

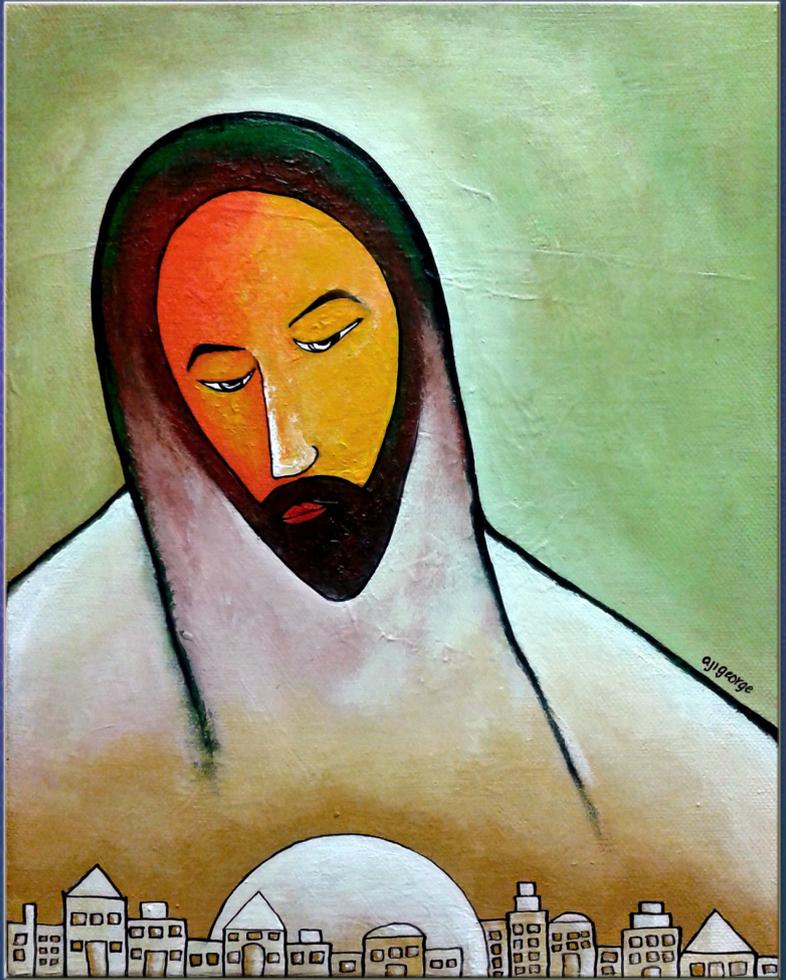
Vol. 3
No. 2
March 2018

ISSN 2395 - 4426

HEKAMTHO

SYRIAN ORTHODOX THEOLOGICAL JOURNAL

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THE MALANKARA SYRIAN ORTHODOX
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY



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SYRIAN ORTHODOX THEOLOGICAL JOURNAL

ISSN 2395 - 4426

Published by

The Malankara Syrian Orthodox Theological Seminary

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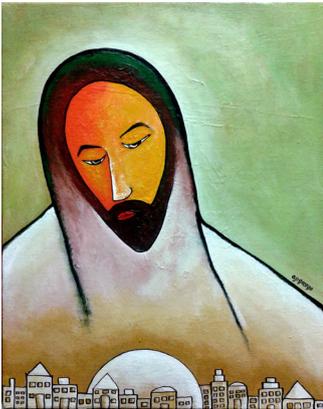
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About the cover painting...



“Divine Providence”

by Ajiyan George | Acrylic on Canvas | 50x70 | 2018 |

This painting depicts the Providence of God Almighty. He keeps constant watch over all his creations. Ecclesiastes observes, “A time to be born and a time to die. A time to plant and a time to harvest... He has made everything appropriate in its time. He has also put eternity in their hearts, but no one can discover the work God has done from beginning to end” (Eccles. 3: 2, 11). Everything happens for a reason- fulfills the Lord’s majestic plans. We are mere clay in the hands of creator.

Editorial

On examining the daily events that surrounds us without looking deeply into their causes and consequences, it may all seem to occur randomly. However, divine intelligence guides us to the fact that all things happen for a reason. All creations are part of Lord's majestic design. Each substance has a role to play. All our actions are guided by God Almighty.

God's mind is infinite and encompasses everything that we can fathom. The Almighty God penetrates and sees all places in a single moment: the height of the heavens, and the width of the earth, the depth of the sea and the unfathomable abyss.

In this regard, the current issue of Hekamtho tries to elaborate few dimensions of the divine prudence.

The first article, 'Syrian Orthodox Church's Contributions to Christian Unity' by Adai Jacob Corepiscopa presents the importance of Ecumenism in the changing world and the involvement of Syrian Orthodox church in it. He correlates the biblical and theological accounts with the efforts of Syrian Orthodox Church to effect a 'togetherness' among Christian denominations.

Jacob Thekkeparambil, in his article 'Pelgeh d-Sawmo: Mid-Lent Depicts Christ as the Mediator and Centre of Salvation', explains the themes in Mid Lent liturgy that highlights the importance of the mediator-ship of Christ in salvation.

Third article, 'Temple- Criticism and Reformation for a New Ecclesiological Paradigm' by Ebin K. Alias gives an exegetical account on Gospel of Mark as an important source for the criticism of Jesus against the Jerusalem Temple in its exploitation of poor and marginalised. A similar attitude observed in Luther's writing of ninety-five theses. This article analyses the response of Jesus Christ and Martin Luther to the ruining of the Church and examines its implication to the present ecclesial context.

'Bill Viola: A Poet of New Media' examines the life and work of well-known American video artist Bill Viola. It also discusses the various influential factors that led Viola to become a successful creator of visual poetry in New Media Age. This article showcases how video art got transformed from being just a performance based medium to a vehicle of psychological and imaginative medium.

Anish K. Joy, in his article 'St. Athanasius: The Father of Orthodoxy', affirms that St. Athanasius, defended the true faith for his flock, regardless of the cost to himself. Athanasius's work remains even today one of the definitive statements of orthodox Trinitarianism.

Hope this issue of Hekamtho benefits you to understand few of the concepts of Providence!

- Fr. Dr. Ajiyan George
Editor

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Syrian Orthodox Church's Contributions to Christian Unity

Rev. Dr. Adai Jacob Corepiscopa

1. Christian Unity- Biblical and theological Perspectives

The fourth Gospel and the letter of Paul to the Ephesians emphasize the unity of the church and from them we can distinguish the main biblical and theological perspectives on Christian unity.

a. Unity as a God given pre-existing attribute of the Church.

The New Testament as a whole hold the view that the unity of the church is not created or established by somebody, but it is a God given pre-existing attribute.¹ When Ephesians speaks about one body, one spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism and one God and Father, all those focus to the God given pre-existing Unity of the Church (Eph 4:3ff). Therefore when we speak about ecumenism it is not creation of a new Unity but it is an attempt to regain the lost God given unity.

¹ Mussner, To the Ephesians P. 175

b. Unity of the Universal Church in one Spirit

The introductory verse on unity in Eph 4:3 is an advice to keep the unity of the spirit. This means that the real unity originates from the Holy Spirit. The Universal Church is Body of Christ and the Body of Christ is filled with the Spirit of God and this one spirit in the one body maintains the Unity of the Church. In the letter to the Corinthians also the role of the Spirit in keeping the unity of the mystical body of Christ, that is the church, is emphasized (1 Cor 12:13). The pneumatological and Christological aspects of the Unity of the Church are vividly expressed here. In the second Vatican Council in the Decree on Ecumenism the role of Holy Spirit in the Unity of the Church is described as the ‘principle of the Unity of the Church’². The Holy Spirit is also the creative power behind the formation of the Church. In the Nicene Creed confession of faith in one Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church is inseparable from the confession of faith in one Holy Spirit³. One Holy Spirit has to work in every individual Christian and in the whole Universal church, and they have to produce the fruits of the Spirit and that is the way to regain the lost unity of the Church.

c. Unity of the church in one Lord Jesus Christ

In Eph 4:5 the ‘One Lord’ is presented as an important factor of the Unity of the Church. The Christian churches in the whole world witness and confess their faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and savior. The faith of all the Christian Churches is oriented to one person Jesus Christ. The author of Ephesians finds not only the unity of the church in Christ but also the unity of humanity, heaven and earth (Eph 1:10)⁴. Through His death on the cross Jesus Christ united the hostile folks Jews and Gentiles and a new human race that is the Church was formed (Eph 2:14-

² Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche (Supplementary Volume II), 47.

³ J. Ratzinger, Einführung in das Christentum, 275ff.

⁴ Card. Bea, Der Weg Zur Einheit, 214 f.

18). Jesus Christ thus established peace and unity in humanity. The Unity of the whole Christian Churches in the world is pre-existent reality in the person of Jesus Christ, because He is confessed as the Lord and saviour of all the Christians in the world.

d. God the Father as source of Unity

When Jesus tries to establish the Kingdom of God, He presents God as a loving and compassionate Father, who is always ready to forgive the sins of His Children, when they repents (Lk 15:11-24). God is primarily the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (Eph 1:3-17). The Christians believe in Christ and they belong to Christ and are also members of His body- the Church. Besides they possess the Holy Spirit and on all these grounds the Christians also become eligible to call God as Father and they have access to God the Father. This truth is expressed in Eph 2:18 in simple way- the Christians have access to God the Father through Christ and in one Spirit. According to Eph 3:14 God is the source of all fatherhood in heaven and on earth, and He is also the 'one God and Father of all'. Here God the Father is presented as the source of unity of the whole Christianity⁵.

e. The Trinitarian model in the unity of the Church

If we analyse Eph 4:4-6 we can see three groups of Formulas of Unity. In the centre of those formulas is placed one Spirit, One Lord and one God, the Father. In Ephesians the Trinitarian unity is the model of the Unity of the Church. The author of Ephesians relates directly the unity of Universal Church with the unity of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. Nowadays in Ecumenical world the Trinitarian Ecclesiology is emphasised⁶. The decree of 2nd Vatican Council on ecumenism establishes the

⁵ Schlier, Ober das Princip der Kirchlichen Einheit, 91-110.

⁶ Pottmeyer Der Heilige Geist, 54.

mystery of Unity of the Universal Church on the basis of the Trinitarian Unity⁷.

f. Body of Christ and the Unity

The expression Body of Christ in Ephesians contains important ecumenical message. In the primary letters of Paul the concept Body of Christ is used mainly for the local Church and to show its Unity. As a deuteropauline letter the author of Ephesians applies the concept Body to the Whole Universal Church. ‘One Body’ in Ephesians points to the Unity of the Universal Church.

g. Experience of Unity in the Eucharistic worship of the Community

The worship of the Christian Community provides the member of the church to assemble together and to experience the unity (Eph 5:18 ff). Most probably Eph 5:18 ff speaks about the worship especially the Eucharistic celebration of the church. In the life of the early church the Eucharistic celebration is placed at the centre and through the Eucharistic assembly. The members of the church experience the Unity of the Church⁸. For Paul the Eucharistic celebration is the source of unity (1 Cor 10:17), and it is also the (historical) time and place to experience unity. In the Eucharistic celebration the Gospel is preached, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is witnessed, kiss of peace is given, intercession for the whole church is made and through communion the mystical union between the Body of Christ and Eucharistic Body is realized.

The Christian Love as basic principle of Unity

The all-embracing love of God is the only explanation for work of salvation of God in Christ. The book of Ephesians understands the work of salvation of God as expression of the love of God (Eph 1:15; 3:17; 4:2; 5:25). The church is visible

⁷ Second Vatican Council in LTh KII, 49.

⁸ Card. Bea, *Der Weg Zur Einheit* 190f.

expression of the love of God. Therefore the church in this world should remain as the place where the love of God is to be revealed and practiced. Just before the formula for the Unity of Universal Church is given, Ephesians presents love as the basic principle for the relation between the members of the church (Eph 4:2). For Paul love is the most important spiritual power for the unity of the Church⁹. Recently in ecumenical field the importance of Christian love for the unity of the church is emphasised¹⁰. Just as the powerful work of salvation of God came out of the all-embracing love of God, so also the powerful and lively practicing of the Christian love will be having radical and far reaching result in the case of the unity of the church.

2. Syrian Orthodox Churches Contributions to Christian Unity

The history of the Christian Church in the early centuries witnesses a number of schisms, divisions and excommunications. Because of these divisions, the history of the church was dominated by enmity and mutual fight. When we now look back, we cannot justify those unchristian quarrels between the Christians in early and in later centuries. In the 13th century Bar Ebroyo criticised the quarrels between the churches and for him those quarrels are baseless and meaningless. Bar Ebroyo said: "I became convinced that these quarrels among the different Christian Churches are not a matter of factual substance, but of words and terminology"¹¹. In the 21st century the Patriarch of Antioch Moran Mor Ignatius Zakka I was said: "The split in the Christian Church is a big mistake, a blasphemy of the Holy Spirit and ignoring of the existence of Christ who promised: The gates of hell will not prevail against it(Mt16:18)"¹². Therefore recently when the Christian churches in the world meet together they do

⁹ Schlier, *Über das Prinzip* 102.

¹⁰ Card. Bea, *Der weg zur Einheit* 210f; Held, *Ökumene heute* 442.

¹¹ Bar Ebroyo, *Book of Dove*, Chap 4.

¹² *Lecture in the University of Humboldt*, 1995.

not try to investigate the reasons for division and schism and the differences between the teachings of the different churches, but try to find out the common elements in the faith traditions and teachings of different churches. In ecumenical dialogues thus the emphasis is on seeking common elements and the aim is Christian unity.

The Syrian Orthodox Church belongs to the family of the Oriental Orthodox churches in which the Coptic, Armenia and Ethiopian Orthodox Churches are also members. The Oriental Orthodox Churches are also called pre-chalcedonies churches, because they rejected the decisions regarding Christology in Chalcedon. The Oriental Orthodox Churches thus approve only the first three ecumenical councils namely Nicaea (AD 325); Constantinople (AD 381) and Ephesus (AD 431). The Oriental Orthodox Churches adopted the Christological formula of Cyril of Alexandria. Jesus Christ is one person out of two natures that is divine and human. He is therefore perfect God and perfect man.

The Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church misunderstood the Christological standpoint of the Oriental orthodox Churches and called them as Monophysites. This misunderstanding was corrected in the theological dialogues conducted in Vienna in the auspices of the ecumenical body called Pro-Oriente.

The doors of the Syrian Orthodox church are always open for theological dialogues and ecumenical ventures for the sake of Christian unity. In the ecumenical journey of the churches the Syrian Orthodox Church is running faster than any other orthodox churches. The ecumenical dialogues and decisions taken in them in the 20th century and recently will prove the correctness of the above opinion. Therefore this paper will try to make a survey of the ecumenical activities of the Syrian Orthodox Church.

a. Ecumenical relation with Roman Catholic Church

Unity in the understanding of Christology

The main reason for the split between the Syrian Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church was the council of

Chalcedon and its statements on Christology. Through mutual dialogue both the Churches were able to come to conclusion that in essence both the churches have the same faith in the case of the person of Jesus Christ. Therefore on 27th October 1971 H.H. Pope John Paul VI and H.H. Patriarch Moran Mor Ignatius Yakob III made a joint declaration regarding the faith of the two churches. Mutual dialogue and discussions continued and on 23rd June 1984 H.H. Pope John Paul II and H.H. Patriarch Moran Mor Ignatius Zakka I was made another joint declaration solving the differences in Christology. They also declared unity in the understanding of the Holy sacraments of the two churches. They also gave sanction to co-operate and help each other in the field of Pastoral Ministry.

Agreement on inter church marriage

On the basis of the common profession of faith between the Pope and the Patriarch the doors became open for dialogue and church unity. After detailed study, dialogue and discussion, the agreement on inter church marriage was made on 7th December 1991. Accordingly the marriage between the members of the two churches can be made remaining in their own mother churches.

Joint Statements

The dialogue between the two churches led to the formation of joint statements. In 2001 the ecumenical commissions of both the churches formed a joint statement on the theme Episcopacy and Petrine Ministry. Both the churches share similar faith and tradition on the theme Episcopacy and Petrine Ministry. In the year 2002 both the commissions formed a joint statement on the theme 'common witness'. Both the churches agreed to work together in spiritual, social, educational and other fields, so that the churches may be able to bear common witness in a multi-religious and pluralistic society.

Sharing of sacred places

Another important agreement between the Catholic Church and the Syrian Orthodox Church is on sharing of sacred places. This agreement allows pastoral collaboration including the mutual

admission of the faithful belonging to both the churches to the reception of sacraments of penance, Eucharist and anointing of the sick, if there arises any grave spiritual need. Use of Church buildings is also allowed with the permission of the bishops concerned.

b. Relation with the Eastern Orthodox Church

Unofficial consultations were held in 1964, 1967, 1970 and 1971. The main reason for split was difference in Christological definitions. The dialogue held in 1993 in Geneva decided to remove the anathemas and condemnation. The Syrian Orthodox and Eastern Orthodox Churches firmly believe that Jesus Christ is perfect God and Perfect man. Bishop Timothy Kallistos Ware has the opinion that there is no disagreement on the person of Christ, but it happened only in the level of Phraseology¹³.

c. Relation with Protestant Churches

As a member of the Oriental Family the Syrian Orthodox Church has very cordial relations with the Anglican Communion and World Lutheran Federation. Ecumenical dialogues and discussions are going on to prepare the way for Christian Unity. In November 2002 the Anglican Communion arrived at a consensus in the case of Christology of the Oriental Orthodox Churches. Both the churches confess that: “the perfect union of divinity and humanity in the incarnate Word is essential to salvation of the human race”.

d. Relation with Assyrian Church of the East

For several centuries the relation between the Syrian Orthodox Church and Assyrian Church of the East was not cordial. But in the 20th century there were bilateral dialogues between the churches. In 1997 the heads of the two churches decided to appoint a bilateral commission to explore ways to bring about a rapprochement between the churches. In the

¹³ Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church: An Introduction to Eastern Christianity*, Penguin UK, 1993.

liturgical texts of the Assyrian Church of the East, there were anathemas against Cyril of Alexandria and Severus of Antioch. As a result of Ecumenical relations the Synod of the Assyrian Church decided to remove those anathemas and steps are taken to promote unity.

e. Syrian Orthodox- Marthoma Syrian Church Dialogue

In November 2014 the Syrian Orthodox Church began official dialogue with the Marthoma Syrian Church. Both these Churches were one for the last 18 centuries and at the end of 19th century division took place because of certain historical and ecclesiastical reasons. But recently through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit both the churches decided to begin dialogue aiming at co-operation and church unity. Both the churches are extremely happy and satisfied with the dialogue and discovered the truth that their existence is rooted in the same faith, traditions and patrimony. As a result of the dialogue both the churches were able to formulate a joint statement.

f. Participation of the Syrian Orthodox Church in the Ecumenical activities in the world

The Syrian Orthodox Church actively participate in almost all the ecumenical activities in the world and has membership in all the ecumenical bodies worldwide. For example, the Syrian Orthodox Church has membership in World Council of Churches, in Christian Conference of Asia, Pro-Oriente, National Council of Churches, Kerala Council of Churches, Pontifical Council for Christian Unity, Oriental-Catholic Dialogue Committee and several other committees in India and abroad. All those councils and committees aim at promoting Christian Unity.

g. Co-operation in the field of Theological Education

The ecumenical attitude of the Syrian Orthodox Church is concretely reflected in the field of theological education. The Syrian Orthodox Theological Seminary(MSOTS) is affiliated to the Senate of Serampore University. The provision of admission

is not limited to the students from Syrian Orthodox Church, it also gives admission to the students of other denominations such as Church of the East, Malabar Independent Syrian Church of Thozhiyoor, and Salvation etc. The Seminary also utilize the service of teachers from sister churches like Mar Thoma Syrian, Catholic and CSI Churches. We also engage women teachers to teach in the Seminary.

In the year 2000 the Seminary arranged an international Symposium called the World Hindu - Christian Symposium in which Hindu professors from different Universities in India and Christian theologians from Europe participated and presented papers. This means that the church promotes not only inter church relations but also inter religious relations and dialogues.

Conclusion

As I have already mentioned above the doors of the Syrian Orthodox Church is open for dialogue and the church is ready to cooperate with all legitimate attempts for Christian unity. In the 21st century perhaps the Christians are the most persecuted folk in the world, and the Christians in the world has hope for the future, if they stand together and are united. All the attempts for Christian unity must bring us back to the conviction that we all belong to one Body of Christ and all are inseparable members of that body.

Unity of the Christianity is the crucial challenge that every individual Christian and each and every individual church today in this 21st century is facing. Let us wholeheartedly pray and earnestly strive to regain and re-establish the lost unity of the Church.

***Pelgeh d-Sawmo*: Mid-Lent Depicts Christ as the Mediator and Centre of Salvation**

Jacob Thekkeparambil¹

1. Christ as the *Meṣ'oyo*² (Mediator) in the West Syriac Liturgical Tradition

Pelgeh d-Ṣawmo rabo, the Middle of the Great Lent, is the name given to the middle day of the 50-day Lent. Under this name the Syro-Antiochean Church understands the Wednesday of the 4th week of Lent. The service prescribed for this day is also known by the same name, implying the idea of the middle or the centre of Lent: *Ṭakso d-Yum 'arb'o b-ṣabo d-Pelgeh d-Ṣawmo* Order of the

¹Fr. Dr. Jacob Thekkeparambil is a renowned Syriac Scholar excels in the fields of language, literature and liturgy. He is also the Director of St. Ephrem Ecumenical Research Institute (SEERI), Kottayam, Kerala.

²This Syriac term "Mediator" occurs 5 times in the New Testament: Gal 3:19, 20; 1 Tim 2, 5, Heb 8, 6, 9, 15, 12, 24. Another term found in the New Testament related to the term 'Mediator' is *Mṣ'ato* in the meanings of middle, midst, centre etc. It occurs 28 times in the NT. For all the references, cfr. The Concordance to the Peshitta Version of the Aramaic New Testament, American Christian Press, Ohio, 1985, No. 1842, p.210. Most of the terms found in our Hymns and prayers quoted above give an echo of Christ as Mediator suggested by 1Tim. 2, 5-6: For there is one God, and there is one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus., who gave himself as a ransom for all, the testimony of which was borne at the proper time.

Wednesday of Mid-Lent.³ A similar idea is also recorded in the title of this service provided in the Mosul Penqito “Wednesday of the 4th week of Lent. It is the middle of the Lent”.⁴

Likewise the rubrics of the service to be conducted on this day attest to the importance of the ‘middle’ or ‘centre’. “Before the service of the *Ramšo* (Evening service) people set up the cross (*šlibo*) on its stand in the centre of the church”. The wordings of the rubrics of the Pampakuda Penqito are strikingly similar. They also put in relief the ‘middle’ of the church as the place to erect the cross, representing the Redeemer of the world who was crucified on the cross erected on Golgotha, the centre of the world.

To reach the middle of the road implies that the first half is over and the second half is at hand. This central position is made relevant and meaningful also in the case of the Great Lent (*Şawmo rabo*) lasting for 50 days. One of the hymns prescribed for the Mid-Lent states that the course of the Lent has reached its middle:

O prudent ones, the course of the Lent has reached its middle (ܐܢܬܘܢ ܥܘܠܡܝܢ). Let us be diligent in repentance as far as possible. Even if we did not bear the fatigue of the day (*yuqreh d-yawmo*) nor its heat (*humeh*) with the first- [hour] and the last [hour]-labourers, let us not be slothful, my brothers, because the Lord of the vineyard sees us; let us not cease from the work of truth.⁵

The next hymn sung after the short prose prayer of incense called *Eṭro* (ܐܬܪܘ) continues to highlight the importance of the ‘middle’ of Lent. It names the Lenten season as a ‘blessed duration’ (ܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܥܘܠܡܝܢ). It should urge the children of the Church to be earnest through repentance with all the diligent ones of the Fast, in view of the approaching joy of the marriage chamber of light.⁶

³ Cfr. the Pampakuda Penqito: *Penqito d-Hudro Sha(n)tonoyo*, Vol.II (from the beginning of the Great Lent till the feast of Resurrection), Mar Julios Press, Pampakuda 1963. *Pelgeh d-Şawmo*, p. 223-233. (Henceforward PP = Pampakuda Penqito)

⁴ Mosul Penqito : *Penqito da-Şlawoto idtonoyto d-Idto Antyokoyto d-Suryoye*, Vol. III, Mosul 1891: *Pelgeh d-Şawmo*, p. 483-513.(Henceforward MP = *Mosul Penqito*)

⁵ MP p, 487.

⁶ MP p, 488

Another theme developed in the hymns of Mid-Lent is the instruction to look at Christ (ܫܘܥܝܘܢ ܕܚܝܘܫܬܐ), an expression found occasionally in Syriac inscriptions of the Cross and borrowed from Psalm 34, 6. It is also an echo of Numbers 21, 8-9 and John 3, 14-15.

O you, who are bitten by Satan, gaze at Christ (*hūr ba-Mšīho*). He is lifted up for this, that you may gaze at Him and be healed through Him. O you, who bear the ulcers from the hidden venom in the limbs of your body, through the very sight of the luminous Cross you will be healed. O you, who are moribund through the stings of evil demons, lift up your eyes, look and be healed, if you will.⁷

Christ on the cross is ‘the sign of life’ (*nišo d-hāye*); it is erected in the centre of the world, offering the cosmos ‘the medicine of healing’ (*samo d-mahlem*). The sinners need only gaze at it.

Behold Him, hung and fixed (*ho tle w-qoyem*), so that all the bitten ones may gaze at Him and be healed through Him, who is full of compassion for the wounded. O sinners, behold, He is gazing at you, so that you may gaze at Him, because in that very sight there is medicine –that heals all sores– hung like a ‘sign of life’ (ܫܘܥܝܘܢ ܕܚܝܘܫܬܐ) in the centre of the world (ܡܫܘܪܝܢ ܕܗܘܝܬܐ), that we may consider it. From it flows out great compassion to him who gazes at it.⁸

In the bronze serpent that Moses erected in the tent of the Israelites he was depicting the type of the cross. As the serpent gave healing to those who looked at it, so the cross of Christ heals all those who look at it. Moses was celebrating there only ‘the type’ (*tupso*) and sign of the mystery of the cross. The ‘reality of the type’ (*šroro*) that Moses depicted was seen on Golgotha.⁹

⁷ MP p. 489

⁸ MP p. 489

⁹ Golgotha is the centre of the world. The cross was raised in the tomb of Adam. It was also the place of the altar of Melchisedeq, sacrifice of Abraham etc. For comments on this common teaching of the fathers, see my article *Adam-Christus in den Passions sedre und in der Schatzhoehle*, OCA Vol. 221: III Symposium Syriacum, Goslar 1980, p.323-332

Moses solemnly carried (أَمَد) in the types and figures the mystery of the cross when he erected the bronze serpent (سَمَل) (سَمَلًا) and hung it so that the people might look at it¹⁰. In the type of the cross it was Christ who was lifted up on it and healed the wounds from the basilisk. ‘Afar’ (أَفَار) the types and mysteries were served, and on the summit of *Gogulto the ‘reality’* (أَفَارُ حَقِيقَةِ الْوَحْيِ).¹¹

In the following stanza Christ is presented as the ‘Mediator’ (مُتَوَسِّط), the intermediary, standing in between the two sides.¹² It provides also a detailed description of his mediation.

The Mediator of both sides (مُتَوَسِّطُ الْبَيْنِ), who reconciled all with His own blood, lifted the fence in the midst and united and made one both sides. Through His life-giving death, the blood from His side, His death and His resurrection He gave life to mortal ones. Grant peace O Lord, to Your Church and Your sheepfold through the great power of Your Cross.¹³

The last stanza of this hymn specifies the day and time as ‘Mid-Lent’ and addresses the petition for peace directly to the ‘Mediator of both sides’.

The days of the contest are now half way through. Behold O Lord, Your Church standing at the middle of Lent (مُتَوَسِّطُ الْبَيْنِ) and making supplication, while saying: Mediator of both sides (مُتَوَسِّطُ الْبَيْنِ) grant that Your peace and tranquility may reign in Your sheepfold; may it sing for You glory on festival days of joy. By Your cross, O Lord, may the injurious ones who hate the truth, be overthrown.¹⁴

What was depicted through the salvific Cross is a profound mystery (‘*rozo rabo*). And Moses, the Son of Amram perceived it while portraying it through all types, signs and figures, especially

¹⁰ Jn 3, 14; Nb 21,9

¹¹ MP p. 495 - 496.

¹² For detailed treatment of the title “Christ as the Mediator” confer *Mesites, Mesiteo*, in Gerhard Kittel (ed.) *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. IV Stuttgart 1972, p.598=-624.

¹³ MP p. 496

¹⁴ MP p. 496

that of the bronze serpent erected in the tent.¹⁵ By repeating twice the word ‘middle’ (ܡܘܨܬܐ), the hymn writer highlights the symbolism of the ‘middle’ in reference to the place of the bronze serpent, the Cross of Golgotha, and finally to the day and custom of Mid-Lent on which the cross is placed in the middle of churches of the West Syriac tradition.

Moses depicted in the bronze serpent, the type of the Cross and erected it in the middle of the tent (ܡܘܨܬܐ ܡܘܨܬܐ) to heal the victims of the serpents. The faithful Church worships Your truth, she honours Your passion, O You who vivify all (ܡܘܨܬܐ ܡܘܨܬܐ). And behold, in the middle of Your Lent (ܡܘܨܬܐ ܡܘܨܬܐ) she adores Your Cross, and with her children from all mouths she sings glory to You, who tasted death to give us life.¹⁶

The tent of Moses symbolically stands for the Church. The healing and the salvation take place in their ‘interior’ (ܡܘܨܬܐ). The next stanza highlights the importance of ‘the interior’ of both the tent and the Church (ܡܘܨܬܐ ܡܘܨܬܐ □ ܡܘܨܬܐ ܡܘܨܬܐ).

In the interior of the tent, Moses the prophet erected the serpent and gave healing to the revolting people. And behold, in the interior of the Church, the Cross, the sign of victory, gives life to all those who believe in it. Let us confess and worship the Cross, the sign of life, for it was in it that we have hope and salvation.¹⁷

In the next hymn of the *Lilyo* (Night) Service, to be sung in the melody of “*Moryo Moran*”, we find further precisions regarding our ‘Mediator’:

Lord, our Lord, who in Your love was Mediator between us and Your Father (ܡܘܨܬܐ ܡܘܨܬܐ ܡܘܨܬܐ ܡܘܨܬܐ), You reconciled us with Him (Your Father) through Your blood. May the fast and prayer of Your servants, O Lord, be pleasing to You. Pardon and forgive Your entire flock.¹⁸

¹⁵ MP p. 497

¹⁶ MP p. 497.

¹⁷ MP p.497.

¹⁸ MP p 499

The tent itself of the Israelites where the sign of salvation was erected, represented the Church. The interior (ܘܫܬܘܢܐ) of both the tent and the Church offered and offers healing to those who gaze at the sign of life placed there.

In the interior of the tent (ܘܫܬܘܢܐ ܕܡܘܨܝ) Moses the prophet erected the serpent and procured healing for the rebellious people. And behold, in the interior of the Church (ܘܫܬܘܢܐ ܕܩܝܫܬܐ) the Cross, the sign of victory, gives life to all those who believe in it. Let us confess and worship the Cross, the sign of life, for it was through it that we all have hope and salvation.¹⁹

The type of the bronze Serpent healed and gave life only to the People (‘amo), the Israelites. But its reality (šrorok), that took place through the ‘Son of man who was lifted up’ (Breh d-nošo), bestows healing and life on the Peoples (‘amme), the Gentiles. The following stanza masterfully stresses the universal offer of salvation through the ‘erected sign of life’. *Salus Populi* foreshadows *Salus Populorum*.

Your sign (ܫܘܢܐ) was placed in the likeness of the serpent, because the serpent represented also Your passion (ܫܘܢܐ).

As the serpent was erected by Moses, so were You erected on the wood; And as the serpent healed the stings of the snakes, behold Your sign (ܫܘܢܐ) heals the venom of the deadly serpents. Blessed is Your type that healed [Your] people (ܘܫܬܘܢܐ), and Your reality (ܘܫܬܘܢܐ) that gave life to the Gentiles (ܫܘܢܐ).²⁰

On the day of the Middle of the Lent the Churches of the West Syriac tradition, according to their custom, place the *Golgotha* and the cross in the middle of the church. Thereby the faithful are called upon to meditate on the three ‘middles’ namely of the holy Lent, of the Church and of the earth.

In the middle of the Church (ܘܫܬܘܢܐ ܕܩܝܫܬܐ) I will glorify You, Christ, King of all worlds.

¹⁹ MP p. 499.

²⁰ MP p 496

In the middle of holy Lent (صَحْرُحْلَاهُ وَيَوْمًا كَبِيمًا) I will bless and praise Your name, because in the middle of the earth (أُتْرُكًا; أُنْجُلًا) You wrought our salvation through Your crucifixion.

And in the middle of the Lent (صَحْرُحْلَاهُ وَيَوْمًا) it is just that we worship the symbol of Your Cross by which we all have salvation.²¹

According to the last stanza of the *Bo'uto of Mar Jacob of Sarug* of the Night Service, the beginning of the course of the Lent is connected to the Father, its middle to the Son, and its completion (the Paschal Feast) to the Holy Spirit.

Glory be to the Father, through whom we began the course of the Lent. Worship to the Son, by whose help we arrived at its middle (أُنْجُلًا; أُنْجُلًا). Praise to the Spirit who grants us all entry to the Paschal Feast. Blessed is He who gladdens us all at His Paschal Feast. To Him be glory.²²

2. Christ, as the “Mediator” in the East Syriac Tradition

Similar themes highlighting the importance of Mid-Lent and the mediator-ship of Christ in salvation are recorded also in the **East Syriac liturgical tradition**. One finds such relevant hymns and prayers in the *Hudra*, containing the prayers for Sundays and Feast days.²³ Here also the 25th day of Lent is called ‘Mid-Lent’ (وَيَوْمًا كَبِيمًا).²⁴ The East Syriac Churches do now not have the custom of placing a cross solemnly in the centre of the church on the day of Mid-Lent. But in theory the *bema* which represents earthly Jerusalem, wherein one finds the cross on Golgotha, is the middle of the earth, and the liturgy begins there. It contains, however, hymns and prayers that are relevant for the significance of the mediator-role of Christ and for the centrality of the cross in the salvific mission of ‘Ammanuel’. The antiphon after the Psalm 51, *rahem ‘alay* “have mercy upon me”, for example, six times uses the

²¹ MP p. 500

²² MP p.501

²³ *Ktaba da-qdam wad-batar wad-hudra wad-kaškul*, Mar Narsai Press, Trichur 1961. (Henceforth *Hudra*).

²⁴ *Hudra* V. II-316-326 (= vol.2, p. 316-326).

various derivatives of the term (مُرْحَلًا, مَرَحَلًا) to be in the midst / a mediator / intermediary etc.

Christ, who conversed with the human race of the house of Adam through the mediation of Your humanity (مُرْحَلًا), and was in Your love the mediator (مُرْحَلًا) between the humans and the angels, uniting perfectly the ones with the others in a bond of harmony, today Your chosen Church has arrived at the middle of Your lent (مُرْحَلًا), O Mediator (مُرْحَلًا) by virtue of Your being the Mediator (مُرْحَلًا), You pulled down the wall of anger and wrath, and reconciled the world with Your Sender.²⁵

The same prayer continues after *šabāh*: Here we notice that the prayer emphasizes not only the ‘beginning’ and the ‘completion’ of the Lord’s Fast as propitious, but also its ‘middle’. To have reached the middle is significant and impels us to arrive at the end.

Make worthy, O Lord, Your worshippers (p.326) that they may reach the end of Your contest and, on account of the beginning

(مُرْحَلًا), the middle (مُرْحَلًا) and the end (مُرْحَلًا) [of it], may we raise to You incessant praise and glory O Lord of all.²⁶

The next stanza records the very same expression of the *Pelgeh d-Sawmo* as in West Syriac Liturgical texts:

[bh] May Christ, who strengthened, supported, encouraged and made us worthy to reach the middle of His holy Fast (مُرْحَلًا), bring to perfection in us the power of Your divine grace and in Your mercy make us worthy to arrive at its end (مُرْحَلًا) and be pleasing to Your Majesty.²⁷

²⁵ Hudra, p. 325. This being a prayer, I changed the 3rd person into 2nd person in translation.

²⁶ Hudra, p.325-326

²⁷ Hudra p. 326.

The next stanza also dwells on Christ the Mediator and asks Him to bless those who have come to Mid-lent.

[bh]²⁸ O Christ, the Mediator (ܡܨܘܚܘܬܐ) between God and man, your worshippers have come today to the middle of Your Holy Fast (ܦܫܬܐ ܕܚܘܫܬܐ ܩܘܕܫܐ); O Mediator (ܡܨܘܚܘܬܐ) of the divinity and humanity, make us worthy to reach the end of Your glorious Fast (ܦܫܬܐ ܕܚܘܫܬܐ ܩܘܕܫܐ); O [You] who enabled us, by Your power, to begin (ܡܨܘܚܘܬܐ) and come to the middle (ܦܫܬܐ), grant us to come to the end (ܦܫܬܐ) with the power of Your support. To You be glory and praise, Lord of all, Amen.²⁹

A *Tešbuhta* – a hymn of glory – of the same service likewise highlights the importance of the middle of the Fast.

My beloved, Lent has divided itself in Two (ܦܫܬܐ ܕܚܘܫܬܐ). Let everyone (ܦܫܬܐ) part with his heinous deeds at the end of his life and cease from his shameful deeds. Behold the Fast of Our Lord has come to its middle (ܦܫܬܐ ܕܚܘܫܬܐ ܩܘܕܫܐ). Blessed is he who parts with his debts (ܦܫܬܐ), his shameful and absurd deeds, and cleanses them by means of his supplications.³⁰

Here the verb *plag* which means to divide, part with, be in the middle etc. is repeated four times - evidently to emphasize the theme of the arrival at the middle of the Lent.

3. Conclusion

It is fitting to conclude this series of hymns of Mid-Lent that dwells on the theme of Christ as Mediator with a citation from the *Bo'uto* of Mor Aprem sung during the Morning Service, *Sapra*, on the Wednesday of Mid-Lent. It is a prayer addressed directly to the 'Mediator' and to the 'Benevolent Philanthropist' (*ʔobo w-Roḥemnošo*).

²⁸ Here *beh* could be translated as: "with it". It seems to express a link to the previous piece.

²⁹ Hudra p. 326

³⁰ Hudra p. 328

In Your Love, O Lord, You were the Mediator between us and the heavenly Father (حَسْبُكَ هُنَا يَا رَبُّنَا مَا بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَ سَمَاءِ سَمَاءِ) (سَلَامًا مَعَكُمْ). Be also now the Mediator at the middle of the holy Lent (يَا رَبُّنَا مَا بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَ سَمَاءِ سَمَاءِ) and may we be accepted by Your Grace, [O You] the Benevolent One and Lover of man (أُو الْكُلِّ وَوَسِيمًا)³¹

Finally it is important to note that Christ did not actually use the term ‘mediator’ in reference to Himself. On the contrary He proclaimed a religion without mediation. He is not a mediator like other prophets such as Moses. Rather He is more the “decisive self-offering of God.” The theology of ‘mediator’ is a later contribution, the roots of which can be traced back to St Paul and to other Fathers of the Church.³²

4. Appendix:

In the appendix I include the three ‘Prose’ prayers, known as *Prumion*³³ (a kind of short introductory prayer), *Sedro*³⁴ (the principal prayer that develops and unfolds the theology and petitions

³¹ MP, p, 507

³² For more comments Cfr. Alois Grillmeier mit Theresia Hainthaler *Jesus der Christus im Glauben der Kirche, Verlag Herder Freiburg im Breisgau 1989/2004: vol 2/2, “Mittler” p. 43-46, 326.*

³³ *Prumion* = Introduction prelude. It is a short doxological prayer of introduction of the theme of the Feast/Saint celebrated or commemorated, generally without any reference to the rite of incense. According to J. Mateos, these represent later developments of the earlier and simpler doxology known as Gloria Patri ... For more details: Cfr. His article *Trois recueils anciens de Prooemia syriens*, OCP 33 (1967), p. 457-482. Also cfr. J. Thekeparambil *Sedre and Rite of Incense in the West Syrian liturgy*, Doctorate Thesis, Institut Catholique de Paris, 1977.

³⁴ *Sedro* = Order, rank, line etc. It is a liturgical term related to the *Seder* of the Jewish liturgy. In the West Syriac Liturgical Tradition, *Sedro* represents the main prayer of incense developing the theology of a Feast or a commemoration and relevant petitions. For more details, cfr. G. Khouri Sarkis, *Sedre dans l’Eglise syrienne d’Antioche*, OS1 (l’Orient Syrien), Paris 1956, p 88-96 ; J. Mateos, *Sedre et prières connexes dans quelques anciennes collections*, OCP 28 (1962) p. 239-87. Cfr. also my thesis cited in footnote 28 above.

Temple- Criticism and Reformation for a New Ecclesiological Paradigm

Ebin K. Alias¹

Introduction

Jerusalem Temple has a special position in the social, economic, political and religious life of Jewish community. As the only one Temple of the Jewish people, it unites them as one community giving them a unique identity. But many a time it becomes the centre of power, wealth and thus also the centre of exploitation. Similarly, Christian Church which was also a symbol of equality and justice became the centre of power and wealth and exploitation of the poor. Gospel of Mark is an important source for the criticism of Jesus against Jerusalem Temple in the exploitation of poor and margins. A similar attitude we can see in Luther's writing of ninety-five theses. In this paper we are analysing the response of Jesus Christ and Martin Luther to the ruining of the Church and examine its implication to the present ecclesial context.

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1. Jerusalem Temple

The Temple has a central position in the social economical and religious life of Jewish community. The main activity in the Temple is of blood sacrifice, the people are required to offer sacrifice on a daily, weekly, monthly basis and also at the major religious festivals. People offered sacrifice if they committed any trespasses or if they wanted to thank God for the blessings. Thus Jewish people were expected to come on a regular basis to worship at the Temple. As the religious institution, Priests were the custodians of Law and also responsible for teaching it to the people.² The Jerusalem Temple played a central religious and cultic role in the Jewish life till the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E. Although there were conducted numerous activity, for the people, Temple was the place of presence of God, sign of election of people of Israel and the central worship place³

The Temple was the centre of accumulation of extensive wealth through different types of tithes, taxes, offerings, vows and donations. Part of it was used for the building purposes of Jerusalem city. The presence of huge wealth in the treasury attracted many foreign invaders and its controlling. The Temple also served as the bank in which the rich Jews kept their money on deposit and possibly lent money. But the important thing is that there was no way of access for the common people to the Temple treasury for their any kind of survival.⁴ Joachim Jeremias explains two industries connected with the building of the Temple and its ceremonial as the buildings and the cults. They made the Temple as the economic capital. The rebuilding of the Temple completed only in 62-64 C.E. around 18000 people were working in the rebuilding of the Temple when it was completed. The ceremonial activity was not interrupted even a single day during

²Lester L. Grabbe, *Second Temple Judaism: History and Religion of the Jews in the Time of Nehemiah, the Maccabees, Hillel and Jesus* (London: T&T Clark, 2010), 39, 40.

³Sam P. Mathew, *Temple- Criticism in Mark's Gospel: The Economic Role of the Jerusalem Temple During the First Century C.E* (Delhi: ISPCK, 1999), XVIII.

⁴Mathew, *Temple- Criticism*, XIX.

these long years of rebuilding. Thousands of people were working in the cultic preparations and other activities in the Temple.⁵ The Temple authorities had political support of the Roman government and many a time functioned as the important agency of the economic exploitation of the Roman government in the collection of taxes and building projects in Jerusalem as during the Herodian time the office of the high priest was under the control of Herod. As economic exploitation was the main agenda of the Roman Empire, they had great interest in the Temple treasury.⁶

2. Gospel of Mark

The Gospel of Mark is well known for its special focus on the subaltern groups. One of the strongest groups in the community of Mark is the subalterns. The use of the word ὄχλος (crowd) over against λαός (people) has deep ideological and theological implication. ὄχλος explains a casual non-membership group of people, fairly large in size but λαός refers to the people of God. In the Jewish context the first term refers to the ordinary masses and second term refers to the religious authorities. Mark explains the resistance of the first against the second.⁷ For J D Kingsbury, Mark explains two contrasting approaches of the ὄχλος to Jesus, until Jesus' arrest they well-disposed to Jesus, the crowd searches for Jesus (Mark 1: 37) but in the passion narrative they support the religious authorities for the crucifixion of Jesus. Which explains the vulnerability of the ὄχλος but in being well disposed toward Jesus, the crowd stands in sharp contrast to its leaders, the religious authorities.⁸

⁵Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, trans. F.H and C.H. Cave (London: SCM Press, 1969), 21-26.

⁶Richard A. Horsley, *Jesus and Empire: The Kingdom of God and the New World Disorder* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 32, 33.

⁷David Joy, *Mark and Its Subalterns* (London: Equinox, 2008), 114.

⁸Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Conflict in Mark: Jesus, Authorities, Disciples* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 21-23.

The priestly class is portrayed as the major power centre in Jerusalem, governing the Temple and enjoying the fruits of religious customs and practices. But it is also important to note that they became the oppressive tool of the Roman imperial rule for preserving their power and position. It explains their intolerance toward the Jesus movement. Other important social and religious groups are Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians and the Scribes.⁹

Markan attitude toward the Temple is unique and important. For Gerd Theissen, “as far as the Temple as an institution is concerned we find in the other gospels a softening of Mark’s explicit Temple criticism.”¹⁰ That is, Theissen is arguing for a strong criticism of Temple in the Gospel of Mark. Craig A. Evans also identifies Jesus’ criticism toward Temple establishment in Mark 11: 17 as ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nation but you have made it a cave of robbers.’¹¹ Sam P. Mathew takes a too sharp position in this as, for him, from the beginning till the end of Mark’s Gospel the author seems to be critical of the Temple (Mark 1:2; 15:38). For him Mark Gospel is full of explicit and implicit critic of the Jerusalem Temple, he presents the explicit criticism such as Mark 7:9-13, 11:15-19, 12:1-12; 28-34; 38-40 and the implicit criticism such as 1:40-45, 2:15-17, 7:1-8, 7:14-23 and so on. Mark Gospel is a gospel of the poor and marginalised, it explains Jesus’ solidarity with them and Mark’s Temple criticism should be viewed in this context.¹²

3. Temple Criticism in Mark 11:15-19

Temple- Criticism means the critical statement in the New Testament concerning the Jerusalem Temple.¹³ The passage Mark

⁹Joy, *Mark and Its Subalterns*, 103.

¹⁰Gerd Theissen, forward to *Temple- Criticism in Mark’s Gospel: The Economic Role of the Jerusalem Temple During the First Century C.E.*, by Sam P. Mathew (Delhi: ISPCK, 1999), XIV.

¹¹Craig A. Evans, “Mark,” in *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible*, eds. James D. G. Dunn and John W. Rogerson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 1064.

¹²Mathew, *Temple- Criticism*, XX.

¹³Mathew, *Temple- Criticism*, XV1.

11:15-19 is presented in between a miracle story of Jesus' cursing the fig tree (11:12-14, 20-21) and a conclusion consisting of a series of Jesus teaching about the importance of faith and its bearing on prayer (11:22-25). The relation between the cursing of the fig tree and cleansing of the Temple are strongly debated. Another debate is on the intention of the Jesus portrayed in the narration, whether it is a reformation or a judgment?¹⁴

The context of the Jesus action against the Temple authorities is related to the Temple functions in the Passover time. The worship in the Temple is integrated with the offering of sacrifices and the once- a-year collection of the Temple tax. Every male of the Israel above twenty-year-old age has to pay the Temple tax of half- shekel (Exodus 30:11-16; Nehemiah: 10:32-33). Payment had to be made by using the Tyrian silver half-shekel. To facilitate this, table were arranged for money changing in the provinces of Passover. All these practices were profit oriented, functioning under the leadership of the priests as the exchange of the money involved the charge of 4-8 percent. Also for the sacrifice, they sold the blemish-free sacrifices, "certified/approved" sacrifices in the court of the Gentile within the Temple itself. These also were profitable venture under the control of the priests.¹⁵ The actions of Jesus in the Temple-criticism includes

a) Expulsion of Sellers and Buyers (11: 15b)

Jesus expelled (ἐκβαλλω) those who sold (πολέω) things in the Temple. Fernando Belo explains the term ἐκβαλλειν as for the expulsion of unclean spirit, that is the narrative shows those who expelled as in the same category of unclean spirit.¹⁶ Those who sold are the people who traded to the victims for the Temple sacrifices, they traded materials such as wine, oil, and salt, and those who bought (ἀγοράζω) are the pilgrims who needed such

¹⁴Robert H. Stein, *Mark* (Michigan: Baker Academic, 2008), 508,509.

¹⁵Stein, *Mark*, 515.

¹⁶Fernando Belo, *A Materialistic Reading of the Gospel of Mark* (New York: Orbis Book, 1975), 180.

things for the sacrifice. The scene is probably in the court of the Gentiles.¹⁷ Sam P. Mathew explains that, the repetition of the verb *πολέω* and use of the other commercial terms such as *ἀγοράζω* explains the actions was specifically against the commercial activity in the Temple and Jesus' strong criticism for that.¹⁸

b) Overturning the Tables of Money- Changers (v. 15c)

The Greek word *κόλλυβος* is a small coin or a rate of exchange, and thus *κολλυβιστῶν* means money- changer. These men sat at their table or 'bank' for the purpose of the exchange of Greek or Roman money of the pilgrims into Jewish or Tyrian coinage in which alone the Temple dues could be paid.¹⁹ It can be noted that the word used for table *τραπέζα* is same word used by Luke 19:23 and also Josephus to denote bank. That is, the main emphasis of the Mark is at the banking operations. It is clear when we consider the cosmopolitan nature of the Jerusalem and diaspora Jews bringing money from whole the Mediterranean world, that the money changers as the representatives of powerful banking interests centered in the Temple. So Jesus action can be viewed as Jesus' attack on the exploitation of the common people by the powerful in the name of Temple tax.²⁰

c) Overturning the seats of Dove- sellers (v.15c)

For Evans, Rabbinic tradition affirms the presence of money changing tables that placed in the Temple.²¹ Mark explains the seats (*καθέδρα*) of those who sold doves, the offerings of the poor for the purification of the women (Leviticus 12:6, Luke 2:22-24), the cleansing of the lepers (Leviticus 14:22) and other purposes.²² The word *καταστρέφω* typically means to destroy a place or building, and thus Mark describes Jesus' action with the

¹⁷Vincent Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark* (London: Macmillan & Co, 1957), 462.

¹⁸Mathew, *Temple- Criticism*, 141.

¹⁹Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, 462.

²⁰Mathew, *Temple- Criticism*, 142, 143.

²¹Craig A. Evans, *Mark 8:27-16:20*, Word Biblical Commentary 34: B (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001), 172.

²²Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, 462.

provocative image of destruction.²³ The doves should be right, youth, perfect, uncontaminated, and properly reared. That is the dove- sellers should be specialist in examining these things and warranted them for the sacrifice. The term καθέδρα means the seats reserved for philosophers, rabbis, teachers and priests. Thus the dove- sellers looked as if they were teachers or rabbis and it explains the exploitation of the poor by the Temple leadership. Since the Tyrian currency was required to purchase the dove, the poor were more exploited by those who control the shops. Jesus' this particular action shows his concern over poor especially to women and the lepers, who were the extreme victims of the social oppression and economic exploitation by the Temple leaders and their agents. It also presents Jesus' attitude towards the purity law that discriminated the women and lepers by made them inferior in the society and also demanded sacrifices for economic exploitation.²⁴ Martin Hengel also views this as a demonstrative condemnation of the trade, a condemnation against the ruling Temple aristocracy, which derived profit from it.²⁵ Simon Samuel views Jesus' action as an attack on the power structures in the Temple complex.²⁶

Taylor concludes Jesus' action as a spirited protest against the injustice and the abuse of the Temple system. For him, there is no doubt that the pilgrims were exploited by the traders. He also argues for the public support for Jesus in this action as there was no strong opposition from the soldiers and Temple authorities in this.²⁷ For Craig A. Evans Jesus' action was a prophetic protest and pronouncement against corruption, that is, it has a strong connection with the purity concerns.²⁸ The exploitation of the poor

²³ Timothy C. Gray, *The Temple in the Gospel of Mark* (Michigan: Baker Academic, 2008), 27.

²⁴ Mathew, *Temple- Criticism*, 145.

²⁵ Martin Hengel, *Was Jesus a revolutionist?* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 17.

²⁶ Simon Samuel, *A Postcolonial Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus* (New York: T&T Clark, 2007), 138.

²⁷ Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, 463.

²⁸ Evans, *Mark 8:27-16:20*, 170,171.

in the name of the purity pollution norms is a strong point of concern in the action of Jesus. The poor especially women and lepers were socially and economically exploited by the religious authority and these actions could be seen as a strong call for reformation of Jewish religious system especially Jerusalem Temple system.

Temple-Criticism & Luther's writing of Ninety-Five Theses

In the beginning of the 16th century, the life of the common people who were working in the land in Europe was pathetic. They lived a miserable life supporting the Church and the nobility with their toil, sweat, taxes.²⁹ Many of the peasants labored not only to sustain himself and his dependents but also to meet the demands of the Church. To the Church, they had to pay three tithe, one over the grain, then on fruits and vegetables and finally over the livestock. Also to their landlords they had to pay a fixed percentage of all they produced twice a year as a rent for his land.³⁰ This situation gave rise to many peasant movements in Europe, especially in Germany. This economic situation by the exploitation of the Church and the feudal landlords contributed to the wild acceptance of the reformation message among the common people.

Indulgences

For Philip Reynolds, "According to a doctrine established in the thirteenth century, an indulgence is the complete or partial remission by the Church of temporal punishment"³¹ (as opposed to

²⁹ Arthur Jayakumar, *History of Reformation Period* (Kolkata: SCEPTRE, 2014), 35.

³⁰ Edith Simon, *The Reformation* (Amsterdam: Time- Life International, 1967), 23

³¹ In the 13th C Catholic Church formulated the idea of 'treasury of merits' it was a spiritual bank of sorts that contained the good work performed by Jesus Christ, Saints, and all the pious, or devoted, Christians. In other words, as Jesus and other saints lived better lives than necessary to get into heaven, their good deeds have been left on Earth in the treasury of merits. Good deeds from this treasury could be redistributed to Christians believers in the form of indulgences. One would give money to his or her clergyman, who would in turn a withdrawal from the spiritual bank on behalf of person who paid for the indulgence. This system was supposed to reduce the amount of time the soul spent in the purgatory. (Jayakumar, *History of Reformation Period*, 56, 57).

the eternal punishment of hell) for sins that have already been forgiven, provided that certain condition (for example, going on a pilgrimage, going on or supporting a crusade, almsgiving, making a contribution toward the building of a Church or of a hospital) have been fulfilled.³² The later middle ages saw extreme abuses of the indulgences by the unrestricted sale of the indulgences by the professional pardoners, this is considered as an immediate occasion of the Reformation.³³ It also became another exploitation agent against the poor farmers to accumulate wealth on the Church treasury for their luxury, huge building projects and crusade by exploiting the guilt feeling of human heart through establishing purity and pollution norms.

Martin Luther's Ninety-Five Thesis

The response of Martin Luther on the indulgence is debated. Scholars like Reynolds views that it is out of his concern over the misinterpretation of the doctrine.³⁴ But Arthur Jayakumar connect his response with his concern over his people, which is clear from his letter to the Archbishop Albert by saying he had to give an account of the souls entrusted to his Episcopal care. The important argument of Luther was that if God could release the souls from purgatory with the buying of indulgence then God would be cruel to do so because the poor cannot buy indulgence. He tried to convince his people by his teaching. Then he wrote his ninety- five theses. It was a response to the Church authorities as he wrote the thesis in Latin, Latin was the language of the scholars and his aim was the academic discussion on the issue of indulgence.³⁵ In the fiftieth theses he writes, "Christians are to be taught that if the Pope knew the exactions of the indulgence preachers, he would rather that the basilica of St. Peter were

³²Philip L. Reynolds, "Indulgences," *The Oxford Encyclopaedia of the Reformation* 2: 314.

³³F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone eds., "Indulgence," in *Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Massachusetts: Oxford University Press, 1997), 830.

³⁴Reynolds, "Indulgences," 314.

³⁵Jayakumar, *History of Reformation Period*, 57, 58.

burned to ashes than built up with the skin, flesh, and bones of his sheep.”³⁶

The response of Martin Luther can be seen in the background of Jesus’ Temple criticism. There are some important reasons for that, one and most important one is that both are doing this out of their concern over common people; they were exploited by the religious authorities in the name of pollution/sin. Both are doing their criticism for the reformation of the Church and against the authorities. So the conclusion will be Martin Luther might be influenced by the Temple criticism by Jesus Christ in his action against the Catholic Church authorities.

Critical evaluation of Present Indian Church

Jesus came to promote a counter culture and promoted the vision of the Church as a movement for the fullness of life for all. But the Church became an institution from the fourth century with royal patronage. The Church in India with its close association with the colonial powers is also fall into the same destiny. M. M. Thomas rightly observes in Chenchiah as, “all history was proof that any movement of the Spirit loses its potential when it gets institutionalised into a community, a sect, a caste.”³⁷ Indian Church is a minority in the Land and predominantly a Church of Subaltern like Adivasi, Dalit, Tribal communities. But the hard reality is that the Church cannot perform its duty as the mediator of fullness of life. James Massey explain this situation as Christian Dalits are twice- discriminated. The first level discrimination is by the government on the basis of religion and the second level of discrimination is within the walls of the Church.³⁸ Aruna Gnanadasan analyse the situation as “in the Indian Church we hesitate to create space for women as well for

³⁶Martin Luther, *Luther’s The Ninety-Five Theses*, ed. Harold J. Grimm, trans. Charles H. Jacobs (Saint Luis: San Val Inc., 2003), 7.

³⁷M. M. Thomas, “Pandippedi Chenchiah” in *Towards an Indian Christian Theology: Life and Thought of Some Pioneers*, eds. M. M. Thomas and P. T. Thomas (Tiruvalla: The New Day Publications of India, 1992), 156.

³⁸James Masey, “The Role of Churches in the Whole Dalit Issue,” *Religion and Society* 41(1994): 44-50.

those on the margins of our society, because we are unable to confront and dismantle patriarchy and caste: both of which are rooted deep in our ecclesiologies.”³⁹ Jacob Peenikaparambil views the tendency that is gaining momentum in all religions in India as commercialization of religion, using God and religion for amassing money.⁴⁰ For Mor Coorilose “The Churches continue to build structures and institutions which only cater to the needs and interests of the rich and the middle class. While condemning globalisation and emerging consumerist culture using the strongest possible jargons, the leaders of the Church and the ecclesiastical hierarchy indulge in luxurious life style. The global market has effectively supplanted the traditional Church and money has replaced God.”⁴¹

New ecclesiological Paradigm

In the Temple- criticism of Jesus and Ninety-five theses of Martin Luther, they were critically looking at their Church context and proposing a new ecclesial paradigm. Their ecclesial paradigm was an egalitarian and non-exploitative Church. Jesus proposed it in Mark 11:17b as ‘a house of prayer for all nation’. This is a direct quotation from the LXX⁴² text of Isaiah 56:7. The context of the Isaiah explains that this intended to be inclusive and open to all the nation and people. There is also an indication of the criticism of the purity laws that restricted entrance into the Temple. For Sam P. Mathew, the “real purpose of the use of this quotation was to create an atmosphere of prayer for all people including the marginalised groups.”⁴³ Luther explains a similar view about the Church in his writings in 1520 ‘On the Freedom of the Christian,’ his most influential and enduring work. In this he argues that gospel freed human beings from sin and self, so they

³⁹Aruna Gnanadasan, “Being a Lay Women in the Indian Church Today,” *Religion and Society* 61(2016):74- 80.

⁴⁰Jacob Peenikaparambil, “Jesus a Rebel” *Indian Currents* 21(2017): 40-42.

⁴¹George Mathew Nalunnakkal, *New Beings and New Communities* (Thiruvalla: KCC, 1998), 63, 64.

⁴²Septuagint

⁴³Mathew, *Temple- Criticism*,148, 149.

are no longer under the power of the Church and the bondage of sacramental system of penance and good works.⁴⁴ Elizabeth Fiorenza in her ground-breaking work, 'Discipleship of Equals' explains the significance and meaning of the 'ekklesia' as the democratic decision-making assembly of equals as a counter term to the structures of dominion and exclusion, based on her deep interaction with the gospels and other New Testament literature. She proposed it as an ecclesiological paradigm in the context of exclusion of the subaltern, especially women.⁴⁵

In the new ecclesiological paradigm, it is important to think about the mission of the Church. Jesudas Athyal presents a new dimension of diakonia ministry of the Church. For him, diakonia includes the prophetic ministry and participation in the struggles for justice. He proposes a restructuring of the Church with the existential realities of the people around it. For that the Church should be prepared to undergo a process of self-criticism. It is in this tension between the mission to the world and the openness to meaningfully transform one's own structures, that the Church should seek patterns of diaconal ministry relevant for our times.⁴⁶

Jesus was proposing a house of prayer for all the nation and Luther was envisioning a Church of freedom for all, we are also expecting a Church which is not centred on the dominant values such as market and profit, power and domination but a Church that cares for the suffering of the poor, empowering the weak, equal position for all without any discrimination, also challenging any attempt to exploit the poor and weak. Sam P. Mathew explains it as, Jesus protested against the oppressive system and its leaders, he cared for those who suffered from this system by helping them

⁴⁴Theodore G. Tappert, ed., *Selected Writings of Martin Luther* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), 40.

⁴⁵Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza, *Discipleship of Equals: A Critical Feminist Ekklesiology of Liberation* (New York: Crossroad, 1994), 105, 106.

⁴⁶Jesudas M. Athyal, "An Exploration of the Diaconal Ministry of the Church," *Religion and Society* 60(2015): 77-98.

and he presented an alternative community which is non-exploitative.⁴⁷

Conclusion

The paper examined the action of Jesus explained in Mark 11: 15 as the Temple- Criticism and the ninety-five theses of Martin Luther as a response to the exploitation of the Church on the poor and marginalised by using purity- pollution norms in Mark Gospel and the idea of sin and doctrine of indulgence in the Roman Catholic Church. It is evaluated as an attempt to reform the Church from its exploitative character into its original nature of egalitarian and marginal nature. It is presented by using Jesus' expression of house of prayer for all nations and Martin Luther expression of Church of freedom from the domination and exploitation of sacraments and authorities. Based on this frame work the paper attempted a critical evaluation of the present context of the Church and argued for the need for reformation. In that attempt the paper propose an ecclesial paradigm out of the teaching of Jesus Christ and writings of Luther in which discerning the signs of the time as the starting point of the mission and margin as the focus of the mission. Thus the paper attempted to bring the message of Jesus' Temple criticism and Luther's reformation into the present Indian Christian Church context.

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⁴⁷ Mathew, Temple- Criticism, 279, 280.

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Bill Viola: A Poet of New Media

Aji George¹

Bill Viola is a worldwide renowned name in contemporary art. His works were the foundation for the development of video art as an art form especially in the field of modern art. He also contributed significantly to its development in terms of technology adoption and content. He is known not only as a visual genius but also as a poet of video art because of his aesthetic sense of expression of a moving image which was enriched with emotional values in order to give the viewer an experience of multi-sensory limits of emotional and mystical transport². Using the inner language of subjective thoughts and collective memories, his videos have the ability to reach out to a larger audience and allowing experiencing his work directly, without the requirement of any further explanations.

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² Cfr. BORDINI S., *Arte elettronica: I grandi movimenti artistici*, op. cit., p.38.

1. Bill Viola: Life and career

Born in 1951, Bill Viola grew up in Queens and Westbury New York .The Syracuse University in 1973 awarded him his BFA in experimental studios. After graduation he worked as a technical director of production at “art/tapes/22” in Florence, Italy for 18 months. He then later spent his time travelling to Solomon Islands, Java, Bali, and Japan to record traditional art forms. In 1977 viola received an invitation from Kira Perov to show his videos at La Trobe University in Australia. A year later, Perov moved down to New York, where she and viola got married. They have worked together ever since then³.

In 1980, As a part of a cultural exchange they lived in Japan where under Zen master Daien Tanaka they studied Buddhism and eastern spirituality. During this period, Sony’s Atsugi research lab invited Viola to serve as the first artist-in-residence⁴. Since then his work has been exhibited at various places such as museum of modern art in New York, the national gallery in London, Guggenheim gallery of art in Berlin, Guggenheim (New York), the Whitney museum of American art, Getty Los Angeles and the metropolitan museum of art in New York.

Viola was also bestowed the privilege of being the U.S. representative for the 46th Venice biennale, where he showcased ‘Buried Secrets’, a collection of five installations and also 'The Greeting'. Viola also served at the Getty research institute in Los Angeles as a scholar in residence in the year 1998 and also had the privilege of being elected to the American academy of arts and sciences in 2000. He currently lives and works in long beach, California⁵.

2. Evolution of his work

The evolution of Viola’s work has been very tied to the evolution of technology. In 1964, at the tender age of 13 he had

³ Cfr. www.billviola.com <30.12.2018>

⁴ Cfr. <http://www.billviola.com/biograph.htm> <30.12.2018>

⁵ Ibid.

his first encounter with moving image using his parents' 8mm movie camera. The first experience with video made him believe that this is the tool he was looking for and decided to give himself to video for the rest of his life⁶. That time medium was very primitive, low quality and only black and white images were available. He committed to video medium and started working with it when he was an art student in Syracuse University. He had a clear vision of the vitality of video in electronic age and the way video conceived and moving out into the social life and modern culture.

As one of the best-known video artists today, the artistic career of Viola has evolved along with the development of image technology. He considered technological development as the evolution of a painter in regard to his knowledge about his medium, as if a painter learned to paint with only a limited set of colours in the beginning of career and then every year there were more colours, more techniques and that's what happened in video⁷. He uses a wide variety of image tools for his production: both film camera and HD camera are used for depicting images. He regarded the image technology as the paint and the editing table is his palate where different technologies intersect to form a final product.

He didn't like the concept of art as a depiction of a moment of a time: an arrested action or an effect of light and darkness. Instead he looked for the unfolding of a continuous condition in life and society.

One of the things the camera taught me was to see the world, the same world that my eye sees, in its metaphoric, symbolic state. This condition is, in fact, always present, latent in the world

⁶ Cfr. VIOLETTE R. & VIOLA B., *Reasons for knocking at an empty house*, Thames and Hudson, London, 2005, p.287.

⁷ Cfr. VIOLA B., *Going forth by day*, Deutsche Guggenheim, Berlin, 2003, p.111.

around us. I want to look so close at things that their intensity burn through your retina and on to the surface of your mind.⁸

It was an attempt to come closer to the essence and existence of the source. For which he liked to move along with technology and to incorporate the best technology in the world to visualize his ideas. At the same he tried to avoid rendering a static realism in his works. He formulates an interest beyond the accuracies of a phenomenal world.

3. Nature of his work

Viola's art has the ability to reach out even to the common man because of its profound nature of spirituality and compassionate approach to humanity. In this world of never ending signs and signification, Viola has always possess the energy to make an meaningful big statements⁹. His statements are mostly related to human life and its relation to the universe, to the soul and human spirit, to nature, and to death. He is one of those rare artists whose work makes us aware of our nature as human beings.

He takes art back to what were once its fundamental concerns and gives it a relevance to the emotional and spiritual lives of ordinary people. But Viola's work is in accordance to our time. Even though his interest lies in the recreation of old fashioned Italian renaissance¹⁰, he uses the most innovative and modern tools of production for his work. The technological means of modern audio visual production: high speed film, high-definition video, the LCD screen, sophisticated recording and relation of sound and image, are used in different ways in order to challenge the prevailing intellectual and artistic traditions prevailing for the last one hundred and fifty years.

⁸ Ibid., p. 78.

⁹ Cfr. TOWNSEND, C.(ed.), *The art of Bill Viola*, Thames & Hudson, London, 2004, p. 10.

¹⁰ Viola is exceptionally influenced by the fresco paintings of renaissance period and many of his work are considered to be the fresco paintings portrayed on video screen.

The critics' opinion about Bill Viola's work is that he creates an environment that totally immerses the viewer in both sound and image. Candice Breitz describes Viola's *The Greeting* as

It prompts you to think about the relationship between photography and painting . . . you start to feel a collapse of the border between painting and photography.¹¹

This is one of the best compliments awarded to an artist by a critic. Viola was able to achieve the feeling of a painting by letting the viewer stand in front of the work and make him/her sense the same feelings that he was trying to portray. He cleverly preconceives the intention of his viewers and integrates his expertise and experience to their expectations. At the same time he doesn't want to let them explore only the visual fantasy in his work. According to John Haber,

Bill Viola makes illusions but does not believe in them. He depends on a lens, the lens of his video camera, but he wants to startle the viewer out of illusion. He wants to bring art back to a more primal humanity.¹²

Here again he is known for working in a ways which many film makers and artist are unable to. Bill Viola allows the audience to reach out and feel the emotions and to make a soulful connection which may have been disconnected, resulting in the transformation in internal and personal dialogue. Here, Viola's art address the inner space of experience to which we are rarely given access.

Viola often uses ultra-slow-motion camera techniques to enhance the viewers' involvement and thereby enabling them to connect with the content at a deeper level. The nature of his work has been accepted and understood not only from the usual contemporary art circles alone but also from the outside world

¹¹ Cfr. TOWNSEND, C.(ed.), *The art of Bill Viola*, op. cit., p. 47.

¹² Ibid.

resulting in the opening up of new avenues for comments, some praising highly while others criticizing its obviousness.

Bill Viola's video installations are like a total environment that envelops the viewer both in image and sound by using the high definition image technology with distinguished precision and direct simplicity. His works are exhibited in different museums and galleries all over the world and are also found to be a part of many famous collections¹³. His videotapes have been presented in cinema format and widely broadcasted, while his writing has been extensively published and translated.

Bill Viola is noted for the repetition of images throughout his videos/films. The idea of water plays an important part in most of his pieces. It helps to portray the strong feelings of Viola and helps the viewer to relate to something that he knows. He provides the viewer the ability to appreciate both the internal and external aspects of his works¹⁴. The water seems to drown the idea which he is trying to portray and hence trying to get closer to the viewer. He has unlimited creativity which comes across to his viewers which make them spell bound.

4. His influences and motives

For over three decades Viola has created stimulating and thought-provoking video installations. By viewing his works one gets absorbed in Viola's total environment of image and sound. Despite using state-of-the-art technologies as his media, the artist is inspired by the past including the Renaissance frescoes of Italian artists Giotto and Luca Signorelli and the works of 20th century artists Alberto Giacometti and Joseph Beuys¹⁵.

In the period between 1977 and 1979 Viola became increasingly interested in visionary and mystical literature-writings by William Blake, Jelaluddin Rumi and Lao Tzu¹⁶. His

¹³ Cfr. <http://people.wcsu.edu/mccarneyh/fva/V/ViolaEssay.html> < 30.12.2018>

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵ Cfr. <http://www.betterwall.com/bnr.php?bid=99> <30.12.2018>

¹⁶ Cfr. http://www.gencat.cat/pic/pdf/bill_viola_eng.pdf <30.12.2018>

mystical perception helped him to develop a notion about video as a medium with which he could bridge gap between known things and unknown invisible things¹⁷.

Viola uses video as a medium to explore the phenomenon of perception as a path to self-knowledge. His works are based on a wide range of universal human experiences such as birth, death and the unfolding of consciousness which have roots in both Eastern and Western art as well as in spiritual traditions. His extensive use of slow motion is derived from the oriental tradition. Western art tries to depict a moment of time or an arrested action, but oriental art represents a continuous condition¹⁸. By extending the time span of an event, he creates a profound affinity towards the image which brings the viewer close to the inner self/space of an image. It renders a sort of mystic mood to the visual. In this regard he tries to visualize a sacred art through his pictorial mysticism.

Conclusion

From the very initial stages video artists were able to appreciate video art since it was an uncomplicated and easy mode of communication. Due to these unique features they portrayed video art as an alternative medium for the expression of public opinions and political movements. Later on due to the change in the political scenario and also due to the evolution of digital technology and internet video art lost its importance. It took video art from being just a performance based medium to a vehicle of psychological and imaginative medium. It also leads to the development of video installations as a physically interactive medium. With its increasingly sophisticated digital manipulations video art became the launch pad for some of the most elaborate flights of artistic imagination. As the story unfolds it can be seen that there has been a shift away from counter-cultural aspirations

¹⁷ Cfr. ANDREWS C. M., *A history of video art*, op. cit., p.185.

¹⁸ Cfr. VIOLETTE R. & VIOLA B., *Reasons for knocking at an empty house*, op. cit., p. 198-99.

towards popular culture which coincided with the renewed involvement of the commercial gallery system.

The artistic career of Bill Viola spans almost the entire history of video art. He is the most influential and successful artist in the contemporary art scene. He is a wizard of electronic language and visual media that underlie the conceptual and formal particulars with an extraordinary capacity to evoke the audience interest. Video becomes the vehicle for an exploration of internalized experience of real life situations or unconsciousness and dreams, the analysis focused on a narrative marked by a mythologizing introspective spirituality. Viola extensively used the prospect of digital evolution to create powerful images which reflects the depth of human emotions.

With extravagant research on the relationship between electronic music and the image, Bill Viola visualizes a world of visual poetry. By the exposure he gained by wide travelling, interest in mysticism, and Eastern and Western philosophies made Viola's works an experience of a life time. His works were indeed a deep exploration into the unknown realities beyond one's life experience.

St. Athanasius: The Father of Orthodoxy

Anish K. Joy¹

Introduction

Athanasius of Alexandria (c. 293 – May 2, 373), also known as St Athanasius the Great, Pope Athanasius I of Alexandria, and St Athanasius the Apostolic, (Greek: Αθανάσιος, Athanasius) was a theologian, Bishop of Alexandria, Church Father, and a noted Egyptian leader of the fourth century.² For his life-long defence of the divinity of Christ, Athanasius is called the ‘Father of Orthodoxy’³. The reason Athanasius is called the ‘Father of Orthodoxy’ is because of his many victories for the cause of

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² The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 105.

³ Webster’s New Biographical Dictionary, 56.

Catholicism. He is best remembered for his role in the conflict with Arius and Arianism.⁴ At the first Council of Nicaea (325), Athanasius argued against Arius and his doctrine that Christ is of a distinct substance from the Father.⁵

Saint Athanasius is revered as a saint by the Oriental Orthodox, Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Eastern Catholic Churches. He is traditionally regarded as a great leader of the Church by the Lutheran Church, the Anglican Communion, and most Protestants in general.⁶ He is chronologically the first Doctor of the Church as designated by the Roman Catholic Church, and he is counted as one of the four Great Doctors of the Eastern Church. St Athanasius' feast day is May 2 in Western Christianity, May 15 in the Coptic Orthodox Church, and January 18 in the Eastern Orthodox Churches.⁷

1. Biography

Athanasius was an Egyptian by birth and a Greek by education⁸. Athanasius received his philosophical and theological training at Alexandria. He was ordained as a deacon by the current patriarch, Alexander of Alexandria, in 319.⁹ The life of Athanasius can be divided into seven sections such as His consecration, From his Consecration (326) to his First Exile (336), From his First Exile (336) to his Second (340), From his Second Exile (340) to his Second Return (346), From his Second Return (346) to his Third Exile (356), From his Third to his Fourth Exile (356–362) and From his Fourth Exile to his Death (362–373).¹⁰ In 325, he served as Alexander's secretary at the First Council of Nicaea.¹¹ Already a

⁴The Harper Collins Encyclopedia of Catholicism (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1995), 107.

⁵Caesar and Christ; Durant, Will. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1944), 24

⁶The Encyclopedia of Religion, Vol. 1 (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987), 478.

⁷<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Athanasius> on 7-08-2008 8.20

⁸The Penguin Dictionary of Saint, (New York: Penguin Books, 1993), 285.

⁹Encyclopedia Americana, Vol. 2 (Connecticut: Grolier Incorporated, 1997), 681.

¹⁰A Dictionary of Christian Biography, Vol. 1 (London: John Murray, 1877), 179.

¹¹The New Encyclopedia Britannica, Vol. 1 (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica Inc. 1995), 665.

recognized theologian and ascetic, he was the obvious choice to replace Alexander as the Patriarch of Alexandria on the latter's death in 328,¹² despite the opposition of the followers of Arius and Meletius of Lycopolis.¹³

2. Writings

Athanasius was a prolific author whose literary production was intimately linked with his life and, as such, part of his unceasing battle against the enemies of Christ, as he designated Arianism in any form. This explains the predominantly polemical nature of most of his dogmatic works, the biased selection of documents in his historical compositions, the lack of serenity in his argumentation, and the public character of his letters. Even the *Life of St Antony* contains an attack against Arianism.¹⁴ For the same reason he cared more for clarity and persuasiveness than for literary excellence.

2.1 Dogmatic Writings

The major work in this section is constituted by three *Discourses against Arians*: they contain a summary of the Arian doctrine, a defense of the Nicene definition, and a comprehensive discussion of Spiritual arguments¹⁵. A fourth Discourse, added in the Benedictine and Migne editions is now considered as definitely spurious.¹⁶ *The Oration against the Pagans* and the *Oration on the Incarnation of the Word*¹⁷, although often edited as separate works, are one treatise mentioned by Jerome as the *Two Books against the Pagans*.¹⁸ A third work, *On the Incarnation*¹⁹ and against the Arians

¹²Ibid., 665.

¹³Encyclopedia Americana, Vol. 2 (Connecticut: Grolier Incorporated, 1997), 681.

¹⁴Encyclopedia Britannica, Vol. 2 (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica Incorporated, 1957), 598.

¹⁵New Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. 1 (Washington D C: The Catholic University of America, 2003), 819.

¹⁶Ibid., 819.

¹⁷Athanasius; *On the Incarnation*; translated by A Religious of C.S.M.V (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, 1982), 97-119.

¹⁸The Dictionary of Christian Biography, Vol. 1 (London: John Murray, 1877), 201

¹⁹St. Athanasius on The Incarnation translated by Robertson, Archibald. (London: D. Nutt, 1885), 13.

deals with the divinity of Christ and of the Holy Spirit.²⁰ To this category belong also several letters that are, in fact, short dogmatic treatises: the *Four Letters to Serapion*, in which Athanasius set forth his admirable doctrine on the divinity and procession of the Holy Spirit; the Letter to Epictetus, often quoted in later Christological controversies; and the *Letter to Adelphus*, on the same theme; and the *Letter to Maximus the Philosopher*.²¹ His *Letter concerning the Decrees of the Nicene Council* presents a defense from scripture and the Fathers of the non-scriptural expressions in the Nicene Creed.²² The *Letter on the Teachings of Dionysius the Alexandrian* is probably a later addition to the letter on the decrees of the Nicene Creed.²³

2.2 Historical-Polemical Writings

Athanasius composed several apologies during his third exile from 356 to 362; they include: the *Apology against the Arians*, *Apology to Constantius*, *Apology for His Flight*, *History of the Arians*, *Letter on the Synods of Rimini and Seleucia*, *Encyclical Letter to the Bishops of Egypt and Libya*.²⁴

2.3 Ascetic Writings

Of paramount importance is the *Life of St. Antony*²⁵, founder of Christian monasticism at the request of the Egyptian monks and intended to provide “an ideal pattern of the ascetical life,” it enjoyed astonishing popularity and was soon translated into various Languages.²⁶ From the literary point of view it created a new Christian genre, and set the pattern for countless later lives of monks and saints. The *Letter to the Monk Amun* and the *Letter to*

²⁰The Letters of Saint Athanasius Concerning the Holy Spirit; translated Shapland C R B. (New York: Philosophical Library, 1951), 35.

²¹New Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. 1 (Washington D C: The Catholic University of America, 2003), 819.

²²Ibid. 819.

²³Ibid., 819.

²⁴The Dictionary of Christian Biography, Vol. 1 (London: John Murray, 1877), 185 & 186.

²⁵Athanasius; The Life Of Antony And The Letter To Marcellinus, translated by Robert C. Gregg (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), 101-129.

²⁶Everyman's Encyclopedia, Vol. 1 (Chicago: J. M. Dent & sons Ltd, 1950), 606.

Dracontius also belong to this category.²⁷ *Letter on Love and Self-control* is a well-known Athanasian Coptic writing.²⁸

2.4 Homiletic and Exegetical Works

Much remains to be done to determine the authenticity of sermons attributed to Athanasius, either in the collection published in *Patrologia Graeca* in newly discovered Syriac and Coptic manuscripts.²⁹ As to his Biblical commentaries, none has survived in full, but numerous fragments are found in ancient CATENAE.³⁰ Many of these pertain to a Commentary on the Psalms, a few, to Genesis or to Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs. There are a number of problems about the text and the authenticity of parts of it and there is no proper critical edition, nor, to the best of my knowledge, any English translation. These pages, then, are to a great extent pioneering and provisional. St Athanasius writes not so much a full commentary as a series of short notes on whole verse or individual words or phrases. These discuss not only the original meaning of the Psalms in the context of the story of the People of God under the Old Covenant but also the prophetic and typological nature of the Psalter. It is not for nothing that David is known in the Church as both Prophet and King. There is also a Letter to Marcellinus on the Interpretation of the Psalms that provides valuable insight into the shape of Athanasius's spiritual program, its relationship to previous Hellenistic philosophical traditions, and, especially, the crucial function of the psalms in the reformation of the self and serves as a general introduction on their meaning and use.³¹

²⁷The Encyclopedia of Religion, Vol. 1 (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987), 479.

²⁸The World Book Encyclopedia, Vol. 1 (Chicago: World Book Incorporated, 2003), 853.

²⁹The Dictionary of Christian Biography, Vol. 1 (London: John Murray, 1877), 202.

³⁰New Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. 1 (Washington D C: The Catholic University of America, 2003), 819.

³¹<http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayAbstract?fromPage=online&aid=446132> on 11-08-2008 7.45

2.5 Letters

There is a collection of annual Lenten messages, the so-called Festal Letters which is also an important work of the Saint.³² Thirteen of these have been preserved in a Syriac translation; seventeen others in a recently published Coptic manuscript. The Festal Letter of 367 consists of the enumeration of the canonical books of the Old Testament and New Testament. Three other letters were written at the request of Alexandrian synods: *Tome to the Antiochians*, *To the Emperor Jovian* and *To the African Bishops*.³³ The *Letter to the Bishop Rufianus* gives directives for the reconciliation of the Arians; while the *Letter to the Monks* contains a warning against the heretics

3. Doctrine

Because Athanasius's life and writings were one long battle against Arianism, his doctrinal horizon is dominated by Trinitarian and Christological controversies. His doctrine is eminently traditional. He created no new synthesis of his own, but clarified and defended the central mysteries of the Trinity and the Incarnation by means of revealed concepts rather than philosophical constructions. The key to his theological thinking is the Dogma of Redemption and he stressed the identity of the Logos with the Son of God become man.³⁴ In his spiritual doctrine, asceticism and virginity are but means to achieve in man the divine image through the Divine Word, who is the substantial image of the Father.³⁵

Conclusion

Athanasius led a confused but dedicated life of service to the Church. He was the great champion of the faith against the widespread heresy of Arianism. The vigor of his writings earned him the title of doctor of the Church. Athanasius suffered many

³²The New Encyclopedia Britannica, Vol. 1 (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica Inc. 1995), 665.

³³Encyclopedia Britannica, Vol. 2 (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica Incorporated, 1957), 599.

³⁴New Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. 1 (Washington D C: The Catholic University of America, 2003), 820

³⁵Ibid., 820.

trials while he was bishop of Alexandria. He was given the grace to remain strong against what probably seemed at times to be insuperable opposition. Athanasius lived his office as bishop completely. He defended the true faith for his flock, regardless of the cost to himself. Athanasius's work remains even today one of the definitive statements of orthodox Trinitarianism.

Four points, perhaps, ought especially to dwell in our remembrance: (a) the deep religiousness which illuminated all his studies and controversies by a sense of his relations as a Christian to his Redeemer; (b) the persistency, so remarkable in one whose natural temperament was acutely sensitive; (c) the combination of gifts, (d) the affectionateness which made him so tender as a friend, and so active as a peacemaker—which won for him such enthusiastic loyalty, and endowed the great theologian and church ruler with the powers peculiar to a truly lovable man. *In today's world we are experiencing this same call to remain true to our faith, no matter what we are.*

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