

---

# **ELEMENTS OF HISTORICAL ANTIJUDAISM IN THE ANCIENT TEXTS OF THE SYRIAN ORIENTAL LITURGY**

**Peter Caban\***

*Catholic University at Ružomberok, Faculty of Arts and Letters, Hrabovská cesta 1, SK 034 01  
Ružomberok, Slovakia*

(Received 28 November 2012, revised 12 December 2012)

---

## **Abstract**

Judaism as the oldest existing monotheistic religion created a specific identity within its historical development. This identity is preserved until modern days through several historical problems. It was a nation which survived many difficult times in history. It was mindful of its situation in its own environment. Some historical excellence of Israel meant the task that the Jewish people was separated to some extent but not divided from other nations. If we want to look at the ancient liturgical texts mentioning the Jewish people in the changes of Syrian liturgy, it is necessary to perceive their continuity and historical aspects of the view in the geographical environment of the ancient Syria. This study wants to show the specifications and historical development of the texts of the Syrian liturgy from the viewpoint of the recent scientific information and research of the author. It confronts the available resources related to the research of the historical environment and texts of the Syrian liturgical rite concerning the Jewish people with the accent on the elements of the historical antijudaism which are present in the ancient texts of the Syrian oriental liturgy. The historical relationship between Christians and Jews and its research is very delicate. But independently of these historical relationships in this scientific study we want to show historical problems in the environment of the Syrian liturgy which presented the adequate relationship to the Jewish people. Our aim is to give correct but true contribution to the clarification of this delicate relationship between Christians and Jews in the history of the liturgy.

*Keywords:* ancient Syria, statements on Jews, antijudaism, Syrian liturgy, history of Jews

---

## **1. Introduction**

The theme and historical situation of Judaism played an important role in the history. The Jewish people experiences joyful moments but also difficult times during history when it had to maintain the firm attitude of its existence in front of the face of the nation and it had to maintain the fidelity to Yahweh.

---

\* E-mail: caban@centrum.sk, phone: +421904 355143, +42144 4304693, fax: +42144 4304694

During history of the liturgy several liturgical specifications and inspirations were created. These specifications concerned the situation of Jews in the liturgical prayers [1]. Modern time influenced by media pressure creates inspiration related to the status of Jews in history. In this way a specific environment for scientific research of Judaism in the perspective of the history of liturgical tradition is created.

The situation of the Jews in the liturgical texts of the Syrian liturgy was varied. Christ was a Jew, his mother Maria was also Jew, and the first apostles were Jews. In the first centuries after Christi the Roman Empire did not distinguish between Jews and Christians because Christians were considered by Romans as a Jewish sect. The separation between Jews and Christians which began in the second century after Christ was not completed yet. It is probable that majority of the first Christians (so called Jewish Christians) would identify themselves as Jews. When Rome was pagan, this question did not bother practical Romans. Later they began to distinguish who is Jew or Christian. Even though Christians of the Jewish origin were expelled from the synagogues later, the practice of the Jewish faith was not forbidden. Majority status of Christianity was fulfilled. Unfortunately sometimes it negatively influenced the respect for the Jewish faith. Jews were scattered throughout the whole world [2]. When Christians came to the area of the ancient Syria after the spread of the Gospel, they began to use some specific elements in their liturgy under the influence of the historical context. De facto they began to create Syrian liturgical rite. Within the Syrian liturgical rite [3] there were created several liturgical texts which related to the situation of the Jews as well. Here we can see some shift in the conception of the situation of the Jewish nation and this shift was expressed in the texts of the Syrian liturgy. Sometimes this shift was negative but there are some ancient liturgical texts where the Jewish nation was presented in the positive light.

Some Biblical exegetes concede [1] that roots of antijudaism as a synthetic expression for not always kind thinking and attitude towards Jews can be traced back to the Biblical times of the New Testament. If some antijudaism is as old as Christianity itself, it is understandable that this thinking and attitude towards the Jews was transferred to the Christian liturgy as well. Contemporary liturgical or religionist science sincerely wants to search for the truth. The texts of the Syrian liturgy of both geographic groups of rites express the attitude which related to the theme of the Jewish nation in their liturgical texts. This expression is especially remarkable in the texts of the Syrian liturgy which were used in the ancient times when the Syrian Christians commemorated the passion and death of Jesus Christ [4]. These days were especially inclined to anti-Jewish emotions [5].

## **2. Ancient itinerary *Peregrinatio Silviae Etheriae ad loca sancta***

The famous pilgrim and maybe a relative of the Roman emperor *Silvia Egeria* [6] in its famous itinerary *Peregrinatio Silviae Etheriae ad loca sancta*

from 380 proves the existence of the rites of Holy Week in the Holy Land. They were framed by two Sundays and culminating by the Sunday of the Resurrection of the Lord, so called *Qymoto* [7]. According to Egeria [8] all the participants had olive branches [3, p. 119-150] in their hands during the procession of the Palm Sunday. In this way they paid homage to the One in front of whom people in his time spread their robes and branches [9] and children saluted him by 'Hosanna' (Mark 11.8).

### **2.1. Palm Sunday and anti-Jewish tendencies**

The coming of Christ into Jerusalem was celebrated annually even in the eastern Syrian liturgical rite [10]. Unlike Latin rite it was celebrated by a solemn procession which took place [8] in the Syrian 'Hosanna Sunday' before communion. First so called procession canticle in this Syrian celebration had roots in the ancient times. It evokes the view from the vicinity of Jerusalem on the children who salute Christ by olive branches [8]. The exclamation of the Gospel origin: "Hosanna to the Son of David" (Matthew 21.9) in the Syrian text culminates by the exclamation: "The blessed came and will come in the glorious name of the Father. Glory and honour to you, the Lord of all lords!" Despite of the sign of peace which is symbolized by olive branches in the Gospel which surround Christ as a humble king who does not come as a glorious emperor on horse but as an ordinary Israelite on ass there is dramatic even explosive atmosphere among the people. The city of Jerusalem was on the horizon, the hour of decision has come. As it is known the fourth gospel was accentuated as anti-Jewish in many places during history [11]. The refusal of Pharisees (John 12.12-19) plotting against Christ was opposed to the joyful exclamations of people who welcomed Jesus [12]. Even in the synoptical gospels the historical passage on the triumphant arrival of Jesus is ended by the note that the Jewish authorities wanted "to kill him." (Luke 19.47). When we consider any of these Biblical reports they are ended by the final positive motive and the expression of respect for Christ as a Messiah at the end.

In the Syrian liturgy the situation was different: The report on triumphant arrival of Christ is read in the liturgical texts of the procession after communion but it is always taken from Mark's gospel. Unlike Latin Roman liturgy this passage in the Syrian rite is not ended by the glorifying exclamation in verse 10 but it is read further to the point when the evangelist mentioned high priests and scribes by the words: "They searched how they could kill him" (Mark 11.18). The Gospel does not culminate in the joyful exclamation: "Hosanna in the highest" (Mark 11.10), but it is ended by the plan of Jewish authorities. In other procession ancient chants of the Syrian rite for the day the situation is similar [8].

## **2.2. *Pueri Hebraeorum and Jewish attitude***

In the Syrian rite Hebrew children – *pueri Hebraeorum* (Latin *pueri, orum, m, f* – children) are seen in the very positive light. These children carried olive branches in their hands and they walked towards Jesus who was coming to Jerusalem. This passage attests that old Christian literature and liturgy did not take negative attitude toward Jews. A hymn for this Sunday from the 9<sup>th</sup> century by Frank bishop Theodulf from Orleans praised the multitude of children shouting ‘Hosanna’ to Christ and they named him by precious Old Testament titles that were reserved for the Messiah only such as ‘The King of Israel’ and ‘The Son of David’, which could be quite unpleasant for the orthodox Jews at that time. Of course even western Syrian liturgy knows this friendly side of the above mentioned Biblical scene. The third verse of the 8<sup>th</sup> psalm in the Syrian rite is quoted from Matthew 21.16 and proclaims the fulfilment of the Messianic honour: “From the lips of (Jewish) children you were praised...” [3, p. 122]. The Syrian text calls Christ “The Son of David”, but even in extension “The Lord of David”. The Jewish children in the text are praised because they fulfilled the prophecy of King David when they shouted ‘Hosanna’. After a short while this idyllic picture of the ancient Syrian text begins to change. A sympathetic scene with Hebrew children is in contrast with unsympathetic behaviour of their parents. Shouting children are not called ‘Hebrew children’ by Syrians but they are described differently than their parents. They seem to be innocent creatures that are not infected by the mistrust of their Jewish parents and the resistance of Christian opponents. Even the second part of the verse of the Psalms 8.3 is sung by the Syrian church with the same joy as the first part. It is mentioned there that God prepared praise from the lips of babies and children – “despite their enemies”. The shouting of children becomes a protest song against revolt and mistrust of the adult Jews. Syrian processional canticles make an impression that no adult Jews took part in the triumphant arrival of Jesus into Jerusalem. Just apostles did. Just in one place there is some mention about ‘crowd of people’ which came to celebrate Christ with olive branches. But we must take into consideration that Syrian tradition does not see Jewish inhabitants of Jerusalem in this ‘crowd’ (John 12.12) who were friendly to Jesus but it sees pagans who were coming to Jerusalem for the holiday. We can see it in Efreem Syrian who was called ‘Cithara Spiritus Sancti’. In his opinion pagans shouted to Jesus who was coming on the ass. And Efreem continues: “Local inhabitants – circumcised, heard the shouting and they began to learn from people because they began to ask who is coming here. When local people did not know it, they learned it from foreigners.” Saint Efreem called Jews “blind” because pagans had to explain to them “their own things” [13]. In John’s gospel this anti-Jewish and pagan-friendly interpretation finds Biblical common point. In the context of the report on the arrival of Jesus there are mentioned ‘Greeks’ i.e. Greek-speaking adherents of Jewish religion and proselytes who wanted to see Jesus. (John 12.21). So the shouting ‘Hosanna’ does not come from Jewish inhabitants according to Efreem. Syrian text mentions that ‘innocent children’ praised Jesus

in the streets and the Syrian liturgy recognizes in them future children of the Church. In this processional canticle of the Syrian rite there is a text: “In front of him a crowd of prophets came” [9, p. 268, 270]. The prophets of Israel were added as preachers of Christ’s teaching and they are described positively as disciples of the One who comes after them. The Church invites them as prominent witnesses for the unwise Jews who were enemies of their Messianic king.

### **2.3. *Sedro canticle***

In the Syrian canticle *Sedro* for the blessing of branch there are quotations of the Old Testament prophecies and images of the Messiah: Jacob’s blessing of Judah where the coming ruler of Israel is mentioned. He is tying his ass to the wine tree and precious vine (Genesis 49.10), Zachariah who sees the arrival of the humbler king on ass (Zachariah 9.9), David who wrote about the praise of babies and children (Psalm 8.3) and Isaiah 52.9 who spoke to Jerusalem about its salvation. Despite Israel which was deaf to the words of its patriarchs and prophets, the Church – as it is stated in the Syrian liturgy – has open ears for the prophecies of the Old Testament. The Church considers them as their own because intentionally they belonged to Christ. In this perspective the ‘inhabitants of new Zion’ are real addressees of the words of the Old Testament prophets.

### **2.4. *Specific Syrian motive of parents and children***

In this Syrian text there is a remarkable contrast between children who paid homage to Christ and adult Jews who are presented as his opponents. The contrast is culminating in the following Syrian canticle which presents the motive that does not appear in the Biblical report on the arrival of Jesus in this form. It is a specialty of the Syrian rite: Jewish parents recommend their children to welcome Jesus with stones. The Syrian text reads [20]:

*The older said to the children: Take stones  
And go forward to the one who is coming  
To enter Jerusalem!  
They took stones and ran to him.  
But when they saw him coming from the Olive Mountain  
They released the stones  
And instead they took branches  
And shouted: Come, the King of Israel! Alleluia.  
Blessed be your coming!*

In another Syrian ancient petition canticle named after Mor Jakub there is some mention about the guilt of the older people and by the people Israel nation is meant here. These ‘older’ are opposed to the behaviour of the younger people and they offered an acceptable price by their attitude to pay for the ‘guilt of the older people’.

### **2.5. Syrian analogy of the animal on which Jesus was sitting**

We must tell about some anti-Jewish feature in the way how the western Syrian liturgy of the Palm Sunday allegorically explains the animal on which Jesus was sitting. In the tractile animal – an offspring of the mule which is without reason it is possible to see pagan nations which unlike Israel were not instructed and illuminated by the ordinances of Torah and words of prophets, therefore they aimlessly wandered “without reason“ [8]. In comparing with the preferred Israel nation these pagan nations are presented in more favourable light. While Israel did not acknowledge the Redeemer, pagan nations represented in the Syrian liturgy by sympathetic but unreasoned animal offer their services. In the presidential prayer of a priest [9] Christ’s riding on the ass is interpreted as a sign that Christ implied an invitation and future redemption of other pagan nations by this gesture.

### **3. Syrian Passion Friday and verbal mentions of Jews**

Another historically interesting phenomenon where we can see the elements of the early antijudaism in the Syrian context are some parts of the Syrian liturgy of the ‘Passion Friday’. Its rite consists of two major points which are relevant to our theme [14]. One of them is so called first procession which is implemented in morning hours in the eastern rite, usually after tertia. The other one is the afternoon procession of the placing of Christ into a grave which is implemented according to the Jerusalem example [15] in Syria after the adoration of the Cross. According to Mark 15.25: “When they crucified him, it was nine o’clock“. The pilgrim Egeria registered a specialty of the Jerusalem liturgy of Good Friday and Easter because everything was celebrated there in the right time and real place. So morning procession remembered Jesus’ way from the Pilate’s palace where Jews were shouting “Crucify him!“ and the Roman governor sentenced Christ to death. The procession ended on Calvary, where he was crucified. In the Syrian liturgy a priest representing Christ is carrying a cross on his right shoulder during the first procession. In this symbolism the faithful accompany the Lord on his way of the cross. Elegies are sung during the procession. The first elegy [3, p. 316] in the Syrian liturgy was inspired by the theme of the compassionate weeping of the women and the elegy begins by the remembrance of these ‘Hebrew women’ [8].

#### **3.1. Mary’s weeping in the Syrian liturgy of the Passion**

An ancient Syrian canticle pays attention to a group of Christ’s friends who were on Via Dolorosa and Jesus’ mother was in the middle of them. We can hear painful words of weeping from his lips in this canticle: “Where do you go, my son, my beloved one. Where do they lead you? Why were you given to the hands of this unthankful people?“ [16] Anti-Jewish connotation is evident in the words ‘unthankful people’ in the canticle.

### **3.2. Soldiers on Calvary**

Despite the critical exegesis which clarifies that during Jewish execution soldiers were mostly inhabitants of Orient and not Jews the Syrian tradition presents ‘Jews’ who were not only requesting Jesus’ death on the cross but it sees direct offenders and killers of Jesus. Not only is this thing stated here: “Today (Jews) shouted loudly in front of Pilate: Crucify Jesus who is called Christ! But they pronounced their prayers to Christ: Lord, the only Son of the Father, unthankful children of Israel dared to nail you to the cross. They pierced your side by a spear...” And in some other place: “The offering which was killed by Jews is prepared on the altar.”

From the viewpoint of historical research it is interesting and quite unique how the Syrian tradition emphasized that Syrians were not guilty of Christ’s death. The historical evidence of this statement can be seen in the document *A Cave of Treasures* which comes from Efreem’s school. The trilingual inscription on Christ’s cross in the 53<sup>rd</sup> chapter of the text is interpreted in the following way:

*“And why did not Pilate write any words in Syrian?  
Because Syrians did not have any participation in the blood of the Messiah  
And because Pilate was wise and truth loving man.  
He did not want to record any lie  
As it is done by unjust judges  
He did as it is written in the Moses’ law:  
“Those who will condemn the righteous one...”  
According to their name as God killers  
First they should have put their hands on him.  
Pilate had written so and he placed it above the Messiah  
Who was killed by Herod – a Greek, Caiaphas – a Jew and Roman Pilate.  
But Syrians does not have any participation in his death,  
It is attested by Abgar, the king of Edessa.  
He wanted to attack Jerusalem and destroy it  
Because Jews crucified the Messiah.” [17]*

### **3.3. Compassion of non-living creatures and culmination of antijudaistic motives**

In the Syrian liturgy of modern days it is interesting that drama of Christ’ death is emphasized by the fact that Syrians counterpart the hardness of the heart of Jewish nation by the compassion of the non-living creatures. In the previous Syrian canticle it is stated: “On Friday creatures were weeping” and immediately the canticle mentions natural phenomena described in the synoptical gospels: it describes the sorrow of the sun which does not want to radiate rays of its light, the earthquake and the Earth gave the bodies of its dead, confusion of angels who flied around the Crucified by fiery flapping of their wings. The final sentence is in sharp contrast with the previous statement: “And people who

crucified him were blind and did not understand that He was the Lord of glory.” This motive is used in various forms. For example: “Earth was quaking and the fundamentals of the worlds were shaking due to terrible cruelties which were done by Zion.” Efreem the Syrian commented: “They hanged God on the cross; creatures were shocked when they saw it. Rock graves were collapsing but the heart hard as stone was not touched” [13, p. 39]. Some culmination of anti-Judaistic motives of old Syria were so called Verses on the Lord’s suffering which described the committed crimes (of Jews) paragraph after paragraph and they described cruel deeds of those who pierced Jesus’ hands and feet by nails and they pierced his side by a spear during his crucifixion. This anti-Jewish list of sins is presented by exclamation: “Lord, when you judge the nation which condemned you, please do not carry us to account!” The last sentence of the canticle is frightening: “The condemned nation did not understand whom it crucified” [9, p. 329].

### ***3.4. Syrian afternoon liturgy of the adoration of the cross***

Some reproach for the cruelties of Jews in the Syrian texts of the afternoon Good Friday liturgy of the adoration of the cross is supplemented by reproach of their blindness. If pagans not instructed by Torah were people ‘without reason’ the similar thing is mentioned in regard to Jews. “People without reason were mocking hm.” Even non-living creatures had more esteem for Christ’ suffering and pain than Jews. These things are written about the Earth where darkness was spread at noon: “It understood who is directing the celestial bodies.” Light which was unexpectedly setting down in the middle of the day made it evident for the whole world that the crucified one was the Son of God. In the liturgy of Syrian origin this is sung at the end of the rite of the exaltation of the cross: “Blessed be the one whom unlearned Jewish people crucified on Golgotha!” Blinded Jewish nation is compared here to a thief who was crucified on the left side while Christians join the faithful thief on the right side and they shout: “Remember us when you come.”

In the second, so called afternoon procession of Good Friday which represented the burial of Christ after crucifixion the first processional canticle is interesting for our theme. This canticle reminds us the service of love of Joseph from Arimatea and Nicodemus who took the dead Jesus from the cross and buried him into a new grave. This canticle remembers what happened previously on Golgotha. They quote from the 22<sup>nd</sup> Psalm of the Old Testament where there is accusation of Jews: “Cruel wolves surrounded him and they broke an innocent lamb to pieces.” Then the attention is paid to weeping women on the way of the cross. But this time they get gloomy threats: “Daughters of Jerusalem, what evil was done by the Only begotten one? He was good to your husbands in every way. He opened the eyes of a blind by his saliva; he cleaned the lepers by his word. Your husbands and children will suffer for his humiliation.” [9, p. 338]

When the procession returns in front of the altar [18] the exaltation of the cross on four world parts precedes the rite of the 'burial'. In this way Syrian liturgy demonstrates the global significance of Christ's sacrifice. Interesting interpretation of seemingly minor detail of the crucifixion clarifies the notion that Old Testament people was expelled from the position of God's chosen people and its place was taken by new Israel. We can see it in the Syrian canticle for the exaltation of the cross [19]. All four evangelists report that the Crucified was given vinegar when he said "I thirst." They gave him a sponge on a reed. The sponge was full of vinegar (Matthew 27.48, Mark 15.36). Only John mentions a pole of hyssop (John 19.29). The Syrian canticle uses this motive and it mentions that executioners who exalted the King of kings on the cross gave him a hyssop branch on a reed [20]. Jesus "wrote with the reed, he put it off and spread (Jewish nation) among other nations". Hyssop on the reed immersed to the jar of vinegar was a paintbrush immersed to ink. Jews gave this paintbrush to the Jewish king and he signed this decree about their dispersion to Diaspora from the throne of the cross. In the hour of Jesus' death so called disinherison of the chosen people took place in the meaning of this text. Dispersion of the Jewish people into the whole world is staged here as if it was an eternal sentence. In the meaning of the historical understanding of poetic freedom of ancient texts of the liturgy of Syrian rite canticle of the Passion Friday represent typical multidimensional theology of the Syrians. At the adoration of the cross the liturgy analogically goes from Jesus' sacrifice on the cross to the preparation of the Eucharistic sacrifice on the altar. It is attested by one anti-Jewish quotation: "The sacrifice that Jews killed is prepared on the altar. Come, pagans, because the chosen people went away. Lift up, Church, because Zion has collapsed." Substitution theory gets its transparent expression here. The community of the faithful is a place where it is possible to obtain salvation through Christ's death. The Syrian liturgy continues: "in you a table was formed, a table with the bread of life and chalice for the wine mixed from the Lord's side." This text of the Syrian liturgy of the Palm Sunday and Good Friday was not changed since the codification in Pontifical of the patriarch Michael the Great in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. This pontifical contains the texts which are much older from the historical viewpoint and they come from the ancient times. We can say that these Syrian texts absorbed some historical continuity regarding Syrian patres of the fourth and fifth centuries. Besides the mentioned Efreem the Syrian we can mention a Syrian bishop from the beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> century Baleus. He was convinced that Israel and its nation were repudiated: "He repudiated the Jewish nation because (Jews) hated him instead loving him even though they gave birth to him. But he loved the Church who accepted him, carried him on its hands and caressed him." [21] According to Efreem the Syrian God protected Israel as its flock in the past because the Shepherd of shepherds was hidden in this flock but now "he left... the flock and (pagan) nations became his flock" [13, p. 39].

#### **4. Conclusions**

In the Biblical reports on the passion of Christ there is sensible tendency to increase the share of the Jews on Jesus' condemnation and in the cruelties of his execution and to minimize the responsibility of the Roman part. The Syrian liturgy increases these tendencies because it makes impression that only Jews were guilty of Jesus' death. But Jews were considered blinded people and Christ's enemies without heart at that time. Even though several Jews are seen in very positive light such as Joseph of Arimatea and Nicodemus, Veronica, Mary Magdalene, they are taken as Jesus' secret disciples and in the Biblical reports they are separated from other Jews in general (John 19.38). On the other hand all the Jews are reproached by Jesus. According to the gospel of Saint Luke this reproach was addressed by Jesus to the inhabitants of Jerusalem when he came from Galilee for his last journey to Jerusalem. "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which kills prophets and stones those who are sent to you..." (Luke 13.34).

John's gospel is characteristically anti-Jewish. It is the only gospel which reports that 'Jews' reacted violently after long dispute: "They took stones and wanted to throw them on him" (John 8.59). We can see the motive of the stoning in Matthew's gospel in the parable on bad vine keeper. In this passage the keeper is identified with Jews at the end of the same chapter which begins with Jesus' arrival to Jerusalem (Matthew 21.35). The New Testament contains some elements and only the Syrian liturgy of the Palm Sunday collected these elements into one anti-Jewish story. According to this story Jewish parents told the innocent children to stone Jesus when he triumphantly enters Jerusalem. Here we can see the historical fact of blaming the Jewish nation collectively and there is some allusion to basic inventory of anti-Semitism. God's repudiation or even condemnation of Jews, guilt and reproach that they killed God and bitter animosity toward Christians.

Apostle Paul who had Jewish origin wrote in his First Letter to Thessalonians around 50 AD to the church in Thessalonica which he founded: "For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews: Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men: Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins always: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost." (1 Thessalonians 2.14-16). Modern exegesis warns us that this hard speech of Paul is situationally conditioned. It is caused by some personal bitter experience of the apostle and Christian minorities in Jewish communities. Who accepted Jesus as the Messiah, he had to take into account that he would be expelled from Jewish synagogue (John 9.22, 12.42). Situationally conditioned statements of the apostle Paul which are hostile to Jews cannot be misused as the validation of the historical anti-Semitism. These words were not the last words of the apostle of nations. Paul corrected them in the touching passage in the Letter to Romans (Romans 9-11) when he asked himself as a Jew: "What will become from

Israel?” The Syrian liturgy reads this passage on Hosanna Sunday. As it is generally known the text reminds that Christians from pagan origin were engrafted as branches to the noble olive trees of Israel. When they were engrafted they took the place of those branches which were cut off from the tree of life because of their mistrust. The apostle Paul wrote that Christians must be conscious that the noble root of Israel is carrying them. God engrafted them by his grace so it is in His power to put the broken branches back if they give up their mistrust. At the end there is the apostle’s eschatological optimistic vision of the salvation of the whole Israel (Romans 11.25) and liturgical preaching says about this promise of the salvation of the whole Israel. Andreas Heinz asked in one of his papers [8]: “Was there something like liturgical Antijudaism?” Partly yes. It is not a specialty of ancient Syrian liturgies of both groups that some texts were not talking positively about the Jews. Even Roman liturgy of Good Friday [22] was talking about Jews [23] as “perfidy Judaei” – unbelieving or godless Jews till lately [24]. We can see some analogy in some parts of the songs in Slovak Unified Catholic Songbook (JKS) especially for the Lent season. In big petitions on Good Friday genuflection which was typical for all the other God Friday petitions was omitted in the petition for Jews [8]. Amalar from Metz around 850 in *Liber officialis* 1,13,17 commented this omission by the explanation that we as Christians do not want to be like Jews who mockingly genuflected in front of Christ. (Matthew 27.29, Mark 15.19).

The Catholic Church expressed its relationship to the Jewish nation in the documents of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). In the council declaration on the relationship to non-Christian religions *Nostra aetate* dated October 28<sup>th</sup>, 1965 the council positively spoke about our Jewish brothers in faith [25] in reference to the Paul’s Letter to Romans 9-11 and especially the final part of its 11<sup>th</sup> chapter: “... but as touching the election, they (Jews) are beloved for the father's sakes.” (Romans 11.28). And again: “And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins“ (Romans 11.26-27). Christians are warned not to boast in front of the Jewish nation and it remembers them permanent grace and vocation of Israel: “Not you are carrying the root but the root carries you“ (Romans 11.18). The positive consequence of the liturgical reform of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was the effort to remove any open or hidden negative attitude toward Jews in the Catholic liturgy. The Good Friday petition for Jews says with great respect about the nation to which ‘God has spoken first’. In the Easter vigil after the reading on exodus of the chosen people we pray for the grace for all people that they could be spiritual children of the patriarch Abraham.

The position of Jews in the liturgical texts of the Syrian eastern liturgy was varied. There was a prevailing opinion that mentions about Jewish nation in the liturgical texts, especially on Good Friday, were mostly negative. But it was not so. The Syrian liturgy of the western or eastern origin as any other Christian liturgy celebrated passion, death and resurrection of Christ in Holy Week. This was the big theme of the Syrian Christians of the ancient times. It is logical that

based on the Biblical reports the Gospel passages about the Passion mention Jews as well. These passages have dual character – positive and negative. God's mother Mary, apostles, disciples, Mary Magdalene and Jewish children are taken positively. On the other hand we can see some Anti-Jewish tones which were able to evoke hostile feelings toward Jews or to increase them. In this way they initiated some elements of the historical anti-Judaism in the ancient texts of the oriental liturgy. On the basis of research this study showed historically important mentions of the Christian ancient times in the area of Syria which are new to us in many aspects. This study wanted to introduce the reader into the beginnings of the anti-Semitism in liturgy with respect and in adequate way on the basis of the research and reconstruction of old Syrian texts which are dated to ancient times mostly. The Syrian liturgy has its own development. It is specific by its antiquity and historicity. Richness of the studied liturgical texts of the Syrian origin showed positive and negative statements of the Syrian liturgy about the chosen nation. These statements are coming from the ancient times. In this study we saw positive and negative mentions concerning the position of the Jewish nation and we wanted to bring historical and theological concepts in truth. The crucifixion of Christ cannot be attributed to Jews who were living at that time and it cannot be attributed to Jews who are living now. Let this study help to clarify and strengthen correct and good relationships to the Jewish nation in the area of the historical research.

## References

- [1] G. Dautzenberg, *Antijudaismus I*, in *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, vol. 1, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn., Verlag Herder, Freiburg i. Br., 1993, 748-749.
- [2] P. Caban, *Cesta vyvoleného národa v priebehu dejín*, in *Významné židovské osobnosti mesta Ružomberok*, D. Iskrová (ed.), Verbum, Ružomberok, 2011, 12.
- [3] M. Barsom, *Ma'de'dono. The book of the Church Festivals according to the Ancient Rite of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch*, Mar A.Y. Samuel, Lodi, 1984.
- [4] A.G. Kollampampil, *The live-giving Paschal Lamb. Great Week Celebrations in the East Syrian Liturgy*, vol. 2, Catholic Theological Studies of India, Changanassery, Kerala, 1997, 13.
- [5] A. Angenendt, *Das Frühmittelalter*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn., Kohlhammer, Stuttgart, 1990, 71, 165, 175.
- [6] P. Caban, *Liturgika. Princípy a teológia liturgie*, SSV, Trnava, 2010, 25.
- [7] A. Panczová, *Egeria, Púť do Svätej zeme. Itinerarium Egeriae*, in *Starokresťanská knižnica*, vol. 1, Trnavská univerzita. Teologická fakulta, Bratislava, 2006, 153.
- [8] A. Heinz, *Antijudaismus in der christlichen Liturgie?*, in *Syriaca II. Beiträge zum 3. deutschen Syrologen-Symposium in Vierzehnheiligen 2002*, in *Studien zur orientalischen Kirchengeschichte*, M. Tamcke (ed.), vol. 33, LIT Verlag, Münster, 2004, 307-325.
- [9] A. Heinz, *Feste und Feiern im Kirchenjahr nach dem Ritus der Syrisch-Orthodoxen Kirche von Antiochien*, LIT Verlag, Trier, 1998, 68-71.
- [10] A.G. Kollampampil, *Ephemerides Liturgicae*, **111** (1997) 307-342.
- [11] F. Hahn, „Die Juden“ im *Johannesevangelium*, in *Kontinuität und Einheit*, Herder, Freiburg i. Br., 1981, 430-438.

- [12] F. Vouga, *Theologie und Glaube*, **83** (1993) 84-88.
- [13] Efrem Syrian, *Über den Glauben* 3, 10, in *Des hl. Ephräm des Syrers ausgewählte Schriften aus dem Syrischen und Griechischen übersetzt*, part 1, in *Bibliothek der Kirchenväter*, vol. 37, Kempten u. München, 1919, 53.
- [14] A. Kakkanat, *Christological Catechesis of the Liturgy. A Study of the Great Feasts of our Lord in the Malankara Church*, PIO, Roma, 1996, 42-46, 206-210.
- [15] \*\*\*, *Itinerarium Egeriae ad loca Sancta*, in *Fontes Christiani*, vol. 20, XXXVII/1-8, Herder, Freiburg i. Br., 1985, 94.
- [16] G. Khouri-Sarkis, *L'Orient Syrien*, **2** (1957) 201-203.
- [17] P. Riessler, *Altjüdisches Schrifttum außerhalb der Bibel*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn., Dr. Benno Verlag, Heidelberg, 1975, 1011.
- [18] Bar G. Hebraeus, *Nomocanon (hudoye)*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn., Mor Ephrem Syrian Monastery, Glane-Losser, 1986, 11.
- [19] G. Rabo, *Die liturgischen Geräte in der syrisch-orthodoxen Kirche*, in *Zu Geschichte, Theologie, Liturgie und Gegenwartslage der syrischen Kirchen*, in *Studien zur orientalischen Kirchengeschichte*, M. Tamcke & A. Heinz (eds.), vol. 9, LIT Verlag, Münster, 2000, 366.
- [20] P. Riessler, *Altjüdisches Schrifttum außerhalb der Bibel*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn., Dr. Benno Filser Verlag, Heidelberg, 1975, 966.
- [21] \*\*\*, *Kenneschrin*, in *Ausgewählte Schriften der syrischen Dichter Cyrillonas, Baläus, Isaak von Antiochie und Jakob von Sarug*, in *Bibliothek der Kirchenväter*, vol. 6, Kempten u. München, 1913, 15.
- [22] J. Hennig, *Liturgisches Jahrbuch*, **10** (1960) 129-140.
- [23] J. Hennig, *Liturgisches Jahrbuch*, **13** (1963) 9-21.
- [24] W. Sanders, *Liturgisches Jahrbuch*, **24** (1974) 240-248.
- [25] Second Vatican Council, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, **58** (1966) 4.