

SYRIAC DIALOGUE

FOURTH NON-OFFICIAL CONSULTATION ON DIALOGUE WITHIN THE SYRIAC TRADITION

**Edited on behalf
of the Foundation
PRO ORIENTE by
Johann Marte/Gerhard Wilflinger**

Vienna 2001

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Patriarch Mar Addai II: Preamble	6
Johann Marte/Gerhard Wilflinger: Foreword by the Editors	8
Dietmar Winkler: The Scholarly Achievement of the Fourth Syriac Consultation	10
Programme	14
List of Participants	16

FOURTH NON-OFFICIAL ASSYRIAN CONSULTATION

Opening Ceremony:

In Memoriam President Alfred Stirnemann	18
Address by Peter Hofrichter	19
Address by Archbishop Mar Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim of Aleppo	21

Papers and Discussions:

Mar Bawai Soro (Assyrian): Understanding Church of the East Sacramental Theology: The Theodorian Perspective	22
Elias Khalifé-Hachem (Maronite): Maronite Sacramental Theology.....	53
Michael J. Birnie (Assyrian): Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist in the Church of the East	67
Johns Abraham Konat (Malankara-Orthodox): The Sacrament of Initiation (Baptism) in the West Syrian Tradition	78
Joseph Chalassery (Syro-Malabar): Sacraments of initiation in the Syro-Malabar Church	90
Mar Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim (Syrian-Orthodox): Introduction to the Sacraments. An Oriental Orthodox Perspective	107
Joint Communiqué	118

Annex:

Dietmar W. Winkler (Roman-Catholic): Dogmatic and Historical Results of the First Three PRO ORIENTE Syriac Consultations.....	121
Dietmar W. Winkler (Roman-Catholic): Between Progress and Setback: The Ecumenical Dialogues of the Assyrian Church of the East	138

PRO ORIENTE Publications in English

The Oriental Orthodox - Roman Catholic Ecumenical Dialogue

* First Ecumenical Consultation between Theologians of the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church, Papers and Minutes. Supplementary Issue Number 1 of the Periodical "Wort und Wahrheit" (Verlag Herder, Vienna 1972) 190 p.

* Second Ecumenical Consultation between Theologians of the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church, Papers and Minutes. Supplementary Issue Number 2 of the Periodical "Wort und Wahrheit" (Verlag Herder, Vienna 1974) 208 p.

* Third Ecumenical Consultation between Theologians of the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church, Papers and Minutes. Supplementary Issue Number 3 of the Periodical "Wort und Wahrheit" (Verlag Herder, Vienna 1976) 240 p.

* Fourth Ecumenical Consultation between Theologians of the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church, Papers and Minutes. Supplementary Issue Number 4 of the Periodical "Wort und Wahrheit" (Verlag Herder, Vienna 1978) 256 p.

* Fifth Ecumenical Consultation between Theologians of the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church, Papers and Minutes. Supplementary Issue Number 5 of the Periodical "Wort und Wahrheit" (Verlag Herder, Vienna 1989) 208 p.

* Selection of the Papers and Minutes of the Four Vienna Consultations between Theologians of the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church. Edited by Ökumenische Stiftung PRO ORIENTE in Vienna (1988) 286 p.

* Five Vienna Consultations between Theologians of the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church 1971 - 1988. Selected Papers in One Volume. Published and edited by the Ecumenical Foundation PRO ORIENTE - Vienna (1993) 370 p.

The PRO ORIENTE Dialogue within the Churches of Syriac Tradition

* Syriac Dialogue No 1, First Non-Official Consultation on Dialogue within the Syriac Tradition, PRO ORIENTE, Vienna 1994, 240 p. Available in English, French and Arabic.

* Syriac Dialogue No 2, Second Non-Official Consultation on Dialogue within the Syriac Tradition, PRO ORIENTE, Vienna 1996, 228 p. Available in English, French and Arabic.

* Syriac Dialogue No 3, Third Non-Official Consultation on Dialogue within the Syriac Tradition, PRO ORIENTE, Vienna 1998, 192p. Available in English, French and Arabic.

* Syriac Dialogue No 4, Fourth Non-Official Consultation on Dialogue within the Syriac Tradition, PRO ORIENTE, Vienna 2001, 154p. Available in English.

* Syriac Dialogue No 5, Fifth Non-Official Consultation on Dialogue within the Syriac Tradition, PRO ORIENTE, Vienna 2002, in preparation.

The Oriental Orthodox - Roman Catholic Ecumenical Dialogue

PRO ORIENTE Booklet Series

* Booklet Number 1, Communiqués and Joint Documents; PRO ORIENTE, Vienna 1990, 136 p. Available in English, German, Arabic, Malayalam and Armenian, planned in Amharic.

* Booklet Number 2, Summaries of the Papers; PRO ORIENTE, Vienna 1991, 74 p. Available in English, German and Arabic; planned in other languages.

* Booklet Number 3, Middle East Regional Symposium, Deir Amba Bishoy, October 1991; PRO ORIENTE, Vienna 1993, 168 p. Available in English and Arabic.

* Booklet Number 4, On Primacy, First Study Seminar, June 1991; PRO ORIENTE, Vienna 1993, 92 p. Available in English and Arabic.

* Booklet Number 5, On Councils and Conciliarity, Second Study Seminar, June 1992; PRO ORIENTE, Vienna 1993. Available in English and Arabic.

* Booklet Number 6, Kerala Regional Symposium, Kottayam, October 1993; PRO ORIENTE, Vienna 1996. Available in English and Malayalam.

Booklet Number 7, On Ecclesiology, Third Study Seminar, July 1994; PRO ORIENTE, Vienna 1995. Available in English, planned in Arabic.

* Booklet Number 8, Lebanon Regional Symposium, Kaslik, September 1994, PRO ORIENTE, Vienna 1998. Available in English, planned in Arabic.

* Booklet Number 9, On Authority and Jurisdiction, Fourth Study Seminar, July 1996; PRO ORIENTE, Vienna 1999. Available in English.

* Booklet Number 10, Regional Symposium Kröffelbach, Germany, August 1997, PRO ORIENTE, Vienna 1999. Available in German.

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بطريركية
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للطائفة الآثورية
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هاتف ٧١٩٨٣٦٢
فاكس ٧١٧٩٧٥٢
بغداد - العراق

Preamble

This is how all will know you for my disciples: your love for one another. (John 13: 35)

Mister President!

Venerable members of the foundation PRO ORIENTE!

Greetings to you with the love and peace of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Redeemer, to whom be glory and honour!

In the spirit of love that originates from the Word of the Lord mentioned above, we express our sincere wish to permanently embody that we are pupils of the Divine teacher, who asked God, His father, that those who believe in him be one, as he and his father are one.

In harmony with our clear vision of faith and with our good and right intention - we therefore bless the way the honourable foundation PRO ORIENTE has adopted and which should result in the fact that all members of this body fill their position and their function and thus perfect the function of the other members, especially through the ecumenical dialogue, which constitutes the excellent basis of what is favourable and useful for Christianity through its sacraments.

We are proud of being sons of the Apostolic Church of the East, the old Oriental Church which was founded in the first century after Jesus Christ by the blessed apostles and disciples of the Lord, Thomas, Addai and Mari and which belongs to the East Syriac tradition which has grown and blossomed in Mesopotamia and the surrounding countries, which is based on the excellent "theological and liturgical" heritage of faith and kept all truths of faith recorded in the Holy Scriptures. We value every effort to keep going the ecumenical dialogue which includes different historical, theological and liturgical aspects. Thereby a part of her brightness and her shining is given back to the Church of Christ which she had before the schisms of the 5th century and the following eventful developments. Those – originating from an error – go back to their limited earthly and carnal existence and essentially result from diverging opinions in regard to the translation and interpretation of some theological terms which concern the person of

Jesus Christ and the way how his human and his divine nature are united in his one person – praise to him.

Since the foundation PRO ORIENTE with her venerable personalities is at the lead of those groups and organisations which since 1971 strive for the realisation of this honourable aim, we are delighted that we share this experience with our other brothers, the shepherds of the Church of Christ with all their different designations and titles, and wish that all kinds of misunderstandings and splits which the Church has known in the course of the last 2000 years, be ended and that she can step with joyful exclamations into the third millennium thanks to the constructive ecumenical dialogue like a bride in a white dress.

We are glad that we, as living embodiment of our point of view and of the light of our striving in this bright ecumenical organisation, can rely on His Grace Mar Emmanuel Eilya, Bishop of America and Canada, as a representative of our Church in the foundation PRO ORIENTE in general and in the dialogue within the Syriac tradition in particular, and it is our hope that this step enriches the continued dialogue which we wish to be continued, successful and fruitful.

We do not want to miss the occasion to mention with our highest esteem His Eminence Cardinal Franz König, the founder of the foundation PRO ORIENTE, the late great teacher Alfred Stirnemann, who lead the foundation during the past years, and all the illustrious names of the Church men, theologians and teachers who have contributed through their fruitful thoughts, based on the authentic faith and the sincere love, to the building of a great Christian home. Simultaneously we would like to express again our readiness to promote all that contributes to the success and the prospering of this dialogue. Hereto we implore the Holy Spirit to effuse his holy mercy upon all and inspire all that contributes to the well-being and the blessing of the faithful.

The blessing of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God our Father and the community of the Holy Spirit be with us eternally. Amen.

+ Addai II

Patriarch of the Ancient Church of the East
in Iraq and the whole world

FOREWORD BY THE EDITORS

Following the extraordinary interest raised by the publication of the three volumes on the Syriac Dialogue of the years 1994 - 1997 we today present the fourth volume of this series. This collection of papers deals with the topic of Sacraments in the Churches of Syriac tradition.

First of all we express our thanks to the participants of the Fourth Consultation, above all to those who were presenting papers. We are particularly grateful to H.H. Patriarch Mar Addai II for his appreciation which he expressed in his preamble.¹ Our gratitude also goes to the other heads of Churches, especially to the Protectors of PRO ORIENTE, H.H. Mar Denkha IV of the Assyrian Church of the East and H.H. Mar Zakka I Iwas of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch.

At the education centre "Pallottihaus" in Vienna 25 theologians delegated by their Churches and experts invited by the foundation PRO ORIENTE took part in this consultation from February 29th to March 2nd, 2000. They presented and discussed papers on sacraments in general in the different Churches of Syriac tradition and in detail on the sacraments of initiation.

The participants were affected by the unexpected death of president Alfred Stirnemann on January 28th, 2000. They commemorated him during the opening session and appreciated his deep engagement in the Syriac dialogue, which was one of the projects promoted and led by him in the last years. The participating Churches of Syriac tradition discovered a surprisingly large amount of agreement on their liturgical prayers and hymns and their theological views. The common origins and traditions obviously prevail the differences.

The preparation was done by the PRO ORIENTE Syriac Commission in its meetings in Vienna and Rome in 1999.

The Vienna Syriac Dialogue which began in June 1994 has entered a second phase with this Fourth Consultation. The first phase which covered the three Syriac Consultations (1994, 1996, 1997) had examined the Christological aspect of theological dialogue.

The second phase was entitled: "Celebrating and witnessing of faith in liturgy of sacraments". Future Syriac Consultations with this theme are scheduled for the years 2002 and 2003, thus reflecting the suggestions made by the participants of the Fourth Syriac Consultation in their Final Communiqué. Hence the Fifth and Sixth Syriac Consultation will study rites which are identified and listed differently as *raze/roze* by the individual Syriac Churches (i.e. Marriage, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Leaven (Malka), Sign of the Cross, Penance).

Our gratitude as editors of the present volume goes to the Archdiocese of Vienna and its Archbishop Cardinal Christoph Schönborn and to the Archbishop emeritus Cardinal Franciscus König. Both cardinals visited the participants of the consultation during their work.

Furthermore we thank Dr. Dietmar Winkler of the Theological Faculty of the University of Graz for writing a concise description of the main lines of the Fourth Syriac Consultation and presenting the scholarly achievement.

Finally we express our thanks once more to the lecturers and the participants of the conference, its minutes' secretary Miss Marion Bremer, to Secretary General Franz Gschwandtner and the other staff members of PRO ORIENTE who helped in organising the consultation.

¹ Concerning the preamble of the second volume of Syriac Dialogue (Vienna 1996/97) the editors have to apologize: "By mistake the preamble of His Holiness Mar Addai to the second volume of Syriac Dialogue (page 6-8) and the greeting address (page 23) printed there were presented to PRO ORIENTE with texts that had not his authorization."

REDISCOVERING THE COMMON SYRIAC HERITAGE: SACRAMENTAL THEOLOGY AND SACRAMENT OF INITIATION

The Scholarly Achievement of the Fourth Syriac Consultation

The first three unofficial Syriac Consultations (Vienna 1994 and 1996, Chicago 1997) dealt mainly with Christological questions and their historical context. The PRO ORIENTE Commission on Dialogue within the Syriac Tradition (*Syriac Commission*) decided at its meeting in March 1999 to begin a series of studies on the Sacraments of the Church. At the fourth Syriac Consultation, documented in the present volume, participants from nine Churches of both the West and the East Syriac tradition had the opportunity to study sacramental theology in general and, specifically, the sacrament(s) of Initiation. This investigation of the liturgical witness and sacramental rites of the Christian faith is an important contribution to theological research on the Syriac heritage as well as to current ecumenical efforts.

1. Theological research

Liturgical studies were also presented at the previous Syriac Consultations. Papers there focused on the absence of the Institution Narrative in the Anaphora of Addai and Mari with the result that it is an authentic consecrative Eucharistic prayer, and investigated various offices of the Church of the East on the basis of the axiom “lex orandi – lex credendi” from a Christological point of view. However, while scholarly research on Syriac liturgical questions has devoted special attention to East and West Syriac *anaphorai*, known as canon in the western church, and the Liturgy of the Hours, there is no new comprehensive study on the sacraments (mysteries, *raze*) of the Syriac tradition. Probably the most comprehensive current research for both the East and the West Syriac tradition is that of Wilhelm de Vries SJ, published in the series *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* (vols. 125 and 133). But these excellent studies were produced in the 1940s and present the external view of a Western theologian. The only newer complete presentation from an Assyrian point of view is that of Mar Aprem Mookan, published in Trichur (Mar Narsai Press 1978).

The fourth Syriac Consultation, which intended not to offer an exhaustive new overview of the subject, but rather, by its methodology, to present the perspective of theologians of both liturgical traditions (East and West Syriac) and the three theological branches (Assyrian, Oriental Orthodox, and Oriental Catholic), brought a fresh impulse and provides important material for theological and ecumenical research.

2. General sacramental theology

The first phase of the Consultation analysed sacramental theology in general. The theologically most important contribution was given by Mar Bawai Soro. He outlines the concept of a general sacramental theology from an East Syriac point of view, based mainly on the anthropology of Theodore of Mopsuestia (and his adherent Narsai of Nisibis) and its soteriological aspects. The paper emphasises the Church of the East's di-

stinctive understanding of humankind's fall: “For Theodore, sin is an act of voluntary disobedience to God's law. And, accordingly, it is not inherent in man's nature but is a consequence of his choices, namely, of the exercise of will, since sin is a property of will, not of nature.” This thought is fundamentally Antiochian, in its special emphasis on the completeness of the human nature with its free will. This is an important theological and anthropological contribution for the whole of Christianity. With this approach Mar Bawai elaborates the context in which “the work of the Holy Spirit is offered to man in the Church, through the Holy Sacraments.” He further reflects on the Syriac term “*raza*”, the equivalent to the Latin term “*sacramentum*”. The term represents the redemptive act of Jesus Christ on the cross and points at the same time to the eschatological expectation of the kingdom to come. In the “*Raze*” the faithful of the Church partake in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Finally reference is made to Abdishô bar Brikkâ (†1318) and Timotheus II (†1332), the only ones who have designed a systematic sacramental theology in the East Syriac Church. It is not until their time that the western scholastic development of a seven-fold sacramental model entered the Church of the East.

The second paper, given by Elias Khalifé-Hachem, deals with Maronite sacramental theology, a West Syriac point of view. He elaborates the position of the Maronite theologian Estephan Ad-Dûwaihi († 1704), who opposed the process of Latinization in the Maronite Church and wrote three books on sacramental theology. According to Ad-Dûwaihi, the term “*raza*” describes best the symbolical reality of God's acts celebrated by the Church in the power of the Triune God.

Mar Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim, unable to participate in the consultation, could not give his paper in person. However, his contribution is fortunately included in the present volume and casts light on the Syrian Orthodox perspective on the sacraments. He refers to George († 725), the Syrian Orthodox Bishop of the Arab tribes of Al-Kufa, who dealt with only four Sacraments comprehensively. Further, he stresses the writings and liturgical commentaries of Jacob of Edessa (†708), Ivannis of Dara (†860), Moses Bar Kepha (†903) and Bar Hebraeus (†1298) which demonstrates that the West Syriac tradition did not use the number “seven” for the sacraments up to the 13th century. This correlates with the observations on the East Syriac tradition. Although the paper does not solve the question how this specific number arose in the Syrian Orthodox Church, it becomes obvious that the seven-fold system of Sacraments imposed on the different “*raze*” was imported into the East from western Latin scholastic theology.

The intense discussions after the papers of Mar Bawai Soro and Elias Khalifé-Hachem are reflected in the final communiqué, in particular with regard to the Syriac “*raza*” (East Syriac)/“*rozo*” (West Syriac). It is stated that “since the connotations and range of meaning of this term are far closer to those of the Greek ‘mysterion’, it might be preferable, in certain contexts at least, to represent ‘*raza/rozo*’ as ‘Mystery’, rather than ‘Sacrament’, or to leave it in transliteration.” According to the comprehensive understanding of ‘*raza/rozo*’ their number can be left unspecified. A clear distinction between sacraments and sacramentals is therefore not appropriate for the Syriac tradition. Neither the West nor the East Syriac tradition developed a “general” sacramental theology as the Latin Church did. Reflection on the Mysteries as celebration of the Economy of Salvation (syr. *mdabranutha*) is always done in the concrete context of the respective liturgical celebration. As one important result of the first part of the consultation, the Joint Communiqué nevertheless makes clear that “there is no essential difference from

western tradition in the basic understanding of the underlying meaning and theological content of the various sacraments/raze/roze.”

Finally the Joint Communiqué indicates the distinctive emphasis of the Church of the East, i.e. “the work of the Holy Spirit simultaneously confers the earnest, or pledge, of immortality and empowers the human person to deal with sin successfully and live in obedience before God.”

3. Sacrament of initiation

Among the mysteries of the Early Church, Baptism together with the post-baptismal Chrismation, called Confirmation in the West, and the Eucharist have a particular standing. This also applies to the East and West Syriac tradition. Before the 13th century two main groups can be identified and distinguished: Baptism – Eucharist on the one hand and Baptism – Eucharist – Priesthood. The second working session of the fourth Syriac Consultation was dedicated to the Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist). Contributions were furnished by all three traditions: Michael J. Birnie (Assyrian), Johns A. Konat (Malankara Orthodox) and Joseph Chalassery (Syro-Malabar). It can be deduced from each one of these well-grounded presentations that from an historical point of view the ancient ecclesiastical practice of celebrating the rite of initiation (i.e. Baptism-Chrismation-Eucharist) as a whole has always been the case in all the Syriac Churches. The western terminology, which speaks of three sacraments in the plural, therefore does not fit the Syriac tradition. The post-baptismal anointing is an integral part of the baptismal rite that reaches its climax in the participation of the Christian community in the Eucharist. The Final Communiqué points out strongly that the treatment of Christian Initiation “as distinct units in an exclusively analytical manner” is inadequate, and that it is further misleading to try to isolate particular moments in the respective rites.

The richness of the symbolic power of expression in the Syriac baptismal rites was accentuated by all the speakers. In that context the fourth Syriac Consultation highlighted the relationship and connection between Christian baptism and the baptism of Jesus. Furthermore, the theology of St John’s Gospel, which urgently calls for the necessity of a “new birth”, is used in the baptismal rite of *all* Syriac Churches, alongside St Paul’s vision of death and resurrection in Baptism which is also reflected in these traditions.

4. Ecumenical relevance and Future Perspectives

The current official theological dialogue between the Assyrian Church and the Roman Catholic Church completed its studies on sacramental theology at its sixth meeting (October 12-14, 2000, Arezzo/Italy). At this session of the official Joint Committee for Theological Dialogue, the results of the Fourth PRO ORIENTE Syriac Dialogue could already be integrated. At Arezzo the Joint Commission concluded their studies and a draft of a “Statement on Sacramental Life” is now under consideration by the competent church authorities.

Apart from this direct contribution to the official Assyrian/Catholic dialogue, the PRO ORIENTE Syriac Dialogue gives a unique opportunity for ecumenical and theological encounter between all the Churches of Syriac tradition. Therefore, important basic preparatory work for a future official Oriental Orthodox/Assyrian ecumenical dialogue is already done. Serious theological work on a non-official level has proved several

times to be a special strong point of PRO ORIENTE. Within the trilateral concept of the Syriac Dialogue, historical-theological misunderstandings can be discussed and clarified.

The Fourth PRO ORIENTE Consultation has brought both ecumenical and scholarly results. It makes an important contribution to a general sacramental theology and the sacrament of initiation from the point of view of the respective Church traditions. The participants from different Churches with a common Syro-Aramaic heritage had a chance to learn more about the specific characteristics of each other and to have a theological exchange in the calm atmosphere of a non-official level meeting. These studies on the Sacraments have to be completed in the next Consultations.

One may also suggest a new methodical approach for the future: It is important and necessary to work on sources that are scarcely taken into consideration in today’s ecumenical theology, the Christian Arabic literature. Writings of Syrian Orthodox theologians like Ali Ibn Dawud al-Arfadi (9th century) and Grigorius Abu l-Faradj (Bar Hebraeus, 13th century) or even of the Coptic theologian Al-Safi Ibn al-Assal (13th century), could be examined for their perspective on East Syriac theology. The relations and discussions between East and West Syriac theologians who lived together in the same environment during the Arab and Ottoman periods need to be investigated. In the course of this fourth Syriac Consultation it was already observed that interaction between East and West Syriac liturgical rites took place after the divisions. This clearly suggests certain relations – theological and non-theological - between the different Syriac Churches. Further explorations of such encounters of the past will reveal important ecumenical perspectives for present inter-church relations in the Middle East.

PROGRAMME

Tuesday, 29th of February 2000

- 9.00 **Opening session:**
Memoriam to President *Alfred Stirnemann* by *Philipp Harnoncourt*,
Member of the Executive Board of PRO ORIENTE
Welcome by *Peter Hofrichter*, Member of the Executive Board of
PRO ORIENTE in the Syriac Commission
Address by *Franciscus Cardinal König*, Founder and Protector of
PRO ORIENTE
- 9.45 **First working session: "Sacraments in general"**
Papers and Discussions: chaired by Archbishop *Boulos Matar*
- Mar Bawai Soro*
Understanding Church of the East Sacramental Theology: The
Theodorian Perspective
- Greetings of *Mar Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim* of Aleppo read out by
Peter Hofrichter
- 12.30 Lunch
- 15.30 **Second working session: "Sacraments in general"**
Papers and Discussions: chaired by *Mar Bawai Soro*
- Elias Khalifé-Hachem*
Maronite Sacramental Theology
- 18.30 Dinner

Wednesday, 1st of March 2000

- 9.00 **Third working session: "Sacraments of initiation"**
Papers and Discussions: chaired by Archbishop *Mar Joseph Powathil*
- Michael J. Birnie*
Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist in the Church of the East
- Johns Abraham Konat*
The Sacrament of Initiation (Baptism) in the West Syrian Tradition
- 13.00 Lunch (in company of *Christoph Cardinal Schönborn*)

- 15.30 **Fourth working session: "Sacraments of initiation"**
Papers and Discussions: chaired by Archbishop *Boulos Matar*

Joseph Chalassery
Sacraments of initiation in the Syro-Malabar Church

- 18.00 Reception in the Residence of the Lebanese Ambassador in Vienna

Thursday, 2nd of March 2000

- 10.00 **Fifth working session:** Drafting and Discussion of the Communiqué:
chaired by *Mar Bawai Soro*
- 12.30 Lunch
- 15.30 **Sixth working session:** Drafting and Discussion of the Communiqué:
chaired by *Mar Joseph Powathil*
- 17.15 **Closing session:**
Presentation of the Communiqué by *Sebastian Brock* and *Frans
Bouwen*
Words of thanks by Archbishop *Boulos Matar*
- Closing service: Reading: Acts 11, 19-26 (*Theresia Hainthaler*)
Final Prayer (*Geevarghese Chediath*)
Hymn ("Emar lee etha") (Tell me o Church)
Blessing (*Mar Joseph Powathil*)
- 18.30 Dinner

PARTICIPANTS

1. Members of the PRO ORIENTE Syriac Commission

Mar Bawai Soro
Bishop of Western California, USA (Assyrian, New Calendarian)

Father Louis Sako
Rector of the St. Peter Seminary Baghdad, Iraq (Chaldean)

Archbishop Jules Mikhael Al-Jamil
Procurator del Patriarcha di Antiochia presso la S. Sede Rome, Italy (Syrian Catholic)

Mar Joseph Powathil
Metropolitan of Changanassery, India (Malabar Catholic)

Archbishop Paul Matar
Maronite Archbishop of Beirut, Lebanon (Maronite)

Father Geevarghese Chediath
St. Mary's Malankara Seminary, Trivandrum, India (Malankara Catholic)

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University of Graz, Austria (Roman Catholic)

Peter Hofrichter
University of Salzburg, Austria (Roman Catholic)

excused: Father Kondothra K.M. George
Rector of the Orthodox Seminary Kottayam, India (Malankara Orthodox)

excused: Mar Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim
Metropolitan of Aleppo (Syrian Orthodox)

2. Participants in the Study Seminary “Sacraments in the Syriac Tradition”

Father Paul Rouhana, Université Saint Esprit de Kaslik
Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity Kaslik, Lebanon (Maronite)



From left to right: Fr. Elie Khalifé, Chorbishop Michael J. Birnie, Mar Emmanuel Eilya, Mar Aprem George Mookan, Prof. Sebastian Brock.

From left to right: Fr. Joseph Chalassery, Fr. Pierre Yousif, Fr. Louis Sako, Archbishop Jules Mikhael Al-Jamil, Fr. Matthew Vellanickal, Fr. Frans Bouwen, Prof. Philipp Harnoncourt, Dr. Dietmar Winkler.





From left to right: Prof. Peter Hofrichter, Mar Bawai Soro, Fr. Johns Abraham Konat, Mar Joseph Powathil, Archbishop Paul Matar.



Visit of Christoph Cardinal Schönborn to the participants of the Fourth Syriac Consultation from left to right: Archbishop Maronite Paul Matar, Fr. Pierre Yousif, Fr. Paul Rouhana, Christoph Cardinal Schönborn.

From left to right: Dr. Theresia Hainthaler, Fr. Geevarghese Chediath, Fr. Paul Rouhana, Fr. Johan Bonny, Deacon Jacob Mathew, Fr. Philip Nelpurapampil.



Lunch of the participants of the Fourth Syriac Consultation together with Christoph Cardinal Schönborn.





Reception at the residence of the Lebanese Ambassador in Vienna from left to right:
Mar Aprem George Mookan, Fr. Matthew Vellanickal, Dr. Dietmar Winkler, Archbishop Paul Matar, Fr. Frans Bouwen, Mar Bawai Soro, Chorbishop Michael J. Birnie.

From left to right: General Secretary Franz Gschwandtner and Acting President Johann Marte with the Lebanese Ambassador William Habib and his wife.



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Father Johns Abraham Konat
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Father Joseph Chalassery
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Mar Emmanuel Eilya
Bishop of San Fernando, USA (Assyrian, Old Calendarian)

Mar Aprem George Mookan
Metropolitan of Trichur, India (Assyrian, New Calendarian)

3. Observers in the PRO ORIENTE Study Seminar

Monika Gimplinger
University of Salzburg, Austria (Roman Catholic)

Father Philip Nelpuraparampil
Department for Ecumenism, Changanassery, India (Malabar Catholic)

Jacob Mathew
University of Salzburg, Austria (Malankara Orthodox)

Philipp Harnoncourt

IN MEMORIAM ALFRED STIRNEMANN

PRESIDENT OF PRO ORIENTE

Alfred Stirnemann was born on August 21, 1939, in Vienna. He studied Economics, Slavistics, Politics and foreign languages in Vienna, Fribourg (Switzerland), Santiago de Compostela (Spain), Zagreb (Croatia) and Peking (China). From 1964 to 1966 he was working as General Secretary of the international catholic student's movement Pax Romana. From 1970 on Alfred Stirnemann worked for the Austrian People's Party to found its Political Academy, and for further ten years he was the Scientific Secretary of this Academy. From 1984 to 1992 he was installed as director of the Austrian Institute for Political Education in Mattersburg, and from 1988 on he was engaged as lecturer in Political Sciences at the University of Vienna.

Despite all these obligations Alfred Stirnemann took over as General Secretary of the ecumenical Foundation PRO ORIENTE in 1965, one year after PRO ORIENTE was founded by His Eminence Franciscus Cardinal König, and he stayed in this function until 1993, when he was elected President of this foundation to succeed the former Federal President of Austria, Rudolf Kirchschläger, in this position.

Because of his efforts to promote relations with the Orthodox Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches Alfred Stirnemann was a highly esteemed dialogue partner, and a man who held the confidence of many eastern Church leaders. In 1992 the Pontifical Oriental Institute in Rome honored him with the "Award for Excellent Achievements in the field of Ecumenism".

Alfred Stirnemann was connected to PRO ORIENTE and its history like nobody else. Due to his talent for languages and his profound knowledge of the Christian East he had an irreplaceable role. Nobody else founded and cultivated so many deep contacts in the field of Eastern Churches, and the representatives of these Churches placed deep confidence in him, because ecumenism was so important to him, and because ecumenical work became - especially in his last years - "the meaning of his life".

Peter Hofrichter

OPENING ADDRESS

Your Eminence, Your Graces, Reverend Fathers, esteemed professors and colleagues!

I want to welcome you cordially to this Fourth Syriac Consultation. Thank you for coming from so far away and from so different parts of the world. Your presence shows how necessary these meetings in the framework of PRO ORIENTE are and how much you appreciate the opportunities of coming together and exchanging your theological convictions. I specially welcome His Eminence Franciscus Cardinal König who gives us the honour to be with us.

We will be very much missing in this meeting the President of the Foundation PRO ORIENTE, Mr Alfred Stirnemann who has been building up and guiding the foundation in various functions since its very beginnings and who has so unexpectedly passed away. Before we enter our agenda, please, let us raise for his memory and pray for him.

I take the opportunity to present to you the personalities of PRO ORIENTE now in charge, the Acting President and former Vice-President of the foundation, the General Director of the Austrian National Library, Dr. Johann Marte, and the General Secretary of the Foundation, Dr. Franz Gschwandtner, who has been in charge of his task already all the time Mr Stirnemann has been President.

I have to apologise His Grace Mar Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim, Metropolitan of Aleppo, who is for health reasons prevented to come, but has sent us a warm greeting message. I have to apologise also Father Prof. K.M. George who is hindered by his duties.

Let me say some few words concerning this Consultation, its background and the way we have already gone. We have already effectuated three non-official consultations among members of all Churches belonging to the Syriac tradition. With this meeting we enter a new level of our dialogue.

In our former three Consultations, two held in Vienna, 1994 and 1996, and one in Chicago, 1998, we got first acquainted to each other. Churches who had not been in contact since antiquity realised their common roots. We were in these first meetings treating the significance and the history of those ancient christological controversies which had divided the Syriac community in the 5th and 6th century. When we started our dialogue these controversies had fortunately already been overcome with the Catholic Church. Already ten years before a "Declaration about the Common Christological Faith of the Roman Catholic Church and the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch" was signed by Pope John Paul II and Patriarch Mar Ignatios Zakka I Iwas¹ and in 1989 a "Doctrinal Agreement on Christology" was signed also between the Roman Catholic Church and the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church of India². The basis was in both cases the so-

¹ Common Declaration of Pope John Paul II and Patriarch Mar Ignatios Zakka I Iwas on June 23th, 1984, in: Alfred Stirnemann/Gerhard Wilfing (Hrsg.), *Ortskirche und Weltkirche* (Pro Oriente Band XXII), Innsbruck 1999, pp.311-313.

² The Vienna Dialogue. Five PRO ORIENTE Consultations with Oriental Orthodoxy (Pro Oriente, Booklet 1), Wien 1991, p.123, Document 90.

called Vienna Christological Formula.³ And in fall 1994, shortly before we met the first time, Pope John Paul II had signed a Common Christological Declaration also with the Catholicos Patriarch of the Church of the East, Mar Dinkha IV.⁴ Thus, quite unexpectedly for PRO ORIENTE, almost all Churches of the old Syriac tradition found themselves now in doctrinal agreement with the Roman Catholic Church and with their sister Churches of Syriac tradition within the Catholic family. Although this did not immediately result also in an agreement among the different independent Churches of Syriac tradition themselves, it nevertheless was a solid and optimal basis for a discussion of the circumstances that had caused the ancient differences and divisions within the Syriac Christianity.

In the past three consultations most of the crucial dogmatic and historical questions concerning councils and theologians have been discussed from different sides. We clarified to each other the different christological terminologies, we spoke about the political reasons of the mutual alienation, we discussed the ancient theological opinion leaders like Theodore of Mopsuestia, Nestorius and Cyril of Alexandria and especially the Councils of Ephesus and Constantinople II. We did not arrive to a totally unanimous attitude towards all these issues and we could not yet solve all problems concerned. But it became apparent to the participants of the consultations that the common heritage of the Syriac tradition is by far more impressive and more important for the life of the Churches than the remaining differences. I remember the exciting experience for the participants of our first meeting, when they realised that they could still pray and even sing together after a division of nearly one and a half thousand years.

Ecumenical dialogue has been searching for the same true meanings under the surface of different traditions, expressions and terms. This method was indeed extremely successful and one of its achievements was the Vienna Christological Formula. But in addition to this method our ecumenical understanding has learned to realise that there are approaches and solutions to important questions of our faith which cannot be brought to absolute harmony or identity and which are none the less likewise legitimate and true.

Having not exhausted but thoroughly penetrated and discussed the christological issue, we will now proceed to subjects which have developed differently, but were not responsible for the separation of the Churches. With this Fourth Consultation which is dedicated to the sacraments, we shift to a kind of dialogue which is less or not at all controversial, but has a more informative character and will in the first line enrich the knowledge of each other and ourselves. I hope it will bring rich fruits, and I wish all of us three days of dense informative and interesting discussion and results that will bring us closer together and facilitate our mutual understanding.

Franciscus Cardinal König

ADDRESS

Thank you very much, Prof. Hofrichter. I am very happy to be here. I represent the actual Archbishop of Vienna, Cardinal Christoph Schönborn, who will come tomorrow. I am most grateful, my dear Graces, Bishops and participants of this Study Seminar, that we have the chance to continue what Mr Stirnemann has so fruitfully begun. I am convinced that this Study Seminar will be a step forward in ecumenism. May God bless our meeting and I ask Professor Hofrichter to preside this morning meeting.

Mar Gregorios von Aleppo

GREETINGS IN THE NAME OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

When I was attending the funeral of our friend Mr Alfred Stirnemann, I was convinced more than before that our work with Pro Oriente should be continued; and all the churches, related with the Syriac tradition, should be together to promote Christian Unity among other churches.

I was preparing myself to be with you in the Syriac Commission and the Study Seminar, taking place between 28 Feb-3 March 2000, not only to attend or to read my paper on "*Sacraments in the Syriac Tradition*", but to assure you that my Patriarch H.H. Mor Ignatius Zakka I Iwas and the whole Syrian Orthodox Church is ready to work with Pro Oriente and to make serious efforts for the continuation of the dialogue through Pro Oriente between the Syriac Churches on the one side, and between the Oriental Orthodox and the Catholic churches on the other side.

I apologise for not being able to be with you this time for health reasons. My paper on the sacraments is not completed yet. I have discovered many things on the number of the sacraments, and how they were used in my church before the 12th century, and the role of the Holy Spirit in the sacraments according to the liturgical books. I hope that my paper, when I finish it, would be included with the other papers in the Study Seminar.

May I once again apologise for my absence and pray for the success of this and other forthcoming meetings.

Sincerely Yours,

+ Archbishop Mar Gregorios of Aleppo

³ Created in 1971: Communiqué, in: Selection of the Papers and Minutes of the Four Vienna Consultations between Theologians of the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church 1971, 1973, 1976 and 1978 in one volume. Published and edited by the Ecumenical foundation PRO ORIENTE. Vienna/Austria 1988, pp.91/92.

⁴ Syriac Dialogue. First Non-Official Consultation on Dialogue within the Syriac Tradition, Vienna 1994, pp. 230-231.

Prof. Peter Hofrichter gives the presidency to Bishop Paul Matar.

Bishop Paul Matar

Your Eminence, dear President, dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ. First of all we thank God for being here together for this meeting. We remember in our thoughts and prayers President Alfred Stirnemann who was a constant supporter of these meetings. We have travelled a long way since we started and it has been fruitful. We are thankful to God and we thank PRO ORIENTE for the unique opportunity that the Churches of the Syriac tradition had to come together for the first time in 1500 years, and for the impact this has had on our relations with each other. In the first Consultations we studied Christology, and now we are moving to the Sacraments in the Syriac Tradition. I now invite His Excellency Mar Bawai Soro to give a lecture on the understanding of the sacraments in the Church of the East.

Mar Bawai Soro

UNDERSTANDING CHURCH OF THE EAST SACRAMENTAL THEOLOGY: THE THEODORIAN PERSPECTIVE

1. Introduction

The sacramental theology of the Church of the East has not been elaborated systematically by the Fathers of this Church. Instead, the understanding of the sacraments in this tradition came to be articulated in connection with other aspects of the Faith, most notably Christian anthropology, Christology and soteriology. The latest and the most influential among the Fathers to deal with this issue of the sacraments are Abdisho of Soba and Patriarch Timothy II, both of whom died in the 14th Century. Nevertheless, in the Fifth Century, the most complete exposition of the sacramental beliefs of the Church of the East was presented by the Antiochene theologian and exegete, Theodore of Mopsuestia, through a theological approach that draws upon scriptural, patristic (Niceno-Constantinopolitan) and liturgical language.

In this paper I shall attempt to summarize briefly the main components of Church of the East's Sacramental Theology mainly based on the writings of Theodore of Mopsuestia (c. 350-428), and partly on Narsai of Nisibis (c. 399-503), Yohanan Bar Zo'be (d. early 13th Century), Abdisho of Soba (d. 1318) and Patriarch Timothy II (d. 1332). I shall also endeavor to demonstrate that despite some apparent fundamental differences between the Church of the East and other traditions in theological conceptualization, methodology and content, the sacramental theology of the Church of the East is altogether ecumenical by virtue of its affirmation of the same basic elements which are common to both the Oriental, Byzantine East and the Latin West.

In general, the Sacraments are referred to in Church of the East as «*Razeh*» (singular «*Raza*»). The etymological root of the word «*Raza*» in Syriac is closer to the Greek concept of «*Mysterion*» (Mystery) than to the Latin sense of the term «*Sacramentum*»

(Sacred).¹ More precisely, «*Raza*» is understood in the tradition of the Church of the East as a Mystery in the sense that the act of the Church transcends the existential moment. It both «re-presents» the past redemptive act of Jesus Christ on the Cross, and points to the future eschatological expectation of his Second Coming. In the Church's «Mysteries» the believer is given participation in the Death and Resurrection of Christ, and in the life of the Kingdom to come. Against the background of a unique understanding of man's fall into sin, the sacramental theology of the Church of the East rests ultimately upon the High Priesthood of Christ, who has become our eternal High Priest according to the order of Melchizedec.² His sacrifice replaces the cultic rituals of the Old Testament's Aaronic priesthood, which mediated the presence of God through rituals and sacrifices, but which, in the fullness of time, was brought to fulfillment in and through the Priesthood of Jesus Christ. According to the New Testament, Jesus Christ, by his three-fold ministry, established his own sacrifice on the Cross as the atonement for our sins and brought about the reconciliation of all creation with God, thus bringing God's forgiveness and redemption to the world, and renewing God's Covenant with all humanity.³

2. The Anthropology of Theodore

2.1. The Theological Context for the Sacramentology of the Church of the East

Man's Redemption achieved by Jesus Christ is the context and foundation of Christian sacramental life. But before we enter in the following sections into a discussion of the actual Sacraments, which will represent the focus of this paper, it will be necessary to explore briefly the understanding of human nature which is found in the tradition of the Church of the East, together with its doctrine of man's Fall and Redemption. These introductory remarks will begin to familiarize the reader with this tradition's soteriological doctrine, which attempts to articulate God's plan to save man by offering his divine grace through those realities which the Church recognizes as the Holy Sacraments.

Among the earliest and most authoritative Fathers who exercised great influence on the way in which the Church of the East was to articulate its thought on the holy

¹ Mar Toma Audo, *Simtha d'Lishana Suryaya*, 2nd vol. (The Dominican Press: Mosul, 1897), entry: «*Raz*» p. 989. Customarily, in the Church of the East, the word «*Raza*» is used for the general sacramental rites, but in its plural form, i.e., «*Razeh*» for the Eucharist, namely, for the «*Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ*».

² Cf. Heb 6:20. Concerning the priesthood of Jesus Christ after the order of Melchizedec, Theodore states that «(Jesus) became after the order of high priests because he was the first to enter (heaven), and through him the favor of entering was bestowed upon us. The work of a high priest is indeed that he should draw near unto God first and then after him and through him the rest should draw near». For further details, Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Commentary on the Lord's Prayer and on the Sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist*, in the *Woodbrooke Studies*, vol. 6, ed.: Alphonse Mingana, Cambridge 1933, p.18.

³ According to R. Murray, during the fourth and fifth century, Church of the East's Fathers, like Aphrahat and Ephreni, began to have an «explicit consciousness of rites being what we mean as Sacraments». Liturgical rites like the Eucharistic sacrifice, the signing and anointing of the whole body (as part of the Rite of Initiation), Baptism, the 'laying on of hands' in ordination were all understood to be effected by the power of the Holy Spirit whose actions in these rites were understood as «hovering» or «brooding» (*Rukhapa*, in Syriac). In addition to these, Murray adds, that the Syriac-speaking Church practiced other liturgical acts like Penance, Readmission to communion by the 'laying on of hands' and Marriage but there is little evidence that this fourth century Church understood these as Sacraments. For further elaboration see, Robert Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom* (Cambridge, University Press, 1975), p.21-23.

church's sacraments is St. Theodore of Mopsuestia, «Bishop and Interpreter of the Divine Books». Theodore's soteriology begins with the premise that God, in his boundless mercy and love, originally created man (Adam) innocent and capable of the free exercise of his will. But by disobeying his Creator, Adam fell from his original state. Nevertheless, God's love continued to be offered to man until, in the fullness of time, God sent his only-begotten Son, who became incarnate in a complete human nature, to redeem and save the world.

By his Incarnation, Life, Ministry, Passion, Death, Resurrection and Ascension, Jesus Christ achieved victory over Satan, and therefore enabled those who believe to become God's «*Adopted Sons*» through Baptism. Theodore sees Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of the potential, which had characterized Adam's original state. Through his victory Christ, in his Person, provides a bridge between the «*Two Ages*» namely, this world and the world to come. He himself becomes the 'earnest', or 'pledge' of man's salvation, and through him, man participates in the foretaste and promise of the coming age, which is mediated in the sacraments.⁴

2.2. Adam's Fall

Theodore's understanding of human nature before the fall is itself difficult to present, since it is not altogether clear. Nevertheless, I shall attempt to introduce here those views of his which were most frequently stated and which proved most influential.⁵

In his commentary on the Book of Galatians, Theodore states that «*The Lord God established us in this present life, in fact, as mortals.*»⁶ He further assumes that the first man was created mortal, and that mortality was a constituent of the nature that belonged to Adam and to his posterity.⁷ His presumption was that God in his foreknowledge

⁴ Theodore, VI, Mingana, 20. On the concept of sacramental «foretaste», see Francis J. Reine, *The Eucharistic Doctrine and Liturgy of the Mystagogical Catecheses of Theodore of Mopsuestia* (Catholic University of America Press, Washington, D.C., 1966). Reine states, «The Eucharist, then, 'symbolically' or 'sacramentally' feeds the Christian in order to nourish that foretaste of his future immortal existence. This nourishment consists in the hope of the future benefits of salvation, which hope is generated by the sacramental image of Christ's work of redemption.» p. 38f.

⁵ Theodore's other, i.e., minor, view is found in his commentary on the Galatians. He states «*When the first man was made, if he had remained immortal, there would have been no existence of the sort which is now come upon us, inasmuch as it would have had no end. But since (man) became mortal through his sin, the present life is rightly called 'the existence which is now come upon us', as inferior to the life which is to come.*» Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Theodori Episcopi Mopsuesteni in Epistolas B. Pauli Commentarii*, 2 vol., H. B. Swete, ed., (Cambridge, 1880, 1882). See Theodore's Commentary on Galatians, 1:3 ff., Swete vol. I, p. 7. According to this citation, Theodore seems to have divided the history of salvation into three parts. (i) The pre-fall period; (ii) the period between the fall and the Second Coming, or that of the «*First Age*»; (iii) the period after the Second Coming, or that of the «*Second Age*». Before the fall, Theodore affirms, when God first created Adam, he was made immortal. But by sinning against his Creator, Adam was removed from his immortal state, and his posterity, as well was transferred from that level of existence to an inferior one. The second phase is the present human condition. Again, according to the above citation, this existence was brought about not as part of the original plan of God, but as a result of Adam's sin and its consequences: that is, the Fall. In this phase, which elsewhere Theodore will call the «*First Age*», man became mortal and could not reach his potential objective because of his mortality, which is the merited reward of sin. The third phase is initiated with the «*Second Coming*» of the Son of God and his «*Final Judgement*» of the world through which man shall be restored to immortality in order to be brought back to a higher level of existence.

⁶ Theodore's Commentary on Galatians, 1:3 ff., Swete vol. I, p. 25.

⁷ See, Richard Alfred Norris, *The Anthropological foundations of the Christology of Theodore of Mopsuestia*, a thesis submitted to the General Theological Seminary, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

knew what was going to happen to the first man in terms of his disobedience and sin. He contends accordingly that the Creator, in the beginning and in view of this sin, created Adam susceptible of dying. The sin of Adam did not frustrate God to the extent that in a matter of some moments of time he would transform man's nature from immortality to the state of mortality. He says:

«It is obvious both that (God) knew (Adam) would sin, and that for this reason he would, beyond doubt, die. How then is it not the part of the most serious insanity to believe that (God) first made him immortal in six hours ..., but after he sinned, made him mortal? For it is certain that if he (God) had wanted him to be immortal, not even the intervention of the act of sin would have changed the divine decree. For (God) did not reduce the devil from immortality to mortality.»⁸

Therefore, in his wisdom and foreknowledge, God created Adam mortal from the beginning so that after man's disobedience (sin), death would both serve as his punishment and, unlike sin, also as a constitutive part of his nature.

Theodore asserts such a view on human mortality in several places in his Catechetical Homilies on Baptism, though in a way which is more or less indirect. In the context of explaining the significance of Baptism as a second spiritual and immortal birth, Theodore implies the state of mortality after the first birth.

«(The Jews) did not think, as we do, that (after our baptism) we shall be changed into an immortal life⁹ ... (for after receiving the Divine and spiritual grace a baptized person) will be fashioned from a mortal into an immortal, from a mutable into an immutable nature; he will be changed completely into a new man according to the power of the One who fashioned him¹⁰ ... it is in (the name of the Godhead) that we are baptized, and through it that we expect to receive the future good things which are now bestowed to us as in symbols, and it is to it that we look for the happiness which is to come, when we shall rise in truth from the dead, and become immortal and immutable in our nature.»¹¹

But Theodore's most clearly stated position on the question of Adam's mortality is presented in his «*Fragments of the Dogmatic Works on the Original Sin and Mortality*».

«The Lord became the author of all good things for people in order that – *just as Adam appeared as the founder at the first and mortal state* – He Himself, by appearing as the beginner of the second and the immortal state, might safeguard that which pertained to the nature of the first, earlier Adam ... Thus He ultimately incurred death in order that He, by dying in accordance to the law of human nature and rising by divine power, might become the beginning for all people who die according to nature so that they might rise from the dead.»¹²

From the three texts cited above we can observe Theodore's conception of how God, in his foreknowledge, created Adam rational, and mortal even though innocent.

degree of Master of Sacred Theology (New York, 1957). On page 55, Norris asserts, «[A] training in virtue requires that man be created mortal, since the possibility which is [the] essence of mortality is also a presupposition of moral growth and moral effort.... [T]o have created him immortal, and hence (bodily) impassible, would have been to deny him the possibility of earning immortal life for himself....»

⁸ See, Theodore, *Fragments of the Dogmatic Works of Theodore*, Section VI. On the Original Sin and Mortality, Book III, Swete, vol. II, Appendix A, 332.

⁹ Theodore, VI, Mingana, 19.

¹⁰ Ibid., 55.

¹¹ Ibid., 45.

¹² See, Theodore, *Fragments of the Dogmatic Works of Theodore*, Swete, 335.

According to the Genesis account, God commanded Adam not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and imposed a penalty if he should do so.¹³ Subsequently, Theodore declares that «Satan,» who took advantage of Adam's naiveté and primitiveness, «deceived (him) by assuming the role of a friend and an ally» and tempted Adam by «removing (his) fear and by perverting (God's) promise».¹⁴ Thus, by his own will and desire, Adam became arrogant and deliberately contradicted God's instruction. When Adam yielded to Satan, he exchanged God's promise for Satan's assurance that he (i.e., Adam) would be a god; in other words, he effected the distortion of his own reality. Through the sin of disobedience Adam ceased to be innocent; he became guilty and thus brought about his Fall. Hence, as Theodore has it, God punished Adam for his disobedience, imposing death upon him and his posterity.

«From the beginning and from the time of our forefathers, we did not belong to Satan but to God, who created us while we were not and made us in his own image.¹⁵ ... It was through the iniquity and wickedness of the Tyrant and through our own negligence that we were driven towards evil, from which we lost also honor and greatness of our image, and because of our sinfulness we further received the punishment of death.»¹⁶

Because of the Fall, in which he was tested and succumbed to temptation, Adam furthermore caused his posterity to inherit a nature which was inclined toward sin, though this nature had not originally been sinful, nor had sinfulness as such ever come to be an inherent element of it. Herein lies the crux of the problem of the Fall, which is particularly acute in the case of Theodore, since he continues to insist throughout that it is by man's choices that he becomes sinful, rather than through his nature.¹⁷ Theodore infers that since the inherited connection between Adam and his posterity is obviously the human nature rather than the will, then sin, not being a constituent property of this nature, cannot itself be passed on or inherited. For Theodore, sin is disobedience to the divine law and can only be exercised by a free and unconstrained will.¹⁸

How, then, have men obtained from Adam an inherited natural-state of sin? Theodore maintains that it is by virtue of the fact that the knowledge of mortality and its fear are ever present to their consciousness. This knowledge provides a strong incentive to obey the «demands of the flesh», with the result that concupiscence has its way. Nevertheless, this «inclination» or «tendency» toward sin, as stated before, is not due to an original and inherited sinful human «nature», but mainly due to human weakness in the face of limitation and death.¹⁹ Consequently, After Adam's Fall - or «Adam's Sin», as it is identified in the terminology of the Church of the East - all men possess an «inclination», a «tendency» toward sin, and therefore all do sin, though some less than others.

¹³ Gen. 2: 15-17.

¹⁴ See, Theodore, VI, Mingana, 21.

¹⁵ Gen. 1:27.

¹⁶ See, Theodore, VI, Mingana, 28.

¹⁷ Theodore cannot be categorized as an «Augustinian» because his portrayal of man's freedom and moral responsibility cannot be considered to cause Adam's posterity to inherit original, or the first man's, sin and guilt. Contrary to the classical Augustinian positive reply, Theodorian Anthropology would resolutely negate any possibility that Adam's posterity would also inherit his sin and his guilt.

¹⁸ See, R. A. Norris, *Manhood in Christ: A Study in the Christology of Theodore of Mopsuestia* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1963), p. 179, note 5.

¹⁹ See, Norris, *Manhood in Christ*, 58. Norris declares that «But it is this weakness of the flesh which accounts ultimately for the fact that the Law cannot assure men of salvation. Because of their mortality, they fall away perpetually into sin. . . ».

Included among the propositions clearly and fervently advanced in Theodore's writings, therefore, are these: 1) that there is a distinction between «nature» and «will»; 2) that sin cannot be inherited; and 3) that it is a property of the will, not of nature. These anthropological considerations provide the context within which the sacramental theology of the Church of the East takes shape.

Although Theodore uses traditional theological language, the theological argumentation which he articulates in his doctrine of the Fall therefore comes to us with a content which is perhaps somewhat different from the categories which are more familiar in the West. While Theodore would hold that the weak and mortal state of man may be inherited, he would not accept that through this inheritance man can receive a predisposed moral state *per se*, unconnected to actual choices made before God. He locates the locus and the root of sin not in the properties of human nature but in man's own use of his faculties when confronted with the limitations of his nature. When Adam disobeys God's laws, it is his free and responsible will, and that of his posterity, which is the source of the sin.

Furthermore, the weakness inherent in mortal flesh is the occasion for sin and guilt, rather than an inherited component of it. If man were born already as a sinner, he would cease to be responsible and free before his Creator.²⁰ Man does not inherit the actual guilt of his predecessors, nor could he be blamed for a sin which he did not commit. A free choice freely made, by a man free either to obey or to disobey, is absolutely central to the understanding of man's posture before God which prevails in the theological tradition of the Church of the East.

2.3. Consequences of the Fall

Following St. Paul's teachings on the relationship between sin and death, Theodore affirms that man turned away from God through disobedience, and in consequence was made subject first to death, and then to Satan. In other words, the outcome of Adam's sin was death, i.e., «to be detached from God,» «to return to the earth, from which he had been taken» and «to have an alliance with (the Rebel) Satan». Here is how Theodore puts it:

«Our Lord God made man from dust in his image... If (man) had been wise he would have remained with the one who was to him the source of all good things, which he truly possessed, but he accepted and completed the image of the Devil, who like a rebel ... had striven to detach man from God by all kinds of deception and ... assumed the role of a helper. And because man yielded to (the Devil's) words and rejected the laws that God had given him and followed the Rebel as man's true helper, God inflicted upon him the punishment of returning to the earth from which he had been taken. By sin therefore death entered in.»²¹

What then becomes of the fate of man after the Fall? Theodore speaks of three consequences. The *first* one pertains to the relationship between Adam and his posterity. His anthropological argument concerning Adam and his posterity is clarified below within a Christological context:

«(In the fullness of time, God) ... indeed wished to put on (humanity) and raise the fallen man, who is composed of a (mortal) body and of an immortal and ratio-

²⁰ Theodore, see above note #11 (Swete, 335).

²¹ See, Theodore, VI, Mingana, 21.

nal soul, so that «as by one man sin entered the world, and death by sin, so also the free gift and the grace of God by the righteousness of one man might abound unto many.»²² As death was by one man, so also the resurrection from the dead (will be) by one man because «as we all die in Adam, even so in Christ shall all be made alive,»²³ as the blessed Paul testifies. Therefore, it was necessary that he should assume not only the (mortal) body but also the immortal and rational soul. It was not only the death of the body that had to cease but also that of the soul, which is sin.²⁴

The *second* result is that all men share in Adam's mortality. Death, considered not only as a natural event but as a condemnation which is due to sin and which generates sin, is now a constitutive element of their nature. Hence, Theodore states, «By sin therefore death entered in, and this death weakened (human) nature and generated in it a great inclination towards sin.»²⁵

The *third* effect of Adam's sin takes also place within the universe in which God had bestowed upon Adam a primal place and power. The death which Adam inflicted upon himself and his posterity brought dissolution to the cosmic unity and destroyed the perfect spiritual and material harmony that had existed between man and the universe.²⁶

In summary, although Theodore rejects the concept of hereditary sin, he nevertheless appeals to *some* elements of such a notion. He declares that since all men inherit mortality from Adam, through his nature, they accordingly have an «additional» inclination to sin. «God created man mortal ... by nature» Theodore states in his commentary on the Book of Romans, «and therefore, he possesses an ability to sin easily».²⁷ After the fall, Adam's posterity possessed a tendency to sin which was related to the anxiety engendered by the perception of their own mortality and limitations.

2.4. Sin, Punishment (Death) and Grace

What we have seen thus far is that through his human nature man inherits mortality, not sin nor guilt.²⁸ For Theodore, sin is an act of voluntary disobedience to God's law. And, accordingly, it is not inherent in man's nature but is a consequence of his choices, namely, of the exercise of will, since sin is a property of will, not of nature. Theodore would also assert that it is man's natural inherited mortality which underlies his moral failure. Correspondingly, the concupiscence of the flesh explains man's disobedience toward God. In this regard Theodore says in his commentary on Chapter Five of the Book of Romans:

«Death reigned over all who had sinned in any way whatsoever. For the rest of mankind are not free from death because their sin was not of the same sort as Adam's. Rather, all were placed under the decree of death because they sinned in

²² Rom. 5:12, 15 & 17.

²³ I Cor. 15: 22.

²⁴ See, Theodore, VI, Mingana, 56.

²⁵ Ibid., 21.

²⁶ Theodore's Commentary on Colossians, 1:16 ff., Swete vol. 1, p. 267 ff.

²⁷ Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Pauluskommentare aus der griechischen Kirche*, in Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen 15, Karl Staab, ed., (Aschendorff Münster, 1933). See Theodore's Commentary on Romans, 7:14, Staab, p. 131-212.

²⁸ See above; in the Theodorian sense, the death which was caused by the Fall means (i) to be detached from God, (ii) to return to the earth, from which he had been taken, and (iii) to be in alliance with (the Rebel) Satan.

any way whatsoever. For death is not set as the punishment of this or that kind of sin, but as the punishment of all sin.»²⁹

Theodore adds to this commentary by stating the following. «When Adam had sinned, and had become mortal on account of his sin, sin gained access to his descendants and death ruled over all men, as was just. For since all had sinned it was necessary that death should rule over all in the same way.»³⁰ Thus again, Theodore peculiarly regards mortality, at once, as the cause and the effect of sin.

Admittedly, the relationship in Theodore's thought between creation, sin and mortality is a complex one. Yet, on the basis of what has been said above, one can see how for Theodore God's loving design for man is so consistent as to prevent any possibility that God would create man first immortal, only to punish him later with mortality after he had fallen into sin. Man's mortality is a vehicle for the punishment of a sin foreseen by God even in his act of creating him; and yet the same sin would also be occasioned by the weak human condition (i.e., mortality!) of Adam and his posterity. The paradoxical relationship is that even though the mortal state precedes sin in chronological terms, death is, at the same time, the reasonable consequence of sin.³¹ By means of man's mortality God *punishes* sin, *prepares* his creation for redemption, and *instructs* mortal human beings to live in accordance with higher moral principles.

3. Man's Cooperation with Grace

3.1. Theodore's Sacramental Framework

Although, Theodore's understanding of God's love for his creation could not make room for the idea that God created man immortal only to see him fall into mortality through sin, yet he depicts man as «fallen into sin» and immersed in a weakened and disordered nature, whose soul has been inflicted with sin.

«As we have all of us fallen into sin and been driven to the dust by the sentence of death, it behooves us to «bow our knees in the name of Jesus Christ» as the blessed Paul said, and to «confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God his Father.»³² In this confession we show the things that accrued to us from the Divine nature through the Economy of Christ our Lord, whom (God) raised up to heaven and showed as Lord of all and head of our salvation. Because all these things have to be performed by us all, who «are fallen to the earth» according to the words of the blessed Paul,³³ it is with Justice that you ... bow your knees, and manifest your ancient fall, and worship God, the cause of these benefits.»³⁴

We can also be sure that Theodore's teachings can hardly be categorized with Pelagius' doctrine of grace, since he holds both the universality of sin after the Fall and the absolute need for the Redemption.³⁵ If Theodore understands sin to be the willful dis-

²⁹ See Theodore's Commentary on Romans, 5:13-14, Staab, p. 119.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Norris, *Manhood in Christ*, 184.

³² Phil. 2:10-11.

³³ Acts 26:14.

³⁴ See, Theodore, VI, Mingana, 36-37.

³⁵ Pelagianism is a teaching that was formulated and spread through the ancient church by the monk Pelagius and some of his followers in the 5th Century. Like Theodore, Pelagianism rejects the teaching of original sin, but unlike him, it does not consider the nature of suffering and death as consequences of man's sin.

obedience of God's divine law, then Redemption from sin would mean for him that, in its freedom, man's rational will is rendered freely obedient to the will of God. This obedience is brought about through the Redemption in such a way that grace, which is the divine assistance, interacts with man's free, responsible will.

For Theodore, the catastrophic effect of mortality in inclining man's will toward sin is now neutralized by the immortality and immutability of the redeemed state which are proffered through the sacraments, by the action of the Holy Spirit. Theodore would further contend that although virtue has its seat in the will, man is in dire need for the help of God, namely, the grace of the Sacraments, because after the Fall, man's own inclination and orientation are towards sin. For him, man cannot alone fight with Satan and his agents. Man cannot overcome the powers of sin unless he receives the Gift, and the inward operation, of the Holy Spirit.³⁶

But despite this, divine grace is not a «thing» that cancels out human free will. Based on man's prior good intention toward God's plan and law, divine grace cooperates with human free and obedient will. Theodore, again, would warrant that «*Being first judged worthy of grace (by God), [men] are then able to make their own contribution together with him, showing their own choices to be proportioned to grace.*»³⁷ God's imputation of righteousness to men is a dynamic that involves the mutual interaction of grace and human free initiative—a matter of cooperation.³⁸ Theodore further affirms that «*we ourselves are never able to perfect works of virtue by our own power, just as we should never obtain the fruits of the earth, though we labored greatly, unless God deigned to give them.*»³⁹

It is exactly in this context that the work of the Holy Spirit is offered to man in the Church, through the Holy Sacraments. As we shall later see in the following sections of this paper, this work of grace simultaneously confers immortality and leads the human will out of sin into a divine obedience fulfilled by an ultimate Redemption by God.

Due to its Stoic philosophical error, it establishes human freedom as the ultimate basis upon which man can and must observe the law of God. Accordingly, unlike Theodore, Pelagianism denies the necessity of grace for the observation of the moral law. For further discussion on Pelagianism, see Henri Rondet, *Concise Sacramentum Mundi*, Karl Rahner, ed., (NY: Seabury Press, 1975), entry: «*Pelagianism*,» 1185-1187. On the other hand, Theodore's doctrine of grace cannot be categorized as Pelagian because the Interpreter affirms that God, observing the weakened condition of man, without impeding upon his human freedom, *punishes* man's sin through mortality, *prepares* him for redemption, and *instructs* man to live in accordance with higher moral principles. For Theodore God's intervention in history and his grace for us is crucial because he claims that «*since sin was reigning in our mortality, and conversely death was growing stronger in us on account of sin, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ came ... and having destroyed death by his death, also destroyed sin which was rooted in us by reason of its mortality.*» See, Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Theodori Mopsuesteni Commentarius in Evangelium Johannis Apostoli*, in *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium* (CSCO): *Scriptores Syri*, Textus, Series IV, Tomus III, J. M. Voste, op. ed., (Louvain, 1940), textual citations in R. A. Norris, *Manhood in Christ*. See Theodore's Commentary on the Gospel of John, 1:29, Voste, vol. 3, p. 29.

³⁶ See, Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Theodori Mopsuesteni Fragmenta Syriaca*, E. Sachau, ed., (Leipzig, 1869). See Theodore's Book Against Apollinarius in which he comments on the Gospel of John 2: 19 (Sachau, 62); also see Theodore's Book on the Incarnation, Section 37-38 (Sachau, 63).

³⁷ See Theodore's Commentary on Romans, 9:13, Staab, p. 144.

³⁸ See, Theodore, VI, Mingana, 36. Here Theodore's position concerning man's cooperation within the Economy of Christ is appropriate due to the fact that «*all these things have to be performed by us all, who «are fallen to the earth» according to the words of the blessed Paul, it is with Justice that you through the Sacrament become partakers of the ineffable benefits, to which you have been called by your faith in Christ, bow your knees, and manifest your ancient fall, and worship God, the cause of these benefits.*»

³⁹ Theodore's Commentary on Galatians, Swete vol. 1, p. 101.

3.2. Theodore's Influence on Narsai of Nisibis

A short preview of Narsai's main theological reflection on the question of man's relation to God's salvific plan is now in order. In the course of such a reflection, it becomes apparent that the influence of Theodore's thought on Narsai's writings is to be seen in the latter's soteriological framework.⁴⁰ First of all, like the Interpreter, Narsai's religious thinking is profoundly biblical and follows the Antiochene exegetical method of interpretation. And, his portrayal of theological discourse is highly anthropological. In Narsai's thought, the term *image* in Gen. 1:27, «*God created man in His 'image'*» is a key one, which points encompasses the whole of man's corporeal and spiritual nature:

«(The Creator) fashioned, first of all, an earthen vessel from dust and anointed it with a spirit; and the whole became a living being ... The Fashioner of the universe made a two-fold vessel for our nature: a visible body and a hidden soul - one man.»⁴¹

In creation, God made man differently and more specially than the other creatures. This man (Adam), whom God creates in His image, is therefore presented as the unique bond and unity that brought together the spiritual and the material worlds.

«More exalted is (the Divine) Nature than that of the creatures - immeasurably so; and it does not possess a visible image as do the corporeal beings. (Man's) image (God) exalted with the name of image (Gen. 1:27) in order that in (man) (God) might bind all creatures, so that (all) might acquire love for (God's) knowledge by means of (man) His image.»⁴²

Since God has a transcendent nature, man, for Narsai, is the vehicle through which God's true knowledge is revealed. This way, God has bestowed «delight» upon man to have him bring others in the world to know their Creator truly and to love him:

«For, (since) it is impossible that the Nature of the Hidden One appear openly, (God) limits inquiries to His visible image (i.e., man).»⁴³ In (man) He opened the treasury of His mercy in the presence of His creation, and rational and dumb beings entered and took delight in the bridal chamber of life. He honored us in the beginning and end above everything that came to be, because He called us His image and made us (i.e., in Christ) the dwelling place of His Divinity.»⁴⁴

Against this background of the manner in which Narsai underscores the divinely willed harmony between the worlds of matter and spirit, one may reflect upon the salutary role now played by the Incarnation and the sacraments. When Adam sinned against his Creator by disobeying Divine law, he subverted the role that God had granted him, namely that of being the image of God and the bond between the spiritual and the corporeal in the universe. Narsai says:

«(Before the Fall), [f]or a short time, there remained the beauty of the temporal image; but there arose a vile-like inquiry over its features. The beautiful colors of his soul faded because of his desire for fruit, and he acquired the color of mortality

⁴⁰ For Theodore's influence on Narsai, see F.G. McLeod, S.J., ed., *Narsai Metrical Homilies on the Nativity, Epiphany, Passion, Resurrection and Ascension* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1979), especially p. 22-29. Also, see R. Devreesse, *Essai Sur Theodore de Mopsueste*, in *Stude e Testi* 141, (Vatican City, 1948), especially p. 13ff.; 368.

⁴¹ Narsai, Homily (II) on the Epiphany of our Lord, verses 3-4, 11-12; see McLeod, 70.

⁴² Narsai, Homily (I) on the Nativity on our Lord's Birth from the Holy Virgin, verses 21-24; see McLeod, 38.

⁴³ Narsai, Homily (V) for the Feast Day of Ascension, verses 235-236; see McLeod, 176.

⁴⁴ Narsai, Homily (I), verses 63-66; McLeod, 40.

by his eating of it. Sin effaced the name of life (belonging to) the royal image and inscribed on his name corruption, and death upon his limbs.⁴⁵ (Therefore) [h]e prostrated the image (endowed with) the name of the (Divine) Essence by his deceitfulness and loosened the love that (forms) the structure of the universe by means of his schemes. He muddled up the peace of kingship with the dregs of iniquity and closed the way of man's journeying to the hidden (Divinity). Rational and dumb beings became strangers to the race of men and lost hope because of his fall that he (would never) rise again."⁴⁶

But God's mercy is great. And, accordingly, in order to restore all to His true knowledge and love, and in order to fulfill His eternal salvation plan, God sends His Eternal Word to dwell among us, within the Second Adam, and to redeem all the universe, through his Passion, Death and Resurrection:

"In love and mercy the Creator was pleased to give life to the universe, and so He sent His Son to restore the universe to His knowledge. His love drew Him to pity for His foremost image. He knew before fashioning him that he (would) surely sin, but His love had already led Him to forgiveness as One omniscient.⁴⁷ In the beginning He honored us through the fashioning that His hands have made, and in the fullness of time, His love dwelt in us and reconciled the universe. He did not send unto us (one) of the spiritual ones who are active in his behalf. He sent the Word Who is from Him, and He called us to His knowledge."⁴⁸

Who, then, is Jesus Christ for Narsai? He is the Word of God who dwells among us through the humanity of Jesus Christ. He is the Second Adam, the true and the uncorrupted image, the bond and communion who unites horizontally creatures among themselves,⁴⁹ and vertically all creation to its Creator.⁵⁰ Christ is the one who restores unity and reconciliation between God and man and brings sanctity to man's condition. In Christ's fullness the whole universe is restored to a life without end.⁵¹ In his body and soul (i.e., humanity), Christ is the likeness of Adam so that He might renew the body and soul of all men and bind the universe in love to Himself, again.⁵²

Christ abrogated by His blood (i.e., the basis and the foundation of the Church's Sacraments) the sentence of reproach, which our debts had instituted against us. It is through His mediation (i.e., in the grace of the Sacraments) that Christ has reconciled the universe with the Lord of all and secured (through His Church) the peace and the renewal of our race through his providence.⁵³

⁴⁵ Narsai, Homily (II), verses 25-32; McLeod, 72.

⁴⁶ Narsai, Homily (I), verses 33-38; McLeod, 38.

⁴⁷ Note how Narsai takes exactly Theodore's position concerning Divine foreknowledge of the Fall - a case in which it could be justified to assert that the death of Adam is both the cause and the consequence of the Fall. See above, p. 4, footnote # 8.

⁴⁸ Narsai, Homily (I), verses 1-2; 43-46; 67-70; McLeod, 38, 40.

⁴⁹ Ibid., verses 23-24; McLeod, 38.

⁵⁰ Narsai, Homily (II), verses 43-50; McLeod, 72.

⁵¹ Narsai, Homily (I), verses 181-186; McLeod, 48.

⁵² Narsai, Homily (II), verses 391-394; McLeod, 94. As a Theodorian, for Narsai, to compromise Christ's humanity is to simply and plainly destroy salvation. See McLeod, 24.

⁵³ Narsai, Homily (V), verses 304-308; McLeod, 180.

4. Institution, Meaning and Consequences of Sacramental Life

As we have seen above in the anthropologies of both Theodore and Narsai, the Church of the East came to understand the meaning of *Raza* as the *encounter* between perpetual, gracious Divine love and human cooperation, situated within a world that is 'wounded' by sin. Now we shall renew this consideration in order to show how Divine grace encounters human transcendence, prayer and cooperation, in the context of sacramental life. Through his Incarnation, Life, Ministry, Passion and Resurrection, Christ achieved victory over Satan, and enabled us through our Baptism to become God's «*Adopted Sons*». Christ became the fulfillment of Adam's original state; and through his victory He ushered in the beginning of the «*Second Age*» – the world to come.

In this regard, the Church which Christ established is the means through which this salvific reality is bestowed on the world. She possesses the reality of Christ's Passion–Resurrection Event, which is the path through which man is granted redemption and salvation. The Church's sacramental nature is obvious in the thought of the early Fathers of the Church, among whom Theodore continues to be, for the Church of the East, the main teacher and «*Interpreter of Divine Books*».

And, since our main source of reflection on sacramental life continues to be Theodore's writings, it becomes important to note that in the Church of the East during the first millennium of the Christian era, the main sacraments were Baptism and the Eucharist, even though in practice, both of these sacraments were understood in a way which presupposed the existence of the Sacrament of the Ordained Priesthood,⁵⁴ which, in fact, later became for the Church of the East the foundation and source of every sacramental act in her life.

4.1. Sacramental Dimensions

The recognition of the existence of more than one dimension in the notion of a sacrament is evident in Theodore's discourse on the sacraments (i.e., of Baptism and Eucharist). He maintains that «*Every Sacrament consists in (its) representation of unseen and unspeakable things through signs and emblems.*» The sacrament is constituted of visible elements (matter), the signs of things that take place or have already taken place, and words that explain the power of the signs and the mysteries. In Theodore's opinion, the sacrament is a mystery, which requires «*explanation and interpretation so that (the believer) who draws near (it) might know its power.*»⁵⁵ As we can observe, the sacrament consists of *visible* elements that make present the *invisible* (i.e., unseen and unspeakable things). This definition is understood in the context of the «*Two Ages*» typology⁵⁶ in which the *invisible* is the age to come, namely, that age which has been ushered by Christ.⁵⁷ For Theodore Christ, our High Priest, is the one who instituted the Sacraments, and ordered us to perform them, hence:

⁵⁴ For citation by Theodore on the role of the priest in the celebration of the sacraments (of Baptism and the Eucharist) see, Theodore, VI, Mingana, 18, 45, 64, 73, 98, 104, 118-123.

⁵⁵ Theodore, VI, Mingana, 17.

⁵⁶ By the term «*typology*» is meant here that means which helps the beginners to learn truths about the Doctrines of the Church, so that they have a better grasp of the mystery of the faith.

⁵⁷ A useful study is advanced by, Rowan A. Greer, *Theodore of Mopsuestia: Exegete and Theologian* (The Faith Press: Westminster, 1961). In Chapter 4, Greer deals with Theodore's concepts of Redemption, the Church, the Sacraments and Christian Life, 66-85.

"We wait here in faith until we ascend into heaven and set out on our journey to our Lord, where we shall not see through a glass and in a riddle but shall look face to face."⁵⁸ These things however, we expect to receive in reality through the Resurrection at the time decreed by God and now it is only by faith that we draw near unto the first fruits of these good things: to Christ our Lord and the High Priest of things that belong to us. We are ordered to perform in this world the symbols and signs of the future things so that, through the service of the Sacraments, we may be like men who enjoy symbolically the happiness of the heavenly benefits, and thus acquire a sense of possession and a strong hope of the things for which we look."⁵⁹

An example of Theodore's notion of sacramental symbolism is his interpretation of the act of Baptism as a second birth. It is clear that for Theodore, Baptism is not, strictly (or literally) speaking, a second (actual) birth, in as much as, it is the symbol of the (true) second birth, which *«in reality you (the baptized) will receive the true second birth only after you have risen from the dead and obtained the favor to be in the state of which you were deprived by death.»*⁶⁰ Theodore continues maintaining that *«you will, therefore, have the second birth only at the Resurrection when you will be given to be in the state in which you were after you were born of a woman and of which you were deprived by death.»*⁶¹ The Sacrament of Baptism is *«the symbol of the birth which our Lord showed when He said to Nicodemus 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God'»*.⁶² According to the Lord, those who should enter the Kingdom of God must have a second birth that is not carnal (as Nicodemus suggested). In Theodore's opinion, the only way is the Resurrection.

Even so, as evidenced by many of Theodore's statements, his understanding of the present efficacy of the sacrament should not be minimized. In this regard, he maintains that "(Just as) in a carnal birth, the womb of the mother receive the human seed and the Divine hand fashions it according to an ancient decree, so also in Baptism, the water of which becomes a womb to the one who is being born, and the grace of the Spirit fashions in it, into the second birth, the one who is being baptized, and changes him completely into a new man ... (the baptized) will be fashioned from a mortal into immortal, from a corruptible into an incorruptible, and from a mutable into an immutable; and he will be changed completely into a new man according to the power of the One who fashioned him."⁶³

4.2. Efficacy of the Sacraments

It is clear that Theodore would not doubt the full and unequivocal efficacy of the Sacrament of Baptism, because he states that *«indeed, we receive from Baptism participation in this second birth without any question or doubt.»*⁶⁴ And, as he cites from Paul's Letter to the Romans (6:3-4) he states that *«As many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death, and were buried with Him by baptism into death:*

⁵⁸ 1 Cor. 13:12.

⁵⁹ Theodore, VI, Mingana, 82.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 49.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid., 50.

⁶³ Ibid., 55.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 51.

*that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of His Father, even so we all should walk in newness of life.»*⁶⁵ This symbolic enjoyment of the future also involves, through the action of the Church in the Sacraments, a real participation in that same future. The symbols make the future present in a real way through prayer and the rituals of the Sacrament.⁶⁶ For in Baptism, *«we receive the second birth sacramentally as the symbol of an earnest, accomplished by the action of the Holy Spirit ... which will also without doubt grant us to participation in the future benefits.»*⁶⁷

Theodore's sacramental theology is typified from historical patterns present in common human experience. He establishes his sacramental analogy from the world's natural reality, which he later connects to the salvific plan that has been revealed by God through Christ. In terms of his concept concerning the sacramental necessity of Baptism and Eucharist for eternal life, Theodore contends that:

"Inasmuch as in this world we exist by two acts, birth and food - in birth we receive our existence and in feeding ourselves we are enabled to maintain our existence, as those who are born will surely die if they are short of food - so also is the case with the next world, in which having been born for resurrection we shall receive our existence, and having become immortal, we shall continue to remain in that state."⁶⁸

Accordingly, Theodore shows a strong relationship existing between Baptism and the Eucharist, just as the same is found between «the event of birth» and «the matter of food». Just as a human existence begins with birth and is maintained by food, so too, a sacramental existence, in anticipation of the Resurrection, is initiated by Baptism and nourished by the Eucharist. A sacramental birth is maintained by a sacramental food, and it is thus that Theodore views the relationship of Baptism to the Eucharist. Just as in natural life, so too, in sacramental life, *«the necessity of the Eucharist flows from the very nature of (its) relation to Baptism.»*⁶⁹ Just as we have received our Baptism (or sacramental birth), so too, we must also receive the Eucharist, the sacramental food that will sustain us until the Resurrection.

4.3. Remembrance, Sacrifice & Eschaton

Despite the fact that the Eucharist is the memorial of the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ in food and drink, Theodore states clearly, *«we, nevertheless, perform in (our) worship a sacrifice, and it is the office of the priest of the New Testament to offer this sacrifice, as it is through it that⁷⁰ the New Covenant appears to be maintained.»*⁷¹ For Theodore the Eucharist is a sacrifice but not a new one, nor one which stands on its own and which the priest celebrates autonomously. Rather, the Eucharistic celebration of the Church is the remembrance of that other real sacrifice of Christ, on the Cross. Jesus, on our behalf, *«performs a real high priesthood and offers to God no other sacrifice than*

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Greer, Theodore of Mopsuestia, 79.

⁶⁷ Theodore, VI, Mingana, 52-53.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 72.

⁶⁹ Enrico Mazza, *Mystagogy: A Theology of Liturgy in the Patristic Age*, tr., M. J. O'Connell, (Pueblo Pub. Co.: NY, 1989). See Mazza's Chapter 3 on Theodore of Mopsuestia (pp. 45-104), but for this note, see pages 59-60.

⁷⁰ Heb. 8: 4-5.

⁷¹ Theodore, VI, Mingana, 79.

Himself, as He had delivered also Himself to death for all. He was the first to rise from the dead and He ascended into heaven and sat at the right hand in order to destroy all our adversaries ...»⁷²

The sacrament of the Body and Blood of our Lord is also the sacrament of unity for us, as Theodore teaches:

“Indeed all of us are one body of Christ our Lord⁷³ and all of us are members one of another,⁷⁴ and the priest only fills the role of a member that is higher than the other members of the body ... (and) leads and directs every one according to the role of the priesthood .. and like a tongue he offers the prayers of every one.”⁷⁵

At the same time, the eschatological dimension of the Sacraments is clearly present in the tradition of the Church of the East, for, according to Theodore, the sacraments place the faithful «in a virtuous nature and in a high dwelling.»⁷⁶ And through the sacraments, «as through symbols, (the faithful) might gradually approach the future hope (and) obtain a faith without doubts in these gifts ... (for) while still on earth (they) have been inscribed in the awe-inspiring glory of the future world through these mysteries.»⁷⁷

Yohanan Bar Zo'be reiterates such an approach towards sacramental reality. In his discussion of the Eucharist, he too clearly attests to the fact that we celebrate the Eucharist on Sundays “in order to recall that which is already past and that which would come.”⁷⁸ What is already past is the Resurrection of our Lord, His Passion and His Death because, for the salvation of all, He has suffered and was tried, He was risen and ascended to heaven. What is to come is the Resurrection of all and the acquisition of the beatitude because he who believes in Him and eats His Body inherits his Love.”⁷⁹

4.4. The Holy Spirit in the Sacraments

The role of the Holy Spirit, invoked with prayers and supplication to God, is constitutive in the understanding and efficacy of the Sacraments. Consistent with the Tradition of the Christian East, there is no doubt that in Theodore's mind, as the case is with the tradition of the Church of the East, that the consecratory «moment» in the Eucharist is the invocation of the Holy Spirit upon the Gifts on the altar. For Theodore maintains that it is the «Holy Spirit» through the grace of God, «that comes upon the bread and wine that are laid (on the altar) so that they may be seen as truly the Body and Blood of our Lord, which are the remembrance of immortality.»⁸⁰

The crux and effectiveness of the Eucharistic mystery is the Resurrection of Christ. Theodore adds immediately:

“Indeed, the body of our Lord, which is from our own nature, was previously mortal by nature, but through the Resurrection it moved to an immortal and immutable nature. When the priest declares (the bread and wine) to be the Body and

Blood of Christ, he clearly reveals that (the offerings) have become so by the descent of the Holy Spirit, through whom they have also become immortal, inasmuch as the Body of our Lord, after it was anointed and had received the Spirit,⁸¹ was clearly seen so to become. In this same way ... (after the coming of the Holy Spirit) we hold that (the elements of bread and wine) are henceforth immortal, incorruptible, impassible, and immutable by nature, as the Body of our Lord was after the Resurrection.”⁸²

4.5. The Celebrant and Receiver of the Sacraments

A crucial condition for the encounter with God's forgiveness and grace in the context of the Sacrament is the act of faith. In the spiritual eyes of Theodore, «faith» (i.e., the belief in One God, Father Almighty) «is the foundation of the religion of the fear of God.»⁸³ Faith is an integral element of the act of prayer and worship both for the celebrant of the sacrament and for its recipient. An authentically held religion lies in the «belief in things that are invisible and indescribable.»⁸⁴ Those are the articles that are «in need of faith, which causes the mind to see that which are invisible.»⁸⁵ Things visible we see with our eyes, while things that are invisible are only «seen by faith.»⁸⁶ For Theodore, as for Paul, «Faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen.»⁸⁷

It is equally an important theological element for the recipient and the celebrant of the sacrament that one should engage in the act of prayer. However, prayer is defined as follows. Theodore begins by stating that «A true prayer consists in good works, in love of God, in diligence in the things that pleases Him».⁸⁸ He later on adds,

“Prayer does not consist so much in words as in good, love and zeal for duty. Indeed any one who is inclined to good works, all his life needs to be in prayer ... Prayer is by necessity connected with good works, because a thing that is not good to be looked for is not good to be prayed for ... If you care for prayer, know that it not performed by words but by the choice of a virtuous life and by the love of God and diligence in one's duty. If you are zealous in these things you will be praying all your life.”⁸⁹

A recipient of the sacraments is called upon by the Church Fathers to lead «a life of good works and prayer». As he approaches the Church to receive the Sacraments, he should be confident that «(the Lord) granted to the Church the power that any one who becomes related to it should also be related to the heavenly things, and any one who becomes a stranger to (the Church) should also be clearly a stranger to heavenly things.»⁹⁰

⁷² Ibid., 80.

⁷³ I Cor. 12: 27.

⁷⁴ Eph. 4: 25.

⁷⁵ Theodore, VI, Mingana, 90-91.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 29.

⁷⁷ Theodore, V, Mingana, 59.

⁷⁸ I Cor. 11: 26.

⁷⁹ Yohanan Bar Zo'be, *Explanation of the Divine Mysteries*, Thomas Mannoorampampil, ed., (Kottayam, 1992), 17-18; concerning the inheritance of the Love of the Lord, the editor cites John Chapter 6.

⁸⁰ Theodore, VI, Mingana, 104.

⁸¹ Lk 4: 18.

⁸² Theodore, VI, Mingana, 104.

⁸³ Theodore, V, Mingana, 21.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 22.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 21.

⁸⁷ Hebrews 11:1. See also, Theodore, V, Mingana, 21.

⁸⁸ Theodore, VI, Mingana, 3.

⁸⁹ Ibid. See Mingana's Introduction, x.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 23.

As an evidence to the fact that the Church has sacramental power and authority, Theodore recites the Petrine verses in which Christ says to Peter *«you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.»*⁹¹

Again, on part of the receiver of the Sacrament there is a rudimentary understanding that the faithful should have as a necessary pre-condition – the proper understanding of the history of man's Salvation, or more correctly, the history of his Fall. In this context, Theodore insists that we have to know our spiritual history and the reasons of our Fall, *«because, the Devil, to whom (we) had listened, was the cause of numerous and great calamities.»*⁹² Accordingly, during the Sacrament of Baptism, the denunciation of Satan, in the form 'I abjure Satan' is crucial for an alignment of our own faith history with that of the history of salvation. When we abjure Satan, who induced disobedience to Divine law in and among men, we declare our present separation from him and also any former one that we have had with him. To abjure Satan is to declare that the relation we had with him since that *«cruel and ancient time, which resulted in the calamitous servitude»* to us, is now ended.⁹³ And, to abjure Satan in the context of the Sacrament is also to abjure and reject those who collaborate with Satan, namely, his angels.⁹⁴ By the rejection of Satan is meant that we *«reject him always and would not revert to him nor be pleased to associate with him any more.»* Accordingly, we have to *«remain steadfast before God and unshakably with Him ... to think high ... to live with Him and conduct ourselves in a way that is in harmony with His commandments.»*⁹⁵

The recipient of the Sacrament is already in a serious conflict with Satan and his angels, with the Devil and his demons. Since they were the forces that brought our human race from that high prominence after God created Adam, they continue to do the same, or at least plan in doing the same to Adam's posterity, namely, to all humanity. Accordingly, in the mind of the Church of the East, the recipient of the sacrament is in a kind of war with the evil forces and accordingly has to keep up with three things, (i) to receive the teaching of the Church about each sacrament; (ii) to be vigilant and prayerful before and after the act of reception; (iii) to continue to lead *«a life of good works and prayer»*.⁹⁶

Yet, although the Sacrament is so awesome and great, Theodore continues to exhort the believer to have confidence and to receive it with great hope because *«of the greatness of the gift (because) when you receive it you will put your trust in Him who granted such things to mankind, and who bestowed also such a confidence ... upon those who are in need for the grace of God ...»*.⁹⁷

Man's relationship with his neighbor is also crucial in the justification of the reception of the Sacrament (i. e., the Eucharist). The moral imperative to love and one's neighbor as oneself is a key theme of Theodore in his teaching on the moral condition or state of the receiver of the Sacrament. He maintains that as we ask

God's forgiveness when we pray, we also state in our prayer that we are asking for the grace of forgiveness, just as we have forgiven those who have trespassed against us.⁹⁸ Accordingly, "[W]e will all the more not receive the grace and the benefits prepared for us by God, while still in this world, if we do not strive with all our power to have mercy upon our neighbors. We become worth of this awe-inspiring Sacrament if we think of things of which we (pray to God above), and if we acquire in the measure of our power, a mind higher than earthly things, and if we contemplate heavenly things, and think continually that it is in their hope that we have receive this Sacrament."⁹⁹

5. The Problem of Numbering the Sacraments

5.1. The Catholic-Assyrian Dialogue

We have seen in the preceding two sections of this paper how the development of sacramental theology in the Church of the East came about to a great extent as a result of a contribution articulated by the Antiochene theological and exegetical discipline, through the writing of Theodore of Mopsuestia and his adherent-disciple Narsai of Nisibis. I also cited a 12th Century Father of the Church of the East, Yohanan Bar Zo'be, in order to illustrate that the same Theodorian approach on the sacraments was still in use during that time.

5.2. Western Scholastic Development & the Debate of Abdisho and Timothy II

Nonetheless, to understand the reasons for the development of the practice of numbering the sacraments or composing sacramental lists in the Church of the East, we must briefly consider the history of the development of sacramental theology in the Church of the West. In the Roman Catholic Church, prior to the 12th and 13th centuries, the term *Sacrament* was used inclusively to indicate the use of liturgical rites, prayers and objects.¹⁰⁰ It was not until the Council of Florence (1431-1445) but more significantly at the Council of Trent (1545-1563) that the teaching of the Sacraments as seven-fold was defined as dogma of the Catholic faith. The main characteristics of these Seven Sacraments were:

1. That the Sacraments were *instituted* by Christ in such a way that what he fulfilled in his Person during his earthly life and ministry is that which the Sacraments, at present, signify and bring about in the Church - namely, the salvation procured for humanity through the Passion, Death, Burial and Resurrection of Christ - by means of signs administered at various moments in the lives of individuals and the community.¹⁰¹

2. That the efficacy of the Sacraments is by the sole fact that during their celebration Christ himself is the acting subject.¹⁰²

⁹¹ Mt. 16: 18-19, also see Theodore, VI, Mingana, 23.

⁹² Theodore, VI, Mingana, 37.

⁹³ Ibid., 38.

⁹⁴ Theodore considers these contemporaries of his as angels of Satan: Paul of Samosata, Arius, Eunomius and Apollinarius. See *ibid.*, 40-41.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 44.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 35.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 120.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 115.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 116.

¹⁰⁰ New Catholic Encyclopedia, vol. 12, p. 790. See entry on «Sacramentals».

¹⁰¹ Domenico Saratore, «I Sette Sacramenti della Chiesa», tr. Rev. Michael Magee, in *Catechismo della Chiesa Cattolica: Testo integrale e commento teologico* (Casale Monferrato: Piemme, 1993), 865.

¹⁰² The consequence of this definition makes the unworthiness of the minister of the Sacrament unable to jeopardize its efficacy. See, Ildebrando Scicolone, «Le Altre Celebrazioni Liturgiche», tr. Rev. Michael Magee, in *Catechismo della Chiesa Cattolica*, 935-36.

The Council of Trent defined the following acts as Sacraments: (1) Baptism, (2) Confirmation, (3) Eucharist, (4) Penance, (5) Extreme Unction (for anointing of the sick), (6) Holy Orders and (7) Matrimony. In addition, as a consequence of this Scholastic development in sacramental theology the remaining actions, signs and forms of the Church were designated differently - as *Sacramentals* - since they could not be fitted into the criteria defining a Sacrament. The standard definition for *Sacramentals* became: *they are things or actions that the Church uses, in imitation of the Sacraments, in order to obtain, through her intercession, certain effects - especially spiritual ones.*¹⁰³

At approximately the same time that the writings of Theodore were translated from Greek into Syriac, the Church of the East became very much influenced by his teachings and method of interpreting the Scriptures. Similarly, Theodore's sacramental theology became the main reference for the Authors and Synods of the Church of the East in dealing with questions concerning the Sacraments. By carefully reviewing Theodore's works which have been cited in this paper, one perceives that for Theodore there were two major Sacraments, i.e., Baptism and Eucharist. These two Mysteries reflect and relate the life of Christ in the lives of individual(s) and communities that celebrate them. Did Theodore consider other actions of the Church as sacraments in the same way that he did Baptism and the Eucharist? In fact, the Sacrament of Priesthood (Orders or Ordination) is obviously either foundational for or antecedent to both, since acts of Baptism and the Eucharist are only realized (celebrated) in the Church of the East by the Order of the Christian Priesthood of the New Testament, held as a matter of faith to have been established in the Church by Jesus himself. Concerning the other sacraments, one can also suggest that during the Fourth and Fifth Centuries the act of forgiving sins was a constituent part of the celebration of the Eucharist and similarly the anointing after Baptism was included in the same liturgical act.¹⁰⁴

From the Fifth to the Eleventh and Twelfth centuries in the West, there was a great variety of views as to the number of the sacraments. Peter Lombard (d. 1160) was the first to assert a list of seven Sacraments, which were affirmed both at the Second Council of Lyons (1274), and at the Council of Trent (1545-1563).¹⁰⁵ Beside this list of Seven Sacraments, there were other actions of the Church considered to be Sacraments, washing of the feet, anointing of a king, the profession of monk, the consecration of a virgin, the funeral rites, and the blessing of holy water. Also, other important Church Fathers recognized numbers that were different than seven for the Sacraments, e.g., John of Damascus (749) accounted for *two*, Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite (5th century) recognized *six*, Bernard of Clairvaux (1153) listed *eleven*, Peter Damian (1072) enumerated *twelve* and Hugh of St. Victor (d. 1142) recorded *thirty* sacraments.¹⁰⁶

But, the Scholastic description of the seven-fold sacramental system was an attractive proposition that the Church of the East eventually could not avoid. It was not until the time of Abdisho of Soba (d. 1318) that this categorization was made; and even then, there was already an on-going debate which included him together with the Patriarch of

the Church of the East, Timothy II¹⁰⁷ on the question of the Sacraments. As a result, there were circulated at least two distinct lists of Sacraments - one for each prelate [see *Appendix*]. For reasons outside of the focus of this presentation Abdisho's List became the official one and has, since the Fourteenth Century, been used officially in the Assyrian Church of the East. Timothy's work¹⁰⁸ became less known in the Church of the East, though it clearly argued for Matrimony to be considered a true Sacrament of the Church of the East.

5.3. The Catholic-Assyrian Dialogue on the Sacraments

From Trent to the Second Vatican Council, a period of four centuries, there was little development affecting the definitions of, and the distinction between, sacraments and sacramentals. But during the Second Vatican Council this changed. The Catechism of the Catholic Church defined in a more broadly Christocentric and explicitly ecclesial way as «*signs and instruments (instituted by Christ) by which the Holy Spirit spreads the grace of Christ the Head throughout the Church which is His Body.*»¹⁰⁹ At the same time, the document of the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (Sacrosanctum Concilium)* gave the following definition of the Church's understanding of the term *Sacramentals*; they were declared to be *sacred signs which bear a resemblance to the Sacraments and signify grace of a particularly spiritual kind, that which is obtained through the Church's intercession. By means of the Sacramentals, then, the sanctification of human beings is signified and realized in a manner proper to each of them, the Sacramentals.*¹¹⁰

Accordingly, when the Church celebrates any of the *Sacraments*, Christ, who is her Head, is always united to the Church, his beloved Spouse, since it is by his institution that *Sacraments* came to be. Likewise, when the Church performs the *Sacramentals*,¹¹¹ she, through her prayer and supplication for the Holy Spirit, is never separated from her Head, Christ. And, if this is so, let us ask the following question: Can the prayer instituted by the Church, when united to her Head, not be validly and efficaciously be

¹⁰⁷ Timothy II was a successor of the patriarch Yahb'Alaha III who commissioned Abdisho to write his famous dogmatic theology work, the *Marganitha*. Abdisho died in 1381, one year after Timothy's appointment to the Patriarchate.

¹⁰⁸ I have examined three unedited manuscripts of Timothy II, all of which are dealing with sacramental theology of the Church of the East. The title ascribed to every manuscript is the same, «*Book of the Seven Causes of the Church Sacraments.*» The manuscripts details are as follow: (i) Vatican Siriaceus Manuscript # 151: Vatican Apostolic Library; (ii) St. Mark Monastery Manuscript #142: Jerusalem; (iii) British Museum Manuscript # OR9378: London.

¹⁰⁹ CCC 774, also 1116.

¹¹⁰ Cf. SC #60, 70; See also Scicolone, 936. Certainly, if this is the case with the understanding and the effects of a Sacramental, namely, that *sanctification of human beings is signified and realized*, then Vatican II Council has *come close to* restoring the significance of *Sacramentals* to that which was the Church's understanding before the rise of Scholastic theology in the early 12th century. A further development towards enhancing the meaning of Sacramentals, and narrowing the gap between, *Sacraments* and *Sacramentals* is to be found in the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Many *Sacramentals* (e.g., baptismal water and its blessings, the Charms and other oils, baptismal exorcisms, the anointing, etc.) are depicted as *moments or elements of the celebration of the Sacraments; they prolong the liturgical life of the Church without becoming a substitution for it* (Scicolone, 936). In both of the previous descriptions of the Sacramentals, we see that the gap that seemed apparent between *sacramentals* and *sacraments* is reduced significantly.

¹¹¹ From a Catholic point of view, such a Sacramental act would be, for example, when *Malka* is consecrated and then added to the Eucharist bread in the Assyrian Church of the East, and when the *Sign of the Cross* is made at all the liturgical services.

¹⁰³ CIC, c. 1144.

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heard?¹¹² Further, can we not consider the fruit that both individuals and the Church receive from Sacramentals to be in many ways very similar to those from the Sacraments, especially since faith and the right spiritual disposition are obviously required for both?

As theological dialogue progressed between the Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church of the East after the signing of the «*Common Christological Declaration*» (CCD) in 1994, the question of a new sacramental accord, as the next and second step towards full-communion between the two Churches, was undertaken by the «*Mixed Committee of Theological Dialogue*» (MCTD) in 1995. Among a number of other subjects, there were the sacraments that are *not* enumerated in the same way in the official sacramental lists of both traditions, namely, the Sacraments of *Malka* and the *Sign of the Cross*, from the Assyrian side, and, the Sacraments of *Marriage* and *Anointing of the Sick*, from the Catholic side [see *Appendix*]. In five of its consecutive meetings between 1995-1999, the MCTD discussed the liturgical acts and theological meaning of the sacraments in question and is at present in the process of putting together a Common Statement on Sacramental Life as shared by both Churches. The two Churches do, in practice, recognize that the liturgical intention and theological significance of the respective (corresponding) sacraments of both lists are virtually the same.

The MCTD is able to realize that while there exists in the sacramental theology of the Assyrian Church of the East no differentiation between the terms of *Sacraments* and *Sacramentals*, as in the Catholic Church,¹¹³ (a fact which is particularly evident, for instance, in regard to *Malka* and the *Sign of the Cross*), such a distinction has been articulated, defined and applied to the Catholic Church's understanding of the Sacraments, as we have seen, since the Middle Ages. It became clear, therefore, that unless a new approach is adapted, the discussion on the sacraments could face obstacles that are due mainly to questions of expression (terminology) and forms rather than to the essence and content of the Apostolic Faith as transmitted within the respective traditions. Accordingly, the MCTD realizes that time has come for the two Churches to commit themselves to a process of re-presenting their sacramental belief in a theological language that transcends ancient categories as well as possibly needless enumeration. Instead, they both are seeking at present to formulate together, at least with regard to commenting and reflecting on the meaning of sacramental life in both Churches, a language that bases itself more on the Sacred Scriptures, the Fathers of the early Church, and liturgical texts of both East and West. While honoring one another's ancient liturgical devotions and sacramental practices, the Churches carry this process ahead without infringing on one another's rights or needlessly expecting one to imitate the other. To preserve the diversity of our traditions in the unity of our Christological faith¹¹⁴ is the way, and probably the only one, to be faithful of the Catholicity of the Church of Jesus Christ.

¹¹² Scicolone, 936.

¹¹³ For the Assyrian Church of the East, living according to sacramental principles means that we, who are mortal human beings, must participate in the Mystery which God communicates to us in Jesus Christ, through gestures and actions. For further details, see Abdisho of Soba, *Marganiitha*, tr. Mar Eshai Shimun, (Mar Narsai Press: Trichur, India) 1965, reprinted by Assyrian Church of the East Literary Committee: Chicago, 1988, 45-47.

¹¹⁴ When both the Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church of the East engaged in dialogue to formulate the Common Christological Declaration of 1984 a method was adapted of avoiding the use of metaphysical terms of the Fourth and Fifth Centuries, such as *nature*, *qnuma*, *hypostasis*, *parsopa* and *prosopon*, for all the years that it took to arrive at the signed text in 1994.

5.4. Closing Observations

1. One of the reasons for the successful reception of the CCD in both the Catholic and Assyrian Churches was that, while the drafters of the statement affirmed the one and the same Apostolic Faith, they at the same time avoided the usage of controversial terminology especially the employment of technical terms that no longer relate to the inner faith of the present Christian believer.
2. Most probably the MCTD will accommodate a similar methodology in her task of formulating the forthcoming «Joint Statement on Sacramental Life» of both Churches.
3. Both points 1 & 2 above have already, and will to a greater extent in the future, allow the Assyrian Church of the East and the Chaldean Catholic Church to pursue increased steps in their journey towards restoring full-ecclesial re-union of the historically one Church of the East, within the larger framework of the Catholic-Assyrian relations. By the same token, it is hoped also that the approach in dialogue and collaboration set forth by the Catholic-Assyrian-Chaldean agreements will present itself as one of the possible models of restoring full communion between Eastern Christianity and the West.
4. With equal hope and earnestness, it is hoped that the historic and very important bilateral dialogue between the Assyrian Church of the East and the Syrian Orthodox Church will soon be re-started, so that, it will bring both sister Church closer to future Christological, Sacramental and Ecclesial accords.
5. Finally, one can only hope that the important work of Pro Oriente Foundation that has been advancing since the Second Vatican Council will continue to bear fruit toward a deeper realization of truth and communion among the Churches of East and West. The uniqueness of its unofficial dialogue gives to all the Churches of the Syriac tradition - from India, the Middle East and the Diaspora - a most welcomed and attainable means to come together in openness and sincerity, to communicate relevant ecumenical issues common to their Syriac heritage.

APPENDIX

Comparison of Sacramental Lists					
Abdisho's List ¹¹⁵		Timothy's List ¹¹⁶		Trent's List ¹¹⁷	
1	Priesthood ¹¹⁸	1	Priesthood	6	Holy Orders
2	Baptism ¹¹⁹	3	Baptism	1	Baptism
3	Oil of Unction ¹²⁰			2	Confirmation
4	The Oblation ¹²¹	4	Eucharist	3	Eucharist
5	Holy Leaven ¹²²				
6	Remission of Sins ¹²³			4	Penance
7	Sign of the Cross ¹²⁴				
				5	Extreme Unction «Anointing of Sick»
8	*Marriage & Virginity* ¹²⁵	7	Marriage	7	Marriage
		5	Consecration of Monastic Life		
		2	Consecration of Altars		
		6	Funerals		

Discussions

Hainthaler: Let me tell that Dionysius takes for sacraments: Baptism, the Anointment with Myron, the Eucharist, the Ordination, the Consecration of Myron, the Profession of monks and the ritual of Funeral. That would be seven sacraments for Dionysius.

Sako: I am satisfied with the paper of Mar Bawai and its perspective for the future. I would like to mention three points:

First: There is a distinction between image "Sorta" and likeness "demoutha" in the homilies of the Syriac Fathers like Narsai (+502) and Jacob of Sarug (+520). With the sin the likeness of God is distorted, but not his image. The sacraments come to restore this distorted likeness. Therefore the sacraments are celebrated in an atmosphere of Joy as in a wedding.

Second: Mar Bawai mentioned only the list of Abdisho of Nisibis and he did not mention the list of George of Arbela (+960) who considered marriage as a real sacrament (see manuscript Vatican Syriac no 150). Also Timothy II (+1332) mentioned engagement and marriage as a sacrament (V.S. 151).

Third: Mar Bawai could underline the role of the Holy Spirit. This role is very crucial in the sacramental theology of the Church of the East. The Holy Spirit is perform-

ing "shumlaya" and sanctifying everything, that is why, in the anaphora of Addai and Mari, the text of the Institution changed with the Word of God and the (power) of the Holy Spirit. Timothy II adds the authority of the Church.

Mar Bawai: George of Arbela I did not consult, I look forward to doing so in the future. Second, by the comparison of the likeness and image it is made sure that likeness is not lost, but distorted; and that by Christ the image becomes restored, so that through the sacrament we can attain the image that God gave Adam even before the fall.

Sako: Following Narsai each sacrament has three dimensions: doctrinal - expressing the authentic faith, moral - we should live what is required and eschatological - we will have in the coming world, the fullness of what the sacrament is symbolizing.

Winkler: I would like to ask a question about terminology. Do you use in your current ecclesial language the word "sacraments"? It does not sound like a word that belongs to Eastern theology. We are already used to using "mysterion" when we speak about the Greek tradition. I did a study on the response of your church to the Lima document, and noted that it is an English translation of Abdisho bar Briha's "Marganitha". The English begins with "The sacraments (of the Church are)..." which is a translation of the Syriac "raze". As we become more and more aware that the Syriac tradition is the third main tradition, shouldn't we use the Syriac word "raza"?

Mar Bawai: I agree because it would be more faithful to the original terminology, but you run the risk of others not knowing what the term "raza" means.

Winkler: But we decided - that is what was suggested in the discussion on Christology - that we use "qnoma" instead of hypostasis and not translate it. Perhaps we should also decide not to translate raza/rozo.

Mar Bawai: Maybe in circles like these - I agree with you - it could serve helpful, since everyone else here is presupposed to know the distinction and to be familiar with the terminology. As member Churches of the Syriac tradition, we hope - and this is something that the rest of the Syriac Churches will have to agree - that our terminology is mutual so that the connotations of sacraments are the same, as well. Before we proceed with the asking of questions, however, I would like to make only one remark concerning the fact, why I dwelt so much upon Theodore's teachings, before entering into the discussion on sacraments. It is precisely because sacraments are the means that at the mistake or the Fall that took place in creation is corrected after the Christ advent. The Church of the East's problem is that throughout our history we have been in isolation and therefore outside of the main stream Christianity, especially the oikumene of the Roman Empire. Such reality made The Church of the East the exception - often the misunderstood part of Christianity. One can add that in the field of Christian anthropologies, Augustinian concepts became so established, and today are so taken for granted that we, who were outside the Roman Empire, were expected to follow the same Augustinian patterns. But that has not been the case. That is why I chose to dwell on Theodore, to expose the fundamentals of our thinking, of our very own anthropology, so that we may know that there was another approach towards anthropology, in addition to Augustin, namely, that is brought by the theory, the connection between Adam and his posterity is the human nature. Also for Theodore this human nature may serve the same purpose, but the added difference between Theodore and Augustin is that for Augustin the human nature transmits sin. But for Theodore there is a distinction between sin and mortality. And for Theodore sin is not property of human nature, only mortality is. Again, for Theodore sin is a personal choice, a deliberate personal premeditated free act that human beings make in disobeying divine law. Sin therefore does not get transmitted

¹¹⁵ See, Abdisho of Soba, *Marganitha*, tr. Mar Eshai Shimun, (Mar Narsai Press: Trichur, India, 1965), 45-47. Abdisho maintains that the Sacraments according to Sacred Scriptures are seven. (1) Priesthood; (2) Baptism; (3) Oil of Unction; (4) Eucharist; (5) Absolution; (6) Holy Leaven and (7) Sign of the Cross. The Sacraments are necessary «because of the wants of man in this world». Abdisho maintains that in this world, we are born from «carnal parents», though «the figure and perfection of man come from the Father of Light.» Spiritually, we are born from the «womb of baptism,» through the «agency of the priest,» but «the form and the perfection are imparted by the Holy Spirit and the power of the Most High.» Physically, we are «in need of physicians who will restore (us) to (our) former health;» but due to «the effects of sin and immoral living,» spiritually we are in need for «the priests of the Church, who are the spiritual physicians.» The Oil of Unction is used for the spiritual birth and the Holy Leaven is used in the spiritual food, which is the Body of Christ. The Sign of the Cross is that by which Christians are ever kept. However, those Christians who don't possess the Holy Leaven as sacrament, they have as a sacrament marriage, which is instituted by Christ. There are three elements that «sanctify» or make valid a sacrament. (i) A validly ordained priest. (ii) A sacrament has to be instituted by Christ. (iii) Those who partake of the sacrament must have the right intention and that they must believe that the sacrament is effected by a «heavenly power».

¹¹⁶ Timothy II, *Book of the Seven Causes of the Church Sacraments*. (Vatican Siriatic Manuscript # 151: Vatican Apostolic Library), folio 6-7.

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¹¹⁸ On the Sacrament of Priesthood, see Abdisho of Soba, *Marganitha*, 48-50.

¹¹⁹ On the Sacrament of Baptism, see *ibid.*, 51-52.

¹²⁰ On the Sacrament of Oil of Unction, see *ibid.*, 53-54.

¹²¹ On the Sacrament of the Oblation, see *ibid.*, 55-57.

¹²² On the Sacrament of Holy Leaven, see *ibid.*, 58-59.

¹²³ On the Sacrament of Remission of Sins and Repentance, see *ibid.*, 60-61.

¹²⁴ Abdisho of Soba does not include the «Sacrament» of the Sign of the Cross in his systematic treatment of the other Sacraments. However, elsewhere in the same work he elaborates on this subject but within the framework of another Part of his book *Marganitha* that is entitled «On the Theory of Those Things Which Depict the World to Come», see *ibid.* page 67-68.

¹²⁵ Abdisho of Soba is equally ambiguous about his categorization of Marriage within his List of Sacraments. In Part IV of his Book of *Marganitha*, he writes eight chapters. In chapter one, he lists the names of the liturgical acts that he recognizes as Sacraments. His list contains the following: (1) Priesthood; (2) Baptism; (3) Oil of Unction; (4) Eucharist; (5) Absolution; (6) Holy Leaven and (7) Sign of the Cross. In the same Part IV, he dedicates one chapter for each sacrament. But, Chapter VIII interestingly deals not with «the Sign of the Cross» but precisely with «Marriage and Virginity». For a review of Abdisho's teaching on Marriage as an act among the other Sacraments of the Church of the East, see *ibid.*, 62-63.

from man to man, because individually we make those decisions. That is why it is important to see how fundamentally Theodore of Mopsuestia is different from Augustin. And lastly, Augustin developed such teachings because during this time he was put against the heresy of Pelagius. Despite Theodore's difference from Augustin, Theodore is not a Pelagian. As you can see from the cited texts, unlike Pelagius Theodore comes back to the concept of man's co-operation with God, mainly due to man's helplessness in facing sin and Satan. For Theodore, man cannot actually achieve through his knowledge of intellect or his will salvation, unless he is aided by the Holy Spirit. Original sin gets transmitted in Augustinian mentality, in Theodorian approach we do not see original sin as brought from Adam, because sin is committed by our own free will.

Matar: We all have sin in Adam.

Mar Bawai: That is true in the sense that the world we live gets injured, but still in Theodorian approach man continues to be a free agent, having a free will, because if he already inherits this predisposition, judgement and guilt, they will well impede his own personal freedom. And the assistance of the Holy Spirit does not clash with his personal freedom, but is supposed to co-operate, because man alone cannot save himself.

Matar: We say that even the world is wounded through original sin.

Konat: I would like to have clarification on the relation between mortality and sin. In chapter I in the paragraph "Consequences of the Fall" you have remarked "man is created mortal" and at the same time you say that mortality or death are the punishment of sin.

Mar Bawai: Exactly -- this is a paradoxical relationship. The way it works out is like this. God with his wisdom and foreknowledge -- according to Theodore -- knew that time will come when Adam will disobey God's divine law. That is why when he created Adam, he created him innocent, but also susceptible to death. When Adam sinned, he did not sin due to a sinful nature, but according to Theodore, Adam sinned because he chose due to his arrogance to disobey God and follow the will of the evil and so he fell into temptation. When Adam sinned God did not change his mind and accordingly transformed Adam from immortal to mortal. But because God already knew he had created Adam susceptible to death, at that juncture God said, "Now I pronounce the judgement, now you will die".

Konat: So mortality is inherited and sinfulness is not inherited, in chapter I in the paragraph "Sin, Punishment (Death) and Grace" you say "man's natural inherited mortality which underlies his moral failure".

Mar Bawai: Exactly -- mortality is inherited from Adam. And, hence we die because we belong to his race. And despite it, according to Theodore, our inheritance of mortality still does not affect our own choices. But because mortality has a severe various effect on the rest of us, it never allows anyone not to be so weak and vulnerable. When facing mortality and its consequences we panic and as a result we begin to sin. Despite this, in such an anthropological framework, the integrity of humanity is still very important for Theodore.

Powathil: Man therefore is in a weak situation.

Mar Bawai: Yes, and that comes the closest to the western theological mentality. This is the closest step where the conclusions of Theodore and Augustin are corresponding. That is what I mean by saying: "Theodore is not a Pelagian", because he says that we are weak. Yet, man's fear, presuppositions and worldview are different from those articulated by Augustin or most of the Church fathers. Theodore tries to preserve his own priorities in entering into this mystery.

Powathil: Is the will somewhat weakened?

Mar Bawai: It could be interpreted in that way, of course, our whole judgement is weakened. Because for us, as soon as we become rational, in our 6th and 7th year of age, first we begin to understand the concept of mortality, our mortality. Our vision of the world is distorted and consequently we begin to fear. Hence, the Gospel saying to us "Don't be afraid!", let not fear enter into your hearts. Because, exactly at this juncture of fear we begin to sin.

Jacob Mathew: Fathers of the Orthodox Syriac tradition say that the fallen nature of human beings has caused Christ to incarnate and to save the humanity. This thought is really strong in the writings of the Anti-Chalcedonian fathers and here, I agree with Father L. Sako as well.

Second clarification is that in the Orthodox Syriac tradition, sacraments are aimed at the wholistic salvation of both the individual and the whole creation. Seen in this angle, we can not put priesthood above Eucharist and Baptism.

As Dr. Hainthaler mentioned already I also would like to ask about the Myron and the consecration of the Holy Oil. What is the role of Myron in your tradition? And the second question is based on the paragraph where you write "Christ is the likeness of Adam so that He might renew the body and soul of all men and bind the universe in love to Himself, again". There is a bit of clarification that I would probably need, which likeness of Adam, I would like to ask you: before or after the Fall?

Mar Bawai: The Church of the East teachers who followed the Theodorian anthropological Christology, maintained that for us and for our salvation, the Son of God became man, yet, without sin. Though in assuming a human nature, the Son of God assumed a fallen human nature, yet, one without sin. So your question is really verbalised and dealt with in the recitation of the creed. God assumed a fallen human nature, in order that through that nature he may restore the image that was distorted by the fall.

Sako: About the original sin, there is a text of the synod of Sabrisho I (596), which says that illness and mortality do not depend on the first sin. Mortality is natural (cf. Chabot, *sinodicon orientale*, p. 459).

About the Myron: Early the Church of the East had only one unction before the immersion. The second (Myron) was introduced by Mar Abba the Great (+552) from the Byzantines, when he visited Constantinople.

Mar Bawai: In the Appendix it depends if you can consider oil of unction in this list of Abdisho as the Myron. We use this as oil that christianises the acts of the Church in baptism and in consecrations. Probably that is the closest that Abdisho in the 14th century comes to calling it the oil of unction.

Jacob Mathew: I asked 'after or before the Fall', for I think that it is good to add "after the Fall" to make the idea clearer.

Mar Bawai: I accept this question; it was good to make me think about it. The reason why I personally respect Theodore is because his thought is highly Patristic; his teachers are the fathers of Nicea (325) and Constantinople (381).

Hainthaler: I think that Theodore is not only following the fathers, but especially and more precisely I would say that he is following the Bible. At this point his verse in Hebrew "because of fear of death, people started to sin" is crucial. And I would like to add one word on the Myron. The end of the 5th century was its coming out and it became especially important for Dionysius.

Khalifé: I have one question about the role of the Holy Spirit in the sacraments (chapter 4.4 "The Holy Spirit in the Sacraments"). You speak about the "consecratory moment"

in the Eucharist. It seems to be an anachronism, because of a controversial war between Latin and Byzantine. In Syriac tradition there is no such question about the more consecratory moment. And the text of Theodore of Mopsuestia makes clear that Theodore speaks about the consecratory moment of the invocation. And in the Syriac tradition there is another point of view: the Holy Spirit has an important role, but not in one moment. When we invoke the Holy Spirit, there is – like the Latin say – transubstantiation. It is a Latin and Byzantine controversy.

Mar Bawai: That is why I have put the word “moment” in inverted commas. Precisely I was aware of the problem, I personally would like to use a terminology that avoids controversial terms one of which is the theology of “the moment”.

Chediath: Concerning the human nature Theodore was perhaps influenced by Cyril of Jerusalem.

Mar Bawai: The reason why I exposed Theodore, is because my tradition unfailingly appeals to Theodore’s thought.

Chediath: What I wanted to say is that Theodore is not a person alone.

Mar Bawai: Yes, that is a good point.

Yousif: I am very glad to have heard Mar Bawai. He found out many things in our tradition. I would like to add just some points. I am teaching sacraments of my own Church. Here are some points that might be useful for the dialogue:

- a) The first point is connected with the number of sacraments. The number is behind what is the meaning of sacraments. That idea goes back to Petrus Lombardus in the 12th century when the question of the number of sacraments came up. When you put as granted that there are seven, at this point it would be possible, I think, to have a point of connection between the Latin and Byzantine. I think about the position of St. Thomas who speaks of the notion of sacraments as analogical that is applied at different levels for different things. So the point is to put seven or more.
- b) Though we are taking Abdisho as important and the “Marganitha” had the concept of an official catechism, the following patriarch Timothy II said that matrimony is a sacrament. But Abdisho treated it with great respect. Timothy II knew the position of Abdisho which is official of our traditions; nevertheless he considers matrimony as a sacrament!
- c) In the Book of the Fathers Simon of Shaqlabad speaks of sacraments not as things, but as actions (what the priest performs). This is a dynamic vision. So he speaks of performing baptism, reading of the Gospel, the blessing of matrimony, the act of burying, reconciliation of the public sinners, of bonding and disbonding etc. This is the idea of sacraments as performed actions, not things which are given. Another point which has much importance to Theodore (his work was treated so badly in history!). I hold a seminar about him with the introduction title: “*Génie banni au détriment de la science biblique et théologique*”. In our tradition he was not easily accepted, not all agreed with him.
- d) Another point which I would like to explain concerns the original sin. Because we in our mind often confuse the actual and the original sin. The original sin is not a voluntary, free sin. We speak of the mystery of the original sin. This is very near to St. Thomas as well: man does not see what is good and commits sin. This is the actual sin. Original sin is inherited.

Mar Bawai: If I can make a short comment on what Father Yousif said, namely why Abdisho’s list survived and is followed today and not the other lists. Probably there is more than one Church of the East representative; there are Father Birnie, Mar Aprem

and myself, all of whom follow Abdisho’s list. I would welcome their advice and comments, as well. This is an interesting question that deals with one sacramental perspective, namely, that of the Church of the East during her isolation period. After the Mongolian invasion, as most of you may know, we lost our scholastic patrimony, we lost our institutions that have held the Church of the East in prominence theologically. And with that lost of institution a great deal of our theological sources and resources were lost, as well. For some reason, the work of Timothy on the sacraments became unfamiliar to the Church of the East, as she survived in the mountains of Hakkari and probably in the valleys and plains of South India. And, probably for the same reasons, the only work that survived was the work of Abdisho of Soba. I agree with you his work is much less authoritative. Ecclesiastically, Abdisho was only a Metropolitan, but Timothy preceded him and was a patriarch - with higher authority and who wrote a commentary on the sacraments. If we compare the past to the present, today’s Eastern Patriarchs would not want their writings to be overridden by one of their bishops or metropolitans. So why was Abdisho preferred more than Timothy II, then, if today, we do otherwise. The only explanation would be it was an *incident* of history due to the emergency situation that followed the Mongolian invasion and resulted with the destructions and isolation of the whole Church of the East. The list-issue is really a commentary of which we can extract so many other explanations for almost all other discrepancies that we may come to see as to why has the Church of the East not become so competitive with the rest of Christianity. Even though there are such apparent discrepancies, and I think I would like to have some comments on these from Father Bonny as he is the one who is putting together the papers on sacraments in the Catholic-Assyrian Commission, but on the essentials our faith continues to be the same, namely, in all of its dimensions, Trinitarian, Christological, Ecclesiological, sacramental. In appreciation of such needed distinction, one can see the contribution when the Catholic Church accepts more than one way of expressing the one and the same substance of faith. The Catholic Church is able to distinguish between the one essence of faith and between the forms in which that same essence, which is a mystery, is expressed differently in different places throughout ages.

Winkler: I’d like to make two comments. First, the Catholic Church can certainly agree with Theodore’s concept of inherited sin. When I read in your paper “Man does not inherit the actual guilt of his predecessors, nor could he be blamed for a sin which he did not commit. A free choice freely made, by a man free either to obey or to disobey...”, this opinion would be commonly held today by most Catholic theologians. I think there is no difference between us on this question. However, we have to say that we are now in the area of speculative theology. My second point concerns the number of sacraments. Today you have the list of seven *raza* of Abdisho. But the larger concept of *raza* suggests the possibility of an endless list, because *raza* is participation in the redemptive act of Jesus Christ. So the number is not important. We should note that the Council of Trent never formally defined as a dogma that there are only “seven” sacraments, but that the seven named in the canons are truly sacraments. We could say that there are five or nine sacraments: if we count the sacraments of initiation (baptism, Eucharist and confirmation) as one, there would be five; if we count deacon, priest and bishop as three sacraments instead of the one holy orders, we would have nine. So the number of sacraments is arbitrary, only the essence is very important. Let me suggest a possible way that the number seven found its way into the Church of the East. It is reasonable to speculate that Pope Nicholas IV would have given the decrees of the Se-

cond Council of Lyon to the monk Rabban Sauma, who was ambassador of the Mongolians to the West.

Mar Bawai: I think it was an ecumenical gesture to line oneself with the rest of Christianity. The number of seven is important scripturally and has theological connotation.

Winkler: We have talked about the concept of *raza*. And you later said that for the Church of the East the ordained priesthood became the foundation and source of all sacramental life. So if *raza* is the participation in death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, is it necessary to have ordained priests?

Mar Bawai: Apparently according to the thought of the Church of the East yes, because unlike the Church of the West, baptism and marriage (baptism in exceptional cases and marriage in regular cases) can not be officiated or conducted by non-ordained individuals, as it is the case in the Catholic Church. Again, the characters of sacramental thought are defined by two elements, anthropology (Theodore is very important) and Scriptures. If you read the early 4th – 5th century fathers like Aphrahat, Ephrem, Theodore, you will see that they have a specific philosophical concept (or some other systems that they follow), but their source of theology from which they draw everything are the Scriptures. The priesthood of the Church comes from Christ's priesthood, which in turn is from the Old Testament – such thinking is highly scriptural and is influenced by the Semitic background of Syriac Christianity. Accordingly, it becomes inconceivable for us in the Church of the East to have a marriage without the presence of a priest just as it is equally inconceivable to have a Eucharist without the presence and presiding of a priest.

Hannoncourt: In case of emergency it was a practise in the Catholic Church to have it without a priest, regular or not.

Sako: About the authority of the book of the Pearl “Marganitha” of Abdisho. This book is a handbook of catechism i.e. an official document in the Church of the East. Abdisho says in the preface that the Patriarch asked him to write such a book of the formation of the faithful. Maybe because in the same time Bar Hebraeus wrote the book of “The Lamp of sanctuaries (Sacraments)”. I wished that Mar Bawai compared both books to see the similarity and differences.

Bonny: Regarding original sin, I just want to say that this concept is related to a most important chapter of theology, concerning human nature and redemption. Every human being is part of a wounded humanity, since the very beginning of his/her existence. We can not be, at the same time, a human person and not in need of redemption. That is the fundamental point. As soon as you are a human being, you are part of a sinful humanity and thus in need of redemption. Jesus Christ, therefore, is the Saviour of all humanity; he became man for the sake of all human beings. How to explain this, in which categories, is another question.

Mar Aprem: This was an excellent paper. We are aware of the problem of the writings of the metropolitan and later on of the patriarch. And the writings of the patriarch after 1318 have been psychologically more effective on the Church. But I think in many Church councils we have not taken this problem seriously. I realise that this was just a book written by an authority of the Church. And in the context with the dialogue with the Vatican there is the problem with the number of seven, what we have just said. The number of seven is not that important, because we have two lists. Abdisho's “Marganitha” and then the list of Timothy II, so maybe in one of the synods we should take action on this by saying that we make this or that list official. Because you see here again the word *raze* comes, I visited the Assyrian Churches outside India and asked the priest

at what time is my qurbana tomorrow morning. He looked at me: “Raze?” and I said: “for the communion service”. In India I say qurbana for communion service. They said that maybe *qurbana* is the word for receiving of the elements and *raza* is the word for the celebration of a communion service. So there are difficulties in the meaning that people understand. So in one sense we should only take Abdisho's list. This has become more popular in life than Timothy II. When I talked about patriarchs as a young student, I only knew one patriarch, Timothy I. Timothy II is not that known. But now – especially in the context of the seven sacraments – Timothy II comes. It is true that in the West Syrian tradition there was Bar Ebraya in 1286 and then comes Abdisho's book and then the book of Timothy II. But I feel that they are different, not immediately contemporary. We have to see how many books and how much weight Timothy II had in the synod. There was a reference to 1599 Council of Diamper, where Timothy II is condemned. I was actually surprised that in 1582 the new calendar arrived in India and in 1583 the Synod already agreed that we adopt the Gregorian Calendar. I was not aware of it, only recently when I was studying Diamper for a seminar, I came through it.

So that are the sort of things that have taken place, difficulties and how the Church in Malabar becomes publicly latinized in 1599 under the Pope. The Synod finalized therefore the problems with the books, but we have some English books for example printed by the Anglican Church where the “Marganitha” was first printed.

I was the first one to go to other seminaries and study for my Church and I was asked, why do you go to other seminaries. I said when I learn, I will be able to explain to their Church and they will be able to learn something from me. Because we never told them what we believe and we never came to know what the other faith was. And that are the discussions at PRO ORIENTE and others, where we are coming in a context not to fight, but to share what we believe, and then we will come to sort of a statement which will be really helpful.

Yousif: I just want to give some points of discussion about Timothy II. He makes his commentary and says that it is only about the tradition, and he does not attribute to it the authority of a patriarch. He says that he is working about the tradition regarding the sacraments of the Church. He does not give it an official tone, but sees it as pastoral work. That is one of the reasons why the volume of Abdisho of Soba remains the official manual of the Church.

Second point of thought is that there was a tradition that when a document was of importance, e.g. a letter of a patriarch, it was included into the book of synodicon. This letter was a dogmatic part of the book. In the book of Timothy II such a letter was not included, if it existed.

Mar Bawai: I would like to make a short comment on this point.

- a) It would be interpreted as an unnecessary arrogance of the patriarch, to state anything besides what Timothy II has said in his introduction.
- b) The reason why it was not included into Synod, is that there were no Synods that took place in the Church of the East after he has written the book.
- c) The most important difficulty in our Church, however, was the decline in our church after the Mongolian invasion, which interrupted the whole theological development and the integration of private authors into the canonical, sacramental, Christological specialities of the Church of the East.

As you know, in the Church of the East the acts of Christian Marriage and Anointing of the Sick are not included in the official list of the Seven Sacraments. And by examining them in the Catholic-Assyrian dialogue, we came to see that we follow the same theo-

logy, the same interpretation, intention, and the same outline of liturgical practice. But, for historical incidental reasons, in the Church of the East marriage and anointing of the sick were not included in the list of sacraments. Similarly, consecration of monastic life was not included into Abdisho's list, but only in Timothy's list. On the contrary, the remission of sins exists in Abdisho's list but it does not in Timothy's list. So, as Dr. Winkler pointed out, we can have an endless list of sacraments, and today's approach to the sacraments in the Catholic Church, I personally welcomed very well. It views the Church as a whole as a sacrament because of her acts and because of her being connected to Christ as her life.

Brock: May I offer a few remarks. First concerning the term of *raza*, I would suggest that the best solution would be simply to translate it "mystery". This would be familiar to Westerners through the Greek usage, while it would remain close to the Syriac usage and sense. This would solve the problem of having to distinct term. My impression is that some people were perplexed by the fact that you concentrated on Theodore. It is important especially for the dialogue between the Assyrian Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church to emphasize that much of what the Church of the East has taken over from Theodore is in fact the common heritage of the Greek East. A further aspect which I feel it is very important to emphasize is the indigenous Syriac heritage, because time and time again what Theodore is saying is actually very close to what Ephrem is saying, but in totally different language. And one place where I think that Ephrem is actually more helpful than Theodore is his views on the original state of Adam and Eve before the Fall: Ephrem sees them as deliberately created by God in an intermediary position, in between mortality and immortality, in order to emphasize that he gave them free will; thus, had they not transgressed "the tiny commandment", they would have been rewarded with the crown of immortality. This view is also to be found in several Greek writers as well.

Mar Bawai: The reason why I purposely decided to present Theodore more extensively than the rest is because he has influenced the Church of the East even more than Ephrem and Aphrahat had. Theodore synthesizes primitiveness semantic theology with Hellenized Antiochene thought. His approach became prominent after the fifth century. Accordingly, as the Church of the East progresses in the ecumenical march, we should recognize thought as being Theodorian more than Nestorian. We ought to make sure that there is no misconception about our real theological identity for we could not hide nothing that is so deeply embedded in the way we theologise.

Second working session, Tuesday afternoon

Chairman: Bishop *Mar Bawai Soro*

Elie Khalifé-Hachem

MARONITE SACRAMENTAL THEOLOGY

1. Introduction

In the Maronite sacramental theology, as in the whole Syriac tradition, there is no comprehensive and systematic treatises of sacramental theology like those elaborated in the Latin tradition from the middle ages. However we can gather elements for such a theology from the liturgical texts drawn from the (*tēksē*) or services for the celebration of each sacrament¹ and from other liturgical texts drawn from the weekly and yearly offices (*Šhīmō* and *Phanqītō*),² from the book of M'ad'dono³ where we find special celebrations for the great feasts in the liturgical cycle etc... We can also find very interesting elements for this purpose in the writings of the commentators of the sacramental services and disciplines. In the case of the Maronite church we have a great commentator from the end of the 17th century, the Patriarch *Estephan Ad-Dūwaihī* (+1704)⁴ to whom I shall often refer in this paper. But doing so, one must be aware of the risk of imposing on this material, gathered from the old texts, the logic of the western Sacramental theology. This will be very misleading in the understanding of those old texts.

Concerning the Syriac Maronite Sacramental Theology we must take care of consulting the old manuscripts of those services and offices executed before the end of the sixteenth century when the latinizing process started. In those old manuscripts we shall be surprised to find very genuine features of the old Syriac sacramental theology.

Some recent works can help us in this undertaking like those of Sebastian Brock⁵ about the Baptism and the Myron in the Syriac tradition and those of the Bishop Butros Gemayel about the Maronite Liturgy of the Mass⁶ and the very important monograph of the Prof. Augustine Mouhanna "Les rites de l'initiation dans l'Eglise Maronite, Rome 1980" where he published and commented on seven Maronite baptismal services. Recently Michel Aoun published in PdO XXIII (1998) a very interesting old Maronite service of marriage.

I have divided my paper into two parts: in the first I deal with the latinizing reform of the late sixteenth century and the reactions against it; in the second part I deal with the reform implemented by the great Patriarch *Estephan Ad-Dūwaihī* who represents the ge-

¹ *Ktobō d-tēksē l-tēšmešto d-rosē qadiše*. Maronite patriarchate Bkérké 1942. For the old mss. cf. DIB, *Etude sur la liturgie maronite*, Paris 1919, pp. 89- 142

² cf. Tabet, Jean, *l'office commun maronite*, Kaslik, 1972. Sources, pp. XIII- XXI

³ cf. DIB, p. *Etude...*, pp. 89- 142

⁴ DTC, t.IV col. 2230- 2231. Graf, G., GCAL, t. III, pp.361- 377. Gemayel, N. - *The patriarch Estephan Dūwa'hī i, his life and his writings* (in Arabic), Beirut 1991, Bibliography pp. 302- 309.

⁵ *The Holy Spirit in the Syrian Baptismal tradition*, The Syrian Churches series, POONA, 1979: *Some important baptismal themes in the Syriac tradition*, The Harp IV (1991) pp.189- 214. For many other articles cf. S. Brock, *Syriac studies*, a classified bibliography (1960- 1990) PdO 1996 pp.193- 1994.

⁶ *Avant- messe maronite*. Histoire et structure, OCA 174. *Al- Qidās al- mārūni*. Beirut 1970

nuine Syriac Maronite tradition and to whom all the liturgical reforms must refer. Unfortunately this was not often the case.

2. The Latinizing Reform

2.1. The Beginning

In the late 16th century a latinizing process started in the Maronite Church due to the two synods held at Qannûbin monastery, the patriarchal seat, in 1580 and 1596 in the presence of the two Jesuit pontifical delegates, John Baptist Eliano (1580) and Jerome Dandini (1596). The main arguments of those two synods was the sacramental theology and discipline.⁷ It was the first time that some Latin sacramental doctrines and usages were adopted officially in the Maronite Church. This adoption, however, did not go without resistance from the clergy and the people. By way of proof it needed two synods in a period of sixteen years to adopt the same canons, and the second one, which was a repetition of the first, neglected the major part of it. About fifty years later, the Patriarch Youssef Ákūrī held a synod in 1644 at Hraš monastery in Kesrowan and dealt with the same items without mentioning the two previous Synods.⁸ This patriarch was famous in reacting against the latinizing process in the Maronite Church and he excommunicated the Latin missionaries who exercised pastoral functions among the Maronites.

So during the first part of the seventeenth century, we observe a great confusion in the matter of sacramental theology and discipline in the Maronite Church. This confusion was ascribable, in my opinion, first to the discrepancy existing between the new Synodal canons and the text of the ritual books which were still manuscripts in their old form, and secondly to the carelessness, if not opposition, of the great part of the people and clergy vis a vis the new Latin educated clergy in the Maronite Roman College founded in 1585 in their enthusiasm for the Latinized reforms in the field of sacraments.

2.2. What Were the Natures of those Synodal Decisions

The Synod of 1580 unfolded its reforms in three chapters. The first was a dogmatic exposé of the faith in seven canons. The second, with which we are concerned, was like a sacramental treatise in thirty one canons. The third contained some points of ecclesiastical discipline in twelve canons.⁹

2.2.1. The First Canon

The first canon about the sacraments in general said: " We acknowledge and we confess that the sacraments of the Church are seven: The baptism, the anointment by Myron (*mašhat al-mairūn*), the eucharist (*al Qūrbān*), the confession, the unction of the sick, the priesthood and the marriage. They are established by our Lord Jesus-Christ and in them reside the divine grace for those who receive them properly."¹⁰

⁷ Feghali, J. *Histoire du droit de l'Eglise Maronite*, T1, les conciles des XVIe et XVIIe siècles. Paris 1962 (quoted Feghali...)

⁸ Feghali, J. ... pp.271-281 (Arabic text), 283-295 (French translation).

⁹ Feghali, J. ... pp.107-135 (Arabic text); 137-196 (French translation with commentary).

¹⁰ Feghali, J. ... p.145

We can understand that, according to the Roman delegate, the sacramental septenary was not clearly affirmed in the Maronite tradition. The principal lack in the septenary, in his opinion, was the second one which is, according to the Latin tradition, the confirmation of faith (*tathbūt al-īmān*). In fact the anointment with Myron, according to the Maronite tradition, was celebrated as a part of the baptism. For this reason the Synod, speaking about this sacrament, said clearly that "This sacrament is distinct from the baptism ... it is necessary". The matter of it is said to be "The Myron composed only of olive oil and balsam". It must be consecrated and administered by the Bishop. Its form is: "I mark you (*aršmuka*) with the sign of the Cross and I confirm you by the Myron of salvation in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit ...the baptised must receive it at the age of seven years..."¹¹

Some of those points were alien from the Maronite tradition as we shall see later. It seems, even, that in the Maronite baptismal service, attributed to Jacob of Serug, contains two prebaptismal anointings, while the postbaptismal anointing was absent.¹²

2.2.2. The Unction of the Sick

The second sacrament which appeared dubious for the Roman delegate was what is called the "Extremum unction" (*al-mašhat al-ahirat*) or "The unction of the sick" as in the Maronite tradition. This sacrament was celebrated by the Maronites in the "Rite of the lamp" (*teksō d-qandīlō*). The principal lack in this sacrament was its matter which was the oil consecrated by the priest and not by the bishop.¹³

2.2.3. The Eucharist

In the Eucharist, the matter and the form are clearly fixed according to the Latin theology. The matter is the unleavened bread and the wine of grapes mixed with a little water. The form for the bread is: "This is my body", and for the wine: " This is my blood for the new and eternal covenant which is shed for your sake..." Nothing is said about the epiclesis. The doctrine of the transubstantiation is clearly affirmed. The communion of the babies is forbidden as non-fitting...¹⁴

2.2.4. The Penitence

The sacrament of penitence is called "Confession" (*I'tirāf*) whose matter is the acts of the penitent which are the contrition of the heart, the confession of the sins and the satisfaction imposed by the confessor. The form is "I absolve you of all your sins in the name."¹⁵ In the Maronite tradition this formula was variable and of deprecativ form.

¹¹ Feghali, J. ... pp.160-161

¹² Mouhanna, Augustine, *Les rites de l'initiation dans l'église maronite*, OCA, 212, Rome 1980 p.64 (text) and p.228 (commentary).

¹³ Feghali, J. ... pp.176-181

¹⁴ Feghali, J. ... pp.165-172

¹⁵ Feghali, J. ... pp.173-175

2.2.5. The Priesthood

As for the sacrament of priesthood it is said that the matter is the delivery to the candidate of the chalice with the blood and of the paten with the body of Christ. The form of the sacrament is the following: "Receive the power of offering the Eucharist in the Church for the sake of the living and the dead in the name of the Lord."¹⁶ This was completely an innovation in the Maronite celebration of this sacrament that is why it was never introduced in the pontifical ritual of Siomid; we can find a long refutation of those affirmations in Dūwāihī's commentary on the Consecrations and the Cheirotonia (šarh at-takrīsāt waš-Šartūnyat, Beirut 1902, pp. 129-248).

2.2.6. The Marriage

About the sacrament of marriage (*Az-zījat*) the synod of 1580 said: "It represents the union between the Christ and His Church as the apostle said: " This is a great mystery, I mean in regard to Christ and the Church," (Eph.5/32). The effective cause of the marriage is the consent of the man and the woman; this consent must be manifested by a public sign uttered by words".¹⁷ In the Maronite service of the marriage there was no such public exchange of consent, but it was introduced since the eighteen century before the benediction of the rings and the crowns.

3. The Sacramental Theology of the Patriarch Estephan ad-Dūwāihī

3.1. The First Steps

As we have seen, the introduction of the Latin theology and discipline into the Maronite tradition created a great confusion especially between the clergy and the faithful who were educated traditionally, whereas the small number of the clergy educated in Rome since 1585 were very enthusiastic in the implementation of the latinizing reforms initiated by the synod of 1580. It happened even that some of those priests began to use Latin rituals translated into Arabic. This was the situation when a great Maronite figure returned back to Lebanon in 1655 after he had studied fourteen years in Rome. This was Estephan Ad-Dūwāihī, patriarch from 1670 to 1704.

Though educated in Rome, Dūwāihī was very appreciative and proud of his Syriac Maronite tradition while remaining very attached to the Roman faith and theology. He was firmly convinced that what he learned in Rome he could find, but differently expressed, in his own tradition. This is true even in such questions like the Filioque and the purgatory which he widely treated based on Syriac texts drawn from liturgical books and the writings of the Syriac fathers.¹⁸ In all his writings, he unfolds a large and deep knowledge of the Syriac tradition as a whole. He was well acquainted with the great Syriac fathers and with the main commentators of the Syriac liturgies. He moreover knew well

the oriental liturgies like Byzantine, Coptic and Armenian and he often practised comparative liturgical studies.

Dūwāihī wrote three books on sacramental theology:

The first and most important one is the "Ten lamps" (*Al-manā'ir al-āšr*) published in 1895 - 96 in two volumes under the wrong title of "The lamp of the sanctuary" (*Man-nārat al-aqdās*).¹⁹ This book is a commentary of the Maronite liturgy of the Mass and occasionally Dūwāihī commented on other sacraments such as priesthood, baptism and penitence.

The second book is a commentary on "Consecrations and the Ordinations (Cheirotonia) in the Maronite Church."²⁰ In the first part Dūwāihī comments on the principal consecrations, that of the Church, of the altar, of the baptismal font, of the tombs, of the crosses and icons, of the Holy Myron, of the baptismal oil, of the oil for the unction of the sick or the oil of the *Kandil*. In the second part he explains the ordinations or the *cheirotonia* or *siomid*.

The third book is a controversial one written against the Jesuit John Baptist Eliano, the pontifical delegate who was present in the latinizing synod of 1580 and who, in a report to the Pope, accused the Maronites of several errors in the faith and of many abuses in the sacramental discipline. The synod of 1580 aimed, in fact, at correcting those errors and abuses. For this reason Dūwāihī ignored completely this synod in his historic and liturgical writings. This book is published under the title of "The defence of the Maronite Church" (*Ihtijāj*...).²¹ It constitutes a refutation of all the points raised up in that synod and so it represents a treatise of sacramental theology from the Maronite standpoint, which is that of the Syriac tradition. Following those books of Dūwāihī, we can discover the genuine Syro-Maronite Sacramental Theology.

3.2. Definition of the sacrament (*Sirr*, *Rōsō*)

Since there is no clear definition of sacrament in the Syriac tradition, Dūwāihī, inspired by the Latin theology, defines the sacrament (*as-ssir*) as "a sensible (*mahsūs*) and holy thing (*šay'* - *Res*) ordained by God to be a sign of the sanctification and of the grace bestowed to man."²² This definition is true for all the sacraments of the Old Law like the circumcision, the Pontificate, the Pascal Lamb and others, and for all the Sacraments of the New Law like the baptism, the priesthood, the confession, the marriage and others. In all those, there is a sensible thing which can be seen and by which we can be acquainted with the sanctification which is invisible. For Dūwāihī, the sacrament is an act of God, and the church celebrates it by the power of Triune God; that is why the symbolic term *Rōsō* is the best to signify the symbolic reality of the sacrament which is visible and invisible: "but though the term *Rōsō* or *Sirr* is applied to all the sacraments which grant the grace, it is especially applied to the sacrament of the Mass (*al-quddās*) because it gives the grace and the Lord of the grace."²³ "This sacrament is the completion (*mūkammil*) of all the sacraments", for this reason all the other sacraments and con-

¹⁶ Feghali, J. ... pp.182-187

¹⁷ Feghali, J. ... pp.188-189

¹⁸ For the Filioque cf. "Kitāb al-ihitijāj? n al-millat al-mārūniat" published by Philipe As-Simrani, Jounieh 1937, pp.121-137 (quoted Ihtijāj...); "Manārat al-aqdās", published by Rašīd as-Šartūnī, Beirut 1896, Vol. II, pp.80-123 (quoted "Manārat"). For the purgatory cf. Ihtijāj, pp.169-175.

¹⁹ Moubaraka, M., *Le titre de l'ouvrage de Douwaihy sur la messe*, PdO XVII (1992) pp. 193-210

²⁰ *Šarh at-takrīsāt waš-šartūniat*, (quoted Šarh ...) published by Rachid K. Šartūnī, Beirut 1902

²¹ Kitāb al Ihtijāj ... (note 18)

²² Cf. Catechismus Romanus, 1566, 11/9

²³ Manārat ... Vol. I, p.p 38,11

secerations are celebrated in one of its parts in order that the communion will be the completion of all sacraments.²⁴

3.3. The Baptism and the Myron (cf *Ihtijāj*...pp. 176 - 238)

John Baptist Eliano had asserted in his report that: "The Maronites consider the baptism as null and void without the anointment with Myron which is an essential part of the baptism and thus the sacrament of confirmation does not exist with the Maronites."²⁵ For this reason the synod of 1580 said that "This sacrament is distinct from the baptism". Dūwāihī refuted this assertion saying: " The baptism with water and Spirit is complete in itself as it appeared from the words of our Lord (Mt, 28/10) and from the practice of the apostles as in the baptism of the Ethiopian by Philip (Act 8/38). In the baptism, man "puts on" the Holy Spirit (*labisa ar-rūh*) without the anointment with the Myron, but the Church prescribed the anointment with the Myron after the baptism in order to manifest that the baptised had put on the Holy Spirit because Myron points to the Holy Spirit and His effects in the soul of man as we read in the consecration of the Myron: "Because we cannot know Him in Himself, the Holy Spirit makes Himself, His power, His gifts and His grace manifest in us by the imprint (*tab'ō*) of the Myron."²⁶ And he added: "As to the sacrament of confirmation which is administered by the anointment of the Myron, there are many differences between the Eastern and the Western Church: first, in the matter from which the Myron is confected, second, in the words by which it is consecrated, third, by the rite in which the priest distributes it, fourth, at what age the baptised must be anointed with it, fifth, where the baptised must be anointed, sixth, how many times the Christian is anointed... Those differences, existing from the oldest time, are not so essential to corrupt the sacrament because they are external only and the Leaders of the Churches can dispose of them accordingly as they have been entrusted by the Lord of sacraments..."²⁷

Commenting on the consecration of the Myron, Dūwāihī wrote "The Myron is the symbol (*timthāl*) of the Holy Spirit according to the apostles when they gave the Holy Spirit by the imposition of their hands. So we do now when we anoint with the Myron because the anointment with the Myron substitutes the imposition of the hands... The Myron is the completion (*šumloyō*) of the divine gift given in the Holy baptism... by which man becomes the son of God and by the anointment he is confirmed in this sonship..."²⁸ Speaking about the composition of the Myron, from olive oil and balsam, he writes "The Myron is the figure (*rasm*) of the Lord Saviour and as the Lord is composed from divinity and humanity, so the Myron is compounded from balsam and oil: the balsam represents the divine nature and the oil the human nature..." and he quotes some verses from the 65 *mimro* about the Myron of Jacob of Serug describing the mixture of the Myron by the Bishop: "He has two unguents on his hands and he mixes them so that he represents the divinity and the humanity. He pours out one unguent in another and he mixes them carefully as the divinity poured himself in the humanity. Invisible unguent

because invisible in the divinity, visible unguent because the humanity is always visible. The one exceeds because the perfume of his fragrance is exceeding, one is the Christ whose divinity is inscrutable."

In his "Book of Defence" (*ihitjāj*) Dūwāihī reports that John Baptist Eliano had accused the Maronite church of a bizarre error according to it "the *Hypostasis* (*uqnūm*) of the Holy Spirit is present in the holy Myron like Christ is present in the Eucharist."²⁹ Dūwāihī is astonished at this accusation and said he never found in the books of the Maronites such an affirmation and he refuted this accusation by about 15 Syriac texts drawn from several baptismal services from which I quote the formula of anointment from the baptismal service attributed to Jacob of Serug: "By the holy Myron of Christ our God, the sweet fragrance of the true faith, the imprint and the completion (*tab'ō - šumloyō*) of the grace of the Holy Spirit, your servant is anointed for life, for the growth of the faith, for the blessed resurrection from death and for the new life in the kingdom of heaven."³⁰

From these quoted texts and others Dūwāihī deduced, against J. B. Eliano, that the Myron is the symbol of the incarnation of the Son of God and the completion of the grace of the Holy Spirit. In this sense we can also say, according to a text from the service of the consecration of Myron, that "the Myron, which is the perfection of the divine gift granted to us in the holy baptism, is the type (*tuphsō*) of the Holy Spirit."³¹

After this very documented study about the theology of the baptism and Myron in their relationship Dūwāihī could conclude that "if the Maronites persist to anoint their babies while baptising them, this is neither a heresy nor a bad practice... because according to the rites of the church and the commentaries of the fathers... it appeared that this anointment has no proper rite than that with the baptismal one and so the pure fathers testified that the immersion in water and the anointment with the holy Myron are linked together and not separated."³²

3.4. The Eucharist

Patriarch Dūwāihī treated extensively and deeply the eucharistic theology in his great work "The Ten Lamps" or the 10 demonstrations about the Maronite *Qurbano* or mass. In this book (1150 pages) he comments on each part, each prayer, each movement, each symbol, and each instrument of the Maronite mass in its Syriac text. Every page of this book is full of Syriac texts drawn from the Syriac common fathers like Ephrem, Balai, Isaac of Antioch, Jacob of Serug (+521), and from Jacob of Edessa (+708), Moshe Barkepha (+903), Dionysios Bar Salibi (+1171) and Gregorius Bar Haebreus (+1286), from the West Syriac tradition, and Abu Al-Faraj Ibn At-Tayib (+1034) from the East Syriac tradition. When he is defending the Maronite tradition, he often says "our Syriac tradition." He was profoundly aware that, in the sacramental theology there were no essential differences between the Syriac churches.

It is impossible, in this paper, to develop all the Eucharistic theology of Dūwāihī; therefore I shall only touch on the very delicate question of the role of the Holy Spirit in

²⁴ Manārat ... Vol. I, p.54

²⁵ Feghali ... p.64-65

²⁶ Ihtijāj ... p.189

²⁷ Ihtijāj ... p.204

²⁸ Šarh ... pp.54-56

²⁹ Feghali ... p.65

³⁰ Ihtijāj ... p.216

³¹ Ihtijāj ... p.220

³² Ihtijāj ... p.213

the consecration of the Eucharistic mysteries. He dealt with this topic in eight chapters (*Manārat* vol. II, pp. 358 - 396).

It must be said at the outset that Dūwāihī opposed the opinion that the consecration of the mysteries happens in the epiclesis. On the contrary, he maintained that the Words of our Lord consecrate them (*Manārat*... vol. II, pp. 300-356). He proved this from the texts of the Syriac anaphoras and from the Syriac fathers. But even the consecration is implemented by the Words of Christ, it is nevertheless the work of the three divine *Qnūmē* especially of the Holy Spirit. Commenting on the three glorifications of Holy Trinity by which the prayer of the consecration (the anaphora) begins, Duwāihī wrote the following: "We invoke the names of the three *Qnūmē* on the mysteries because they consecrate them by their power as the church prays in the memory of the dead priests: "Glory to the Father who elected the priests to serve him (*šameš*, an eucharistic term), adoration to the Son who teaches them to consecrate His mysteries, praise to the Holy Spirit who descends and hovers upon their sacrifices..." We invoke here (in the beginning of the anaphora) the three *Qnūmē* together and we offer to them the glorification and the thanksgiving because they consecrate together the mysteries." (*Manārat* vol. II, p.209).

This idea of the consecration of the mysteries by the three divine *Qnūmē* is repeated several times by Dūwāihī especially when he comments on the epiclesis (*Manārat*, vol. II, pp.364, 366, 376, 390). But the Holy Spirit plays a very important role in this consecration; He is the beginner and the completion of the Eucharist. "For this reason, wrote Duwāihī, before the consecration of the mysteries the Church orders the Archdeacon to proclaim before the people: "behold the *qūrbonō* is to be offered and the Majesty shines and the doors of the heaven are opened and the Holy Spirit descends and hovers upon the holy mysteries." and, after the consecration in the epiclesis, the same Archdeacon warns the people proclaiming: "how awful is the moment when the Holy Spirit descends from on high of the heaven and hovers upon the *Qūrbonō* laid in the sanctuary and sanctifies it..." The reposing (*hulūl*) of the Holy Spirit, continued Dūwāihī, happens first to consecrate and to transform (*yuhawil*) the bread and the wine to the body and blood of our Lord... and secondly, the reposing of the Holy Spirit happens after the consecration in order to be the cause of the holiness in those who participate in it..." (*Manārat*, vol. II, p. 370)

So Dūwāihī could also affirm "that the Mass is called (*qūdošō*) or sanctification because, by the word of the Lord and the power of the Holy Spirit, the bread and the wine are consecrated and transubstantiated (*yastahilūn*) to the body and blood of the Lord (*Manārat* vol. I, p.12) and in another place "the words of the consecration excels all the other prayers [of the mass] because by it and by the power of the Holy Spirit we are acquainted (*nastadill*) with the presence of the body and of the blood of the Son of God (*Manārat*, vol. II, p. 203).

We notice here that Dūwāihī recognises the essential role of the Holy Spirit in the consecration of the bread and the wine when the priest utters Christ's words and not in the epiclesis.

4. Conclusion

The great patriarch Estephan Ad- Dūwāihī remains the main source for the knowledge of the genuine Syro-Maronite Sacramental Theology in the midst of a very strong

westernising stream in all times. After him no other Maronite theologian could attain the depth of his living knowledge of the Syro-Maronite tradition; even the great Joseph Assemani (1687-1768), who was in a way his disciple, could not rise up to the level of his master's theological insights and remained, in the field of Syriac tradition, more a scholar than a theologian. Unfortunately the writings of Dūwāihī remained unpublished for more than two hundred years while in the same period, hundreds of books of lesser value were translated and published from Latin and other languages. What is worse, very few Maronites read his theological writings today.

Discussions

Konāt: I would like to have some clarification. In the first part of the paper that we have heard I had the impression that Patriarch Dūwāihī was resisting to latinization, but coming to the end of the paper I had the impression that he was some sort of latinized. For example in chapter 3.2. it is said that the term "roso" is especially used for the sacrament of the Mass. And in chapter 2.2.3. there is the word "qudoso" for the Mass. And the word "transubstantiation" is used, which is more a Latin term.

Khalifé: But "qudoso" is a Syriac term. Dūwāihī – in the first chapter of his "Manārat" – gives all the names of the Mass: "rozo", "qudoso", "qurbono", about ten names the Mass has. And in Syriac there is no term for "transubstantiation", I translated it from Arabic.

Konāt: And about the term "transubstantiation": the paragraph that comes just before the conclusion says that for the patriarch "the essential role of the Holy Spirit is in the consecration of the bread and the wine when the priest utters Christ's words and not in the epiclesis". How can we justify this?

Khalifé: Yes, but the Holy Spirit works when the priest utters Christ's words. "After the consecration in order to be the cause of the holiness of those who participate". But there are two epicleses in Syro-Maronite tradition, before the consecration and after it. For Dūwāihī the three eternal persons, the Trinity, consecrate the mysteries, especially the Holy Spirit, but not in the epiclesis.

Jacob Mathew: I would like to have some clarification on chapter 3.2. where it is said: "This definition is true for all the sacraments of the Old Law like the circumcision..." and then comes the word "Pontificate"?

Khalifé: I translated it from Arabic. "Pontificate" is the priesthood in the Old Testament (but not in the New Testament).

Brock: In your excellent paper you are lamenting that Dūwāihī has been neglected for such a long time, in the recent attempt for reforms in the Maronite Church has he been an influence?

Khalifé: Yes, but not all Dūwāihī did intend, because now we are – not latinized – but westernised, in the sense of in a non-Orthodox way.

Jacob Mathew: You said in the morning session that in the Maronite tradition, the liturgical action as a whole, i.e. from the beginning to the end of the *roso*, is seen as one unit and all its parts are integral and equally important. How can you then speak of the concept of transubstantiation at a particular moment?

Khalifé: Dūwāihī is not speaking about transubstantiation in a moment. All the anaphora is offered to the Holy Trinity and the three persons of the Holy Trinity work and conse-

crate the mysteries. When we repeat the words of our Lord, then the Holy Spirit and our Saviour Christ consecrate together the mysteries. This is new with Dūwāihī, because when there was this controversial question between Latin and Byzantine, he had a position between the two, it is a Syriac position. And also concerning the Filioque, for Dūwāihī filioque is not a Syriac question.

Bonny: The Maronite Church was in full communion with Rome since the 13th century (remark: *the other participants do not agree with this date, they say it is a difficult question*). Did the Latin Church asked you for some changes before the Council of Trent, or before the Council of Florence?

Khalifé: No, it is in the Council of Lateran (1215). Patriarch Jeremias Al-Amshitti was present in this synod and from this time some latinizing reforms were done, not very strong, but the latinizing process started from this time. But in the synod of 1582 it was very official, we have a text for all the sacraments, for each sacrament we have two texts (in a Latin theology).

Bonny: In the Council of Florence they asked the patriarchs about the words of institution in the anaphora. Did you have this already before the Council of Florence?

Khalifé: Yes, we had it from the origin. We had first about hundred anaphoras, then nine and now six.

Sako: I have two questions: first, who is consecrating the Myron, the bishop or the patriarch?

Khalifé: The patriarch.

Sako: Then it should be the same in our Church in which today the bishop is doing that. Second, in chapter 3.1. it is said that the title of “The lamp of the sanctuary” was changed. May we know why? Is that because of the same title of the book of Bar Hebraeus?

Khalifé: No, it is not the original title. He speaks of the “Ten lamps” because the book is divided into ten parts, and each part has the title of “manārat”. Bar Hebraeus was a theologian, but here we only have the explanation of the Maronite mass.

Hofrichter: In the Syrian Orthodox liturgy there are anaphoras – like those of Peter, of Xystus and of Mar Salibi – without the words of institution having the account of institution, but without the very words, do you have some as well?

Khalifé: Yes, this is called “sharrar”, but the use of this anaphora is not allowed.

Winkler: You said that the latinization started at the Lateran Council. Is there any evidence of how it was before? Was there some sort of theology of the raze? Was it nearer to the western tradition or to the Syrian Orthodox or is there a special Maronite tradition?

Khalifé: We had the same Westsyrian tradition and the same theology, that is why I did not get into theology here, because Mar Gregorios was supposed to speak about this, and I did not want to repeat. And I said to myself that I should give something specific Maronite. Our texts and the texts of the Syrian Orthodox are the same, but not the celebration.

Vellanickal: In chapter 2.2.3. you wrote that “Dūwāihī opposed the opinion that the consecration of the mysteries happens in the epiclesis. On the contrary, he maintained that the Words of our Lord consecrate them.” So when you say the Words of our Lord, does it mean the institutional words?

Khalifé: Yes, I suppose.

Vellanickal: Then in answer to the question of Deacon Mathew you said that the consecration is limited to one moment. I have the impression that you said it is not.

Khalifé: Yes, you are right. The consecration happens when the priest utters the words of our Lord, then the Holy Spirit descends in power upon the priest.

Vellanickal: Is that restricted to the words of consecration?

Khalifé: Yes. This is the influence of the Latins. We have three anaphoras under the name of St. Peter. The third one is under the name of “sharrar”.

Chalassery: Can you explain the role of epiclesis in Maronite qurbana?

Khalifé: It is very important and very developed, but for Dūwāihī the consecration does not happen in the epiclesis. The Holy Spirit consecrates the Holy elements, but not in the epiclesis. This is the position of Patriarch Dūwāihī. Because we have two epicleses in our mass: at the beginning and at the end.

Matar: In order to understand the position of Dūwāihī, it is important to know that he never refused the Latin theology, he even adopted it. We are not opposed to this, but he tried to say: there is the equivalent to this theology in the Syriac tradition. He tried to put together things like that. Therefore he spoke about the consecration and the action of the Holy Spirit.

Khalifé: The Latin theology refused the epiclesis as consecratory, the Holy Spirit has a very important role in the consecration for Dūwāihī.

Matar: If we as Orientals say that the transubstantiation happens at the end by invocation of the Holy Spirit, you introduce a Latin way of thinking about the moment. It is not a matter of moment at the end or in the middle, the Orientals speak about a process of prayer from the beginning to the end without designating a moment. The whole canon is consecrating.

Powathil: I was struck by the similarities between the Malabar Church and the Maronite Church. The latinization started at the same time and had the same consequences. Because of that there was an open split in the Malabar Church; because of that the question how the Church should go back to its traditions is also controversial.

Khalifé: The celebrations in the Maronite Church are not so latinized. We have a Syriac text, we conserved the Maronite ancient texts for celebrations.

Powathil: Yes, but what I wanted to say is that with theology it goes the other way. So my conclusion would be, because we have the same tradition we should stand together and help each other, so that the Syriac tradition can be spread in different ways and not cling to the Latin tradition.

Hofrichter: About the Latin scholastic theory of transubstantiation of the Maronites: the priest represents Christ in speaking the words of institution and by representing Christ personally he consecrates the elements. And the Holy Spirit has nothing to do with that. There is a big difference even in the theory of the moment. It is totally different if in the Maronite theory the Holy Spirit is acting and in the Latin theory the priest is acting in the person of Christ.

Mar Bawai: How representative is the character of Dūwāihī's theology before his time and after his time on the Maronite theology?

Khalifé: Before his time the Maronites were using the texts of all Syriac Churches. From the end of the 16th century the Maronites started to adopt also Latin texts of sacrament. Dūwāihī was the reaction against this stream and in his book he demonstrated that our theology, our Syriac theology, our Syro-Maronite theology is authentic and represents the true theology of the Syriac tradition. It is the same as the Latin theology, it is expressed in the same way.

Hofrichter: I have a second question concerning the two epicleses. There are in Eastern anaphoras sometimes two epicleses, but one is concerning the faithful, the congregation; and I would like to ask: are they spoken both before and after the words of institution to the Holy elements or are they referring to the congregation?

Khalifé: In the beginning, before the consecration of the mysteries, in the beginning of the anaphora the Archdeacon proclaims the epiclesis, the Holy Qurbana is to be offered and the Holy Spirit descends upon him. This is at the beginning and at the end it is the same. But not all the anaphoras have two epicleses.

Winkler: You said that in sacramental theology there are no essential differences in the Syriac traditions. Do you mean sacramental theology in general, as we are speaking of here, or the Eucharist in particular?

Khalifé: No, it concerns the whole sacramental theology in the Syriac tradition. There is no definition of sacraments.

Winkler: You mentioned in your paper that in his comments Dūwāihī, who is in the West Syriac tradition, used the East Syriac canonist Ibn At-Tayib. This is very interesting. Do you know of any other East Syriac texts used in the Maronite Church?

Khalifé: Dūwāihī read most of the Syriac fathers; he had for example a copy of Jacob of Sarug', of St. Ephrem, of Moshe Barkepha, of Gregorius Bar Hebraeus and quotes several times out of their books.

Mar Bawai: I am sorry that I probably misled the discussion on the question of "moment." I put the word between inverted commas, knowing that the term "moment" is a theological concept that comes from the Latin West. However having said that, it is not very clear to me, what has been suggested here from the Syrian Orthodox Church along with the Chaldean and Maronite Churches and the experts. Whether in the Eastern mentality – by pointing out clear sources – did our fathers speak about the anaphora being the whole of the moment? In my understanding this is a relatively new development in liturgical theology. Going back again to the question that I would like to pose, in our tradition it would be marvellous to see that there are sources to speak about the anaphora being a "consecratory moment." But this is something that must be substantially confirmed with sources.

Matar: I think that the idea of the "moment" came after the Protestant influence in the West.

Harnoncourt: It belongs to the change of philosophy of Aristoteles, it was in the beginning of the ideas of natural sciences. It has been asked: what is "grace", what is "moment", what is "reality"? This was quite a new line of thinking. Transubstantiation is an attempt to use terms of Aristotelic philosophy and terminology to a mystery of faith. In new times we have tried to bring together faith and natural sciences.

Matar: Yes, that is true, but do the words of consecration become essential for transubstantiation only at the Council of Trent?

Harnoncourt: No. The question which words are consecrating, is not the same question as the moment of consecration. Also when it was clear that the whole anaphora is consecrating, some of the fathers meant the words of Christ are in this, maybe they did not know that there were Eucharistic prayers in use without the words of institution. From my point of view the question is always separated from the consecration, because the sense of the Eucharist is not to consecrate bread and wine, but to participate in the mystery of Christ and his resurrection from death. Consecration is the actual presence of the work of salvation and not only the consecration of bread and wine. In the theology of

baptism it is quite clear that what has to happen is to be included in the mysteries of incarnation, passion and resurrection. The role of the anamnesis was not mentioned, the words of consecration are part of the anamnesis.

Youssif: Dūwāihī shows resistance against the latinization, although he was a voice in the desert for some time. The second thing is his methodology, because he wanted to make a sort of ecclesiastical book; his theology is based on liturgical texts. A copy of Dūwāihī has been printed at the University Saint Esprit de Kaslik and is available there. It is very useful, it deserves to be more known. Because the Maronite Church has been latinized more in its outside, than in the texts. This is what I wanted to say regarding the work of Patriarch Dūwāihī. I also wanted to make another remark that might be useful for the dialogue between the liturgies. I noticed for example that under point a in the paragraph "What were the nature of those Synodical decisions" in chapter 2.2. there is a formula of the Myron given: "I mark you with the sign of the Cross and I confirm you by the Myron of salvation in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit" which has also been adopted by the Chaldeans, same thing is mentioned in chapter 3.3.: for the baptismal rite the following formula of anointing is used: "By the holy Myron of Christ our Lord, the sweet fragrance of the true faith, ..." that is used in the Syriac Church. In the paragraph on "The Eucharist" in chapter 3.4. we find an element that the Maronites have in common with the Church of the East when the Archdeacon says "how awful is the moment when the Holy Spirit descends from on high of the heaven and hovers upon ...". This is also the anaphora of Mar Theodore of the tradition of the Church of the East. So I wanted to name some elements that the three Syriac traditions have in common.

Sako: In the East Syriac tradition, there is no more or less important moment in the celebration of the Eucharist. The mass is a whole from the beginning to the end. The mass is structured upon the "Mdabranoutha" (the Economy of Salvation) I mean the life of Christ (the main steps of his earthly being until his resurrection and glorification) which should be the life of the Christian.

Jacob Mathew: For us, in the Orthodox Syriac tradition, participation of the physically visible and the physically invisible in a roso is very important. When we celebrate the Holy Qurbano, for instance, we say that all – physically visible and invisible members of the Church or the quick and the dead – take part in it. The culmination of the Holy Eucharist is in communion. Yet, we consider the participation as of great importance. The priest says at the end of the Holy Qurbano: 'may the blessing be on all those, who have participated and on all those, who desired to participate'. Thus, the participation itself becomes a blessing. In short, The Syriac tradition would like to emphasise the wholistic aspect of the Holy Qurbano, i.e., it is seen as a wholistic healing event.

Mar Bawai: Having listened to the presentations of Father Sako and Father Youssif, in regard to the epiclesis prayer, where the priest prays for the descent of the Holy Spirit, it is significant to know that the prayer does not mention: "so that this bread and wine are changed in the body and blood of Christ". I can concur here that there is no "moment" of transubstantiation. It could imply that we are looking at a dynamic where the whole block of time could be considered as the consecratory time.

Vellanickal: When speaking of transubstantiation, the Catechism of the Catholic Church says that the transubstantiation takes place through the Word of Christ and the Power of the Holy Spirit. So it is not the words of Christ in the plural, but the word of Christ in the singular. But what does it mean by the word of Christ? It refers not only to the

Institution words, but to the whole 'Word'. The word in the singular means the whole "medabranutha". We have the Holy Spirit that works throughout the life of Jesus.

Bonny: I would like to add something regarding the Latin tradition. The Roman Canon (Canon Romanum) has its very early origin in Rome, when Greek and Latin liturgical elements were brought together. We know that this Eucharistic Prayer is a rich, complex composition. It also is a very prayerful text. By prayers and gestures, the celebrant stands in the presence of God and in the communion of saints. In the Roman Canon, there is indeed no epiclesis in the strict or classical sense of the word. But it sounds too simple to conclude that, in the Latin liturgy, the priest makes bread and wine to become the Body and Blood of Christ in a quite "magical" or "sorcery" way. And although the Roman Canon was the Eucharistic Prayer generally used (after the Council of Trent nearly the only one used), there was a real variation and progress in western Eucharistic theology during the centuries. In the Middle Ages, several authors developed a rich Eucharist theology and spirituality; in the 16th century, a strong accent was put on the theology of transubstantiation; in the 19th and 20th century new movements in Eucharistic theology and devotion developed. In brief: the Latin Eucharistic tradition was not so "monolithic" as sometimes suggested.

Matar: At a certain time we tried in the Maronite Mass to translate the five Latin words into five Syriac words: "Hoc est enim corpus meum". Now we have changed that. We can say it in Syriac in two words.

Youssif: At the end of the anaphora in the Maronite tradition (sharar) they thank for the dispensation. There are two points of dispensation, expressed in different words, at the beginning and the end of the anaphora, showing that the anaphora is built on the dispensation. And another point which is interesting is that Father Vellanickal mentioned the New Catechism. We know in the tradition of the Church of the East after the proclamation of the deacon before peace, the text prays that the offering may be accepted, sanctified by the words of God and the Holy Spirit.

Third working session: Wednesday, 1st of March 2000

Chairman: Archbishop Mar Joseph Powathil

Michael J. Birnie

BAPTISM, CONFIRMATION AND EUCHARIST IN THE CHURCH OF THE EAST

1. Christ and the Evangelical Mandate

The Church of the East teaches, along with all Christendom, that the sacrament of baptism was instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ when he gave command to his disciples to "Go ... and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit..."¹ But the fathers of the church refer back to the baptism of Christ by John in the Jordan to establish a link between the Christian rite and Jesus's model of baptismal obedience. They draw a connection between Christ's prescription of baptism to his disciples, and his own personal baptism by John "to fulfill all justice."² They set forth the image of the humanity of our Lord, which he shares with us, as the "First-born"³ or "First-fruits"⁴ of creation - that is, of the "new creation" of which through him, Christians are made a part. Having been born in the human condition, a condition of mortality, though remaining obedient and without sin, Christ submitted himself to the baptism of John "that he might become the first of all."⁵ In an evening anthem during the Epiphany season the church sings, "You were baptized in [the Jordan], though you were exalted above sin, and to us you showed in your compassion the way of life's salvation, for thus you desired to free the whole race of mortals."⁶ The mortal humanity of the Son of God received in his baptism, which pre-figured his death and resurrection, an "earnest" of immortality,⁷ a pledge redeemed by his resurrection from the dead. This "earnest" is the same which all those who would come to believe in him

¹ Mt. 28:19. "O Lord God of Hosts, holy and incomprehensible, you who appointed in your holy Church spiritual stewards, the blessed Apostles, to feed your flocks in the tranquil meadows of doctrine, saying to them, Make disciples of every nation, and baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; and when you have baptized them, give them communion in the life-giving Mysteries in holy Church; and the Apostles gave this symbol, delivering it to the priests and leaders of the flock of Christ ..." *Takhsa*, ed., Joseph E. Y. de Kelaite, Assyrian Press of the Church of the East, 1928 (from the baptismal office, hereinafter *BO*), p. 185. (The reference is to the Syriac text; the translation, here and hereafter, is by M. J. Birnie.)

² Mt. 3:15.

³ "He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation... He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in everything he might be pre-eminent." Col. 1:15, 18

⁴ "But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep... But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ." 1 Cor. 15:20, 23

⁵ "So also in the spiritual birth of the united humanity of our Lord, who mystically, through holy baptism, was born to immortality that he might be the first of all..." Babai the Great, *Liber de Unione*, ed. A. Vaschalde, CSCO, 1915, p. 28. (Hereinafter *LU*.)

⁶ The "Royal Anthem" of the Evening Office for the Sixth Sunday After Epiphany, Khudra, Mar Narsai Press Trichur, South India, 1960, Vol. 1, p. 474.

⁷ "... he also was baptized and received the earnest of immortality ..." *LU*, p. 113.

would later receive through their baptism.⁸ Proleptically his humanity is said to have entered into immortal life, as does the Christian's at his baptism, and he, through his obedience in baptism, leads the way rather than merely prescribing the way, even as he later obediently accepts death and burial, and is vindicated in resurrection and glorification.⁹

2. Links With the Early Syrian Ritual Tradition

The traditional ritual aspects of initiation in the Church of the East, as well as the doctrinal teaching standing behind them, are related to the wider traditions of oriental Christianity in antiquity, including those of Roman Syria. The common understanding of the rite's two parts, that is, of the anointing with oil and baptism in water, is early set forth by Theophilus of Antioch (c. A.D. 180), who speaks of the "anointing" of Christians when they enter the new life: "First ... that which is anointed is sweet and serviceable, and far from contemptible ... Wherefore we are called Christians on this account, because we are anointed with the oil of God."¹⁰ And in his chapter on the creation he compares the emergence of animal life from "the waters" to Christian rebirth through baptism: "Moreover, the things proceeding from the waters were blessed by God, that this also might be a sign of men's being destined to receive repentance and remission of sins through the water of regeneration - as many as come to the truth and are born again..."¹¹

The *Clementine Homilies* (c. 200 [?]) set forth the received ritual sequence of anointing and baptism, placing the instruction concerning them in the mouth of St. Peter: "But every one of you shall be baptized in ever flowing waters, the name of the Triune Beatitude being invoked over him; he being first anointed with oil sanctified by prayer, that so at length, being consecrated by these things, he may attain a perception¹² of holy things."¹³ The resultant benefits for the baptized in this two-fold process are that he is "stripped of his former evils" that "he may, for the future ... become heir of heavenly blessings...."¹⁴

This sequence is again set forth by St. Ephraim (c. 350): first, anointing with oil, which he calls the "seal," then baptism in water. Speaking of the "prize," of Christ's "twofold victory," i.e., the "prize" of the newly baptized, he says, "He engendered it of

the chrism, and he gave it birth of the water."¹⁵ Ephraim associates pardon and the "cast[ing] off [of] sin" with the anointing, and sanctification and "cloth[ing] with glory" with the baptism.¹⁶

The *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles* (c. 380) introduces what appears to be an innovation, another anointing with "ointment" (μύρον) following the Baptism.¹⁷ As for the anointing prior to baptism, the writer of the *Constitutions* describes its effect as being the "remission of sins."¹⁸ But speaking of the words the priest repeats over the candidate at the second anointing, this time with μύρον the writer says, "[F]or unless there be such a recital made by a pious priest over every one of these, the candidate for baptism does only descend into the water as do the Jews, and he only puts off the filth of the body, not the filth of the soul."¹⁹ This signation with μύρον was considered by the writer to give the baptized "participation" in "the Holy Spirit;"²⁰ the baptism in water symbolized the "death of Christ;" the ointment was the "seal of the covenants."

This practice of a post-baptismal anointing eventually became a feature of the baptismal liturgy of the Church of the East, though olive oil was prescribed, not μύρον. However, since post-baptismal anointing as confirmation (or "sealing") was unknown to Narsai²¹ in the late 5th century Persian Church, though it is often spoken of by Severus, bishop of Antioch (512-519), it may be that the widely-traveled Catholicos, 'Isho'yahb III, who brought about reform of the baptismal office in the church in the 7th century, drew upon his knowledge of West Syrian and Byzantine rites when he incorporated this feature into his *Takhsa*.

The available evidence, though, indicates that throughout the Syriac-speaking world, at least up to the fifth century, and in the Church of the East until the sixth century, baptism consisted of three principle parts: unction, baptism, and communion, in that order. Aside from the *Apostolic Constitutions*, there is no trace whatsoever of a post-baptismal unction, and confirmation (the "completion," or "sealing") was held to precede baptism. The anointing itself consisted of two parts: the signing of the head, forehead, or breast; and the anointing of the whole body. The gift of the Holy Spirit was believed to be imparted through the prior unction, and there was no post-baptismal anointing or important act other than the communing of the baptized.

3. The Developed Tradition in the Church of the East

The final form of baptism and confirmation in the Church of the East was ordered in the 7th century by the Catholicos-Patriarch, 'Isho'yahb III (652-661). The pre-baptismal anointing of the head, followed by an anointing of the full body, is ordained, but its meaning has undergone a transformation. No longer does it convey to the baptismal candi-

⁸ "The holy Oil of Anointing, which, according to tradition, is kept in the Church in all regions, is powerfully and typically a Mystery of the putting on of the 'adoption of sons' and of incorruptibility, and the promise of the anointing of the Holy Spirit, which those who are deemed worthy of holy Baptism receive in a hidden way, and by which they are begotten divinely to immortality."—*Synodos Orientale*, ed., J.-B. Chabot, from 'Isho'yahb's "Letter to Yaqob", p. 186.

⁹ In addition to the prophetic type of death and resurrection which Jesus's baptism showed forth, the fathers also taught that his baptism sanctified the waters: "It was not that his purity and sincerity had need of baptism in water, but that he might sanctify the water for us, filthy and defiled with sin, by his own holy baptism, that by the hidden power and armor of the Spirit which are put on in [the water], those who in faith are baptized in it may conquer Satan our Enemy." *BO*, p. 123. See also St. Ephraim, *Hymns for the Feast of the Epiphany*, XI, 7.

¹⁰ "Theophilus to Autolycus," i, 12, tr. Marcus Dods, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Eerdmans Press, Grand Rapids, Mich. 1956, Vol. II, p. 92. Cf. Babai's "By this anointing... we are also called 'anointed ones'." *LU*, p. 136.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, ii, 16, p. 101.

¹² A translator's note indicates that the word "perception" may be rendered "participation" in holy things, i.e., in the holy Mysteries.

¹³ "Recognitions of Clement," iii, 67, tr. Thomas Smith, *Ibid.*, Vol. VIII, p. 132.

¹⁴ *In loc cit.*

¹⁵ "Hymns for the Feast of the Epiphany," iii, 1, tr. A. Edward Johnston, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Eerdmans Publishing, Grand Rapids, 1969, Vol. XIII, p. 269. This order of unction followed by baptism is repeated in iii, 17, and viii, 22.

¹⁶ "The baptized when they come up are sanctified; the sealed when they go down are pardoned. They who come up have put on glory; they who go down have cast off sin."—*Ibid.*, vi, 9, pp. 273-274.

¹⁷ "Constitutions of the Holy Apostles," iii, 16, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. VII, p. 431.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, vii, 42, p. 476.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, vii, 44, p. 477.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, vii, 22.

²¹ In the post-baptismal sequence given by Narsai the newly-baptized was given the Kiss of Peace, clothed, and communicated. The Spirit was imparted at the pre-baptismal anointing with oil. (*Liturgical Homilies of Narsai*, 21, 22, ed. R. H. Connolly, 1909).

date confirmation, but “the knowledge of the Trinity is fixed in his heart, which is imparted from above.”²² Another explanation, given earlier in the text, states that by this anointing “we put on Christ,²³ whose honor is worshipped through the anointing with holy oil with which the candidate for baptism is anointed.”²⁴ Confirmation, or “completion”, is removed to a post-baptismal anointing, aligning the Persian practice with that of the Church in the West.

Finally, though the post-baptismal communion was ordered by 'Isho'yahb III, and was still in use as late as the time of 'Elias III (1176-1190), it has since disappeared from the ritual practice of the Church of the East. The politically and ecclesially isolated and embattled situation of the Church of the East hindered, and eventually precluded, the possibility of open adult conversions, meaning that the baptism of infants or young children became the only practice.

4. The Effects of Baptism/Confirmation

In setting forth the conditions which baptism is intended to address, primary among them, according to the fathers of the Church of the East are man's mortality and sinfulness, which are interrelated, the latter being exacerbated by the weakness inherent in the former and the fear engendered by it.²⁵ Thus the “putting-on of immortality” by Christ's humanity in the waters of the Jordan [see above] was the forerunner of Christian baptism. His coming was for “the salvation of our nature; and the clay which was wasting away, which was fashioned by [his] holy hands according to the will of [his] Godhead, he renewed, restoring its mortality to life.”²⁶ We have all sinned because of a “tendency” rooted in, and exacerbated by, the weakness of our mortality.²⁷ We are all under the dominion of Satan and his hosts until such time as God sets us free from his power and authority through Christ, by way of baptism.

The sacrament of baptism, then, effects the onset of a new creation, the renewal of the person who, according to the words of our Lord, is in need of such renewal in order to enter the kingdom of God.²⁸ This new creation is begun in response to faith and is culminated in baptism through the operation of the Holy Spirit, whose power is the effective agent of that renewal.²⁹ In baptism the Church teaches that one is freed from sin³⁰ and reborn³¹ as a son of God through adoption, and made into Christ's likeness;³²

²² *BO*, p. 145-146.

²³ Lit., “we are clothed with Christ.”

²⁴ *BO*, p. 116.

²⁵ “But your grace, upholding all, did not leave us subject to the fall, that we should be consumed by the fear of mortality in the valleys of the shadows of death.” *BO*, pp. 111-112.

²⁶ *BO*, p. 112.

²⁷ “As a result of this tendency then, and the freedom of will which he gave to us and to intelligent and spiritual natures, there multiplied in us men much error, an intensifying of offenses, numberless sins and impieties, frequent defilements, alienation from God, obedience to demons, the service of idols, and a multitude of injustices and corruptions of all sorts.” *SO*, “Letter of Mar Giwargis to Mina,” p. 231.

²⁸ Jn. 3:5.

²⁹ Jn. 3:6, 8.

³⁰ *BO*, p. 115: “...their bodies being unsullied by the impurity of sin, they may receive an unchanging cleansing...”; p. 120: “...pardons our sin, and raises up our fallen state...”; p. 123: “...that [the Holy Spirit] might sanctify the water for us, who are filthy and defiled with sin...”; p. 125: “...who by your Spirit, as with a sponge, have cleansed the filth of sin from our souls...”; p. 137: “...for deliverance from the pains of sin...”; p. 138: “...a circumcision which is not by hands by putting off the flesh of sins through the circumcision of Christ...”; p. 150: “...by it have been freed from the passions of their sins...”

he becomes a member of Christ,³³ is incorporated into the Church,³⁴ and made a sharer in her ministry to the world. This sacrament makes new our “worn out condition” and endows us with immortality through “water and the renewing Spirit,”³⁵ for it signifies and actually brings about the rebirth, without which no one can enter the kingdom of God.

The faith of the newborn in Christ, shown in obedience to baptism, is augmented by the gift of the Holy Spirit, whose continuing presence and activity strengthen the new Christian against the lure of the corrupting influences of the world and of the Evil One.³⁶ Though in the baptismal liturgy we find no specific verbal renunciation of the Devil and his works by the candidate for baptism himself or his sponsors, a deacon urges him to renounce “Satan and all his works” and to “put off in absolving baptism the old man who is corrupted with the lusts of error,” and “put on in the laver of holy water the new man who is created by God in righteousness and true holiness.”³⁷

Thus the effects of baptism are rebirth, the forgiveness of sins, incorporation into the Church, the earnest of immortality, the ongoing activity of the Holy Spirit which strengthens the baptized to live uprightly before God, and the promise of resurrection and eternal life.

5. The Structure of the Baptismal/Confirmation Rite

There are three distinct sections of the baptismal rite, each containing an anointing with oil, and each representing a step in the movement from the “old man”, who is from Adam, to the “new man”, born into Christ and participating fully in his life through the Church.

5.1. The Pre-Baptismal Anointing

The first section, modeled on the eucharistic liturgy's mass of the catechumens, contains a pre-baptismal anointing. Its principle part is a LAYING-ON OF HANDS and SIGNATION with Holy Oil. This first signation takes place at the beginning of the rite, following the usual opening anthem and a Psalm. It consists of a “laying-on of hands”, a

³¹ *BO*, p.112: “...the womb of baptism which he fashioned for us, that by it we may be born again...”; p.132: “...those who in repentance are brought near to the true faith are born of God...”

³² *BO*, p.137: “...which is given for the perfection of the adoption of the sons of your Lordship...”; p.143: “...for a type of the adoption of sons ...”; p.149: “...that we might gain the perfection of the adoption of sons ...”; p. 120: “...by absolving baptism they will be made members and likenesses of him who is the head of the Church and the First-born from the dead.”

³³ *BO*, p.115: “... receive an unchanging cleansing and be made members of Christ...”; p. 120: “...by absolving baptism they will be made members and likenesses of him who is the head of the Church and the First-born from the dead...”; p.150: “... have become pure members in the body of Christ...”

³⁴ *BO*, p.111: “... receive these men within your Church...”; p.148: “Write their names with the Church of the first-born in heaven...”

³⁵ *BO*, p.141: “For the Holy Spirit, who is from the glorious Being of your Trinity, through visible water makes new as he wills the worn out condition of our fashioning...”; p. 143: “O believers, put on incorruptibility through water and the renewing Spirit...” (*Cf.* Titus 3:5)

³⁶ *BO*, pp.120-121: “Let us therefore also supplicate with them, and beseech God, the Compassionate One, that he might make them worthy of the incorruptible fashioning which Christ revealed, who is the First-fruits of the resurrection to life, sending to them the gift of the Spirit, who strengthens the weakness of their nature ...”; p. 123: “... that by the hidden power and armor of the Spirit which are put on in [the water], those who in faith are baptized in it may conquer Satan our Enemy.”

³⁷ *BO*, pp.123-124.

signing in the air above the head of the candidate for baptism, and a signing of the candidate's forehead with the oil of anointing. An accompanying explanation indicates that by this signing "we strip off the old man."³⁸ This signation and unction is sometimes done separately in cases where it is expected, for whatever reason, that the baptism itself may be delayed for a period of time. Used in this way it is reminiscent of some primitive preparations for the catechuminate. This signing is followed by prayers, an anthem, psalms, and litanies which both explain the meaning of the sacrament and bid certain prayers. Then the normal ritual of the liturgy of the catechumens resumes, with a reading from St. Paul,³⁹ the Gospel,⁴⁰ a litany, the prayer "of the imposition of hands" and the dismissal of the catechumens, *etc.*

5.2. The Baptismal Anointing

The second section contains the baptism itself. Its principle parts are an EPIKLESIS upon a supply of unconsecrated oil, set apart in a basin for the anointing of the full body, a SIGNATION of the unconsecrated oil with previously consecrated Holy Oil,⁴¹ an EPIKLESIS upon the water and its SIGNING with Holy Oil, an ANOINTING of the baptismal candidate, and the BAPTISM.

While an anthem is sung the priest readies a supply of unconsecrated olive oil for anointing the body of the candidate for baptism; then the Nicene Creed is recited, after which the priest prays for worthiness "to be a mediator of this ministry, that it may receive the fullness of [God's] gift."⁴² He then invokes the Holy Spirit upon the unconsecrated oil, that "he may be mingled with this oil and may give to all those who are anointed with it the earnest of the resurrection from the dead, which is given for the perfection of the adoption of the sons ... for deliverance from the pains of sin, and for the delight of the heavenly resting-place."⁴³ The priest prays for the oil "that it might give to all who are anointed with it ... complete and true holiness, and a portion and exalted fellowship in the kingdom of heaven, through absolving baptism,"⁴⁴ thus indicating that these effects are brought about, not by the oil itself, but through the anointing *and* the baptism which is to follow. He then signs the previously unconsecrated oil with the Oil of Anointing "that it may be for a type of incorruptibility in absolving baptism."⁴⁵

When the basin of oil to be used in anointing the body of the baptismal candidate has been thus consecrated, they proceed to the consecration of the waters in the font. The Holy Spirit is invoked upon the waters, he who "through visible water makes new as he wills the worn out condition of our fashioning, placing in us by his grace an earnest of incorruptibility..."⁴⁶ The water is signed with the Holy Oil, and the priest proclaims,

"The Holy Thing is meet and right unto one divine nature."⁴⁷ Then the priest proceeds to anoint the candidate on the breast with the sign of the cross, which indicates that "the knowledge of the Trinity is fixed in his heart, which is imparted from above."⁴⁸ The deacons then anoint the entire body of the (infant) candidate⁴⁹ in preparation for his baptism, then hand him to the priest who immerses him fully three times in the name of the Holy Trinity.

5.3. The Post-Baptismal Anointing

The third section of the baptism is the post-baptismal anointing, corresponding to confirmation. Its principle parts are a "COMPLETION" with the laying-on of hands and a signation with oil, and the CROWNING.

After clothing the newly-baptized they take him out to the priest, who has gone out himself to stand before the door of the altar. They bring him near and the priest offers a prayer of praise for the gift of baptism. They sing a canticle and the priest prays for acceptance of the newly-baptized. Then he offers the prayer of the laying-on of hands and signs him with Holy Oil, asking that "this sign, by which you are sealed, may be for you unto the benefits which are to come, and which do not pass away, at the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ."⁵⁰ He then declares that the new-born in Christ is "baptized and completed, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit for ever."⁵¹ A reason earlier given for this third signing is that by it "we ascend from the lowliness of earth to the height of heaven through absolving baptism."⁵² This is followed by the "crowning," a sign of the victory over sin and death and a visible token of standing in the Church of Christ.

6. Conclusion

There are three observations that I would make in conclusion regarding baptism/confirmation and our common search for ecumenical understanding and unity:

1. Baptism, as it is administered in the Church of the East, follows a structural form which is deeply rooted in the traditions of the churches of the Syriac world. In fact, where the tradition had gone through a stage of development among the West Syrians and others - that is, in removing confirmation to its post-baptismal setting - a conscious effort was made to bring the Church of the East into conformity with its western neighbors. In so doing there was implicit recognition of the need for agreement in this most

³⁸ *BO*, p. 116. Separate prayers are said for men, women, and infants.

³⁹ I Corinthians 10:1-13.

⁴⁰ John 2:23-3:8.

⁴¹ The Holy Oil is provided by the bishop, and is never used for any purpose other than baptism/confirmation.

⁴² *BO*, p. 136.

⁴³ *BO*, p. 137.

⁴⁴ *BO*, p. 139.

⁴⁵ *In loc. cit.*

⁴⁶ *BO*, p. 141. The prayer continues, "who also descended upon our Savior and remained on him, when he fashioned the type and image of this holy baptism," drawing together again Christian baptism and our Lord's baptism, treating the latter as "first" and "forerunner" of the Church's baptism.

⁴⁷ Again, the baptismal office is modeled on the eucharistic liturgy, modifying "the Holy Thing is perfectly meet for the holy." The meaning here is that the waters are ready for the baptismal candidate to be united therein with the divine nature.

⁴⁸ *BO*, p. 144-145.

⁴⁹ There is some confusion here, in that the rubric specifies that they "anoint the whole body of one who has been anointed by the priest, discreetly and in an orderly fashion (except for a mature woman or a mature man.)" Parentheses in the text of Takhsa usually indicate a variant reading which has been included by the editor. This variant and its inclusion may indicate reticence toward anointing an adult's full body. However, at the end of the office there is an elaborate set of instructions on the anointing of adult women, providing for a deaconess in such a case, who anoints fully the candidate and performs the baptism out of sight, while the priest fulfills his role verbally. See *BO*, p. 157-158. Today the office of deaconess has become obsolete.

⁵⁰ *BO*, p. 150.

⁵¹ *BO*, p. 151.

⁵² *BO*, p. 116.

basic of liturgical rituals. Thus the sacrament of baptism, having served in the past as a basic element of ecclesial agreement, may serve in the future as a basis for ecclesiological convergence.

2. The teaching of the Church of the East fathers on the meaning of baptism is consistent with that of the fathers of the Syriac tradition elsewhere and with the fathers of the West. It stresses the same themes and envisages the same results. Thus Baptism may be viewed as a basis for sacramental convergence.

3. The rite of baptism is a common area of convergence among the Catholic and Orthodox churches, as well as the churches of the Reformation. It is a ritual insisted upon by all churches of apostolic origin, and by virtually all churches of non-apostolic origin. Though churches of the Reformation differ significantly from Catholic and Orthodox understanding about the nature of sacraments, there is a great deal of convergence about what the rite signifies, even if it is accorded only symbolic significance. Thus it represents an extremely important element in ecumenical dialogue which seeks the promotion of Christian unity. The common rootedness of the apostolic churches in the patristic understanding and application of the biblical tradition should make that task an undertaking worth pursuing. May we have the humility and charity necessary for its completion.

Discussions

Harnoncourt: I have two questions regarding the rite of baptism. In your text you mentioned the vestment. Is it a special vestment for the newly baptised?

Birnie: In antiquity adults put on new clothing following their baptism. In the present day the newly baptized may also be clothed with garments subsequent to baptism.

Harnoncourt: Is the vestment a meaningful rite, of the sort that you are “dressed with Christ”? Is it the part of a significant ritual?

Birnie: It was so in antiquity, but I believe it has lost its significance.

Harnoncourt: Is there any rite with candles or lights?

Mar Bawai: No, not according to my knowledge. We have no significance for light in our baptism.

Matar: You mentioned in your title: baptism, confirmation and Eucharist. What about Eucharist in the texts? What is your tradition?

Birnie: The Eucharist, as I said, was a feature of the rite as late as the fifth century, but after that time there were fewer adult conversions.

Mar Bawai: No, but it begins when the child is able physically to receive, except in India where they give the Eucharist to the babies, as well.

Harnoncourt: But it seems to me that this first communion separated from the baptism of children comes from Western influence. - What is the crowning? Is it only said or do you have a real crown on the head?

Birnie: In the Church of the East we do not have actual crowns, but ribbons of different color which are types of crowns. In subsequent rites, particularly that of matrimony, the same ribbons are incorporated in the ceremony. The colors are red and white.

Vellanickal: In your paper you wrote “This sequence is again set forth by St. Ephrem: first, anointing with oil, which he calls the seal, then baptism in water.” The pre-baptismal anointing of the head in our tradition was called “rushma” (the sign) and the pre-baptismal anointing of the body was called “mesihutha” (anointing), and the post-baptis-

mal anointing was known as “hatma” (seal). The pre-baptismal anointing as a ‘seal’ is of later understanding.

Birnie: The second sealing, following the pre-baptismal sealing and baptism, was not introduced in the Church of the East tradition until the time of Ishuyaw III.

Sako: “Rushma” is another word to say baptism in the Syriac tradition. About the use of the habit: in the act of Thomas (3rd century) it is not mentioned, it appeared later and according to the Syriac Fathers it symbolizes the hope of being in paradise and is not a sign of purity. And for the baptism of the children there is no forgiveness of the sins but it is a configuration in Christ.

Birnie: This is a very significant difference with the Western tradition. In the baptism of infants we put no emphasis upon the forgiveness of sins, but rather to the rebirth of the baptized, and his or her incorporation into the body of Christ, along with other benefits.

Mar Bawai: I think it is a key element for the Church of the East to keep in mind the distinction between sin and mortality. Here we see how the concept of Theodore continues. All are mortal, but not all are sinful.

Konat: About the signation of non-consecrated oil with consecrated oil, this is a ritual which we do not have in our tradition. Does it have a special signification or is it only to solve the problem of the availability of consecrated oil?

Birnie: A large amount of oil is required in order to perform the anointing, and therefore the amount of Holy Oil you may have on hand that has been consecrated by the bishop is hardly enough for this purpose. For this reason non-consecrated oil of sufficient quantity is consecrated with the Holy Oil.

Harnoncourt: There was a principle in the Western Church in the case of necessity: “consecrare per consecratum”. You could add consecrated wine to non-consecrated wine and all was consecrated.

Birnie: Yes, that is the same we have.

Konat: We also do that with the oil when consecrated oil is not available.

Mar Aprem: There are also consecrations without oil, if it is with oil the bishop does it.

Khalifé: There are similarities with the Maronite tradition too.

Brock: The usage concerning the oil has a very complicated history. In the earliest texts, such as in the Acts of St. Thomas, you have a prior consecration for the oil, at least in one of the accounts. This is a feature that has been preserved in the Church of the East. And in the later West Syriac tradition the Myron poured in the baptismal water has a corresponding role. Similarly, the anointing of the newly baptised has also gone through a rather complicated history. At the beginning, in the Syriac tradition there was just the pre-baptismal anointing (on the forehead) and then the baptism. The original term for this pre-baptismal anointing was “rushma” (“mark”), but subsequently this term was also sometimes used to indicate the whole rite of baptism. And then in some areas, especially those with a Greek background, the anointing of the whole body before the ritual bathing is introduced. The introduction of a post-baptismal anointing in the Syrian area is first to be found at the end of the fourth century, in the Apostolic Constitutions, and this usage gradually spread among the various Syriac Churches. Thus one ends up with a plurality of anointings, for the prebaptismal anointing(s) is/are preserved, rather than superseded.

Jacob Mathew: I see a number of similarities in your paper with our tradition. Still I think it is good to mention two differences.

You write: “Though in the baptismal liturgy we find no specific verbal renunciation of the Devil and his works by the candidate himself or his sponsors...” In the Orthodox Syriac tradition, it is an imperative thing that the candidate or the Godparent for the can-

didate verbally renounces Satan three times. Acceptance and confession of Jesus Christ is also made verbally. It is interesting to know that deacons are also allowed to do the anointment.

Youssif: I think that the present ritual was modelled for the baptism of infants, so the renunciation was technically unnecessary, but we have a usual scenery. Isho'yahb III made the present rite only for the children. After the readings follows the mass of baptism.

Mar Bawai: But do we have any known manuscripts that carry any prayers of renunciation stated by the baptized?

Youssif: We do not have such a text. The earliest text we have dates of the end of the 10th century; it corresponds almost exactly, 95%, to the present use of the Church of the East and the Chaldean Church. So we follow the most ancient manuscript tradition available for Mass and baptism.

Sako: We can easily find the original text in the homilies of Narsai especially number 17,21,22. He explained Eucharist and baptism step by step.

Mar Bawai: But these are only commentaries?

Sako: No. He usually paraphrases the text and commentary.

Mar Bawai: Today in order to restore ancient practices it is safer to go to the actual liturgical texts, although these commentaries are also liturgical.

Birnie: I would like to finish the variations about the Church of the East and the Malankara Orthodox Church. The priest does the sign, that is significant. The anointing of the body by the deacon is a secondary aspect, the priest has done it already.

Mar Bawai: In our tradition, the deacon holds the infant and the priest is who anoints.

Youssif: If there are many infants, the priest starts to do the signation and the deacon continues to anoint. And for women the priest anoints the forehead and then the deaconess does the rest.

Brock: In the Syrian Orthodox Church, according to the oldest manuscripts, one finds the same directives as those described by Father Youssif for the Chaldean tradition.

Mar Aprem: In our Church in India we occasionally have baptism of women, so we have deaconess. It is said that the priest is not allowed to touch the body of the women, except the forehead. Therefore the deaconess can anoint, but the deacon usually does not do it, because the priest does the anointing.

Harnoncourt: What is more important to have: text or commentaries? This is a question of methodology. If you have no text in a special early area, you can conclude from the commentaries to the rites. - I would also like to make a comment about the following-up of anointing and baptism. We have to take into account the cultural situation, in the antique Roman-Greek tradition there was always a connection between bathing and anointing. The bath was not completed if you did not use oil after the bath. Maybe that in Eastern traditions it is not the same.

Youssif: I just wanted to add something regarding the anointments. The anointing of the baptized is not with the Myron or some special oil. The persons are baptized before the mass and then receive the Eucharist in the mass. They first receive the spirit and then the body. The tradition is to give communion to the babies and infants immediately after mass following baptism.

Mar Bawai: For a possible liturgical renewal in the Syriac Churches, they are encouraged to conduct liturgical reforms. In the case of the Syriac Church, especially the Assyrian Church, the phenomenon is the attachment to the rite of resources. Although we live in the Middle East, in India and in the Diaspora, the underlying ecclesiology is very different. The Oriental Catholic Churches celebrate the liturgy together, but the mentality is different. I think that in the Church of the East it is very difficult for us to progress with

liturgical reforms, unlike in the Oriental Catholic Churches. I think that it is an excellent idea to look at the commentaries, not only at the text. But it is very difficult to convince conservative patriarchs, traditional bishops and clergy of the difference between essence and form.

Matar: I think that it is very good to find similarities between us and even with Western Christianity. In our tradition we have the pre-baptismal anointing and the epiclesis over the water. The water becomes a womb giving life to the child and we put the Myron into the water. Water is the symbol of humanity and oil is the symbol of divinity. In my tradition I find that there are very old traditions from the Chaldeans. We have to find some common Syriac tradition and prepare a new way to reform our sacraments.

Mar Bawai: The Oriental Catholics look at methods in a totally different way. That underlines my comment. Significant part of the Christian West is alien to the ways people of the Christian East think and act. No one from the Church of the East would have commented like Bishop Matar did and recognize the influence of the Chaldeans on their Church. We have to know these realities to successfully dialogue with the other Churches.

Hofrichter: Is it a matter of generations?

Mar Bawai: That which cannot change or develop is doomed to die. Biologically when our body stops from developing, they are clinically dead. That is what our Churches have to be aware of. Our deficiency is that when we reject Western ways of thinking and methods we would not be able to fully understand your Western questions and methodologies.

THE SACRAMENT OF INITIATION (BAPTISM) IN THE WEST SYRIAN TRADITION

The concept of the sacrament of initiation held by the West Syrian tradition is different from that of the Western Church. Even the title of this paper bears witness to this difference, because I have entitled this paper as "The Sacrament of Initiation", though I have been asked to present one on the "The Sacraments of Initiation (baptism, confirmation and Eucharist)". I consider that this change is necessary if I have to be just both to the intention of this paper as well as to the West Syrian tradition. The unction with the holy oil (myron), which is intended by the word "confirmation" in the Western tradition is never considered as a separate sacrament in the Syrian Orthodox tradition. The Eucharist, of course, is a separate sacrament, but in the context of baptism, participation in the Eucharist forms one of its integral elements. In short, the immersion, the unction with myron and the participation in the Eucharist form Parts of a single sacrament - baptism. Dr. B. Varghese explains this as follows:

"Dans l'Eglise syrienne, l'onction et l'immersion forment une seule célébration liturgique dans laquelle les deux rites partagent ensemble tous les effets du baptême. La tradition syrienne ne permet aucune réflexion théologique qui mettrait en cause l'unité des rites baptismaux. Les liturgistes qui parlent d'une "célébration simultanée du baptême et de la confirmation par les Eglises Orientales" devraient tenir compte de l'histoire du baptême syrien qui n'a jamais connu une désintégration des rites baptismaux."¹

In the strict sense it is incorrect even to speak of a post-baptismal or a pre-baptismal anointing because these unctions form part of baptism.² Yet we will use these terms because the words pre-immersional or post-immersional are not used in modern language. Leaving the details to a later stage let us begin by exploring the meaning of baptism.

1. Meaning of baptism and the terms employed

Responding to the question of his auditors, the Apostle Peter said "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Act.2:38). The Gospel of Mark says: "the one who believes and is baptized will be saved" (Mk.16:16). Undergoing the experience of being born again in water and Spirit is held as a pre-requisite to enter the Kingdom of Heaven (Jon. 3:5). Thus baptism is the first sacrament that every Christian has to receive. It gives full membership in the Church and enables him to have communion in the Eucharist. It has manifold meanings.

Two major ideas related to baptism are "adoption as children of God" (ܐܕܡܢܝܬܐ) and "rebirth in water and Spirit".³ A person is made worthy of adoption as a child because Christ became incarnate. The baptism of Christ is the source of Christian ba-

ptism. According to the West Syrian liturgy, every Christian is baptized in the river Jordan itself.⁴ Thus we have fellowship with Christ's baptism. Every Christian receives the Holy Spirit in baptism as Christ himself was anointed with the Spirit at His baptism. Through baptism the Adamic nature of man is restored. The nature of the first Adam dies and it is transformed to the nature of the second Adam - Christ. Through baptism we become a new creation. One of the terms used is ܠܕܢܝܬܐ ܕܡܢ ܒܪܝܬܐ which means "birth from the beginning" and it indicates such a total regeneration. Christ's death and resurrection are other important events related to the restoration of human nature. The death and resurrection of Christ are symbolically represented in baptism. Water of baptism is pictured as the tomb of Christ (Rom. 6:3-5).⁵

"Be included in the sheepfold of the Son", "be marked with the light of the Son's face", "be made son of the Father", "be stripped of the ancient man", "be clothed with the dress of non-corruption" etc. are some other ideas found in the text of the liturgy of baptism.

2. A brief analysis of the liturgy

There are different versions for the liturgy of baptism in the West Syrian tradition, attributed to different Fathers and more than one text is actually in use.⁶ The text currently used in the Orthodox Syrian Church in India is the one abridged by Bar Hebraeus⁷ (13th century) and here I have followed this text. For the sake of convenience I have divided it into four parts, even though no such division is found in the *ordo*.

1. Introductory office and the preparation for baptism.
2. The consecration of water and immersion.
3. Chrismation and crowning.
4. Communion in the Eucharist.

2.1. Introductory Office and preparation

The liturgy of baptism begins exactly in the same manner as any other Office in the West Syrian tradition; i.e. with a prayer of introduction, relevant quotations from the book of Psalms ܠܡܢ ܡܢܝܢ ܡܢܝܢ (*prumion* (ܠܡܢ ܡܢܝܢ), *sedro* (ܠܡܢ ܡܢܝܢ)) reading from the Epistle of Paul and the reading of the Gospel.⁸ The hymns sung between these prayers evoke the baptism of Christ.⁹

Immediately after the Gospel reading the candidate is enrolled and then exorcism is conducted. The exorcism is preceded by breathing on the candidate. In the accompanying prayer, the priest demands to prepare the candidate for the reception of the Holy Spirit and remove all forms of idol worship from his mind (ܠܡܢ ܡܢܝܢ ܡܢܝܢ).¹⁰ The celebrant then marks the forehead of the candidate with the sign of the Cross, without oil. This

¹ Varghese, B. *Les onctions baptismales dans la tradition syrienne*, CSCO Sub. 82, Louvain, 1989, p. 340

² *Ibid.*, "Introduction", p. xxxiii

³ The idea is seen in Jacob of Serugh. Brock, S., "Baptismal Themes in the writings of Jacob of Serugh", in: OCA 205, Rome 1978, p. 335.

⁴ For details see below p. 5

⁵ For other implications of the use of water see below p. 4,5.

⁶ For detailed information; see Varghese, *Onctions*, p. 283.

⁷ I have used the liturgical edition published by Konat. A, at Pampakuda, 1982 edition. (Abbreviated hereafter as "Pampakuda Text")

⁸ It should be noted that there are sometimes slight variations in this order with regard to the different liturgies.

⁹ "Pampakuda Text", p. 6-8, 10-12.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 18-20.

might have been a rite connected with the enrollment and instruction of catechumens. It is in *The History of John* that this rite appears for the first time in Syrian baptism.¹¹ As suggested in the preceding prayer, this consignation also can be considered as part of preparing the candidate for baptism and especially for receiving the Holy Spirit.

The prayers that follow - one silent and one aloud - are prayers of exorcism. The priest marks the candidate nine times with the symbol of the cross.¹²

After the exorcism, the candidate himself - or the god-parent in the case of infants - rejects Satan and affirms the faith in Christ and the faith handed down to us through the prophets, Apostles and the Fathers of the Church. The recitation of the Niceno-Constantinopolitan creed follows.

The first part ends with the pre-baptismal anointing which is associated with exorcism by certain Fathers.¹³ The olive oil used for this unction can be consecrated by any bishop of the Church and it is called as the "oil of Joy" (ܐܝܠܐ ܕܝܘܝܐ).¹⁴ This unction is the remnant of a very ancient practice of the liturgy. Already in the book *Acts of Thomas* there are clear indications of this practice and it was done by invoking the Holy Spirit.¹⁵ So from the beginning this unction was not merely associated with exorcism. There existed also an ancient (at least from the 4th century) tradition of anointing the whole body at this moment.¹⁶ Later, the anointing of the body was transferred to another stage and placed just before the immersion.¹⁷ However, the text used in India contains only one pre-baptismal anointing of the forehead alone.

In the beginning when there was no post-baptismal unction this pre-baptismal unction clearly was a symbol of the Holy Spirit. Even after the development of a post-baptismal unction the same ideas were associated with both of them and sometimes with the immersion or the ensemble of baptismal rites.¹⁸ Even today as we see in the *ordo* of the liturgy, pre-baptismal unction is not exclusively related with exorcism. It does not immediately follow the exorcism in the *ordo*. It comes after the confession of faith and the prayer says: "so and so ... marked with the oil of joy to be worthy of filial adoption ܐܝܠܐ ܕܝܘܝܐ".¹⁹ The silent prayer which immediately precedes the unction expresses the following idea. "Send the Holy Spirit on him that he may be worthy of sacramental unction (ܐܝܠܐ ܕܝܘܝܐ)".²⁰ Thus it is impossible to make clear distinctions between the unctions attributing exclusively the idea of exorcism to the pre-baptismal unction and that of Holy Spirit to the post-baptismal unction. According to B. Varghese, this is the remnant of a baptismal tradition in which the same oil was used for both unctions.²¹

¹¹ Varghese, *Onctions*, p. 286. *The History of John* is an apocryphal Syriac writing from the 4th century. *Ibid.*, p. 58.

¹² "Pampakuda Text", p. 20-30

¹³ Hippolytus of Rome is an example. Varghese, *Onctions*, p. 86f.

¹⁴ "Pampakuda Text", p. 34.

¹⁵ Varghese, *Onctions*, p. 5.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 58

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 296.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 341.

¹⁹ "Pampakuda Text", p. 34. The same word is used in one of the prayer of consecration of water. See below p. 5

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

²¹ Varghese, *Onctions*, p. 341.

2.2. The consecration of water and immersion

The use of water for baptism has its symbolic roots in the creation narrative of the book of Genesis where it is stated that the Spirit of the Lord was brooding (ܠܘܝܢ) over the water (Gen. 1:2). We get the impression that the first creation came into being from water. So, in baptism, the new creation also emerges from water. Cyril of Jerusalem for example says: "The Spirit of God was upon the water ... the beginning of the universe is water and the beginning of the Gospel is Jordan."²² The use of water in baptism is also related to the water that flowed from the pierced side of Christ.²³

The consecration of water has three main sections.

2.2.1. Exorcism

First of all the celebrant mixes hot and cold water in the baptismal font which is done by invoking the Holy Spirit. The priest prays that the water may become a spiritual womb (ܠܘܝܢ ܕܝܘܝܐ).²⁴ The baptismal font is then covered with a veil which is removed after singing a few stanzas of a hymn which evokes the theme of Christ's baptism.²⁵ Following the initial pattern the priest breaths on the water before saying the prayer of exorcism. With a silent prayer the water is exorcised by marking the sign of the cross three times. The prayer that follows²⁶ assumes that the baptismal water becomes the water of Jordan. This notion is dear to Syrian Fathers like Jacob of Serugh for whom the baptismal water is made identical with the Jordan water by the coming of the Holy Spirit, thus enabling the Christian to receive a true baptism in fire and in the Spirit.²⁷

2.2.2. Epiclesis

While the deacon announces to the congregation to stand in awe and fear, the celebrant waves his hands over the water saying the silent prayer of epiclesis. Again he marks the water three times with the sign of the cross. He prays that the water may be made

"water of calmness (ܠܘܝܢ), ...water of joy and happiness. (ܠܘܝܢ ܕܝܘܝܐ), .. water which symbolizes the death and resurrection of the Son, ... which purifies the blemish of flesh and spirit, ..which loosens bondage .. Forgiveness of sins .. enlightenment ܠܘܝܢ of the body and soul ... the bath of regeneration and the gift of filial adoption".²⁸

2.2.3. Mixing of myron

In the patristic tradition, Dionysius the Areopagite (c. 500) seems to be the first to have spoken of an effusion of myron in the baptismal water.²⁹ The priest takes the bottle of consecrated myron (the same oil used for post-baptismal unction) and mixes it with

²² p. G, vol. 33, 432.

²³ The idea is dear to Jacob of Serugh. Brock, "Baptismal Themes", p. 329-330

²⁴ "Pampakuda Text", p.34.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.36-9.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.42.

²⁷ Brock, "Baptismal Themes", p.334.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.46

²⁹ Varghese, *Onctions*, p.293.

the water in the baptismal font. It should be noted that there is no special invocation of the Holy Spirit in the rite. The priest prays that the ancient man (ܐܕܡ ܥܕܢܐ) may be renewed (ܬܚܝܬ). The section ends with the final prayer of consecration which is done by the fluttering of the hand in the same fashion as in the Eucharist. Once consecrated the nature of the water is changed; all the graces of baptism are bestowed on it including that of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit confers His energy to the baptismal water. It is purified from all evil influences and acquires the power of sanctification. This is not merely an agent but it becomes united with the Holy Spirit. It becomes the water of Jordan and thus by being baptized in this water every Christian gets fellowship with Christ and specifically with His baptism.

The immersion of the candidate is done with his face turned towards the east. The priest places his right hand on the candidate's head and with his left hand pours water on the candidate's head from the four sides saying: "So and so is being baptized ܕܢܚܝܬ in the hope (ܐܡܝܢ) of life and forgiveness of sins in the name of the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit." The candidate is then entrusted to the god-parent. The idea in the hymn for the occasion makes it clear that it is to the Church that the candidate is actually entrusted. The Church welcomes the candidate saying ܬܚܝܬ ܕܥܡܝܢ.³⁰

2.3. Post-baptismal unction (Chrismation) and Crowning

The *Apostolic Constitutions*³¹ speaks of chrismation as a familiar rite of baptism. We are not sure about the reasons for its introduction. The writing speaks of olive oil being used for pre-baptismal anointing and myron used for post-baptismal anointing.³² But post-baptismal unction was not practiced every where in the Syrian Church during this period. The two practices co-existed for a long time.³³ The use of two different oils for post and pre-baptismal anointing became generalized in the West Syrian Church at a later stage. Jacob of Edessa (7th century) and George of Arabs (8th century) knew only one oil.³⁴ It is Dionysius the Areopagite who gives for the first time the details of the consecration of myron. He speaks of its consecration as one of the six sacraments.³⁵ According to the present practice prevalent in the West Syrian tradition, myron is consecrated only by the head of a Church.

The order of baptismal rites seen in the writings of Dionysius is essentially the same as that found in the Syrian baptismal liturgies of the 5th and 6th centuries. The post-baptismal unction comes immediately after the immersion.³⁶ This unction confers the Holy Spirit according to Dionysius.³⁷ Through this chrismation the candidate enters into communion with the Holy Spirit. It has to be noted that Dionysius considers the post-baptismal unction as an integral part of baptism while the consecration of myron is considered as a separate sacrament. Post-baptismal unction is the perfection of baptism. The Syrian Fathers who were fond of typological interpretation find the images of this

rite in the Old Testament incidents like the anointing of the stone by Jacob at Bethel (Gen. 28:18-19), the anointing of priests, kings and prophets, the oil with which prophet Elijah protected a widow from famine (I kgs. 17:7-16) etc. This oil is sometimes seen as a symbol of Christ also. But the prominent idea is the gift of Holy Spirit and the perfection of baptism.

Once again I would underline that the ideas related to the post-baptismal unction cannot be seen as fully separate from those of other rites. The central notion found in this unction can be seen also in the pre-baptismal unction and the benediction of water. In the prayer which precedes chrismation, the myron is pictured as the symbol of protection against all adverse forces (ܐܡܝܢ ܕܥܡܝܢ).³⁸ In the prayer of anointing it is said "so and so be marked (ܕܢܚܝܬ) by holy myron, the sweet odor of Christ and the sign ܐܡܝܢ ܕܥܡܝܢ of true faith and the perfection of the gift ܐܡܝܢ ܕܥܡܝܢ of the Holy Spirit". In the hymn sung while the priest anoints the body, the following ideas are seen. "By this washing (ܐܡܝܢ) of grace let you be seen as light in the world. Acquire strength from above through the Holy Spirit. Reject the old man, corrupted by the pleasures of error. Understand that you approach fast to the future new life that is promised to the believers. May you be worthy to reign with Christ."³⁹

It is quite clear that the major ideas of baptism are all found here associated with chrismation. The gift of the Holy Spirit is related to chrismation as much as to the consecration of water. The epiclesis on the water is specifically for the gift of the Spirit on the water. The exorcism is not done without the intervention of the Spirit. It is in the name of the Holy Trinity that evil spirits are cast out. The pre-baptismal unction also contains the idea of the gift of the Spirit. Thus the exact moment of the intervention of the Holy Spirit on the candidate cannot be specified. It is the whole sacrament of baptism that confers the Holy Spirit.

The candidate is crowned after the unction of the whole body. The prayer for the occasion is as follows. "Oh Lord God! crown your servant with excellence and glory ܐܡܝܢ ܕܥܡܝܢ. Let his life be pleasing to your Lordship and the glory of your holy name". In the hymn that follows it is described that the crown shows the glory of the house of Adam. It shows the heavenly blessing which the candidate receives and he is instructed to guard it from being stolen by the evil one.⁴⁰

2.4. Communion in the Eucharist

The participation in the Eucharist is another integral part of baptism. The candidate is made to participate in the Eucharist immediately after the crowning. Once the person is baptized, he receives the Holy Spirit and adoption as a child of God. He becomes a full member of the body of Christ - the Church - and it is made perfect by the participation in the Eucharist. We do not delay this any further. Eucharist of course is another sacrament, but participation in it is an indivisible part of baptism.

3. The practice of baptism

Following the ancient tradition of the Church we also baptize infants of Christian

³⁰ „Pampakuda Text", p. 52.

³¹ *Apostolic Constitutions* is a collection of canonical and liturgical texts compiled in Syria towards the end of the 4th century. Varghese, *Oncions*, p. 105-106.

³² Varghese, *Oncions*, p. 129-130.

³³ The anonymous commentaries written in the 5th century do not mention post-baptismal unction. *Ibid.*, p. 145.

³⁴ Varghese, *Oncions*, p. 199, 207.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 150.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 151-152.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 154.

³⁸ „Pampakuda Text", p. 54.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 54-56.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 58-60.

parents. Baptism is conducted either after or before the Eucharistic celebration, but it is necessary that the candidate and the god-parent must participate in the celebration of the Eucharist. Baptism, chrismation, crowning and communion in the Eucharist take place at one stretch.

It is true that according to the prevalent practice, the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church admits members of some other Christian Churches after chrismation alone. The decision of the Episcopal Synod held in February 1977 prescribes that members of the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of the East (those Churches which confess the "in two nature Christology") can be admitted without any further liturgical rite being administered on them. Those who are willing can be admitted by making them communicate in the Eucharist, if they are ready to confess the faith of the Orthodox Church. But members of reformed Churches (e.g. Mar Thoma Church and the Church of South India) have to be admitted by administering chrismation.⁴¹ This does not mean that chrismation is a separate sacrament. This, we consider, is in accordance with the practice of the ancient Church. The baptism of certain schismatic groups were considered as not perfect in the early centuries. So, when members of those groups were admitted, they were not rebaptized, but their baptism was perfected by administering chrismation.⁴² B. Varghese even evokes the doubt that the origin of post-baptismal unction may be from this practice of admitting members of schismatic groups through an anointing.⁴³ However this does not permit us to view chrismation as a separate sacrament. It is an integral part of baptism. Neither the history of evolution of rites nor the major ideas related to these rites permit us to consider it as a separate sacrament.

4. Conclusion

The fact that the Western Church views this differently is not an obstacle from an ecumenical point of view. As I have already mentioned, we accept the baptism of the Roman Catholic Church in its totality. It is necessary to accept other traditions if unity of Churches has to be attained. Minute differences in rites and the manner of their administration should not be a hindrance to attain mutual recognition of sacraments. If each of us can mutually accept our respective traditions and rites of baptism, it would be a big leap towards unity.

Discussions

Sako: At the beginning of your paper two terms are used for the same thing. "Sima" is the abbreviation of "saïoumouth".

Brock: There is no difference in the meaning between the two terms, "simath bnaya" and "syamuth bnaya"; the latter simply reflects the form preferred by later Syriac translators to represent the Greek *Hyothesia*, "adoption".

Sako: I propose "treasure" as translation.

Hainthaler: "Hyothesia" in Greek is the same, the problem is already in the New Testament. "Adoption of children" is very well expressed. We come across Dionysius again and the emphasizing of Myron. I would like to ask the East Syriac about the meaning of Dionysius in your Church?

Mar Bawai: Not very known in the liturgical tradition.

Brock: Dionysius is known in the East Syriac monastic tradition.

Bonny: Did the fact that the Syro Malankara-Orthodox Church moved from East Syriac to West Syriac tradition brought any changes in baptism?

Konat: Everything changed, because of that big changes between the Malabar and the Malankara Orthodox Church took place.

Vellanickal: The pre-baptismal unction is related to the action of the Holy Spirit, initiating a person to a life of faith. It is the Spirit that brings a person to faith: "Unless one is drawn by the Father, he can never come to me" (Jn 6:44). Thus the pre-baptismal unction is also related to the Spirit.

Konat: The post-baptismal unction points to the perfection of the baptism and of the Holy Spirit. The pre-baptismal unction does not directly invoke the Holy Spirit, but maybe that it can come as a supplementary implication, but it is not specifically said.

Winkler: Is it possible to find some elements of the East Syriac tradition in the Malankara Orthodox rite? Was the development of the rite a gradual process or did it happen abruptly?

Konat: The change was not abrupt, it was a gradual process. There are historians who say that East Syriac tradition was still present in the 18th and 19th centuries. But I do not think that there are still East Syriac relics today.

Jacob Mathew: There are remnants in the language, but not in the practices. Until the 19th century certain practices and ideas have prevailed in our tradition. However, when the Patriarch of Antioch came in 1876, there has happened a total change. From then onwards we have put on the West Syriac tradition.

Mar Aprem: We always kept our East Syrian pronunciation of the words (e.g. "Mar" not shifted to "Mor").

Konat: There are theologians that think different about that.

Mar Aprem: But not in your Church.

Konat: No, not in the Malankara Orthodox Church, but in the Syrian Orthodox Church. And that is the point I would like to make. I do not think that all these pronunciations are Malayalam pronunciations of ancient Syriac words in the West Syriac tradition, e.g. "qurbana" is not the Malayalam version of "qurbano", but the East Syriac pronunciation.

Sako: In your paper you often use the term "initiation". Do you have in your tradition a precise distinction between the sacraments or is it Latin?

Konat: No, it is Latin. In the letter that was sent to me I was asked to prepare a paper on the sacraments of initiation, that is why I used the term.

Harmoncourt: I need clarification: we often use the terms "East Syriac tradition" and "West Syriac tradition". Is it similar to the distinction between eastern and Western in the Roman Empire? This was because of political reasons and language. What was the reason for the distinction between East and West Syriac?

Brock: It represents a genuine geographical distinction, but it also fits well with the liturgical history and with a distinctive development in the pronunciation of Syriac (in the East they retained the long "a", whereas in the West it shifted to an "o"). The differen-

⁴¹ *Decisions of the Holy Episcopal Synod: 1976-1983*, Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church: Catholicate of the East, Kottayam, 1984, p. 4.

⁴² Novatians, Photinians, Quartodecimans etc. are examples of such groups. Varghese, *Onctions*, p. 116f.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 126.

ces in pronunciation neatly correspond with the differences in the two main liturgical traditions and with their geographical location.

Harnoncourt: Yes, but you speak about common Syriac tradition. There seems to be not only two branches, but two jurisdictions.

Brock: The common elements go back to a common liturgical tradition on which both sides have drawn material and that is why, for example, in some notable cases you have material common to both the East Syriac rite and to the West Syriac Maronite rite (but absent from the Syrian Orthodox branch of the West Syriac tradition), and in some other cases elements that are common to the East Syriac and Syrian Orthodox rites, but which are not found in the Maronite rite. Thus one can speak of a common Syriac tradition which in any case is very different from the Constantinople tradition.

Harnoncourt: So the border between East and West Syriac is it similar to the Eastern border of the Roman Empire?

Brock: You cannot really draw a line. There is no political division, it is simply a geographical division where two different liturgical traditions with common roots developed in two separate ways into three different jurisdictions.

Mar Bawai: I would like to add another common element between East and West Syriac, apart the geographical and patrimonial resources that we have in common, there is also at least after the Syriac enlightenment as one may turn it, the late 19th and 20th century, with the rise of ethnic feeling and sentiments and the search of national roots, the whole question of Syriac ethnicity that manifests itself in various ecclesial and nationalistic names, as we see with the Chaldeans, with the Assyrians, with the Syrians, with the Maronites probably, at various timelines you also have an emerge element of ethnicity that all of us share.

A question that I would like to ask Father Konat: I am also very fascinated of a tradition that I myself love very much, being close to my tradition, but I know so much little of. That is why it is important for me to know: how much similarity, especially after the ecclesiastical separation of your Church and the Malankara Church and the theological tension that exists between your jurisdiction and the patriarchal jurisdiction, these separations and tensions do they influence liturgy? And given the fact that they only existed within the 20th century and within this relevant short period of time have there been some changes? That would be very interesting. And the second thing is when attempts at reforms which in my opinion are extremely limited within the Orthodox circles, if they exist, is there at least an attempt to coordinate or to consider the other Churches that are not following the line of reforms? The reason why I ask this is because in the last ten years, as the Assyrians and the Chaldeans began to initiate talks, the Chaldeans establish a liturgical committee of which Father Youssif is a member, that they always keep in their mind the elements of the Assyrians, we are reforming our liturgy and if we one day unite, at least we have to accommodate the reality of the non-reformative element of the Assyrians. How do you describe this dynamic in the context of the Indian West Syriac tradition?

Konat: In the context of the tension between us and the pro-Antiochene group which supports the Patriarch of Antioch, many theologians have started demanding a revision of the liturgy. The Patriarch's party is insisting on keeping the Syriac tradition and using more Syriac language in the liturgy, whereas Syriac language is slowly disappearing from our liturgical texts. Theologians and sometimes even our laity have started asking to set aside a liturgy which was codified centuries before and opt for a more indianized liturgy including elements which are more relevant today. The synod has already ap-

pointed a committee for revising the liturgy. But no basic change is expected in near future.

Mar Bawai: My question is as far as the indianization tendency within the autocephalous Orthodox Church in India, do you try to bring your tradition more inline with Malayalam and introducing Indian elements?

Chediath: Not everything into Malayalam, but there is a tendency to indianize the Church.

Hofrichter: I have two comments to make. First, if you blame the Latin Church for latinization you should have in mind that the Antiochians also "West-syrianised". I would like to ask: is there any idea to return to the original Indian that means East Syriac tradition?

Konat: No, we do not have any effort which goes back that line. Because we as an Orthodox Church, we prefer to consider us as an Indian Orthodox Church, and what I want to say, is that if we are an Indian Orthodox Church we have to have an Indian liturgy and not only a mere translation.

Mar Bawai: If this part of reform within the Indian Orthodox Church continues, on what basis one could then justify the participation of the Indian Orthodox Church in the Syriac Dialogue, will there be actual grounds or will it appeal to historical grounds?

Konat: Then we might not participate anymore in 100 or 200 years, that is the period of time required to bring in any basic change from the Syrian liturgical tradition. It will take that long. Now a committee has been appointed by the synod to revise the liturgy, but with the strict instruction that nothing will be changed basically.

Hofrichter: Secondly, I would like to comment about your paper. In your paper you mentioned twice that the unction was originally the unction of the whole body. You mentioned it in connection with the pre-baptismal unction ("an ancient tradition anointing the whole body at this moment") and in connection with the post-baptismal anointing ("the candidate is crowned after the unction of the whole body"). Which unction is connected to the tradition of the unction of the whole body, the pre-baptismal, the post-baptismal or both?

Konat: The unction of the whole body is carried out after the baptism, before the baptism only the unction of the forehead is carried out. In ancient times there was also a tradition to unction the whole body before baptism.

Al-Jamil: In my opinion there are certain differences in liturgical practices which I believe will not affect the unity of our Churches. The reason why I think that the diversity within our Syriac tradition does not conflict with our unity is because in the Syrian Catholic Church we continue to have two baptismal liturgies that are distinct, one belonging to Antioch and one belonging to the Greek.

Khalifé: I have a practical question: is the baptismal celebration a part of the Eucharistic celebration?

Konat: The actual situation is that the baptism is celebrated just before the Eucharistic celebration or immediately after the Eucharistic celebration. It is not incorporated into the Mass, but the candidate and the godparents should participate in the mass.

Khalifé: I ask this question because Duwaihi said that the baptism is part of the Eucharistic celebration after the lecture of the Bible.

Konat: No, it is not practiced as that in India.

Youssif: Just some comments about the question of East and West Syriac. The great centers will lead local different usage. The situation of the Syrian rite of Antioch is special, because Antioch was a Greek city and the official language was not Syriac. This

has consequences in the rite; there are Greek expressions and also in the rite of baptism there are translated Greek texts used in the liturgy. The Maronite rite is more eastern. In this rite the baptism is for example regarded as illumination. So in the scale of the different liturgies we can see the influence of Antioch; a lot is substantially the same, but it differs. In the text that I use the communion takes place before the crowning.

I think that concerning the question of the transition from pre-baptismal to post-baptismal anointing, is important the consequence that we can draw: the Church has the power to change liturgy.

Brock: It is a very complicated question. We are dealing basically with the late 4th to 7th century and the introduction of the post-baptismal anointing into the Syriac tradition. It seems basically to have been motivated by a shift in the exegetical basis given to baptism. In the New Testament you have two conceptual models: rebirth in the Gospel of John, and death and resurrection in the Epistles of Paul. The earliest Syriac tradition gives much more emphasis to John's idea of baptism, that is rebirth. And in connection with this pre-baptismal anointing is given various symbolic meanings in the texts of this early period, and many of these are still retained in the liturgical texts of the various Syriac rites even today. Once, however, a greater emphasis is given to the idea of baptism as a death and resurrection, then the whole structure of the service really needed to be adapted and so the post-baptismal anointing came to be introduced. This change is also tied up with the observation that many people make from the late 4th century onwards, that the Holy Spirit appears at Christ's baptism after He has come out of the river Jordan. Thus there were seen to be two prime reasons for introducing a post-baptismal anointing: when baptism is understood to symbolize death and resurrection instead of a rebirth, then the positive symbolic content of the pre-baptismal anointing loses much of its rationale. Accordingly, themes that were originally connected to the pre-baptismal anointing were transferred to the post-baptismal anointing, though the latter also now has attached to it the idea of "perfection" or "completion" ("shumloyo"), which was never a term used in connection with the pre-baptismal anointing. Thus most of the elements originally associated with the pre-baptismal anointing came to be transferred to the post-baptismal anointing, though this was not entirely so, for in all the liturgical texts today one still can find elements of this original emphasis given to baptism as rebirth, alongside the more predominant idea of death and resurrection. Thus, one has these two conceptual models which are connected with each other and should not be seen as rivals, but rather as enrichments within this tradition. Our Western mentality likes to look for tidy solutions, but in this case there is no very tidy solution if one tries to analyse the different constitutive parts of the baptismal rites; it is only when the rite is seen as a whole that the variety of themes within it can be properly appreciated.

Sako: I would like to say something about the question of Father Khalifé about the celebration of baptism and Eucharist. We have the case with the ordination of deacons, priests and bishops, just before the communion, the celebration of the Eucharist, they are ordained, why should the baptism not be in the same case? Why after the mass?

Konat: For ordinations we do the same thing as you said, it is performed in the middle of the mass. And for baptism it is performed before or after the mass, it is not built into the liturgy. Maybe that in the ancient tradition it has been built into the liturgy and later separated for practical reasons.

Brock: Yes, with the predominance of child baptism it became more convenient to separate baptism from the liturgy of the mass.

Harnoncourt: I have two questions. To have clear insights into liturgical rites you have to take into account space and time. What can you say about the baptismal font? Is it a baptisterium outside the place for the Eucharistic celebration or is it a kind of thing you can bring into the church? What meaning does it have? An important night to celebrate baptism is Passover. And that means also that you take part in the death and resurrection of Christ in baptism. Particularly in the Orthodox tradition the Jordan and also the day of Epiphany represent and commemorate the baptism of Christ. It emphasizes the incarnation more than the death and the resurrection, and that means baptism as rebirth. What is the main time or day to baptize in the Syriac tradition?

Konat: There is no such practical instruction. Traditionally we baptize on any day, mostly on Sunday, except the days of lent. But I do not think that this is the ancient practice. Regarding the baptismal font two traditions exist: There are churches which have a separate room for the baptismal font and there are churches where the baptismal font is built inside.

Vellanickal: There is a tradition in the Syro-Malabar Church known as "rakkuli" (night bath), which is in association with the Epiphany for commemorating the Jordan baptismal experience.

Youssif: The works of St. Ephrem write that baptism was celebrated the day of resurrection. Then the importance of baptism was more attributed to Epiphany that is the baptism of Jesus. The practice privileged it.

Chalassery: In the early tradition, the period of lent was the time for the preparation of the catechumens and the sacraments of initiation were administered on the vigil of Easter celebration.

Mar Bawai: I would like to ask the Chaldeans: do you baptize during lent?

Sako: Actually we try to celebrate baptism on Saturday, the eve of the Easter.

Mar Bawai: We baptize within 30 or 40 days after the birth of the child, as early as practically possible for the mother and the child. We have such a prayer in the liturgy. We can also baptize during lent, although before we need to issue permission.

Jacob Mathew: In the West Syriac tradition the feast of Epiphany is actually the baptism of Christ. I think it is also good to add here a small note. The present Catholicos of the Orthodox Church of India wrote in one of His publications that the practice of immersion symbolises the judgement of all the humanity during the time of Noah, the judgement by water, and the myron depicts the fire, the judgement at the Babel. Hence, after the baptism, the baptized is delivered from both these judgements as well.

SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION IN THE SYRO-MALABAR CHURCH

1. Introduction

1.1. Syro-Malabar Church

The Church was founded by St. Thomas the Apostle, who came to India in 52 A.D., and was martyred on July 3, 72 A.D. at Mylapore. The faithful of this Church are known as St. Thomas Christians.

1.2. Liturgical Patrimony of the Syro-Malabar Church

The Syro-Malabar Church shares the East Syriac (Chaldean) Tradition together with the other Churches founded by Apostle Thomas or by his disciples.

2. Subject: Sacraments of Initiation

The Sacraments of Initiation are Baptism, Chrismation or Rušma, meaning setting a mark or sign (Confirmation in western terminology), and the Eucharist. They are called the Sacraments of Initiation, because they initiate us into the life of Christ and thereby into the Trinitarian life. Through these sacraments we enter into the very life of the Church, the earthly kingdom of God.

2.1. Background

2.1.1. The Traditional Syriac Order of the Sacraments of Initiation

In the early Syriac tradition, the rites (later referred to as sacraments) of Christian Initiation consist of Anointing (Rušma), Baptism of water, and Communion of the Holy Eucharist. In this order Rušma (Confirmation) comes first. This order of the Sacraments of Initiation was confined to Syriac or Syriac-speaking Churches up to the 6th century. After that a Post-baptismal anointing was introduced in the Syriac tradition due to the Greek influence.

2.1.2. The Apostolic Authority and the Biblical Foundation of the Syriac Order of the Sacraments of Initiation

This Syriac tradition has its roots in the apostolic past and could claim apostolic authority (see Acts 10, 44-48; 9, 17-18). God sends down the Holy Spirit on men and thereby indicates that he has chosen them, and leads them to baptism. This priority of

the Spirit seems to be implied in Rom. 5, 5; Gal 3, 2-3; 4, 6; 1 Jn 5, 8 [There are three witnesses – the Spirit, the water and the blood]

2.2. Early Syriac Sources

Odes of Solomon (before 140 A.D.), *Syriac Didascalia* (3rd c.), *Acts of Thomas* (first half of the 3rd c.), and the writings of the early East Syriac Fathers: Aphrahat (+ after 345), St. Ephrem (306-373), and Narsai (399-502) are the earliest East Syriac sources which we have consulted in our study.

2.2.1. The Odes of Solomon

The *Odes of Solomon*¹ is a collection of forty-two poems, belonging to the very first documents of early Christian literature. In these poems what we notice is the expression of a joyful experience of divine sonship and the consequent appropriation of a new life made possible by the Holy Spirit. According to the Odist, from the beginning of this new life the Spirit becomes part of him. He says, "And from that (life) is the Spirit which is within me" (Ode 28, 8). The strong hope of salvation, the firm faith in Christ, the awareness of a new life which leads to immortal life, the experience of the joy of life in paradise, and participation in Trinitarian life are some of the results of the presence of the Holy Spirit in us. In short, though there is no explicit mention of the ritual ceremonies of Christian Initiation, the *Odes of Solomon* provides us with an experiential knowledge of the realities contained in the rites of Initiation.

2.2.2. The Syriac Didascalia

The *Didascalia Apostolorum* is the first extensive manual of Church-customs, liturgy, and ecclesiastical legislation. Its Syriac version² helps us to understand the mentality of the Syrians of the early period towards the sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist. At first there was an anointing of the head only, by the bishop, with an imposition of hand; then an anointing of the whole body by the minister, or by a woman where women are baptized; finally, there is the baptism itself with the pronouncing of the Trinitarian formula. The pre-baptismal anointing is compared to the anointing of the priests and kings in Israel. There the main effect is the consecration of the person as a result of the descent of the power of the Spirit of the Lord upon him (see Lev 8, 12; 1 Sam 10, 1-6; 1 Kings 1, 39). Therefore we can infer that, according to the *Syriac Didascalia*, the giving of the Spirit is the beginning of the rites of Initiation. The Spirit sanctifies the person through the act of baptism and leads him to Holy Communion.

2.2.3. The Acts of Thomas

The *Acts of Thomas* is an ancient apocryphal Acts of the Apostles, which deals with the activities of the apostle Thomas in India. There are five descriptions, in chapters 25-

¹ For the text see, J. H. Charlesworth, ed. & trans., *The Odes of Solomon*, Oxford 1973.

² A. Vööbus, ed., & trans., *The Didascalia Apostolorum in Syriac*, CSCO Vols. 401, 402, 407 & 408, SS 175, 176, 179 & 180, Louvain 1979.

27; 49; 121; 132-133 and 157-158,³ regarding the celebration of the rites of Initiation in the *Acts of Thomas*. Among the five descriptions, chapters 25-27 and 132-133 mention only one anointing, the pouring of the oil over the head before baptism. Chapters 49-50 refer to the imposition of hand before baptism, but the proper anointing itself is not mentioned here. Chapters 121 and 157-158 attest to two anointings before baptism: first, anointing of the head; then, the anointing of the whole body by the celebrant himself, or by a deacon, or by a deaconess in the case of a woman candidate for baptism. Thus we see two groups of accounts regarding the pre-baptismal anointing in the *Acts of Thomas*. The second group (chapters 121 and 157) seems to represent a later addition.⁴ Originally there was only one anointing, the anointing of the head. The anointing of the whole body was introduced at a later stage in the rites of Christian Initiation. This pre-baptismal anointing seems to be the central part of the rites of Initiation and it is a ritualization signifying entry into the messianic kingship of Christ (the Anointed), which is made known through the coming of the Spirit at this anointing. The rites of Initiation are seen as a birth into the eschatological reality. This new birth is symbolized by the baptism of water and then the bestowed Spirit leads the baptised person to the eschatological realities through the eucharist.

2.2.4. Aphrahat

Aphrahat gives a reference to the administration of the rites of Initiation in his demonstration *On the Pasch*. In relating how the annual Paschal celebration is to be observed in the Christian community, he says that "there must be fasting and prayer and the singing of psalms, and the giving of the sign (Rušma) and baptism according to its due observance; the blessings of consecration in their own time, and whatever is customarily carried out."⁵ Here, as we have seen in the early Syriac writings, the order of Christian Initiation is the same: the Anointing, Baptism of water and the Eucharist. The solemn administration of the rites of Initiation formed a part of the annual celebration of the Pasch. According to Aphrahat, Christians are anointed to be set apart from non-believers through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, who becomes the distinguishing mark in them, and this was a sign of deliverance from the wrath to come.⁶ He sees the fulfilment of the first circumcision of the OT, which was a sealing and a sign for Abraham's descendants,⁷ in the baptism of NT. As Israel enters the Promised Land through the crossing of the River Jordan, the candidate for baptism, by passing through the baptismal font, the figurative Jordan, enters the land of life and becomes the inheritor with Abraham.⁸ For him, the reception of the sacraments of Initiation is not only an emerging from the world of sin but also an entrance into true life, the life of grace in the Church of Christ. According to him, those who are separated by baptism are fittingly compared to faithful dogs. He says: "... the dog is the most faithful of all animals, keeping watch for

³ *The Acts of Thomas*, Introduction – Text – Commentary by A.F. J. Klijn, Leiden 1962.

⁴ According to Gabriele Winkler, the reason behind this development is a shift of the leitmotif centered around the Messiah to the healing aspect of the anointing. See G. Winkler, "The Original Meaning of the Prebaptismal Anointing and its Implications" In: *Worship* 52 (1978) 31.

⁵ Aphrahat, *Demonstration* XII, 13, PS I, p. 537.

⁶ See Aphrahat, *Demonstration* VI, 1, 14; PS I, p. 244, pp. 291-298.

⁷ See Aphrahat, *Demonstration* XI, 10-11, PS I, pp. 496-500.

⁸ See E. J. Duncan, *Baptism in the Demonstrations of Aphraates the Persian Sage*, in: SCA 8 (1945) 57.

its master day and night. 'So are those strenuous ones who are separated at the water': they are ready to die for their master: keep watch for Him day and night, and bark when they meditate on His law."⁹ As a faithful dog loves its master and serves him faithfully, those who are separated by baptism are called to love and serve their master, Jesus Christ, in his Church.

2.2.5. Ephrem

In Ephrem, one comes across a very profound sense of Orthodox belief. It is apparent, from the works of St. Ephrem, that the rites of Christian Initiation consist of the pre-baptismal anointing (Rušma), the consecration of the baptismal water, the baptism of immersion and Holy Communion (see HVirg 7, 8; HEpi 3, 16). According to him, the Holy Spirit, who is bestowed upon the baptismal candidate through the *Rušma*, leads him to the twin sources of his life: the waters of the Jordan hallowed and made effective by the baptism of Christ and the water flowed down from the pierced side of the crucified Christ. The anointing of the Christians is greater than the anointing of David. As Ephrem points out, in the anointing of David the Spirit dwelt in him and made him sing, whereas in the anointing of a Christian, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit move and come down to dwell in him (HEpi 3, 14). Ephrem sees baptism as the occasion of the recovery of the lost robe of glory, which Adam had lost among the trees of Paradise (HEpi 12, 1). After baptism in the water, he is led to the Holy Eucharist, and receives Holy Communion as the living bread and living fruit which delivers him from death and renders life. As the medicine of life and treasury of healing, the Eucharist restores the glorious life of the communicant. He sees in the eucharistic bread and wine the *medicine of life* which removes the curse with which Adam was bound (HVirg 31, 14). In Ephrem, we find one who recognized and experienced the realities behind the rites of Christian Initiation. He says: "Baptism that is with understanding is the conjunction of two lights, and rich are the fountains of its rays. ... And the darkness that is on the mind departs, and the soul beholds Him in beauty, the hidden Christ of glory, and grieves when *the glory* fails. Baptism without understanding is a treasure, full yet empty; since he that receives it is poor in it, for he understands not how great are its riches into which he enters and dwells. For great is the gift within it, though the man perceives not that he is exalted even as it" (HEpi 9, 9-10).¹⁰

2.2.6. Narsai

Narsai was an eminent theologian of the 5th century Church of the East. In Narsai we have a developed liturgical theology deeply rooted in the liturgical traditions of his time and profoundly imbued with the Syriac culture. Two well-known homilies which describe the rites of Christian Initiation and their meaning are ascribed to Narsai. They were first published by A. Mingana in his edition of Narsai's homilies (Mosul, 1905; his nos 21 & 22). Among them no. 21 is *On the Mysteries of the Church and on Baptism*; and

⁹ Aphrahat, *Demonstration* VII, 21, PS I, pp. 348-349. This ET is from R. H. Connolly, "Aphraates and Monasticism", in: JTS 6 (1905) 530.

¹⁰ CSCO 186, Syri 82, p. 178-179; for this ET, *Hymns for the Feast of the Epiphany*, trans., A. E. Johnston, in: NPNF, 2nd Series Vol 13, Michigan 1976, Rep. 1989, p. 279.

no. 22 is *On Baptism* itself. Both are in fact complementary discourses on Christian Initiation. Number 22 considers the first part of the rites, namely the anointing (rušma) and no 21 deals with the second part of the rite, which includes water baptism and Holy Communion. The whole structure of the rites of Initiation can be inferred from these homilies of Narsai: viz, introductory prayer, renunciation of Satan, confession of faith, kneeling down, witnessing of the sponsor, blessing of the oil, signing the forehead followed by the anointing of the whole body, consecration of the water, baptism by immersion, embrace and kiss by the priest and others, vesting of the newly baptized, anaphoral part of the Eucharist which begins with *let your minds be aloft*, the rite of consecration, the epiclesis, holy communion and the concluding prayers of praise and thanksgiving. Narsai provides us with his theological reflections on all these actions and rites of Christian Initiation, and places in evidence the Holy Spirit as the protagonist of these actions. The person is set apart from the profane and the unbelievers of the world and is joined to the body of Christ in which he shares the very life of the Trinity by the action of the Holy Spirit.

2.3. The Doctrine

2.3.1. The Notion of the Sacraments of Initiation in the East Syriac Tradition

In the East Syriac sources, the beginning of the rites of initiation is the invocation and the giving of the Holy Spirit. He gives power to the oil and the baptismal water so that they may perform in us the mystery of redemption. The Spirit is invoked at the consecration of the oil and the Spirit of holiness is conferred to the individual through the *Rušma*. The Spirit cleanses him from all sins and separates him for Christ and leads him to the baptism of water. Through baptism, a person participates in the death and resurrection of Christ. He becomes a full member of the Church and receives the body and blood of Christ. The presence of the Holy Spirit in the baptized person makes him share the very life of the Trinity. Cooperating with the Spirit, he grows in this life, especially by means of the Eucharist, and finally will realize the fullness of this life in the eschatological kingdom.

2.3.2. Post-Baptismal Anointing as a Later Addition

In the seventh century, Isho'yab III, the Patriarch of the Church of the East, undertook a revision of the order of the rites of Initiation and introduced the post-baptismal anointing accompanied by the prayers of the imposition of the hand. This post-baptismal anointing seems to be performed as the completion of baptism.

2.3.3. The Meaning of the Pre-baptismal Signings

There are three signings in the baptismal ceremonies, which demonstrate our true faith in the Holy Trinity, rendered possible by the Holy Spirit in us.¹¹ They are the signing on

¹¹ See Timothy II, *The Mystery of Baptism*, [= P. B. Kadicheeni, ed., & trans., *The Mystery of Baptism. The Text and Translation of the Chapter "On Holy Baptism" from the Causes of the Seven Mysteries of the Church of Timothy II, Nestorian Patriarch (1318-1332)*, Bangalore 1980], (section 15), p.59.

the forehead of the candidate after the imposition of hands at the beginning of the ceremony; the signing on the breast just before the baptismal immersion and the signing on the forehead at the end of the prayer of imposition of hands after the immersion. Timothy II says: "The first (signing is made with the forefinger) to make known the unity of divine nature in which we believe. The second (signing is made) with three fingers to make known the Trinity of persons (*qnome*) and their properties. The last (signing is made) with the thumb to (make known) the unity of action and operation of the nature as well as that of the person (*qnoma*)."¹² He continues, 'The first signing resembles that by which Abraham was signed who left his parents after having renounced their gods'.¹³ Similarly those who receive this sign renounce the evil one and his power by the strength of the Holy Spirit and are separated from the gentile world through their true faith in God. It shows the dedication of the baptismal candidate to the service of God through a faithful life as Abraham did (cf. Heb 11: 8-19).

The first signing, which comes in the preparatory rites, is on the forehead, by the oil of anointing (*mešha da Mšihuta*), and with the forefinger. It is made from below upwards and from right to left, while saying "N. is signed in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit for ever."¹⁴ The sign of the cross from below upwards, here, signifies that we disrobe the old human nature.¹⁵ It is made from right to left which shows that the Lord raises the baptized to his heavenly abode, and that in Christ the right reigns over the left. Besides, it leads us through the right (*yamina*) and gives us a place on the right.¹⁶ The sign from right to left is the manifestation of the divine help and power which will accompany us throughout our life,¹⁷ through the presence of the Holy Spirit. This signing is a ritual expression of the divine initiative of encounter between God and the candidate in baptism, effected by the personal mediation of the Holy Spirit.

The second signing of the baptismal rite takes place immediately before the baptismal immersion. The deacons bring the children to be anointed, stripping off their garments. The priest anoints them one by one on the breast with the three central fingers from up downwards and from right to left with the sign of the cross saying: "N. is [being] signed (*met-mšah*) in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit for ever."¹⁸ The text itself points out the meaning of this anointing by saying: "thereby showing that he imprints the knowledge of the Trinity in his heart and that it is gifted from above."¹⁹ Then the deacons anoint the entire body of the children.

¹² Timothy II, *The Mystery of Baptism*, (section 16), p.73.

¹³ Timothy II, *The Mystery of Baptism*, (section 19), p.89.

¹⁴ See Kelaita, [= *The Liturgy of the Church of the East*, Syriac Text, ed., J. Kelaita, Mosul 1928], p.116; *Order of Baptism*, [= *The Liturgy of the Holy Apostles Adai and Mari Together with the Liturgies of Mar Theodorus and Mar Nestorius and the Order of Baptism*, et: K. A. Paul & G. Mookan, Trichur 1967], p.126; Youssif, "Rito del mistero del santo battesimo" [= P. Youssif, trans., *I sacramenti nella liturgia Caldea*, dispensa in Pio, Rome 1983, 1-53], p.7-8.

¹⁵ Kelaita, 116; *Order of Baptism*, 127; Youssif, "Rito del mistero del santo battesimo", p.8.

¹⁶ We find this interpretation in Emmanuel Bar Sahhare, Vat. Syr. 182 Fol. 270v, quoted by C. Payngot, *The Cross: Its Place in the Hudra and its Sign in Baptism and Eucharist*, Udd, Pio, Rome 1971, p.98.

¹⁷ See Timothy II, *The Mystery of Baptism*, (section 16), p.79. In the Scripture, wherever there is mention of the "right hand", there is an indication of help and powerful action. For example Ps. 118, p.15-16.

¹⁸ Kelaita, p.144; *Order of Baptism*, p.156; Youssif, "Rito del mistero del santo battesimo", p.33.

¹⁹ Kelaita, p.144-145; *Order of Baptism*, p.156; Youssif, "Rito del mistero del santo battesimo", p.33.

This signing is made on the breast except in cases of the baptism of adult women, when it is made on the forehead as mentioned above.²⁰ For Bar Sahhare, the breast is the seat of the heart and the source of life.²¹ In the Scripture, the heart contains the fullness of spiritual life, which involves the whole person, with all his faculties and all his activities (see Mk 7, 14-23; Mt 6,21). The heart is the point of contact between God and man. In the opinion of Timothy II, this second signing shows the mystery of the Holy Spirit who descended from above upon the apostles and perfected them perceptibly in the upper room; and now this action of the Holy Spirit takes place secretly in baptism.²²

This sign made from above downwards signifies that we put on Christ, *the New Man*, through baptism.²³ According to Timothy II, it shows that the conferring of grace is from above, from the Father of lights, and that we earthly beings always receive this splendour whenever we are prepared for it. The heavenly power comes down from above to this world at that moment and makes us mortals mystically immortal.²⁴ The use of three fingers represents the three persons of the Trinity and their distinct properties.²⁵ The anointing of the whole body shows the deposition of the old man.²⁶

2.3.4. The Act of Baptism

The act of baptism shows the mystery of death and resurrection. By the immersion in the water death is signified; by the coming out of it, the resurrection is symbolized (Rom 6, 4-14).²⁷ The immersion represents the moment of death to sin and to 'the old man', and the ascent from the font symbolizes both the resurrection of Christ in the past, and the resurrection of the individual Christian in the future.²⁸ The act of baptism consists of a triple immersion while saying: "N. is [being] baptized (*'med*) in the name of the Father, Amen; and of the Son, Amen; and of the Holy Spirit, Amen."²⁹ At each invocation the priest immerses the candidate and raises him again. The triple immersion shows the mystery of the three days, each immersion signifying one day, in which our Lord was among the dead and rose by the power of his divinity.³⁰ As we have seen in the text the traditional formula that exists among the East Syrians is in the passive form.³¹ This baptismal formula shows the power and presence of the Trinity. While commenting on this formula, Narsai says: 'A person is baptized in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. The priest does not say 'I baptize', but 'N. is baptized'; for it is not he that baptizes, but the power that is set in the names. In their name he that is baptized is baptized (and buried) as in a tomb, and

²⁰ Kelaita p.157-158; *Order of Baptism*, p.169-170; Youssif, "Rito del mistero del santo battesimo", p.47-48.

²¹ Vat. Syr. 182 Fol. 271v, quoted by Payngot, *Cross*, p.104 and by P. Youssif, *Appunti sui sacramenti e sui riti apparentati nel rito Caldeo e Malbarese*, dispensa in Pio, Rome 1989-1990, p.27.

²² See Timothy II, *The Mystery of Baptism*, (section 16), p.71.

²³ Kelaita, p.116; *Order of Baptism*, p.127; Youssif, "Rito del mistero del santo battesimo", p.8.

²⁴ See Timothy II, *The Mystery of Baptism*, (section 16), pp.69-71.

²⁵ See Timothy II, *The Mystery of Baptism*, (section 16), p.73.

²⁶ See Youssif, *Appunti sui sacramenti*, p.27.

²⁷ See Timothy II, *The Mystery of Baptism*, (section 3), p.9.

²⁸ See S. P. Brock, *Spirituality in Syriac Tradition*, SCC 2, Kottayam 1989, p.66.

²⁹ Kelaita, p.145; *Order of Baptism*, p.157; Youssif, "Rito del mistero del santo battesimo", p.34.

³⁰ See Timothy II, *The Mystery of Baptism*, (section 17), p.85.

³¹ See Youssif, *Appunti sui sacramenti*, p.28; J. Kariapuram, *The East Syrian Baptism – A Textual Study*, UDD, PIO, Rome 1971, p.144; F. Chirayath, *Taufliturgie des Syro-Malabarischen Ritus*, Würzburg 1981, p.55.

they call and raise him up from his death'.³² Thus the death and the resurrection of Christ are truly fulfilled in the baptized person through the power of the Holy Spirit.

2.3.5. The Post-Baptismal Anointing

2.3.5.1. The Administration

The post-baptismal anointing is administered as follows. The priest takes the horn of the anointing oil and signs the forehead of the baptismal candidate, with the thumb of his right hand, from below upwards and from right to left with the holy oil, saying: "N. is baptized and completed in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit for ever."³³ This formula reveals that, this anointing is performed as the fulfillment of baptism.³⁴

It imprints on the baptized the sign of the One who owns him through baptism and it shows our high and unique calling. The text itself reveals the meaning of this third signing of baptism from below upwards as our ascension from this world to heaven.³⁵ According to Timothy II, this signing shows that in baptism we have risen out of the abode of the dead and have no longer a dwelling on earth. We are taken to heaven above, where we live with Christ (Eph 2, 6; 1 Thes 4, 16-17). For him, it represents also the perfection through the Holy Spirit as it happened in the baptism of our Lord.³⁶ The Anonymous Author also considers it as the perfection through the Holy Spirit as in the baptism of Christ.³⁷ Emmanuel Bar Sahhare says, this sign on the forehead in the form of a cross perfects the mystery of the passion of Christ and the conferring of the grace that we receive in the resurrection.³⁸

2.3.5.2. The Meaning of the Post-Baptismal Anointing

In the East Syrian baptismal liturgy, the act of immersion is followed by the post-baptismal anointing and Communion, which complete the Christian Initiation. The predominant element, that we see in the prayers and the ceremonies that follow the immersion is that they are for the complement and completion of baptism. By the rite of post-baptismal anointing, the Christian was said to be completed, 'perfected', by the gift of the Holy Spirit. In the formula of the post-baptismal anointing (*N. has been baptized and is completed in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit for ever*) there is no reference to the anointing but to 'the completion'. It is the perfect tense that is used here, because it supposes that the gift of the Holy Spirit has already been received. The bestowal of the Holy Spirit seems to be attributed to the pre-baptismal anointing, and the post-baptismal anointing seems to serve the proclamation of the completion of the union between the Holy Spirit and the baptized person. The basic and funda-

³² See Narsai, *Liturgical Homilies* [= R. H. Connolly, trans., *The Liturgical Homilies of Narsai*, TS 8, Cambridge 1909], XXI, 51.

³³ See Kelaita, p.151; *Order of Baptism*, p.163; Youssif, "Rito del mistero del santo battesimo", p.39.

³⁴ See W. de Vries, *Sakramententheologie bei den Nestorianern*, in: OCA 133 (1947) 187-188.

³⁵ See Kelaita, p.116; *Order of Baptism*, p.127; Youssif, "Rito del mistero del santo battesimo", p.8.

³⁶ Timothy II, *The Mystery of Baptism*, (section 16), pp.73-75; (section 19), p.91.

³⁷ See R.H. Connolly, ed & trans., *Anonymi auctoris expositio officiorum ecclesiae Georgio Arbelensi vulgo adscripta*, CSCO 64,71,72,76; Syri 2 tomus 91 & 92, Romae 1913-1915; Rep. Louvain 1953-1961, p. 96

³⁸ See Vat. Syr. 182 Fol. 273r. quoted by PAYNGOT, *Cross*, p.109.

mental effect of the Sacraments of Initiation is the bestowal of the Holy Spirit. It is the presence of the Holy Spirit that causes all other effects of the Christian life.

2.3.6. *The Unity of the Sacraments of Initiation*

The modern understanding about the newness and the radical uniqueness of the post-baptismal anointing (or Confirmation in western terminology) is that it bestows on us not any particular gift or gifts of the Holy Spirit, but the Holy Spirit Himself. The attribution of the bestowal of the Holy Spirit to the post-baptismal anointing and its separation from the rite of baptism as the 'sacrament of Confirmation' administered after a considerable interval of many years is theologically unsound. In other words a baptism which does not unite us with the person of the Holy Spirit seems to be imperfect.³⁹

According to the interpretation of the Syriac Fathers, the perfection of baptism consists in the unification of the body and soul with the Holy Spirit. However, the Fathers do not specify the exact moment of this unification in the baptismal ceremonies. The attempt to specify the exact point and precise time of this unification would not be consonant with the mentality of the ancient Christians. The early liturgical and patristic texts hardly distinguish between the two sacraments or between the effects proper to each; they seem to attribute to baptism that which we now attribute to Confirmation. They saw the whole of the mysteries as one event which took place in the 'spacetime' by the action of the Holy Spirit. It might be the reason for the absence of the post-baptismal anointing, as a special ceremony for conferring the Holy Spirit, in the early Syriac tradition until the 6th century. But the early Syriac sources provided the clear idea that a Christian was not completely initiated and perfected until he received the Holy Spirit and Communion. Participation in the eucharistic celebration and receiving Holy Communion is the culmination of Christian Initiation.

There seems to be no valid theological reason for the separation of the rites of Christian Initiation as baptism, 'Confirmation' and first holy Communion. Until the middle ages, the Western Church had not formed her position of differentiating these sacraments. Confirmation was named after baptism in the list of the seven sacraments at the Council of Lyons in 1274⁴⁰ and finally defined as two separate rites at the Council of Trent⁴¹. But the modern tendency seems to fall back on the intimate connection between these sacraments. The Second Vatican Council says: "The rite of Confirmation is to be revised also so that the intimate connection of this sacrament with the whole of the Christian initiation may more clearly appear. For this reason the renewal of baptismal promises should fittingly precede the reception of this sacrament" (SC 71).⁴² The re-affirmation of the inseparable unity of the rites of Initiation is much more underlined in the official dialogue between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches held at Bari in 1986-87.⁴³

2.4. *Some Observations*

1. Baptism can be viewed from two different perspectives: one as rebirth in accordance with the Johannine tradition (Jn 3, 3), and the other as death, burial and resurrection in accordance with the Pauline tradition (Rom 6, 3). The baptismal font, as a womb, gives birth to the children of the kingdom. The priest is the minister of this re-birth and those who are born newly are nourished soon by the Holy Eucharist. The three immersions followed by the anointing symbolize death, resurrection, and the new life in the glorified Christ. In the East Syrian Baptismal liturgy, the theology of baptism is viewed not only under the aspect of dying but under the aspect of birth event as well. This provides us with a rich theology of baptism.

2. The East Syrian baptismal liturgy provides us with an integral vision of the authentic Christian faith. The fundamental basis of Christian faith is the faith in the Trinity. God, the Father sent his Son to this world for our salvation, and this salvific work is continuing through the mission of the Holy Spirit in the Church. Every Christian is called to participate in this salvific mission of the Word and the Spirit, through baptism. For that, he enters into the very life of the Trinity in baptism, and in accordance with his co-operation through faith, this life of the Trinity is more and more realized in his daily life.

3. The proper celebration and understanding of the East Syrian baptismal liturgy inspire us and challenge us to lead a perfect Christian life. The life of perfection now understood as the life of 'Christian nature' where the Holy Spirit illumines and orientates the faculties of the soul and the body by becoming the core of one's being. In the rites of Initiation the Holy Spirit comes and dwells in the Christian and unites him with Jesus Christ. Thus, the call for the elevation of human nature is fulfilled in genuine Christian life.

4. There are two movements, downward and upward, in the relationship between God and human beings. In the downward movement, the Father creates and redeems man through the Son and sanctifies him in the Spirit; and in the upward movement, man gives glory to the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit. These dual movements are contained and conveyed in the theology and celebration of the East Syrian baptismal liturgy.

5. On the basis of anthropological, cosmological and sociological perspectives of man, we can outline five basic trends of Eastern spirituality, namely, practical, mystical, experiential, cosmic and ecclesial.⁴⁴ All these characteristics of eastern spirituality in general, can be seen in the liturgical celebration of the East Syrian baptism. It is practical, in the sense, that it leads to a concrete way of life fully permeated with charity. It is Mystical because it incorporates us into the mystical life of the Trinity. It is experiential through the gifts of the Spirit who lives in us, and the same Spirit relates us to every creature of this cosmos and helps us to enter into a deeper relationship with this world. The ecclesial dimension is very well expressed through our incorporation into the life of the Church through baptism.

3. Conclusion

The present celebration of the rites of Initiation in many Catholic Churches, including that in the Syro-Malabar Church, is an isolated event, is limited to baptism only, and is

³⁹ See R. Bultmann, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, 4th Edition, Tübingen 1961, p.141.

⁴⁰ See H. Denzinger & A. Schönmetzer, eds., *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, 36th Ed., New York 1976, Num. 860.

⁴¹ See *Enchiridion* Num. 1628. In the opinion of H. Goltzen: "Confirmation divorced from Baptism has become a rite arranged primarily to satisfy ritual requirements - not as real entrance into life shaped in the teaching of the Church". H. Goltzen, "Inchoatio et perfectio Initiationis Christianae", SL 3 (1964) 18.

⁴² For this et, Flannery, *Vatican Council*, p.22.

⁴³ For the document and its explanation see D. Salachas, *Il dialogo teologico ufficiale tra la Chiesa cattolica-romana e la Chiesa ortodossa: La quarta assemblea plenaria di Bari 1986-1987*, Bari 1988.

⁴⁴ See T. Spidlik, *The Spirituality of the Christian East*, Eng. Trans. A. P. Gythiel, CSS 79, Michigan 1896; pp.18-22.

often done as a private celebration of the family concerned according to their convenience.⁴⁵ The community of the faithful as a whole has no participation in it. This does violence to the profoundly evocative practice of celebrating baptism as an ecclesial event in which the whole assembly of the people of God took part. The private administration of baptism therefore should be discouraged and gradually eliminated; and the people should be instructed on the importance of their participation in the celebration of baptism. In the early Church, the Paschal liturgy was the great occasion for the celebration of the rites of Initiation. Our genuine tradition teaches that the proper occasion for the celebration of the rites of Initiation is the Easter Vigil. This well appreciated and highly significant practice should be reintroduced in our Churches making it once again a jubilant event of celebration for the community. This will foster the ecumenical movements of the Catholic Churches. Further, it is our hope that the renewal and a personalized appropriation of a proper liturgical spirituality would certainly help us to heal the wounds that led to the divisions of our Churches today.

APPENDIX⁴⁶

The Structure of the Baptismal Liturgy of the East Syriac Tradition

1. The Prayers and Ceremonies of the Preparatory Part

1.1. *Introductory Rites: At the entrance of the baptistery*

In the name of the Father....
 Glory to God in the highest... (three times)
 Our Father...
 Let us pray, Peace be with us
 Priestly prayer
 Psalm 84 "How beloved are Thy tabernacles..."
 Let us pray, Peace be with us
 Prayer before the imposition of hands

1.2. *Imposition of Hand and the First Rušma*

The prayer of the imposition of hands – "In thy name, O living King..."
 (special prayers for males and females in Kelaita edition)
 Prayer before the second imposition of hand
 Let us pray, Peace be with us

⁴⁵ In 1994 the Synod of Bishops of the Syro-Malabar Church published the Draft of the rites of Baptism and Confirmation. The administration of Baptism and Confirmation are put together in the draft while holy Communion is to be administered separately for the time being, and the rite of Confirmation was prepared in such a way that it could be administered either jointly with baptism or separately. See *Synodal News*, 2 (February 1994, Published by the Syro-Malabar Major Archiepiscopal Curia, Kochi). We note that it recaptures only partially the lost unity of the rites of Christian Initiation practised in the East Syriac tradition since the administration of holy Communion remains deferred and separated in the new proposal.

⁴⁶ Based on the Last Syriac Edition: J. Kelaita, *The Liturgy of the Church of the East*, Mosul 1928, pp.107-160

The second prayer of the imposition of hands—"The promises of thy pitifulness..."
 The rušma (signing) on the forehead.

1.3. *In the baptistery*

Hymn of entrance and the prayer after it
 Ps 45 "My heart bubbled forth good words..."
 The first proclamation of the deacon (composed by Theodore)
 The prayer after the first proclamation of the deacon
 Ps 110 "The Lord said unto my Lord..."
 The second proclamation of the deacon (by Barsauma of Nisibis)
 The prayer after the second proclamation of the deacon
 Ps 132 "O Lord, remember David..."

1.4. *The preparation of the baptismal font*

The prayer before Laku Mara
 "Laku Mara" and the pouring of water into the baptismal font
 Priestly prayer
 Trisagion

2. The Liturgy of the Word

The prayer before the epistle
 The epistle 1 Cor 10: 1-13
 Estationa (station)
 The Gospel Jn 2: 23-3:8
 The onitha of the Gospel
 The karo-zutha (Litany)
 Priestly prayer
 Imposition of hand and the dismissal

3. The Liturgy of the Mystery in baptism

3.1. *The disposition of the oil*

Onitha d'raze
 The disposition of the oil on the altar
 The Creed

3.2. *The consecration of the oil*

Proclamation of the deacon
 First g'hanta and quanona
 The prefatory dialogue
 Second g'hanta and sanctus
 Third g'hanta and quanona

The consecration of the oil
Our Father

3.3. Consecration of the baptismal water

The initial sacerdotal salutation
Fourth g'hanta and quanona
The consecration of the water with the oil
'One Holy Father'
One of the anthems of epiphany

3.4. The pre-baptismal anointing and the act of baptism

The pre-baptismal anointing on the breast and then on the whole body
The act of baptism (immersion 3 times)
Vesting

3.5. The post baptismal anointing (before the altar)

Introductory prayer
Ps 95: 1-7 and the prayer after
The two prayers of the imposition of hand
The anointing
The crowning and the prayer & Communion

4. The Concluding Rites

The anthems of Resqala and prayers
Huttama (conclusion)
The release of the baptismal water from its consecration

Discussions

Chediath: Do you follow the authentic rite?

Chalassery: Now we follow the latinized form. But as I have noted in footnote 45 of my paper, we are trying to reintroduce our genuine tradition.

Konat: Point 1.2. says "The Syro-Malabar Church shares the East Syriac (Chaldean) Tradition together with the other Churches founded by Apostle Thomas or by his disciples." So, do all the Churches founded by St. Thomas share the same liturgy?

Chalassery: Here the worship is meant. I wrote not "all the Churches", but "the other Churches".

Konat: My second question concerns the use of the oil. Do you use the same for the pre-baptismal and the post-baptismal unction? Do you use consecrated or non-consecrated oil?

Chalassery: There are three signings in the baptismal ceremonies. First one is the signing on the forehead of the candidate after the imposition of hands at the beginning of the ceremony. For this anointing we use non-consecrated oil (*mešha da Mšihuta*). The second one is on the breast just before the baptismal immersion, and for this pre-baptismal anointing we use the consecrated and mixed with the holy oil of anointing which is already consecrated by the bishop. The same consecrated oil we use in the third signing on the forehead which comes at the end of the prayer of imposition of hands after the immersion.

Mar Bawai: I have a double question. In the instance of the Myron, which in the Syriac tradition is consecrated by the patriarch, what is the case in your Church?

Konat: In our Church it is the head of the Church, the Catholicos.

Mar Bawai: My question to you Father Chalassery is in relation to possible future reforms of the liturgy, including the baptismal ritual, because we too have a lot of pastoral conflicts, of problems because we isolated the baptismal ritual, it is private and no more communal, it is unattractive in that it loses a lot of its original spirituality. In order to return back to our roots and introduce relevant reforms, my question is: how do you see in your opinion the essential structure of the liturgy? How much is appeared as a component of catechumens?

Chalassery: I see the restoration of the traditional baptismal liturgy itself help us to foster our Christian call and thus our catechism. Because, this liturgy involves the preparation of the entire community for the reception of the new members. For the whole Church is enriched and fulfilled when a person is integrated into her life. Therefore as I have pointed out in the conclusion of my paper, let us try to reintroduce our genuine tradition in our Churches making it once again a jubilant event of celebration for the community.

Youssif: I would like to mention that there is a "new" rite in the Malabar Church which is already a step in the direction of getting closer to the tradition. That is something positive. I also would like to add something about the present rite. The structure of the holy qurbana, the holy mass: at the beginning there is the anointing of the front, the liturgy of the Word, the consecration with water and of oil, then the gift of sacrament. The text needs certainly some reform. As it is now, it is like in the most ancient manuscript we have. This rite is full of theology and very rich, but we need two rites, one for the adults and one for the children. The other thing which is worth mentioning is the introduction of the Myron. It is clear that traditionally we do not have it. The Myron has a full meaning for example in the West Syrian rite, but in the Church of the East, the oil used is pure olive oil. In regard to the question of H.G. Mar Bawai Soro I would like to add that in Paris we have adults that we prepare to baptism through catechumenate. They are formed in the sacraments, they assist mass and accept willingly to leave holy qurbana after the dismissal of the non-baptized.

Sako: In some Churches they have a procession after the confirmation, for example in the West Syrian Church.

Konat: Maybe in Syria, but it is not practised in India. The candidate is made to enter the altar. Only male children were permitted to come to the altar, but now even girls are allowed to be taken to the altar.

Sako: In the East Syriac rite we have a series of hymns just after the procession.

Youssif: A procession is clearly stated in the rite. When they say: "The door of the bride chamber is open", they go to the baptistery, after the immersion they take the baby and go again to the holy of holies and after the last signation they go to the baptistery again.

Sako: What is the meaning of the procession?

Youssif: There are two processions. The first is the participation in the wedding of Christ and is seen as the bridal access to Christ and the second procession is on Epiphany and new life of baptized.

Harnoncourt: In some papers the office of the sponsors was mentioned. What is the meaning of this office? In our Catholic tradition there was a change in regard to the change of the baptism of adults in comparison to the baptism of the children. The sponsor has to speak in the name of the infant. But in former times he or she represented the community and should be engaged in the name of the Church to accompany the candidate. Vatican Two brought the first real rite for baptism of children. Because before Vatican Two children were baptized as if they were grown-up. They were asked "Do you believe?" as if they could answer and the sponsor answered as if he was the child. And now according to the new rite the parents and sponsors are asked of their faith, because it is not allowed to baptize a child, if the faith of the family is missing. The accompanying person obliges himself for the faith education of the child.

Chalassery: In the case of adult baptism the role of the sponsor is to witness the confirmation of his faith to his candidate. In the case of an infant baptism the role of the sponsor is to be responsible for the growing of the child in a faithful environment, in an atmosphere of faith. In our Church the sponsors are relatives, most often the grandparents.

Mar Bawai: In the Church of the East, at least in our own social context what he answered you is the theological aspect. But if there is a difference in the practise it would be due, not to a difference in theology, but for eschatological reasons. In that context – I am not sure if this is general for every tradition, but in our Church the sponsor also serves as the guarantor – in case there would be (and this comes from the agricultural rural society) something happening to the parents – the sponsor becomes the guarantor that the child will continue to be educated in the Christian faith.

Vellanickal: According to the paper it seems that the pre-baptismal anointing brings out very well the issue of the Holy Spirit and bringing a person to participate in the mystery of Christ. And there are biblical foundations. But there are those who received the word in Samaria, Peter and John who were sent out to lay their hands on those who were baptized in the name of the Lord, but who did not have received the Holy Spirit.

Chalassery: We can see three set of traditions in the Bible regarding the conferring of the sacraments of initiation. The first one is mentioned in my paper. God sends down the Spirit on men and thereby indicates that he has chosen them, and leads them to baptism (Acts 9, 17-18; 10, 44-48). This priority of the Spirit seems to be implied in Rom 5,5; Gal 3,2-3; 4,6; 1Jn 5,8. The second tradition we see in Acts 2,38, where Peter exhorts the Jews: Repent and be baptized...and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, and also in Acts 19,1-7 says about the 12 men of Ephesus. They were first baptized and when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them. In the third tradition the order of events is actually the same as in the second, first the baptism and then the receiving of the Holy Spirit. In Acts 8, 4-17, Philip's evangelization in Samaria, as Fr. Vellanickal has already mentioned, the converts were baptized and news of this having reached Jerusalem, the apostles sent Peter and John to them. They laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit. The difference of the second and the third is

that there is a gap between the giving of the rites in the third set of tradition. According to the German theologian Johannes Weiss, in his book *Urchristentum*, the first tradition is the oldest one. In this first tradition, which was kept by Syriac Churches, we see the fundamental principle of the Gospel, that the Christian God is a God who approaches sinners while they are still sinners, is symbolically retained.

Khalifé: I have a small question about doctrine and theology. In point 2.3.1. of your paper you write "Through baptism, a person participates in the death and resurrection of Christ" and also in point 2.3.4. you write "The act of baptism shows the mystery of death and resurrection" and in point 2.4. it is written "In the East Syrian Baptismal liturgy, the theology of baptism is viewed not only under the aspect of dying but under the aspect of birth event as well." So what is the purpose of baptism: death and resurrection or rebirth? In our liturgical texts the rebirth is the first and then no death and resurrection.

Chalassery: Baptism can be viewed from two different perspectives: one as rebirth in accordance with the teaching of John (Jn 3, 3) and the other as death, burial and resurrection in accordance with Pauline teaching (Rom 6, 3-11). Our baptismal liturgy reflects both traditions and provides us with a rich theology of Christian initiation.

Hainthaler: In point 2.2.1. the description of the theory of the Odes of Solomon may be a bit broadminded to see that it is already a Christian perspective. And 2.3.3 you write in the last sentence "The anointing of the whole body shows the deposition of the old man" and then in Christ the "new man", it might be a terminological problem. In Greek we would say that Christ became a human being ("anthropos"). And in point 2.3.6. you are arguing very strongly against the separation of the rites of Christian Initiation as baptism, confirmation and holy communion. You say that there is no valid theological reason and that it is "theologically unsound". This is a very sharp formulation, perhaps we could smoothen it, because there are pastoral reasons and maybe also theological reasons.

Chalassery: Theologically it is imperfect, because as Bultmann pointed out, a baptism which does not unite us with the person of the Holy Spirit seems to be imperfect. (See R. Bultmann. *Theologie des neuen Testaments*, 4th edition, Tübingen 1961, p. 141 where he says: "Eine Taufe, die den Geist nicht verleiht, ist keine rechte Taufe und muss also durch den Geistesempfang ergänzt werden.")

Hainthaler: Yes, but if you have a child, it has to grow into Christian faith. Christian initiation is a process. So the whole initiation goes for some years, it is a development.

Jacob Mathew: The first question I would like to ask concerns point 2.3.5.2., "The meaning of the post-baptismal anointing" and you write there "The bestowal of the Holy Spirit seems to be attributed to the pre-baptismal anointing, and the post-baptismal anointing seems to serve the proclamation of the completion of the union between the Holy Spirit and the baptized person." This means that the pre-baptismal anointing has given the Holy Spirit to the candidate. So how can this be equated with the baptism of Christ? It is stated that the baptism of a child or of a person has its similarities with the baptism of Christ. The bestowal or descending of the Holy Spirit was after the baptism of Christ. Now, I would like to know about the baptism, the confirmation and holy the communion of the mentally handicapped children, if these three rosos are being administered separately. In fact, the development process of mentally handicapped children is different from that of the mentally sound ones. What I mean is that the mentally handicapped can not have a conscious development and initiation into the mysteries of Christianity. It is not

the problem at all for the Orthodox Syriac Tradition, for they administer all these three *rosos* together.

Chalassery: In the case of Jesus' baptism, Jesus himself sanctified the water of Jordan, in the case of Christian baptism the Holy Spirit sanctifies the water. According to Ambrose the order of events at Christ's baptism was intended to show that Christ sanctified the water himself, whereas in Christian baptism the Holy Spirit is the sanctifier of the water. (See Ambrose, *De sacramentis* I, 18-19, p.59-60). Regarding the question of the baptism of the mentally handicapped: I think above all baptism is a free gift of God. The second prayer of the imposition of hand in our baptismal liturgy gives a theological justification for such kind of baptism. There we read: "Thy gift is not bestowed upon the wise and prudent only, and the door of Thy mercy is not open to them alone, but also unto this Thy servant whose infancy nature ranks with such as have no understanding, but whom Thy grace has dragged the children in the life-giving net and cast into the holy vessel of sin-forgiving baptism...and that his body being undefiled by the filth of sin..."

Jacob Mathew: Jesus Christ is the one, who is born almighty. He is the king. Then, how far is it feasible to say that at this point or later He has the Holy Spirit?

Chalassery: Regarding Christ, he is the Anointed One with the Spirit of God even at his incarnation. Baptism of Christ was only a revelation of his personality for the world and the foundation of Christian baptism. But for us, as I have clearly pointed out in my paper, the Syriac fathers do not specify the exact and precise moment of the unification of the body and soul with the Holy Spirit in the baptismal ceremonies. They saw the whole of the mysteries as one event which took place in the time by the action of the Holy Spirit. But when we examine the prayers of the baptismal liturgy, the bestowal of the Holy Spirit seems to be attributed to the pre-baptismal anointing and the post-baptismal anointing seems to serve the proclamation of the completion of the union between the Holy Spirit and the baptized person.

Hamoncourt: We have no problem to baptize and confirm the handicapped, maybe that there are problems for the holy communion with some pastors, because we know that the confirmation is not a sacrament of "being aware". The distinction between baptism and anointment is not because of age, but because the anointment is belonging to the bishop. Every pastor can baptize, but the anointing is task of the bishop. And in the baptism of adults there were two anointments with Myron, one at the baptisterium and then with the bishop. This reserving one anointment to the bishop had the consequence for the parishes that they could wait or could come to the bishop for completion of the baptism or when the bishop comes to visit he had to confirm all who were not yet anointed, and it did not matter if they were three months old, six years or twenty. We have visitation reports where it is said that the bishop had to confirm persons from six weeks to thirty years for example after the Turkish invasion. Because of this separation a new theology of confirmation has been developed, as it was the confirmation for grown-up. Up to the beginning of the 20th century it was strictly forbidden to take part in the holy communion before confirmation.

INTRODUCTION TO THE SACRAMENTS AN ORIENTAL ORTHODOX PERSPECTIVE

1. A General Introduction to the Sacraments

1.1. I do not intend, in my paper to speak about the Biblical background in each Sacrament according to the contemporary authors. Indeed, all the authors of the Oriental Orthodox Churches while speaking about Sacraments: Baptism - Chrismation (Holy Myroon/Confirmation) - Repentance/Confession - Eucharist - Marriage/Matrimony-Priesthood -Unction of the Sick; quote the same verses from both the Old and New Testaments, confirming the institution of all these Sacraments. It is the same when they speak about the role of the Holy Spirit in the Sacraments.

1.2. Contemporary authors of the Oriental Orthodox Churches wrote about the Sacraments from different aspects; Biblical, Canonical, Spiritual, Historical and Liturgical. Since the fourth century until the end of the fourteenth century, scholars of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch (SOCA) - which is my Church - have studied the Sacraments analytically and in depth. Focusing on the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation/Chrismation, Priesthood and Eucharist, they wrote comprehensively and in a detailed way in their various theological, exegetical, spiritual, and ascetic writings.

Some of these studies are still preserved in the Syriac manuscripts. Indeed, we consider ourselves lucky and privileged to have such important sources for this topic. Ironically, there was no single author or book that specialized in analyzing the "seven" Sacraments. As is the case in our days, scholars and authors are narrowly specialized in this subject.

I would like to mention here the work of one of our sources of knowledge. He is George, the Bishop of the Arabs (+725), who was consecrated Bishop in 686 for the Arab tribes of Al Kufa in today's Iraq. He wrote a concise book of 15 pages, dealing with the Sacraments. I quote from his preface: "*Whereas the doctors of the Church have made expositions of the Mysteries at length and minutely and in elevated style, especially the Holy Dionysius, the disciple of Paul the Apostle, one of the judges of the Areopagus, who was bishop of the city of Athens: I also have made (one) in brief for the instruction of lovers of doctrine, especially those who are feeble like ourselves, and are unable constantly to read the volumes of the Holy Fathers, either because they do not have them at hand, or else because it is not every one that is able to comprehend the lofty meaning of the Fathers.. The beginning, then, of the mysteries of the Christians is the true faith.*"¹

1.3. This provides evidence of how our scholars in the seventh century recognized the Sacraments in the Church. George, the Bishop of the Arabs, for example, dealt comprehensively with four Sacraments only; starting with the Faith, then Baptism, followed by the Holy Eucharist, and finally the Confirmation/Chrismation. He may have considered the Sacrament of Faith as an entry to the Sacrament of Baptism. However, he elaborated clearly that the basis of the Sacraments in Christianity is the *true faith*. He

¹ Codrington, H.W., and Connolly, R.H., *Two Commentaries on the Jacobite Liturgy* (1913), p.11

allocated the teaching of the faith to the Deacons; and summarized this teaching as consisting in the listening to, or familiarizing oneself with the Gospel. However, performing Baptism was assigned only to priests.

1.4. Linguistically, the Syriac word 'آرزا' rozo, in the New Testament, has several different meanings. It certainly, does not mean 'secret' or "hidden", which is in Syriac 'طشيا' tashyo' or 'كسيا' kasio'. For example: when Joseph did not wish to make the conception of Virgin Mary public, he thought of divorcing her "secretly" 'مطشياية' mtashyoeef'. The same word is mentioned when Jesus visited Bethany after the death of Lazarus, Martha "went away and called her sister Mary secretly" 'كسياية' kasyoeef'²

The word 'آرزا' rozo / mystery' is used in the Gospel in the way we understand it when we use it for the seven Sacraments. For example: In the Parable of the Sower, according to St. Mark, Jesus says to his twelve disciples "... to you is given to know the mystery 'آرزا' rozo' of the kingdom of God"³. Here, he does not use the word 'secret' as it is used in some modern translations.

St. Paul uses the word 'آرزا' rozo / mystery' in his Epistles correctly, in the same sense. The following are some examples: In his first letter to Timothy, he says: "Truly great is this divine mystery 'آرزا' rozo' of righteousness, it is revealed in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen by angels, preached to the Gentiles, believed on in the world and received up into Glory"⁴. In the same manner, he writes to the Romans "Now, I entrust you to God, who will confirm you in my Gospel, which is preached concerning Jesus Christ in the revelation of the mystery 'آرزا' rozo' which was hidden since the world began."⁵

He writes, also, to the Corinthians, saying "Behold, I tell you a mystery 'آرزا' rozo': we shall not all die but we shall all be changed"⁶. Again he writes to the Romans, saying "I am desirous, my brethren, that you should know this mystery 'آرزا' rozo'."⁷

Finally, while explaining the relationship between wives and husbands in his Epistle to the Ephesians, he says: "This is a great mystery 'آرزا' rozo' but I speak concerning Christ and his Church"⁸.

Therefore, it is clear that mystery / 'آرزا' rozo' in Syriac has a deeper concept than the word 'hidden' or 'secret'.

² (John 11:28)

³ (Mark 4:11)

⁴ (1 Timothy 3:16)

⁵ (Romans 16:25)

⁶ (1 Corinthians 15:51)

⁷ (Romans 11:25)

⁸ (Ephesians 5:32)

Like St. Paul, the Syrian Fathers distinguished between mystery and secret in their teachings. Today, the word 'آرزا' rozo / mystery in church terminology, signifies a visible Holy Rite that produced an invisible grace in the soul of the person to whom it is administered and from which he/she receives spiritual strength. Hence, the word 'آرزا' rozo' is used for the two Sacraments which do not include the profitable Ordinances.

1.5. We expect that all the faithful can receive all the Sacraments; except Priesthood, which is given only for men. Some of the Sacraments are given once during their lifetime such as: Baptism, Confirmation (Chrismation/Holy Myroon), and Priesthood. Other Sacraments may be given more than one time, like Marriage/Matrimony, and the Unction of the Sick. Others, like Repentance/Confession and the Holy Eucharist, continue to be given until the last breath.

1.6. We consider the four Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation (Chrismation/Holy Myroon), Repentance and Confession, and Holy Eucharist to be essential for human salvation. The remaining Sacraments, Marriage/Matrimony, Priesthood, and Unction of the Sick, are not.

1.7. During the Rite of Baptism, the faithful receive three Sacraments the Baptism, Confirmation (Chrismation/Holy Myroon), and Holy Eucharist.

1.8. In our Church tradition, we believe in infant and child Baptism. Therefore, we do not wait until the faithful reaches a certain age before receiving the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation (Chrismation/Holy Myroon) and Holy Eucharist.

1.9. The Sacraments, which are given once in a lifetime, are Baptism, Confirmation (Chrismation/Holy Myroon) and Priesthood. They should not be repeated again. This is done according to the teaching of St. Paul: "Now it is God who has confirmed us with you in Christ, and who has anointed us and who anointed us, who has sealed us, and pledged his spirit in our hearts."⁹

1.10. In one of his letters against those who say that penitent men who have communicated with the Synod of Chalcedon and anathematize those who call our one Lord and God Jesus Christ two natures after the ineffable union and come over to the orthodox faith must be re-anointed, St. Severios writes that the Fathers made a distinction while speaking about Baptism: "... saying that those who had been baptised in the name of the three substances, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, even though it were by heretics that they were baptized, but still such as confess the three substances, should not be re-baptized: but converts from the other heresies should certainly be perfected 'نشةملون' neshtamloun' by the baptism of the church. This opinion, the three hundred and eighteen Fathers who assembled at Nicaea also followed, and those who nourished the churches after them."¹⁰

1.11. In our tradition, in order to successfully conduct the Rite of a Sacrament, three elements should be available. For example in Baptism:

1. **The Material** which is the water.

2. **The Formula** which is the words that the priest during Baptism: "(Name) is baptised for holiness, salvation and a blameless life, and for the blessed resurrection

⁹ (2 Corinthians 1:21-22)

¹⁰ *The Sixth book of the Select Letter of Severus, Patriarch of Antioch*, Mar Severios Patriarch of Antioch, Translated by E.W. Brooks (Oxford 1903), II, pp. 294, 297.

from among the dead in the hope of life and the forgiveness of sins. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”¹¹

3. **The Servant of the Sacrament** is the priest, who is canonically authorised, as is described in the Acts of the Apostles: “So after they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away”¹²

The Church has authorised one exception in the absence of a priest: deacons are allowed to baptise very sick infants only.

2. The Liturgy of the Seven Sacraments

2.1. The Syriac liturgy went through many stages of development until it took its present shape. According to the tradition of SOCA, the early Christian Church knew first the hymns; and the Christian faithful used to chant “the Glorification of Virgin Mary”¹³, Elizabeth’s song of praise¹⁴, Zacharia’s prophesy¹⁵, the praise of the angels after the birth of Lord Jesus: “Glory To God in the Highest, Peace be on Earth and good hope for men”¹⁶ and the words of thanks of Simon and Anna.¹⁷

In this way, we understand the words of Acts “And when the day of Pentecost was fulfilled, while they were assembled together...”¹⁸, as well as “...for all men praised God for that which was done”¹⁹, and the reminder of St. Paul to the faithful in his Letter to the Ephesians, “Speaking to your souls in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, sing with your heart to the Lord”²⁰, and to the Colossians, “And let his word dwell in you abundantly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, in singing with grace in your hearts to God”²¹

These words of prayer, praise and thanksgiving became the foundation stone of the formation and the development of the liturgy, which is used today in SOCA.

2.2. Until the ninth century AD, the liturgical books in use were sometimes abbreviated or enlarged. Among our renowned scholars who revised many of our common prayers and liturgical books up to the thirteenth century, are:

Mor Jacob Bishop of Edessa (+708), who revised the daily prayer book **شحيما** shhimo’, prayers of Saturdays and Sundays **فنكية** fenkitho’; major feasts **معد عدنا** m’ad’edono’,²² the Rites of Baptism; Matrimony; the Blessing of the Water at Epiphany; Funeral services of Bishops; priests; lay people (women, men and children). He also

¹¹ The Sacrament of baptism according to the Ancient Rite of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch, translated from the original Syriac (1974), p.70.

¹² (Acts 13:3)

¹³ (Luke 1:46-55)

¹⁴ (Luke 1:42-45)

¹⁵ (Luke 1:68-79)

¹⁶ (Luke 2:14)

¹⁷ (Luke 2:29-32)

¹⁸ (Acts 2:1)

¹⁹ (Acts 4:21)

²⁰ (Ephesians 5:19-20)

²¹ (Colossians 3:16)

²² **معد عدنا** m’ad’edono’ Ancient Rite of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch, translated from the original Syriac.

wrote about Baptism in the church, the sanctification of the Holy Myroon (Chrismation), with special attention to the difference between the Holy Oil of Chrismation and Holy Oil for anointment.

Another scholar is Mar Ivannis, Metropolitan of Dara (+860), who allocated a section in his volume on theology to the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Eucharist.

Likewise, Mar Moses Bar Kepha (+903), who wrote a 24-chapter book on the Church’s Sacraments, concentrated on Baptism, Eucharist, and Holy Myroon, while devoting a special treatise to the ordination of deacons, priests and bishops.

Other scholars wrote on the same matters until the thirteenth century.

2.3. Today, we use different Rites for the Baptism of male and female without reference to age. This Rite includes the Sacrament of Confirmation, and it comes when “the Priest raises the vessel of the Myron reverently and moves it over the water crosswise saying: ‘The water saws You, O God, the waters saw You; they were afraid. The voice of the Lord is upon the waters; the glorious God has thundered. The Lord is upon the great waters.’ Then the priest pours the Holy Myron into the water in the sign of the cross, saying: ‘We pour Holy Chrism into this water of Baptism for the blessings of regeneration and incorruptibility. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.’”²³ Then, the Priest “moistens his right thumb with the anointing oil in the vase of ointment and signs the child upon his forehead. At each invocation, he draws the sign of the cross upon the child’s forehead and says: ‘(Name).. is signed with the ointment rejoicing that he/she might confront the satanic influence and be engrafted into the cultivated olive tree in Your Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit’”²⁴

*See the attached Canons and Instructions from the Hudoyo and other Ecclesiastical Canons which are used today in SOCA in the book of The Sacrament of Baptism according to the Ancient Rite of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch.

2.4. One should note that in the SOCA, there is a special and elaborated Rite for the Sanctification of the Holy Myroon. Initially, it used to be within the authority of every Bishop. Later on, this authority was allocated to the person of the Patriarch only.

2.5. The Rite of the Sanctification of the Holy Oil, which is used for the Sacrament of Unction of the Sick, is within the authority of the Bishops. This Sacrament is administered by Priests to both sexes, with no age restrictions.

2.6. The Rite of Repentance consists of specific words delivered by the priest to the person making the confession, before, upon, and after the confession of sins before the priest. These words mainly consist of verses of the New Testament and teachings of the Fathers. Repentance is achieved through the will of the person, especially when he says “I am truly sorry and great is my remorse for all the sins I have committed. Moreover, I have determined never to return to the hateful paths of sin again. Accept O Lord my confession and support me in Your Grace that I may choose death rather than disgrace you.”²⁵

²³ The Sacrament of Baptism according to the Ancient Rite of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch, translated from the original Syriac, 1974, p. 4.

²⁴ The Sacrament of Baptism according to the Ancient Rite of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch, translated from the original Syriac, 1974, p. 50.

²⁵ Mar Ignatius Ephrem Barsoum, The Spiritual Treasure on Canonical Prayer (1956), English translation 1999, p. 129.

2.7. The Rite of Marriage has been well revised in our tradition. Currently, we use special prayers and blessings for the wedding of virgins and widowers. Recently, extra prayers were adopted in cases where one of the spouses is going through his/her third or subsequent marriage.

*See the attached *Canons and Instructions from the Hudoyo and other Ecclesiastical Canons which are used today in SOCA in the book of The Order of Solemnization of The Sacrament of Matrimony, according to the Ancient Rite of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch.*

2.8. The Sacrament of Priesthood is given only for men and on a single occasion. The Rite of this Sacrament starts with a short sermon to the Deacons and a long one to the Priests. Today we have the Rite of the Consecration of Deacons (Acolyte, Reader, Sub-Deacon, Deacon, and Archdeacon) - Priests (married and unmarried); and finally Bishops (Bishop, Catholicos/Maphrian), and Patriarch.

2.9. Regarding the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist according to the tradition of the SOCA; the origin of the liturgy goes back to St. James, first Bishop of Jerusalem. This liturgy, which is called the Anaphora, has gone through many changes and additions in the course of time. The use of this liturgy of St James most probably started before the fourth century.²⁶

Some early information on the Eucharistic liturgy can be found in the writings of St. Ephrem the Syrian (+373), St. Jacob of Seroug (+521), and other scholars and poets of the two schools of Nisibis and Edessa.

Most of the liturgy of St James in its present form, as we have it today, was established at the hand of Mor Jacob of Edessa (+708), with some minor alterations during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Further minor alterations and standardisations took place when these liturgical books were printed for the first time at the instructions and authorisation of the Patriarchs before and at the turn of the twentieth century. As a matter of fact, Patriarch Ephrem Barsoum compiled in the year (1943) a list of about 80 Anaphoras that were used in our Church.

However, it has to be highlighted that there are no systematic academic studies or research in any eastern or western institutions that confirm and trace back the origins of the liturgy in our Church during the first four centuries of Christendom. Further analyses of those manuscripts that have survived may give us a clearer picture of its origins and its successive development.

3. Conclusion

To conclude, I would like to mention here the question of the number of Sacraments in our tradition, a matter which it is not clear even to us. Indeed, we do not distinguish between Sacraments and semi-Sacraments. Our Fathers only mentioned those Sacraments which are essential for salvation and those which are not. Some scholars believe that the number '7' seven symbolizes the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, mentioned in Isaiah: *"And he shall be at peace, and the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the reverence of the Lord."*²⁷

²⁶ Anaphorae Syriacae, II.2, Anaphora Sancti Iacobi, ed. and tr. Odilo Heiming, Rome 1952.

²⁷ (Isaiah 11:2)

Until the fourteenth century, no synod in the SOCA specifically fixed the number of Sacraments as '7' seven Sacraments.

I may give you two examples:

One witness, preceding the tenth century, is George, the Bishop of the Arabs, in *"An Exposition of the Mysteries of the Church"* in which he starts with the words *"The beginning, then, of the mysteries of the Christians is the true Faith"*.²⁸ Then, he speaks about Baptism, Chrismation and Holy Eucharist.

Another, also preceding the fourteenth century, is Bar Hebraeus (+1286). In his book *"Candelabra of Sanctuary"* منارة قودشا, he speaks about Priesthood, Holy Myron, Baptism and Holy Eucharist.

It is interesting to know that in the first chapter of his *NomoCanon (Hudoyo)*, and while speaking about church administration, he mentions Baptism, Holy Myron, Eucharist, fasts and feasts prayers, funerals, and matrimony.

This is evidence that up till the days of Bar Hebraeus (1286) the SOCA did not number the sacraments as '7' seven. There is no doubt that the Church used all the Sacraments, but up to the end of the thirteenth century we can not prove whether the Church recognized the Sacraments as '7' seven as we do today.

However, in the theological sources, the word 'آرزا rozo/mystery' often referred to

the Holy Trinity آرزا دقلتيوآ rozo datlithoyoutho/the mystery of the Trinity',

and as آرزا دمتبرنشوآ rozo dmetbarnshonouth / the mystery of Incarnation'.

We conclude with the words from the article 146 of the constitution of the SOCA: *"It is one of the gifts of God to the Church giving her the seven Sacraments, namely: Baptism - Chrismation (Holy Myroon/Confirmation) - Repentance/Confession - Eucharist - Marriage/Matrimony-Priesthood-Uncion of the Sick.*

*Therefore Bishops and Priests recommend the faithful to necessarily practice the Holy Sacraments and to encourage them as well to practice the Uncion of the Sick whenever it is necessary."*²⁹

4. Bibliography:

1. The verses from the Holy Bible are quoted from the version of: The Holy Bible, George M. Lamsa's translation from the Aramaic Text of the Peshitta, 1957.
2. *Two Commentaries on the Jacobite Liturgy*; trans. Dom. R.H. Connolly, and H.W. Codrington, Oxford 1913.
3. Mar Severius Patriarch of Antioch, *The Sixth book of the Select Letter of Severus, Patriarch of Antioch*, translated E.W. Brooks, Oxford 1903, Vol. II.
4. Mar Ignatius Ephrem Barsoum, *The Spiritual Treasure on Canonical Prayer* 1956, translated from Syriac and Arabic into English, 1999.
5. Mar Ignatius Ephrem Barsoum, *History of Syriac Sciences and Literature - Syriac patrimony*, 5th ed. 1987 (English translation by M.Moosa, Pueblo 2000).

²⁸ Codrington, H.W., and Connolly, R.H., *Two Commentaries on the Jacobine Liturgy* (Oxford 1913), p. 11.

²⁹ The constitution of SOCA, article 146.

6. C.Moss, *Catalogue of Syriac Printed Books and Related Literature* in the British Museum, London 1962.

7. Bar Hebraeus, *The Candelabra of Sanctuary* منيرة قودشا, Arabic print 1996.

8. *Anaphorae Syriacae II.2, Anaphora Sancti Iacobi*, Fratr. Domini, ed. and tr. Odilo Heimig - Roma 1952.

9. *The Sacrament of Baptism* according to the Ancient Rite of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch, translated from the original Syriac - 1974.

10. *The Order of Solemnization of The Sacrament of Matrimony* according to the Ancient Rite of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch, translated from the original Syriac - 1974.

11. *معادنا m'ad'edono* Ancient Rite of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch, translated from the original Syriac - 1984.

ANNEX 1

Canons and Instructions from the Hudoyo and other Ecclesiastical Canons which are used today in SOCA in the book of The Sacrament of Baptism, according to the Ancient Rite of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch.

1. Holy Baptism is a Sacrament, being the gate through which the human being enters into the Christian Faith. Therefore, it should be performed with utmost reverence and awareness by the Priests, and received with true faith by the believers.

2. The Sacraments of Baptism shall be performed at the baptistery in the church, except in case of necessity resulting from extreme sickness or forcible circumstances; then baptism shall be performed in the homes of the believers by permission of the bishop. In this case, a wide and deep basin should be made ready in which water is to be sanctified. This basin is to be used exclusively for baptism. This procedure shall also be followed in countries where we have no church or house of prayer.

3. The bishop as well as the Priest shall perform the Sacrament of Baptism fully dressed in his vestments. Incense shall be offered as is required by rituals of the Church.

4. Baptism shall be performed in the morning after the Divine Liturgy, unless an emergency may require its performance before or at any other time.

5. For every male child there must be an Orthodox Godfather, and for every female child there must be an Orthodox Godmother.

6. Two kinds of oil shall be used in the administration of Baptism. The oil of ointment (mesh'ho), which is consecrated by the Bishop, shall be administered before immersion. The Holy Chrism (Myron), which is consecrated by the Patriarch, confirms and shall be administered after Baptism.

7. The godparents, before participating in the baptismal ceremony, shall, with due respect and purification, confess and receive Holy Communion. They should also instruct the baptized male or female in the Christian doctrine and religion.

8. The Priest shall register the name of the Baptised in the church registry. It is proper and commendable that the baptised be given a Christian name.

9. When the Priest baptizes male and female children at the same time, he is not permitted to immerse them simultaneously in the same water. He should immerse the male children first and after changing the water, the female children. In cases of multiple

baptism, the priest shall immerse the children in descending order with the oldest being first.

10. If a child is near death, the priest shall baptize him without immersion, by pouring water upon his/her forehead and the rest of his/her body if possible.

11. The Sacrament of Baptism should be fulfilled two weeks after birth, unless an emergency requires postponement. In such cases, baptism may be performed after one month but not later than two months.

12. A Priest shall baptise his own child only in cases of emergency or when another priest is not available.

13. If the child is near death, a high deacon (gospeller) can baptise his/her, in the absence of a priest. Later on, if the baptised lives the priest shall confirm the child by anointing him/her with Holy Chrism.

14. In an emergency, the Priest can baptise even after having had his meal. In an emergency of death, the Priest shall use the shortened Service of baptism of Mar Severios, Patriarch of Antioch.

15. When a maiden or a mature woman is to be baptised, the Priest shall pour the oil of ointment as well as the Holy Chrism in water in a large vessel and draw a curtain between him and the baptised. Then he shall confirm the baptised with the Holy Chrism by anointing the forehead. After placing his right hand on the head of the baptised and baptising her in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the baptised shall immerse herself in the water three times while wearing a white robe. In former times, deaconesses and nuns used to anoint baptised women. At the present time, it would be preferable for the Priest's wife to assist the celebrant in anointing the baptised. In the same manner, if a man is to be baptised the Priest shall follow the above instructions, and perform the ceremony alone. After the ceremony, the white robes should be kept in the church. As to the Holy Water, it should be poured in the baptismal font or in a clean place, such as a field or a garden.

16. If the Baptism of a person is doubtful or cannot be substantiated by a certificate, the priest shall baptise him/her saying: "(Name..), if you are not baptised, I baptise you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit".

17. The Church accepts the baptism of the Chalcedonians, i.e. the Byzantine Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church. If one of the faithful is baptised in one of the Protestant Churches, he/she must be confirmed by being anointed with Holy Myron inasmuch as the said Churches do not employ Holy Chrism.

ANNEX 2

Canons and Instructions from the Hudoyo and other Ecclesiastical Canons which are used today in SOCA in the book of The Order of Solemnization of The Sacrament of Matrimony, according to the Ancient Rite of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch.

1. When it became necessary for everyone to recognize that matrimony is an honourable institution intended to preserve life of the human race, it was considered appropriate that wedlock should be started at the time of puberty, namely at the age appointed by the Canons of the Church when the couple have attained both physical and mental maturity. Furthermore, the wedding should be held only as and when the couple

are capable of exercising free will and of comprehending the natural obligations of married life. Even though, at the time of engagement, the bridegroom should be of the age of sixteen, and the bride at the age of twelve, and although, at the time of the wedding ceremony, the bridegroom should be eighteen, and the bride fourteen, it seems preferable and more appropriate if the bride has reached the age of sixteen. Today, the approval of the parents is required in those cases when either the groom or the bride are still considered minors by the law of the state concerned.

2. Prior to the betrothal ceremony, the Priest shall investigate and ascertain:

One) That neither the maiden nor her suitor are engaged to another person.

Two) That the maiden is not divorced and the suitor is not under any legal prohibition.

Three) That no consanguineous, fosterage, or sponsorial relationship bind the couple by the Canons of the Church.

Four) That both parties are of sound health, free from contagious diseases and deformities prohibited by the secular laws. In accordance with civil laws, it is proper to obtain a competent written report from a medical authority.

Five) That the wedding ceremony is not performed on a day prohibited by the Church.

3. The Priest shall not perform either the betrothal or marriage ceremony unless he is absolutely certain that the couple are desirous to marry one another of their free will without compulsion. He must ask the bride's opinion in this matter. He shall not be satisfied with an answer from the bride's parents or relatives on her behalf.

4. The two marriage witnesses shall be mature, pious, Orthodox believers, of sound mind and senses, and not related to either the bride or the bridegroom.

5. It is advisable to observe a reasonable period of time between the engagement and the wedding, enabling the couple to come to know each other and thus enter the Holy institution of Matrimony without prohibitions.

6. The Priest shall not perform the wedding ceremony without first obtaining a written permit from the Archbishop of the Diocese or his representative.

7. If a bride is a Christian but non-Orthodox, she may be married by a special permit from the Archbishop or his representative enabling her to follow the Church of the bridegroom.

8. Both the bridegroom and the bride shall go to confession and take the Holy Communion prior to the wedding ceremony.

9. The wedding ceremony shall take place in the Church unless absolute necessity requires its performance in the home.

10. During the ceremony the priest shall place the crowns (wreaths) over the heads of the wedded couple.

11. Only the Parish Priest has the right to perform the marriage ceremony. Other Priests may perform the same ceremony by special permission of the Archbishop of the Diocese or by invitation of the Parish Priest.

12. The Priest may not perform the marriage ceremony of his own daughter unless no other Priest is available. He may act as the representative of his daughter at her wedding, but he may not be her witness.

13. During the wedding ceremony, the bride shall stand at the right of the bridegroom while the bridesmaid stands at her right, carrying a lighted candle in her right hand. The bestman shall stand at the left of the bridegroom, carrying a cross in this right hand.

14. The marriage of a widower shall be performed at least forty days after the death of his wife, while the marriage of a widow shall be performed at least ten months after the death of her former husband.

15. The marriage ceremony of widows and widowers shall consist of a special order not containing benediction of the rings or the crowns. If the ceremony is the first marriage for either the groom or the bride, he or she will be entitled to the benediction of the rings and the crowns.

16. After the marriage ceremony, the Priest shall immediately enter the following data in the Church's marriage record: the names of the married couple, the name of the bestman, the name of the bridesmaid, and the day and year of the marriage. He shall also record his own name. And, if the Archbishop has granted special permission of any kind for the marriage, it too shall be recorded. A copy of the marriage certificate should be presented immediately to the couple.

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

of the Fourth Non-official Syriac Consultation on Sacraments

Building on the three earlier Non-Official Consultations on Dialogue within the Syriac Tradition (1994, 1996, 1997), PRO ORIENTE (Vienna) had invited participants from nine different Churches of the Syriac tradition to meet together from 29 February to 2 March 2000 for the Fourth non-official Syriac Consultation, on the topic of Sacraments in the Syriac Tradition.

At this Consultation the East Syriac tradition was represented by:

- the Church of the East (Assyrian Church of the East and Ancient Church of the East),
 - the Chaldean Church,
 - the Syro-Malabar Church,
- and the West Syriac tradition by
- the Maronite Church,
 - the Syrian Catholic Church,
 - the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church,
 - the Malankara Catholic Church.

Unfortunately the participant from the Syrian Orthodox Church, Archbishop Mar Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim, was prevented by ill health from attending and giving his paper in person.

All the participants take the opportunity to express their profound thanks to the PRO ORIENTE Foundation and to its staff for organizing and arranging the Seminar, and for continuing the most valuable work of PRO ORIENTE after the much lamented death of its President, Mr Alfred Stirnemann. The participants wished to express their profound appreciation of all the work of Mr Alfred Stirnemann, as General Secretary and then President of PRO ORIENTE in the service of ecumenical relations.

It was a special privilege for the Seminar to have Cardinal Franz König, the Founder of PRO ORIENTE, present on the first day to open the proceedings, and to have present at lunch on the second day Cardinal Christoph Schönborn, Archbishop of Vienna and Chairman of the Board of Trustees of PRO ORIENTE, and the Acting President of PRO ORIENTE, Dr. Johann Marte. It was also an honour for the members of the Seminar to be invited to a reception by His Excellency the Ambassador of Lebanon, William Habib. They would also like to thank the staff of Pallotti Haus for their friendly welcome and hospitality.

In the course of the Fourth Consultation five papers were read and there was good opportunity to discuss the issues raised by them at length. The titles of the papers read were:

- Understanding Church of the East Sacramental Theology: The Theodorian Perspective (Mar Bawai Soro);
- Maronite Sacramental Theology (Father Elie Khalifé-Hachem);
- Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist in the Church of the East (Chorbishop Michael J. Birnie);
- The Sacrament of Initiation (Baptism) in the West Syrian Tradition (Father Johns Abraham Konat);
- Sacraments of Initiation in the Syro-Malabar Church (Father Joseph Chalassery).

The subject for the first day was "Sacraments in General". The Syriac term corresponding to "sacrament" is *raza* (East Syriac)/*rozo* (West Syriac), but since the connotations and range of meaning of this term are far closer to those of the Greek *mysterion*, it might be preferable, in certain contexts at least, to represent *raza/rozo* as "Mystery", rather than "Sacrament", or to leave it in transliteration. Although Syriac *raza/rozo* can just mean "secret" (as in the Aramaic of the Book of Daniel), there are two main religious contexts where it has a technical sense: in exegesis it corresponds approximately to "type", "symbol" (in the patristic sense of the word where an ontological link is understood as existing between the symbol and the reality it symbolizes), and in liturgy, where the (plural) *raze/roze* are par excellence the Eucharistic Mysteries. In both cases *raza/rozo* denotes a visible sign endowed with a "hidden power" (St Ephrem) which, in the case of the *raze/roze* in Scripture and in the natural world, serves as a vehicle for the disclosure of a divine reality, and, in the case of the Eucharistic Mysteries/*Qurbana/Qurbono*, as a means and vehicle of salvation.

In a liturgical context, originally the term *raze/roze* was confined to the Eucharistic Mysteries: since baptism concluded with these, this (together with forgiveness of sins and holy oil) was effectively included in this overall term. In the light of this understanding, which was common to all the Syriac Churches prior to the divisions of the fifth and following centuries, the liturgical *raze/roze* were confined to these Mysteries par excellence, these being the *raze/roze* which provided the means for salvation for the entire Christian community, effected through the ministry of the ordained priesthood. Later, however, and perhaps under the influence of Dionysius the Areopagite (late 5th century), the term *raza/rozo* came to be extended in a liturgical context to other liturgical rites, although the identity of these differed between the different Syriac traditions, and sometimes within the same tradition. Thus, in the Syrian Orthodox, Syrian Catholic and Maronite Churches the term was extended to refer also to the Myron, and in the Church of the East to the *malka*, or Holy Leaven. In the various medieval enumerations of *raze/roze* there is no regular fixed number given, although under later western influence the symbolic figure of seven sometimes became the norm; even so, the contents of these lists was not uniformly fixed among the Syriac Churches.

One of the consequences of the difference in connotation between the terms sacrament and *raza/rozo* was that the Syriac tradition as such has never developed an equivalent of western sacramental theology or any clear distinction between sacraments and sacramentals.

Despite a number of outward differences, there is no essential difference from western tradition in the basic understanding of the underlying meaning and theological content of the various sacraments/*raze/roze*.

Sacraments are celebrations of *mdabranutha/mdabronutho* (Economy of Salvation), namely God's plan in Jesus Christ to save humanity by offering his divine grace through those rites which the Church recognizes as holy *raze/roze*. Jesus Christ, by his own sacrifice on the Cross made atonement for our sins and brought about reconciliation with God. Thus he brings God's forgiveness and redemption to the world and renews God's covenant with all humanity. Through the celebration of *raze/roze* the Church is built up as the Body of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. The believer is given participation in the death and resurrection of Christ and in the life of the Kingdom to come. A distinctive emphasis of the Church of the East is the following: the work of the Holy Spirit

simultaneously confers the earnest, or pledge, of immortality and empowers the human person to deal with sin successfully and live in obedience before God.

The topic for discussion on the second day was "The Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist)". It emerged very clearly that this western terminology, with Sacraments in the plural, did not correspond to the situation in the Syriac tradition, where historically the rite incorporated all three elements into a single celebration; in particular, there was no separation between the baptismal immersion and the post-immersion anointing (to which the later western notion of Confirmation corresponds).

In the case of both the Baptismal Rite and the Eucharistic Mysteries it is important to treat the rite as a whole, and not as distinct units in an excessively analytical manner: thus it is misleading to try to isolate particular moments when (for example) the gift of the Spirit is conferred in Baptism, or whether it is the Institution Narrative or the Epiclesis which effects the consecration.

Special mention was made of the richness of the symbolism of baptism in the Syriac tradition and the close connection between Christian baptism and the baptism of Christ in the Jordan. Among those elements considered in the papers, particularly significant were the entrance of the newly-baptized into the life of the Holy Trinity, and their incorporation into the full life of the Church. It was also noted that all the Syriac communities use the reading from St John's Gospel (2:23-3:8) in the baptismal rite, where the emphasis is on the "new birth" of the baptized, though eventually St Paul's emphasis on death and resurrection in Baptism was incorporated within the tradition as well.

An important point which was noted, but not further explored, was the fact that on occasion interaction between the liturgical rites of the different Syriac Churches still took place after the divisions between them had occurred.

The participants strongly encourage PRO ORIENTE to continue the most valuable initiative of a dialogue within the Syriac Tradition. For future consideration and study they suggest the following as possible topics:

- rites which are identified and listed differently as *raze/roze* by the individual Syriac Churches (Penance, Marriage, Anointing of the sick, Holy Leaven, Myron, Sign of the Cross);
- the interaction between the different liturgical traditions and their consequences;
- the theology and practice of mission in the Churches of the Syriac tradition in both historical and contemporary experience;
- priesthood.

In conclusion, these days provided a unique and most useful opportunity, provided by PRO ORIENTE, for members of the different Churches of Syriac tradition to discuss and learn directly from each other about each others' understanding of the Sacraments. It was extremely gratifying to discover the large amount of agreement between the traditions of the different Syriac Churches over essentials.

Dietmar W. Winkler

DOGMATIC AND HISTORICAL RESULTS OF THE FIRST THREE PRO ORIENTE SYRIAC CONSULTATIONS

From its beginning PRO ORIENTE has given important theological stimulus to ecumenical relations with the Eastern Churches.¹ The genius of PRO ORIENTE is the unofficial character of its consultations and study seminars. Participants – members of the respective churches supported by distinguished experts on theology and church history – have the opportunity to confer in openness and to find new approaches in ecumenically stuck situations.

In the matter of Christology, the five non-official Vienna Consultations between Oriental Orthodox and Roman Catholic theologians (1971-1988) provided the basis for subsequent official Joint Declarations between Roman Popes and Oriental Orthodox Patriarchs. This dialogue gave sustained attention to the Alexandrine reflection on the incarnate Christ, while the Antiochene approach to Christology stood out of the way.

In 1994 PRO ORIENTE began to study the Antiochene tradition, together with the history and theology of the "Nestorian" Assyrian Church of the East, and has started a series of Consultations for the dialogue within the Churches of the Syriac tradition. The special quality of this "Syriac Dialogue" lies in the participation of all the Syriac Churches: The Assyrian Churches of the East (Old and New-Calendarian), the Oriental-Orthodox Churches (Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch, Malankara Orthodox Church of India), and the respective Oriental Catholic Churches (Chaldean, Syrian, Maronite, Syro-Malabar, Syro-Malankara Churches). The common Syriac tradition "ensured a willingness to understand theological positions that might appear to be diametrically opposed to one's own."²

The first three of these PRO ORIENTE Consultations centered mainly around Christology since this has been identified as the crucial point in ecumenical efforts. The results are remarkable and deserve careful reflection.

1. The first PRO ORIENTE Syriac Consultation (Vienna 1994): Historical and Theological Basics

The first Syriac Consultation (Vienna, June 24-29, 1994) was called: „Orthodoxy and Catholicity in the Syriac Tradition with Special Attention to the Theology of the Church of the East in the Sasanian Empire“.³ The papers dealt mainly with historical or theological questions from the fifth to the seventh centuries, providing the basis for discussions on the „Nestorianism“ of the Church of the East.

Two Assyrian participants, Mar Bawai Soro and Michael J. Birnie (both USA), made clear that the Assyrian Church of the East neither takes the view of a Christology that

¹ Revised version of a lecture given at the „2nd Symposium on History, Theology and Liturgy of the Syriac Churches (Wittenberg/Germany, July 14-16, 2000). I am grateful to Hannelore Tambornino (PRO ORIENTE/Vienna) for initial help with this English text, and to Patrick Henry (Institute for Ecumenical and Cultural Research, Collegeville) for refining and correcting my prose style.

² S. Brock, „Pro Oriente Consultation 1994: Orthodoxy and Catholicity in the Syriac Tradition“, in: Sobornost 16/2 (1994) 59-62, here 60; reprint: Syriac Dialogue 1. First non-official consultation on dialogue within the syriac tradition. Ed. PRO ORIENTE. Vienna 1994, 223-226, here 224.

³ Papers, Discussions and Communiqué published in: Syriac Dialogue 1.

results in two subjects, persons or sons, nor interprets the teaching of Nestorius in that way. This is evident also in the excellent summary of research on Nestorius by Luise Abramowski (Germany), as well as in the papers of Adelbert Davids (Netherlands), Bernard Dupuy OP (France) and Sebastian Brock (England). It appeared, however, that the Oriental Orthodox (miaphysite) Churches especially in light of their tradition, have problems and reservations regarding the Christology of the Assyrian Church.

Further, the papers of Sebastian Brock and Jean Marie Fiey OP (Lebanon) made it clear that the Church of the East spread in a different historical and theological context. The East Syrian or Persian Church did not come into being because of the condemnation of Nestorius at the Council of Ephesus (431) or a schism from the Roman Imperial Church. It can be proven that the origin of the Persian church "dates from the end of the first century, or, at latest, the beginning of the second century."⁴ Persian bishops were not present at the Council of Ephesus (431) or at the Council of Chalcedon (451). The Church has its history outside the bounds of the Roman Empire. As Sebastian Brock notes, this "is especially important to remember in connection with the 'Ecumenical Councils': These were gatherings confined to the bishops of the Roman Empire and they were in any case convoked by the Roman Emperor, whose authority of course was not recognized outside the bounds of the Roman Empire. This of course meant that the creeds and canons issued by these Councils were only authoritative within the Roman Empire – though they might... be subsequently accepted by the Church outside the Roman Empire."⁵ The fact that the so-called "ecumenical" Councils were imperial synods is of utmost importance for the question of the reception of councils in contemporary ecumenical dialogue.

When Christianity became the state religion of the Roman Empire, the Persian kings regarded the Christians as a potential threat to their interests and suspected their loyalty. During the Persian persecutions of the 4th century in the Sasanian Empire, many Christians had to seek refuge in the Roman Empire. Some of them studied at the famous School of Edessa, where they adopted an Antiochene Theology and eventually brought this approach to the Persian Empire. When the Christians of the Church of the East got caught between the politics of the ancient superpowers Persia and Rome, they needed to distance themselves from the state religion of the Roman Empire to avoid suspicions that they were collaborators with the enemy. Further, there was a significant immigration of Christians into the Persian Empire after the condemnation of Nestorius and the expulsion of his adherents from the Roman Empire. So this could be one of the reasons that the East Syrian church decided for a diphysite Christology at the synods of Beth Lapat and Seleucia-Ctesiphon in 484/486. But yet the great ecumenical theologian Wilhelm de Vries – followed by numerous western scholars – wrote: "the official adoption of *Nestorianism* by the Persian Church took place at the Synod of Seleucia in 486."⁶ However, the brief Christological statement of that East Syrian (Persian) synod⁷ does not reveal "Nestorianism", but a diphysite Antiochene Christology. Today there should

⁴ J. M. Fiey, „The Spread of the Persian Church“, *Syriac Dialogue* 1, 97.

⁵ S. Brock, „The Church of the East in the Sasanian Empire up to the Sixth Century and its Absence from the Councils in the Roman Empire“, *Syriac Dialogue* 1, 70.

⁶ W. de Vries, „Die syrisch-nestorianische Haltung zu Chalkedon“, A. Grillmeier/H. Bacht, *Das Konzil von Chalkedon. Geschichte und Gegenwart*, vol. I. 2nd ed. Würzburg 1962, 603. Emphasis mine.

⁷ Cf. J.-B. Chabot (ed.), *Synodicon Orientale ou recueil de synodes nestoriens*, Paris 1902, 55 (lin. 1-9 syr.), 302 (fz.). Syr. text with German translation in: D.W. Winkler, *Koptische Kirche und Reichskirche. Altes Schisma und neuer Dialog*. Innsbruck 1997 (Innsbrucker theologische Studien 48), 61f.

be no doubt about the fundamental orthodoxy of this passage. Sebastian Brock finds "nothing specifically Nestorian in the formulation of the wording"⁸. He directs attention to William F. Macomber who having interpreted the Christology of this Synod in a consistently negative fashion, nevertheless admitted in 1958, "It is also true that the words used can be taken as *materially* orthodox".⁹ It seems to me that western research had an idea of the orthodoxy of the East Syrian Church, but because of centuries old prejudices, churches as well as scholars were not willing to interpret it this way. It is of some note that the name "Nestorius" does not appear in the records of the East Syrian synods (*Synodicon Orientale*) before the 7th century.

Analysis of East Syrian synods and theologians show that the Church of the East handed down an Orthodox Christology.¹⁰ In his paper, Adalbert J. Davids concluded, that in the light of the *Synodicon Orientale*, there is an explicit Antiochene Christology present "since the end of the fifth century and [it] will be developed in an 'anti-Eutychian' sense from 585 onwards. At the same time there is a growing importance of the person and of the theology of Theodore of Mopsuestia for the Persian Church."¹¹ Theological reflection always takes as its point of departure the Nicean and Nicean-Constantinopolitan creed.

As a result of contemporary research we have to recognize that the theology of the Church of the East is more "Theodorian" than "Nestorian". Among the Greek doctors of the Church of the East such as Diodor of Tarsus, Theodore of Mopsuestia, and Nestorius, the last seems to be more a symbol than an important theologian. The influence of Theodore, however, is obvious.

The road to better understanding leads through terminology. We have to find out what the East Syrian theologians intended to say with the terms they used, rather than asking what their opponents imagined they read in these expressions. Are the Syriac terms "kyana", "qnoma" and "parsopa" really identical with the Greek physis, hypostasis and prosopon? Along such lines we have to examine the formula "two kyane and two qnome in one parsopa" forced by Babai the Great (551/2-628), one of the most important East Syriac theologians, and adopted by the Church of the East in 612. Babai especially has been accused of being a real Nestorian, because the Syriac and the Greek terminology were regarded as identical in their meaning.¹² Taking his lead from the marvelous research of Luise Abramowski¹³, the Syro-Malankara theologian Geevarghese Chediath shows the richness, nuances and brilliance of Babai's Christology.¹⁴ In his paper at the first Syriac Consultation, he analyzed the terminology of Babai, and showed that the Syriac "qnoma" should not be translated with the Greek "hypostasis". "Babai finds the unity of Christ on the side of the parsopa [prosopon, person] of Filiation and the duality on the side of natures with their proper qnome. There is only one Son,

⁸ S. Brock, „The Church of the East in the Sasanian Empire“, *Syriac Dialogue* 1, 79f.

⁹ W. F. Macomber, „The Christology of the Synod of Seleucia-Ctesiphon AD 486“, *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 24 (1958) 142-154, esp. 154. Emphasis mine.

¹⁰ Cf. also D.W. Winkler, *Ostsyrisches Christentum. Untersuchungen zur Christologie, Ekklesiologie und zu den ökumenischen Beziehungen der Assyrischen Kirche des Ostens*. Habilitationsschrift Graz 2000.

¹¹ A. J. Davids, „Is the Theology of the Assyrian Church Nestorian?“, *Syriac Dialogue* 1, 234-142.

¹² Cf. W. de Vries, „Die syrisch-nestorianische Haltung zu Chalkedon“, 617.

¹³ Cf. L. Abramowski, „Die Christologie Babai des Großen“, *Symposium Syriacum Rom 1974* (*Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 197) 219-244; Idem, „Babai der Große. Christologische Probleme und ihre Lösungen“, *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 41 (1975) 289-343.

¹⁴ cf. G. Chediath, *The Christology of Mar Babai the Great* (OIRSI 49), Kottayam 1982.

and he is God and man, having perfect godhead and perfect manhood".¹⁵ Although the Greek hypostasis was always translated into Syriac with qnoma, the Syriac term has a wider field of meaning and is often closer to the Greek idiotes (properties).¹⁶ Sebastian Brock therefore suggested not to translate the Syriac term qnoma, but to transliterate it.¹⁷

Especially today, with new discoveries of contextual theology and inculturation, we have to acknowledge that there is a valuable heritage of and contribution to Christology outside the bounds of the theology approved by the Councils of the Roman Imperial Church.

In the course of the consultation expectations of reaching a christological convergence surfaced, but were finally not realized. "Given the centuries of miscomprehension that have divided these Churches, it was thought that such a statement would be premature and open to misunderstanding and misinterpretation in some circles."¹⁸ Despite the progress achieved, the final Joint Communiqué therefore is mainly descriptive. Although it states that the mystery of the incarnation of Christ is "ineffable and never fully comprehensible nor expressible", the communiqué continues cautiously: "... we, at this consultation have started to discuss and further explore the principle of various theological expressions in the one Faith."¹⁹

In ecumenical dialogues there is unfortunately still much difficulty in handling already existing results of current theological and critical historical research. Nevertheless, the first PRO ORIENTE Syriac Consultation made evident that the theology of the Church of the East cannot be reduced to Nestorius, or to a Christology considered to be connected with him.

For continuation of the PRO ORIENTE Syriac Dialogue a "Follow-up Commission" was suggested by participants. Its task "will be to plan future consultations, symposia, publications, etc., and to develop the appropriate procedures and methods."²⁰ The PRO ORIENTE Commission on Dialogue within the Syriac Tradition (short: "Syriac Commission") had its constitutive meeting in September 1994 in Kaslik (Lebanon) and further gatherings in February and June 1995 in Vienna.²¹ The second Syriac Dialogue was prepared carefully.

¹⁵ G. Chediath, "The Theological Contribution of Mar Babai the Great", *Pro Oriente, Syriac Dialogue* 1, 164.

¹⁶ Cf. S. Brock, "The Christology of the Church of the East", D. Afinogenov & A. Muraviev (eds.), *Traditions and Heritage of the Christian East*. Moscow 1996, 159-179.

¹⁷ Cf. S. Brock, "The Christology of the Church of the East in the Synods of the Fifth to Early Seventh Centuries: Preliminary Considerations and Materials", G. D. Dragas (Ed.), *Aksum-Thyateira. A Festschrift for Archbishop Methodios*, London 1985, 125-142, reprint in: S. Brock, *Studies in Syriac Christianity. History, Literature and Theology*. London 1992.

¹⁸ Brock, "Pro Oriente Consultation 1994" 225.

¹⁹ Joint Communiqué, *Syriac Dialogue* 1, 197-199.

²⁰ Ibid. 198.

²¹ The members of the PRO ORIENTE Syriac Commission are currently: Bishop Mar Bawai Soro (Assyrian Church of the East), Bishop Mar Emmanuel Eilya (Ancient Church of the East), Archbishop Mar Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim (Syrian-Orthodox), Fr. K. M. George (Malankara Orthodox), Archbishop Mar Joseph Po-wathil (Syro-Malabar Catholic), Fr. Louis Sako (Chaldean Catholic), Archbishop Boulos Youssef Matar (Maronite), Archbishop Jules Mikhael Al-Jamil (Syrian Catholic), Fr. Geevarghese Chediath (Syro-Malankara Catholic), Fr. Frans Bouwen, Peter Hofrichter, Dietmar W. Winkler (PRO ORIENTE/Roman-Catholic).

2. The Second PRO ORIENTE Syriac Consultation (Vienna 1996): Towards a Christological Convergence

The second non-official Syriac Consultation, held from 22 to 27 February 1996 in Vienna, was thoroughly successful.²² The subjects treated there were the Christological agreement already achieved, problems of the Council of Ephesus (431), the Three Chapters controversy and the liturgical expressions of Christology in the East Syrian tradition. As only one day was reserved for each of these topics, this very full program sometimes did not permit profound discussions. Nevertheless, respectable results have been achieved.

Shortly after the First Syriac Consultation the Common Christological Declaration between Pope John Paul II and Catholicos-Patriarch Mar Dinkha IV was signed (November 11, 1994). This agreement and the christological debate and results of the five Pro Oriente Consultations between Oriental-Orthodox and Catholic theologians (1971-1988)²³ prepared the ground for the progress at the second Syriac Consultation.

Reports on the Christological debate of the five Pro Oriente Consultations with Oriental Orthodoxy were presented at the second Syriac Dialogue by Frans Bouwen MA (Jerusalem) and Mar Aprem Mookken (India). The most important result of these consultations is the so-called "Vienna Christological Formula", a common expression of the faith in Christ produced by Oriental Orthodox and Catholic theologians at the first Pro Oriente Consultation in Vienna 1971, which was the basis for subsequent official declarations between Roman Pontiffs and Oriental Orthodox Patriarchs. Mar Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim (Syria), Msgr. Boulos Y. Matar (Lebanon) and Mar Bawai Soro commented on the christological agreement between the Assyrian and the Catholic Church.

Although there are common christological declarations between the Roman Catholic Church and the ("pre-Chalcedonian") Oriental Orthodox Churches on the one hand and the ("pre-Ephesian") Assyrian Church of the East on the other, a christological agreement between Oriental Orthodox and Assyrians is still missing. However, for the first time in ecumenical history some sort of christological convergence between the pre-Ephesian, the pre-Chalcedonian and the Chalcedonian Syriac churches was achieved at the second Pro Oriente Syriac consultation. In the Joint Communiqué, the Niceno-Constantinopolitan creed (381) provides the common basis, and further on we read: "the participants agreed with and were able to *proceed from* a common understanding with the Unity of Faith that was expressed in the Vienna Christological Formula".²⁴ The words of this christological accord is: „We believe that our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, is God the Son Incarnate; perfect in his divinity and perfect in his humanity. His divinity was not separated from his humanity for a single moment, not for the twinkling of an eye. His humanity is one with his divinity without commixtion, without confusion, without division, without separation. We in our common faith in the one Lord Jesus Christ, regard his mystery inexhaustible and ineffable and for the human mind never

²² Papers, Discussions and Communiqué published in: *Syriac Dialogue* 2. Second non-official consultation on dialogue within the Syriac tradition. Ed. PRO ORIENTE. Vienna 1997.

²³ Published in: *Wort und Wahrheit*. Suppl. Issues 1-5 (1971, 1973, 1976, 1978, 1988); detailed analyses cf. Winkler, *Koptische Kirche und Reichskirche*, 260-302.

²⁴ Joint Communiqué, *Syriac Dialogue* 2, 191-194, here 192. Emphasis mine.

fully comprehensible or expressible.²⁵ This christological accord of 1971 has its roots in the Coptic Liturgy, the Syriac vita of Dioscur written by Theopistos (6th c.), the Formula of Union between Antioch and Alexandria (433) and the Council of Chalcedon (451).²⁶ That the Vienna Christological Formula can be accepted by the Church of the East is remarkable.

It is further noteworthy that a theological correspondence between the Church of the East and the Imperial Church was discovered: "The *theological thought* and formulations of the Church of the East as present in its liturgical and synodical sources are considered to be in line with the teachings of the Ecumenical Councils of Nicea (325), Constantinople (381) and *compatible* with those of the Council of Ephesus."²⁷ If we consider that Nestorius was condemned by the last of these, it is remarkable that the Final Communiqué of the second Syriac Dialogue states that „the theological contents discussed at the Council of Ephesus 431 are shared in one form or another by all the Churches of the Syriac Tradition.“²⁸ The ability of the participants to think theologically in a fresh way and not in categories of old prejudices made this progress possible. However, the Council of Ephesus (431) never passed a doctrinal statement, and there is ongoing discussion about what its theological content might in fact be.²⁹ To make things clear, the Joint Communiqué therefore points out "that there is a necessity to make an absolute distinction between the doctrinal position of the Assyrian Church of the East and the position, recognized by all to be heretical which holds, that there are two Sons, two propsoa in the one Incarnate Christ, a position which is traditionally described by the Chalcedonians and Oriental Orthodox as 'Nestorianism'".³⁰

The christological misunderstandings and problems are a result primarily of the identification of Syriac with Greek terminology. This is especially the case with the term "qnoma", usually translated into Greek as "hypostasis" and into western languages as "person". Another important step at the second Syriac Dialogue was done with the distinction "between the understanding in the Church of the East of the term qnoma (i.e. individuated, but not personalized nature) and that of some other Syriac Churches where qnoma is regularly understood as the equivalent of hypostasis in the sense of person."³¹ Further the Assyrian, Chaldean and Syro-Malabar delegations of the Church of the East presented an explanation of the term qnoma: "In Christology, as expressed in the synodical and liturgical sources of the Church of the East the term 'qnoma' does not mean 'hypostasis' as understood in the Alexandrine Tradition, but instead, individuated nature. Accordingly, the human nature, which the Holy Spirit fashioned, the Logos assumed and united to Himself without any separation, was personalized in the Person of the Son of God. When we speak of the two natures and their qnome, we understand this very much the same sense as two natures and their particular properties (dilayatha). It is im-

portant to note that the term 'qnoma' is used in a different way in Trinitarian theology."³²

This explanation of the East Syriac understanding of „qnoma“ corresponds perfectly with the Christology of the early Church of the East. Babai the Great († 628) laid the cornerstone with his precise definitions in the "Book of Union", and already the Catholicoi of the 7th century – Ishoyahb II of Gdala († 646), Ishoyahb III of Adiabene († 658) and Giwargis I of Kaphra († 680) – assumed and received his christological approach and terminology.³³ This definition should be taken into consideration in any further theological discussion to facilitate ecumenical rapprochement instead of repeating ancient prejudices permanently.

In a further working session, the second Syriac Consultation dealt with the so-called "Three Chapters Controversy". The conflict in the years up to the second Council of Constantinople is not a glorious episode in church history, and it is not my aim to repeat it here.³⁴ However, the controversies between 544 and 553 resulted in the condemnation of (1) the person and works of Theodore of Mopsuestia, (2) the works of Theodoret of Cyrus, and (3) the letter of Ibas of Edessa to Mari the Persian at Constantinople II (533).

In the second Syriac Consultation it became evident that the Three Chapters Controversy was a dispute within the Roman Imperial Church. The papers and discussions showed that the historic proceedings before and at the Council of Constantinople II were of little interest to the Assyrian and Oriental Orthodox participants. Michael J. Birnie (Assyrian/USA) and Mar Gregorios Saliba (Syrian Orthodox/Iraq) spoke about the condemned persons and writings, but not in the context of the council. Only the lectures of the Catholic participants – Geevarghese Chediath (Malankara Catholic) and especially of Vincenzo Poggi SJ (Italy) – treated the topic in the way "western" Theology and church history is accustomed to do it: Constantinople II is seen as the trying to reconcile Chalcedonians and Non-Chalcedonians by condemning "Nestorian" writers. In my opinion the Fifth "Ecumenical" Council was doomed to fail in this respect. It had no significance for several Churches, as they were outside the borders of the Roman (Byzantine) Empire and its Church.

The discussion on the Three Chapters has almost no echo in the final Communiqué of the second Syriac Consultation. The one sentence referring to it, however, contains a methodologically important admonition: "Our discussion of the Three Chapters Controversy, and the ensuing condemnation of the 'Three Chapters' at the Council of Constantinople (533), led us to see the need to make the distinction between doctrines condemned and persons anathematized."³⁵ Therefore participants suggested studying Nestorius and Theodore of Mopsuestia in the context of their condemnations and discussing the canonical status of an anathema.

Again and again in the history of the Church, non-mainstream theological approaches have been stigmatized as heresies by personalizing them. This is a serious obstacle in ecumenical dialogues, even when current theological research deduces on the basis of new found and edited texts that a certain historical person did not hold the position attributed by tradition to him.

²⁵ Communiqué of the first non-official Consultation between Theologians of the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church, Wort und Wahrheit Suppl. Issue 1 (1971), 182.

²⁶ Cf. my „Ein Passus aus der koptischen Basileiosliturgie und der syrischen Vita Dioscori als Quellen der Wiener Christologischen Formel“, S. Emmel et.al. (ed.), Ägypten und Nubien in spätantiker und christlicher Zeit. Vol 1. Wiesbaden 1999 (Sprachen und Kulturen des Christlichen Orients 6,1), 534-545.

²⁷ Joint Communiqué, Syriac Dialogue 2, 192. Emphasis mine.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Cf. S. Brock, „Dialogue within the Syriac Tradition: The Second PRO ORIENTE Consultation“, Sobornost 19:1 (1997) 78-81, here 80; reprint in, Syriac Dialogue 2, 222-225, here 224.

³⁰ Joint Communiqué, Syriac Dialogue 2, 193.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Cf. D.W. Winkler, Ostsyrisches Christentum. Untersuchungen zur Christologie, Ekklesiologie und zu den ökumenischen Beziehungen der Assyrischen Kirche des Ostens. Habilitationsschrift Graz 2000.

³⁴ For the Three Chapters Controversy cf. also D.W. Winkler, „Theodosios von Alexandrien (535-566), Ökumenischer Patriarch der Miaphysiten“, Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie 121 (1999), 406-409.

³⁵ Joint Communiqué, Syriac Dialogue 2, 192.

3. The third PRO ORIENTE Syriac Consultation (Chicago 1997): Examining Theodore of Mopsuestia and Nestorius

One of the most painful problems of divided Christianity is the fact that fathers and saints of one Church are condemned as heretics by another one. It is not a rare case that a church's identity was determined by delimitation and exclusion, and that those images and stories were transmitted throughout the centuries by tradition.

Theodore of Mopsuestia and Nestorius of Constantinople are names connected with the schisms and christological problems of the fifth century. Their teaching and their condemnation, as well as the relation between the latter and the Assyrian Church of the East, were at the center of the third Pro Oriente Syriac Consultation in Chicago (July 8-11, 1997).³⁶

In fact, this subject area had been present throughout the first three consultations. Above all, in the first Syriac Consultation Nestorius was at the center of interest because of the classical accusation against the Assyrian Church. Already there it became clear that it is advisable to turn rather to Theodore of Mopsuestia in order to understand East Syriac Christology. At the second Syriac Consultation Nestorius and Theodore were again on the agenda, because the Council of Ephesus and the Three Chapters Controversy were discussed.

Before I introduce the Third Syriac Consultation, I will sketch the theological problem around Theodore and Nestorius. They are not simply two saints or "Greek" doctors venerated among others in the Church of the East. The writings of Theodore became the measure of orthodoxy in the course of the sixth century. Nestorius as a saint has above all symbolic character, as a heresy named after him has been tagged to the Church of the East, although this Patriarch of Constantinople never had belonged to the hierarchy of the East Syriac Church. Further Theodore and Nestorius have a special place in the liturgy of the Church of the East. Only three anaphoras have been in use since the liturgical reform of Catholicos Ishoyahb III of Adiabene (+ 658): The Anaphora of the Apostles Addai and Mari, the Anaphora of Mar Theodore and the Anaphora of Mar Nestorius. Alongside to the liturgical formula named after the first apostles who brought the gospel to the Church of the East are the two anaphoras with the names of the controversial doctors of the Church. Therefore the question about their heterodoxy or orthodoxy is not at all a mere intellectual question of only speculative interest.

3.1. Theodore of Mopsuestia

Theodore is the most outstanding exegete and classical representative of the so-called "Antiochene School". He studied together with John Chrysostom (+407) at the school of the famous pagan teacher (rhetor) Libanius and later on at the one of Diodore of Tarsus († before 394). In 392 he became bishop of Mopsuestia in Cilicia. He died there highly respected and in peace with the Church, in the year 428.

Like his teacher, Diodore of Tarsus, Theodore was attacked as a heretic only after his death in the course of the Christological conflict between Cyril of Alexandria (+444) and Nestorius. The conflict was enflamed anew by the Three Chapters Controversy in the 6th century. Finally, the person and writings of Theodore were anathematized at the

³⁶ Lectures, Discussions and Communiqué published in: Syriac Dialogue 3. Third non-official Consultation on Dialogue within the Syriac Tradition. Ed. PRO ORIENTE. Vienna 1998.

Second Council of Constantinople (553). The circumstances of his condemnation leave many questions open as his Christology should have answer to questions which arose 125 years after his death.

Theodore was an extraordinarily prolific author. He wrote commentaries on almost the whole Old and New Testament. Because of his condemnation unfortunately only a small part of his work has been preserved. Most even of this would probably have been lost completely without the translation of the original Greek works into Syriac. In his dogmatic writings he reveals himself as a defender of the faith of Nicea. Regrettably the Syriac manuscript of his important work "On the Incarnation" was lost during World War I, and only his writing against the Macedonians has been preserved. Consequently his "Catechetical Homilies" preserved in Syriac are the most important source for understanding his theology.³⁷

There is no doubt that only beginning with Theodore may one speak of a classical diphysite Antiochene Christology. It is the consensus of current research that Theodore gained great merit in the struggle against Apollinarism, and that his Christology, in the context of his entire theology has to be seen as a positive contribution to the history of the Christian faith.³⁸

Theodore's theology emphasizes the full humanity of Christ. He seeks to achieve an interpretation of the union of God and Man in Christ that preserves the integrity of both the divinity of the Word and the Humanity. Theodore elaborates the "Logos-Anthropos" Christology and criticizes the *Logos-Sarx* framework, as the two christological approaches are called in the history of dogma today.³⁹ Against Arius and Apollinaris of Laodicea, Theodore speaks clearly of a full and unrestricted humanity with a rational soul in Jesus Christ. He argues against Apollinaris that the Logos could not simply take the place of the soul, for this would not be appropriate to His divine nature, and would in fact lower it. To maintain the transcendence of the divinity it is necessary to see the gap between Creator and creation. Theodore therefore unrestrictedly holds for the divine as well as human nature in Christ. Nevertheless, as an Anti-Apollinaristic Christology has to accentuate the perfect humanity of Christ, it has also to stress more the difference of the two natures. The remaining problem is how it is possible to think of the unity of both.

Theodore refers to an analogy in man: Soul and body of man have a different nature respectively. As both natures are able to exist separately, according to Theodore we must concede to each nature a hypostasis, a real existence, too. The Second Person of the Trinity, the Word of God, the Son, has to be distinguished from the one born of the Virgin from David's descent. It is only one Son, the two radically distinct natures do not constitute two persons, and they are one prosopon. This is how Theodore says it: "... through the union the two natures which have been brought together make up *one* prosopon [hen prosopon] according to the union. Just as the Lord said of a man and his wife that 'they are no longer two, but one flesh', so let us reasonably say, in accordance

³⁷ Cf. P. Bruns, *Den Menschen mit dem Himmel verbinden. (A Study on the Catechetical Homilies of Theodore of Mopsuestia)*. Louvain 1995 (CSCO 549 Subs. 89).

³⁸ Cf. A. Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*. Vol. I: From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon (451). 2nd ed. Atlanta 1975, 421-439; L. Abramowski, "Über die Fragmente des Theodor von Mopsuestia in Brit. Libr. aDd.12.156 und das doppelt überlieferte christologische Fragment": *Oriens Christianus* 79 (1995) 1-8, engl.: *The Harp* 6/3 (1993) 199-206.

³⁹ For the different approaches in Christology („Logos-Sarx“ and „Logos-Anthropos“) cf. Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition* I.

with the principle of the union [henosis]. 'So they are no longer two prosopa, but one', the natures being of course distinguished. For just as in the former case it does no harm to the one flesh to be called by the number two, since it is evident in what sense they are called one; so also in the latter case the union of the prosopon does not militate against the difference of the natures. For when we distinguish the natures, we say that the nature of God the Word is complete, and that (his) prosopon is complete - for it is not correct to speak of an hypostasis without its prosopon -, and (we say) also that the nature of the man is complete, and likewise (his) prosopon. But when we look to the conjunction [synapheia], then we say *one* prosopon."⁴⁰

In this phrase of Theodore, hypostasis means the concrete individual existence of a nature, and prosopon means the concrete existence of two united natures. "The prosopon of Christ is thus the ultimate expression of the close conjunction which exists between Christ's humanity and the hypostasis of the Logos."⁴¹

Nevertheless, in the times of Theodore the word "prosopon" did not have the strictly ontological content of "person". Prosopon cannot be interpreted in the light of later definitions. In Antiochian pre-Chalcedonian christological terminology, prosopon is closer to the original Greek meaning of "countenance" or "form in which a physis or hypostasis appears. Every nature and every hypostasis has its own proper prosopon. It gives expression to the reality of the nature with its powers and characteristics."⁴² Therefore Theodore was accused of understanding the unity of Christ merely as a moral and not an ontic one. However, these judgements are made from a later point of view and a later phase of terminological development.

The special situation in which Theodore developed his theology has to be taken into consideration: He stressed against Arianism and especially against Apollinarianism the two natures and came obviously to a diphysite Christology. Duality is present; to speak of "dualism" is misleading.⁴³ His Christology is a defense of orthodoxy and open to any form of unity. In fact, Theodore struggles for a definition of this unity as a substantial and not only a moral one. But the right conceptual and terminological material is still lacking. Whenever Theodore uses the terms like prosopon, hypostasis and physis, they do not have the same meaning as later at the Council of Chalcedon (451) or in the writings of Cyril of Alexandria. His Christology has to be read in the theological context of his time.

For the East Syriac Church Theodore is the Great Interpreter and teacher as such. His exegetical commentaries belonged to the standard repertoire of the famous theological schools of Edessa and later of Nisibis. The great East Syriac doctor and poet Narsai (+503) especially promoted the writings when he headed the schools. Because of the translation of the work of Theodore into Syriac - first by Abraham of Beth Rabban in the 6th century⁴⁴ - and because of the high quality of Theodore as a theologian, the Antiochene tradition survived in the Church of the East. In the course of the controversy about the director of the school of Nisibis, Henana († 610), who attacked the authority of Theodore's work, the then Catholicos of the Church of the East, Ishoyahb I. († 596), convoked a synod in 585 to defend the teaching authority of Theodore. Finally, the Sy-

⁴⁰ Theodore of Mopsuestia, Frag. from De incarnatione VIII. Cf. R.A. Norris, *Manhood and Christ. A Study in the Christology of Theodore of Mopsuestia*. Oxford 1963, 228f. Emphasis and Greek additions mine.

⁴¹ Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition* I, 433.

⁴² Ibid. 431.

⁴³ Cf. A. Davids, "The Person and Teachings of Theodore of Mopsuestia", *Syriac Dialogue* 3, 43.

⁴⁴ Cf. Vööbus, *History of the School of Nisibis*. Louvain 1965 (CSCO 266 Subs.26) 137.

nod of Catholicos Gregory (605) defined that everybody in the Church of the East had to receive and accept the commentaries of Theodore. Thus at the beginning of the 7th century the Interpreter of Mopsuestia became the normative teacher and the synonym for orthodoxy in the East Syriac Church.

3.2. Nestorius of Constantinople

Nestorius was probably a student of Theodore of Mopsuestia. He became Patriarch of Constantinople in 428. In the christological controversy of the 5th century, which was mingled with the conflicts about the preeminence of the sees of Constantinople and Alexandria, Cyril defeated him. Nestorius was condemned at the Council of Ephesus (431). Emperor Theodosius II deported him to an oasis in the Egyptian desert, where he died after 451.

The precise *relecture* of the sources attracted attention to serious defects in the proceedings of the Council of Ephesus. Here I have to mention the marvelous investigation of the late André de Halleux⁴⁵. Today any serious analysis of the subject has to take into consideration the results of this study. André de Halleux shows „that one cannot suspect the fundamentally orthodox intention of the Christological faith of Nestorius“ and that it „corresponds in substance to the apostolic tradition“⁴⁶. De Halleux also evaluates critically the proceedings of the first Council of Ephesus (431), and gives a rereading of the sources. As is generally known it was not possible to open the Council on June 7, 431, because of John of Antioch's and the Roman delegate's delay. John of Antioch wrote a letter to Cyril in which he announced that he would arrive a bit later because of some external circumstances. Nevertheless, Cyril opened the Council on June 22 ignoring the protest of the delegate of the emperor and of 68 bishops. The first session therefore started with an important insufficiency: there was a lack of impartial verification and official authentication.⁴⁷ In de Halleux' article we read: „In this manner, then, the ecumenical council of Ephesus began illegally. ...there are no other examples of an ecumenical council opening against imperial orders.“⁴⁸ Furthermore there were considerable defects in the process against Nestorius. Although the assembly tried to compensate its irregular opening by the observation of canonical forms of juridical procedure, „it did, nonetheless, violate an elementary rule of natural right“⁴⁹. Cyril was the head of the synod, the accuser and the judge. Even the theological positions of Nestorius were not discussed: „...the heresy which is imputed to him is not otherwise indicated than by the act, of thinking and preaching impious things, 'or of having committed blasphemy against Christ.“⁵⁰ Finally the condemnation happened in the absence of Nestorius.

Research into Nestorius in the 20th century dealt anew with the question of the actual "Nestorianism" of Nestorius.⁵¹ It started with the edition of his texts by Friedrich

⁴⁵ Cf. A. de Halleux, „Nestorius. Histoire et Doctrine“, *Irénikon* 66 (1993) 38-51.163-178. Engl. in: *Syriac Dialogue* 1, 200-215. De Halleux completed this investigation with the important paper „La première session du concile d'Éphèse (22 Juin 431)“ *ETHL* 69 (1993) 48-87. See also Winkler, *Koptische Kirche und Reichskirche* 41-58; Winkler, „The Current Theological Dialogue with the Assyrian Church of the East“, R. Lavenant (ed.), *Symposium Syriacum VII*. Rome 1998 (*Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 259), 160f.

⁴⁶ De Halleux, „Nestorius“ 168.

⁴⁷ Cf. De Halleux, „La première session“ 50.

⁴⁸ De Halleux, „Nestorius“ 40.

⁴⁹ Ibid. 42.

⁵⁰ Ibid. 45.

⁵¹ Cf. L. Abramowski, „The History of Research into Nestorius and Nestorianism“, *Syriac Dialogue* 1, 54-65.

Loofs.⁵² The outstanding event however was the discovery and edition of the Syriac text of the "Liber Heraclidis" of Nestorius by Paul Bedjan.⁵³ The translation into Syriac had been performed by the East Syriac Catholicos Mar Aba I, or by his disciple Cyrus of Edessa around 539/40. The edition of this text made new insights possible. The most important work on the Book of Heraclides is still the critical analysis of the text by Luise Abramowski.⁵⁴ This marvelous precise study demonstrates that the second part of Nestorius' apology is authentic, though it received some interpolations between 451 and 570. Abramowski regards the beginning of the Liber Heraclidis as a later addition, a kind of introduction, and names its author "Pseudo-Nestorius".

James Franklin Bethune-Baker absolved Nestorius from the reproach of heresy already before the edition of the Book of Heraclides as a result of examinations of a copy of the text accessible to him.⁵⁵ Since that time discussion of the orthodoxy of Nestorius has not ceased. Especially in western theology the tendency for a rehabilitation of Nestorius is evident. The works of Luise Abramowski, Luigi L. Scipioni⁵⁶, Alois Grillmeier⁵⁷, of the Eastern Orthodox theologian and expert for Byzantine studies, Milton V. Anastos⁵⁸, and of André de Halleux show that Nestorius did not take the view of the two-person Christology. Current research differentiates between the Nestorianism condemned and the real teaching of Nestorius. Alois Grillmeier, excellently comprehending the peculiarity of the condemnation, writes: "...the Nestorian rejection of Theotokos was considered by the church in the context of all its possible systematic or historical consequences, even if only grosso modo. An investigation was made to discover all the consequences which this denial might objectively have (a doctrine of two sons, of two persons in Christ). All possible lines were drawn to other heresies of earlier periods (adoptianism [of Paul of Samosata], Judaism [and Pelagianism]). In this way an objective, impersonal picture of heresy was formed, which was then assigned to Nestorius as its originator. All this results in a 'popular' image of a heresy and a heretic which chiefly corresponds with the demands of the church's preaching rather than with those of historical accuracy."⁵⁹

The Christology of Nestorius, accused of separating the divine and human nature in Christ with the result of two Sons or Persons, has to be seen in the greater context of Antiochene theology. As was Theodore of Mopsuestia, Nestorius was shaped by the controversy against the christological approach of Apollinaris of Laodicea, who denied the perfect humanity. From this perspective it is comprehensible that Nestorius opposed to the "One Nature of God the Logos incarnate" of Cyril. The patriarch of Alexandria erroneously quoted his own main christological sentence from texts which circulated under the names of Athanasius and the Popes Julius and Felix, but which were Apollinarian forgeries. The terminology employed there could only provoke misunderstanding

⁵² Cf. F. Loofs, *Nestoriana. Die Fragmente des Nestorius*. Halle 1905.

⁵³ Cf. Paul Bedjan, *Nestorius. Le livre d'Héraclide des Damas*. Paris 1910.

⁵⁴ Cf. L. Abramowski, *Untersuchungen zum Liber Heraclidis des Nestorius*. Louvain 1963 (CSCO 242 Subs. 22).

⁵⁵ Cf. J.-F. Bethune-Baker, *Nestorius and his teaching. A fresh examination of the evidence*. Cambridge 1908.

⁵⁶ Cf. L. Scipioni, *Ricerche sulla Cristologia del „Libro di Eraclide“ di Nestorio; Nestorio ed il concilio di Efeso*. Fribourg 1956.

⁵⁷ Cf. Grillmeier, „Das Scandalum oecumenicum des Nestorius in kirchlich-dogmatischer und theologiegeschichtlicher Sicht“, *Schol.* 36 (1961) 321-356.

⁵⁸ Cf. Milton V. Anastos, „Nestorius was Orthodox“, *Dumbarton Oak Papers* 16 (1962) 117-140.

⁵⁹ Cf. Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition* I, 448f; Grillmeier, *Das Scandalum oecumenicum des Nestorius* 253.

and disturb theologians like Nestorius who contended with Apollinarism. However, Cyril interpreted the phrase in an orthodox way, and especially realized that the incarnation is not merely an apparent unity of divinity and humanity, but a real and ontological, physical or hypostatic union. Nevertheless as Nestorius interprets physis as an abstract nature in the Aristotelian sense he has to understand Cyril's christological phrase as mingling or mixture; to speak in Aristotelian terms, as a "krisis". From Nestorius' point of view this krisis affects the divinity and the humanity and therefore the economy of salvation as such. For Nestorius the subject of the message in the Scripture and the Nicene Creed is Jesus, Christ, the Only-begotten, the Son. He deduces from this semantic finding that the name Christ stands for both natures, and distinguishes at the same time the divine and human nature and their respective integrity. Thereby he emphasizes the unity in Christ: "Christ is indivisible in that he is Christ, but he is twofold in that he is both God and man; he is one in his Sonship, but he is twofold in that which takes and that which is taken. In the prosopon of the Son he is individual, but, as in the case of two eyes, he is separate in the natures of manhood and Godhead. For we do not acknowledge two Christs or two Sons or Only-Begottens or Lords, not one Son and another Son, not a first Only-Begotten and a new Only-Begotten, not a first and a second Christ, but one and the same, who has been seen in created and uncreated nature."⁶⁰

How does Nestorius in fact understand this "prosopon" of unity"? The bishop of Constantinople designates the nature as divine and human "ousia" (substance) and "physis" (nature). By this he means a general and abstract nature, and distinguishes it from the prosopon. Nestorius characterizes this prosopon with all abilities and qualities which are not of general typical kind and which are attributed to a concrete existing being. Thus each nature, insofar it really exists, must have its prosopon, for it must appear with its characteristic properties and cannot be merely nature.

Nestorius realizes the Logos as the divine nature, the godhead of the Son. This Logos was the divine Son from eternity. Thus "Son" is the term for the prosopon of this divine nature. The prosopon of the divine Logos is the basis on which the unity of Christ is realized, and by assumption of a human nature a prosopon of unity will emerge.⁶¹ Alois Grillmeier states that throughout "his whole career, indeed his whole life, Nestorius takes pains to explain this unity of prosopon in itself and as the exclusive basis of unity in Christ."⁶² Nestorius stresses a real unity of the subject with insufficient terminology. Son as prosopon of unity is not only semantically the subject of all statements with divine and human predicates but at the same time ontologically the togetherness of human and divine qualities. For Nestorius the subject of all predicates is Christ, the Son, who is indivisible in his Being Christ.

In his struggle for a speculative analysis of the unity in Christ, Nestorius gets to the fundamental comprehension that this unity has to be found in the sphere of the person and not on the level of the natures. The unmixed and perfect status of the divine and the human nature has to be realized: "Our Lord Christ, who is twofold in his Divinity and in his Humanity, is a Son in the connection. Thus One is He, born from the Mother of Christ Mary, the Son of God. Many times I say the same."⁶³ Here his terminology is different from that of the Alexandrine theology: Each of the natures in Christ (physei or

⁶⁰ Nestorius, *Sermo XII*, 280, in: Loofs, *Nestoriana*, engl. transl. quoted from Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition* I, 461.

⁶¹ Cf. Nestorius, *Sermo X*, 257 (Z.1-5), in: Loofs, *Nestoriana*.

⁶² Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition* I, 462.

⁶³ Nestorius, *Sermo XIV*, 283, in: Loofs, *Nestoriana*.

ousiai) has its reality (hypostasis) and appearance (prosopon). From the exchange of the prosopa and from the mutual penetration (perichoresis) of these prosopa the prosopon of unity emerges.⁶⁴ With his *Liber Heraclidis* Nestorius presents one of the first speculative christological tracts, whose philosophical interest is based entirely on the union of the two prosopa. However, he tried to solve the problem with inadequate, perhaps unclear means. "This fundamentally orthodox believer was not a good theologian."⁶⁵ His Christology is before all apologetic, and particularly directed against Apollinarism. His concept of unity might not be satisfying, but the accusation against him is based on a very crude understanding of his position.

Although Nestorius is theologically nearly insignificant for the Church of the East, he was nevertheless in high esteem and venerated already in the 6th and 7th centuries. His name is mentioned in the same breath with Diodore of Tarsus and Theodore of Mopsuestia.

3.3. *The ecumenical discussion on the theological and historical Problem*

The first Day of the third Syriac Consultation in Chicago 1997 dealt with Theodore and the relationship between his teaching and the Assyrian Church, with special reference to the Three Chapters Controversy. Two papers were presented on the subject.

Mar Bawai Soro (Assyrian/USA) profoundly worked out the Christology of Theodore with its emphasis on the humanity of Christ directed against Arianism and Apollinarism. He rightly drew a picture of an outstanding controversial theologian of his times: "...it would not be historically responsible to ascribe to Theodore errors of which he was not guilty nor to refuse him his proper place in the fourth and fifth century history of the development of Christian theological thought. The terminological clarification of the Person of Christ and the relationship of physis, hypostasis and prosopon... was something that transpired after the death of Theodore."⁶⁶

Adelbert Davids (Netherlands) presented the historical and political background of the condemnation of Theodore. He concluded "Theodore's vision on Christian life is an adequate expression of the message of the Bible"⁶⁷, and the actions of the Council of Constantinople which led to the posthumous condemnation of a theologian highly respected during his lifetime were not justified. Therefore the Anathema against Theodore should be lifted and he should be recognized as a true Father of the Church.

The result of these lectures and the succeeding discussions is reflected in the Joint Communiqué of the Consultation: "In the light of the modern recovery of more of his works than were available to earlier generations, and in the light of the universal esteem in which he was held in [his] lifetime, we all agree that it is time to re-evaluate the anathema imposed on Theodore's person and works at the second Council of Constantinople in 533 AD, one hundred and twenty five years after Theodore's death. We recommend that our Churches consider whether they could remove the anathema from their memories."⁶⁸

⁶⁴ For exchange of prosopa and perichoresis cf. Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition* I, 717-726; de Halleux, „Nestorius“ 212f (engl.).

⁶⁵ Cf. de Halleux, „Nestorius“ 213 (engl.).

⁶⁶ Cf. B. Soro, „The Person and Teachings of Theodore of Mopsuestia“, *Syriac Dialogue* 3, 37

⁶⁷ A. Davids, „The Person and Teachings of Theodore of Mopsuestia“, *ibid.* 52.

⁶⁸ Joint Communiqué, *Syriac Dialogue* 3, 139

At the second day of the consultation, three papers took up the subject of Nestorius and his condemnation at the Council of Ephesus (431). An especially impressive paper was given by the Syrian Orthodox Archbishop of Aleppo, Mar Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim. With ecumenical openness he gave an eminently constructive and critical explanation of the image of Nestorius in his tradition, referring to historical, liturgical and doctrinal sources of his Church.⁶⁹

In his paper Mar Bawai Soro placed Nestorius in historical and theological context: Although Nestorius and Cyril have defects in their theological thought, "both men were faithful to their own respective schools of thought."⁷⁰ The Church of the East has held "that his theological concerns were valid and his contribution to protecting the integrity of Christ's humanity will always be admired and appreciated."⁷¹

Elias Khalifé Hachem (Maronite, Lebanon) concluded in his paper that it is difficult to form an objective view of Nestorius because of the loss of most of his works. He stated also that Nestorius was unjustly condemned at Ephesus without any discussion, and he regretted the defamation Nestorius had undergone in the Roman Empire, which used to be called the "oikumene".⁷² Many things called "Nestorian" were attributed to him by his adversaries in the course of controversy.

Although heavy historical burdens meant that the topic "Nestorius" could not be treated in discussion without any controversies participants in the Consultation came to an agreement in the Joint Communiqué: "... in regard to the person and works of Nestorius, patriarch of Constantinople, we wish that a distinction should be made between the person of Nestorius, his faith and his pastoral concern on the one hand, and the heresy called 'Nestorianism'."⁷³

The outstanding quality of this joint statement is the consent and contribution of the (miaphysite) Syrian Orthodox Church. The pleading for a revision of the case of Nestorius based on new research is remarkable. Equally significant is the passage that "we take notice of the fact that the Assyrian Church of the East had no part in the Christological controversies in which Nestorius was involved. Patriarch Nestorius is not the Founder of the Church of the East, as it is often assumed, nor one of its hierarchs, but became one of their honored teachers... With regard to the expressions Theotokos and Christotokos, we agree to respect the preferred usage of each community since we now realize that these terms can express the same apostolic faith."⁷⁴ The latter sentence has value also in relations between the Syrian Orthodox and the Assyrian Church, as this has been stated already in the Common Christological Declaration between the Assyrian and the Catholic Church in 1994.

After the first two days had already dealt with the condemnations of Church-teachers in a wider sense, the whole third day was dedicated to that topic. Three studies were presented. Mar Cyril Aphrem Karim (Syrian-Orthodox, USA) reflected upon the problematic with reference to previous ecumenical dialogues, particularly the non-official consultation between Orthodox and Oriental-Orthodox theologians in Addis Ababa

⁶⁹ G.Y. Ibrahim, „Nestorius in Syrian Orthodox Tradition“, *ibid.* 56-67

⁷⁰ B. Soro, *The Person and Teachings of Nestorius*, *ibid.* 90

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² E. Khalifé –Hachem, „The Person and Teachings of Nestorius“, *ibid.* 92-97, here 96.

⁷³ Joint Communiqué, *Syriac Dialogue* 3, 139.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

(1971) and the second non-official Pro Oriente Consultation between Oriental-Orthodox and Roman-Catholic theologians (1973).⁷⁵

In his study of the East Syrian collection of official Synods (Synhados, Synodicon Orientale) Michael J. Birnie (Assyrian, USA) comes to the remarkable conclusion that none of the synods between 410 and 775 issued anathemas "against persons by name other than in specific local matters of ecclesiastical discipline."⁷⁶ Although authors like Cyril of Alexandria or Severus of Antioch have been denounced "in angry and bitter tones" by individual authors, no formal synodal anathema against these men appear in the canonical records. The Church of the East avoided "directly addressing the status of individuals engaged in the Christological disputes."⁷⁷ Thus by the early East Syriac Church a principle was observed that is of high importance in ecumenical dialogue: The teachings rejected as heresies should be characterized by their content and substance without personalizing them.

Theresia Hainthaler (Germany) gave a profound analysis of the term anathema. In her study we can find two further examples of condemning doctrinal teaching without personalizing. Though Arius is condemned in the canons of Nicea (325), the creed itself ends with the anathema on Arian doctrines without mentioning Arius' name, and at the synod of Carthage (418) Pelagianism is condemned without naming Pelagius.⁷⁸ Hainthaler refers to the lifting of the anathemas of the year 1054 by Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras on the last day of Vatican II as a recent example. Finally her remarks on the methodology of the Ecumenical Study Group of Protestant and Catholic theologians on the condemnations of the Reformation Era give most valuable hints for further steps in the present dialogue. The Study Group established by the German Catholic Bishops Conference and the Evangelical Church in Germany suggested to ask against whom a given doctrinal condemnation is directed and if it targeted the position correctly, if the condemnation affects the partner in dialogue today and what significance the remaining differences have.⁷⁹

In the final Communiqué of the Syriac Consultation in Chicago, the discussion on condemnations is summed up as follows: "Regarding the issue of the anathemata of the past, pronounced by synods and hierarchs in the context of controversies that have divided our Churches, we dedicate ourselves to the search for appropriate ways to lift them especially from liturgical texts, as an act of love and mutual respect. ... Furthermore we agree not to use polemical language in our descriptions of persons, institutions, and doctrinal formulae of our sister Churches."⁸⁰

Already at the beginning of the consultation the Assyrian Patriarch Mar Dinkha IV could inform the participants that the Holy Synod of the Assyrian Church that had taken place in Chicago from 23 June to 1 July 1997 made the decision to remove all condemnations against persons like Cyril of Alexandria and Severus of Antioch from their liturgical books.⁸¹ This is a step unique in the history of contemporary ecumenical dialogue

⁷⁵ Cf. D.W. Winkler, „The Discussion of Anathema in the Ecumenical Dialogues among the Oriental and Orthodox churches“, *Ephrem's Theological Journal* 4 (1998) 28-48.

⁷⁶ Cf. M. J. Birnie, „Studies on Anathemata and their lifting in relationship to the question of ecclesial community and heresy“, *Syriac Dialogue* 3, 114.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* 115.

⁷⁸ Th. Hainthaler, „Studies on Anathemata and their lifting in relationship to the question of ecclesial community and heresy“, *ibid.* 124

⁷⁹ Cf. *ibid.* 130.

⁸⁰ Joint Communiqué, *ibid.* 139

⁸¹ *Ibid.* 138

and exemplary in its consequences. Also the responsible delegate for ecumenical issues of the Syrian-Orthodox Church, Mar Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim, appealed at the Consultation that the condemnations should be removed from the liturgical books and that Church history ought to be rewritten in an ecumenical spirit.⁸²

4. Conclusion

The dogmatic and historical results of the first three Pro Oriente Syriac Consultations to which Oriental-Orthodox, Catholic and Assyrian theologians have contributed together by well-founded studies, lead to a new perspective on events of the past.

The official dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the Oriental-Orthodox Churches could already state in its Joint Communiqué in Geneva 1993 that "the anathemas and condemnations of the past can be lifted because of the common understanding of the fact, that councils and fathers condemned in the past are orthodox in their teaching,... we have understood, that both families have truly conserved the authentic orthodox christological teaching and the uninterrupted apostolic tradition, though they may have used christological terms in a different way."⁸³ In that sense also the Pro Oriente Syriac Dialogues have provided important basic work, which – we hope – will contribute to a better understanding of Councils, Fathers and Christologies of the Oriental-Orthodox Churches and the Assyrian Church on an official level.

The Syriac Dialogues successfully open ways to a better mutual understanding and help to pull down the fence of old prejudices and misunderstanding. Furthermore constructive suggestions are made to overcome problems that are still separating. This should be especially helpful in the relationship between the Oriental-Orthodox Churches (Syrian Orthodox and Malankara Orthodox) and the Assyrian Church of the East, to discover their common Syriac heritage and to transmit the results of current research into the ecumenical dialogues. However, it needs courageous Heads of Churches who are willing to take up these ecumenical results of research and to make them effective.

⁸² Cf. *Syriac Dialogue* 3, 97.

⁸³ Communiqué Geneva 1993, Joint Commission of the Theological Dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches. Cf. *Ökumenische Rundschau* 43 (1994) 82-84.

BETWEEN PROGRESS AND SETBACK: THE ECUMENICAL DIALOGUES OF THE ASSYRIAN CHURCH OF THE EAST

In 1928 E. A. Wallis Budge (1857-1934) published an English translation of a Syriac narrative that goes back to the 14th century.¹ The text, originally written in Persian, recounts the travels of two Chinese Mongolian Christian monks in the 13th century. Bar Sauma from today's Beijing and Markos from Kawshang set out for Jerusalem to pray at the tomb of the Lord. Most probably they were emissaries of the Mongolian king Kublai Khan, sent to the West to negotiate an alliance with the Christian kings of Europe against the Arab Muslims in the Middle East. The two humble monks travelled along the Silk Road through China and Central Asia and reached Kurdistan and today's Iraq, where the See of their Patriarch was. They were unable to proceed farther west because fighting blocked all road. So Bar Sauma and Markos stayed with the Patriarch and never reached Jerusalem. Markos, the younger monk, found himself consecrated a Metropolitan of China and got the Name Yahballaha. When the Patriarch died in 1281, Yahballaha was elected Patriarch of the Church of the East, becoming spiritual head of faithful in Mesopotamia, Syria, Persia, Armenia, India, Central Asia and China. The elder monk, Bar Sauma, became Visitor-General for congregations in the East, and ambassador of the Persian Mongolian Il-Khan to the emperor of Byzantium, Andronicus II, the king of France, Philip IV, the king of England, Edward I, and Pope Nicholas IV. Bar Sauma celebrated the East Syriac Liturgy in one of the papal Churches and finally shared the Eucharist with the pope.

This remarkable Syriac document shows the impressive expansion of the so-called "Nestorian" Church. In Late Antiquity it had been called just "(Apostolic) Church of the East", because it spread in the East and outside the borders of the Roman Empire. Already in the 7th century, while the Arabs conquered the Middle East, East Syriac missionaries reached the court of the Emperor of China, and in the European Middle Ages the Church of the East was geographically far larger than the Roman Catholic Church. However, during the invasion of Tamerlane (Timur Lenkh) in the 14th century this Church was almost erased. Only a small community survived in the mountains of Kurdistan and was further weakened by internal struggles and a union with Rome. At the beginning of the 20th century they counted about 150,000 members. But during World War I the "Assyrians" - as they were called by Anglican missionaries - lost again a third of their population through massacres and deportations at the hands of Kurds and Turks of the Ottoman Empire, because of suspected collaboration with the British. In 1933,

This is the revised manuscript of various lectures I gave in the years 2000/01 at the Evangelical Academy Hofgeismar (Germany), Luther Seminary Minneapolis-St. Paul, Institute for Ecumenical and Cultural Research, St. John's University Collegeville (Minnesota/USA). Some of the information is also available in my paper given in Uppsala (Sweden) in 1996, published as "The Current Theological Dialogue with the Assyrian Church of the East", in: R. Lavenant, Symposium Syriacum VII. Rome 1998 (*Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 256) 158-173, reprint in: *Pro Oriente, Syriac Dialogue* 2. Vienna 1996, 225-236). However, the two papers complement each other. I am grateful to Marion Bremer (*PRO ORIENTE*/Vienna) for initial help with this English text, and to Patrick Henry (Institute for Ecumenical and Cultural Research, Collegeville) for refining and correcting my prose style.

¹ Cf. *The Monks of Kublai Khan, Emperor of China*. Trans. E. A. Wallis Budge. London 1928.

after the British mandate in Iraq, the Iraqi government expelled the Patriarch, Mar Eshai Shimun, who - after stops in Geneva and London - went into exile to San Francisco (California). The people have been scattered all over the world.

The current Patriarch, Mar Dinkha IV, has his see in Morton Grove near Chicago (Illinois). He is the head of a Church with about 400,000 faithful. The Church currently has four Metropolitans in Baghdad/Iraq, Beirut/Lebanon, and Thrissur/South India, and eight Bishops in the US, Canada, Australia, Europe, Iran, and Syria.

Up to now the Church of the East has been called the "Nestorian Church". Encyclopaedia information is generally under this entry. From a theological point of view this term must be rejected today, because "Nestorian" has been used to insult them. Somewhat better is the expression pre-Ephesian Church, because they accept only the first two imperial synods (Nicea 325, Constantinople 381) as ecumenical. But the Church of the East expanded outside the bounds of the Roman Empire. Therefore the term East Syrian or Syro Oriental Church is more appropriate than a name which refers to the reception of Councils of the Roman Empire. Better yet, is to call them what they call themselves: "Apostolic Assyrian Church of the East" or just "Church of the East".

The Church of the East is not just a "Nestorian" episode in the history of early Christianity within the Roman Empire. In western Systematic Theology and Church History, the Oriental Churches - both, the so-called Nestorian and the so-called Monophysite Churches - are often "straw men" knocked down early in a chapter on Christology. As a result of the controversies of the fifth and sixth century, these Christians were marginalised. Latin and Greek theologians regarded them as heretical, and they receded from awareness in the "western" Latin and Greek Churches. As a consequence, the study of Syriac, Coptic, Armenian, and Ethiopian patristic literature has only been done at Departments for Philology, Semitic or Oriental Studies and not at Schools of Theology.

Contemporary ecumenical dialogues have brought these churches back into western awareness. My aim in this paper is to give insight into these theological encounters and the complex inter-church relations the Assyrian Church is involved in.

1. Collaboration in the World Council of Churches (WCC)

The ecumenical development of the Apostolic Church of the East in the course of the 20th century was initially slow. During the pre-WCC period when the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople gave important impulse to the ecumenical movement with encyclicals (1902 and 1920), when the World Missionary Conference was held in Edinburgh (1910), and the International Missionary Council (1921), Life and Work (1925), and Faith and Order (1927) were founded, the Assyrian Church of the East suffered from the aftermath of war. The handbook of Member Churches of the WCC refers to 1948 as the year when the "Holy Apostolic and Catholic Assyrian Church of the East" became a member², but the report of the first assembly in Amsterdam (1948) lists the "Church of the East and of the Assyrians" - the official name since the emigration of Patriarch Mar Eshai Shimun to the United States - among those Churches that had accepted the invitation but were not present.³ Therefore, 1950 is sometimes given as the

² Cf. *Handbook of Member Churches*. World Council of Churches. Ed. A. J. van der Bent. Geneva 1985, 200.

³ Cf. *Die erste Vollversammlung des Ökumenischen Rates der Kirchen* (The first Assembly of the WCC). Ed. W. A. Visser't Hooft. Geneva 1948, 312.

year when the Church of the East joined the WCC⁴, referring to the meeting of the Central Committee in Toronto.

The Assyrian Church was integrated into the WCC right from the beginning, but she is in a difficult situation in regard to its representatives. The clergy first had to recover from the effects of World War I and of the forced emigration from their home countries in the Middle East. Theologically educated specialists were unavailable. The drastic situation of the Assyrian Church prevented more intensive ecumenical efforts.

On the occasion of the third assembly of the WCC in New Delhi (1961) the Patriarch visited South India with the aim of resolving the tensions with Metropolitan Mar Thomas Darmo.⁵ But the problem was not solved and seven years later the Indian Metropolitan travelled to Iraq, ordained three bishops, and was afterwards elected as Anti-Patriarch.⁶ In the 1970s the Indian Metropolitan Mar Aprem Mookan and his auxiliary bishop Poulos Mar Poulos (†1998) were the only ones with an advanced academic theological background. But at that time both were in communion with Patriarch Mar Addai, the successor of Mar Thomas Darmo, and therefore not available to Patriarch Mar Eshai Shimun who participated in the Assemblies of the WCC.

At the fifth Assembly in Nairobi (1975) no Assyrian delegate was present. After the internal schism, the Church of the East had to deal with a second crisis: the marriage of Patriarch Mar Eshai Shimun and his assassination, half a year before the Assembly, in San Jose (California).

With the former Assyrian bishop of Teheran (Iran) as Patriarch Mar Dinkha IV (since 1976), the Assyrian Church has caught up with the ecumenical movement. He sent official delegates to the WCC Assemblies in Vancouver (1983)⁷, Canberra (1991)⁸ and Harare (1998).

2. Relationship with the Anglican Church

From the time of the mission of Archbishop of Canterbury in the 19th century, the Assyrian Church has maintained good relations with the Anglican Church⁹, though they were strained after World War II, because the Assyrians were disappointed victims of British promises, military interests and flexible post-war-diplomacy. The relationship got a new impetus in the 1980s when Archbishop Robert Runcie asked the Anglican Bishop of Canada, Henry Hill, to establish contacts with the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Assyrian Church. This happened in the years 1982 to 1988 during which Bishop Hill also visited Patriarch Mar Dinkha IV in the USA.¹⁰ In July 1983, at the WCC As-

⁴ Cf. W. Hage, „Nestorianische Kirche“ (Nestorian Church): *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* 24 (1994) 271.

⁵ Opposition against Mar Eshai Shimun arose because of some „western“ reforms (Gregorian calendar etc.) and the since 500 years practiced hereditary system to elect the patriarch.

⁶ For details cf. W. Baum – D.W. Winkler, *Die Apostolische Kirche des Ostens. Geschichte der sogenannten Nestorianer* (The Apostolic Church of the East. History of the so-called Nestorians). Klagenfurt 2000, 129-131.

⁷ Assyrian Delegation: Mar Aprim Khamis (Bishop of Western USA), Fr. Ashur A. Soro (now Bishop Mar Bawai Soro), Fr. Lawrence Mamato.

⁸ Assyrian Delegation: Mar Geevarghese Sliwa (Metropolitan of Iraq), Mar Meelis Zaia (Bishop of Australia and New Zealand), Ms. Susan Iso (Australia/Youth).

⁹ Cf. J.F. Coakley, *The Church of the East and the Church of England. A History of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Assyrian Mission*. Oxford 1992.

¹⁰ Cf. H. Hill, „Anglican-Oriental Orthodox Dialogue“: *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*. Ed. N. Lossky et al. Geneva 1991, 23.

sembly in Vancouver, a meeting of Anglicans from England, Scotland and Canada on one side and of Oriental Orthodox and Assyrian delegates on the other side took place. Because of the positive atmosphere during this dialogue, the Assyrians decided to accept an invitation from the Anglican Church to participate in a Theological Forum. It took place in 1985 in St. Albans/Great Britain¹¹, but only participants of the Oriental Orthodox Churches are mentioned in the records. The relationships between the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Assyrian Church are very difficult and complex, as we will see later.

So far no Anglican/Assyrian dialogue has followed the meeting in Vancouver, although the Lambeth Conference of 1998 encouraged a common dialogue in those regions where the Churches coexist.¹²

3. Relationship with the Roman Catholic Church

3.1. The Common Christological Declaration (1994)

The story of this agreement begins in 1978. Mar Dinkha took part in the mass at the inauguration of Pope John Paul II as one of the representatives and delegates of the various Christian denominations. In November 1984, during an official visit of Mar Dinkha IV to John Paul II at the Vatican both heads of Churches initiated a process of theological dialogue.¹³ The Patriarch also participated in the 1986 day of prayer for peace at Assisi (Italy) to which the pope invited world religions leaders.

In the next ten years, 1984 - 94, five non-official meetings took place, culminating in a Common Christological Declaration. The most important theological preparatory work and the draft of the text were done by the patristic and Syriac scholar André de Halleux (†1994)¹⁴, who died before the signing and thus did not see the fruition of his marvellous work. In October 1992 the draft was completed and submitted then to the respective church authorities for approval.

The Common Christological Declaration is a landmark in ecumenism. It confirms that both Churches are „united today in the confession of the same faith in the Son of God“. It takes into consideration previous Christological agreements between the Roman Catholic Church and the so-called „miaphysite“¹⁵ Churches: The Christological Agreements with the Coptic Orthodox Church (1973), the Syrian Orthodox Church (1984) and the Malankara Orthodox Church (1990). The text is theologically very ba-

¹¹ Cf. D.W. Winkler, *Koptische Kirche und Reichskirche. Altes Schisma und neuer Dialog*. (Coptic Church and Imperial Church. Old Schism and new Dialogue. Preamble by Franz Cardinal König). Innsbruck 1997 (ITS 48), 213 f.

¹² Cf. Lambeth Conference 1998, Sect. IV: Called to be One (<http://www.lambethconference.org/4>).

¹³ Cf. „New Impetus to Mutual Relations“: *L'Osservatore Romano* (weekly edition in English), November 16, 1994, p 4; *The Messenger*. The Official Publication of the Holy Apostolic and Assyrian Church of the East 11 (March 1995) 20-22; „Common Christological Declaration“: *L'Osservatore Romano* (op.cit.) pp 1 and 4, cf. Information Service (Council for Promoting Christian Unity) 88 (1995/I) 1-6; cf. also: *Growth in Agreement II*. Ed. J. Gros et al. Geneva 2000, 711f with a „Historic Introduction“ by R. Roberson. Documents also: <http://www.cired.org/cath.html>.

¹⁴ Cf. „Vers la déclaration commune catholique-assyrienne“: *Courrier Œcuménique du Moyen-Orient* 23 (1994-III) 12 f.

¹⁵ The expression is explained in: D.W. Winkler, „Miaphysitism. A new Term for Use in the History of Dogma and in Ecumenical Theology“: *The Harp* 10 (1997) N° 3, 33-40. See also D.W. Winkler, „Monophysitism“: *Late Antiquity. A guide to the postclassical world*. Ed. G. Bowersock et al. Cambridge/Ms 1999, 586-588.

lanced, and grounded in the Formula of Union (433), the agreement between John of Antioch and Cyril of Alexandria.¹⁶

Before the official signing, the Christological Declaration was debated in the Assyrian Church by the Fifth Synod of the Patriarchate of Mar Dinkha, July 18-29, 1994, in Sydney (Australia). The Holy Synod decreed unanimously in favour of signing the agreement, as this declaration "protects and preserves the faith, liturgy, order, leadership of each Church individually."¹⁷

Furthermore, this Synod established a new department, the "Commission on Inter-church Relations and Educational Development", with Bishop Mar Bawai Soro as director. This department has responsibility to develop theological literature and educational material as well as to prepare and co-ordinate inter-church relations, theological dialogues and ecumenical consultations. By this the Holy Synod of the Assyrian Church of the East created an appropriate body for bilateral and multilateral ecumenical relations.

3.2. *The official theological dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church (1994-2000)*

With the signing of the Common Christological Declaration, an official "Joint Committee for Theological Dialogue of the Roman Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church of the East" was established. From 1995 to 2000 six meetings of the Joint Committee took place. Currently the co-chairmen are the Indian Assyrian Metropolitan Mar Aprem of Trichur and Bishop (now Cardinal) Walter Kasper. On the agenda now is sacramental theology. In the course of these dialogue sessions only press releases and no communiqués have been published, in order not to short-circuit the whole process before completion.

In the first meeting (November 22-24, 1995) in Rome was noted that positive reception of the Common Christological Declaration put the dialogue on a firm footing to overcome obstacles on the way towards unity. Additionally General Sacramental Theology and the Eucharist were examined.

At the second meeting (October 10-12, 1996), in Adma (Lebanon), the discussion on the sacraments was continued and consideration of marriage and the anointing of the sick began. Though these two do not appear on the official list of "sacraments" (raze) of the Church of the East, consensus was reached in regard to the content, biblical basis and liturgical celebration of both traditions.

Held in Rome October 23-27, 1997, the third session dealt with the Assyrian raze (sacraments) of the Holy Leaven (*Malka*) and the Sign of the Cross. This discussion was continued during the fourth meeting (November 6-9, 1998), in London with concentration on the common aspects of sacramental life. At the fifth meeting (October 12-14, 1999), in Venice a draft on sacramental life and the pastoral implications of a Common Declaration on the Sacraments were discussed. Arezzo (Italy) was the site of the sixth meeting (October 12-14, 2000). Here the Joint Committee concluded these studies. The final draft of a "Common Statement on Sacramental Life" has been submitted to the competent church authorities. The dialogue expects to proceed with Ecclesiology and certain theological questions concerning the first Ecumenical Councils.

¹⁶ For a theological analysis see Winkler, "The Current Theological Dialogue" 168-173.

¹⁷ Cf. Decrees of the Fifth Holy Synod of the Patriarchate of H.H. Mar Dinkha IV, 18-29 July 1994, Sydney - Australia, in: The Messenger 11 (1995) 24-31.

The consequences of the ecumenical dialogue between the Assyrian Church of the East and the Roman Catholic Church are not easy to predict. There may be here an exemplary case of church unity between two traditional, so-called Apostolic Churches. A unity of Churches could appear which does not demand ecclesiastical subordination, or theological and ritual uniformity. Thanks to geographic conditions, the history of both Churches is not as heavily burdened as, e.g., the relations between the Catholic Church and (Byzantine) Orthodox Church on the European continent.

At the signing of the Common Christological Declaration (1994) Pope John Paul II said to Mar Dinkha IV:

"We all recognize that it is of supreme importance to understand, venerate, preserve and foster the rich heritage of each of our Churches, and that a diversity of customs and observances is in no way an obstacle to unity. This diversity includes the power of our Churches to govern themselves according to their own disciplines and to keep certain differences in theological expressions which, as we have verified, are often complementary rather than conflicting."¹⁸

This paragraph is highly remarkable and indeed contributes enormously to the discussion on primacy. A communion of the Assyrian Church of the East and the Roman Catholic Church could be achieved while maintaining autocephaly (jurisdictional independence) and equality. Furthermore with the Common Christological Declaration different forms of expression of the faith are accepted as long as they correspond in substance. Controversial terms like "Christotokos" and "Theotokos" (Christ-Bearer or God-Bearer) are not regarded as being opposed to each other. This theological tendency - to catch the substance in faith -, which seems to be continued now in regard to sacramental theology, makes pluralism in liturgical rites, theological terms and approaches possible.

3.3. *Relations with the Chaldean Catholic Church*

The Common Christological Declaration of 1994 also mentions practical and pastoral implications for the faithful of the Assyrian Church and the Catholic Church, especially in regions where both live together closely. This especially laid the basis for bilateral relations of both branches of the East Syriac tradition - the Assyrian Church and her Catholic counterpart, the Chaldean Church. The Chaldean Church is a part of the ancient "Church of the East" that is in full communion with the Roman Catholic Church. Until the 15th/16th century, the Assyrian and the Chaldean Church were one East Syriac Church. Participation of Chaldean theologians in the official "Joint Committee for the Theological Dialogue of the Roman Catholic and the Assyrian Church of the East" facilitated the process of rapprochement.

In 1996 the Chaldean Patriarch Raphael I Bidawid, whose see is in Baghdad, visited the USA, and together with the Assyrian Patriarch Mar Dinkha IV, consecrated a new Chaldean Church in Southfield/Detroit (Michigan). This first official meeting of an Assyrian and a Chaldean Patriarch, on the 26th of November initiated a new common process of dialogue and co-operation aimed at restoring full church unity of the (Apostolic)

¹⁸ John Paul II, "Deep Respect and Charity" (Address to H.H. Mar Dinkha IV), in: L'Osservatore Romano (op.cit.) p. 3; The Messenger 11 (1995) 13; <http://www.cired.org/cat/pope2html>.

Church of the East. A Joint Patriarchal Statement¹⁹ outlines several options for how to proceed. Both patriarchs propose that the common patristic, liturgical and theological heritage and the same origin and culture which link one church to the other should be studied and acknowledged. Furthermore, a "Commission for Unity" should be established to carry out a comprehensive educational plan for the Assyro-Chaldeans. This includes: a "Catechism of the Church of the East"; a common educational institution for the theological education of priests, deacons, and catechists of both Churches in the region of Chicago and Detroit; common effort for the Syro-Aramaic mother tongue in liturgy and culture; and the development of pastoral programs for both Churches in the different parts of the world.

In May and June 1997 these proposals were accepted by the respective Synods. In the same year the two Patriarchs met again on the occasion of the blessing of a new Assyrian parish in Roselle (Illinois). The "Joint Commission for Unity" came together in their Constituent Assembly (August 13-14) in the Assyrian Patriarchate in Chicago under the co-chairmanship of both patriarchs.²⁰ A working program of the Commission was presented and a "Joint Synodical Decree"²¹, already accepted by the respective Synods, was implemented and signed by the two Patriarchs. The Assyrian Bishop Mar Bawai Soro and Chaldean Rev. Sarhad Y. Jammo were appointed General Secretaries.

All questions that concern the theology will be left to the official Joint Commission for Theological Dialogue. As both sister Churches are regarded to have the same apostolic succession and sacramentality, clergy and lay people are called to work together in brotherly fashion. Despite this degree of consensus, however, the differences that developed during the time of separation are not concealed. Therefore one stated principle of the dialogue is that the Assyrian Church keeps her church identity and the freedom of her independent leadership while full communion with the Roman see is guaranteed to the Chaldean Church.

4. The PRO ORIENTE dialogue with the Churches of Syriac Tradition

The official Roman Catholic meetings and dialogues with the Oriental Churches have been supported on a non-official level by the foundation PRO ORIENTE. On November 4, 1964, two weeks before the third session of the Second Vatican Council came to an end with the passage of the Decree on Ecumenism (*Unitatis Redintegratio*) the Archbishop of Vienna, Cardinal Franz König, on advice of some Austrian Catholic intellectuals decided to found PRO ORIENTE.²² This Foundation has become an enormously important tool for dialogue between Churches of East and West.

¹⁹ Cf. Joint Patriarchal Statement between H.H. Mar Raphael I Bidawid and H.H. Mar Dinkha IV, in: Syriac Dialogue 2. Second non-official consultation on dialogue within the Syriac tradition. Ed. PRO ORIENTE. Vienna 1996, 201 f.

²⁰ Cf. Joint Communiqué 1 of the Joint Commission for Unity. Made available by H.G. Mar Bawai Soro. The following members of the Commission have been nominated. Assyrian: Mar Gewargis Sliwa (Iraq), Poulouse Mar Poulouse (India † 1998), Mar Aprim Khamis (USA), Mar Bawai Soro (USA), Mar Emmanuel (Canada), Mar Narsai de Baz (Lebanon) and Mar Meelis Zaia (Australia); Chaldean: Mar Gewargis Garmo (Iraq), Mar Ibrahim Ibrahim (USA), Msgr. Zuhair Toma (Australia), Fr. Sarhad Jammo (USA), Mar Emmanuel Delly.

²¹ Cf. Joint Synodical Decree, in: Syriac Dialogue 3. Third non-official consultation on dialogue within the Syriac tradition. Ed. PRO ORIENTE. Vienna 1998, 185-188.

²² Cf. F. König, "Ecumenical Relations with the Orthodox Churches of the East from a Viennese Perspective": G. Alberigo et al., *The Holy Russian Church and Western Christianity*. London 1996, 75-88, esp. 76-81.

The original task of PRO ORIENTE was to "establish and deepen the contacts with Eastern Europe in all intellectually important fields, especially also between representatives of the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Churches". Austria preserved its centuries-long experience as a state of many peoples even after the collapse of the Habsburg monarchy in 1918. In the period after 1945, Austria was squeezed between the two opposing alliances of NATO and the Warsaw Pact, and became often the point of encounter between East and West, especially because of its neutrality, itself a product of the Cold War. This situation could be utilised not only for politics – Vienna became the third seat of the United Nations in this period – but also for the encounter of the Catholic Church and Eastern Christianity. During the Cold War the Archbishop of Vienna was the Western prelate nearest to the East.

In the 1970s emphasis was on inter-confessional relations, and today the task of PRO ORIENTE is to "promote ecumenical relations between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, the pre-Chalcedonian and pre-Ephesian Churches". PRO ORIENTE's work, because it is "unofficial", makes it possible for Orthodox and Oriental theologians to confer frankly with their Roman Catholic colleagues. This prepared the ground for the official dialogue with the Byzantine Orthodox, and contributed substantially to official agreements with the Oriental Orthodox Churches. Finally, since 1993, relations with the Assyrian Church of the East have been taken up in the context of the so-called "Syriac Dialogue".

This Syriac Dialogue is unprecedented. For the first time theologians of all the Syriac churches have come together: the Assyrian Church of the East (Old and New Calendarian), the Oriental Orthodox Churches (Syrian Orthodox from Antioch, Malankara Orthodox from India), and the Oriental Catholic Churches (Chaldean, Syrian, Maronite, Syro Malabar, and Syro Malankara Catholic Churches). So far four Syriac Consultations have taken place. The first three (Vienna 1994, Vienna 1996, Chicago 1997) dealt in particular with the historical and theological problems concerning the accusation of Nestorianism against the Assyrian Church.²³ This means that Nestorius and Theodore of Mopsuestia, and the Council of Ephesus and the condemnation of the so-called "Three Chapters" in the context of the Council of Constantinople (553) stood at the centre of interest. The third Syriac Consultation (Chicago 1997) declared in its final communiqué that in light of new research, Theodore of Mopsuestia and the anathema imposed on him and his works, 125 years after his death, at the Council of Constantinople (553), must be re-evaluated. Similarly, in regard to Nestorius the third Syriac Dialogue concludes that a distinction should be made between his faith and pastoral concerns on the one hand and the heresy called "Nestorianism" on the other.

The ecumenically important point in that statement is that representatives of those Syriac Churches that are in the theological tradition of Cyril of Alexandria and of Severus of Antioch have also contributed and agreed to this evaluation of Theodore and Nestorius.

The fourth Syriac Consultation took place in Vienna in the year 2000 and is documented in this volume.

²³ For an analysis cf. my paper on the theological results of the PRO ORIENTE Syriac Consultations in this volume.

5. Relations with the Oriental Orthodox Churches

5.1. Encounter with the Coptic Orthodox Church

The Assyrian-Coptic dialogue had a successful start. At the 6th General Assembly of the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC) in November 1994, the Coptic Pope Shenouda III invited the Assyrian observers to come to Egypt and to begin a bilateral theological dialogue. This was a result of the dialogue process within the MECC itself and of the Common Christological Declaration (1994) with the Roman Catholic Church which had been presented to the General Assembly of the MECC.

Shortly afterwards, in January 1995, a meeting of Coptic and Assyrian theologians took place in the Coptic monastery Amba Bishoy in the Wadi Natrun (Egypt). A draft of a Coptic-Assyrian "Common Christological Declaration" was worked out. The text was then considered by the respective holy synods. The Assyrian Church ratified the declaration in the same year, but the Coptic synod rejected it. The dialogue with the Assyrian Church was stopped totally by the Coptic Orthodox Church in the year 1996.

In July 1996 an article written by the ecumenical representative and secretary of the Coptic Holy Synod, Metropolitan Amba Bishoy of Damiette, and published in Great Britain helps explain the rupture.²⁴ The article says that the Assyrians promised at the meeting in Egypt in January 1995 to eliminate everything from their teachings and liturgical texts which is not in agreement with the draft Common Coptic-Assyrian Christological Declaration. According to the interpretation of the Coptic Metropolitan, this meant lifting the anathemas against Cyril of Alexandria and Severus of Antioch and erasing the names of Nestorius, Diodore of Tarsus and Theodore of Mopsuestia from the Assyrian list of saints.

From an ecumenical perspective and from the perspective of a theological observer, it can be stated that the request from a partner Church in a dialogue to erase Saints from calendars and traditions is neither appropriate nor understandable. Furthermore the rupture of dialogue is not a solution to resolve present problems. The interpretation of the Coptic Metropolitan contains requests to a partner Church in dialogue, which do not correspond to the present standard of theological, patristic and historical research. Today we have to evaluate theologians of the past in a more differentiated way, as texts of the Fathers have been recovered and newly edited. Thanks to such research, other dialogues with Coptic collaboration have moved forward. The official dialogue of the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Orthodox Churches states that "Councils and fathers previously anathematised or condemned are orthodox in their teachings"²⁵ The dialogue with the Assyrian Church should not be judged according to a double standard. Results of theological research have to get implemented in the ecumenical dialogues. It is noteworthy that in 1997 the Holy Synod of the Assyrian Church of the East lifted the anathemas against Cyril of Alexandria and Severus of Antioch.

The current dilemma exists because the Coptic Orthodox Church interprets every discussion about the Council of Ephesus and the person of Cyril of Alexandria as an attack on their tradition and identity. In the Second PRO ORIENTE Syriac Consultation (1996) Metropolitan Amba Bishoy, who participated as an observer, said in the discus-

sion: "I am sorry to say that we are shocked whenever we hear accusations against the Ecumenical Council of Ephesus from representatives of Churches which had already received and accepted this council together with our Churches. We consider this an indirect accusation against St. Cyril of Alexandria who was presiding [over] this ecumenical council."²⁶ This is why the Coptic Church views the christological discussion with the Assyrian Church of the East as a great danger. Metropolitan Amba Bishoy regards the PRO ORIENTE Syriac Dialogue as a Catholic/Assyrian alliance, which acquits the teachings of Nestorius, Diodore of Tarsus and Theodore of Mopsuestia, and at the same time accuses Cyril of Alexandria and the Council of Ephesus, which had oppressed Nestorius. He sees the Catholic Church playing a role no less regrettable than its part in the Council of Chalcedon, where the legates of Pope Leo the Great absolved Theodoret of Cyrus and Ibas of Edessa, both "well known for their Nestorian tendencies".²⁷

The Christological question that had been considered solved is therefore raised again by the Coptic Church. In a further article published in July 2000, Metropolitan Amba Bishoy writes: "The question now in front of the Coptic Orthodox Church regarding the Christological agreement signed by Pope John Paul II and Patriarch Mar Dinkha in November 1994, is how this agreement may affect the Christological agreement signed between Rome and Alexandria in February 1973 in which it is stated that we anathematize both the teachings of Nestorius and Eutyches."²⁸

5.2. Dialogue with the Syrian Orthodox Church

A very hopeful sequel of the second PRO ORIENTE Syriac Consultation (1996) was a letter written by the Assyrian and the Syrian-Orthodox participants to encourage their Patriarchs Mar Dinkha IV and Mar Ignatios Zakka I Iwas to create a Joint Committee for theological dialogue between both ancient and apostolic sister churches.²⁹ At the third PRO ORIENTE Syriac Consultation in Chicago (1997) participants were informed that both patriarchs agreed to establish a bilateral commission.³⁰

The first meeting took place in March 2, 1998 in the monastery Mar Maron in An-naya (Lebanon) – simultaneously with the 8th meeting of the PRO ORIENTE Syriac Commission - where a working program was prepared.³¹ First, the Commission suggested starting with a reflection on the Common Christological Agreements of the Roman Catholic Church with the Syrian Orthodox Church (1984) and the Assyrian Church (1994). Second, the practical and pastoral implications of the declarations between Pope John Paul II and Patriarch Mar Ignatios Zakka I Iwas (1984), and between the Patriarchs Mar Dinkha IV and Mar Raphael I Bidawid (1997), should be discussed. Then third, the theology of the sacraments (raze) in the two Churches should be addressed, and finally, fourth, attention would turn to the promotion of the common Syro-Aramaic language in liturgy and education.

²⁶ Cf. Syriac Dialogue 2, 71.

²⁷ Bishoy, "A Report concerning the Dialogue of the Syrian and Assyrian Churches" 208.

²⁸ Cf. A. Bishoy, "Dialogue with the Assyrian Church of the East And its effect on the Dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church": <http://www.uk-christian.net/boc> (link: Ecumenical Dialogue).

²⁹ Cf. Voice of the East 5/6, 1996, 13-14; Der Christliche Osten 51 (1996) 274.

³⁰ Joint Communiqué, in: Syriac Dialogue 3, 140.

³¹ Vgl. Der Christliche Osten 53 (1998) 136f; Orthodoxes Forum 12 (1998) 289; W. Schwaigert, "Die Orientalischen Orthodoxen Kirchen II": Internationale Kirchliche Zeitschrift 90 (2000) 73-106, here 82.

²⁴ Cf. A. Bishoy, "A Report concerning the Dialogue of the Syrian and Assyrian Churches": The Glastonbury Bulletin (July 1996) 206-213.

²⁵ Communiqué Geneva 1993, in: Ökumenische Rundschau 43 (1994) 82-84.

But this program had to be cancelled because of a decision of the Oriental Orthodox Patriarchs in the Middle East only one week later. Coptic Pope Shenouda III invited the Syrian Orthodox Patriarch Mar Ignatius Zakka I Iwas and the Armenian Apostolic Catholicos of Cilicia, Aram I Keshishian, to meet in Cairo and in the Wadi Natrun (Egypt) on March 10 and 11, 1998.³² From the final "Common Declaration of the Three Patriarchs" it is easy to infer the apprehension that the Christological Orthodoxy could get lost because of the integration of the Assyrian Church into the ecumenical efforts. The Common Declaration of the patriarchs requests that the three Oriental Orthodox Churches of the Middle East should have "united dogmatic positions in all theological dialogues". Further they should engage "themselves in all theological dialogues as one Church family", and the Patriarchs regard it as absolutely necessary "to have common positions concerning vital issues of our Churches in the Middle East Council of Churches, World Council of Churches, PRO ORIENTE and in other ecumenical organizations."³³

The effect of the decision to engage themselves as a Church family in all ecumenical dialogues was to put a stop to the bilateral Syrian Orthodox/Assyrian efforts.

6. Relations with the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC)

Already in 1985, at the 4th General Assembly in Limassol (Cyprus), the Assyrian Church tried to become a member of the MECC. But since this Church was closely associated with the "Nestorian" heresy, the application was turned down.³⁴ Only when the family of the seven Catholic Churches in the Middle East³⁵ joined the Council in 1990 at the 5th general assembly in Nicosia (Cyprus) did the discussion concerning MECC-membership for the Church of the East get a fresh impetus. A "MECC-committee for dialogue with the Assyrian Church of the East" was appointed in 1991. From 1992 to 1994 two official dialogue sessions were held and several unofficial encounters were arranged with a reduced number of participants. No final communiqué was issued, but important theological work was done. Especially because of the reservations of the Coptic Church, the subjects treated were Christological terminology, Mariology, and the teachings of Nestorius.³⁶

The 6th general assembly of the MECC (November 15-21, 1994) in Limassol (Cyprus) instructed the Executive Committee to examine the conditions for membership of the Assyrians. The Executive Committee took steps at its meeting in February 1995 to set in motion the process for receiving the Assyrian Church into the membership of the MECC.

As the MECC does not have individual Churches as members, but four confessional families (Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox, Catholic, Evangelical/Episcopal), there was still another problem left: To which of the four families should the Assyrian Church be as-

signed? In October 1995 a solution was found: The Assyrian Church was accepted as a member within the Catholic family – a compromise settlement made possible by the Assyrian/Catholic Common Christological Declaration (1994).

However, the Coptic Orthodox Church objected to the membership of the Assyrian Church because of a defect in procedure. At their second meeting in February 1999, the three Oriental Orthodox Patriarchs of the Middle East touched on the procedure for membership of the Assyrian Church of the East. Pope Shenouda III, Patriarch Mar Ignatius Zakka I Iwas and Catholicos Aram I Keshishian decided that "in view of the family-structure of the MECC we do not oppose the membership of any church of the MECC provided that it is in line and in accordance with the constitution, rules and procedures of the Council."³⁷

The General Secretary of the MECC, Riad Jarjour, had to inform the director of the Assyrian Commission on Inter-church Relations in November 1998 that the decision of October 1995 had been cancelled by the Executive Committee and that membership could not be accepted. The letter says that it is a precondition that within a Church family there is full communion. This is not the case with the Catholic and the Assyrian Church. The Assyrian Church of the East was invited to come only as an observer to the 7th General Assembly, April 26-30, 1999, in Dar Sayyad al-Jabal (Lebanon).

The Synod of the Assyrian Church came together in April 1999 in Chicago (Illinois) and discussed among other things this situation. In a letter to the General Secretary of the MECC dated April 23, 1999, Patriarch Mar Dinkha IV responded to the invitation of the MECC to participate in the General Assembly as an observer.³⁸ The letter was sent also to Cardinal Edward I. Cassidy of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, to the Chaldean Patriarch Raphael I Bidawid and to the Presidents of the MECC. Mar Dinkha wrote that he was grateful for the efforts of the MECC in the past years. He regards the Council as an important Christian testimony in a largely Muslim context. Therefore the Assyrian Church had tried hard through the MECC Sub-commission of Faith and Unity, and especially in discussions with the Coptic Orthodox Church, to overcome reservations and mistrust shown in regard to his Church.

"But the fact that our membership in the Council was revoked and, at present, we are invited as mere observers in the forthcoming General Assembly are very disappointing and painful occurrences for us. We feel hurt and wounded in our heart, especially because this decision is taken by our Christian brothers and friends living in the same homeland. To be reduced by your brothers to mere observers in a common homeland is very painful. Because accepting to be present as mere observers is accepting a grave offence against our beloved Church. What does it mean to be present if you are not really welcomed? We therefore find ourselves unable to accept MECC's invitation to be present as mere observers.

I also wish to add that, for the future, we do not even have to defend or legitimate ourselves or our apostolic faith any further. Our Church belongs to the Middle East Christianity, long before other MECC member Churches arrived in the region. Our Church had so many saints, martyrs and missionaries; we suffered during the centuries for our Christian faith. There is no single Assyrian family that did not pay with its blood for the Christian faith. We are scattered all over the

³² In regard to the following: cf. Common Declaration of the three Patriarchs (unpublished). Extracts English cf. Oriental Orthodox Patriarchs met, in: MECC newsreport 10 (Spring 1998) 38.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ B. Soro, "Recent Ecumenical Initiatives of the Assyrian Church of the East"; Syriac Dialogue 2, 195-201.

³⁵ I.e. Maronite Church of Antioch; Greek Catholic Melkite Church of Antioch, Alexandria and Jerusalem; Armenian Catholic Church of Cilicia; Syrian Catholic Church of Antioch; Coptic Catholic Church; Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem; Chaldean Catholic Church.

³⁶ For more details cf. Winkler, "The Current Theological Dialogue" 160-162; Soro, "Recent Ecumenical Initiatives" 195-198.

³⁷ Cf. The Second Meeting of the Heads of the Oriental Orthodox Churches in the Middle East (unpublished); Extracts: Sommet orientale orthodoxe, in: *Courrier Œcuménique du Moyen-Orient* 37-38 (1999-I/II) 29f.

³⁸ Cf. Mar Dinkha, Letter to Rev. Riad Jarjour (April 23, 1999), in: SEIA newsletter N° 43 (May 1999) 10f.

world as a consequence of our faith. What else can be asked of us? Why should we be reduced to beggars?”³⁹

This position of the Assyrian Church is understandable. Thirteen of 28 member Churches of the MECC are Protestant or Episcopal. They represent one MECC-Church family but not all of them are in full communion with each other. While Protestant/Episcopal or Catholic Oriental Churches can be members of the MECC, this is not possible for one of the oldest Churches of Christianity. The arguments against membership are neither theologically nor administratively substantial. Cardinal Edward I. Cassidy alone among speakers at the 7th General Assembly raised the problem in his greeting address:

“Let me mention in this context the concern of the Catholic Church regarding the persisting problem to grant a MECC membership to the Assyrian Church of the East. Without striving for a constitutional change in the MECC, a change which certainly is not possible nor desirable at the moment, the Catholic Church would stress the importance of finding an acceptable solution to this painful situation. It is our firm hope that the Council may find an appropriate way for reaching that purpose. At the threshold of the third millenium this would be a supplementary sign of growing Christian reconciliation and togetherness in the Middle East.”⁴⁰

7. Concluding remarks

In the course of World War I the Assyrian Church of the East lost one third of its population and nearly all its leaders and clergy. The resulting lack of theological experts made a more intensive engagement in the ecumenical movement impossible. A schism within the Church in the 1960s, the marriage of the patriarch in 1973 and his murder in 1975 have plunged the Church into another deep crisis. Only since the 1980s, and especially during the 1990s, have substantial theological dialogues on different levels taken place.

The dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church is very successful. Indeed, couldn't it be said to have resumed a conversation that had already begun in the 13th century when Bar Sauma from Beijing met Pope Nicholas IV? The recent dialogue has culminated so far in a Common Christological Declaration in 1994. This Agreement had multiple implications: First, a Joint Commission for Theological Dialogue of the Catholic and the Assyrian Church has been established. On the basis of the common faith in Christ, the draft of a Common Declaration on the Sacraments was finished in October 2000. Second, a bilateral dialogue with the Chaldean Catholic Church was started with the goal of comprehensive pastoral collaboration up to full communion of both East Syriac sister Churches. Thirdly, the theological dialogue with the Middle East Council of Churches got a new impetus and bilateral dialogues with the Coptic Orthodox Church began. But the next procedures on that level of inter-church relations are less encouraging: The dialogue that had been started with the Copts in 1994 collapsed in 1996; the bilateral dialogue of the Assyrian and the Syrian Orthodox Church was interrupted in 1997; membership in the Middle East Council of Churches was refused in 1999.

The non-official PRO ORIENTE Syriac Dialogue is now the only working forum of communication of Oriental Orthodox Churches (Syrian Orthodox, Malankara Orthodox) and the Assyrian Church of the East. The important systematic-theological work and research on liturgy and Church history which takes place in the official dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church and in the PRO ORIENTE Dialogue gives hope: First, that other Churches will realise that there are still Oriental Christians with a venerable and rich heritage; and second, that the Assyrian Church of the East and its eminent East Syriac tradition gets its place in the symphony of the Christian Oikumene.

³⁹ Ibid. 11.

⁴⁰ Cassidy Cardinal Edward, Address to the General Assembly of the MECC (extract), in: SEIA newsletter N° 43 (May 1999) 11.