriel bar baktisho on the question of whether one may receive the Eucharist from the Romans and Jacobites. Borg. Syr. 81, f. 363 v.

matter is, we divide it into two natures and two hypostases, not as if we see Christ as two things, whether they are two natures or two hypostases, but so that the truth of His nature may be recognized. Because we say that God became man and that man became God. But we are convinced that nature has not changed. We say that God remains God and man remains man, and that God did not become man in terms of His nature; That through union God became man, and man became God. And since this is so, this bread and this wine also became body and blood, not by nature but by union. When we call them flesh and blood in a sense, we also call them sacraments, so that they may be understood as sacraments of flesh and blood, because they are different in nature.”¹¹³

The anonymous author, of course, introduced the idea of the distinguish between mystery and reality. He places the relationship between them parallel to the unity between the humanity of Christ and the Word of God. Just as the unity between man and God is not an internal unity, nor is that between the mystery and the truth represented in the mystery. The mystery is not in the nature that it represents, but in the union, just as the human nature of Christ does not become one nature with the divine, but rather is united with it only. He clearly contrasts the mystery with the reality: the bread and wine are the body and blood of Christ in union. By nature, they are bread and wine. But bread and wine are not by nature (حقيقه) body and blood, but rather they are the mystery of the Body and Blood of Christ through faith in the power of the work of the Holy Spirit in the church.¹¹⁴

Mar Ishodad of Merv (9th. Century) also explains that the descent from heaven is attributed to bread in the church, just as Christ is attributed to man. Where he says: “Why do we wonder that the one who came down from heaven is called a man, who is the son with

¹¹³ Anonymous author, *Anonymi auctoris Expositio*, Volum II, Rom 1913-1915, 67.

¹¹⁴ Wilhelm De Vries, *Sakramententheologie bei den Nestorianern*, Roma 1947, 86-87.

him who was before him from eternity? Likewise, our Savior also attributes the descent to the bread in the church.”¹¹⁵

In a footnote summary of the writings of Ibn al-Bultan (11th. Century), he rejects his view that the Holy Eucharist is merely an example or symbol of the body of Christ. To explain the correct teaching, he presents the idea of parallelism between the Eucharist and the mystery of the Incarnation by saying as follows: “The same thing can be said about both (bread and wine) as about Christ. What did he look like when he was among the Jews? They have a human being and in him is the God of heaven and earth. Likewise, the outside of the offering is bread and wine for people, while its inside is flesh and blood.”¹¹⁶

On this intellectual path, Mar Abdisho Bar Brikha explains the effectiveness of the Eucharistic bread is similar to the effectiveness of Christ’s humanity through the connection with divinity: “And we describe bread as the mystery of His body, and wine as the mystery of His soul, not as if they could sanctify by their nature, but by the power of the Holy Spirit that is mixed with the bread and wine.”¹¹⁷

An anonymous commentator from the Church of the East writes about the symbolic interpretation of the doctrine of the Nicene Creed as follows: “We are against those who say that we believe in two sons. This is not so, but because of his union with the essential Son, we acknowledge the existence of one Son, and we also believe that the sacraments that are offered for forgiveness are one body. United with the body that is in heaven, who sits at the right hand of the Father. Because we do not say that there are two bodies, that is, the body of our Lord and this bread that is distributed in the church. I say that there are not two bodies, but one body, because of the union of this visible bread with the body of the Godhead that is in heaven.”¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ Ishodad of Merv, *Commentaries of Ishodad of Merv*, edited and translated by Margaret Dunlop Gibson, I, 228.

¹¹⁶ G. Graf, *Die eucharistliehre des Nestorianers Al-Mukhtar Ibn Butlan*. In: *Oriens Christianus*, Band 35, 1938, 183.

¹¹⁷ Abdisho Bar Brikha, *Ordo Iudiciorum Ecclesiasticorum*, 101.

¹¹⁸ Anonymous questions, *Declaration of the Nicene Creed*, Borg III, 2. 293-294.

On the basis of the doctrine of dual nature of Antioch, Mar Timothy (14th. Century) highlights the distance between the two distinct natures; That the true body of the Lord is not sacramentally present on the altar, but rather in heaven, by saying as follows: “Since Christ is in heaven, the priests make him visible from a distance through the shapes of bread and wine.”¹¹⁹ Mar Timothy II refers to Mar Babai and Mar Narsai when he says that the Eucharistic bread, because of its close connection with the true body of Christ, shares in His name and glory. However, the body of Christ, which was formed by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin and now sits on the throne in heavenly glory, is fundamentally different from the body of Christ that is formed daily from the wheat substance in the Eucharist. On this point, Mar Timothy agrees with Mar Babai: “In addition, just as it is not believed that the Word and his body are two sons and two Christs, neither does one appear as a symbol of the other in sonship and Messianic. That is, Christ is a son by two natures, that is, his humanity is naturally united with the Word. Likewise, the body of Christ is also that body that is in heaven, and with it and because of it the mystical body is called a body and not a symbol. There is no duality, because one is the body of Christ, united naturally in the body and in the bread, although they are different in nature, but it takes the honor, power, and name of the other and his glory.”¹²⁰

Therefore, Mar Timothy II affirms that the Word of God and His body are not two sons and two Christs. They do not appear as the other type in sonship and messianism. For Christ is a Son in two natures, united essentially and intimately (ܡܫܝܚܐ ܥܝܢܐ ܥܝܢܐ) in the same Word. The actual body of Christ is the body in heaven, and with it and because of it the mystical body is called a body and not a symbol, and there is no duality, that is, one is the body of Christ, and it is fundamentally and closely linked in the body and in the bread.¹²¹ There is also a quote from a text from an author whose name was not

¹¹⁹ Timothy II, I, 1: Vat. Syr. 151, fol. 7r.

¹²⁰ Ibid, IV, 6: Vat. Syr. 151, fol. 89v-90r.

¹²¹ Ibid, IV, 6, 89 v – 90 v.

mentioned on this subject, in which it is said that the body of Christ, which was formed by the Holy Spirit in the Virgin, differs in essence from the body of Christ, which is composed every day of matter in the Eucharist. But one cannot speak of two bodies, because Christ is one.”¹²²

Also, in the liturgy of the Church of the East, and in particular in the seventh week of Great Lent from the Book of the Khudra (ܟܘܕܪܐ), we find doctrinal correspondence between the mystery of the Eucharist and the mystery of the Incarnation, as in this following text: “Just as the bread and wine are different from you by nature, but they are united in strength and effectiveness, With what is yours, so our body (that is, the human body that Christ took as his own) is different from the substance of the Word, but equal to it in dignity and authority.”¹²³

Also, in another place we find this idea: “For just as this (the sacrament of the Eucharist) is of the nature of wheat and wine, so the temple of our nature is in his person as a man, but through his union with the Word he is called a true Son. Therefore, we teach without fear of blasphemy; Christ is one who is in heaven and in the church, and therefore we do not say about the body on the altar that it is a double body, but rather one body without any doubt.”¹²⁴

Therefore, after all of this, we find basically this exact same point of view among the Fathers of the Church of the East in all ages. The Fathers of the Church of the East believe that bread and wine do not transform by their nature into the body and blood of Christ. That is, the bread and wine are also present on the altar after the consecration. The true body of Christ is in heaven, and therefore it is not naturally present in the mystery. But also, the bread and wine are not merely symbols of the body and blood of Christ; Because they participate in the atoning effectiveness of the body and blood of

¹²² De Vries, Sakramententheologie, 218-219.

¹²³ The Book of Khudra, Vol. II, 484.

¹²⁴ Ibid, 484-485.

Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit dwelling within them. Moreover, they are united with the true body of Christ in heaven, just as His humanity and divinity are united in one Christ, and therefore they are called the Body and Blood of Christ.

The sacrament of the Eucharist is the sacrament of Christ's atoning death

The Fathers of the Church of the East see the Holy Eucharist as the sacrament of Christ's atoning death. In the sacrament of the Eucharist, there is eternal love that knows no limits, there is a body that loved humans and shed blood for the salvation of humanity. The sacrament of the Eucharist cannot be understood outside the context of the Easter event. The first Christian community saw in this event the meaning and effectiveness of its celebration of the Mass. The entire power of salvation and the dynamism of the mystery are directed toward the fruit of the salvific event that enables believers to participate into the reality of Christ the self-sacrificing one. That is, it is the living and effective sign of His sacrifice that was accomplished on the cross for the salvation of all human beings. Meaning, it is the cup of the New Testament that announces the death of the Lord (1 Corinthians 11:26). Here we have to delve into more detail whether the Eucharist, according to the fathers, is a true sacrifice or not. First, we should cite some texts that state that the Holy Eucharist is the sacrament of Christ's atoning death.

Mar Narsai (5th. Century) asks the priest before the consecration to caution the people: "Look at him, who is now being mystical slaughtered on the altar".¹²⁵ Mar Ishoyahb I (6th. Century) writes: "The priest mystical offers the sacrifice of the living Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world and represents sacramentally the mysteries of Jesus' death, resurrection, burial, resurrection, and ascension".¹²⁶ Mar Babai the Great (7th. Century) teaches: "To

¹²⁵ Narsai, XVII, Connolly, 11-12.

¹²⁶ In Arabic Language: Youssef Habbi, Councils of the Church of the East, Lebanon - 1999, 423, can.18.

commemorate his death, the sacrifice of his body is mystical offered daily in the church”.¹²⁷ Mar Theodore Bar Koni (8th. Century) also defends the doctrine of the sacrificial nature of the Holy Eucharist against objections.¹²⁸ The Eucharist is a sacrifice, although the offering is not burned here. The Eucharistic sacrifice is a type of the sacrifice of Christ that lives and gives life.

The anonymous author (9th. Century) also calls the Eucharist a memorial of our Lord's sacrifice.¹²⁹ According to Ishodad of Merv (9th. Century), we offer the sacrament of sacrifice on the cross in the Divine Liturgy.¹³⁰ Elijah of Nisibis (10th. Century) describes the Eucharist as a memorial of the death and resurrection of Christ.¹³¹ Saint Youhanna Bar Zobi (13th. Century) also confirms that the sacrifice of Christ was slaughtered mystically in the bread and wine that sanctified the impure.¹³² Saint Timothy II (14th. Century) clearly teaches the sacrificial nature of the Eucharist by saying as follows: “We partake of the body and blood of the Lord, which was given for our salvation in the form of bread and wine.”¹³³

Likewise, the idea of sacrifice is also expressed in the liturgy of the Church of the East (the Anaphora of Mar Addai and Mar Mari): “Christ, who was sacrificed for our salvation, commanded us to celebrate the memory (ܘܨܘܪܘܢܐ) of his death and resurrection.”¹³⁴ According to the Bible, the word remembrance is a living and effective memory of the work of divine dispensation. That is, it is not just a reminder of a past event, but rather an effective declaration of God’s present work in the church and believers and the fulfillment of His promises. The meaning of the word remembrance in the Greek

¹²⁷Babai, the Book of Union, 193.

¹²⁸ Theodore Bar Koni, the book of schools, Syriac text edited by Addai Scher, 2 volumes, Paris 1910-1912, CSCO, 250.

¹²⁹ Anonymous Author, II, 122.

¹³⁰ Ishodad of Merv, Commentaries I, 104.

¹³¹ Eliya of Nisibis, Evidence of the truth of faith, 93.

¹³² Johannan Bar Zobi, Borg. Syr. 90. F. 50a, f. 51 a.

¹³³ Timothy II, IV, 5. 87 r.

¹³⁴ The Liturgy of the church of the east, printed and published by the Revd. Joseph De Kalaita, Mosul, 1921-1928, 11.

language is anamnesis (1 Corinthians 11:24), the exact meaning in Greek is deeper than in English, as English does not give the intended meaning. That is, in the sense of the body and blood of the Lord in the sacrament of the Eucharist, not only an image that I remember, but in a collective sense, that is, a union with the Lord, and not only with rational logic or just a memory related to the past, and this ended.

This is a mistake, and whoever believes in this says that the redemption of Christ has stopped, but the true meaning of the word in the Greek language includes the meaning of continuity in a true union, so this is made due to the continuity of the union in the true body of the Lord and His true blood. It is a continuation of what the Lord did in the past and the continuation of the memory that we are united with the true body of the Lord by partaking of it because What the Lord did in the past is still continuing and has not stopped, and his shed body is still available to whoever accepts to eat His body, and his shed blood is still available to whoever accepts to drink His blood. So, this remembrance that we may remember and unite with this body and this blood, and remember that its saving effect is still continuing and extending in the present time with the same strength and with the same breadth for those who accept to partake of it for salvation, such as the disciples and those after them. Therefore, it does not mean merely a remembrance of something that we look forward to that is absent from us, but rather to realize the presence of the living God working in the lives of believers, the presence of what we make the Eucharistic memory of. Therefore, it is the sacrifice of His truth, present and active, it is an effective remembrance, and it is a practical preaching of the death of the Lord, through whom alone is salvation.

However, after these previous lines, we have a question: According to the teaching of the fathers of the Church of the East, is the Holy Eucharist merely a symbol of the sacrifice of the cross, or is it also a true sacrifice in itself? The truth indicates that they understand the Eucharistic sacrifice as real, offered for the forgiveness of sins for the dead and the living, and granting us aid, sanctification, and eternal life.

Mar Narsai (5th. Century) says about the Eucharistic sacrifice: “It is now being slaughtered in order to blot out and forgive your sins... Behold, the filth of their sins will be cleansed. Behold, it will be offered for the dead and for the living, so that all may find mercy in the sacrifice.”¹³⁵ Ishoyahb I (6th. Century) calls the effects of the sacrifice: forgiveness of sins, salvation of the soul, comfort and peace for all. ¹³⁶ According to Mar Babai the Great (7th. Century), the body of the Lord is sacramentally offered in the church for the forgiveness of our sins and we have advanced in the truth.¹³⁷ Mar Joseph Khazaya (7th. Century) also explains that the sacrifice benefits the dead, atones for their sins, and grants forgiveness of sins. Whoever does not accept this doubts his faith.¹³⁸ As for Mar Theodore Bar Koni (8th.Century), he calls the holy mysteries a living and divine sacrifice, and through them the believer attains holiness, meaning that whoever receives this sacrifice is sanctified.¹³⁹ We also find the word “holy living sacrifice” in the anaphora of Mar Addi and Saint Mary.¹⁴⁰ Since it is a living sacrifice, meaning that the one who died rose from the dead and traces of nails remained on his living body. Therefore, the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist is the remembrance of the passion, death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ the Lord. The Fathers of the Church of the East interpret the various liturgical celebrations from this dispensational perspective. So that bread and

¹³⁵ Narsai, Hom. XVII, Connolly, 12.

¹³⁶ Youssef Habbi, Councils of the Church of the East, 400.

¹³⁷ Babai, the Book of Union, 193.

¹³⁸ Joseph Khazzaya, Questions. Borg. Syr. 88, 335.

¹³⁹ Theodore Bar Koni, the book of schools, 249.

¹⁴⁰ Liturgy in the Church of the East, 18.

wine are placed on the altar, indicating the burial of the Lord. The ceremonies of the Mass, even the prayer of the descent of the Holy Spirit, represent pain, death, and burial, and through the descent of the Holy Spirit, they symbolize the resurrection of the Lord's body from the dead.

The power of sanctification can also be expressed here through Holy Communion. According to the anonymous author (9th. Century), we remember the dead in the celebration of the sacraments, so that those who have sinned may be vindicated through the memory of our Lord's sacrifice broken by sinners.¹⁴¹ According to Abdisho bar Brikha (13th. Century), the Eucharistic sacrifice is offered for forgiveness, for the great hope of resurrection from the dead, for heavenly joy, and for eternal life for the dead and the living.¹⁴² The true impact of the Eucharistic Sacrifice is often expressed in the East Syriac liturgy, where it says: "Lord God Almighty, accept this offering on behalf of the Holy Catholic Church... on behalf of all the dead and the living who stand before the holy altar."¹⁴³

Therefore, according to the thought of the Eucharistic theologian in the Church of the East, that we celebrate the true sacrifice in the Holy Eucharist and not just a purely subjective memory of the sacrifice on the cross, it is also evident that Christ is described as the sacrificer. The anonymous author (9th. Century) notes that in all church services he is called the priest (ܩܪܒܢܐ), but in the Eucharistic celebration he is called the priest (ܩܪܒܢܐ). The reason is that Christ the Eternal High Priest himself performs this service. Also, as Blessed Saint Ephrem (4th. Century) says, and he (Christ) himself is the one who offers, receives, and as well sanctifies.¹⁴⁴ According to Ishodad of Merv (9th. Century), at least Christ was sacrificed in the upper room. He calls Christ a priest because he offers bread and wine like

¹⁴¹ Anonymen, II, 122.

¹⁴² Abisho Bar Brikha, the Order of Ecclesiastical Judgments, 99.

¹⁴³ Liturgy in the Church of the East, 32.

¹⁴⁴ Anonymen, II, 46.

the priest Melchizedek.¹⁴⁵ And in another place, he says: “We must learn that our Lord Himself was a priest and a sacrifice, for He sacrifices Himself before those who crucify Him slaughter Him.”¹⁴⁶ According to Mar Narsai (5th. Century), it is very clear to view the celebration of the Divine Mass as a sacrifice, because this is the fulfillment of the Lord’s mission to do what He did. Thus, Narsai made Christ say: “Offer bread and wine as I taught you.”¹⁴⁷

Moreover, we find in the Fathers of the Church of the East the idea that the holy sacrifice of the Eucharist is offered to God. This does not apply to the purely symbolic act of remembrance. Mar Abdisho Bar Brikha also confirmed this by saying that the gift is offered to God, the Lord of all.¹⁴⁸ Likewise, Anaphora Mar Addai and Mar Mari say: “The sacrifice is presented to God, Lord of all”.¹⁴⁹

In order to support his thesis about the compatibility between the teachings of the Church of the East and Anglican teaching, the writer Badger cites some passages in liturgical books and from a text by Abdisho Bar-Brikha, that the fathers of the East saw in the Holy Eucharist merely a memorial of the sacrifice of the Cross.¹⁵⁰ One of the passages he cites states that after the sacrifice of the cross, there is no other living sacrifice for sins. However, this text does not speak against the true sacrificial character of the Holy Eucharist any more than the passage from the Epistle to the Hebrews does: “But Christ, our high priest, offered one sacrifice for sins, and then sits down forever at the right hand of God” (Hebrews 10:12). The Eucharistic sacrifice is one with the sacrifice of the cross. As it is said elsewhere, which Badger cites in support of his thesis, that Christ would be sacrificed daily for sins, but without suffering, and would be daily consecrated in a mystical (spiritual) way, this agrees well with the

¹⁴⁵ Ishodad of Merv, Commentaries V, 2, 110.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, Commentaries I, 105 (Matth 26: 26-27)

¹⁴⁷ Narsai, Hom. XVII, Connolly, 17.

¹⁴⁸ Abdisho Bar brikha, Ordo iudiciorum, 98. (Borg. Syr. 88, 397)

¹⁴⁹ Liturgy of the Church of the East, 26.

¹⁵⁰ Badger G. P., The Nestorians and their Rituals. II, London 1852, 175 ff.

point of view of the apostolic churches, which speak of the bloodless renewal of the sacrifice on the cross. The text found in Abdisho Bar Brikha, Which Badger wants to use for his purposes, he basically says: “The sacrifice of the New Testament is the body of Christ on the cross. The bloody sacrifice of the body of Christ, as happened on the cross, cannot be repeated in every time and place. That is why Christ established the Eucharist.”¹⁵¹

Therefore, the Divine Mass is a bloodless renewal of the sacrifice of the Cross. But it remains the case, even for the fathers of the Church of the East, that the holy sacrifice is not merely a subjective memory of the sacrifice on the cross. The presence of the body and blood of the atonement continues in a mystery that transcends all examination and understanding and is accepted only by faith. It is not only to remember the death of Christ, but also His resurrection, and He lays down His life and takes it, attracting to Him all who partake of it worthily.

The rank of Sanctification (Anaphora) of the Church of the East

In the Church of the East, there are three Anaphoras (the order of sanctification), whose titles are listed in the Book of the Khudra of Mar Isaiah from the tenth Century. It is the oldest known liturgical manuscript that contains these anaphoras: the anaphora of the Apostles (ܐܢܦܘܪܐ ܕܥܢܝܫܐ), the anaphora of Mar Theodore the Interpreter (ܐܢܦܘܪܐ ܕܡܪ ܬܝܘܕܘܪ ܕܐܢܬܘܢܐ) and the anaphora of Mar Nestorius (ܐܢܦܘܪܐ ܕܡܪ ܢܝܫܘܪܝܘܨ).

These three anaphoras were chosen and made into a specific form in the seventh Century by Catholicon Ishoyahb III. The anaphora of the Apostles, composed by the Apostles Mar Addai and Mar Mari, missionaries to Mesopotamia, is the oldest tradition that is still mostly used in holy masses ceremonies. In its primitive form, it was brought to East from Edessa, perhaps in the late 2nd or early 3rd Century. This anaphora starts from Resurrection Saturday until the

¹⁵¹ Abdisho Bar Brikha, the Book of Marganitha 10, 5, 333.

end of the liturgical year, namely, until the week of the Annunciation.¹⁵²

As for the two Anaphoras of Theodore and Nestorius, they were written in the Greek language, and they were translated from the Greek language and into the Syriac language by the Catholicos Mar Aba when he went to Roman territory. In addition, just take it out with the help of Dr. Mar Toma of Edessa. As for the anaphora of mar Theodore of Mopsuestia, it is celebrated from the beginning of the liturgical year, that is, Sunday of the first week of the Annunciation until Palm Sunday.¹⁵³ However, the mar Nestorius anaphora is celebrated on five occasions: Epiphany, John the Baptist's commemoration, the Greeks' commemoration, Wednesday for the fast of the people of Nineveh, and Easter.¹⁵⁴

The Institution Narrative

The main liturgy among the anaphora of the Church of the East is the anaphora of Mar Addai and Mar Mari of Syriac origin, whose main feature is the absence of the Institution Narrative. The Anaphora of Theodore and the Anaphora of Nestorius contain the words of the Eucharistic Institution. All the ancient manuscripts of the Mar Addai and Mar Mari Anaphora do not contain the institution narrative, and the oldest of them, as mentioned, dates back to the tenth Century.¹⁵⁵

It is interesting, and I was somewhat astonished, that there is only one reference to the anaphora of the Church of the East by a Greek Orthodox author, which is the one made by Leontius of Byzantium around the year 531, in the context of his discussion with Mar Theodorus of Masisi. The Greek author confirms that there is an anaphora under the title of the Apostles' anaphora, which was

¹⁵² Liturgy of the Church of the East, 21.

¹⁵³ Ibid, 59.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, 76.

¹⁵⁵ W.F. Macomber, the oldest known text of the Anaphora of Addai and Mari, OCP32, 1966, 335-371.

handed over by the fathers of the apostolic era to the congregations.¹⁵⁶

Let us see first whether the words of institution at the Last Supper play a role according to the Fathers of the Church of the East in the rite of sanctification, and then what importance they attach to the prayer for the descending of the Holy Spirit. As we mentioned above, in the East Syriac Mass, the institution narrative is mentioned only in the anaphora of Nestorius and in the anaphora of Theodore of Mopsuestia.¹⁵⁷ However, it is not present in the anaphora of the Apostles. It is clear from this that some of the East Syrian commentator fathers used the anaphora of Theodore and Nestorius in explaining the institution narrative.

The Biblical Dimension of the Institution Narrative: The Importance of the Words of Institution in the New Testament Understanding of the Eucharist

Although the institution narrative in the Synoptic Gospels and in Paul is fundamental to understanding the Eucharist, there is an ancient Syriac tradition that celebrates the Eucharist without the words of institution. This ancient tradition is reflected in the Gospel of John, which, unlike the other Gospels, does not mention the words of institution at the Last Supper. Namely, the Gospel of John does not speak about the body and blood of Jesus in visible words of institution, but only about Jesus as the living bread coming down from heaven (John 6: 32-41).¹⁵⁸ The Gospel of John does not contain a memorial meal of Jesus' last meal, nor it does connect this or any other common meal with institution words about the bread and

¹⁵⁶ Leontius of Byzantium, *Contra Nestorianos et Eutychianos*, III, XIX; P.G. LXXXVI, C.I., 368.

¹⁵⁷ *Liturgy of the Church of the East*, 104, 131.

¹⁵⁸ P. Hofrichter, *Die Anaphora nach Addai und Mari in der kirche des Ostens – Eucharistie ohne Einsetzungsbericht?*, in *Heiliger Dienst* 49, 148.

wine.¹⁵⁹ One might ask the question: Does the Gospel of John not really have an institution narrative?

In the Gospel of John (6:51-58), you are strongly reminded of the terms known from the institution narrative (bread, flesh, and blood). Isn't there a story of the Last Supper here? Is there a part in the Gospel of John that makes the account of the multiplication of the loaves the basis for understanding the Eucharist, and only Jesus himself is spoken of as the living bread? Also, especially in the Synoptic Gospels, there are two different concepts side by side for the Eucharist, namely the multiplication of the bread and the establishment of the Last Supper?

Let us first begin by taking a look at the synoptic institution narrative, the history of its origin, and its place in life. The starting point is in fact that there are four sources for the institution narrative in the New Testament, each of which relates to Jesus' last meal in the three Gospels (Mark 14:22-25; Matthew 26:26-29; Luke 22:15 - 20) In addition, the oldest witness to the establishment of the Eucharist as an established tradition is Saint Paul (1 Corinthians 11: 23-26). Before the Gospels were written, as St. Paul testified, the institution narrative was an individual tradition and bore features of worship, as an indication of the common use of this text in Eucharistic ceremonies.

The synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) are also considered to implicitly prove this liturgical practice. However, on the other hand, this does not mean that we find in the Gospels or in the Acts of the Apostles any hint that the words of institution, "This is my body..." were ever used in the context of "the breaking of the bread." This means that what we have accepted from the Synoptic Gospels and Saint Paul through their testimonies give witness about the practice of a certain liturgy. Therefore, also, after them, the Gospel of John and the Church either did not know this practice or

¹⁵⁹ K. Berger, *Im Anfang war Johannes. Ddatierung und Theologie des vierten Evangeliums*, Stuttgart 1997, 209.

did not use the words of institution, because St. John does not mention the Eucharistic institution at the Last Supper, but he focuses on Christ Himself as the living bread that came down from heaven (John 6:32 -41).

According to the narration of Saint Luke and Saint Paul, the meal took place between the bread and words over the cup (before the words over the cup: after the meal, 1 Corinthians 11:25; Luke 22:20), so that the words explaining the bread and the cup were not pronounced directly one after the other, but rather they were separated by the satiety meal. According to Luke - as in Mark and Matthew - it is the Passover meal. In contrast to Paul and Luke, Mark and Matthew give the impression that words over the bread and the cup were spoken by Jesus immediately after each other during the meal, which likely meant at the end of the meal. Immediately afterwards, both of them mention the praise (Hallel), which concluded the Passover meal (Mark 14:26; Matthew 26:30). This actually reflects the liturgical practice of the community, while Paul and Luke retain the ancient practice in their traditions, which has its origins in Jesus' last meal. The fact that the separation of institution words represents the ancient version is particularly clear in St. Paul, who in the tradition cited by the sequence introduces the word over bread - meal - the word over cup. Then the full meal is followed by the celebration of the Eucharist with the institution narrative. The Eucharist would then be celebrated together, even though the behavior was socially irresponsible. The rich will be satisfied and the poor will go hungry (1 Corinthians 11:21,33).

So, there are two branches of the tradition that differ from each other on some points, but because of their many similarities, they can be traced back to one tradition that has its origins in the last meal that Jesus ate with his disciples on the evening before his death. The story of Jesus' last meal was originally transmitted independently of the Passion story, as Pauline tradition shows, which contains a reference to Jesus' death (1 Corinthians 11:23), "on the

night in which he was betrayed." It is certain that the phrase "my body is for you" (1 Corinthians 11:24; Luke 22:19), which still reminds us of Isaiah 53:12 and which in the sense "for all" indicates the universality of Jesus' death and the commandment of repetition ("Do this in remembrance of me" 1 Corinthians 11:24-25), which is found only once in Luke (Luke 22: 19) It is not found at all in Mark and Matthew.

According to the Synoptic Gospels and Saint Paul, it is crucial that Christ commanded the disciples to act, not to formulate or repeat words, so he said, "Do this in remembrance of me." That is to say, he ordered that the sacrament of the Mass be celebrated in memory of his entire work of salvation. Memory here does not mean remembering what happened that night as something that is absent from us, but rather it means re-inviting it or representing it in an effective meaning. The Greek word used indicates and means remembering Christ, crucified and risen from the dead, and remembering his sacrifice, not as a past event, but as offering a true, present and active sacrifice, that is, an effective memory. It is probably that the idea of remembrance that focuses on the repetition of the Eucharistic meal entered Christian theology after Easter from the Jewish understanding as remembrance. However, it presupposes an understanding of Jesus' last meal as a recurring, mystical event.

Thus, the institution narrative has the function of highlighting the origins of the sacramental celebration in the salvific works of Jesus and at the same time, to inform them and make them aware of their relationship to the suffering of Jesus. Therefore, the celebration of the Eucharist is seen as a representation of the redemptive effects of Jesus' death, expressed in the institution narrative. The same is true of the tradition of sacrificial institution in the Gospel of Luke. However, Mark is concerned with the meal report, which does not directly reveal his desire to establish the worship practiced in the parish. The Evangelist Mark refers to the context of the Passion. Perhaps he wants to show that the gift of life that Jesus gave "to

many” finds its ultimate expression in the cross. That is, the account of the Lord's Supper has Christological importance in the first place for Saint Mark.

However, in reality, as we mentioned previously, the Gospel of John lacks institution narrative. When the Fourth Evangelist tells us about the last meal that Jesus had with his disciples, he does not present the story of the institution of the Eucharist, but rather the symbolic act of washing the feet (John 13:1-20). However, an alternative to the missing institution narrative can be found in the sixth chapter of the Gospel of John. Within the Bread of Life discourse after the story of the multiplication of the loaves, the mystery of the Eucharist is clearly spoken of in verses 51-58, in terms and expressions associated with or coming directly from the institution tradition. It appears here clearly in verse 51: (And the bread that I will give is my body for the life of the world) The Eucharist during the meal. The giving of bread by Jesus himself - and not by the Father who sent Jesus into the world - will continue, occur and be completed in the future, that is, after Jesus' death and resurrection. The bread is known in the address as the body of Jesus. This is a new term compared to the Synoptic institution narratives, because it is not about Jesus' flesh, but about his body. The Gospel of John is therefore not evidence of the lack of importance of the founding tale in these communities, nor is it due to a lack of preparation for the sacrificial tradition, which had not yet been established throughout the entire Church. As a result, the tradition of the sacrament of the Eucharist without reference to the words of institution, compared to the tradition of St. Paul and the corresponding Gospels, may be the most authentic.¹⁶⁰

¹⁶⁰ Lothar Wehr, Eichstätt, Die Bedeutung er Einsetzungsworte für das neutestamentliche Eucharistie verständnis; Die Anaphora von Addai and Mari, Studien zu Eucharistie und Einsetzungsworten, Herausgegeben von Uwe Michael Lang, Bonn 2007, 15-30.

Early patristic Testimonies

There is early Church non-biblical evidence for an early Christian understanding of the Eucharist that should be mentioned in the Didache or Teaching of the Twelve Apostles (80-130) and the Epistles of Ignatius of Antioch (35-108), which link the Eucharistic gifts of bread and wine with the flesh and blood of Christ. They bear witness to a similar development in the institution tradition as we find in the Gospel of John. They do not cite the institution narrative, but they are clearly familiar with Jesus' institution words. The Didache represents a special case. Although it recognizes a religious meal under the name of the Holy Eucharist and the prayers before and after this meal and distinguishes between spiritual food, spiritual drink, and profane food, it does not mention any institution narrative. There is no evidence of knowledge of the words of institution in the Didache. However, the eucharistic prayers in the Didache can be seen as a development of the references to Jesus' words of thanks from the institution narrative.¹⁶¹

The Institution Narrative according to the fathers of the Church of the East

In the absence of direct sources for the early history of Addai and Mari before the tenth Century, the extent of the importance of interpretations on the East Syriac liturgy is particularly valuable. There is a theological reason why this type of interpretation flourishes. During the fifth and sixth centuries, the Church of the East not only adopted Christology but also relied on the theological Summa of Mar Theodore of Mopsuestia, including his teachings on the sacraments and liturgy. According to Theodore, sacramental rituals cannot have their full salvific effect on believers unless they are properly understood. There is therefore a need for liturgical

¹⁶¹ B. Kollmann, *Ursprung und Gestalten der fruhchristlichen Mahlfeier*, Göttingen 1990, 94-101; K. Niederwimmer, *Die Didache*, Göttingen 1975, 172-209; G. Schollgen, in: *Zwölf – Apostel – Lehre. Apostolische Überlieferung*, Freiburg – Basel – Wien 1991, 50-54.

interpretations that explain the salvific meaning of the sacraments and the church rituals through which they are given. What must be taken into consideration is the Theodorian liturgical interpretation that was celebrated in the late fourth Century in Antioch. It had a major influence on the development of the liturgy in the rite of the Church of the East and the interpretations of later East Syrian authors. Also, according to Mar Theodore, the words of Institution represent the death of the Lord, and the transformation actually occurs through the Holy Spirit, so they symbolize the mystery of the Resurrection. According to Mar Theodore, the effectiveness of the Holy Spirit is included after the institution Narrative and after the historical saving work of Jesus Christ. This means change occurs and fulfills in the prayer of the coming of the Holy Spirit. However, Mar Theodore never obviously denied the effectiveness of the words of institution, except to affirm above all that change accomplishes through the descent of the Holy Spirit.

Mar Narsai (5th. Century) is the oldest liturgical commentator in the Church of the East from Mesopotamia. The Institution Narrative was not mentioned except in the seventeenth sermon, which cites and relates to the text of the Anaphora of Mar Nestorius.¹⁶² In the Anaphora of Saint Nestorius, we find in the second prayer of ܐܢܦܘܪܐ the narrative of the Eucharistic institution: “He took bread, blessed, broke it, and gave it to his disciples, and said: This is my body..... And he took the cup, blessed, and gave thanks, and gave it to his disciples, saying: This is my true blood.....” .¹⁶³

In Mar Narsai's seventeenth sermon on the ecclesiastical sacraments, there is evidence of Anaphora that reflects the East Syriac liturgy of the late fifth Century. Be that as it may, the sermon on the sacraments has Institution Narrative that is supposed to reflect the content of Jesus' thanksgiving at the Last Supper. This narrative is not identical with any of the biblical versions, and is

¹⁶² Alphonsi Mingana, *Narsai doctoris syri Homilie et Carmina*, Vol. I, 283-285.

¹⁶³ *Liturgy of the Church of the East*, 88.

therefore most likely a ritual version. In addition, Mar Narsai also attributes his anaphora directly to Mar Theodore of Mopsuestia.¹⁶⁴ Mar Theodore of Mopsuestia explains in detail the Holy Hymn and the Post-Holy Prayer to commemorate Christ's incarnation, passion, and resurrection. At this point he refers to the tradition that the Lord handed down to his disciples. He cited the Institution Narrative as most likely a liturgical formula, which is clearly a combination of Matthew 26:26-28 and 1 Corinthians. 11. 24-25.¹⁶⁵

Since the narrative of the Eucharistic institution was not missing from the liturgy in the time of mar Narsai, however, he emphasizes the role of the Holy Spirit in sanctifying the mysteries through the prayer of the descent of the Holy Spirit as follows: "If the Church does according to the commandment of the Lord as he did, then the bread and wine will turn into flesh. The Lord and His Blood: Offer bread and wine as I taught you, and I will perfect them and make them body and blood, transforming the bread and wine into body and blood through the effectiveness of the work of the Holy Spirit".¹⁶⁶

Then, sanctification is not attributed to the words of institution, but to the descent of the Holy Spirit that occurs in the prayer (ܐܘܨܚܐ ܕܩܘܕܫܐ). Through the prayer of offering and the parts that follow it, the image of Christ's death is expressed, and through the rite of consecration recited by the priest, it symbolizes those salvific events that occurred as Christ did and accomplished them. However, with the resurrection of Christ, God will pour out His grace on all of us, which can only happen through the grace of the Holy Spirit. Namely, in the sense that the liturgical resurrection of Christ takes place through the grace of the Holy Spirit that is invoked.

¹⁶⁴ W.F. Macomber, An Anaphora Prayer Composed by Theodore of Mopsuestia, in *Parole de l'Orient* 6-7 (1975-1976), 341-347 considers this ascription correct.

¹⁶⁵ Theodore of Mopsuestia, Hom. XVII, 10: 550 Tonneau-Devreese, n.47; Hom. XV, 7: 470-472.

¹⁶⁶ The Liturgical Homilies of Narsai, translated by Dom R. H. Connolly, Cambridge 1909, 17.

The important interpretation of Gabriel of Qatar (7th. Century), which dates back to the early seventh Century, because it precedes the liturgical reforms carried out by the Catholic Mar Ishoyahb III. It has been noted that he does not refer to the institution narrative when he comments on that part of the Anaphora, that is, in the context of the ܐܢܦܘܪܐ prayer which follows the Holy Hymn and precedes the deacon's call to ܦܪܘܫܘܢܝܗܘܢܐ - Pray with your minds." Rather, Gabriel explains in detail the establishment of the Holy Eucharist after mentioning the Creed and the intercessory prayers as follows: "Here the Church depicts through its symbols, the mystery of Christ's death and burial. From now on, the priest approaches to describe the symbol of the Resurrection by reciting the holy words from his mouth, and through the sign of the cross that is in His hand, because just as our Lord Jesus Christ, when He conveyed these mysteries, blessed and gave thanks and said (these words), so the Church, according to His command, separates one priest who blesses and gives thanks, in the likeness of Christ our Lord, and through the recitation indicates that he utters the words of our Lord, saying, "This is He My body, which was broken for you for the remission of sins."(1 Corinthians 11:24) After the priestly recitation, the bread and wine are blessed by the grace of the Holy Spirit that descends on them. From now on, they become the body and blood of Christ, not by nature, but by faith and effectiveness.¹⁶⁷

Gabriel of Qatar also comments on the prayer of ܐܢܦܘܪܐ after the chant of the Holy and before the deacon's call (ܦܪܘܫܘܢܝܗܘܢܐ): "For the priest to bow three times and recite the holy words of the offering of the Eucharist: a symbol of the three days during which the humanity of our Lord was under the power of death. He reads the entire section quietly, but At the end, he raises his voice so that people can hear: first, because it is a Mystery that is being done, and not all people should know about it; and second, so that the laity, women, and children do not learn the words when they hear them, which leads to

¹⁶⁷ Gabriel of Qatar, Memra V, 2, 56.

the divine words being considered ordinary and very common. And the fact that he raises his voice in the end is for the people to share with the priest the response (Amen).¹⁶⁸ The same remark is found, in an abbreviated form of Gabriel's work, in Abraham's commentary on the bar.¹⁶⁹

Meaning that the Church expresses through her prayers the mystery of the death and burial of Christ. Then the priest approaches to express the image of the Resurrection, by reciting the sacred words with his mouth. Because just as our Lord Jesus Christ, when he delivered these sacraments, blessed, gave thanks, and spoke, so also the Church must, in accordance with his command, bless the bread and wine and give thanks in the manner of Christ, through the priest reciting the words of the Lord: This is my body, which was given for you for the forgiveness of sins. The mystery of the Resurrection appears through two actions: the recitation of the sacred words and the descent of the grace of the Holy Spirit. The body that is on the altar is the same one that is in heaven. This does not mean that Christ will have two bodies: one in heaven and another on earth. Rather, they are one body of Christ.

In analogy to the mystery of the incarnation, when the angel announced that the power of the Highest was descending upon the Virgin Mary, Gabriel of Qatar spoke of the Holy Spirit descending on the bread and wine, thus transforming them into the body and blood of Christ. In this context, there is an important reference to the priest's recitation of the divine words "Blessing of the bread and wine." This passage can be clarified with the help of an exegetical passage on Holy Communion, where Gabriel emphasizes the necessity of approaching the sacrament with reverence and awe, because it is the body and blood of Christ: "For as (in the case of) the blessing with which God blessed Adam and Eve, saying: 'Be fruitful

¹⁶⁸ Gabriel of Qatar, *Memra*, V, 2, 65-67.

¹⁶⁹ R. H. Connolly, *Abrahae bar Lipeh Interpretatio Officiorum*, in his *Anonymi auctoris Expositio Officiorum Ecclesiae*, vol. 2 (CSCO 72, 1913; 76, 1915), 92, 177.

and multiply, and replenish the earth' (Genesis 1:28), it is transmitted through all generations forever, without being obstructed. Likewise, that blessing with which the Lord blessed the bread and wine, and called them His Body and His Blood, is transmitted through all generations forever, without anyone obstructing it again, as it is. It is an evil deed for someone to say that Adam is not the image of God when God called him his image (Genesis 1:26), just as it is (also) a great evil for someone to say about the sacraments that they are not the body and blood of Christ, after (Christ) himself said: "This is my body and this is my blood."¹⁷⁰ We also find this concept that the divine words spoken over the bread and wine are like a blessing that will last forever has a striking parallel in John Chrysostom's first sermon on the betrayal of Judas.¹⁷¹

Liturgical scholar Robert Talf asserts that in the early Christian understanding, the recitation of the Institution Narrative was not necessary for the consecration of offerings because the word spoken by Jesus once at the Last Supper is always effective and therefore need not be repeated in the individual celebration of the Eucharist. The effectiveness of the divine words: This is my body and this is my blood is of course based on the institution of the sacrament at the Last Supper, but it is activated in the liturgical celebration through the sacrament of priesthood.¹⁷² Also, the Syriac term used by Gabriel of Qatar for the priest's recitation of the divine words (ܩܘܪܒܢܐ) literally means repetition, i.e. the need for activation, which was proven true by comparing it to God's blessings on Adam and Eve (Genesis 1:28). Since Gabriel of Qatar's liturgical interpretation is quite general, it is not clear whether he refers to any specific eucharistic prayer for the liturgy. Similarities with the anaphora of mar Theodore of Mopsuestia

¹⁷⁰ Gabriel of Qatar, *Memra V*, 2, 73, 2-4.

¹⁷¹ E. J. Kilmartin, *John Chrysostom Influence on Gabriel Qatraya Theology of Eucharistic Consecration*, in *Theological Studies* 42 (1981), 444-457.

¹⁷² R. F. Talf, *Mass Without the Consecration? The Historic Agreement on the Eucharist between the Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church of the East Promulgated 26 October 2001*, in *Worship* 77 (2003), 503-509.

were noted, especially in the previous passage in the interpretation, where the words of institution were quoted, ending with the distinctive phrase, “Whenever you gather together in remembrance of me.”¹⁷³

Likewise, according to Mar Ibrahim Bar Lipheh Qatraya (7th. Century), one can assume the presence or mention of the institution narrative in the following place: “Just as our Lord Christ, when he delivered these mysteries, blessed and gave thanks and said: This is what you must do in remembrance of me, so and the Church will do according to His command: They appointed a priest for them, and he would bless and give thanks according to the example of Christ our Lord. He would declare through his recitation that he was speaking the words of our Lord, and as the priest recited and blessed the bread and wine, they became the body and blood of Christ by the grace of the descent of the Holy Spirit.”¹⁷⁴

In the following, Mar Ibrahim Qatraya explains the ritual ceremonies between the institution narrative and the prayer of the descent of the Holy Spirit, and then he speaks clearly about the prayer of the descent of the Holy Spirit. However, in the text just quoted, he does not comment on the institution narrative at all. But in the context, the moment the priest enters the altar after the law of faith and before the ritual of the kiss of peace, the bishop assigns one of the priests present to offer the holy sacrifice. The church is doing here as Christ did when he commanded his apostles: (Do this in remembrance of me). The priest acts in the example of Christ. Through his recitation of the texts of liturgical prayers, he declares and shows that he is speaking the words of Christ. The truth is that we are thinking here of certain words of Christ spoken by the priest, which are the words of incorporation, in another way, it is possible, but it is only part of the rite of sanctification that is concluded in the prayer of the descent of the Holy Spirit, at which time the bread and

¹⁷³ Gabriel of Qatar, *Memra V*, 2, 45.

¹⁷⁴ Anonymen, *Anonymi Auctoris Expositio* etc. See under Abraham Bar Lipheh, II, Rom 1913-1915, 162.

wine become the body and blood of the Lord in a way that the mind cannot comprehend.

Here, Mar Abraham Bar Lipeh distinguishes between the institution narrative and the prayer of the descent of the Holy Spirit in his liturgical interpretation, as he stands between the law of faith and the ritual of peace. Where he speaks about the Creed: “Priests recite the Creed established by the Fathers, and in the Rite of Peace: “First, the ‘peace’ that the priest gives to the people...” Then on the next page he mentions the prayer of bowing - ܘܢܫܘܢܐ after the Hymn of the Holy One: “That The priest bows three times and recites the sacred words.”¹⁷⁵ He certainly cites mar Theodore’s anaphora in this exegetical passage.

Also, in the liturgy of the Church of the East, especially in the anaphora of mar Theodore, he confirms this in this regard. Where every time they recite a prayer (ܘܢܫܘܢܐ) the priest bows. Then he recites the prayer of bowing-ܘܢܫܘܢܐ, and at the end of it: the priest raises his voice so that the people can participate in saying “Amen”. Here comes the institution words in place.¹⁷⁶ This is immediately followed by the deacon's announcement: ܘܢܫܘܢܐ - Pray with your minds. It is interesting to note that Mar Abraham Bar Lipeh explains why the priest prays silently here as follows: “He spends the entire prayer silently, but in the end, he raises his voice and makes it heard by the people, meaning what is happening here is a mystery and not all people should hear it. Moreover: 'lest the words, when heard, be taught by the laity, by women, and by children, the divine words shall be considered common and despised.”¹⁷⁷ There is therefore an effort to keep these 'divine words' Mystery,¹⁷⁸ and here it is clear that the prayer of this contains the Institution Narrative.

¹⁷⁵ Anonymen, II., 163.

¹⁷⁶ De Kelaita, 104-105.

¹⁷⁷ Anonymen, II., 163.

¹⁷⁸ According to some ritual theories, the institution narrative is missing from the Addai and Mari manuscript tradition, because it was probably committed to memory and recited in secret. We can find parallels to such a custom in ancient French and Spanish rituals, where words of institution are not often written. If we follow this line of

Mar Ibrahim Bar Lipeh also speaks about the main role of the Holy Spirit in sanctification: “When the priest recites (i.e., recites the liturgical prayers) and blesses the bread and wine, by the grace of the descending Holy Spirit, they become the body and blood of Christ.”¹⁷⁹ Here, when he talks about blessing, this refers to the descending of the Holy Spirit.” Sanctification, which includes the blessing of gifts, that is, in the sense of sanctifying transformation, occurs through the coming of the Holy Spirit.

The anonymous author (9th. Century) cites the Anaphora of Mar Theodore of Mopsuestia regarding the words of Institution. He also comments on the prayer ܐܢܬܘܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ after the ܐܘܪܘܚܐܢܐ prayer and before the call of the deacon: ܩܘܠܘܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ ܩܘܠܘܢ – Pray with your minds. It is very clear that this prayer contains the narrative of the institution: “When he reaches the end of the narrative about the sacrifice, that is, after the Lord has given up his body and blood, he concludes the prayer of silence with the seal of the Trinity. The people answer: Amen. Then follows the deacon's exhortation to pray.”¹⁸⁰

Likewise, Youkhannan Bar Zobi (13th. Century) follows the thought of Mar Abraham bar Lipeh closely in his explanation of the liturgy. He interprets the text in the sense of mentioning the words of institution. He then adds, "The priest utters the words of Christ": "This is my body, which I give for you all, that it may atone for you your transgressions and your sins."¹⁸¹ However, he implicitly ignores the words of institution in his liturgical explanation, and does not say a single word anything that happens between the prayer of the Holy One (ܐܘܪܘܚܐܢܐ) and the coming of the Holy Spirit. So, this is not

thought, we must first say something about the system of secrecy which was often seen as a common position regarding the sacraments in the early Church. It also seems that the difficult situation of the Church of the East under first Sasanian rule and then under the Islamic Caliphate may have hypothetically begun to encourage a protective attitude towards liturgical rituals. See the following sources:

See: Botte, *Problems of l Anaphor Syriarienne des Apotres Addai et Mari*, 103-104; F. Y. Alichoran, *Missel Chaldeen. The order of mysteres with the trio of anaphora, the song of Saint Eglise of l Orient. The usage of children's catholics of patriarchs Chaldee-Babylon*, ed. And transl. F. Y. Alichoran, Paris 1982, 17.

¹⁷⁹ Anonymen, II, 162.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid, 55-56.

¹⁸¹ Yohannan Bar Zobi, *Explanation of all divine mysteries*, Borg. Syr. 90, f. 48 b.

important at all to him. However, on the other hand, it explains in detail about the prayer of the descending of the Holy Spirit in the sanctification of the bread and wine, which from now on become the body and blood of Christ, not by nature, but by faith.¹⁸²

A few decades later, Mar Abdisho bar Brikha (14th. Century), Metropolitan of Nisibis and Armenia, noted in his interpretation of the liturgy that the sanctification of offerings is accomplished by the word of Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit. Thus, both the institution narrative and the prayer of the descent of the Holy Spirit are essential elements of the Eucharistic celebration.¹⁸³

Mar Abdisho's book *The Pearl* (ܡܕܝܢܬܐ), a short treatise on the truth of the Christian faith written for Christian teaching purposes at the request of the Catholic Patriarch Mar Yahballaha III, contains a chapter on the Eucharist entitled "The Eucharist." The chapter quotes institution narrative that is clearly a ritual formula. Mar Abdisho says at the end of this chapter: The material of this sacrament, which Christ made from wheat and wine, is the most suitable for representing the body and blood. The form that he transmits during his life: the life-giving word and the descent of the Holy Spirit. The reference to Christ's life-giving word clearly means the Lord's words of institution, which are quoted in the same chapter. In his liturgical explanation, he talks about the Institution Narrative that occurred between the law of faith and the call of the deacon, as by Abraham Bar Lipeh, which was quoted from the prayer of the second bowing - ܡܕܝܢܬܐ in the anaphora of mar Theodore of Mopsuestia, which contains the words of Christ. He explains in his book about the anaphora and the role of the priest in it as follows: "The priest performs three prostrations in front of the altar, then approaches to perform the sanctification. This is an image of the fact that our Lord rose from the dead on the third day and that He announced salvation

¹⁸² Yohannan Bar Zobi, *Explanation of all divine mysteries*, Borg. Syr. 90, f. 52 a.; *Explanation of Epiclesis*: f. 52 b.

¹⁸³ Abdisho Bar Brikha, *Order of ecclesiastical judgments, Ordo iudiciorum ecclesiasticorum*, transl. J. M. Voste, Vatican City 1940, 101 and 97; see De Vries, *Sakramententheologie*, 230.

to our race. Then By invoking the Holy Spirit, the priest makes the body rise in a way that the mind cannot comprehend. His standing before the altar, while reciting the prayers of sanctification of the sacraments (ܩܕܝܫܐ ܕܥܡܘܢܐ), expresses the image of our Lord, who gave thanks, blessed, broke, and gave to his disciples, saying: This is my body that was given for you. And: This is my blood for the new covenant, which is shed for many for the forgiveness of sins. And so, accept it all, eat from this body and drink from this cup. Do this whenever you gather together in remembrance of me.”¹⁸⁴

For him, when the priest comes to the altar to consecrate, he expresses the resurrection of Christ, which is accomplished sacramentally by invoking the Holy Spirit. The priest stands in front of the altar as a representation of Christ himself, so he has the right to recite the words of the Eucharistic institution at the Last Supper over bread and wine. However, it is not possible to conclude here that the prayers for sanctifying the sacraments are identical to the words of institution. So here, at this stage between the Creed and the Rite of Peace, mar Abdisho does not explain the institution narrative as part of the liturgy. He just wants to say, as Abraham bar Lipeh said, that when they stand at the altar and say the liturgical prayers, the priests represent the image of Christ and do as Christ did. The second prayer contains an account of Christ's redemptive work, and concludes with the institution narrative. As the priest says the second prayer for the sanctification of the sacraments: “He (Christ) deserves our praise with those heavenly orders because of the grace granted to humanity through the incarnation of the Word of God for the redemption and renewal of all. Through the law, he urges the people to give thanks and praise for his great blessings. To confirm their participation, they respond: Amen.”¹⁸⁵

We find here in the teaching of Mar Abdisho Bar Brikha the effectiveness of the words of institution, as he tells us about these

¹⁸⁴ Abdisho Bar Brikha, the Order of ecclesiastical judgments, 97.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid, 99.

words of foundation, which are: “This is my body, etc.,” and he concludes with Christ’s command to do as he did. The text simply asserts that when the church follows Christ's command to do what Christ did, change occurs. It is obvious to see here a hint at the effectiveness of the words of institution. Then he also continues in his book *The Pearl*, where he says: “With this commandment on Sunday, the bread turns into His holy body and the wine into His precious blood.” Then he talks about the material of the Holy Eucharist, wheat and wine, and about the image: “But the image was given (by Christ) by his living word and by the coming of the Holy Spirit.”¹⁸⁶

This seems clear from the text that the word Christ, which gives form or image to the Eucharist, can only mean the words of institution, and at the same time the changing is of course attributed to the Holy Spirit. Elsewhere in his liturgical commentary, he also seems to attribute the effectiveness to the words of Christ alongside the prayer of the descent of the Holy Spirit: “The priest who celebrates first receives the Eucharist. This shows that he has more need to participate in these sacred mysteries than other people, even though he was the mediator. In its service, but the One who sanctified them (Christ) is greater than all because He is always alive and offers prayers for them, and through His word and by the power of the Spirit, (the sacraments) are made holy.”¹⁸⁷ So, we have here again an indication of the effectiveness of Christ’s words. The validity of this interpretation also appears from a parallel passage “The offering must be accepted and sanctified through the Word of God and the power of the Spirit.”¹⁸⁸

We also find the same text in the teaching of Saint Timothy II (14th. Century).¹⁸⁹ It mentions the institution narrative between the priest's formal entry into the altar with the three bows and the ritual greeting

¹⁸⁶ Abdisho Bar Brikha, *the Book of pearl*, 333 (trans., 458); *Borg. Syr.* 88, 395-396.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 101; *Borg. Syr.* 88. 400.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 97; *Borg. Syr.* 88. 395.

¹⁸⁹ Timothy II, IV, 15, f. 115 r-v.

of the priest: "Peace be upon you." After the first prayer (ܐܢܫܘܟܘܢ) comes the first law (ܩܢܘܢܐ) which is said out loud. Mar Timothy II explains this as follows: "The first canon means the blessing with which the Lord blessed his disciples when he sacramentally gave them bread and wine, and said: This is my body which is broken for you, and this is my blood which is. For your sake it is poured out for you for the remission of sins."¹⁹⁰ Of course, this is not the institution narrative as told in the liturgy. He comments on the passage in the Mass that contains the story of the foundation, the prayer ܐܢܫܘܟܘܢ after the Hymn of the Holy One as follows: "The second prayer refers to the grace given and the mercy that was poured out upon us through the union of God the Word with a son of our lineage; and that Christ is one in his divinity and in his humanity, and that he forgave Our debts through His baptism, and that He raised us here in symbol, in order to raise us up with truth on the last day, and that He enlightened us with knowledge and left for us, in His memory, this Mystery presented to us. If we eat and drink it with faith, we will obtain eternal life, and He has promised us that if we present His body and blood, the Spirit will descend upon it (the body). He will be united with us by participating in his mystery, just as God was united with him."¹⁹¹ Here we have a clear reference to the institution narrative, but the sanctification is not attributed to this, but to the descent of the Holy Spirit. However, the words of institution are not devoid of any meaning, as evidenced by the fact that Christ himself was sanctified by these words. This is what Ibn al-Bultan explicitly says: "Because the Lord said about that bread: This is my body. He stripped that bread of its character as bread".¹⁹² As far as we know, the Fathers of the Church of the East never claimed that Christ was sanctified by the prayer of the coming of the Holy Spirit. In the questions of Mar Shimon Kepha, sanctification is attributed to Christ's blessing:

¹⁹⁰ Ibid, f. 108 v; see. Brightman I. F, *Liturgies Eastern and western*. Vol. I, Oxford 1896, 275.

¹⁹¹ Ibid, f. 111 v- 112 r.

¹⁹² Ibn Butlan, Graf, 197.

“When our Lord gave His body to His disciples, He blessed and with this blessing that He granted the bread was sanctified.”¹⁹³

Although the Anaphora of the Apostles lacks the founding words of Christ, in fact there are two passages in the third prayer (ܐܢܦܘܪܐ) before the prayer of the Descent of the Holy Spirit that contain a clear and concise reference to what the Lord did at the Last Supper and connect with it the church liturgical action: “You, O Lord, in your mercy Inexpressible, you make a generous remembrance of all the upright, worthy, and good fathers before you, in commemoration of the body and blood of your Christ, which we offer to you on the holy and pure altar as you taught us,, and us too, O Lord, who are your unworthy servants, the weak, the contemptible, and the weak. Before you, we who have received by tradition the ritual example that is from you (ܕܡܫܘܒܐ ܕܡܫܘܒܐ ܕܡܫܘܒܐ)....”,¹⁹⁴ although there is no institution narrative, it speaks of the body and blood of Christ and is fundamentally linked to the Easter salvific events understood as a sacrifice.

After all, we must say that with the exception of Mar Abdisho Bar Brikha, no East Syrian author attributes great importance to the Institution Narrative in the liturgy. For him as well, it is not the words of Christ alone that bring about change, but rather the prayer for the coming of the Holy Spirit is an essential part of completing the rank of sanctification.

Prayer for the descent of the Holy Spirit - ܐܢܦܘܪܐ

We see first that the East Syriac Doctrine and the Fathers of the Church of the East unanimously agreed on one principle, which is

¹⁹³ The Questions of Mar Simon Kepha, Vat. Syr. 164, f. 71r.

¹⁹⁴ Liturgy of the church of the east, 33,34

He says of our participation in the mysteries: “If Christ truly rose...then we believe that he truly rose, and the resurrection will take place for us as well.” So, when we believe without a doubt, it will be done for us too. Therefore, according to Mar Theodore of Mopsuestia, the call of the Holy Spirit leads to a transformation in the essence of the Eucharistic procession. Just as Christ's human nature does not have the gift of immortality on its own, but only through the fundamental change after the Resurrection, so the Eucharistic bread does not have saving power from its own nature, but only through the descent of the Holy Spirit.¹⁹⁶

Regarding the mystery of the Eucharist, Mar Theodore opposes a purely symbolic interpretation when determining the content of the concept of the symbol and emphasizes the identity of the sacred elements with the body and blood of Christ: “When he gave us the bread, he did not say: This is the symbol (ܫܡܝܘܬܐ) of my body, but rather this is my body. Likewise, he did not say about The cup: This is a symbol of (ܫܡܝܘܬܐ) My blood, but this is My blood because He wanted us, once they (the bread and wine) received this grace and the coming of the Spirit, not to look at their nature, but to accept them as the body and blood of our Lord because even the body of our Lord was not His (ܫܡܝܘܬܐ) Immortality and the gift of immortality, but it was the Holy Spirit who gave him, and by resurrecting from the dead he attained connection with the divine nature (ܫܡܝܘܬܐ ܕܠܗܘܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ) and became immortal and the originator of immortality for others.”¹⁹⁷ It is clear that he is interested to ensure that his concept of the term symbol is purely superficial, because the specificity of the term symbol does not mean an empty sign, but rather a hidden heavenly reality beyond human reach.

As we mentioned previously, according to Mar Theodore, the concept of the symbol builds the bridge from the Eucharist to the

¹⁹⁶ A. Mingana, Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Nicene Creed, Lord's prayer and on the Sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist, Cambridge 1932-1933, catechetical Homilies, Hom. 15,11-12.

¹⁹⁷ P. Bruns, Theodore von Mopsuestia. Katechetische Homilien I-II, Freiburg. 1994-1995, Hom. 15,10, 393-394.

doctrine of the Incarnation. Here and there, the doctrine of the two natures provides the correct framework for interpretation. The relationship between the mystery as an external sign and the truth of salvation depicted in it is similar to the relationship between human and divine nature. Both are clearly distinguishable but vaguely connected. Just as Christ's human nature does not receive the gift of immortality on its own, but only through a fundamental change or transformation after His resurrection from the dead, so the Eucharistic bread does not have the power of redemption from its own nature, but only through the indwelling of the Spirit, as Mar Theodore emphasized several times in His didactic sermons.¹⁹⁸

What does change or transformation mean for Mar Theodore? In his teaching sermons,¹⁹⁹ The bishop offers a fascinating theory that the call of the Holy Spirit brought about a shift in the nature of prescription. Certainly, the issue of transformation (essential becoming) relates to the nature of aging and also attributes to it an immortal being that does not change. According to Antiochian theology, the relationship between existence and transformation makes Mar Theodoros's doctrine on the Eucharist follow the opposite path from mortal nature to immortal nature, and from the substance of the sacrament to heavenly reality.

Also, in Mar Theodore' teaching about the Eucharist, the idea of sacrifice is of equal importance to the idea of spiritual food. The eschatological gifts of the Eucharist are the immortality of the body and the immortality of the soul. Theodore reckons the present effects of the sacrament as the forgiveness of sins and the strengthening of the soul in the fight against the passions. The Eucharist is above all a sign of remembrance of Christ's death, which guarantees a true participation in the unique meaning of Christ's sacrifice; In this regard, there is talk of a permanent correspondence between the

¹⁹⁸ Theodore, Hom. 15, 11-12.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid, Hom. 15, 10.

is united with the bread and wine that are on the altar.”²⁰² Here the reference is clear and intuitive to Mar Theodore. It is already clear in the introduction to this quote.²⁰³ Narsai also follows the biblical exegete in his literal interpretation of the Institution Narrative, which he paraphrases poetically: The Eucharist is not a symbol or an allegory, but is therefore real body and blood in precision and truth. Therefore, he clearly realizes the unity of the bread on the altar with the Lord’s heavenly body.

There are also some testimonies from Mar Narsai in which he talks about the descent of the Holy Spirit as a reason for sanctifying the Eucharist. Where he says: “Look firmly at the bread and wine on the table, which the power of the Spirit transforms into flesh and blood.”²⁰⁴ He also confirms this principle in another place in his book, as follows: “The power of the Spirit descends upon the mortal man and resides in the bread and sanctifies him by the power of his strength.”²⁰⁵ He also says: “He (the priest) invites the Spirit to descend and dwell in the bread and wine and make them the body and blood of the King Christ.”²⁰⁶ Narsai explains: “The priest summons the Spirit; the Spirit descends upon the offering without change, indwells the power of his divinity in the bread and wine, and accomplishes the mystery of our Lord’s resurrection from the dead.”²⁰⁷ Mar Narsai considers this prayer of the coming of the Holy Spirit to be the moment of offering sanctification. In his teaching, Mar Narsai there are clear traces of an older East Syriac Syrian term, said to also be found in Mar Ephrem, according to which Christ himself is referred to as the Spirit.²⁰⁸ Narsai says: “A corporeal being (priest) holds in his hands the bread in which the spirit is, and raises his

²⁰² Connolly, Hom. XVII: Mingana I, 285, 9-286,7.

²⁰³ Connolly, Liturgical Homilies (as note 58), 16-17, note 1 at p. 17, and Introduction, Ixix.

²⁰⁴ Narsai, Hom. XXI, Connolly, 56.

²⁰⁵ Ibid, 58.

²⁰⁶ Ibid, Hom. XVII, 20.

²⁰⁷ Ibid, Hom. XVII, 20.

²⁰⁸ Narsai, Hom. XVII, 148.

treasure on high and breaks it.”²⁰⁹ The priest calls on the Spirit and it descends on the offerings, and the priest prostrates himself with trembling, fear, and extreme terror. Then the deacon of the church calls out at this hour: Stand in silence and fear..., peace be upon us. Then he makes the whole people stand in awe at this moment in which the wonderful Mysteries are completed by the coming of the Spirit.²¹⁰

Therefore, there is no doubt: the sacraments are not complete except at the moment of the coming of the Holy Spirit. Mar Babai the Great also quotes the words of the coming of the Holy Spirit according to the anaphora of the Church of the East and says: “We believe that with the words of the priest, the gift occurred immediately in an instant, when the grace of the Holy Spirit descended and completed the mysteries of our salvation, to become the body and blood of Christ.”²¹¹ In the same way, Mar Babai the Great teaches in many places: “Through the recitation of the sacred priestly words, the Holy Spirit descends in an incomprehensible way and completes these mysteries on the altar in all regions and makes them one body of Christ.”²¹²

According to Mar Theodore Bar Koni (8th. Century), the name of the greatness of the worshiped God is invoked on the offerings, and thus they attain holiness.²¹³ The anonymous author (9th. Century) also teaches that the Spirit, by its descent, sanctifies the offerings: “When the sacraments are sanctified by the death of our Lord, the Holy Spirit descends and sanctifies them.”²¹⁴ Officially, Mar Youkhannan Bar Zobi explains the descent of the Holy Spirit as the moment of sanctification of the offering, as he confirms that until the descent of

²⁰⁹ Ibid, 59.

²¹⁰ Ibid, 22.

²¹¹ Babai the Great, the book of Union, 95.

²¹² Ibid, 18-19; see. 128, 181, 229.

²¹³ Theodore bar Koni, the book of schools, 249.

²¹⁴ Anonymen, II, 60

the Holy Spirit is only bread and wine, and after the descent they truly become the body of our Lord.²¹⁵

The prayer of the descent of the Holy Spirit always follows the words of institution in the anaphor of Saint Theodore and Saint Nestorius, as we mentioned previously that the words of Institution belong to the prayer ܐܢܦܘܪܐ after the hymn of the Holy One - ܐܘܘܪܐܘܢܐ. All liturgical commentators explain in detail the prayer of the Descent of the Holy Spirit and here speak of the sanctification of the offerings and their transformation into the Body and Blood of the Lord, while, as shown above, they do not pay special attention to the words of institution as the moment of sanctification. Otherwise, as the evidence we will mention proves, the East Syrian opinion is that sanctification is not complete except after praying the coming of the Holy Spirit. Nor do they formally exclude the efficacy of the words of institution, but their full attention is devoted to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

There is a story mentioned in the chronicle of Seert during the period of Persian rule that confirms the opinion of the East Syriac fathers, which tells how an apostate priest celebrated Mass in front of him at the request of King Chosroes. At the moment of the arrival of the Holy Spirit, the king sees the house filled with angels, in beautiful clothes, praising God. Tongues of fire appear above the priest. As if he was clothed in a bright light.²¹⁶

Mar Abraham Bar Lipeh explains the call as follows: “When the deacon calls out: ܐܘܘܪܐܘܢܐ ܘܘܘܪܐܘܢܐ, he does so to teach us that in this hour full of fear, we should not say our prayers out loud, but rather with silence in the heart. But the fact that the whole people are worshipping with the priest at hour (moment) of the descent of the Holy Spirit means that we all pray with the priest for the grace of the Holy Spirit to come and complete the sacraments. To honor the coming of grace, we kneel and pray, that in fact the priests no longer sign the cross

²¹⁵ Yohannan Bar Zobi, Explanation of all divine mysteries, Borg. Syr. 90, f. 46 a.

²¹⁶ Chronik of Seert, PO XIII, 467-468.

on the sacraments after the descent of grace, because the mysteries are completed with the elimination of death.”²¹⁷

So, it is clear that the mysteries are completed through the coming of the Holy Spirit, namely, sanctification. The anonymous author also speaks clearly in the same sense: “When the sacraments are sanctified by the death of our Lord, and the Spirit descends, sanctifies them, and perfects them with all true perfection...”. Where he continues and says: “Until now the sacraments have been sanctified and become the body and blood of Christ. But now that they have become body and blood, they must be united, so that the body is with blood and blood is with the body, and if they are not united, then the offering is not one.”²¹⁸

The time of sanctification is clearly defined in questions regarding the altar service. The following case is discussed here: the priest accidentally poured oil into the cup instead of wine. The question is what should happen if the error is discovered before the consecration, that is, before the descent of the Holy Spirit, or after it. When the Holy Spirit is not invoked in the offering, the body (ܩܘܪܒܢܐ) is distributed to the believers as a blessing (ܩܘܪܒܢܐ), and the mixture of water and oil in the cup is kept to be mixed with the flour that is kneaded into dough (ܩܘܪܒܢܐ) and an altar is consecrated with oil.²¹⁹ Therefore, we do not infer anything about the impact of the founding story from the above-mentioned text. However, what is certain is that sanctification is completed only after the prayer of the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Mar Abdisho Bar Brikha comments on the bowing prayer, to which the prayer of invoking the Holy Spirit is directly related, meaning sanctification: “And in the third prayer, which the priest now recites bowing down, he remembers the prophets and apostles, the martyrs

²¹⁷ Anonymen, II, 178 (trans., 164); see. Yohannan Bar Zobi, Explanation of all divine mysteries, Borg. Syr. 90, f. 52 a-b.

²¹⁸ Ibid, 64 (trans., 60).

²¹⁹ Van Unnik, 162, Question 15.

and confessors, and all the ranks of the Holy Church, in good memory and to participate in accepting these offerings. They are sanctified through the coming of the Holy Spirit, which leads to forgiveness and the great hope of resurrection from the dead... “And with his true faith and the faith of the people who say, ‘Amen,’ the divine mysteries are completed (ܩܕܝܫܐܢܐ).”²²⁰ Which means, at the time of the prayer invoking the Holy Spirit, the sacrifice is sanctified once and for all.

Mar Timothy II. explains the third prayer (ܩܕܝܫܐܢܐ) in a way similar to Mar Abdisho: “In the third silent prayer, the priest remembers the prophets, apostles, martyrs, and confessors... and prays that they participate in this offering, and that they are sanctified through the prayer of the descent of the Holy Spirit, that when the Spirit descends, the holy mysteries are completed.” By divine power and transforms them into actually flesh and blood.”²²¹

Therefore, we find in this text that Mar Timothy II emphasizes the role of the Holy Spirit in sanctifying the bread and wine that are on the altar. The Holy Spirit descends and transfers the offerings at the moment the prayer of the Holy Spirit is completed. In any case, the sanctification of the offerings is only complete by the power of the Holy Spirit. Since then, they have been viewed in the true sense as the body and blood of Christ. Saint Timothy II also attributes this transformation to the moment of invoking the divine Holy Spirit. The fact that the moment of the descent of the Holy Spirit is actually seen as a moment of change also appears from another passage where it is asked about the meaning of the signing that occurs after the descent of the Holy Spirit. These are seen as meaningless because the sacraments have already been completed through the descent of the Holy Spirit.²²² Therefore, unanimously, the fathers of the Church of the East agreed that sanctification takes place and is completed

²²⁰ Abdisho Bar Brikha, the Order of ecclesiastical judgments, 99.

²²¹ Timothy II, IV, 15, f. 112 r-v.

²²² Ibid, IV, 16, f. 120 r.

after the prayer of the coming of the Holy Spirit (ܩܘܕܝܫܐ ܩܘܕܝܫܐ), neither earlier nor later.

Man participates in the mystical truth through symbols, and this is done by the grace of the Holy Spirit. In the mysteries, the believer participates in future realities through faith, hope, and love. That is, this is my body does not only mean that it is the symbol or image of his body, but it also means that the symbol contains the truth that it symbolizes. The mystery of the Eucharist is a real presence, effective sustenance, and a life sacrifice based on the symbols that symbolize the entire mystery of the divine plan of salvation and represent the eternal heavenly ritual (Hebrews 8:4).

The Holy Communion

The Mystery of Holy Communion, according to the faith of the Church of the East, is that we receive true flesh and true blood under the signs of bread and wine. The Church calls this the great mystery of piety: “Great is the mystery of piety: God appeared in the flesh” (1 Timothy 3:16). This is the true sacrifice of salvation that Jesus Christ delivered to his disciples on the night of his passion immediately before his crucifixion. Some call it the Lord’s Last Supper.

Bread and wine are sanctified by the divine power of the Holy Spirit to be food for the souls of believers in the Lord. According to the thought of the East Syrian Fathers from ancient times, Communion should take place in both forms, meaning that the believer must eat the holy bread first and then drink the holy wine, as the Lord commanded to do so (Matthew 26:26-28). Mar Narsai describes in the fifth Century how to receive Communion. The mystery of the Eucharist “in the plate and in the cup” to the believers and how the Body and Blood of the Lord is presented to them.²²³ Likewise, according to Mar Ishoyahb I (6th. Century), it is possible to offer the Holy Eucharist to the sick, as he says it is possible to carry the

²²³ Narsai. XVII, Connolly, 27-29.

Eucharist dipped in the Holy Cup to the sick person.²²⁴ According to the anonymous author (9th. Century), the priest gives the body of the Lord to the believers, and then the deacon gives the cup.²²⁵ Mar Emmanuel Bar Shahare (10th. Century), in his book on the interpretation of the sacrament of baptism, says that the newly baptized receive the atoning body and blood.²²⁶ Mar Elijah of Nisibis (11th. Century) accuses the Melchites and Jacobites of not giving the Holy Cup for Communion.²²⁷ Regarding the question of whether it is possible to receive the Holy Communion outside the church, he acknowledges and describes the method of receiving the Holy Communion as we described above, whereby the holy bread is dipped beforehand into the cup.²²⁸

According to the ritual of the Church of the East, with regard to children receiving Communion, only bread mixed with wine is given to them, and they are not entitled to drink from the Holy Cup.²²⁹ The writer Maclean confirms this, according to the ritual of the Church of the East, which states that the cup should not be given to young children. However, they could obtain a particle dipped in holy blood.²³⁰ As writer Amann believes that children under the age of 12 receive Holy Communion in the form of bread only, this is likely due to the order of mixing.²³¹

However, the Fathers of the Church of the East believe that Communion in both forms is possible and necessary depending on the condition and age of the believer. Assemani writer cites a number of texts that address concerning communion of the sick. He refers to various authors to explain the use of communion under one form

²²⁴ Ishoyahb I., BO III, 1, 244; Van Unnik, 241.

²²⁵ Anonymen, II, 71.

²²⁶ Emmanuel Bar Shahhare, Memra about the Baptism. Vat. Syr. 182, f. 273v.

²²⁷ Elia of Nisibis, Proof of the truth of faith, 99.

²²⁸ Ishoyahb I, Whether the Holy Eucharist may be carried out of the church, Vat. Syr. 150, f. 93 v. see. 94.v. 95 r.

²²⁹ Liturgy of the Church of the East, 45.

²³⁰ Maclean A. J. Und Browne W. H., The Catholicos of the East and his People. London, 1892, 260.

²³¹ Amann E.; Nestorienne, XI. La Theologie de l'Eglise nestorienne. In: Dict. De Theol. Cath. XI, 1, c. 315; De Vries, 243.

among the Fathers of the East.²³² In fact, as explained above, communion under one form is not entirely inconsistent with the tradition of the Church of the East. As stated in a title attributed to Mar Ishoyahb III about the rank of the cup: "There is blood in the offering because the priest sanctified it."²³³ In the form of bread alone there is also the holy blood. That is, it is possible for handling to take place under one form only.

According to Diettrich's writer, the two oldest manuscripts of the baptismal rite contain the following section: "And he (the priest) shall give the Eucharist to the children. And if he cannot take a single thing, the priest shall dip the tip of his little finger into the cup and put it to his mouth."²³⁴ However, I had a question while reading the text: Why the little finger? With research, I discovered that it is a Jewish ritual custom during circumcision ceremonies. According to traditional Jewish practice, on the eighth day after a boy's birth, he is circumcised (Genesis 17:11) and several blessings are recited. This ritual is called the Brit Milah, and it is a religious ceremony within Judaism that welcomes young Jewish children into a covenant between God and the children of Israel through a ritual circumcision performed by the mohel (Circumciser). The word "Brit" means "covenant" and the word "Milah" means "circumcision." This occurs on the eighth day of the child's life in the presence of family and friends, followed by a celebratory meal.²³⁵ There, (Sandek) is the Godfather (in the Syriac sense - *ܡܨܢܝܩܐ*) or the one standing who carries the infant, while (Mohel) is the name of the person who performs the circumcision, recites blessings, and names the child. The blessing is recited over a cup of wine, after which the Mohel dips his pinky into the wine and places small drops in the child's mouth. This concludes the traditional ceremony.²³⁶ It goes without saying that the Lord's

²³² Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, t. III, 2, 312.

²³³ Van Unnik, *Nestorian Questions*, 219.

²³⁴ G. Diettrich, *Die nestorianische Tauf liturgie*, Giessen 1903, 91.

²³⁵ See. www.chabad.org/bris; <https://www.reformjudaism.org/beliefs-practices/lifecycle-rituals/birth-rituals/brit-milah-circumcision-ritual>.

²³⁶ See. www.chabad.org/bris.

Supper was a Jewish liturgical celebration, and that the first Christians of Jewish origins (the Apostles and the Jewish communities in Mesopotamia) were the nucleus in shaping the East Syriac ritual in the first three centuries, meaning that Jewish practices in Christian worship can be traced back to the third Century.²³⁷ It has been preserved longer among Syriac-speaking Christians in the Near East than elsewhere. For this reason, liturgical scholars have attempted to explain the composition of the early Eucharistic prayers by comparison with the blessings of the Jewish meal (Birkat Hamazon). Based on the material of the three Jewish blessing prayers, scholars have proposed the initial shape of the anaphora of the apostles Mar Addai and Mar Mari, given the sublime character of the Eastern rite of sanctification.²³⁸

It is also noteworthy that many of the fathers of the Church of the East celebrated the holy mysteries and received the Eucharist on a daily basis. We find this by Mar Babai the Great in a passage in which it appears that in his days the holy sacrifice was offered daily: “Behold, you wicked ones, we do not break or kill the body of the Lord which is in heaven on the altar every day”.²³⁹ Likewise, in the days of Mar Ephrem the Syrian, Christians used to celebrate the Mass. Not only on Passover and on Sundays and major holidays, but on every day. This is clearly included in one of the Madrashe hymn of Mar Ephrem, about Paradise: “The assembly of saints is like paradise. In Him the fruit of the One who revives all is harvested every day. In it, my brothers, the grapes of the life-giving of all are pressed.”²⁴⁰

Mar Ishodad (9th. Century) comments on the passage from the First Epistle to the Corinthians: “For whoever eats and drinks unworthily...” He says this does not mean that people should receive the Eucharist only rarely and only when they are without sin. No one is without sin. Therefore, the Church orders the celebration of the

²³⁷ Botte B., *Problemes de l'Anaphore syrienne des Apotres Addai et Mari*, Lorient Syrien, 10, 1965, 89-106.

²³⁸ Botte B., *L'Anaphore Chaldeenne des Apotres*, *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, 15, 1949, 259-276.

²³⁹ Babai the Great, *the book of Union*, 229; See. Van Unnik, 212.

²⁴⁰ Brock, *Luminous Eye*, 100; Sebastian Brock, *St. Ephrem the Syrian, Hymns on Paradise*, New York 1998, 61.

sacraments at all times.²⁴¹ However, according to the rules of the Apostles' Mass, the Holy Sacrifice must be offered on the Holy Days, Sundays and Fridays, with the exception of Good Friday as it is in the current liturgy of the Church of the East (Book ܡܘܨܕܐ).²⁴²

Ibn al-Bultan (11th. Century) reflects the view of some who believe that one should always take communion and attend church. There are four reasons for this: to remember the Lord's Cross and Resurrection, as a sign of the forgiveness of sins, to ensure Christ's protection and grace, and because spiritual food should always be enjoyed. Some accept these reasons, but he confirms the necessity of good preparation.²⁴³

The Fathers also emphasize the necessity of Holy Communion. In his book, Abdisho Bar-Brikha presents an ancient apostolic law that states that no one may pray in his home with someone who does not receive the Holy Eucharist.²⁴⁴ Elijah of Nisibis also emphasizes the necessity of receiving the Eucharist and the importance of the Holy Eucharist in our spiritual life, as he says: For them (heretics) and for us, the Lord's Supper is the basis.²⁴⁵ Solomon of Basra (13th. Century) says in his book *The Bee*: "Whoever is not baptized by the priests and does not accept the body and blood of Christ our Lord will not enter the kingdom of heaven."²⁴⁶ Mar Timothy II (14th. Century) also teaches that Christ affirmed that unless a person is nourished by his own flesh and blood, which are a symbol of participation in true life, he will not be able to obtain the bliss of that life.²⁴⁷

They also assure the proper preparation necessary for the correct reception of Holy Communion. The decisive condition for receiving God's forgiveness and grace in the context of the sacraments is the

²⁴¹ Ishodad of Merv, *Commentaries*, V., 2, 36.

²⁴² The liturgy of the Church of the East, Urmiae, 1890, 150; Van Unnik, 212.

²⁴³ Ibn Butlan, *Graf*, 185.

²⁴⁴ Abdisho Bar Brikha, *the order of ecclesiastical Judgments*, 39, N 10.

²⁴⁵ Elijah of Nisibis, *Proof of the truth of faith*, 101.

²⁴⁶ Solomon of Basra, *the book of the Bee*, 93.

²⁴⁷ Timothy II, IV, 6, f. 91 v.

act of faith, as we mentioned above in several patristic quotations. Meaning that the Faith is the integral element in the act of prayer and worship for both the celebrant and recipient of the sacraments. Any credible worship depends on belief in invisible and indescribable things. These are the things that need faith, to enable the mind to see the invisible. The visible things we see with our eyes, while the invisible things are seen only by faith.

One of the most important themes of the Eucharist in the Church of the East is reconciliation with God and with each other through accepting Christ and realizing his presence. Through reconciliation it must first take place, and then the sacrament is accepted, which is the communion in Christ that restores the bond of peace with God and people. According to the East Syriac Mass, before the actual communion in the Body and Blood of our Lord, the deacon calls on the people to prepare themselves with the forgiveness of the sins and transgressions of their fellow servants; Purifying their consciences from divisions and disagreements; Cleansing their souls of anger and hostility. Accepting the Mystery with minds united in mutual agreement.²⁴⁸ These supplications recall our Lord's commandment during the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5: 22-24 / 14:6).

In the prayer of the descent of the Holy Spirit into the Saint Theodore Fountain, the Holy Spirit is called upon us and, in this offering, we remember together the body of Christ inside the church, which is on the altar, with the body of Christ waiting in anticipation inside the nave of the church to be renewed and to rejoice in the kingdom of heaven in the good things that are coming and that will not fade away. This is reminiscent of the Apostle Paul's first letter to the Corinthians where he rebukes them for profaning the Lord's Supper through, among other things, dissension and neglect of their poor fellow Christians, and thinking only of pleasing themselves (1 Cor. 11:17-22). St. Paul also confirms by saying as follows: "For whoever eats and drinks unworthily eats and drinks judgment upon

²⁴⁸ The Liturgy of the Church of the East, 45-46.

himself” (1 Corinthians 11:29). Mar Ephrem the Syrian warned of the danger of death represented by receiving undeserved Communion: "For he who receives that Medicine of Life unworthily takes judgement upon himself: it is a matter for wonder that such a person has, in reverse, gained death by means of life".²⁴⁹ But when we approach the Eucharist with reverence, in a state of grace, instead of killing us (as it might happen!), the fire of God himself heals us and fills us with his life: “let us consume in a holy way this body which the people have pierced with their nails. Let us drink as the medicine of life, the blood that flows from his side”.²⁵⁰

This refers not only to the worthiness of the true Body of Christ within the Holy Sacrament, but also to the worthiness of the Body of Christ among the gathered believers, to whom love and respect must be shown, as well as to Christ Himself. When we stand with outstretched hands to receive Him, we stand under judgment. According to the Apostle, if we neglect love toward one another, the Holy Spirit is summoned “on us and on this offering,” not only for judgment, but for us as well. To give and take and become again the true body of Christ. Therefore, the final gifts of the Eucharist are the immortality of the body and the immortality of the soul. So, according to Mar Theodore, the current effects of the Eucharist are forgiveness of sins and strengthening the soul in the fight against whims.

Conclusion

Celebrating the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist is an act of faith in the existence of Christ under the signs of bread and wine as He is now in heaven, even if we do not see Him. The sacrament of the Holy Eucharist transforms the earth into heaven, meaning it is a period in which we live with the presence of the Lord Christ among us in the church and the church becomes heaven, so the priest says, “Raise your thoughts to the highest,” so spiritual preparation is necessary.

²⁴⁹ Brock, *Luminous Eye*, 105.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 82.

On Maundy Thursday, Jesus and his disciples ate the Passover feast according to the law. They prayed and chanted some psalms and read some texts from the Bible. Then Jesus did two things at the Passover table: passing the bread and drinking the cup. He gave them a new meaning as they referred to his body and blood. He used bread and wine to illustrate the importance of What he would do on the cross. The death of Jesus on the cross completed a new covenant between God and humanity. The first covenant included forgiveness of sins through the blood of an animal sacrifice, but the coming of Jesus as the Lamb of God offered himself as a sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins once and for all. Now and always in our churches, we can come to God through Jesus through the holy bread and wine, in which the truth of His holy body and blood is present. We should not neglect it, but should receive the Holy Eucharist, and accept it with the due preparation for it to be food for our spiritual life and food for the life - long path towards real life. It is the last provision and the only bread that provides the medicine for immortality. So let us approach the Holy Eucharist with a more vibrant faith in the true presence of the Lord Jesus in the Sacrament of the Most Holy Eucharist, and then we will experience the Lord's power, His transcendent love, and hope for a new life, and the soul will be filled with grace, and we will be given a pledge of what is to come.