

THE SETTLEMENT OF THE APOSTOLIC TRADITION REGARDING EUCHARISTIC CELEBRATION

The Christian Eucharist was established by the Lord in the context of the **Passover's liturgical celebration; therefore, it manifests its basic meaning**--though elevated to the New Covenant reality-- and remains in continuity with its fundamental features: Jesus, in his passion and crucifixion, is the Lamb of God; by his blood shed in death as an offering for the atonement of humanity's sins, and by his resurrection, the human race is saved of the bondage of sin and death; the Qurbana of the Church, fulfilling the command and pattern of the Last Supper, is the perpetual memorial of that Messianic liberation, and the true worship in the New Temple of his own Body. Nevertheless, Apostolic and sub-Apostolic era fathers, in their celebration of the New Testament memorial, did not consider themselves as prisoners of the Old one, but adapted the background liturgical and ceremonial elements to the requirements of the new Christian worship.

To put it simply, **the new worship is centered in the following**: 1) taking the bread, blessing God for it, breaking it, giving it and sharing it as the true Body of the Lord; 2) similarly, taking the cup, giving thanks for it, giving it and sharing it as the true Blood of the Lord of the new covenant. 3) Doing this as the memorial of the Lord's redemption. Every other element of the Passover celebration was redundant and had no reason to remain.

The last major element of the Passover that needed to be adjusted, after the Resurrection, was **the duality of the ritual**. Bread and wine, that will become the Body and Blood of the Lord, should not be considered, after the Resurrection, as two sacrifices, or two oblations unrelated to each other, or two memorials, but rather as completing each other within the one Sacrifice of the one Mystery of Salvation. The major point is this: the blood of atonement is the blood of the same Lamb of God; they belong to each other. Thus, instead of two distinct rituals, i.e. one over each of the elements, one ritual was formulated comprising the totality of the Qurbana, in the following manner:

He Took the Bread, He Took the Cup

Here is the formulation of the act of "taking" and its prayer in the **Mesopotamian liturgy**:

Priest: May Christ, who was sacrificed for our salvation and commanded us to make a Memorial of his death, burial and resurrection, accept this Sacrifice from our hands in his grace and mercy, amen.

By your command, our Lord and God, are these glorious, holy, life-giving and divine Mysteries being set and arranged upon the altar of atonement until the second coming of our Lord from heaven, to whom be glory at all times and forever, amen.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. Let there be a remembrance of the Virgin Mary, Mother of God (*or*: Christ), upon the holy altar.

From age to age, amen, amen.

Apostles of the Son and friends of the Only-Begotten: may they be remembered in the Church of Christ.

Let all the people say: amen, amen. Let there be a remembrance

Behold! All of our beloved deceased have fallen asleep in

of St. (Thomas) upon the holy altar, with the just who triumphed and the martyrs who were crowned.	your trust , that you may raise them in glory by your glorious resurrection.
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Deacon: May this Offering be accepted with unveiled faces and sanctified by the word of God and by the Holy Spirit, that it may be for our help and salvation and for everlasting life in the kingdom of heaven, in the grace of Christ.

Commentary:

- 1) The offering of bread and wine are presented as one sacrifice, one *Dewiltha*.
- 2) The Lord’s “Body” is not restricted to his historic body, but implies, in the Mesopotamian liturgy, his ecclesial body as well: his mother Mary, the Apostles and saints, and all the faithful deceased.
- 3) The consecration of the offerings is done by the power of the “word of God (referring probably to the command to: ‘Do this’) and the Holy Spirit.”

THE QUDDASHA OF ADDAI AND MARI

First Section: The Blessing/ Glorification

Deacon: Lift up your minds.
People Toward you, O God of
Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, O
Glorious King!

Deacon: The Oblation is being
offered to God the Lord of all.
People: It is fit and right.

Priest: Glory to you, O adorable and glorious Name of the majestic Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who created the world in his grace and its inhabitants in his compassion, who redeemed mankind in his mercy and effected great grace toward mortals.

O Lord, thousands upon thousands of exalted beings and tens of thousands of holy angels adore and worship your Greatness. Legions of spiritual beings, ministers of fire and spirit, glorify your Name and, with the holy cherubim and spiritual seraphim, bestow adoration to your Lordship.

Make us also worthy to participate with these heavenly hosts as they cry out and glorify unceasingly, proclaiming one to another, saying:

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God
almighty! Heaven and earth are filled
with his glories! *Hosanna in the
highest! Hosanna to the Son of David!
Blessed is he who came and will come
in the Name of the Lord! Hosanna in
the highest! *[LENT] And with the
majesty of his Being, and with the
beauty of his glorious Radiance!

*Qaddysh qaddysh qaddysh, Marya Alaha
hlaylthana, da-mlen shmayya war'a min
tishbhatheth. *Awsha'na bamrawme,
awsha'na la-Breh d-Dhawydh. Brykh d-
ith-tha w-athe ba-shmeh d-Marya:
awsha'na ba-mrawme!
*W-min kyan y-thutheh, wmin hidhra
dzyweh mshabha!*

Commentary: There are two kinds of blessings: a) When a believer is blessing God, it means declaring him Blessed, Holy, and Glorious; this is the Ascending Blessing. b) When God is prayed to bless a believer, it refers to the graces requested to be given by God for the benefit of men; this is the Descending Blessing.

- 1) Because the term “blessing” may refer to either one, the Scriptures and Liturgy specify often the ascending blessing with the term Glorification or Praise, as in the first section of the Anaphora of Addai and Mari.
- 2) God, in his Trinity, is glorified for two major graces given to the universe: the grace of creation, the grace of redemption.
- 3) Heavenly and earthly beings join together as one choir chanting divine glories.

SECOND SECTION: THANKSGIVING

Priest: We give thanks to you, O Lord, we your deficient, feeble and miserable servants, because you have done us a great favor that cannot be repaid, in that you put on our humanity in order to quicken us by your Divinity, you lifted up our lowliness, righted our fall, raised up our mortality, forgave our debts, made righteous our sinfulness, enlightened our understanding, defeated our enemies, and made our deficient nature triumphant through the overflowing mercies of your grace.

And for all your benefits and graces toward us, we lift up glory, honor, thanksgiving and adoration to you now, at all times, and forever and ever. **People:** Amen.

Commentary:

- 1) The redemption, as the main subject of thanksgiving, is specifically the focus of this section.
- 2) The redemption is not narrated as a succession of events from the life history of the Lord, like nativity, baptism, etc. but rather as **perennial effects of divine salvation**, and radical benefits allowing human nature to be transformed by the Savior.

THIRD SECTION: MEMORIAL

Priest: Through the Memorial of your Christ, O Lord, make, in your indescribable mercies, a gracious remembrance for all the upright and just fathers who have pleased you, the apostles, prophets and teachers, the martyrs and confessors, the bishops, priests and deacons, and all the children of the holy catholic Church: those who have been signed with the living sign of holy baptism.

Indeed, our Lord and God, grant us your tranquility and peace all the days of the age, that all the dwellers of the earth may know that you alone are God, the true Father, that you have sent your Son and Beloved, our Lord Jesus Christ, and that he, our Lord and God, taught us all purity and holiness in his life-giving Gospel.

And we also, O Lord, your deficient, feeble and miserable servants who are assembled in the Name of your Son, and who stand before you at this moment, having received by tradition the example that comes from him, while rejoicing and glorifying, praising and magnifying, commemorate and perform this great, awesome, holy, life-giving and divine Mystery of the passion, death, burial and resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, as he taught us:

*[Narrative of the Last Supper: For when the time came when he would suffer and approach death, on that night on which he was betrayed, he took bread into his holy hands and, raising his eyes to you, his almighty Father, gave thanks and blessed. He broke and gave it to his disciples, saying: take, all of you, and eat of it: this is my Body, which is broken for you, for the forgiveness of sins. **People:** Amen.*

*Likewise, after they had eaten, he took the pure cup into his holy hands, gave thanks to you and blessed; he gave it to his disciples, saying: take, all of you, and drink from it: this is my Blood of the new and everlasting covenant, which is shed for you and for many, for the forgiveness of sins. **People:** Amen.*

Priest: Whenever you do this, do it in remembrance of me. **People:** We believe and confess.

Priest: Now, thus, as we are performing his Memorial as we have been commanded, and are offering his Body and Blood upon the holy and pure altar...

...may your Holy Spirit come, O Lord,

and rest upon this Oblation of your servants, bless it and sanctify it, that it may be for us, O Lord, for the pardon of debts and the forgiveness of sins, for the great hope of resurrection from the dead and for new life in the kingdom of heaven with all of those who have pleased you.

And for this whole great and marvelous plan for us, we give you thanks and praise you unceasingly in your Church redeemed by the precious Blood of your Christ, with expressive mouths and unveiled faces, as we lift up praise, honor, thanksgiving and adoration to your living, holy and life-giving Name now, at all times, and forever and ever. *People:* Amen.

Commentary:

- 1) The Church, asking the Lord to remember all categories of the faithful, makes his memorial as he commanded her.
- 2) The Church connects her liturgical act to the Last Supper as its representation and renewal.
- 3) The Church, while invoking the Holy Spirit to come and sanctify her Qurbana, cries to the Lord to be present with her: *Marana Tha!* This is the seal of consecration.

THE BREAKING AND SIGNING RITE

Priest: May the mercy of your grace, Our Lord and God, draw us near to these glorious, holy, life-giving and divine Mysteries, unworthy though we are. (*Three times*)

Deacon: Unworthy though we truly are.

Priest: With true faith in your Name, O Lord, we draw near to these holy Mysteries. In your mercy we break and in your compassion we sign the Body and Blood of our Life-Giver, the Lord Jesus Christ: in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

People: Amen.

Priest: The precious Blood is signed with the life-giving Body of our Lord Jesus Christ: in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. *People:* Amen.

Priest: The holy Body is signed with the forgiving Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ: in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. *People:* Amen.

Priest: These life-giving Mysteries have been set apart, sanctified, perfected, completed, united, mingled, brought together and sealed in the adorable Name of the glorious Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit...

Commentary:

- 1) The Breaking is the liturgical representation of the physical torture that the body of the Lord endured, and the fact of having two consecrated elements side by side represents the separation of blood from his body during the crucifixion process. The Signing and joining of both elements is the liturgical representation of his Resurrection in eternal glory.
- 2) The ceremonial approach of the Mesopotamian liturgy represents dramatically the Way of the Cross, and the Way to the Empty Tomb, making the people witness, with Mary, the holy women, and the Apostles, the climax of the redemptive act.
- 3) The Aramaic term "*Qsaya*" (=cutting in pieces) is accurately fit to signify what happened through the historical Passion of the Lord, and to express the liturgical ceremony that represents it; the English term "Breaking" is not so accurate in view of actual historic fact and liturgy.

THE COMMUNION RITE

Priest: The Holy is fit for the holy ones living in accord.

People: One Holy Father, one Holy Son, one Holy Spirit: glory to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit forever and ever amen.

Qudsha l-qaddyshe ya'e bshalmutha

Hadh Aba Qaddysha, hadh Bra Qaddysha hadh Ruha Qaddysha, shuha l-A ba w-laBra wal-Ruha Qaddysha l-'alam 'almyn. Amen.

Commentary:

1) The Holy, i.e. the Body of Lord, could be received worthily only by the holy ones. But no one is holy but God. Then, what is a practical standard for worthiness? *Shalmutha dah-dhadhe* (=mutual love) is what compensates our unworthiness.

2) "The body of the Lord" says the celebrant to the faithful receiving Communion, in imitation of what the Lord said to his disciples: "This is my body..."

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