CONCLUSION

The principal reason why we venerate Mary is that she gave birth to the Son who saved mankind. And we enumerate her role on the salvation history also. Mary’s relationship to God and her co-operation in the work of salvation are unique. Unlike the Holy Qurbana of the Church of the East, the Liturgy of Hours looks at Mary as one who is constantly interceding for us; and especially for our salvation. Mary’s prayer is our refuge. God gave Mary as a refuge to humanity, who was defeated by the treachery of Eve. Theologians give a special name to the cult rendered to Mary by the Church- it is termed hyperdulia. It is infinitely inferior to the worship rendered to God alone- latria. Yet it is far above the veneration accorded to Saints –dulia. Veneration for Mary is completely distinctive.¹ As a believing disciple of Jesus, Mary can be called daughter of the Church, and our sister as well. Mary is worthy of imitation because she was the first and the most perfect of Christ’s disciples.

There are some minor and major variations in the ms compared with the printed text. The major variations are: the ܡܣܘܒܥܐ prayer including high theological prayers is missing in the printed text. The number of madraše cited from St. Ephrem is reduced into two but the hymns from the composition of Mar Narsai, the important theologian of the Church of the East, are completely missing in the printed text. The twelfth century theologian Abu Halim’s compositions are included in the printed text. Almost the same structure of the divine office for the Liturgy of Hours is kept in the ms and the printed texts. Most of the prayers are of the psalms and other liturgical compositions of Church Fathers such as Ephrem, Narsai and so on.

There are many names and titles attributed to Mary in this prayer and various types and images are used here to express the mystery. Mary’s divine motherhood is symbolically presented in the expressions like New Heaven, Castle of King and

Conclusion

Temple of God. The imageries like earth, the eyes into which the light enters, the ‘unploughed field’, the fleece of Gideon, the door of Ezekiel, the Rod of Aaron, the Rock/Burning Bush and Staff of Moses and the Ark of Flesh/Tree of Wonder are used for denoting the perpetual virginity of Mary. Mary as the fulfillment of the Old Testament for this reason the term ‘harbour’ is used in this prayer. He is the hope of humanity because Mary, the second Eve, is the Mother of the Living and a strong fortress or refuge to the believers. And through her prayers to her Son for us, the Church calls her the spring from which good things come to humanity and the harbour of all helps to the race of mortals. The same titles or names are attributed to Mary in both East and West Syrian tradition except the crucial and controversial title of Mary the ‘Mother of God’. We can see that there is no difference in the way of veneration and the role or place of Mary in the Church of both traditions.

The Church venerates Mary with Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Her divine motherhood and virginity are the reason for giving her an important position in the Church. She gave birth to the Medicine of Life, Christ put on body from her at the end of time, and with the Pauline theme she is called the mother of Second Adam or Second Eve. Through the conception she became a second or new Heaven and He took hostage (ܗܡܝܪܐ) from our race in order to raise us up as the sons of God. Mary is blessed because of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Mary is the model of all Christians and truly the charismatic Christian, par excellence, because she cooperated at every moment of her conscious life in faith and obedience with the movements of the Holy Spirit. Mary is the supreme model of redeemed humanity and she is also a mother of the Redeemer. All the prayers of the Church of the East are Christocentric and with Christ she participated in the salvation history. She is the cause of Life and Salvation because through Eve death had entered into humanity and the human race was under its slavery, but through Mary the Life has entered here and set us free from Death’s slavery, and

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2 George A. Maloney, *Mary The Womb of God*, p. 73.
Conclusion

we are able to enter the bridal chamber with Mary in order to see Christ. In this prayer Mary is termed as a ship, the bodily ship which carried the cargo or wealth. As the pilgrim Church, Mary, the ship, carried our race and placed it on the seashore of the heavenly kingdom. Even though the Church of the East did not develop any Mariological formula or doctrine in the past, her prayers for the Liturgical Hours allow to perceive the different aspects of her theology. The following are the main characteristics of Mary which these prayers indicate: sinlessness, divine maternity, perpetual virginity, Assumption and her mediation. In this prayer the Church never uses the term Theotokos or ‘Mother of God’ for Mary, but in a direct and indirect way we can say that she is the Mother of God the Son, not God the Father. We did not call her Theotokos because she has not brought forth God, who is the Spirit.\(^3\) Syriac tradition stressed Mary’s place because “without Mary, the Incarnation would not have taken place”.\(^4\) The Church of the East faced many Christological controversies in her history due to the use of the terminology: ‘Christotokos and Theotokos’ for Mary, but that situation has been overcome by the signing of ‘Common Christological Declaration’ on 1994. In the third paragraph of ‘Common Christological Declaration’\(^5\) it states that: “Christ therefore is not an “ordinary man” whom God adopted in order to reside in him and inspire him, as in the righteous ones and the prophets. But the same God the Word, begotten of his Father before all worlds without beginning according to his divinity, was born of a mother without a father in the last times according to his humanity, the humanity to which the Blessed Virgin Mary gave birth always was that of the Son of God himself. That is the reason why the Assyrian Church of the East is praying the Virgin Mary as “the Mother of Christ our God and Saviour”. In the light of this same faith the Catholic tradition addresses the Virgin Mary as “the Mother of God” and also as “the


\(^5\) ‘Common Christological Declaration on 1994’ between The Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church of the East signed by His Holiness John Paul II, Bishop of Rome and Pope of the Catholic Church, and His Holiness Mar Dinkha IV, Catholicos-Patriarch of the Assyrian Church of the East.
Conclusion

Mother of Christ”. We both recognize the legitimacy and rightness of these expressions of the same faith and we both respect the preference of each Church in her liturgical life and piety”. ⁶

From this study we can say that the Church of the East venerates Mary without using the term Theotokos but by other terms which are equal to this term. And this Church celebrates Mary not only as the mother of Christ but also the mother of the mystical body of Christ that is the Church, which means that she is the mother of the believers also. May the Prayer of the Blessed Virgin Mary be with us always.