

Amir Harrak

“We Break the Heavenly Bread”:

Dionysius Bar-Ṣalibi’s Concept of Transubstantiation

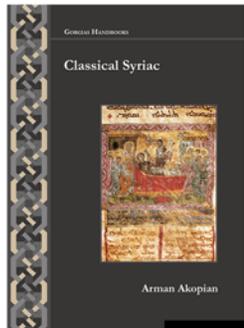
In his Chronicle, Patriarch Michael the Great referred to the “heresy” of some Franks who refused to call the blessed Bread and Wine the Body and Blood of Christ. It seems that Patriarch Michael had asked Dionysius Bar-Ṣalibi, Bishop of Amid (modern Diyar-Bakr in Eastern Turkey), to write a discourse on the subject, and indeed he wrote “an Interpretation of the Offering, which is Celebrated and is Enlightening.” It was addressed to none other than “Mōr Ignatius Metropolitan of the Sacred City” Jerusalem, the seat of the Crusaders. The goal of his writing was “to give an answer (about the subject) to the Romans, I mean the Franks.”

The term Transubstantiation (from the material to the divine) is rendered by Syriac *ṣuḥlōfō* “trans(substantiation)” of the Bread into the Body of Christ and the wine into his Blood, *ṣuḥlōfō* performed by the Descent of the Holy Spirit over them. For Dionysius the Transubstantiation is a reflection of the incarnation: As the Divine united with the physical, the Eucharist unites the physical with the Divine.

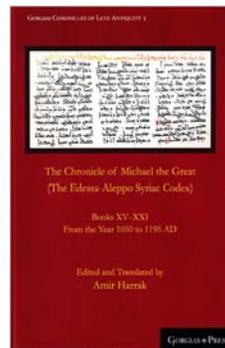
Canadian Publications on Syriac Studies

Amir Harrak

Chronicle of Michael the Great (The Edessa-Aleppo Codex) Books XV-XXI From the Year 1050 to 1195 AD (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 1999)



Arman Akopian
Classical Syriac, Gorgias Handbooks
(Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 1999)



CANADIAN SOCIETY FOR SYRIAC STUDIES

CSSS Symposium XIX

Probing the Graceful Mysteries: The Writings of the Syriac Church Fathers

Chair: **Reagan Patrick**, University of Toronto

10:00 – 10:45 **Abdul-Masih Saadi**, Baylor University
Moshe Bar Kepha’s Ecumenism and Apology in the Adapted Cause of Nativity

10:45 – 11:30 **Demetrios Alibertis**, University of Toronto
Mar Ephrem and Mar Jacob of Sarug: Jephthah’s Daughter and the Female Christ

11:30 – 12:15 **Robert A. Kitchen**, Emeritus Pastor Toronto
Come out Lazarus!: The Exegesis of Resurrection in Narsai and Jacob of Serugh

-----Break – Lunch -----

1:30 – 2:15 **Father John Haitham Issak**, CSSS
Medicine of Immortality: The Eucharist in the Writings of Saints Ignatius of Antioch and Ephrem

2:15 – 3:00 **Amir Harrak**, University of Toronto
“We Break the Heavenly Bread: Dionysius Bar-Ṣalibi’s Concept of Transubstantiation

3:00-3:30

Celebrating Canadian Publications in Syriac Studies

Symposium Place

Earth Sciences Buildings Room 142 University of Toronto
Toronto, Ontario, CANADA M5S 1C1
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Canadian Society of Syriac Studies
Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations
University of Toronto

Abdul Masih Saadi

Moshe Bar Kepha's Ecumenism and Apology in the Adapted Cause of Nativity

Moshe Bar Kepha (813-903) was a prolific writer along with his ministerial duties as a bishop to a large diocese in Mosul, Beth Remman, and Beth Arabaye, during the Abbasid Empire. His writings reflect distinct aspects of West Syriac theology, ecumenism and apology. Of particular importance, his literary legacy is considered a chain that linked the earlier exegetical tradition, beginning with Ephrem (d. 373), and probably earlier, with the classical period of sixth to ninth century, and then to posterity. One aspect of his "chain that links" is his adaptation of the *Causes'* genre that initiated by the East Syriac writers in the sixth century. He clarified that he is not inventing this writing, rather he simplifies the skillful writings of "the divine men, who spoke through the Holy Spirit." More than "simplifying", Moshe Bar Kepha enhanced the Syriac exegesis, promoted the common understanding of Christology among all Christians, and concentrating on apology of the Christian faith against "those who are not convinced of the true faith."

Demetrios Alibartis

Mar Ephrem and Mar Jacob of Sarug: Jephthah's Daughter and the Female Christ

The story of Jephthah who sacrifices his daughter (Judges 11) is perhaps one of the most perplexing narratives in the Hebrew bible, troubling many early patristic authors. A few Greek and Latin fathers touched upon Jephthah and his daughter, focusing on the vow of Jephthah or on the daughter's virginity, but they disdained the narrative, especially the character of Jephthah. By contrast, early Syriac tradition is highly appreciative of the whole narrative. In a commentary attributed to Mar Ephrem and in a homily of Mar Jacob, the story is shown as being heavily infused with symbolism and with foreshadowing the passion and death of Jesus. They exult Jephthah's daughter who typologically pointed to the suffering and dying Christ. While early Church writers generally selected men as being prototypes of Christ, the Syriac authors had no reservations of boldly portraying a female as such. The idea of Jephthah's daughter as a prototype of Christ is entrenched in the Syriac Church as it reappears in the eighth-century *Chronicle of Zuqnin*.

Robert A. Kitchen

Come out Lazarus!: The Exegesis of Resurrection in Narsai and Jacob of Serugh

Narsai of Nisibis and Jacob of Serugh both attended the School of Edessa during overlapping years in the mid-5th century, which has led to the conjecture that the two may have known one another before they both left the school at separate times. Carrying the conjecture further, they are sometimes depicted as rival poets, Narsai being the leading Church of the East poet and exegete, while Jacob rejected the Church of the East and Theodore of Mopsuestia before adopting a favourable stance towards the Miaphysite position. The two poets composed a number of *mīmrē* on the same Biblical themes, reputedly responding to the other's interpretations, and so providing an opportunity to compare their exegetical tendencies and theological perspectives. "The Raising of Lazarus," Narsai 28 and Jacob of Serugh 93, enable one to witness how the two authors perceived the nature of resurrection aside from Easter (John 11), as well as the differences in interpretation their confessional traditions may have produced.

Father John Haitham

Medicine of Immortality: The Eucharist in the Writing of Saints Ignatius of Antioch and Ephrem

St. Ignatius, bishop, one of the most famous names associated with the early church, and one of the Apostolic Fathers. He was sentenced to be ravaged by beasts during the reign of the Roman Emperor Trajan due to the fact that the ruler of Syria heard of his passion to spread Christianity. He was wrestling with the heresy of Docetists who denied the humanity of Jesus. He was given a death sentence, which Ignatius considered the greatest gift from God. In his journey to Rome for martyrdom he wrote virtually six letters to the churches and one to the bishop Polycarp. The Eucharist is one of the most important themes in his letters, this particularly clear when he affirmed that the Eucharist is the actual flesh of Jesus. As well as, for Ignatius, martyrdom means that he suffers in the same way as Jesus Christ suffered. Ignatius saw his coming martyrdom as a Eucharist in reverse. This paper will analyze his understanding of the Eucharist as actual flesh of Jesus Christ, and the way he linked the Eucharist with his martyrdom. We will also compare between what he and St. Ephrem say about the Eucharist.