

SYRIAC DIALOGUE

FIFTH NON-OFFICIAL CONSULTATION ON DIALOGUE WITHIN THE SYRIAC TRADITION

**Edited on behalf
of the Foundation
PRO ORIENTE by
Peter Hofrichter/Gerhard Wilflinger**

Vienna 2003

PRO ORIENTE
Höfburg, Marschallstiege II,
A - 1010 Vienna
Austria
Tel.: *1-533-80-21
Fax: *1-533-80-214
E-Mail: pro-oriente@netway.at
Homepage: <http://www.pro-oriente.at>

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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 2003, 154p. Available in English.

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.

PREAMBLE

"If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love." (Jn 15,8-11) Indeed, these words of our Lord Jesus Christ echo even today as an appeal to the divided Churches to come and abide in the love of his Father and prove themselves to be His disciples. Jesus reminds us that only when we abide in him and his words in us our prayers will be heard. Obviously dialogue to be fruitful is to be accompanied by an ardent desire and a strong will for an internal conversion.

There is only one Word of God, the Word that became man in Jesus Christ. He revealed the same Word to everyone through his words and actions. His apostles handed down that heritage which they received from the Word Incarnate. "However, the heritage handed down by the apostles was received differently and in different forms, so that from the very beginnings of the Church its development varied from region to region and also because of differing mentalities and ways of life. These reasons, plus external causes, as well as the lack of charity and mutual understanding, left the way open to divisions" (*Unitatis redintegratio*, Decree on Ecumenism no.14).

The words and actions of Jesus who by birth was a Jew were conditioned by the Jewish language, culture, history and geography and even climate of Palestine. They had to be translated into the culture and language of the various peoples who received the Gospel in order to make them intelligible to those peoples. The apostles did precisely that. The four Gospels testify to that process. In this process there did take place a clash of notions for want of words or notions themselves in the receiving cultures. The earthly Jesus was no more there with his words and actions to direct the apostles in doubts and problems with regard to His message. The Apostles are confronted with a problem: Are the non-Jews to pass through Judaism to reach the message of Jesus? Peter had not yet emerged as a decisive deciding superior authority. So the apostles met together, prayed, discussed and again prayed. Finally they got the answer. "For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things" (Acts 15, 28). This was a public pronouncement that no culture can claim any superiority in relation to the Gospel of Jesus. External expression of the faith in Jesus Christ will differ from people to people and place to place. Such differences need not be and shall not be a cause for division among the Christians. "But in subsequent centuries much more serious dissensions appeared and large communities became separated from full communion with the Catholic Church - for which, often enough, men of both sides were to blame" (UR 3). Indeed, concentration of authority in any culture often leads to the tendency to judge the faith-expressions of others through that cultural prism and condemn as unorthodox all those who do not conform to the cultural expressions of the authority. Naturally, as in the case of a ray of light that passes through a prism any culture will distort the original message to some extent.

No matter for what reason, division among the followers of Jesus Christ is a matter of fact. Reasons: according to Vatican II were lack of charity and mutual understanding

plus external factors as well as the difference in reception of the Good News. Now the only way to heal these divisions is to abolish the underlying reasons. Even then to go back to the original state of unity is almost an impossible task, as impossible as the dream of a tree broken down in the storm and grown into different trunks to go back to its original state of a single trunk. Thousands of years of separated existence has made it a way of life that can no longer be undone. So the only way seems to be a Christian co-existence in unity and communion.

The first thing indispensable for the co-existence is that all of us abide in the love of Jesus. The love of Jesus leads us to be patient, kind, not jealous and not boastful, not arrogant and not rude, not to insist on our own way, not irritable and resentful, not to rejoice in wrong but to rejoice in right. Love of Jesus makes us to bear all things, believe all things, hope all things and endure all things (1 Cor 13,4-7). A thorough knowledge of the other is the second necessary prerequisite for such a co-existence. Lack of knowledge leads to suspicions and cooked up theories about the other. Mutual understanding and knowledge demolishes the barriers of mistrust and prejudices. Understanding the culture, language, thinking categories and so on of the other is an absolute necessity not to misunderstand him or her.

I am happy that the Pro Oriente Foundation has been an excellent tool in creating an atmosphere of mutual understanding and knowledge, both between the Catholics and the non-Catholics and among the non-Catholics themselves. It is a wonderful service not only to the Churches of the Syriac Tradition but also to the Universal Church. As the Churches of the Syriac Tradition have very many things in common it is essential that they understand among themselves to dialogue with others. It is no secret that in spite of the common elements these Churches have also many differences. Even though the liturgical tradition of the Syro-Malabar Church belongs to the Syriac family "its culture and circumstances of history" (CCEO, c. 28,1) are totally different from that of the other Syriac Churches. This is true also of the Syro-Malankara Church to a great extent.

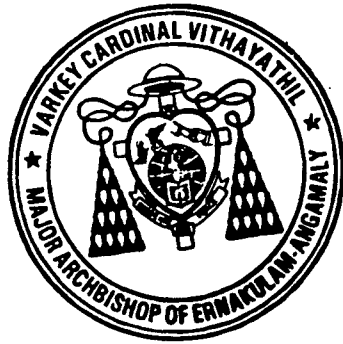
For reasons mostly political the Churches in the Greek and Latin Traditions got predominance and those of the Syriac Tradition were pushed into the peripheries. But it is a fact that these Churches made inestimable contributions to the Universal Church. I am sure that the laudable initiative of the Pro Oriente Foundation will once again bring these Churches into the limelight and wash away their infamy of monophysism and Nestorianism.

It is not possible to achieve this aim unless the Churches of the Syriac Tradition themselves understand among themselves and arrive at some kind of agreement on issues of dispute. PRO ORIENTE certainly is a forum that helps in this direction. Ecumenism is not merely a matter of discussion and agreements on doctrinal and disciplinary issues because the very reason for the division goes beyond the doctrinal and disciplinary matters. The division within the Christian communities of St Thomas Christian Tradition had absolutely nothing to do with doctrine. It is intriguing that there was no difficulty for the St Thomas Christians who were allegedly Nestorians to become at one stroke Jacobites of Antiochean Tradition who were monophysists. In other words the reason for the division in the St Thomas Christian Church had absolutely nothing to do with these doctrines. So the ecumenical dialogue that is based only on doctrine is doomed to fail. It is in this context that the importance and usefulness of Pro Oriente Foundation comes to light in creating a conducive atmosphere for ecumenical dialogues.

I pray and wish that the great vision and ideals of the founding fathers of this foundation may come true one day when all of us will be able to partake of the body and blood of

our Lord and Saviour from the same Eucharistic table. May the grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of the Father and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with the contributors and the readers of the "Syriac Dialogue".

Mount St. Thomas 2-12-2002



Peter Hofrichter/Gerhard Wilflinger

FOREWORD BY THE EDITORS

As editors of the present volume containing the second part of documents and papers about the sacraments in the churches of the Syriac tradition we offer to the interested community of ecumenical experts and laymen the discussions of the Fifth Consultation of representatives of the Syrian Orthodox, Assyrian, Chaldean, Malankara Orthodox, Malankara Catholic, Malabar Catholic and Maronite Churches on behalf of the foundation PRO ORIENTE.

Thus 30 theologians and experts of the different churches and PRO ORIENTE met from February 26th to March 1st, 2002 at Pallottihaus in Vienna on invitation of our foundation. Conducting five working sessions the representatives of the different churches presented their papers and replies on the chosen topics Marriage, Anointing of the sick and Holy Leaven (Malka) and Sign of the Cross. Both aspects, the developments and changes within the liturgies of the involved churches and the common witness of the Syriac tradition became obvious. Nevertheless the discussions were fruitful, intense and concentrated on the task which encourages our preparatory commission to continue its efforts.

The preparation of the meeting was performed – as usually since 1994 - by the members of our Syriac Commission who chose the topics and presided the different working sessions, namely our beloved friends the bishops Mar Gregorios (Syrian Orthodox), Mar Bawai Soro (Assyrian Church of the East), Boulos Matar (Maronite) and Mar Joseph Powathil (Syro Malabar) as well as the fathers K. M. George (Malankara Orthodox), Khoshaba Georges (Ancient Assyrian), Louis Sako (Chaldean) Geevarghese Chediath (Malankara Catholic) and Archbishop Jules M. Al Jamil (Syrian Catholic) and our Catholic members Father Frans Bouwen and Dietmar Winkler.

We are grateful to His Eminence, the Major Archbishop Varkey Cardinal Vithayathil of Ernakulam, the Head of the Syro-Malabar Catholic Church of India, for writing the pre-ambles, in which he emphasizes the striving for Christian unity as a future task concerning all Churches of the Middle East. Like him also the patriarchs of the other Oriental Orthodox and Oriental Catholic Churches which belong to the Syriac tradition sent their representatives to our meeting in order to show the mutual understanding and common heritage among these Churches.

Our special gratitude as editors of the present volume goes to the Archbishop Cardinal Christoph Schönborn of Vienna who visited the meeting and took part in the discussions during the second working session delivering a short speech to the participants.

The president of the executive committee of our foundation, Dr. Johann Marte, took part in several meetings of the preparatory commission and attended both, the working sessions of the Fifth Consultation and the excursion to the monastery of Heiligenkreuz. We are grateful for his commitment.

The responsibility of the technical organization was once more truthfully conducted by the headmistress of the PRO ORIENTE office, Mag. Marion Wittine. The same thanks go to all members of the staff of our foundation and to the members of our board of trustees who granted the means of the meeting.

THE RICH SACRAMENTAL LIFE OF THE SYRIAC CHURCHES: RECOGNIZING DIVERSITY AND EQUAL LEGITIMACY

Scholarly Contributions of the Fifth Syriac Consultation

In 1994, PRO ORIENTE started “Syriac Dialogue:” a series of unofficial Consultations to promote dialogue within the Churches of the Syriac tradition. These Consultations have now reached their second phase. The first phase focused on Christology, and it was made up of three scholarly Consultations: “*Syriac Dialogue 1-3*.” The first two meetings (1994, 1996) took place in Vienna and the third (1997) in Chicago. Participants studied the Antiochene tradition from various points of view, in order to understand the historical and theological contexts and approaches that shaped each tradition. These thorough studies have brought new perspectives concerning events of the past. PRO ORIENTE’s *Syriac Commission* – consisting of representatives from all of the Syriac Churches and experts from this foundation – subsequently planned and organized the next set of three Consultations (i.e. the fourth, fifth and sixth Consultation: “*Syriac Dialogue 4-6*”). They decided to devote these next Consultations to the subject “Sacraments in the Syriac Tradition.”

This second phase, “*Syriac Dialogue 4*,” began in Vienna, 2000. Participants investigated Sacramental Theology, with a view towards articulating both the Theology of the *raze/roze* in general and the Sacrament(s) of Initiation. The present volume contains the papers and discussion notes from “*Syriac Dialogue 5*”, the proceedings of which I shall summarize here. The sixth Consultation will take place in Vienna 2003, and that will then conclude this set of ecumenical discussions on Syriac Sacramental Theology.

Topics and Methodology

The *Syriac Dialogue* is liturgically bilateral (East and West Syriac) and theologically trilateral, including all the Churches that share a common Syriac heritage: two branches of the Church of the East, two Oriental-Orthodox Churches, and five Oriental-Catholic Churches. Representatives of all of these Churches were present at the fifth PRO ORIENTE Syriac Consultation in Vienna 2002. With the support of scholars, they have continued the study and discussion of sacramental life in each of their respective traditions.

The individual Syriac Churches list their rites or *raze/roze* differently, and discussions from this Fifth Consultation focused on how and why this is so. Marriage and Anointing of the Sick, for example, are in the Canon of Sacraments of the Oriental-Orthodox Churches and the Catholic Church. This means that they are found in the West Syriac tradition (Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch, the Malankara Orthodox Church of India) and in the Catholic Syriac Churches, both in the West Syriac (Maronite, Syrian Catholic and Malankara Catholic Churches) and in the East Syriac (Chaldean, Syro-Malabar Churches) traditions. The Church of the East (East Syriac), on the other hand, does count neither Marriage nor Anointing of the Sick among its Sacraments, but it does, however, include Holy Leaven and the Sign of the Cross.

In the course of this Consultation, studies and perspectives from each of the different traditions brought forth ecumenical discussion. The original plan was that a representative of each Church would discuss the *raza/rozo* included on his Church’s list of Sacraments.

He would then read a paper in order to introduce his tradition further. Afterwards, those whose Churches had a different list of *raza/roze* would respond to the paper and comment upon it. In reality, however, the discussion took a different course. Not all of the comments that followed the papers provided precise reactions corresponding to the questions that the speakers had raised. The thought-provoking presentations did, nevertheless, give rise to a fruitful discussion. This led ultimately to a substantial joint communiqué. This communiqué has – thanks to the Drafting Committee guided by Sebastian Brock – condensed the scholarly and ecumenical results of the Consultation. They have brought forth much more than merely a shallow and general overview of the proceedings.

We recall, furthermore, *con variazioni*, what was previously said regarding the *Syriac Dialogue 4*: This set of PRO ORIENTE Syriac Consultations on the liturgical and theological understanding of *raze/roze* makes an important contribution to ecumenical dialogue and research. These Consultations invite representatives of the Syriac Churches to speak openly from their own knowledge and unique experience, offering more than the external views from Western scholarly research.

Raze/Roze Revisited: Definitions, Enumerations, and Clarifications

The topic of Sacramental Theology, especially concerning the Syriac term *raza/rozo*, came up at this Consultation, although it had also been discussed in detail at the last one. Marriage was the subject of the first day of the Consultation. While discussing marriage, the question concerning the different listings of the seven *raze/roze* arose again. In this context, it became necessary once more to clarify the term *raza/roze* in greater detail.

The Fourth Syriac Consultation had already recognized that the Latin term *sacramentum* and the Syriac *raza/rozo* do indeed overlap, though they are not at all, however, coterminous. It is better, therefore, either to leave the Syriac term in transliteration or translate it with the Greek ‘mystery’. It was only in the 13th century that some in the Syriac tradition began to use the symbolic number seven to enumerate the *raze/roze*. This came from the influence of the Latin Church. In the West, seven was an appropriate number, since scholastic theologians began to distinguish between Sacraments and Sacramentals. The number seven did not, however, fit very well into the Syriac traditions. Different lists, therefore, were produced subsequently.

Only in a Synod of 2001 did the Assyrian Church of the East reaffirm the list of the seven *raze* of Abdisho bar Brika (+1318), which does not include Matrimony. The list, however, of the East Syriac Catholicos Timothy II (+1353) includes Matrimony, and this clearly suggests that one should not understand Abdisho’s list to be an exclusive one. Even Bar Ebroyo (+1286), as we learned at the fifth Consultation, does not mention marriage in his list of five *shumloye*. It is, nevertheless, a *raza* in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

Why does a given *raza/rozo* appear on the list of some Syriac Churches while it does not appear on the lists of others? This problem led participants to ask once again how one should define *raza/rozo*. The term *raza/rozo* includes both Sacraments and Sacramentals. There is no doubt that the Oriental Catholic Churches accepted both the number and the specific sacraments from the western tradition. However, the Joint Communiqué of the Fifth Syriac Consultation clearly recognizes that the adoption of a fixed number of *raze/roze* is inappropriate in the context of all Syriac Churches: “This means that the different listings of seven *raze/roze* in the different Syriac traditions is of no particular consequence. What matters is the substance of what each particular *raza/roze* conveys” (*Joint Communiqué pt.10*). In other words, the different listings cannot be a specific ecumenical

problem or an obstacle to unity, as long as the theological substance of a *raza/roze* is clear.

The participants of the Fifth Syriac Consultation, therefore, produced a more specific definition of the Syriac term: “*Raza/Rozo*, in a liturgical context, is a symbolic action, founded on the economy of salvation in Christ, which is performed by the Church as a salvific action with eschatological dimensions through the ministry of a bishop or a priest. Through a *Raza/Rozo* life-giving grace (*taybutha/taybutho*) is effectively communicated by the power of the Holy Spirit to a believer who receives this grace through faith and prayer.” (*Communiqué pt. 17*). That makes it clear that the “various Syriac Churches have developed their sacramental life in differing, but equally legitimate, ways.” (*ibid. pt. 16b*)

Discussion on Marriage

The discussion on marriage led to a debate concerning the different lists of the *raze/roze*. After specifying the Syriac term, however, it became clear that, although some exclude it from their various lists, marriage is, nevertheless, understood as a *raza/roze*. In the context of the Syriac tradition, the question of whether or not marriage belongs to a list of “seven” sacraments ushers in more confusion. It does not bring about a better understanding of the Sacramental Theology of each tradition.

Much concurrence appeared in the course of *Syriac Dialogue 5*. In all of the Syriac traditions, the structure of the matrimonial service is essentially the same. All Syriac Churches refer to Ephesians 5, which describes marriage as a “great *raza/rozo*.” The liturgical rites show, furthermore, that the main foundations of marriage are the same (presence of a priest etc., cf. *Joint Communiqué pt. 7*).

The discussion about divorce, annulment, and/or dissolution showed signs of Western influence. All Churches regard marriage as indissoluble, according to Mt 19,6. Those Churches – East and West Syriac – which are not in communion with the Roman Catholic Church have the same tradition as that of the Eastern Orthodox Churches. They recognize, namely, a dissolution of marriage *kat oikonomian*. The Catholic Syriac Churches, however, acknowledge a difference between divorce and annulment. It is evident that this is a more recent tradition developed under Western influence and Canon law, while the “Syriac Churches have never made any clear distinction in language between divorce and annulment” (*Communiqué pt. 8*).

A Fascinating and Rich Heritage

The second and the third day of the Consultation concentrated on discussing the Anointing of the Sick, The Holy Leaven and the Sign of the Cross. The dialogue that took place revealed the fascinating heritage of the Syriac tradition. The unique developments that grew out of different cultural and geographical contexts did indeed create rich traditions.

Healing had been a prominent aspect in all of the Syriac Churches since ancient times. Over the centuries, the Syriac Churches developed many faithful expressions in order to fulfill Christ’s command to heal the sick and to proclaim the kingdom of God. The Fifth Syriac Consultation realized that behind the great variety of rites – such as laying on of hands, anointing with oil, usage of a mixture of oil and dust from the tomb of a saint (Hnana) etc. – the fundamental common element is the “liturgical action whereby a priest conveys divine grace of healing and forgiveness of sins to a sick person” (*Comm. pt. 12*).

The Church of the East has preserved a distinctive *raza*: the Holy Leaven, or “Malka”. There are various accounts about its origin, and what follows is a brief summary. At the Last Supper, Jesus took bread in his hands, blessed it, broke it, and gave one piece to each of the apostles, but two pieces to St. John. The Lord asked John to eat one piece and carefully keep the other. When Jesus died, John dipped that piece of bread into the blood that proceeded from Jesus’ side. This “Holy Leaven” – consecrated bread, dipped into the blood of Jesus – has been preserved until this day in the Church of the East. The local bishop renews it annually on Holy Thursday, mixing a remainder of the old Leaven with the new one. As no priest is allowed to celebrate *Qurbana* (Eucharist) using bread without Holy Leaven, it is distributed to all parishes, to be used during the year with each bread, specially prepared by the priest before the Eucharist. This *raza* preceding the Eucharistic celebration is to be seen as a visible or outward sign that connects the Last Supper, the Institution of the Eucharist, and the piercing of the Side of Christ with the present Eucharistic celebration of the Local Church. It shows historic and symbolic continuity, and it serves as a *raza* of unity in the diachronic and synchronic sense of ecclesial community. In the way in which this practice shows apostolicity as well as unity between the bishop and the parishes, “the theological significance of the Holy Leaven is not unlike that of the Myron in the West Syriac tradition” (*Communiqué pt 14*). To this we may add the Armenian tradition as well.

Conclusion and Ecumenical Relevance

The contribution of the dialogue within the Syriac Churches is significant. The results of such dialogue serve to awaken ecclesial consciousness to this important branch of the Church. Although the Gospel has its origin in a Syro-Aramaic setting, this tradition had largely fallen out of theological awareness and had been often forgotten or neglected in theological discourse. In many cases, indeed, theological discussion had centered around Western problems. The focus was on relations between Protestants and Catholics or between Catholics and Eastern Orthodox relations, i.e. the Churches of the Roman Empire. The third branch – Syriac Christianity – brings, therefore, valuable input that serves to widen the horizon of ecumenical and theological discussion.

The three-way dialogue of the Syriac Churches concerning Christology has shown already that different forms of expression of the faith are acceptable, as long as they correspond in substance. This pattern should be continued in regard to teachings on the sacramental life. Scholarly discussion is the first step towards building new and mutual understanding among the Churches. Such fruitful dialogue emphasizes that the way towards unity does not lead to uniformity. The rich sacramental life of the Syriac Churches shows this in an impressive way.

PROGRAM

TUESDAY, 26th OF FEBRUARY 2002

9.00	Opening session Prayer: <i>Syrian Orthodox</i> Inauguration of the Syriac Consultation Dr. Johann Marte, Acting President Prof. Peter Hofrichter, PRO ORIENTE Executive Board
9.30	First working session: "Marriage" Chairman: <i>Archbishop Paul Matar</i> Mar Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim: Presentation of his paper
10.30	Coffee break
11.00	Chorbishop Michael J. Birnie: Comment
12.00	Lunch
15.00	Second working session "Marriage" Chairman: <i>Mar Joseph Powathil</i> Participation of H.E. Cardinal Christoph Schönborn Fr. Pierre Youssi : Presentation of his paper Discussion
16.30	Coffee break
17.00	Chorbishop Michael J. Birnie: Comment Discussion
18.30	Dinner

WEDNESDAY, 27th OF FEBRUARY 2002

9.00	Third working session „Anointing of the Sick“ Prayer: <i>Malankara Catholic</i> Chairman: <i>Mar Gregorios Y. Ibrahim</i>
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9.00	Fr. Kondothra M. George: Presentation of his paper Mar George Alencherry: Presentation of his paper
10.30	Coffee break
11.00	Fr. Khoshaba M. Georges: Comment Discussion
12.30	Lunch
15.40	Bus to the Monastery of Heiligenkreuz
16.15	Meeting with Abbot Gregor Henckel-Donnersmarck and visit of the monastery
18.00	Vespers in the monastery and return to Pallottihaus
19.30	Dinner

THURSDAY, 28th OF FEBRUARY 2002

9.00	Forth working session „Holy Leaven (Malka) and Sign of the Cross“ Prayer: <i>Church of the East (Assyrian Church of the East/ Ancient Church of the East/Chaldean Church)</i> Chairman: <i>Archbishop Paul Matar</i> Mar Bawai Soro: Presentation on Holy Leaven Fr. Baby Varghese: Comment on Holy Leaven Fr. Louis Sako: Comment on Holy Leaven
10.40	Coffee break
11.00	Mar Yacub Daniel: Presentation on Sign of the Cross Mar Cyril Afrem Karim: Comment on Sign of the Cross Discussion
12.00	Lunch
15.00	Fifth working session „Holy Leaven (Malka) and Sign of the Cross“ Chairman: <i>Mar Joseph Powathil</i>

Fr. Elie Khalife: Comment on Sign of the Cross
Discussion

- 16.15 Coffee break
- 16.45 Discussion on communiqué
- 18.30 Bus to the City Centre
- 19.00 Dinner at restaurant “Toni” in honour of the PRO ORIENTE-delegates on invitation of Chorbishop Emanuel Aydin

FRIDAY, 1st of March 2002

- 9.00 ***Sixth working session „Communique“***
Prayer: *Maronite—Syrian Catholic*
Chairman: *President Johann Marte*
Discussion on the Communique
- 10.30 Coffee break
- 11.00 Drafting of the Communique
- 12.00 Lunch
- 14.00 ***Final working session on “Communiqué”***
Chairman: *Mar Bawai Soro*
- 15.00 Coffee break
- 15.30 ***Closing session (Moderation: Prof. Hofrichter)***
Presentation of the Communiqué
Words of thanks
Closing speech, benediction and
Closing prayer
- 18.30 Dinner



Participants of the Fifth Syriac Consultation. From left to right, last to first row: Dr. Dietmar Winkler, Prof. Peter Hofrichter, Fr. Frans Bouwen, Fr. Baby Varghese, Fr. Louis Sako, Fr. Mathai Kadavil, Fr. Elie Khalife, Fr. Philip Nelpuraparampil, Fr. Johan Bonny, Brother Uwe Michael Lang, Prof. Philipp Harnoncourt, Prof. Sebastian Brock, Fr. Johns Abraham Konat, Sr. Prasanna Vazheparambil, Fr. Pierre Yousif, Fr. Khoshaba Georges, Fr. Mathew Vellanickal, Mar Mathews Severios, Fr. K.M. George, Mar Aprem George Mookan, Marion Breiner, Fr. Geevarghese Chediath, Chorbishop Michael J. Birnie, Dr. Theresia Hainthaler, President Johann Marte, Archbishop Jules M. Al-Jamil, Archbishop Georges Casmoussa, Mar Joseph Powathil, Mar Yacub Daniel, Mar Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim, Archbishop Christoph Cardinal Schönborn, Archbishop Paul Matar, Mar Gregorios Saliba, Mar Cyril Aphrem Karim, Mar Bawai Soro



From left to right: Fr. Philip Nelpuraparampil, Sr. Prasanna Vazheparambil, Fr. Elie Khalife, Fr. Mathai Kadavil, Fr. Geovarghese Chediath, Fr. Baby Varghese, Fr. K.M. George, Mar Mathews Severios, Prof. Philipp Harnoncourt, Fr. Frans Bouwen, Dr. Dietmar Winkler



From left to right: President Johann Marte, Archbishop Paul Matar, Fr. Pierre Yousif, Archbishop Christoph Cardinal Schönborn, Mar Joseph Powathil



From left to right: Mar Aprem George Mookan, Chorbishop Michael J. Birnie, Fr. Khoshaba Georges, Mar Yakub Daniel, Fr. Louis Sako, Mar Gregorios Saliba, Mar Cyril Aphrem Karim, Archbishop Georges Casmoussa, Archbishop Jules M. Al-Jamil, Mar George Alencherry, Fr. Mathew Vellanickal



Visit of Cardinal Schönborn to the Fifth Syriac Consultation. On the left: Mar Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim



Coffee break at the Fifth Syriac Consultation. From left to right: Mar Yakub Daniel, Mar Gregorios Saliba, Archbishop Georges Casmoussa



From left to right: Mar Bawai Soro, Mar Cyril Aphrem Karim, Dr. Dietmar Winkler

PARTICIPANTS

1. Assyrian Church of the East

Mar Bawai Soro
Bishop of Western California
San Jose, CA 95112, USA

Mar Aprem George Mookan
Metropolitan of Thrissur
680001 Thrissur /Kerala, INDIA

Chorbishop Michael J. Birnie
St. Thomas the Apostle
Seattle, Washington 98117, USA

2. Ancient Church of the East

Mar Yakoob Danil H. Bolis
Metropolitans Palace of the Ancient Church of the East
Hassake, SYRIA

Dr. Khoshaba Georges
Ancient Church of the East
London W13 0ZY, GREAT BRITAIN

3. Syrian Orthodox of Antioch

Mar Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim
Metropolitan of Aleppo
Aleppo, SYRIA

Mar Grigorios Saliba
Metropolitan of Mossul Syrian Orthodox Archbishopric
Mossul, IRAQ

Mor Cyril Aphrem Karim
Patriarchal Vicariate of Eastern USA
Teaneck, NJ 07666, USA

4. Malankara Orthodox-Syrian

Fr. Kondothra M. George
Principle of the Orthodox Seminary
686001 Kottayam, INDIA

Mar Mathews Severios
Metropolitan of Kandanadu
682308 Meempara Kerala, INDIA

Fr. Johns Abraham Konat
Muvattupuzha (via) 686667 Kerala, INDIA

Fr. Baby Varghese
Orthodox Seminary
686001 Kottayam, INDIA

5. Chaldean

Fr. Louis Sako
Chaldean Church
Mossul, IRAQ

Fr. Pierre Yousif
Chaldean Mission in France Notre Dame de Chaldée
75018 Paris, FRANCE

6. Syro-malabar

Mar Joseph Powathil
Metropolitan of Changanassery
686101 Changanassery, INDIA

Fr. Philip Nelpuraparampil
Director of the Dep. for Ecumenism
686101 Changanassery, INDIA

Mar George Alencherry
Bishop of Thuckalay
629175 Tamil Nadu, INDIA

Sr. Prasanna Vazheparampil CMC
686101 Changanacherry / Kerala, INDIA

Fr. Mathew Vellanickal
Vicar General of the Archdiocese of Changanassery
686101 Changanassery, INDIA

7. Syrian Catholic

Archbishop Jules Mikhael Al-Jamil
Procuratore patriarcale di Antiochia presso la S. Sede
00186 Roma, ITALY

Georges Casmoussa
Archbishop of Mossul
Mossul, IRAQ

8. Malankara Catholic

Fr. Geevarghese Chediath
St. Mary's Malankara Seminary
695015 Trivandrum /Kerala, INDIA

Fr. Mathai Kadavil OIC
3000 Leuven, BELGIUM

9. Maronite

Fr. Elie Khalifé
Ordre Libanais Maronite, Couvent N.D. de la Victoire
Ghosta, LEBANON

Mar Boulos Matar
Maronite Archbishop of Beirut
Achrafie-Beyrouth, LEBANON

10. PRO ORIENTE

Dr. Johann Marte
President of the
Foundation PRO ORIENTE
1010 Wien, AUSTRIA

Prof. Philipp Harnoncourt
Executive member of the
Foundation PRO ORIENTE
8010 Graz, AUSTRIA

Prof. Peter Hofrichter
Executive member of the
Foundation PRO ORIENTE
5400 Hallein, AUSTRIA

Univ.Do. Dr. Dietmar Winkler
Inst. f. Ökumenische Theologie, Ostkirchliche
Orthodoxie u. Patrologie
8010 Graz, AUSTRIA

Fr. Frans Bouwen
Pères Blancs, Sainte Anne
91190 Jerusalem, ISRAEL

Mag. Marion Wittne
Secretary of the
Foundation PRO ORIENTE
1010 Wien, AUSTRIA

11. Experts and Observers

Fr. Johan Bonny
Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity
00193 Roma, ITALY

Sebastian Brock
Oriental Institute, University Oxford
Oxford OX1 2 LE, GREAT BRITAIN

Dr. Theresia Hainthaler
Phil.-Theol. Hochschule Sankt Georgen
60599 Frankfurt, GERMANY

12. Minutes:

Brother Uwe Michael Lang
Oratorium d. hl. Philipp Neri
1030 Wien, AUSTRIA

Opening Ceremony: Tuesday, February 26th, morning

Johann Marte

OPENING ADDRESS

Excellencies, dear brethren and sisters in Christ!

May I extend a cordial welcome to those who arrived later. We of the foundation PRO ORIENTE are very pleased to meet you again here in Vienna for the Fifth Syriac Consultation on Sacraments in the Syriac Tradition – Part II. Thank you for taking upon you the inconveniences of a long journey to join us. As usual Prof. Hofrichter has prepared the meeting scientifically and Ms. Marion Bremer did the enormous organisational job. Many thanks to both of them. PRO ORIENTE will do its best to make your staying here in Pallotti-Haus as pleasant and fruitful as possible.

For those of you who did not get in touch with PRO ORIENTE yet, I would like to give some information about our foundation:

PRO ORIENTE was founded by Cardinal König in 1964 in the aftermath of the Second Vatican Council. It is a foundation according to the Codex Iuris Canonici, aimed at the dialogue with the Orthodox, the pre-Chalcedonian and the pre-Ephesian Churches and to support ecumenical attitude and ecumenical initiatives. It is run by a Board of Trustees chaired by Cardinal Schönborn and an Executive Committee chaired by three presidents since November last year: Dr. Franz Fischler, EU-Commissioner, Mrs. Maria Mayr-Melnhof, the former chairperson of our Salzburg Section and little old me, as Acting President. Why did we put an EU-official at the top of PRO ORIENTE, you could ask me? First: He was already for a long time personally interested in ecumenical issues and second: in the process of enlarging the European Union Christians of East and West could play an important role, if they work together.

These are some highlights of PRO ORIENTE's activities during the last 30 years:

In 1971 PRO ORIENTE started the so-called "Viennese Consultations" with the five Oriental Orthodox Churches, resulting in the so-called "Viennese Christological Formula", formulated on the suggestion of the later Pope Shenouda III.

In 1974 we started a dialogue with the Orthodox Churches, thus paving the way for the official dialogue in Patmos in 1980.

The collapsing of the Communist regimes in Eastern Europe confronted PRO ORIENTE with new fields of action. Reacting on the war-like events on the Balkans, we installed in 1995 a commission on South- and East European history, aimed at developing a common conception of the history of the Balkan people and bringing about peace between ethnic groups and religions.

In 1994 – as you know – the Syriac Dialogue started. For the first time all the Churches of this tradition met here in Vienna including the Assyrian Church of the East.

Apart from these highlights there were countless mutual visits, symposia, lectures, expositions, peace initiatives and many publications being an important part of our work.

What are PRO ORIENTE's activities now? Last year we have set some new trends and initiatives which will be continued, i.e. a PRO ORIENTE delegation took part in an inter-

religious dialogue Cardinal Schönborn let with religious leaders in Iran. To the sessions of our commission for South- and East Europe we are regularly inviting Muslim scholars too. As to the dialogue with the Islam we would very much the expertise of your Churches.

In June PRO ORIENTE had its first conference on patristics. 16 Orthodox and 14 Catholic scholars took part. The Patriarchates of Constantinople and Moscow were also represented. A new research project is touching the history of unions of Transsylvania and Galicia. A conference on illuminism and hesychasm was organised in Romania. That was the first common research project we had with an Orthodox metropolis.

The most prestigious guest we had last year, was His Holiness Catholicos Karekin II. Near the Armenian church St Hripsime in Vienna, he opened a monument reminding the 1700th anniversary of the Armenian Church. He met with Austrian President Klestil and some Austrian ministers. In order to make PRO ORIENTE better known by the public, we reconstructed and enlarged our website with information on PRO ORIENTE, our dialogue partners and documents on ecumenism. Our address is: www.pro-oriente.at.

At the very end of my report, I will inform you of some highlights of our program for 2002: next week Archbishop Stanislav Hocevar from Belgrade will speak to us here in Vienna about "Postnational identities in Yugoslavia". In April we open an exposition of Armenian manuscripts and precious objects from the Catholicosate's museum in Etchmiazdin. For June we plan a study seminar on the union of Galicia together with Orthodox and Greek Catholic scholars. In September we invited Patriarch Gregorios III Laham to speak on the topic: "The situation of Christians in the Middle East". In October a study seminar and a separated lecture will be held in cooperation with the Russian Orthodox University of Holy John the Theologian (Moscow) on Christian anthropology. As you could conclude from that, the newly broken out turbulencies between Moscow and the Vatican do not affect PRO ORIENTE's business as usual, at least for the time being.

Our commission for South- East-Europe will meet in September in Sarajevo, where we will present to publication: "God's chosen people" and a second one on Balkan issues. We hope to publish two or three books this year in Greek, Romanian and German language.

With regard to the future of our activities, dear friends, we will be confronted with new challenges, as for example September 11 and its consequences, the enlargement of the European Union, the on-going secularization etc., but what PRO ORIENTE is facing too with is a smaller budget. We have to be aware of this matter of fact.

As to the Syriac Dialogue, last year in Rome our commission decided to continue the consultations. It will be the commission's business to find under the circumstances mentioned topics of highest priority for Churches and for the ecumenical movement. We will have the responsibility given by our Lord to bring forward and promote our unity in the diversity of our rites and traditions as effectively as possible, that the world may believe in Jesus Christ. We have much to loose, dear brethren and sisters, as you do know better than me.

Peter Hofrichter

ADDRESS

Your Excellencies, esteemed participants in this Fifth Syriac Consultation.

I cordially welcome you here in Vienna in the House of the Pallotti Fathers. I thank you cordially for coming from so far to take part in this second meeting on behalf of the sacraments in the Syriac tradition. We have come together from exactly ten different Churches and ten countries. And it may be taken as a sign of interest in the issue to be treated that everybody invited to this consultation is really present here, except only Father Bonny from the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity in Rome who will join us in the afternoon. I welcome especially those who are the first time with us.

The Syriac Dialogue of the foundation PRO ORIENTE is an unofficial dialogue with and among Churches of Syriac tradition, Oriental Orthodox, Assyrian and Catholic. Participants are speaking not as official representatives of their Churches, but as experts in their field of knowledge expressing freely their own opinions and convictions. This Syriac Dialogue started in 1994 in order to deal with the theological divergences which have divided this tradition down from the fourth century and to become aware of the rich heritage that is in common to all groups in spite of all the splits that have separated them. The first three Consultations were dedicated to the christological problem mainly concerning the Church of the East. We treated there the Councils of Ephesus and Constantinople II, Nestorius and Theodor of Mopsuestia and the terminology and intentions of the christological beliefs of the Church of the East. The following three Consultations were scheduled to deal with the sacraments within the Syriac tradition. The first of them took place two years ago.

The large amount of liturgy that is connecting across all ecclesial borders was an amazing experience already at the very first Meeting in 1994 in Vienna. Participants of all these different Churches discovered for the first time that they were able not only to pray but also to sing together, because the wordings and the melodies had not changed throughout the time of their separation. The intention of PRO ORIENTE is not a pure academic one. Scholarly work should pave the way for reconciliation of our divided Christianity. Our unofficial dialogue shall prepare or accomplish official negotiations and shall in any way have practical effects.

I am sincerely convinced that our present meeting and our work on the sacraments that are different between the Church of the East and the other Churches involved will deepen our mutual understanding and will bring us again one more step closer together.

As to the organisation, everything has been prepared by our excellent secretary, Miss Marion Bremer. You find on your desk a map with the program and the papers. Two papers should still be added. The conference is presided by four members of the Syriac Commission, which is the Steering body of this whole dialogue. We will have an Excursion to an ancient Cistercian monastery near Vienna and an invitation by the Syrian Orthodox community. The Archbishop of Vienna, Cardinal Christoph Schönborn who is the chairman of the board of trustees of PRO ORIENTE, will join us this afternoon and the Acting President of the foundation, the former General Director of the Austrian National Library, Dr. Johann Marte, whom I welcome among us, will be so kind and inform you about what PRO ORIENTE is and about the manifold activities of this foundation just now.

Introduction by Chairman Archbishop Matar

Thank you, Mr. President. My dear brother bishops, dear brothers and sisters in Christ, we thank God for giving us this opportunity to meet again here in Vienna for the 5th Syriac Consultation. We thank Pro Oriente for having organized this meeting and all meetings in which we have participated. We have no official delegations from our Churches here, but we are meeting with great interest in one another. In doing so, we are serving the unity of our Churches, which is the unity of the Church of Christ. The Syriac tradition is one of the great traditions in the Church, together with the Latin and the Byzantine, and for us it is important to promote this tradition and to know about its history and its people. We have consecrated our efforts to a better understanding of one another, especially regarding the Church of the East, by studying Christology, the sacraments and, later on, ecclesiology in our Churches. This morning we start listening to Mar Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim about the sacrament of holy matrimony.

Mar Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim

THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE IN THE SYRIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OF ANTIOCH

1. Nomocanon

“Nomocanon” is considered one of most important canon Law sources we rely on in the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch (SOCA) when we speak about marriage. Mor Gregorios Yohanna Bar Hebraeus (+1286) compiled some laws that go back to the apostles, to local, regional and ecumenical councils, and to some of the church fathers. In section eight, Bar Hebraeus talks about the sacrament of marriage as “Mkhirutho” (ܡܚܝܪܘܬܐ), which means “engagement”. However, in six other chapters he refers to the sacrament as “marriage”.

Thus we know that the sacrament of marriage was considered one of the church’s sacraments, at least in Bar Hebraeus’ era.

At the end of the paper, I list some of the laws to give an idea about these laws, which are important to those who seek to approach this sacrament. For example, both the bridegroom and the bride shall go to confession and take Holy Communion prior to the wedding ceremony. The priest shall guide and counsel each of the individuals how to live righteously and to stay away from the marital bed during the days proscribed by the church. The priest also warns them against disobeying the commandments, that is an important spiritual aspect to this sacrament.

The Syrian Orthodox (SOCA) fathers considered marriage a sacrament, Roso (ܪܫܐ) established by God in Eden, as Matthew says: “What God has joined together, let no one separate”, which is based on Genesis 1,28. When God created them man and woman and put them together to live in harmony, God blessed them and told them: “Be fruitful, and

multiply, and fill the earth” (Genesis 1,28). God confirmed his work after the Flood when he told Noah and his sons: “Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the earth” (Genesis 9,1-7).

This is in the Old Testament. The church fathers also take Christ’s presence at the wedding in Canaan of Galilee as a clear sign of the church’s blessing on the sacrament of marriage (John 2,1-11). This concept is confirmed in what the Apostle Paul says in his letter to the Ephesians. The image of the woman’s submission to the man becomes clearer from the relationship of Christ and the church. Paul says: “Just as the church is subject to Christ, so also wives ought to be, in everything, to their husbands” (Eph 5,24).

The church fathers agree that God created humanity man and woman. The man represents Christ, and the woman the church. Christ’s love to the church is the basis of and an example for marriage. The church fathers echo St. John Chrysostom, saying that the love which unites man and woman in one body represents an image of the Holy Trinity. “When a man and a woman are united in marriage, they do not look at earthly things anymore. Instead they become the image of God himself. Love has a very special characteristic, since the lovers are no longer two separate entities, but one. They are not united; they are one. Love changes the essence of things.”

As for the objective of marriage, I do not think our church differs from any other. The first goal and basis of marriage is marital love, which makes the two become one. Each of the spouses reaches outside of themselves to find their completion in the other. After that comes the subject of the propagation of the human race, as mentioned in Genesis 1:27,28. However, childbirth is not what defines a marriage. Many marriages do not produce children. This is why the church blesses the marriage, which aims at the completion of marital love, even though the marriage might for some reason not produce children. However, the church does not view it a legitimate marriage if either spouse has the intention of permanently refusing to have children.

The church also considers what Paul told the people of Corinth:

“Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: ‘It is well for a man not to touch a woman.’ But because of cases of sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband” (1 Cor 7,1-3).

He also said:

“To the unmarried and widows I say that it is well for them to remain unmarried as I am. But if they are not practicing self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to be aflame with passion.” (1 Cor.7,8-9)

This passage considers marriage to be a remedy for sexual lust on the one hand, and abstention from adultery on the other.

2. The sacrament of Marriage

The SOCA personal canon laws are based on church law which deals with the marriage sacrament. The marriage sacrament is not legitimate unless it is performed by a priest in the presence of the bridegroom and the bride, after they have done the usual church prayers. The couple’s declaration is not enough to legitimize the marriage. The priest has to notarize the agreement, which is then signed by the couple. The marriage cannot take place during a period of fasting. The marriage contract is annulled in the following cases: if one of the spouses is currently bound by a marriage contract; or if one of them falsely claims

to be a Christian; or if one of them has congenital conditions which constitute an obstacle to marriage.

There are similarities between our church and other churches when it comes to annulment or divorce: if one of them converted away from Christianity, or became irreparably insane, or became terminally ill, or if they have a conflict which lasts more than three years in spite of the church's attempts to solve it.

These are some of the main reasons for which a marriage contract can be annulled. Divorce, however, is only allowed in the case of adultery, according to what Jesus said:

"It was also said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' But I say to you that anyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of unchastity, causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery" (Matthew 5,31-32).

At any rate, the church's personal canon laws insist that marriage is a sacrament. Polygamy is not permitted, because the two must leave father and mother and cleave to each other. Marriage is a union between two and no more. In the case of a spouse's death or of annulment, the church does not object to remarriage.

3. The Ceremony

The marriage ceremony used in our church dates back to the era of Mor Ya'coub of Edessa (+708). It contains two services.

The first service starts with the public affirmation by both the bridegroom and the bride that they are getting married of their own volition. This is required by the teaching of the Apostles. It is also declared that marriage knows no separation or divorce, and each of them has to reply publicly with "Yes". Then the service starts with the priest saying: "May the beginning our happiness and completion of our joy be in God." He continues with the Psalms and songs, then the prayer for the couple, that harmony and accord may accompany them. After another prayer, the rings are blessed with the following prayer:

"O, Lord, Jesus Christ, Bridegroom of truth and justice, You betrothed to Yourself the Church of the Gentiles and by Your Blood You wrote the deed of dowry, and by Your nails You gave her a ring. As a ring of the Holy Church was blessed, bless now, O Lord, these rings that that we give to your servant and Your amid. This is the ring by which Sarah was betrothed to Abraham, Rebecca to Isaac, and Rachel to Jacob. By this ring all the power and authority over Egypt was placed in the hands of Joseph. By its surety Daniel was delivered and became great in the King's presence. By this ring the prodigal son was accepted. By the truth of this ring the just gained victory, and by its fame the merchants became rich. Great, therefore, is the pledge of this ring. This is the ring which invites the races and generations to the betrothals and wedding feasts and gathers them that are far, and mutual relations are accomplished between them. By this ring women are betrothed to men. By this ring the bridegrooms and the brides are joined in marriage. Bless my Lord these rings that they may become the sign and seal of the true betrothal of our daughter N ... to our son N ... May they receive heavenly blessings and bring forth righteous sons and daughters. By Your Grace, O Lord, let their promise come to happy fulfillment. Rejoicing and exulting, let them offer praise and glory to You now and evermore. Amen."

After this prayer, the priest says:

"May these rings be blessed and may they be for the fulfillment of gladness to the children of the holy Church. Bless my Lord, in the name of the Father, (Amen) and of the Son, (Amen). And of the Holy Spirit, for everlasting life, Amen."

Then the priest gives a ring to the bridegroom while reciting a short prayer. The priest then also gives a ring to the bride. And then it is the turn of the believers who attended the wedding. The priest addresses them saying:

"To you, our faithful brethren, who have come and taken part in this witnessing, justified by God, may He grant you an excellent reward and bestow upon you all good things at all times. May the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ guard you day and night from the evil one and his hosts forever. Amen."

The Second Service. The priest starts with a short prayer, songs and Psalms. Next comes the reading of Paul's letter to the Ephesians, chapter 5,22-33. This passage is read loudly and clearly by a deacon and is directed to both men and women, emphasizing that the love which unites them is the same love between Christ and the church. No one despises their body, but nourishes it and looks after it, just as Christ looks after the church. After this chapter, the priest reads the gospel. Our church tradition only reads Matthew 19,3-11. Sometimes the priest chooses to read the passage about the wedding at Canaan of Galilee. A short prayer follows the gospel reading and then the blessing of the crowns:

"Lord, Who did adorn the sky with luminaries: the sun, the moon and the stars; O God, Who did crown the earth with fruits, flowers, and blossoms of all kinds; O Jesus Christ Who did crown kings, priests and prophets; O Compassionate One, Who did bestow His triumph upon his worshipers in return for their heroic combat to keep the faith; Lord, Who crowned King David with the crown around all the earth; O Good One, Who blessed the year by His grace, put Your right hand, full of mercy and compassion, upon the heads upon which these crowns are placed. Grant them that they also may crown their children with righteousness, justice, and mirth. May your peace and concord abide with them throughout their lives forever. Amen"

At the end, the priest blesses the crowns and the heads on which they are placed. He then takes the crowns and moves them in the shape of a cross on the heads of the bride and bridegroom. He says the following prayer three times:

"The crown in our Lord's hand comes and descends from heaven. Fitting to the bridegroom is the crown which the priest (or the Most Reverend Prelate) places upon his head."

As he places the crown on the head of the groom, he says:

"May God crown you with the crown of righteousness, glory, and with good works forevermore."

And to the bride:

"May God crown you with the crown of modesty, righteousness, and justice."

The priest gives the bride away after a short prayer for the best man and the bridesmaid. The priest usually gives short pieces of advice to the new groom, such as:

"O our son N..., this our daughter has today left her parents and brothers, and has entrusted herself to you as your wedded wife. Therefore, take care of her, and fulfill all that is due to her in food, drink, dress and home, carefully protecting her. In everything be just and right to her. Treat her kindly, deal with her pleasantly, and be always ready to do good to her."

Similarly, the priest addresses the bride, saying:

"Our daughter N..., we exhort you to obey your husband and be faithful to him. Also, be like the dove in gentleness and like the turtledove in devotion."

As the priest places the bride's hand in the groom's, he says:

"Our beloved children, we have a custom received from our Fathers to astonish you and make you diligent. Know that you are standing in the presence of God, Who examines the hearts and the innermost, and in front of the Holy Alter, the cross, the adorable gospel, and in the presence of this gathering. From this time we entrust you each to the other (and pronounce you man and wife). God himself will surely be between you and me. I am innocent of your faults. Behold, O our son, this is your wife whose hand we have placed in yours, and whom we have entrusted to God and to you. Hold her diligently. Remember, that you have to answer for her in the presence of God on the day of judgement.

Lord God, protect Your servants, and under the wings of Your mercy, shelter them. Make their lives prosperous and their days happy. May your right hand guide them that they sing Your praise now and evermore. Amen."

In some areas, after this prayer the trisagion may be recited. Next, they remove the crowns while reciting a special prayer. At this moment the priest blesses them, reminding them of God's blessing of Adam and Eve, Noah and Shiet, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, Jacob and Rachel, Joseph and Assiat, and David, king and psalmist. The priest ends with this supplication:

"Make this, blessed couple, O Lord, emulous of good works of righteousness. By laying aside these temporary crowns, make them worthy, O Lord, to be among the guests at Your heavenly table who are worthy of that everlasting and imperishable crown. For with them, we may sing praise and raise glory to you, and to Your Father, and to Your Holy Spirit now and forever. Amen."

In summary, there are certain conditions for this sacrament. **First**, the element of the sacrament, which is the mutual agreement that they shall keep the marital promise until death do them part. **Second**, the image of the sacrament is the blessing, recited twice by the priest. Initially as he blesses the rings, and then when he blesses the crowns. This part shows the role of the Holy Spirit in the sacrament.

The marriage sacrament is also known as the 'kikli' (ككك), referring to the crowns placed on couple's heads. They symbolize that the two belong to each other. The celebrant of the sacrament is the priest. No one can ever replace the priest; therefore, our church does not recognize a marriage outside the church.

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 honorable 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:

- a) That neither the maiden nor her suitor are engaged to another person.
- b) That the maiden is not divorced and the suitor is not under any legal prohibition.
- c) That no consanguineous, fosterage, or sponsorial relationship bind the couple by the Canons of the Church.
- d) 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.
- e) That the wedding ceremony is not performed on 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 best man 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 of 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 best man, 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.

Discussions

Harnoncourt: From the history of the rite of marriage, we know that nearly all the rites were of pre-Christian offspring and that the first Christian addition to these pre-Christian rites was the holy liturgy, and if the spouses took part in the holy liturgy they were married. Holy communion was the most important liturgical rite, and the rite of crowning, the rite of the rings, the rite of joining hands were of different ethnic offspring. I was surprised to hear that the exchange of rings is in the Syriac tradition. We learned that this was a special Roman tradition. What is the ethnic offspring of the rings?

Mar Gregorios: First of all, in my tradition I could not find any reference that the Eucharist should be prior to the wedding, but nowadays we are insisting that the spouses should come to church before, attend the Eucharist and receive communion. We do this now in all our churches, but this was not part of our tradition. As for the rings, it is in the liturgical book, I do not know since when we have used them, but the prayer means that they were used in the past, at least in the seventh century. Before that, I am not sure whether or not they were used.

Chediath: In our tradition, there is a great emphasis on the mutual agreement between the spouses. It is the same as in the Roman Church.

Mar Gregorios: The mutual agreement is very important, but I am not sure whether it is the same thing in the Roman Catholic Church. The priest asks the bridegroom and the bride, and they say loudly "yes" so that everybody can hear it.

Konat: Do you have a tradition of declaring the marriage as null?

Mar Gregorios: Yes, we have annulment.

George: On p. 24, you mention that "the Church does not view it a legitimate marriage if either spouse has the intention of permanently refusing to have children". On p. 25 you speak of: "congenital conditions which constitute an obstacle to marriage". I thought this meant physical diseases, impotence, psychological diseases, or things like that. Does the Church ask for a scientific certificate to prove that either of the spouses is fit for marriage, or does this mean that after the wedding the Church will separate them if these conditions occur? How could the Church know that a couple is not going to have children?

Mar Gregorios: It is obligatory for each of the spouses to see a doctor before the wedding and bring a certificate. The doctor can tell us.

George: If they do not have the intention to produce children (see p. 24), how would you know?

Mar Gregorios: They say it. They proclaim it in front of us if both do not want children.

George: We have a prayer after the wedding which is a blessing of the bride's chamber, do you have this too?

Mar Gregorios: No, we do not have it.

Kadavil: When Bar Hebraeus speaks about marriage, in one place he uses the word "engagement", in another place he uses the word "marriage". Does he use the word "engagement" in the same sense as "marriage"?

Mar Gregorios: *Mkhirutho*, "engagement", does not mean marriage. It is the preparation for marriage, and "marriage" is the wedding, which we call *zuogo*. *Mkhirutho* is not the same as *zuogo*, and this is also our usage in the Church today. *Mkhirutho* is part of *zuogo*. So both of them make up this sacrament. *Mkhirutho* and *zuogo* can be held separately, with *zuogo* following after one month or after one year, but *zuogo* is still one part of the marriage.

Kadavil: Is there a liturgical celebration of *mukhirutho*?

Mar Gregorios: Yes, the first part of the liturgical book is *mukhirutho*, the second is *zuogo*.

Khalife: You have two services like the Maronite Church, one for the rings and one for the crowns. Are they both called *klilo* or is this only the second service?

Mar Gregorios: *Klilo* is the end of *zuogo*. When we put the crowns on the couple's heads, it means that the bride belongs to the groom. We start with the rings, as a preparation, and then go on to the crowns. *Klilo* is the end of the rite, the end of *zuogo*.

Khalife: In the Maronite Church the whole ceremony is called *klilo*.

Nelpurapampil: On p. 25 you speak about similarities between your Church and other Churches when it comes to annulment or divorce. You mention the case when one of them becomes terminally ill. We do not agree with this in the Catholic Church. Or again, if they have a conflict which lasts more than three years. We do not have that.

Mar Gregorios: The period used to be seven years and is now three years. You practice it too, but in different ways. You use other names for it.

Mar Severios: On p. 25 you say: "In the case of a spouse's death or of annulment, the Church does not object to remarriage". Is this remarriage ceremony the same as the first marriage?

Mar Gregorios: No, we have different rites. The prayers are not the same. We use the rings, but not the crowns.

Winkler: In the Latin Church we have a difference between annulment and divorce. On p. 25 you say: "when it comes to annulment or divorce". Do you have this difference too? As for the last sentence on p. 25 on remarriage, is it the same as in the Byzantine Church, that is three times?

Mar Gregorios: Yes, we have it three times, and we have three different rites, or rather one rite and three different parts. The second and the third one are shorter. Annulment and divorce are different, of course.

George: Can terminal illness be a legitimate cause for the annulment of a marriage?

Mar Gregorios: Fr. George, if you read the last part of my paper, it is all there. I selected the canons and instructions on annulment and divorce from two different sources.

George: You say that your Church does not recognize marriage outside the Church. Does this mean outside the Syrian Orthodox Church?

Mar Gregorios: Marriage outside the Church means civil marriage without a priest.

Mar Saliba: Mar Gregorios discusses the order of marriage from the Antiochian point of view. In our Church we have elements from the East and the West Syrian traditions. Bar Hebraeus later on added other things to the Eastern tradition of marriage. Therefore the service of betrothal is very important, it is not just a blessing of rings, but a special cere-

mony, which is held either a few months or immediately before marriage. There is the betrothal first and then the marriage.

Mar Cyril: I would just like to say that the service is called “the blessing of the crowns” and that the crowns are a reward for the man and the woman, for keeping their chastity before marriage. Similarly, a crown is used at baptism. The crown is a reward, hence at the second marriage the couple are not crowned again. The service itself consists of two parts: the first part is the betrothal, which is the blessing of the rings, and the second part is the blessing of the crowns. The second marriage is not exactly the same, there is an emphasis on repentance and penitence. Therefore they do not exchange rings, because they are married, and they are not crowned. Only the unmarried spouse is crowned.

Sako: I would like to ask for two clarifications. First, in the Church of the East there is just one ring, which is the ring given at the engagement to the bride. *Klilo* is just the rite of the crowns. Second, what is the significance of the crowns? Does this refer to baptism, as John Chrysostom and Theodore of Mopsuestia say?

Mar Gregorios: In our tradition we use two rings, not one ring, as it is in your tradition. *Klilo*, the rite of the crowns, means that one belongs to another. When you crown the groom, he belongs to the bride, they are like king and queen.

Mar Aprem: At the second marriage, whom do you crown?

Mar Gregorios: We use crowns only for someone’s first marriage.

George: Is the reason why you do not crown the couple again that a second marriage is undesirable, because one can be married only once? Is this the theological reason for not giving the crown a second time? Is it mere toleration?

Vazheparampil: In the Syriac tradition, every sacrament is called *raza*. Why do you use the term “image of the sacrament” on p. 7?

Mar Gregorios: On p.28, *dmutha* should be rendered *form* of the sacrament, not *image*.

Matar: There are two formulae, one for the rings and one for the crowns. The first one for the rings is at the end of p.26, but the second one for the crowns is not mentioned here.

Mar Gregorios: It is on p.28.

Hofrichter: In Aristotelian scholastics, a difference is made between form and matter. What is meant on p. 28 is form; the “element” is the matter, and the “image” is the form.

Mar Bawai: I would like to follow on Fr. Johns’ and Fr. Philip’s questions. Here we can learn the difference between East and West, as far annulment of marriage and divorce are concerned – this is a very important distinction. There is a coexistence of two theologies of marriage, and we are here to dialogue about the Eastern concept of divorce and the Western concept of annulment. My impression is that in the Eastern Churches we do not understand fully the concept of annulment.

Matar: I would like to make a distinction. We do not speak about “annulment” but of “declaration of nullity”, which means a marriage is null from the beginning, it does not exist. The court of the Church declares that this marriage has never existed. This is declaration of nullity. Divorce is something different. In the Orthodox Church, there appears to be a divorce for pastoral reasons, a man and a woman can separate, but there is one very important thing: if they want to join in a relationship a second time, the Church does not give them a second sacrament of marriage, but declares them ready to continue their life. This means that it is not a real divorce, but a measure of pastoral discipline.

Konat: We do not have the practice of declaring a marriage as null, neither do we have divorce, but we can give a permission for a second marriage as a pastoral counsel.

Mar Gregorios: We have the same practice, but we use the words “divorce” and “separation” (*phesekh*). We do not use the word “annulment”, but we practise it. We have two things: separation, which means that we permit one side or both sides to remarry, and divorce where we do not permit this for both sides.

Yousif: I have two comments. First, with reference to p. 28 there is an interesting aspect, namely that marriage is a symbol of the relationship between Christ and the Church. In the Malankara service there is a *sughito* (hymn) in which the Church looks for her bridegroom; she goes to Bethlehem, to the desert, to the tomb, but does not find him; then she meets him in glory. This beautiful image illustrates the sacramentality of marriage, an image of that of Christ and his Church. Second, sacramentally there is no divorce, it is just a concession to human feebleness. Is there an understanding of *theologia* and *oikonomia* here like in the Orthodox Church, that is, the idea of condescending to human weakness?

Mar Gregorios: Yes, but we also have divorce which is allowed only in the case of adultery of either husband or wife.

George: Is there a special service for marriage of the clergy? On p. 29, §12, it says: “The priest may not perform marriage ceremony of his own daughter”.

Mar Gregorios: No, this is something else. A priest cannot perform the marriage ceremony of his daughter, but priests cannot be married after their ordination.

Chorbishop M. J. Birnie

A REPLY TO THE PAPER OF METROPOLITAN MAR GREGORIOS Y. IBRAHIM

A comparison of the paper by His Grace, Mar Gregorios, on matrimony in the canon law and practice of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch with the paper of Fr. Pierre Yousif on matrimony in the Church of the East reveals some striking similarities between the two traditions. I should have expected that the general outline of ceremonies would be substantially similar given the cultural affinity of the two churches. Of particular note is that one prayer in the liturgy seems even to have a common source, if not an individual common author, with the same prayer in the Church of the East. I have appended to this paper a striking example of this in the priestly prayer for the blessing of the ring. Though the prayer in the Church of the East is more expanded, there are common elements throughout.

What is not surprising, of course, is the mutual reliance on the same scriptural texts to support the Syrian Orthodox and Church of the East views on the sanctity and inviolability of marriage. These are universally recognized and employed in both the East and West. Nor is it remarkable that the same image is evoked of Bride and Groom representing Christ and the Church according to the witness of St. Paul, and that this “making of one out of two” is conceded a Mystery by both (even though not included in the “seven” Mysteries by the Assyrians.) Mar Gregorios adds another image, invoking the authority of St. John Chrysostom and the Syrian fathers, to suggest that the bride and groom become, through marriage, an image of the Holy Trinity - of God himself! “They are not *united*; they are *one*.” Hence to speak of a “couple”, a “team”, a “pair” - even a union - is inadequate to describe this “mystery”. “Love,” according to Chrysostom, “changes the essence

of things." An "icon", as it were, is produced which reflects heavenly things - not only the relationship between Christ and the Church, but even "God himself". The bond is love, which means "the lovers are no longer two separate entities, but one." This is an exalted view of marriage indeed, and one laying a very heavy burden of responsibility on the "two made one" to live a life of single-minded love and devotion in their relationship, bearing witness through their love to the communion of love within the Trinity.

In regard to this, I was impressed by the spiritual earnestness with which the intended partners are obliged to approach their betrothal and marriage in the requirement for pre-betrothal confession and participation in the Eucharist; and also with the solicitude with which the priest is obliged to ascertain the true intentions of the couple and their fitness for undertaking this vocation. The "right to marry" is often taken to mean the right to marry "in church", and it sometimes comes as an unsettling shock to those seeking a "church wedding" when they are informed that no such right exists (at least in Western countries), and that church law has a certain set of inhibitions and requirements, among which is the requirement that the supplicants be *practicing Christians* and no strangers to the church and its Sacraments. The necessity for the intended bride and groom to undergo pre-marital counseling and instruction will be even more essential as time goes on. If the canonical instructions here outlined are followed with care, the serious and sacred character of marriage should be impressed upon the intended bride and groom by the active involvement of the priest in the preliminary stages and throughout the period of betrothal and wedding.

In regard to Mar Gregorios' reference to Ephesians 5,24 and the "woman's submission to the man", I would comment that the instructions given by the Apostle on conduct within the household (Eph 5,21-6,9) begin with the general command, "*Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ.*" Mar Gregorios is right to make use of this passage to emphasize the need for subjection by the wife, but the exalted view of marriage which he has presented, and the expectation that Christ shall be honored through it as through an image of his relationship to the Church, would require an appreciation of the *mutual* subjection emphasized by the Apostle. If the man in the relationship represents Christ, he represents the one who "came not to be served, but to serve." (Mt 20,28; Mk 10,45) All relationships within the household - husband-wife, parent-child, master-slave - are to be approached on all sides with humility and with an absence of self-regard. The love required of the husband is to mirror that of the one who came to "give his life a ransom for many." To emphasize subjection on the part of the woman seems to me to obscure the larger point the Apostle is trying to make: Christ gave himself to and for us; we give ourselves to and for him. The Virgin's "I am the handmaid of the Lord" is answered by the Son of God's offering of himself as servant to our need. Clearly none of the authors cited by Mar Gregorios and Father Yousif intended to limit St. Paul's "mystery" to the ritual of the marriage ceremony alone. It is a permanent mystery, speaking of Christ and his Church through a life lived in harmony with the image it conveys, as the "two made one" in love fulfill their vocation before God and the world. This is why I feel that being "subject to one another out of reverence for Christ" ought ultimately to be the governing principle for each party to the marriage if it is to be a true image of the heavenly realities it is intended to express.

It is in the light of this that I must say that I was somewhat astonished to learn that "terminal illness" is looked upon by the Syrian Orthodox Church as a legitimate cause for the annulment of a marriage. I had believed there to be a rather common consensus that a marriage should endure "through sickness and health," and that only death itself should

release the sacred bond of matrimony. Perhaps Mar Gregorios meant something else, or I misread his intention, but I should think that faith, hope, and love, the greatest of which is love (which the citation from Chrysostom affirms "changes the essence of things") - these three which endure (1 Cor 13) - ought to motivate one to persevere through the hardships and pain which a prolonged terminal illness may bring. The appeal of the Apostle to husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the Church "and gave himself up" for her should be the governing principle here as well, "hard case" though it may be. I do not feel we can proclaim marriage a sacred image of heavenly realities, and then sanction a man's (or a woman's) abandoning his (or her) responsibility to reflect that image in his wife's (or her husband's) greatest moment of need. Or so it would seem to me.

Mar Gregorios commented in section one of his paper that, "The Syrian Orthodox fathers considered marriage a sacrament (*roso*) established by God in Eden." The sources from the Church of the East quoted by Fr. Yousif indicate that for there to be a "Mystery" (*raza*) there must needs be a sign given by Christ which is intended to dispense grace. This is the Western church's position as well. Since Mar Gregorios did not define what he meant by "*roso*" here, did he mean it in the sense of "institution" or in the more usual sense of Sacrament? If the latter, does the Syrian Orthodox Church broaden the sense of what constitutes a Sacrament to include some Old Testament institutions? It would be of interest to me to get some clarification on this point.

Lastly, I notice that the services used by the Syrian Orthodox do not include a blessing of the bridal chamber, at least as they are outlined here. Since this is an important element in the Assyrian Church of the East's conclusion of the wedding ceremonies, it would be interesting to know if this was previously a part of the Antiochian tradition that has become obsolete, and if so, if there is any symbolic vestige which remains, such as the Jewish "chuppa", or canopy, under which the bridal couple stands, which symbolizes the bridal chamber to which, in ancient times, the bride and groom were led in procession. Since so much else in the ceremony is similar and of semitic provenance, it would seem there would be a correspondence here - at least in the past.

THE PRAYER FOR THE BLESSING OF RINGS

Church of the East

O true Bridegroom, O Christ, you who show your steadfastness to your worshipers by this ring, bless, O my Lord, this ring which we give in your grace, and gladden the bride who receives it in your mercifulness. As through a ring the truth of Judah was shown to Tamar, and again by a ring the dominion of Egypt was placed in the hands of Joseph, and also by a ring of the king and of his princes the integrity of Daniel was deemed trustworthy by the king of Babylon, so too (is) this ring, which has lighted a lamp for the righteous, and has been extolled as a pledge by the merchants,

Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch

O, Lord, Jesus Christ, Bridegroom of truth and justice, You betrothed to Yourself the Church of the Gentiles and by Your Blood You wrote the deed of dowry, and by Your nails You gave her a ring. As a ring of the Holy Church was blessed, bless now, O Lord, these rings that that we give to your servant and Your amid. This is the ring by which Sarah was betrothed to Abraham, Rebecca to Isaac, and Rachel to Jacob. By this ring all the power and authority over Egypt was placed in the hands of Joseph. By its surety Daniel was delivered and became great in the King's presence. By this ring the

for by it Joseph was borne upon the chariot and Daniel was celebrated in his steadfastness. This is the ring by which the holy Church was betrothed to the heavenly Bridegroom and received the body and blood of Christ. This is the ring by which Sarah was betrothed to faithful Abraham the patriarch. This is the ring by which Rebecca was betrothed to Isaac through Eliezar the faithful servant. This is the ring by which Rachel was betrothed to Jacob who was called Israel. This is the ring by which Tamar was delivered from death. This is the ring which was made a bulwark for the ends of the earth. This is the ring by which the treasures of kings are sealed and opened. This is the ring by which all brides are betrothed and adorned with all wondrous things. O ring, how marvelous and exalted you are, for by you women are betrothed to men, and bridegrooms are married to brides. Blessed is Christ who reveals his steadfastness to his worshipers through a ring. So too now bless, O my Lord, this ring through the prayers of your saints and priests, and let your name be celebrated through your servants, and may they be blessed with all blessings of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now, always, and for ever and ever.

Discussions

Hainthaler: I have a small question regarding the lesson from Ephesians on p. 5 of Mar Gregorios' paper. You say that Eph 5,22-33 is read. In an old French translation by Fr. Raes, it says that verses 20-33 are read, i.e. two verses more. This may answer Fr. Birnie's question. Was the reading changed?

Mar Gregorios: According to the printed book, we have verses 22-33 in the Syriac numbering and verses 21-33 in the English numbering.

Hainthaler: Is submission to each another included in this reading or not? Verse 21 in the English translation speaks of mutual subjection. This would correspond to Fr. Birnie's emphasis.

Birnie: My point is that the singular emphasis on the woman's responsibility to be subject has a tendency to obscure the larger controlling principle, i.e. that the subjection is mutual and that the husband's fulfilling the role of Christ in the marriage relationship would require him to fulfil in the servant capacity the role of him who was observant and humble unto death.

prodigal son was accepted. By the truth of this ring the just gained victory, and by its fame the merchants became rich. Great, therefore, is the pledge of this ring. This is the ring which invites the races and generations to the betrothals and wedding feasts and gathers them that are far, and mutual relations are accomplished between them. By this ring women are betrothed to men. By this ring the bridegrooms and the brides are joined in marriage. Bless my Lord these rings that they may become the sign and seal of the true betrothal of our daughter N... to our son N.. May they receive heavenly blessings and bring forth righteous sons and daughters. By Your Grace, O Lord, let their promise come to happy fulfillment. Rejoicing and exulting, let them offer praise and glory to You now and evermore. Amen.

Hainthaler: Your Grace, am I correct that the verse mentioned by Fr. Birnie is no longer part of the reading in the marriage service?

Casmoussa: Only the English translation has the first verse, which has been added.

Mar Cyril: We cannot separate this reading from its origin in male-dominated societies. The English translations were done in the 1960s and '70s. Verse 21 was added in order to be more politically correct, not in order to provide a theological interpretation. We see a similar case in the admonition given to the wife. We do not say it in the same way as we used to, because today the wife sometimes supports the household.

Yousif: I just want to note that the Syriac text does not say "out of reverence for Christ", but "out of love for Christ". This goes very far, for it is not just reverence, but Christian love.

Birnie: In deference to Biblical scholars, let me say that verse 21 is the first verse in a new section; it belongs to what follows, not to what goes before.

Yousif: Verse 21 is an important principle, which was put at the beginning.

Mar Saliba: May I ask for a clarification about terminal illness? According to our tradition, this only applies to a case of total insanity, which is proved by a report from a body of doctors, not just one doctor. It is the case only if a person cannot return to normality.

Mar Gregorios: There is a contradiction between what we read in the Church and the canons. In practice, what is meant is an illness which can in no way be cured. This is one reason for an annulment. But in the rite of marriage we say: "We command and charge both of you to walk in the fear of God; to accept alike and in concord pleasure and distress; to bear all sickness, pain, and other adversities that may accidentally fall upon you with patience and without complaints, that we might not be blamed in the day of judgment on your account, since we have served as mediators in this marriage".¹ This is very clear, but in fact the canons of our Church say the contrary. The practice changes from time to time, maybe this is something new. With reference to p. 35 of Fr. Birnie's paper, in fact we have the blessing of the bridal chamber, but I did not mention it. It is in our rite too: "May God, Who abounds in gifts, Who blessed Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and delighted them and made them great, Who crowned the earth, the mountains, and the hills, the good One Who showers rain and dew and makes the seeds, fruits, and plants grow, delight you in your marriage and adorn you with all religious virtues, strengthening your souls in faith, hope, and charity and blessing the home into which you enter".²

Winkler: The difference between divorce and annulment is still not clear to me. In the Catholic Church there is no divorce, there is just annulment, which means that the marriage did not come into existence. With reference to the paper of Mar Gregorios, what is difference between divorce and annulment in the Syrian Orthodox Church? With reference to the paper of Fr. Birnie, do you have divorce and annulment?

Birnie: We do, but I have to divert to His Grace Mar Bawai on this point.

Mar Bawai: My understanding of the position of the Church of the East is as follows. Despite the fact that our rites allow divorce, I have not seen any theological explanation or interpretation as to why a marriage can be divorced, except for pastoral provisions. But

¹ *The Sacrament of Holy Baptism according to the Ancient Rite of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch*, translated from the original Syriac by Deacon Murad Saliba Barsom, edited and published by Metropolitan Mar Athanasius Yeshue Samuel, Archbishop of the Syrian Orthodox Church in the United States of America and Canaanda, 1974, p. 54.

² *Op.cit.*, p.50

pastoral provisions do not explain the theological path from the establishment of the marriage to the divorce or the annulment. In recent years, at least in the diocese that I serve, what we have done is to issue a letter of annulment or a letter of divorce. This is an Old Testament term. We have taken the Old Testament concept of divorce without really interpreting it or giving a theological account. The most suitable criterion that I have found is to restate the Western methodology, that the Church expected certain conditions for the marriage. The examination of the priest at the court of the Church shows that these conditions were not fulfilled, hence we recognize an annulment and issue the letter. This may not be representative of the whole Church of the East, but I am not aware of any theological interpretation how to deal with the practice of divorce.

Georges: Does terminal illness mean psychological disease? As I understand it, terminal illness applies to people who suffer from organic diseases and are dependent on life-supporting machines, e.g. in case of kidney failures. The problem is that in each state of the US there are different definitions of death and that doctors are uncertain whether they prolong life or the process of death. Psychological disease has never been considered a terminal illness.

Matar: The question still remains whether there is difference between annulment and divorce.

George: Is annulment a notion coming from Roman law? In the background, there is the idea of a contract which has been declared null and void.

Mar Gregorios: I must confess that my paper does not cover this point very well. In my Church we use the words divorce and separation, but not annulment. Annulment is from the Western tradition. We use separation, which is *phesekh*, and divorce, which is *dulala* according to Matthew 5,31. Separation depends on the decision of the Church and from time to time we change it. For example, the period of three years which used to be seven years has now become one year, I did not know this. This depends on the decision of the synod, it is not something traditional in my Church.

Hofrichter: You mentioned that it is possible to be married three times, as in the Byzantine tradition. This goes back to the law of Justinian. Are the ceremonies for the second and the third wedding the same for the divorced and for the widows, or is there a difference?

Mar Gregorios: We do not allow the divorced to be remarried. In case of separation, remarriage is possible.

Mar Severios: In case of divorce, the marriage ceremony is not repeated. The second marriage is only a permission for human weakness. In fact, there is not much difference whether it is divorce or separation.

Mar Saliba: There is a distinction here. Divorce is usually granted only for adultery. The person who committed adultery is not allowed to remarry, only the other one. Separation is permitted for pastoral reasons, and both are allowed to remarry.

Sako: So in this case separation is annulment?

Matar: No, separation is different from annulment, which is declaration of nullity. Separation means that there was a marriage, but the Church allows the couple to separate for pastoral reasons, and they can remarry.

Mar Severios: The sacrament of marriage is once and for all, the second marriage is not a marriage.

Matar: What is it then?

Mar Bawai: This is very interesting because we are exposing the unsystematic reality of Eastern thought on this subject. We have an opportunity to systematize it and I think we should do this in this dialogue. In my opinion, unless any sacramental or even any Church action is established and warranted by the Sacred Scriptures and the tradition of the Fathers, it should not even be contemplated. Second marriages or marriages after divorce are done in the Church, they are graced and mandated by God. But I think we Easterners have not found a proper systematic justification for the second act, as the Westerners have. The whole issue of annulment is the same thing. The Western Fathers talk about the same reality, but using philosophy and theology, they have found grounds to justify it.

Winkler: Perhaps it is better sometimes not to systematize too much. If I understand it correctly, the Syrian Orthodox concept of separation seems the same as in the Byzantine Church, and I think this is because you live together in the same geographical region. The reason why the Malankara Orthodox Church does not have this concept might be that they were outside the influence of the Byzantine Church. Because of pastoral care you had to have a similar concept. You do something likewise now in the US where you are in a new cultural environment. So there is no theological reason, but it is *kat' oikonomian*. There seems to be a problem for sacramental theology. From my Western point of view, the sacrament of matrimony exists, so what happens to it after separation?

Casmoussa: First, the prayer for the blessing of the rings is really concerned with the blessing of the alliance, not the rings themselves, that is, it means the covenant. Second, mental illness can only be a ground for separation if it is there from the beginning; otherwise, if it develops later, it is not a ground for allowing separation, because the love should be forever. Third, in case of divorce for adultery, the innocent party is allowed to marry, because the covenant, the unity is broken, and he or she is free to remarry again. The perpetrator is given punishment.

Vellanickal: Annulment comes from the idea of contract, but the idea of contract here is not in the moral sense of the term, but in the sense of covenant or alliance. It is also in the Eastern tradition that the mutual agreement forms the element of the sacrament. Annulment means that this agreement not taken place, it is a way of explaining the separation and a declaration that there was no alliance because the necessary elements were absent. Divorce is a pastoral dispensation. Though the alliance has taken place, the couple cannot live as they should and therefore a separation is allowed.

Hainthaler: Your Grace, on p. 9, § 7 you mention: "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". Could you perhaps explain what this means? Does it mean that the bride joins the Church of the bridegroom?

Mar Gregorios: The wife should go to the Church of the husband.

Hainthaler: So you do not allow mixed marriages?

Mar Gregorios: The wife must follow her husband.

Hainthaler: She must follow? But then you do not have mixed marriage.

Matar: In the Catholic Church the woman can remain Catholic, even if she married to an Orthodox husband.

Hainthaler: But she is also a member of the Syrian Orthodox Church then?

Matar: Somehow.

Khalifé: There is a new agreement between the Orthodox and the Catholics that the spouse can remain in his or her Church. All Patriarchs signed this agreement that there is a mixed marriage.

Mar Gregorios: Mixed marriage is recognized in my Church. What Fr. Khalifé says is something very new. The agreement happened after the new Codex of Canons for the Oriental Churches had been issued, because we, the Orthodox, were not happy. Therefore was a new agreement signed by all Patriarchs that each spouse can remain in his or her Church according to the agreement, not according to the canon law of the Catholic Church. This is now the practice of the Church. Regarding the question of Mar Severios on widowers and others, I have it here in the book on the "Sacrament of Matrimony of Widowers and Widows": "This Order is to be performed when both the groom and the bride have been married before. In this case, the couple shall be blessed without the blessing of the rings and that of the crowns. If one of the couple has never before been married, the first Order shall be used, and only he or she will be given the wedding ring and crowned"¹.

Second working session: Tuesday, February 26th, afternoon

Chairman: Archbishop Mar Joseph Powathil

Pierre Yousif

THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE IN THE TRADITION OF THE CHURCH OF THE EAST (ASSYRIAN, CHALDEAN, MALABAR)

1. Introduction

The aim of this study is to make a short presentation of the 'sacrament' of marriage according to the venerable tradition shared by (actual) three churches Assyrian, Chaldean and Malabar constituting the glorious Church of the East (Edta d-Madnha), one Church till mid 16th century. It will try to show whether the marriage celebrated by the Church of the East has real elements qualifying it as a true 'sacrament'. And whether it is (was) actually considered as such. Nominally or theoretically so to say there are different positions and we try to understand and interpret the historical data.

This study, though short, is founded on the liturgical and canonical sources of the Church of the East. The liturgical sources are the *Hudra* (Cycle, or the Prayer of the Church, liturgy of the hours, or the divine Office), the *Ritual of marriage* which resumes from the *Hudra* many liturgical texts and prayers, and the liturgical commentaries on this celebration; the canonical sources are: the synods, the canonical collections and the book of the Jewel, the *Marganitha*, official manual of faith of the Church of the East (AD 1292). We also use the few available modern studies.

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 62.

For the *Hudra*, we have the Darmono edition² as well as that of Bedjan-Khayyat.³ For the ritual of marriage we use the chaldean edition by the Dominican Fathers of Mosul⁴ and the *Darmo Takhsa da-Mkhurya wa-d-burrakha wa-d-Khullala w-daqtai Gnona*.⁵ We have two liturgical Commentaries: The *Expositio Officiorum Ecclesiae*⁶ and the *Seven Causes of the Sacraments of the Church* (Book 7)⁷ by Patriarch Timothy II (1318-32). Regarding the canonical sources we refer to the *Synodicon Orientale*,⁸ the different canonical Collections *Syriscche Rechtsbücher*,⁹ the *Nomocanon* of Abdisho¹⁰ his *Marganitha*,¹¹ his *Ordo Judiciorum Ecclesiasticorum*.¹² Finally we refer to the *Liber Patrum* (13th cent.), attributed to Simon of Shaqlabad.¹³ The english translations are taken from Badger, *The Nestorians and their Rituals* or made by us, and we make mention of their provenance.

Regarding the few studies on our topic we mention: G. Balanza,¹⁴ J. Dauvillier/C. de Clercq,¹⁵ *Le Mariage en droit canonique oriental*.¹⁶ L. Edakkalathoor, *The theology of Marriage in the East Syrian Tradition*.¹⁷ S. Hanna¹⁸-Ch. Payngott,¹⁹ A. Raes²⁰-J. Stephenson, *The Nuptial Blessing*,²¹ K. Stevenson, *To join together*.²² M.J. Thomas, *The Sacred Rite of Marriage in the Eastern Churches*.²³ G. Tellini, *Marriage in the Oriental Churches*.²⁴ P. Yousif.²⁵ For more titles, editions, translations, juridical and theological sources and studies, see P. Yousif, *A Classified Bibliography on the East Syrian Liturgy*.²⁶

Since the study of the genesis and of the development of a living thing, such as the liturgy, enables us, to a large extent, to understand its nature and structure, it seems good to treat the topic according to the following points or in the following order.

² Three volumes Trichur 1960-1

³ *Ordo celebrationis Matrimonii*, Mosul 1907

⁴ *Ibidem*

⁵ Rite of Marriage, blessing, crowning and of setting the bride chamber, ed. in Trichur, India 1962

⁶ 9th - 10th century, book VII

⁷ Ms Vat Syr 151

⁸ Ed. and fr. tr. by J.-B. Chabot, Paris 1902

⁹ Ed. Zachau, Berlin

¹⁰ Ed and Lat translation *Collectio Canonum*, in A. MAI, *Scriptorum Veterum Nova Collectio* t. X,1, Rome 1838

¹¹ The Book of Jewel, Engl. Tr. by G.P. Badger, *The Nestorians and their Rituals* II, London 1852

¹² Latin translation by J.M. Voste, *Sacra Congregazione Orientale*, Fonti, serie II, fasc. 15, Caldei, Diritto antico, II Vatican 1940

¹³ Lat. transl. By Voste, S. Cong. Or. Fonti serie II, fasc. 16, Vatican

¹⁴ "Sacramentalità del matrimonio ed ecclesiologia. Alcune riflessioni sulla prospettiva della lettera agli Efesini" *Eph. Liturgicae* 109, 1995, 289-309; esp. 301-4

¹⁵ Chaldéen (Droit), in *Dictionnaire de Droit Canonique* (DDC) 3, 1942)

¹⁶ Paris 1936

¹⁷ Rome 1994

¹⁸ "Marriage (in East Syrian perspective)", A.-G. Kollampampil & J. Perumthottam (Eds.) *The Bride at the Feet of the Bridegroom*, Changanassery 1997, 331-347

¹⁹ "The Syro-Malabar Marriage" G. Farnedi(ed.), *La Celebrazione Cristiana del Matrimonio, simboli e gesti* "Studia Anselmiana 103, *Analecta liturgica* 11, Roma 1986, 261-282A

²⁰ "Le Consentement matrimonial dans les rites orientaux" *Ephemerides Liturgicae*, 47, 1933, 34-47; 126-140; 249-259; 431-445; 48 1934, 80-94; 310-318

²¹ London 1982, 117-119; 231

²² New York 1987

²³ Rome 1992

²⁴ *Liturgical Review* 6, 1976, 22-30

²⁵ "La célébration du mariage dans le rite chaldéen", FARNEDI(ed.), *La Celebrazione etc.* :217-259

²⁶ Rome 1990, 6,4 (A new ed. in preparation)

2. The genesis and formation of marriage as a Church liturgical celebration

2.1. The beginnings

According to R. Murray (specialist of Syriac patristic) our rite would have been substantially established during the 4th century, which is the time-term of his important study:

"Doubtless marriage was not yet regarded theologically as a sacrament, but it is more than likely that the beautiful East Syrian marriage service extremely 'primitive' as it is in its tone, and abounding in the symbolism which has concerned us in this chapter was already established in its main lines by the time our authors wrote"²⁷

In Aphrahat (†345) the neophytes opt, before baptism, for one of the two legitimate states recognized by the Church: either for marriage or for engaged celibacy:

"That is why it suits the heralds of the Church to proclaim and beware the covenant of God saying: 'He whose heart incline to (marital) communion let him get married before baptism'."²⁸

Ephrem has the same vision of the legitimacy of the two states and fights against the detractors of marriage. Eucharist is the link of union, probably an allusion to the chalice drank by the spouses in our present marriage rite.²⁹

Ephrem writes in verses; speaking of the Lord he says:

"By his wine the newly spouses are married;
By his oil married people are made chaste;
By his wine there is the communion (of spouses)
And by his oil, continence."³⁰

At this period, marriage was composed of two ceremonies: the *Desponsatio* (*Mkhuria*) which means the engagement between a man and woman becoming husband and wife, and the banquet or wedding (*Hlola*) followed by the establishment of common life between them.³¹ This corresponds to the two moments of Jewish marriage: *qiddusin* or *erusin* and *nissu'in*,³² of the marriage of Joseph and Mary, and of the present marriage of our rite.

The religious character of marriage will be progressively more stressed. Narsai in his 17th homily says that: "Without a priest a woman cannot be married to a man; without him, his wedding cannot be done."³³

2.2. Gradual formation

In the synod of Mar Aba (544), the great patriarch gives directives on the Christian marriage, insisting on its unity. Marriage, a chaste and legitimate union, is a sacrament of love between one man and one woman, as it was in the beginning of humanity. Mar Aba reacts against polygamy and consanguinity in marriage (with a niece, an aunt, a godmother and a sister-in-law). In order to regulate the cases he gives the delay of three years. The

rebells will be excluded from the sacraments, from ecclesial communion and from religious burial.³⁴ Mar Isho'yahb I, patriarch, referring to Mar Aba,³⁵ gives, in can 13 of his synod (585), a theological and juridical synthesis on marriage. There is a law on marriage because marriage is instituted between rational and responsible beings so that the couple may advance avoiding the disorder and accomplishing the will of God (Ibidem, p. 24). The aim of marriage is the progeniture, its climate is love according to the spirit of Gospel and in the respect of the laws proper to marriage:

"For it is not right for them (men) to confound marriage, which was given through the artful contrivance of the wisdom of the Maker for the sustenance and procreation of the generations of our nature, as though without law, by transgression of law like irrational. Instead, they should reject wantonness and love chastity in lawful marriage in which the love of God towards the married and the love of married toward each other are maintained alike, as that which at the beginning of creation was introduced along with the foundations of the world, and is ordered in the Gospel by our Lord, and according to the orderly fashioning of the body of man."³⁶

From the bodily constitution of man, Isho'yahb passes to the Pauline image of Christ as the head and the Church as his body forming one being, of which he infers that polygamy is a horror against nature and implies terrific consequences for the family: jealousy, quarrels, etc., as it happened even in the families of the saintly patriarchs of the Old Testament! (410). He then insists on the fact that Christ has reestablished the unity of marriage as it was in the creation of man and consequently the husband cannot repudiate his wife, except for adultery. Beside, marriage cannot be realized exclusively for reasons of beauty, richness as some did contracting marriage with their aunt, sister in law or an infidel for their richness, against which Mar Aba had reestablished the law.

Mar Ezechiel,³⁷ did not find necessary to add a new norm, but he demanded to follow the norms established by the fathers and the synods.

A new and important step is made in the synod of Mar Giwargis (676), united in Qatar, (can. 13). While it treats of the *mkhurya* it speaks clearly of the conditions of Christian marriage the *desponsatio* constituting the blessing of marriage as we understand it nowadays.³⁸ The title of the canon sounds so:

"that it is not permitted to a woman to be united to a man without the agreement of her parents, nor without the intervention of the holy cross and of the priest who blesses."

The agreement of the parents is required when the girl is still with them at their home, that is, as it seems, when she is to be married for the first time. The holy Cross is the testimony of the contract. So it will be the judge at the end of time:

"Since it is not permitted to Christians (...) to despise the legitimate conjugal union and to be attached to another union, it is necessary and very useful that the contract of the betrothed of both sexes be made in the presence of the instrument of our life and the cause of our salvation, so that if they lie against the pact of their union, the sign of our victory, by which all secret things will be revealed and in presence of its terrible and glorious tribunal all actions will be examined, will require vengeance."³⁹

²⁷ *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*. A study in Early Syriac Tradition, Cambridge, 1975, p. 155

²⁸ *Demonstration* VII, 20; ed. Parisot PS I, Paris 1894, col 345.

²⁹ P. Yousif, *l'Eucharistie chez saint Ephrem de Nisibe* OCA 224, Rome 1984 pp. 337-40; esp. 339.

³⁰ *Hymns on Epiphany* 3,22; my English translation.

³¹ J. Dauvillier, "Chaldéen (droit)" col 295.

³² Ibidem

³³ A. Mingana ed. *Narsai Doctoris Syri Homiliae et carmina*, I, Mosul 1905, p. 289. But it is worth noticing that this homily might have been reworked by mar Abdisho of Elam (13th cent.) at least at its last parts.

³⁴ *Synodicon Orientale*. Ed. Chabot (french translation) 335-8

³⁵ *Synodicon* p. 410

³⁶ English Transl. Birnie, *Eastern Synods*, mss. Chicago, ca 1900, p. 109

³⁷ Synod 576 AD, can 7, *Synodicon* 377

³⁸ Note of Chabot *Synodicon*, pp. 478-9

³⁹ My translation

These two conditions are new, but the presence of the blessing priest (if the mention by Narsai is not authentic) is in relation with the union of the spouses: they begin their nuptial relation with this blessing (of the Church) in order to consummate their marriage with the blessing (of the Lord), that is, probably, with a fruitful marriage, blessing meaning here a divine act causing fecundity bestowed to them by the giver of the blessing, God:

"...they will begin (their marriage) Christian with the priestly blessing that it may be granted to them to consummate in the blessing, the link of *theimno*, in the hope of their expectation."⁴⁰

The canon ends with threatening the transgressors who will be excommunicated and, in the case of a conflict, they will not enjoy any recourse against the oppressions of the judges. Canon 14 prohibits the marriage of a Christian woman with a non-Christian husband. The reason is that according to patriarchal system the latter may influence his Christian wife so to abandon her religion. In practice this law was less rigid when, for example, Christian women were married to kings, princes, etc.⁴¹

2.3. The period of 9th - 12th centuries: Marriage between Canon Law and Liturgy

In his important juridical summa on Marriage under the title *Book of judgements*, Isho'bokht (8th cent.) asserts that the solemn celebration of marriage is necessary, as we have seen decreed already in the synod of Mar Giwargis. For the *Mkhurya* or the *desponsatio* are required the blessing of the priest and the exchange of the rings (new). "What the priest has blessed, we believe that it is blessed by God."⁴² There are two elements: the Contract of the engaged (Tenway d-Makhore) and conjugal communion (Shawtaputha), the latter is holy if blessed by the priest. The wedding is possible in the impossibility to have a priest on condition to receive his blessing when he is available.⁴³ The betrothal could be dissolved with mutual consent before the consummation of marriage and in the case of impotency and in the following cases: adultery, entry in religion (against the will of the partner), apostasy, murder and the absence or the captivity of one of the partners.⁴⁴

Timothy the Great (782-823) insists on the solemn character of the *Mkhurya*. The presence of the priest and of the cross are necessary for the validity of marriage. Timothy rejects the divorce of *Mkhurya* made with mutual agreement.⁴⁵ He enumerates six reasons which make divorce possible: adultery, spiritual adultery (*apostasis*), entry in religious life with common consent of the spouses, refuse to take his wife, absence with no news of a partner for three years, illness hidden before marriage or known before its consumma-

tion.⁴⁶ Isho'bar Nun (623-28): For the solemn *Mkhurya* are required the presence of the priest and of the lay people, of the cross, of the blessed water and of the ring.⁴⁷ Here we notice two new elements: the presence of lay people and of the blessed water. Isho'bar Nun adds another cause for divorce: the previous loss of virginity in the girl.⁴⁸ The religious marriage consists in the *Mkhurya*, while the banquet is a pure civil ceremony.⁴⁹

Isho'dad of Merv, an renowned Bible Commentator of the 9th century, interprets Eph 5,32, 'this mystery is great' as follows:

"What was said in the beginning of men and women is accomplished mystically in Christ and his Church. Then we all shall arrive through the spiritual birth to the resurrection and we shall be united to Christ and similar to him in the immortality and incorruptibility."⁵⁰

This means that the first couple was the type of Christ and the Church, the true spouses; then through baptism Christians are disposed to be united to Christ, 'universal spouse' in an eternal marriage not threatened by death. Yohannan bar Abgare (about 900) admits the possibility of divorce because of entering in religious life, and then the possibility of marriage for those who left religious state though the latter case is blameworthy.⁵¹

The *Expositio Officiorum Ecclesiae*, a liturgical commentary of 9th - 10th centuries, gives us a specially symbolic and spiritual interpretation of the rites. Regarding marriage it says that Christian marriage is the image of the marriage of Christ and the Church. The wedding is symbol of the Resurrection of Christ if it lasts three days, of the resurrection of humanity if it lasts seven days. The presence of the priest is necessary.⁵²

In the *Collection of Liturgical Questions* (Ms Vat. Syr 150) marriage is considered, in the part regarding the Eucharist, a blessing together with the blessing of the oil, of the body and blood of Christ.⁵³ The rites utilized in marriage must be observed.⁵⁴

2.4. Two syntheses of 13th-14th centuries

We have two important authors, Abdosho bar Brikha (+1318) metropolitan of Nisibis and Armenia who is rather a canonical author and enjoying special authority in the Church of the East, and Timothy II (patriarch 1318-32) who has written a liturgical commentary while patriarch and in this sense he must be recognized to have his special authority.

2.4.1. Abdisho (alias Ebedjesu)

In the 4th memra or Logos of the Book of *Marganitha* (The Jewel), a résumé of Christian faith, Abdisho treats of the sacraments of the Church among which he treats the marriage (and virginity) (ch. 8) though in ch. I, he does not include marriage in the sacramen-

⁴⁰ My translation

⁴¹ P.Yousif, "La célébration" 222-4. We have an example of later period, where in mid-13th Hulagu took as a wife a Chaldean woman, Dukkuz Khatoun or Lady Dukkuz. This personage was then taken as a prototype for a strong and despotic woman. Dukkuz, Dukkuz! Becomes an exclamation on this purpose! At this epoch (2nd half of 13th cent.) the Nestorians of the Church of the East in Irak seem to be called 'chaldeans' so, e.g. by Riccold De Monte Croce, *Pèlerinage en Terre Sainte et au Proche-Orient, Lettres sur la chute de saint-Jean d'Acre*, ed. and french transl. by R. Kappler, Paris 1997, p.138: "These Oriental Nestorians are all chaldeans and in chaldean they read and pray."

⁴² Isho'bokht. *Corpus Juris*, in E. Sachau, *Syrische Rechtsbücher* III.I, Berlin 1914, p.75

⁴³ Ibidem no 2/3; and de Vries, *Sakramententheologie bei den Nestorianern*, Orientalia Christ. Analect. 133, Rome 1947, p. 253

⁴⁴ Ibidem, p. 81; De Vries, *Sakramententheologie*, p 258; also P Yousif "La.célébration" 224-5.

⁴⁵ Timothy. *Definitiones canonicae*, in E. SACHAU, *Syrische Rechtsbücher* II, Berlin 1908,n.28, p.127

⁴⁶ *De Timotheo I Nestorianorum Patriarcha*, of Labourt, Paris 1903, pp. 61,63,64,65-70

⁴⁷ *Gesetzbuch* in Sachau, *Syrische Rechtsbücher* II, n.3, Berlin 1908, n. 29, p. 129

⁴⁸ Dauvillier, "Chaldéen", p. 348

⁴⁹ *Gesetzbücher* n. 19, p. 125.

⁵⁰ *The Commentaries*, ed. and E.T. by M.D. Gibson, V,1913, p. 71.

⁵¹ See Dauvillier, "chaldéen", col 351.

⁵² *Anonymi Auctoris Expositio Officiorum Ecclesiae Georgio Arbelenssi vulgo adscripta; accedit Abrahae bar Lipheh Interpretatio Officiorum* Ed and transl. R. H. Connolly, Vol II, CSCO 92 text p.156-60; Lat. tr.141-4.

⁵³ W. C. Van Unnik, Engl. Tr. *Nestorian Questions on the Eucharist*, Haarlem 1937, p. 159, q.3

⁵⁴ Ms Vat Syr 150, fol 46r; not entirely published.

tal septenary, because in the Church of the East it is replaced by the holy leaven. The other Churches, says Abdisho, because they do not have the holy leaven, consider marriage realized according to the law of Christ as the seventh sacrament. For the moment let us see his position on marriage and make abstraction of its sacramentality. Here is his text:

"Marriage after the ordinance of Christ, and entered into for the sake of the care and labor of a wife about the house, and for the bringing up of children in the fear of God (...) this is called in Scripture a holy state: 'marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled'. Paul makes it the mystery of things far above this world: 'This is a great mystery, but I speak of Christ and his Church (Eph 5,32).'⁵⁵

We see that Abdisho speaks of Christian marriage according to Scripture. Here we can notice three points: marriage is a holy state in itself; in its relation with Christ and the Church, it is their mystery, that is their type, figure or sacrament (Raza), and finally Abdisho links the restriction of divorce's reason to the fact that Christian marriage is the mystery of heavenly thing, Christ and the Church, the spouse. Indeed Abdisho continues:

"Hence divorce is unlawful except for the cause of adultery. For adultery of soul which is divisible into three kinds: sorcery, denial of faith and murder. Or of the body: 'Whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause fornication, causes her to commit adultery; and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced commits adultery.'⁵⁶

In his *Ordo iudiciorum Ecclesiasticorum* Abdisho defines marriage more juridically – although with theological and moral terms – as communion and cooperation of man and woman for the sake of the family.⁵⁷ We have more liturgical information in the *Nomocanon* of Abdisho, though the book is in its nature a Code of Canon Law which was adopted by the Church of the East later. The presence of the priest is necessary unless impossible.⁵⁸ The contract between Christian husband and wife is like that of Christ and the Church in Jordan River (p.43) In the 2nd treatise Abdisho speaks of marriage which is composed of two moments both necessarily solemn under the pain of nullity: *Mkhurya* and the wedding; The elements are practically those of today: the conferring of the ring, sign of the agreement of the bride, the blessing of the chalice, with the *Hnana* and the cross, which takes place in the Church. The agreement of the parents is necessary and also that of the girl stipulated with a writ remitted to each part. The dissolution of marriage is possible in these cases: when one of the partners enters in religion, even against the will of the other one, when the husband is absent for three years if the wife lives in charge of her family, and after seven years if she lives on the charge of her husband.⁵⁹

2.4.2. Timothy II.

The last, very important witness, is Timothy II (patriarch 1318-32) in his *The Seven Causes of the Sacraments of the Church*, written during his patriarchate. In the introduction, Timothy considers marriage as the seventh of the sacraments of the Church,⁶⁰ though secondarily a sacrament.⁶¹ The union of the spouses is symbol of the union of

Christ and the Church⁶² and the love of the husband sanctifies his wife as the instruments of marriage are symbols of this union and of what Christ has granted to his Church.⁶³ Five things are necessary for the *Mkhurya*: (1) the priest, (2) the chalice with wine and water blessed with (3) the *hnana* by the priest and shared by the spouses (man 2/3), (4) the cross and (5) the ring (fol 147r): The priest as blessing minister; the chalice as "blood and water" (Ib.) symbol of the communion-union (*Shawtaputha*) of the spouses, shared by them, the woman a 1/3, according to the order of creation.⁶⁴ The cross is testimony and the sanctifier (148v); with the ring is accomplished the truth of the promise of the spouses; the *hnana* (Lit. Clemency; dust of martyrs with their blood) symbolizes the mercy of God towards them (Ib 149v). So with Timothy II we have an authoritative commentary on marriage and an important testimony of liturgical and theological traditions of the marriage in the Church of the East on the 13th cent.⁶⁵

2.5. Conclusion of the first part

The historical genesis of marriage envisaged briefly here shows that there is a gradual growth of the ceremony of marriage with the will of the composer in liturgy or the legislator in canonical law to maintain the coherence of both canonical and liturgical elements either among themselves in harmony with general meaning of marriage: marriage being the union between man and woman according to Creator's will and as an image of Christ's marriage with the Church. But canonical and liturgical elements are interior linked and we have at least not to neglect the canonical aspect although we are more interested in liturgical aspects. Indeed it may be a serious (and practical) problem if there is a real discrepancy between liturgical and juridical data. But the problem, if any, will come later.

Regarding the liturgical aspect we enumerate some elements which will be better studied later in the following section. Marriage is seen as a Church ceremony, a sacred rite which normally requires an ordained minister or a priest. This rite is composed of prayers indicating the meaning of the 'sacrament' and making of the ceremony a cultic action in which we pray for the couple, for the church and for the world, because this ceremony is an action of all the sons of the Church though the couple is first concerned. This ceremony is composed of actions and material signs or symbols interpreted in the context of marriage and starting essentially with the bible and especially are founded explicitly on the exemplarity of Christ's marriage with the Church as we have said.

3. Liturgy and theology of marriage

3.1. The structure the ceremony of marriage

This liturgy is composed of seven moments some of which have rather a human or civil character (1 and 2) the other five are strictly liturgical. We mention them briefly as a preamble for the following two sub-sections.

⁵⁵ English Translation from G.P.Badger, *The Nestorians*, II London 1852, p. 412

⁵⁶ Engl. Transl. Badger, *ibidem*

⁵⁷ *Ordo iudiciorum Ecclesiasticorum*, Book II, treatise III, ch. 1, Lat. tr. by J.-M. Vosté, Vatican 1940, p. 170.

⁵⁸ *Collectio Canonum*, in A. Mai, *Scriptorum Veterum nova Collectio*, t. X,1, Rome 1838, pp. 43-44

⁵⁹ See also Dauvillier, "Ebedjesus of Nisibis", DDC5,1953,91-134; p.95; also P. Yousif, "La célébration", 227-8.

⁶⁰ Ms Vat Syr 151, fol 4rv

⁶¹ *Ibidem* V, 1; fol 124v

⁶² VII,2, fol 142v

⁶³ fol 144v-7r.

⁶⁴ Ib fol 147v-148r.

⁶⁵ Yousif, "la célébration" p. 228-9

1. Bringing the ring by a wise woman to the future bride: if she consents to marry the boy then she takes the ring that is she receives it.

2. Exchange of the right hands of the procurators, that is the representatives of the two families after the question of the curate if they agree on the conditions previously discussed. The priest takes their two right hands, calls God as testimony, prays for the betrothed, and the ceremony is concluded with the Our Father (and the Hail Mary by the Chaldeans).

3. The ceremony of the blessing of the garments. The Darmo edition puts it here, while that of the Chaldeans puts it after the betrothal, called by Darmo 'blessing', *burrakha*. The structure of this ceremony is composed of the following elements common to the following 4),5),6) and 7), but usually with different texts:

Priestly prayer (collect), psalm and priestly prayer, tropary and priestly prayer, *qano-na* (a psalm with refrain), *Teshbohta* (praise in verses), trisagion, litany, priestly prayer.

As proper elements, this ceremony has the blessing of the clothes and of the crowns.

1. The betrothal or *Mkhurya* (*Desponsatio* so with real juridical state of marriage). It begins with the Our Father and then, as structure, it has the same common elements but with different texts and content, till the blessing of the crowns excluded. Then it concludes with the following important elements: the blessing of the ring, the blessing of the calice with the cross, the *hnana*, the signature, the pauline salutation and the communion of the spouses. Of all this the Chaldeans alas! kept only the blessing of the ring.

2. The crowning: it begins with psalm 91, beseeching God's protection, and the *hpa-khta* (poetic verses), and the general common elements. Then it consists of two readings (by the Chaldeans only): Eph 5,21-6,4, on the harmony in Christian home, and Mt 19, 3-12, on the (impossibility) of divorce, the blessings upon the bridegroom, the bride, the godfather and godmother, and the seal.

3. The setting of the bridal chamber: same structural elements and with a proper final seal.

4. The unmaking of the bridal chamber: same structure with final seal (This rite is not given in Darmo edition).

As we can notice from the above statements there is a logical order of the parts, but they do not have the same meaning. The first intervention has a human meaning: it guarantees the liberty of the girl, feeble partner, against arranged marriages(1). The second ceremony guarantees the engagement of the respective families (2): both 'rites' are performed with Christian spirit. These two rites and the following one are performed in the house of the bride.

The other five ceremonies are strictly religious and their aim is to guarantee the sacrality of marriage as means of sanctification of the couple, through the blessing of the garments (3), the consecration of vessels and of the wine and water with the *Hnana* (Dust of tombs of martyrs) and the Cross which sanctifies and symbolizes their union-communion (*Shawtaputha*). This happens in the *Mkhurya* (marriage-betrothal) (4), the crowning (originally with natural flower crowns!) which establishes them as a living image of Christ the king and the Church the queen, and which implores the blessing of the Lord upon them and inaugurates their common life (5). The blessing of the bridal chamber is intended especially to implore the Lord for the fecundity of the marriage and the good education of the children (6) and the last rite goes in the same sense and implores successful and peaceful life for the new family.(7)

3.2. Theology of marriage

The theme is large and some of its aspects were already touched in the historical part of this article. It also has been well treated by Fr. Louis Edakkalathoor in his *Theology of Marriage*, Rome 1994. In this section we shall be short and go to the essential elements. We use mainly the liturgical sources since we are convinced that they give us, in form of prayer and sacred poems, the faith and teaching of the Church of the East on Christian marriage (the famous theologico-liturgical *lex orandi, lex credendi, lex agendi*). We study three points.

3.2.1. Sacredness of marriage

As in Ephesians 5,26-7, Christ sanctifies the church his spouse, so Christian marriage is seen sacred being an image of the union of Christ and the Church. And what Christ has done for the Church his spouse purifying her already in baptism, is supposed that he does for the spouses. The church chants at the moment of the crowning of the spouses.⁶⁶

"Give thanks, o Church, the queen, to the Son of the King who has affianced you, and introduced you in his palace, and given you as a dowry the blood which he made flow from his side, and has clothed you with a mantle of splendid light which fades not away, and has set on your head a beautiful and glorious crown, (*They shall place the crowns upon the heads of the bridegroom and bride*), and has caused your odor like that of the pure censor to go forth unto all people, and has beautified you with blossoms and flowers and with lilies of April (Badger, puts 'August' mistakenly), and fired you on Golgotha from heathenism. Worship then his cross whereby He suffered for you, and raised you from your low state, and honor the priests who celebrate you by their labors, and cry aloud: 'Glory to you' (Badger adds 'O Lord'.)".

Here it is evident that all what is made for the human bride on civil or cultural and aesthetic level is made for the Church by Christ, on the level of grace, as already saint Paul explained it (Eph 5,26-27). The image and the original exemplar or shape are situated in a sacred and divine atmosphere. This sacredness is realized also through the prayers and gesture of blessing in which the profane belongs now on to the divine. This is perceptible in the blessing of different objects: the bride attire (Badger, p. 254-8), the crowns (258), the Chalice (246-7) and then especially in the signing of the chalice as preparation for the 'communion' of the spouses from the same chalice (p. 253). In the blessings (*Burkatha*) recited on each of the grooms and godparents the insistence is more on the wished benefits, temporal or spiritual, implored from the Lord for each category.

3.2.2. The unity of marriage

The main inspiration of the theme comes from Mt 19,3-11, even though this reading as well as S. Paul, is not mentioned in Darmo edition. As it is known in this pericope the Lord re-established the original unity of marriage of which he deduces its indissolubility. "What God has united, let man not separate" And we have in Syriac the impossibility of repudiation of 'Anttha d-la gawra'; All this supposes the unity of marriage: one husband for one wife, since they become one. The divorce itself, whether possible, is to avoid poly-

⁶⁶ English Translation. Badger II, 259, revised by me

gamy or polyandry; So the unity marriage that is the union of two single persons is supposed as a common usage or rule. That is why we do not insist on this point.

3.2.3. *The indissolubility of marriage*

Starting from the exemplarity of the 'marriage' of Christ and the Church, and of the Christ declaration ('What God has united', as we shall see), marriage is considered indissoluble. In the liturgy, there is insistence on the unity. The Church, prototype of the bride, is exhorted not to look for another spouse.⁶⁷ From the tune of the prayers and hymns it is patent that it is in the nature of marriage to be stable. So the divorce, whether possible, consists in a special position opposed to the unity of marriage of the example: Christ and the Church. Marriage, even in natural law that is in its own nature after the creation, then reestablished by Christ, is union, conjunction and not separation. And I never notice in marriage prayers any allusion to possible separation. Evidently it would have been nonsense to speak of divorce in the ceremony of marriage that of conjunction of two persons on the image of Christ and the Church!

The priestly prayer before blessing the bride-chamber insists in an unequivocal way on this total unity of spouses. The priest prays:

"with an absolutely indissoluble union, Lord, unite your servants, and with an inseparable love link these who fear you, and by your mercy grant them a unique and indivisible mind..."⁶⁸

The reading of the Gospel, on the other hand, would have been enough to found the impossibility of divorce but, as we have said, it is not given as reading in Darmono edition. Nevertheless we must see its interpretation by our others. We have seen above that Abdisho concludes on the impossibility of divorce except in the case of adultery (corporeal or spiritual), and as it is normal it is in the nature of casuistics to speak of exceptions!

How then to interpret or to understand the objective meaning of Mt 19,9: (Man d-shabeq a(n)ttheh d-la gawra w-naseb hretha ga'ar, w-man d-shaqel shbiqta ga'ar)?

Literally and following the order of the words we have this translation:

"He who repudiates his wife without adultery and takes another one commits adultery, and he who takes a repudiated (=abandoned) (woman) commits adultery."

What could mean 'wife without adultery' if not a legitimate wife with whom the husband lives lawfully? Fr H. Zerwick translates so the text: 'Nisi in casu concubinagi'.⁶⁹ So a legal union cannot be dissolved. The English translation of Zerwick by M. Grossvener⁷⁰ we have 'pornia (sexual unfaithfulness of a married woman); other, unlawful cohabitation or concubinage. Fundamentally this interpretation concords of what we have said. Would it be more clear if we propose a reverse of the text. Negatively it could be so formulated:

"Man d-shabeq a(n)ttheh d-gawra w-naseb 'hretha la ga'ar, w-man d-shaqel la shbiqta la ga'ar."

("He who repudiates his wife of adultery (or: adulterine wife) and takes another (woman) does not commit adultery, and he who takes a non repudiated (unmarried woman) does not commit adultery.")

What says the exegesis of the passage and its parallels in our tradition? I limit the research to an excellent and authoritative exegete of the Church of the East: Isho'dad of

Merv.⁷¹ He resumes the tradition of his Church and quotes along his Commentary authors even of other ecclesial traditions; in this way his testimony is more than a personal one.

The incident affirmation of Lk 16,18 is not commented by Isho'dad. Of Mc 10,11-17, is interesting his commentary of 'One flesh': 'One flesh, that is to say, in the attachment of marriage and by that which is born of them.'⁷² But important is his comment on Mt 19, 9:⁷³

"What therefore God has joined, let not man put asunder. Clearly God is not opposed to himself who spoke and created one with the other, and now destroying his laws; but that what he had joined together, and had being dissolved by means of slackness of will, His only Son now restored by the revelation that is in Me. Moses suffered you to put away your wives, that by means of a little evil a great one might be reproved; and it was suitable that she should be put away, and not put to death; for if they have created themselves, and had joined themselves one to another, they could have been separated. But if God made and arranged them, they are adulterers when they destroy and dissolve his law."

In this text of Isho'dad there is no any evocation of divorce but only the affirmation of reestablishment of the law of God on marriage and of the impossibility of human being to dispose of the marriage. But it is fair to say that the position of Isho'dad does not correspond to the historical (subsequent) and canonical interpretation of Mt. In the latter the motif of adultery was interpreted in a large sense: spiritual adultery (apostasy, sorcery..) and corporeal; other reasons were added, as we have seen: entry in religion, absence of the husband for three or seven years, etc. The topic is important and the canonist may settle.⁷⁴

In conclusion we notice a discrepancy, if not a contradiction, between Liturgy and some biblical interpretation on one hand, and the canonical discipline on the other hand. I did not notice a distinction between *Economia* which for human weakness may dissolve marriage while it remains dogmatically firmly untouchable (*Theologia*). To whom should we give priority? Canonical mentality of the jurist starts from the promulgated laws and judges concretely according to them. This is their common approach; but could we make totally abstraction of theology founded on faith (ecclesiology, dogmatics, etc.), liturgy and exegesis? This is more imperative when we see the large place given to these disciplines by Latin *Codex Juris Canonici* (1983) and the Catholic Oriental *Codex Canonum Ecclesiarum Orientalium* (1989)

3.3. Sacramentality of marriage

In order to proceed clearly I propose first a definition of a sacrament in our tradition, then how sacramentality is realized in marriage and, finally, whether marriage is included in the 'seven' sacraments of the Church.

3.3.1. *What is a sacrament?*

'Sacrament' is a mystery, Raza, a secret reality, executed through sensitive things. In the Church there are sublime, secret and sacred realities given us through humble and vi-

⁶⁷ Madrasa of the 2nd Sunday of the Dedication of the Church

⁶⁸ *Ordo* p.119; *Darmo* 58 (and 7, before the blessing of bride's attire)

⁶⁹ *Analysis philologica Novi Testamenti Graeci*.ed. 3a,Romae 1966,p. 48.

⁷⁰ *Grammatical Analysis of the Greek N.T.* Rome 1974

⁷¹ see above, chapter 1.3

⁷² *Commentary of Marc*: Syriac, p. 226; english 137.

⁷³ Syriac, p. 126; Engl. Transl. 74

⁷⁴ See a list of reasons for divorce according to the Synhados of the Church of the East in Badger, *The Nestorians* II, p. 278-80

sible things. So expresses it S. Ephrem interpreting together the miracles of Canaan and of the multiplication of the loaves where Jesus gives Eucharist that is his body and blood through accessible and humble elements, that is bread and wine.⁷⁵ Elsewhere he alludes to some analogy between the feeling of the body and the grace received by the soul. So in baptism: "When the body feels the water, the soul feels the gift of the Holy Spirit."⁷⁶ As it is clear, the analogy is founded between the external sensitive reality (matter or gesture) and the interior fruit of the sacrament.

Theodore of Mopsuestia defines so the sacrament: "Every sacrament consists in the representation of invisible and ineffable things through signs and emblems."⁷⁷ They have their efficacy in the order of grace: the remission of sins, the second birth, the grace of the Spirit, etc. As regarding the eschatological realities sacraments are their pledge, so for example regarding the resurrection of the dead. Sacraments, according to Narsai, are efficient through the grace of the Spirit.⁷⁸

Abdisho of Nisibis defines a sacrament in form of question and answer:

"... what constitutes the holiness and sacramental nature of these seven sacraments? We reply that these three things sanctify them: first, a true priest... secondly, the word and command of the Lord of the sacraments,... and thirdly, right intention and confirmed faith on the part of those who partake them, believing that the effect of the Sacraments take place by a heavenly power."⁷⁹

Speaking of marriage, Abdisho defines a sacrament as a symbol of the realities above. This means that there is, as we have seen, a similarity between symbol and reality.

From all this it results that sacraments are sacred realities which we approach with joy and fear, love and respect; so say many *'oniata* on the Eucharist. On the other hand, baptism is communion with the Trinity, configuration to Christ and indwelling of the Spirit, as it happened with Christ in his own baptism.⁸⁰

3.3.2 Sacramentality of marriage

The starting point here is the word of Paul seeing the Christian marriage as an image or a symbol of that of Christ and the Church. In this point our authors agree, beginning from Theodore.⁸¹ So Abdisho and others. This may clearly be seen in the liturgy: the sacramentality consists in the fact that the spouses are the visible image or sign of the ideal couple that is Christ and the Church, and of their mystic union. With "Christ, the true bridegroom, bless this ring by your grace" begins the prayer of the blessing of the ring.⁸²

Before crowning the spouses, the priest prays:

"Clothe, our Lord and our God your spouse the Holy Church with the robe of your glory (...) rejoice the bridegroom and the bride in their love communion (*shawtaputha*) (...)

⁷⁵ *Commentary on Diatessaron*, XII, 1-2

⁷⁶ *Sermon On Our Lord*, 55

⁷⁷ Mingana, *Woodbrook Studies* I, 17

⁷⁸ Narsai *Hom* 22. E.T Connolly p. 45

⁷⁹ *Marganitha* IV, I, Badger, *Nestorians* II, p. 405

⁸⁰ Theodore, tr: Mingana I, 67

⁸¹ *Commentaries in epistles of Paul* ed H. B. Swete, I, Cambridge 1880, p. 183-7; see in Edakkalathoor, *Theology*, p. 55-6.

⁸² Badger II, p. 252

since you are the bridegroom of the beautiful bride ornate with spiritual beauties, Lord of all."⁸³

The text concluding with the name of the Trinity as in the Chaldean *Ordo* could speak of God in general as spouse of the Community as in the Old Testament. But the context and the explicit mention of the Holy Church obliges us to understand it about the Church of the New Testament, the bride of Christ. But both readings present the same theology of marriage as sacrament symbol of the of Christ and the Church or God and His people.

The sacramentality of marriage is also seen in the symbolic meaning of the objects blessed for the ceremony: The ring, blessed by Christ, is, like a seal or a signature in modern times, symbol of truth of Christ with the people, and of the fidelity between the partners as it was with the patriarchs and their wives, etc.⁸⁴ The chalice, the cross, the wine evoke the Eucharist. We should stress this last aspect. In the rite of 'communion' the analogy is clearly established between the Eucharistic communion and marriage communion where the partners only drink from the one chalice; and as we know both Eucharistic communion and marital union are expressed with the same Syriac term that is: *shawtaputha*.⁸⁵ Then, the crowns, made of flowers, are symbol of immortality and fecundity as it is expressed in the prayer of their consecration.

Finally the litany of the liturgy of the crowning addressed to Christ the groom sees marriage as the image of the marriage of the Church of all nations and Christ, the symbol of the Wedding of the kingdom of God to which all are invited: John is like the minister (because he is a priest son of Zacharias who was a priest), the Eucharistic Body and blood are the dowry, the wine is for the joy of the Church, the invited are all nations. In Canaan, the heavenly bridegroom prefigured his own marriage. All these motives magnify Christ and are followed by beseeching him to grant joy, love, hope and success to the spouses and his blessing and salvation for all the present Congregation.⁸⁶

3.3.3. Marriage one of the seven sacraments of the Church of the East?

It is well known that in the West the question of the number seven came later, starting from Petrus Lombardus (12th cent.).⁸⁷ The passage was from the definition to the septenary of sacraments, that is where the definition -the sacrament as efficacious sign of grace - was applicable to the seven Sacraments. This systematizing of sacramental theology was achieved especially by saint Thomas Aquinas. It is also known that even in the West there were hesitations about 'which seven' of the ceremonies of the Church are to be considered as *the* sacraments. It is not our task here to explain this but to say that the question of number came from the West through missionaries in the 2nd half of the 13th century, and our authors tried to answer this question, consenting maybe to some 'magic' effect of the fascinating number 7, without putting the question 'why seven' and not more or less.

The *Liber Patrum* (13th cent.) has a dynamic vision of the sacraments. While speaking of the faculties or the consequent actions performed by the priest, the author enumerates the following 'sacraments' or sacramentary actions-faculties: the gift of baptism, the

⁸³ *Ordo* p. 42; *Darmo* 41, my Engl. Transl.

⁸⁴ Badger II, p. 252-3

⁸⁵ See C. Brockelmann, *Lexicon Syriacum* Halis 1928, 767b

⁸⁶ Badger II, 266-7

⁸⁷ See e.g. H. Bourgeois, B. Sesboué, P. Thion, *Histoire des dogmes*, III, *Les signes du salut*, Paris 1994, pp. 109-134

offering of the Eucharistic sacrifice, the reading of the gospel, the blessing of matrimony, the burial, the reconciliation of the converted persons, the power of absolving and linking, the imposition of hand on the sick.⁸⁸ Consequently is sacrament all that is performed in the Church publicly with prayers and actions. The author recalls only eight 'sacraments' but he has no intention to be exhaustive in recalling all the sacraments of the Church. For example he does not mention the imposition of hand of the priesthood, which is the mother of the other sacraments and which evidently constitutes one of the important church actions performed not by a priest but by a bishop.

Abdisho in his book of *The Jewel*⁸⁹ says that seven are the sacraments of the Church: Priesthood, baptism, the oil of anointing, the Holy offering, the holy Leaven, the pardon of sins, and the sign of the cross. Although Abdisho does not consider marriage as a sacrament, he treats it with great appreciation in the chapter 8 of this same 4th book which is precisely dedicated to the sacraments of the Church. Is marriage a sacrament for Abdisho? Certainly! Even though it is not one of the Seven! Let us see how.

In the first chapter he says: "But some Christians who possess not the leaven reckon Marriage realized according to Christ's ordinance, (whereby in the place of a mortal deceased another is raised up,) the seventh sacrament."⁹⁰ From this we may conclude that Abdisho does not criticize the other Christian confessions who consider marriage as a sacrament and the identity of the seven sacraments is not so rigid for him as it would seem at the first glance.

But is marriage, for Abdisho, a true sacrament, that is a mystery-sign and similarity of heavenly things, etc. as he defines a sacrament? In chapter 8 he writes: "Marriage (...) This is called in Scripture a holy estate -Marriage is honorable in all and their bed Unde-filed (Hb 13,4). Paul (Eph 5,32) makes it the mystery of things far above this world: "This is a great mystery, but I speak of Christ and his Church." Hence divorce is unlawful except for the cause of adultery (...)."⁹¹ So for Abdisho Paul is clear to affirm the sacramentality of marriage being a mystery (type, figure) of things far above this world, exactly as Theodore defined a sacrament.⁹² Besides, we have seen above the conditions required for a sacrament;⁹³ they are easily applicable to marriage.

So Abdisho is not imprisoned in the number seven as exclusive; he clearly admits other sacraments: marriage for him is one of the seven sacraments for the Churches who have no the holy leaven. For him (and consequently should be for the Church of the East who follows his position) it is a sacrament but not one from the septennary.

Timothy II, in his Liturgical Commentary *On the Seven causes of the sacraments of the Church*, considers marriage as one of the seven sacraments, though of a lower degree:

"Although it is true that the name "mystery" can be applied to every thing that is mediated through the priest, nevertheless some of these are (mysteries) in the strict and proper sense and others in the secondary sense. Therefore the (term) 'mystery' is employed for the perfection of monks, i.e.; those who are called to be solitaries and cenobites, and the (services) for the dead and the engagement (marriage) in a lesser and secondary/meta-

phorical sense and those first four (priesthood, consecration of the altar, baptism and Eucharist) in the strict and proper sense."⁹⁴

In this text Timothy II starts from a definition of mystery as church ceremony performed by God/Christ and 'mediation through the priest' and enumerates marriage among the seven sacraments though of, so to say, less intensive degree. It is amazing to notice, by the way, that at the end of his commentary, Timothy explains the rite of Pardon (*Hussaya*) (as 6th section of the commentary of marriage) though it is not, says he, a sacrament but because it is one of the *rushme* (signs, benedictions) of the Church. So he includes here this commentary because the rite of pardon is, in some way or analogically, a sacrament since it is a benediction that is a 'sacramentary' action of making a sign.

In the 7th chapter of his *Seven Causes* he comments the rite of Marriage and his perfection.⁹⁵ This section constitutes a real liturgical treatise on marriage. Here are the titles of the five sections:

1. That the law of marriage (*Mkhurya*) is given from God (fol 139v-141r);
2. That this sensitive union (Naqqiputha methragshanita) is type of the spiritual (methya-d'anitha) union (Fol 141r-144v).
3. How the things which happen in the *Mkhurya* are similar to those of Christ and the Church (f.144v-147r);
4. About the things without which marriage is not perfected (realized: meshtamle) (fol. 147r-149v);
5. On the benediction (or: the sign, *rushma*) of the chalice (fol. 149v-150v);
6. On the sign of Pardon.

We notice also that Timothy says that he writes on the rite of Pardon (6th section) even though there he does not mention of it in the Proemium (fol 150v-154r). He spontaneously inserts it with (or after) the seven sacraments because it is a *rushma* and not considering it as a sacrament. So the signs in the Church are important. Are not all the sacraments signs or *rushme*, though in the *Acts of Judas Thomas* the term *rushma* meant baptism, being the distinctive sign of Christian as a sheep of the Lord?

What to conclude about Timothy II? - First, that marriage is one of the seven sacraments; Second that his statements on marriage, as we have already seen in the titles of the sections, show that for him marriage is a true sacrament.

And what to think now about the discrepancy between Abdisho and Timothy regarding the position of the Church of the East about the sacramentality of marriage? We leave away the *Liber Patrum* because it is not an official document and because considers sacraments in an other perspective. But Abdisho's *Marganitha* is the official text of the Church of the East and is authoritative. Timothy II is patriarch of this Church and comes later in time. It does not seem reasonable to think that he did not know the position of the book of *Marganitha*. The two positions do not seem so irreducible: both admit that marriage is a sacrament and according to Abdisho the seven sacraments which should be the seven sacraments of the Church are not the same for his Church and for the other Churches; that is why he then explains marriage as a sacrament, though he does not include it in the number seven. This is (or should be) now the position of the Church of the East in concordance

⁸⁸ Latin transl. Vosté, p. 30

⁸⁹ *Marganitha*, Book IV, ch. 1

⁹⁰ Badger II, 405

⁹¹ Badger II, 412

⁹² See above 2.3.1

⁹³ Book IV, I

⁹⁴ Ms Vat Syr 151, V,1; fol 124v; tr. from Kochuparampill, *The Mystery of Eucharist*, by Timothy II, extractum, Rome 2000, p.30.

⁹⁵ Ms Vat Syr 151, fol 139v-150v

with Abdisho. Is this the last word of this venerable tradition? Could we so easily neglect Timothy's position?

It is a fact that Timothy knew the position of the book of Marganitha of Abdisho. There is more: it is Timothy who promulgated it in his proper synod in 1318, canon 1.⁹⁶ But it is imperative to consider that Timothy has written his commentary while he was patriarch and after his synod. Timothy died in 1332. Could we exclude his will of giving the Church of the East its final position since he is her patriarch? As it seems, things about the identity of the sacraments of septenary are still not settled, but logically it seems that the position of Timothy should prevail.

4. General Conclusion

The Church of the East has traditionally and till nowadays followed her official position as expressed in the book of Marganitha, although she knew the position of her patriarch. Neither the patriarch nor the book of Marganitha are so rigid to exclude any alternative. Consequently the position of the Church of the East seems to me open as are her two 'official' sources. These sources show that this Church admits the sacramentality of marriage in its own official book (though it is not included in the sacramental septenary) and that marriage is one of the seven sacraments of the Church in other traditions.

The 'trap' is in number seven which was, it seems, admitted as an unanimous datum. Abdisho like Aquinas accepts it as responding to the needs of the course of human life which seem to be seven.⁹⁷ The hesitation of the sources is understandable. This was a new question for our oriental authors. In the West also there was, as it is known, for example, long discussions on the identity of the 7 sacraments. It was discussed for ex. whether the washing of the feet of the disciples was a sacrament to be performed in the Church (since Christ commanded to follow his example); and now also some ask whether diaconate, priesthood and episcopate constitute one or three sacraments. There is also an other example admitted by the Catholic Church regarding the minister of marriage: in the Roman Rite the spouses are ministers while regarding the East it is the priest who blesses.⁹⁸ So it admits two possible traditions about the minister of marriage. Of great help will be the idea of Timothy II about the notion of sacrament which is in different measures applied to different rites as also the position of S. Thomas that is the idea of 'sacramentality'. It is an analogical notion, realized in different degrees in the rites of the Church. This is indeed what opens the way to better understanding among the Churches and their different points of view. The essential is the same and common to both Eastern and Western theological traditions with the variety of the rites themselves.

⁹⁶ See Arabic tr. (Syriac text not published), in J. Habbi, *Magami' kanisat al-Mashriq, The Synod of the Church of the East*. Harissa 2000, pp.565-576; here 567; Dauvillier, *Le mariage* p. 15

⁹⁷ See S. Thomas discusses the number 7 of the in his *Summa Theologiae* III, Q. 65, a.1 and Abdisho, *Marganitha* IV, 1

⁹⁸ See *Catechism of the Catholic Church* final Latin text, Rome 1997, n.1623

A REPLY TO THE PAPER OF REVEREND PIERRE YOUSIF

Father Yousif has demonstrated, through citing canonical and liturgical sources of the Church of the East, that an exalted view of matrimony was developed and maintained by the fathers of the Church of the East, and that as late as the patriarchate of Timothy II (14th century) it was looked upon by significant authorities as a Sacrament. Marriage is affirmed to have been brought into being by God himself and declared inviolable on divine authority. It is entered into with ceremony and ritual comparable to that which attends other liturgical observances, and speaks of eschatological realities through the images it creates and evokes. At the center of the marriage ceremony is the divine gift which makes one out of two; and, as Fr. Yousif has quoted from Mar Isho'dad, since the two do not make *themselves* one, they may not reverse the process and become two again. Here, then, is something wondrous and holy, something which the Apostle Paul names a "mystery."

In suggesting a case for the sacramental character of marriage as it is understood in the East, Fr. Yousif cites Ephrem Syrus, Theodore of Mopsuestia, Narsai, and Abdisho and their definitions of a Sacrament. They agree on the proposition that a Sacrament is the representation of spiritual realities through sensible, visible signs, but that it is also efficacious in conveying grace through the operation of the Holy Spirit. It is clear from his citations that eschatological realities are depicted in the union of bride and groom. The groomsmen represent John the Baptist who prepared the way for the Groom; the groom himself represents the Son, and the dowry he offers speaks of the dowry of Christ's blood by which he purchased his bride; the bride represents the Church, made one with her groom and received at the heavenly bridal festival. But more than being merely an image of future heavenly blessings, divine grace is conveyed to make present in the life of the earthly bride and groom that of which the Mystery speaks: the making of one out of two, as in Christ and the Church; and the equipping of the newly "one" to fulfill the vocation newly undertaken.

Through the mediation of a priest, the holy cross, and the cup of blessing, and with the seal of the ring, the gift of God is imparted whereby bride and groom are united and made the image of heavenly things. With ceremony and ritual the evocation of this image is repeated and reinforced throughout the liturgies used during which this sacred union of a man and a woman is brought about. A living representation of heavenly realities is thus created by God through the mediating work of the Church, such that an act against this image - this permanent bond - through faithlessness or divorce, may even be considered a kind of profanation. The services which effect this union must be public, presided over by a priest, and sealed by divine grace and the "amen" of the Church. The "mystery" which the Apostle affirmed is re-affirmed in an emphatic way in the central liturgy uniting bride and groom.

Though there is no Eucharistic celebration during this ceremony as in the West, Fr. Yousif has suggested a parallel in the giving of the "cup of blessing." At this point the bride and groom are "communed" in preparation for their "crowning." In addition to Fr. Yousif's remarks, I would cite these verses of the anthem preceding this moment in the ceremony: "O Holy One, sanctifying all, you who are hallowed by the saints, sanctify the cup of your worshipers, and make your grace to dwell within it. ... O Christ, bestow blessings,

and hallow the cup and ring, that the bridegroom might drink with the bride, and they might become inebriated with love and unity." The parallel character of this moment to the Eucharist is, perhaps, suggested further by the rule instructing that the cup must be received by bride and groom "while fasting."

The giving of the cup and the crowning of bride and groom form the centerpiece of this rite, and it is interesting that Fr. Yousif drew a parallel between the cup of blessing and the Eucharist. However, there is no *direct* invocation of the Holy Spirit, as in the great Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist, though the cup is considered "consecrated" through its signing with the Cross, along with the accompanying priestly prayer, "O Exalted One ... make your grace to dwell in this cup of your worshippers...." The expectation that divine grace will be conveyed and operative, as reflected in the anthem quoted above and in the priestly prayer, is answered with a declaration by the priest just prior to the giving of the Cup of Blessing which echoes the declaration following the Benediction and Fraction in the Eucharist, and moments of finality in other sacramental settings: "This cup of the betrothal of these our friends is set apart, consecrated, perfected, fulfilled, mixed, and sealed . in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit for ever." However, the cup of blessing as a necessary part of the ceremony was probably not consciously included as an analogue to the Eucharist. Its origins are more likely to be found in the influence of Jewish customs on the early Christian community in the East, where the first of the "seven blessings" in the marriage ritual was the blessing of wine.

At the center of these rites, which reflect forms and customs drawn from the semitic culture in which they developed, the Church, priest and people, mediates the gift of union, participation in the divine life, and the grace to reflect that gift in the everyday life of the newly-wed couple through mutual submission and sacrificial love. In so doing, she believes she is administering a divine mystery, confident that what has been done has been the source of grace for bride and groom. Though the sacramental life of the East and West manifests different characteristics and elements in their respective traditions, these varied traditions are to a large extent the result of the cultural environment and history unique to each. Within this diversity in the traditions, there is a unity at the core. The different official views on the "status" of Matrimony as a "Sacrament" does not alter the fact that it is the same "mystery" celebrated in the Church of the East and the other ancient churches.

Fr. Yousif has made clear the confusion among the fathers of the East in their enumeration of the Sacraments. They seem to have become trapped in a prison of numbers, constructed for them by solicitous embassies from the West in the 13th century. Confounded by the number seven, it appears that thoughtful men felt constrained to evaluate the relative weight of the various rites of the Church, inevitably making it necessary to eliminate from the enumeration of Mysteries one or more of the precious gifts it mediated for the faithful through its priests. Whether it was right or not for Mar Abdisho to eliminate Matrimony from his list of seven, as Fr. Yousif has shown, it is indisputable that he included it in his chapter dealing with the Sacraments, also acknowledging - while not disputing - its sacramental status in the West. There is an appearance here of serious ambivalence - a throwing away with the right hand what one will not let go with the left. That Timothy II later included Matrimony in his list of Sacraments indicates that the fog of confusion had not yet dissipated and that older concepts were still held fast by some, perhaps by many.

That the number seven had been chosen to set a limit on the sacramental list reflects an understandable reverence for that estimable number (the seven gifts of the Spirit, the seven deacons of the church at Jerusalem, the seven last words of Christ - and the list has many more entries). However, for over a thousand years there had been no arbitrary limitation on the number of Sacraments, and a contemporary of Peter Lombard, Hugh of St. Victor, in his "De Sacramentis Christianae Fidei," enumerated as many as thirty! The Catholic Church in the West *gradually* came to this belief that, among liturgical celebrations, there are seven which ought properly to be called sacraments. No such gradual development - which had only recently reached an established position in the West - had taken place in the Church of the East up to the time this was decided upon. Until recently, there has been no serious discussion concerning the number of the Sacraments in the Assyrian Church of the East, but regrettably, in a Synod convened in Chicago in 2001, a consensus among the bishops was reached that marriage may not be included in that number. In the Synod's decree # 11, the Assyrian Bishops affirmed that for them the official sacraments of the Assyrian Church of the East are those described in the list of Abdisho of Suba, which they believe exclude matrimony as one of the Sacraments of the Church. This is at present the official position of the Assyrian Church of the East, but at the small risk of reprimand I would agree with what I take to be Fr. Yousif's conclusions concerning the sacramental character of marriage - especially in view of the ambivalence of Mar Abdisho - and would hope that the conversation would not end among the bishops.

Union with God through his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and union with one another through the divine gift mediated by the Church - this we expect and faithfully believe we receive through the Sacraments. The sources cited by Fr. Yousif indicate that in matrimony it is the same that is fulfilled, and the "mystery" of which St. Paul spoke is also one of the Church's Mysteries. A life lived in union with Christ, as members one of another, and in marriage as members one of another, the latter imaging the former, is the loving gift of our Lord through his sacrifice on the cross. Our infirmity and separation are healed, and we are made whole again in him who would "draw all men unto [himself]." (Jn 12,32)

Discussions

Matar: Fr. Birnie, on p.35 of your paper you say that "Fr. Yousif has made clear the confusion of the fathers of the East in their enumeration of the Sacraments". If it is made clear, why did the bishops in Chicago not come to a conclusion on marriage as a sacrament? What is clear and what is unclear about it?

Birnie: Fr. Yousif made clear, at least to my satisfaction, was that there was no unity, no agreement among the authorities on what constitutes the seven sacraments. There was confusion, there were different lists that appeared and each one tried to fit into the seven those that were actually more than seven and to eliminate this that or the other in order to fix the number seven. I thought he made clear that this was the case. What did not satisfy the bishops in Chicago I do not know because I was not there.

Matar: The problem is still there. In the Catholic Church we have a theology of sacramentality and we try to apply this theology to each sacrament. We say that this is a sacrament because it is in harmony with our theology of sacramentality. In the Eastern Church, why don't you solve this problem with a proper theology of sacramentality and arrive at a con-

clusion? Could you explain the difference between the Chaldean Church and the Church of the East on that matter?

Mar Joseph: Is there any serious difference between the notion of sacramentality among the Eastern and Western traditions?

Yousif: Maybe in the Eastern tradition there is more insistence on the eschatological character of sacramentality. In the West also, St. Thomas speaks about the world to come as the effect of the sacraments. Marriage remains a reality, it is spiritual but real in the world to come. It is present now as the image of Christ and the Church and also in the future. In the East, the eschatological stress is stronger. Everything is seen in three stages: first, the figures of the Old Testament as images of the Church and Christ; second, the time of the Church as a realization of the kingdom of God in signs and symbols; third, there is the full future accomplishment of this reality which is beyond sensitive things but real in its entirety. Really, heaven is a wedding banquet, with Christ as groom and the Church as bride.

Mar Bawai: I am answering Archbishop Matar's concern regarding the developing sacramental theology in the Church of the East which has important ecumenical implications. I imagine there are two reasons why the Assyrian bishops took a firm decision in decree no. 11 of the synod in 2001. The first reason is that they are not terribly aware of the sources and, as Fr. Yousif's significant paper indicates, Timothy's II book on the causes of the sacraments is a relatively new product on the market. We have not been very much aware of it. Abdisho's *Marganitha* has been the ultimate source in sacramental theology, and it is definitely very much underdeveloped if you compare it to Eastern Catholic Churches which were helped by the Latin tradition in the last two centuries to develop their own sacramental theology. The second reason is that in this phase of ecumenical dialogue, we tend to define our position vis-à-vis what the others have or do not have. So in order to affirm our tradition and to remain the way we are, we would insist that marriage is not a sacrament. By that we are giving signals to others as to what our future position is going to be in more than one aspect. This is my understanding and my truthful evaluation of the present situation.

Mar Aprem: There is a feeling that *Marganitha* is the text for our Church and it does not enumerate marriage as one of the seven sacraments. Timothy II is later than *Marganitha*, so choronogically we have to pay more attention to the latter. But the Holy Synod in Chicago felt that *Marganitha* is more authoritative in our Church and we took a decision approving the list given in *Marghanita* as the official list for the sacraments in our Church.

Yousif: In the *Nomocanon*, which is the official canon law of our tradition, marriage is counted as a sacrament. Should we rather follow a juridical document or a manual of Christian life and doctrine written by Abdisho? How do we imagine that Timothy II, a Patriarch knowing his own tradition, gives marriage all the qualities of a sacrament? This question remains I think; but Abdisho himself shows us a way to consider. The conclusion should be it seems that marriage is a sacrament of the Church, although not one of the seven. Addition: urging the preference between the official of *Nomocanon* and pastorally official book *Marganitha*, both recognized by this same patriarch, we must follow the *Nomocanon*.

Sako: First, the term *raza* is used in a wide sense. It does not have the same systematic significance as *sacramentum* or *mysterion*, because we use *raza* for sacred signs and also for mysteries of the Trinity, Incarnation and so on. The second point is that the restriction of the sacraments to seven is very new in the Church of the East. Maybe this development is

parallel to that in the West, where there used to be a list of much more than seven sacraments and where the number of sacraments was different from one theologian to the other. My question is, could we see here in Timothy and Abdisho two local traditions, two theologians with different views? If we can prove this, it would help us to be more flexible today.

Yousif: It does not seem so likely to speak of two traditions. We have two books, one is official in the Church and the other written by an official person of the Church. In the introduction of this commentary of Timothy II it is clearly said that, founded on the commentaries of the Fathers etc., the author gives the common understanding of the sacraments according to the tradition of his Church in order to nourish the spirituality and the life of the faithful. So local double traditions would be difficult to admit.

Mar Bawai: Some of us in the Assyrian Church who have a more ecumenical vision of the Church are appealing to you in an unofficial capacity. Pro Oriente has no jurisdiction over the formulations of sacramental theology in the Church of the East and no one in the Church of the East is obliged to listen to you, but if you say something, you say something for history, for the next generation. In fact, we are resuming the dialogue which was interrupted by the Mongolian invasions. Marriage is the most pastoral sacrament and elevating it to the rank of a sacrament in the Church of the East will be of historic significance. It seems that we have engaged in trying to define sacraments theologically, but I would like to draw your attention to another aspect. Maybe it is more useful to address for some people not on theological terms, but with other methods, psychological, sociological and anthropological. If theology does not help us fully to reveal the Christian mystery, maybe other languages or methods will help us.

Hofrichter: I think that some special aspects of the tradition of the Church of the East can help Westerners to rethink their dogmatics, which seem to us so natural, so unchangeable. It is really worthwhile for us to be aware that the seven sacraments can also be conceived in another way or that there are more than seven sacraments. I think this is really important for us and we are very thankful to you. You should not try to join the mainstream. E. g. in the case of the liturgy of Addai and Mari, it was very worthwhile for us now to have this recognition which also changes the Western concept of the Eucharist. So please keep your traditions, keep your old approaches to the questions which are answered differently in West and East.

Yousif: I did not propose to change anything. My conclusion was that it is not exact not to consider marriage as a sacrament. It is a sacrament really in the theology of the Church of the East and in St. Paul. I do not say that we should remove one sacrament from the list, but Abdisho himself opens the way to say that those who do not have the holy leaven have marriage as the seventh sacrament. So this position admits the validity of the seven sacraments in other Churches, but privileges the fact of having the holy leaven as the seventh sacrament. Marriage is another sacrament which is very important, and Abdisho speaks of it with much exaltation and beauty.

Kalifé: What do mean by saying that *Marganitha* is the official book of the Church? Was there an official act of approval?

Yousif: In 1292, Patriarch Mar Yahballaha III, who resided in Maragha, because the Patriarchate was in exile, so to say, wanted to organize the Church in two important aspects of her life. First, he asked Abdisho to write this little summa of the faith of the Church of the East. Second, for the first time in Christianity an official canon law was produced (by

Abdisho) and recognized by the Church. The original text is with Mar Aprem in Trichur! Yahballaha III wanted to recognize what was common at the time. On sacramental theology Abdisho is not very strict but fluid. He leaves the door open for further sacraments, perhaps eight or nine. The idea was to have a catechism for the faith of the people and an officially promulgated law of the Church. The *Marganitha* on one hand, *Nomocanon* on the other.

Sako: *Marganitha*, which I translated into Arabic, is a handbook of religious instruction. Catholicos Yahballaha III asked Abdisho to write a book for the formation of the people. So it is a very small and very useful book which deals with the whole catechism. It is the official catechism of this Church. At the same time Bar Hebraeus wrote another book "Minarat Qudshe".

Vellanickal: The numbering of the sacraments is a question of developing tradition. Even a decision of a synod should not be taken as a final statement regarding the position of the Church. It is part of that ongoing development of the tradition and I think it is possible to change it in the future. The numbering of the sacraments is only a question which has come up in the course of history, even in the Catholic tradition; it was not there in the beginning, and therefore we should not give that much importance to it. In the tradition there was no time when the sacramental character of marriage was denied, and also in the tradition of the Church of the East throughout the centuries it has always been maintained. Therefore this question of numbering should be considered relative in the development of tradition. Besides, the sacrament of marriage has something different from other sacraments, in the sense that it is a kind of "Ursakrament", because the sacrament of matrimony is already indicated at the very beginning of the creation of man, in that God has created man in his own image, as man and woman. This is a type of the covenant, of the whole relationship between God and humanity. Later this is specified in the redemptive economy, in the relationship between Christ and the Church. There is no other sacrament which has this significance, and therefore the difficulty in the Church of the East which we are discussing should perhaps be considered in view of the particular status of the sacrament of matrimony which has an eschatological significance. We are moving towards the wedding feast of the Lamb, which is the final consummation of the whole covenant relationship between God and mankind. The unique significance of this sacrament may be one of the reasons why it is not included among the seven sacraments in the Church of the East.

Hainthaler: My question is to the representatives of the Church of the East. Do you distinguish between sacraments and the septenary of sacraments? Do you perhaps speak of different rites as sacraments and, apart from them, of the septenary of sacraments? As far as I understand, marriage was considered sacramental.

Mar Bawai: The problem is that we call sacraments only those which have been included in the list of seven. Even worse, we do not have the Western scholastic distinction between sacrament and sacramental. At least as far as catechism and religious instruction are concerned, we do not use these any of these benefits. The risk of following only one list, let's say Abdisho, is that although we have a very rich theology and liturgy of marriage, we cannot call it a sacrament because it is not in the list of seven.

Brock: As many people have said, the problem is trying to use the number seven as the canon for judging what a sacrament is. In fact, Abdisho himself was unclear about this, because what he says is not entirely logical. He says that those who do not have the leaven have marriage as their seventh sacrament, but in fact in his chapter he has marriage at the

end replacing the cross. So by including marriage in his chapter on the sacraments, it would seem that he is saying in fact that the number seven is the problem and that all these are sacraments.

George: The first Christian millennium witnessed the tremendous liturgical and theological creativity of the Syrian tradition. That creativity had almost ended by the time theological reflection began in the West with the first scholars. But with the Council of Trent the whole idea of number and definition came, which has never been a concern in Eastern theology. We never disputed about numbers, we never had any one definition for anything. In many of the Eastern Churches, even in the Syrian Orthodox Church, number and definition were accepted in the course of history, but we have the feeling that this was an imposition from the West. We should no longer impose number and definition on the creativity of the Eastern Churches.

Winkler: I just want to comment on what Mar Bawai said about the difference between sacraments and sacramentals. Those who participated in the last consultation will remember that we realized that *raza* is a wider term than sacrament. There are two different concepts which really do not fit together, the concept of *raza* and the concept of the number seven. You really do not need the difference between sacraments and sacramentals, because you have the term *raza*. Now you want to press the term *raza* into the seven, I regard this as a loss of your tradition.

SPEECH BY H. E. ARCHBISHOP CHRISTOPH CARDINAL SCHÖNBORN OF VIENNA

Your Eminences, Your Excellencies, dear brothers in the episcopal ministry and in the priestly ministry, dear sisters, dear brothers and sisters, dear Mr. President, dear Mr. Chairman, good afternoon!

It is a great privilege to welcome you again in Vienna. Most of you have been in Vienna before, and it is a privilege that you have agreed to choose Vienna as the place for this fifth plenary consultation in the Syriac tradition. I am myself a poor Byzantine specialist, I have not studied the Oriental Churches, at least not sufficiently. My work was more in the Greek Byzantine tradition. I wrote my thesis on St Sophronius of Jerusalem.¹ Then I wrote my habilitation thesis on Byzantine iconoclasm.² Of course, whenever you touch a question of the Byzantine tradition, you inevitably meet the Oriental Churches with the drama of the division between the Byzantine tradition and the older Eastern traditions. But you also see the common ground which we try to rediscover and reinforce in a way in our dialogue. It was only by lateral contact that I have studied a little bit about the great Church of the East, the Persian Church, as we can also call it, and the immense development it had in the East. I encountered the Syriac tradition in the Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium Scriptores Syrii, with the beautiful translations of St Ephrem.³

¹ Ch. Schönborn, *Sophrone de Jerusalem. Vie monastique et confession dogmatique* (= ThH 20), Paris 1972

² Ch. Schönborn, *L'icône du Christ. Fondements théologiques élaborés entre le 1er et le 2e Concile de Nicée, 325-787* (= Paradosis 24), Fribourg 1976 (Paris 1986); dt.: *Die Christus-Ikone. Eine theologische Hinführung*. Neuauflage, Wien 1998 (erstmalig Schaffhausen 1984).

³ Ephraem der Syrer, *Sermones* 7 Bde. (= CSCO SS 89, 117, 131, 135, 139, 149, 182); *Hymnen* 11 Bde. (= CSCO SS 74, 77, 79, 83, 85, 93, 95, 103, 107, 109, 141); *Nachträge* (= CSCO SS 160).

Years ago, Cardinal König appointed me a member of the Pro Oriente commission. In that time I had no prophetic knowledge that I would become Archbishop of this city. When I saw the work Pro Oriente had done in all those years, not only looking at the Byzantine and Slavic traditions, but also at the Oriental traditions which had previously been unknown to me, I discovered, through the work of Pro Oriente, the richness of the Syriac tradition. I knew of course something about St Ephrem and I profited from the immense knowledge of Professor Brock when I worked on my thesis. So I came to know about this project, which I am happy to welcome and to greet as a beautiful achievement, to serve the communion between Eastern and Western Churches in this place, Vienna, which has a long tradition of meeting and living together of various Christian Churches and communities. It is a pleasure for me to express my gratitude to Cardinal König who had the intuition during Vatican II that Vienna had the charisma to serve as a place of exchange and to deepen the common ground on which we all stand, which is our Lord Jesus Christ and what he has entrusted to his Church. I am not only happy, but also impressed that you have come in such a great number to this consultation.

May God bless our Churches which live through such difficult times, as minorities in Islamic countries or in the diaspora with much cultural pressure. May this meeting express our strength and hope. Thank you for being in Vienna.

Continuation of the Discussions

Harnoncourt: One of the main issues this afternoon has been the question of sacramentality and the numbers of sacraments. It seems to me that there is a similarity between the number of sacraments and the number of apostles. We speak of the twelve, but if we count them, we realize that there are more, and there is no discussion whether or not St. Matthias, St. Paul or St. Barnabas should be called apostles. Perhaps we could solve the problem of the seven sacraments in a similar way. Seven and twelve are holy numbers. There can be realities which are sacraments, even if they are not included among the seven.

Mar Gregorios: At our consultation last year we spoke about the theological meaning of the word *rozo*. In the theological sources of my tradition *rozo* can also refer to the Holy Trinity and to the mystery of the Incarnation. George, Bishop of the Arabs, speaks of three mysteries, that is, baptism, Eucharist and Chrismation. In fact, there are various accounts of *roze*, and it is only after Bar Hebraeus that my Church came to recognize seven sacraments.

Matar: This discussion is one of the most important ones we have had in these eight years of our meetings. We need to find understanding of sacramentality of marriage now. In Arabic there are no two words for mystery and sacrament. The equivalent to the Syriac *raza/rozo* in Arabic is *sirr*. Even in the Catholic Church, Schillebeeckx can speak of "Christ, the sacrament of God". We should not be prisoners of the number seven, but widen the meaning of sacramentality. Ecumenism and dialogue are important for the Syriac Churches, because we share the same texts and traditions. In Christology, we have agreed to speak of Mary as Mother of God or Mother of Christ, who is God. It is very important here to recognise the sacramentality of marriage.

Yousif: I agree with Fr. Harnoncourt on the analogy between the number of apostles and the number of sacraments. In the West, the Eucharist is a sacrament par excellence, or in the principal sense. St. Thomas speaks of the *princeps analogatum*. Perhaps the Church of

the East is capable of accepting this analogical understanding. However, the genesis of the two numbers is not the same. Peter and even Paul are apostles strictly speaking, but Barnabas and others are not. The number of sacraments is applied in a restrictive way, we tend to ask which are included in that number. Because of this different genesis we are imprisoned by the number seven. In fact, the Church of the East is not exclusive, but admits the sacramental reality of other acts as we have seen further. In the *Liber Patrum* sacraments are not things, but acts, including e.g. reading the Gospel. This is a more alive vision than the idea of sacraments as things.

Mar Severios: It is more important to go to the principle of sacraments, which is the Holy Spirit acting through the Church. In the East we speak of *rozo* or *mysterion*, in the West it is *sacramentum*. In the East there is no need to limit the sacraments to the number seven. Each act of the Church where the Spirit is manifest is a *rozo*. Under Western influence, some Syriac Churches accepted the number seven for accidental reasons, but it is important to accept that there are two different traditions.

Sako: In the liturgy we use the word *raze* in the plural for Eucharist, baptism and unction. The number seven is indeed an obstacle for understanding.

George: First, the number serves a catechetical purpose. Children are taught that there are seven sacraments. If you do not teach this, the children will be confused, and the West has seen this. But if we do not go beyond the number, the result will be catastrophic. Second, there is an analogy from the classical Hindu tradition which has sixteen "sacraments" (*samskara* in Sanskrit) through which every stage of life is sanctified. The whole creation is God's gift and a sacrament which can serve our sanctification, and a confinement to a number would be sad.

Hofrichter: I was taught that the Church is the principal sacrament and that the sacraments flow from this principal sacrament. A sacrament consists of an outward sign and an inward effect. The difference between sacrament and sacramental is not so important, since every action which mediates grace is part of the sacramental life of the Church. We are so not limited to catechetical dogmatics, as it may seem to others.

Yousif: When Mar Yahballaha was Patriarch, there were several missions from the West and he was quite open to them. The missionaries confronted him with questions and he was looking for answers which came from his own traditions. It was not easy for Abdisho to give a list of sacraments. He chose the sacraments which seemed most important and then added marriage in a following chapter of his *Marganitha*.

Powathil: I have a question for His Eminence. What is the notion of *ex opere operato* in the Western Church?

Schönborn: I agree that it was a decisive step in the development of the Latin tradition to establish the septenary and to distinguish the sacred actions for which we have a guarantee, so to speak, that Christ and the Holy Spirit work in them and that they are not just religious signs. This is important if we want to understand why the septenary was developed in the Latin tradition. I have a question of information. Do you have a clear shape of the sacraments of initiation in the Syriac tradition, that is, baptism, confirmation, Eucharist, as it in the Byzantine tradition, e.g. with Nicolas Kabasilas? In response to Fr. Pierre's intervention, this development in the Latin Church is an input to which others have reacted in their history, as we are always in mutual interaction between Churches. My question is, is there a formal reaction to the proposal of the septenary by the Latin tradition in giving a precise number of the sacraments?

Mar Bawai: Your Eminence, I try to reflect on your second question first. The problems of the number seven have emerged from years of dialogue between the West and the East. Most of the Syriac Churches, except the Assyrian Church of the East, share the same list of sacraments. The Church of the East has holy leaven and the sign of the cross in their list of seven, but it excludes marriage and anointing of the sick. How are we to address this issue? Either the Church of the East has two sacraments which are not common to the rest of Christianity, or the rest of the Churches should include these two sacraments, or (what is emerging now) we are all hammering the question of the number seven and whether we should limit ourselves. Rightfully so, many of us are convinced that the Christian mystery can be put in so many different ways that it can be supported to have more than seven sacraments. The real fear on the part of the Assyrian Church is not only theological but also sociological and psychological. If we adjust to the rest of Christianity, are we compromising our identity? The state of ecumenical dialogue is that we have followed a methodology similar to that followed at Pro Oriente, that is, we have spoken of sacramental life instead of the number of sacraments. We have established a narrative which reflects all phases of human existence, hence has been a “statement of sacramental life”, which avoids numerical controversies.

Bonny: The number seven is not the crucial question, what we mean by the celebration of marriage is more important. The methodology should be *lex orandi – lex credendi*, hence let us go back to the liturgical books and let us see what is prayed for. The essential elements of marriage are nearly the same on both sides: God’s fidelity to his people, Christ’s fidelity to his bride the Church, the indissolubility of marriage, marriage under the blessing of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit. If these elements are there, the same reality is celebrated. Even if the Assyrians do not call it a sacrament, the reality is there.

Yousif: In the *Acts of Thomas* (third century) the sacraments of initiation are, in this order, anointing, baptism, Eucharist. In the West there was anointing after baptism, in the East (Apostolic constitutions) there was another anointing after baptism from 380. In Narsai there is no mention of anointing or signing after the immersion. The second anointing after the immersion is something late, Professor Brock has an article about this. The second anointing was seen as the reception of the Holy Spirit. Later, Abdisho does not speak of anointing after immersion. He speaks of priesthood, of baptism, of the (pure) oil of anointing which is also used for the blessing of churches, but he does not speak of anointing in the strict sense.

Winkler: Regarding the lists of sacraments, it is not a question of having uniformity. Rather we should go in the same direction as we did in Christology. There is a different terminology, but the substance of *raze* is the same. There is no developed sacramental theology in the Syriac traditions as in the West (with form, matter etc.). You come from the concrete *raze*, which makes the subject much wider than in the Western tradition. I feel an agreement here and ask you to remain faithful to your tradition.

Yousif: I have made allusions to the interpellation by the West. Abdisho, who was more open to the missionaries, adopted the idea of matter and form.

Powathil: We close for this day and thank everyone, esp. His Eminence, for being with us this afternoon.

Third working session: Wednesday, February 27th, morning

Chairman: Mar Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim

K. M. George

ANOINTMENT OF THE SICK IN THE WEST SYRIAN LITURGICAL TRADITION – A THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Healing as a visible sign of the Kingdom of God is at the heart of the Church’s teaching and practice. “Announce the Kingdom of God and heal the sick” (Lk 9,1-2) was the two-fold commission Jesus the messiah gave to his disciples during his Galilean ministry. In our times the metaphor of healing is extensively used in the secular world like, for instance, ‘healing of memories’ and ‘healing of the earth’. Healing is thus paradigmatic for the well-being of society and the integrity of creation.

In all the sacramental acts of the Church from baptismal initiation to Anointment of the sick, the element of healing is present in various forms like remission of sins, illumination, seal of salvation, perfume of life, repentance, reconciliation, love, unity and so on. Above all, the Eucharist, as the “medicine of immortality” (*pharmakon athanasias*) points to the mystery of the Incarnation of God in Christ who, as “heavenly physician” heals humanity of the ultimate form of disease, namely death.

In the West Syrian liturgical tradition as currently followed in the Malankara Orthodox Church, Anointment of the Sick (*Meshho d’Kreehe*) is one of the “seven” sacraments. Influenced by the Roman Catholic–Portuguese colonial period in the in the Malankara church in the 16th and 17th centuries, the Anointment of the Sick is often popularly referred to as the “last sacrament” (Extreme Unction) and in most cases administered to the terminally ill. The official teaching of the Church against this popular notion is not yet very effective except in some limited circles of well informed Christians.

1. The Order of Service

There are two orders of the Anointment of the Sick currently in use – one short and the other very long. The shorter one (*Thakso d’al Meshho d’Kreehe*) is the one regularly used, and the longer one (*Thakso d’Candeelo*) is infrequently used. The latter order is a service of the “oil lamp” similar to the Byzantine service of Anointment on the eve of the Holy Thursday. In the West Syrian tradition five cotton wicks symbolizing the five senses are planted in a base made of wheat flour paste in a vessel containing fresh olive oil. (In the Byzantine tradition 7 wicks are used). Although, according to the rubric, a group of priests can conduct this service, in actual practice in Malankara, a bishop is invited by the individual who requires Anointment. The recipient of the sacrament also invites a large gathering of members of the family and parish at his/her residence. They will be treated to a festive meal after the service! This ceremonial occasion is thus an expensive affair. So usually old people who are well off and not particularly sick, organize a service of *Can-*

deelo probably out of their wish to gather their friends and relatives for a common prayer at their residence or sometimes even to show off their social status.

Since the spirit and purpose of both services are the same, namely, the Anointment of the sick for the remission of sins and healing, there is no theological or spiritual distinction between the two. But a close examination of the service of *Candeelo* can reveal the wider biblical theological dimensions of the anointing of the sick in the West Syrian tradition. In the service of *Candeelo*, fresh olive oil is blessed during the service itself. In fact, there is no elaborate prayer here by the priest for blessing the oil in contrast to the *Service of Blessing of the Oil* to be explained later. Again, the *Candeelo* is theoretically a concelebration by a group of priests, probably a literal application of James 5:14-15: "Call the *presbyters* of the church". The presence of the bishop is not assumed as essential in the order of service, though in practice a bishop is usually invited.

2. Service of the Blessing of the Oil

The oil that is used for the pre-baptismal Anointment (referred to as the "oil of gladness") and for the Anointment of the sick is previously blessed by the bishop and distributed to every parish. The Wednesday of mid-Lent is prescribed for the public service of blessing the oil. But actually it is done on other days also depending on the need and convenience.

There is no real distinction between the oil used for anointing the sick and the one used for the catechumens ("oil of gladness") in the pre-baptismal Anointment. Western scholars sometimes consider the history of the sacrament of anointing and the various practices in the East as rather "confused"¹ Towards the end of the service of blessing, two prayers are said over the same oil, one specifically referring to the Anointment of the sick and other for baptism. So the same blessed oil is used for both purposes. But there is also an alternate arrangement by which the oil can be already divided into two parts and specific prayers of blessing relating to Anointment of the sick and to baptism can be said over the separate portions. It is to be noted that the whole congregation attending the service is anointed individually with the blessed oil.

Some of the attributes and metaphors applied to the oil in the service of blessing may be of interest:

1. Oil of gladness
2. Oil of sanctification
3. Oil typifying royal garment
4. Oil as weapon that destroys the enemy's power
5. Oil of renewal from sinful life
6. Oil of liberation from fear of all kinds
7. Oil of enlightenment
8. Oil for healing of body and soul
9. Oil for the remission of sins
10. Oil of compassion
11. Oil of restoration of health
12. Oil of consolation to the afflicted

¹ A.G.Martimort, *The Church at Prayer Vol.III The Sacraments*, The Liturgical Press, Minnesota, New Edition 1988.

13. Oil of comfort to the sorrowful
14. Oil of deliverance from temptation
15. Oil of cleansing for the apostates who turn to true faith
16. Oil of preparation for the Anointment with the Holy Myron
17. Oil for exorcising unclean spirits
18. Oil of protection for the evil one
19. Oil for healing of both known and hidden ills.

3. Service of the Lamp (Candeelo)

In the five-part service of the Lamp, the above themes are again taken up in the actual context of Anointment of the sick. The five gospel texts chosen for each part of the service reveal the theological significance and interconnection of these themes:

Epistle Rom 15,1-7

Part I – Gospel Lk 18,35-43: Healing of the blind man begging on the road near Jericho.

Part II – Epistle James 5,10-20. Gospel Lk 10,25-37: Parable of the Good Samaritan.

Part III – Epistle I Cor 9,1-5. Gospel Mt 9,36 – 10/4: Calling of the Twelve and giving them authority to cast out unclean spirits and to cure every disease.

Part IV – Epistle Rom 13,11-14. Gospel Mt 15,21-31: Dialogue with the Canaanite (Syrophoenician woman)

Part V – Epistle Eph 6,10-20. Gospel Mt 9,18-26: Healing of the woman with haemorrhage

In the shorter Service of Anointment the epistle reading is Rom 13,11-14, and the gospel text Mt 10,5-10 where Jesus sends out the Twelve to the house of Israel with the commission to proclaim the imminent Kingdom and heal the sick, raise the dead and cast out unclean spirits.

4. Some Theological Observations

4.1. Biblical Basis

The sacrament of Anointment of the sick as practised in the East and the West makes reference to the apostolic instruction in James 5,14-15:

"Are any among you sick ? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise them up; and anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven."

The question whether Anointment of the sick is a "dominical sacrament" instituted by Christ is not usually raised in the Syriac tradition though it has been a recurrent issue in the West, especially in the Reformation context. Referring to the healing of the blind man as narrated in the Fourth Gospel (John 9), John Macquarrie, the Anglican theologian-philosopher says that "this story in John's Gospel might be taken as the New Testament or even the dominical institution of the sacrament of unction, even more than the passage in the Epistle of James."² With all the "sign"(*semeia*) character of the incident in the Johannine gospel, Macquarrie thinks that all the elements necessary for a sacrament like faith on the

² J.Macquarrie, *A Guide to the Sacraments*, SCM Press (1997), London, P. 162

part of the recipient, the act of anointing, the use of materials like soil and saliva as unguent or ointment, the words of Christ as the officiating person and the spiritual enlightenment of the recipient through the restoration of sight are present here.

In the Eastern tradition in general, no sacramental act is unrelated to the incarnate Christ even when not explicitly stated in the Bible. All sacramental acts originate in the mystery of incarnation, which is the expression of God's compassion and love of humanity. In the Jewish scriptures, as read and interpreted by Jesus at the Nazareth synagogue, Messianic age is a time of healing and wholeness, and the Messiah is anointed to heal, to liberate, to announce the good news to the poor and to initiate the year of the Lord's favour. (Is. 61,1-2, Lk 4,18-19)

As the Messiah comes, there is all-round healing. "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped, then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of speechless sing for joy (Is 35,5-6). On the Great Day of the Lord, "the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing on its wings" (Mal 4,2)

Healing is considered as integral to the Reign of God, and Christ the "heavenly physician" manifests his messianic authority through acts of healing, restoring and raising the created world from the power of death.

4.2. Sin and Sickness

The connection between sin and sickness is an often-debated theological question. The services of Anointment of the sick in the Syriac tradition never say that an individual's sin is the cause of his/her sickness. The liturgical-theological tradition of the church follows the statement of Christ referring to the man born blind that "neither this man nor his parents sinned. He was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him" (Jn. 9,3)

However, the Anointment of the sick person immediately follows his/ her repentance in the form of confession of sins. This is obviously what the Apostle James instructs: "Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed" (James 5,16)

So the act of Anointment that follows repentance and confession is an act of forgiveness of sins as well as an act of healing. This two-fold act of forgiveness-healing is on the pattern of several healing miracles of Jesus, like in the case of the paralytic, where Jesus pronounces the forgiveness of sins and healing follows. So while there is no direct connection between an individual's sin and sickness, there is a fundamental link between sin and sickness in humanity as a whole. Neither sin nor sickness is the 'normal' state of humanity as God created. Both are alien to true humanity. Sickness of any kind in the world is the consequence of human sin. So it is logical that lifting of sin through repentance and forgiveness is simultaneously healing of sickness.

The "corporate" character of sin, sickness and healing arises from the notion of humanity as one body (*corpus*). This is also very well illustrated in the service of the Anointment of the sick. After the blessing of the oil and the service of the *Candeelo*, all those who are present at the service are anointed whether sick or not. The assumption here is that the whole body of the people is sick as a consequence of sins of various kinds. So the whole body needs forgiveness and healing. Ultimately all sin is understood as sickness and what humanity needs is a compassionate physician and his healing power. Hence the significance of Christ the heavenly physician.

4.3. The Therapeutic Dimension of Sin

Understanding of sin as sickness highlights the therapeutic dimension of human salvation. This is far removed from the forensic legalism usually associated with sin, guilt, judgment and punishment. In the hymns sung at the services of Anointment as well as the blessing of oil, the theme of the woman who anointed Jesus at the house of Simon the Pharisee figures prominently. Interestingly it is the Lukan account of the "sinful woman" (Lk 7,36-50) that the liturgy of Anointment takes up. (Cf. Mt 26,6-13; Mk 14,3-9; Jn 12, 1-8. In none of these narratives, the woman is a sinner).

The woman is not particularly sick in any ordinary sense of the term. Her sickness is her state of sin. Interestingly it is not she who is anointed but Jesus. She performs a double Anointment on Jesus, first with her tears and then with the perfumed oil. As a result of this Anointment on the body of Jesus, she receives forgiveness of *her* sins. The prominence given to this incident in the hymnody of Anointment illustrates once again the idea of sin as sickness and salvation as a therapeutic process. Tears and oil symbolize the receptiveness and tenderness necessary for healing from the human and divine sides respectively. One cannot really make any valid distinction between the physical, mental and spiritual diseases as far as Anointment is concerned. It is for the whole person. Hence the example of the woman who anointed Jesus.

4.4. The Eschatological Aspect of Anointment

In the attributes of the blessed oil listed earlier, there is no mention of any impending death of the sick person. Instead, the prayers speak of restoration of health and life. This stands in clear contrast with the western tradition where "for various reasons the sacrament of anointing gradually came to be administered not in order that the sick might be healed, but to prepare Christians for death".³

A. G. Mortimort finds two major reasons for the sacrament of healing becoming the *extrema unctio* by the 12th century in the west: the first reason is that in the liturgical books, as early as the 8th century Gelasian sacramentary, the ritual of anointing was placed alongside with the ritual for penance *ad mortem* and the ritual of the *commendatio animae*. A second reason, according to him, is the heavier emphasis on the penitential effect of the Anointment. Even after reconciliation the penitent had to observe until death (*ad mortem*) the imposed discipline like abstaining from sexual relations and from eating meat.⁴

In the Byzantine tradition, the sacrament of *euchelaion* (oil of prayer) was never considered as extreme unction, nor was it taught that the Anointment was invariably followed by recovery of health. While in some cases it helps physical recovery and in other cases it serves as a preparation for death.⁵ Sergius Bulgakov remarked: "This sacrament has two faces: one turns towards healing, the other towards the liberation from illness by death."⁶

Though there is no indication of a preparation for death in the ritual of the Syriac tradition, the eschatological dimension cannot be ignored. In the Anointment of Jesus by the woman, he clearly tells his host Simon the Pharisee that she had done it for his burial.

³ A.G. Mortimort, (ed) *Ibid.*, P. 131

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 128, 131

⁵ Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, Penguin 1993 New Editions, p. 297

⁶ S.Bulgakov, quoted in T.Ware, *Ibid.*

Obviously the spices were used over the body of the dead with the hope of resurrection. The sweet smell of the perfume symbolized resurrected life. In this sense Anointment evokes the final resurrection and everlasting life. The parable of the ten virgins is also very much used in the service to symbolize our readiness for the second coming through the lighted candle and the entry into the bridal chamber. So while retaining its healing-wholeness thrust, without slipping into extreme unction, the Syriac service of Anointment clearly suggests the eschatological fulfilment and wholeness of human person.

4.5. The Indian Context

The Christian sacramental ritual of healing as practised in the Malankara Church in India may be profitably seen against the practice of healing art developed in India for about the last three millennia or so. The *Samskaras* or various religious rituals and prayers related to every stage in human life from birth to death are sometimes translated by Indian scholars as sacraments.⁷ These sacraments beginning with conception of life and pre-natal ceremonies (*Garbhadana*) to the funeral rites (*Antyesti*) are meant to order and sanctify life in view of its eternal destiny. As the word '*samskara*' indicates, these rituals are for the continuous refining and perfecting of human life and society. While sixteen or so *samskaras* in the ancient Hindu tradition touch on every aspect of life there is nothing in it comparable to the anointing of the sick (though there is anointing of the couple with oil and turmeric paste in the ritual of marriage). The reason seems to be that in India a very sophisticated system of herbal medicine (*Ayurveda*) and various other healing systems were developed within the religious framework. Unlike in the development of the modern western medicine, the Ayurveda and other Indian systems assumed the integral connection between body, mind and soul, and considered the art of healing as a spiritual gift and calling. Medical science was considered as a "*veda* (scripture or divine knowledge) of life" as suggested by the word Ayur-veda. One of the principles of this system is the sacredness of the body-mind-soul being and its harmony with nature and with the five elements of the gross universe and with their subtle, spiritual counterparts. This is 'sacramental' in the broad sense of the term, because a sacrament does not bifurcate the material and spiritual in the human person, nor does it isolate the human individual from the context of God's creation. Instead, a sacrament unifies and integrates the human person within and with other persons and the rest of creation. True healing takes place in this holistic approach, and any sacrament addresses itself to the total person in this wider sense. The eschatological insight into the mystery of life emerges from such a holistic understanding of reality. In other words, the ultimate meaning of our present reality including, sin, sickness, and healing reveals itself in the totality of life and in the light of the eschatological fulfilment of the human calling to participate in God's glory. What Christ said about the man born blind alludes to this: "He is born blind so that the works of God may be revealed in him".

Metropolitan Paulos Mar Gregorios in his insightful book on holistic healing emphasizes the relationship dimension of the healing of individual persons.⁸ He says that much ill-health is due to isolation and alienation. Healing takes place in community, in the network of warm human persons. He points to the crucial importance of healing touch and

ritual. What he says in general about them in the contemporary context of a paradigm shift in medicine and healing emerges from his Indian and Orthodox sacramental experience:

"Another very effective form of touch is 'laying hands on' by those who pray for the sick, and by faith healers. The hand becomes a medium through which healing forces transfer to the patient from the healer... Ritual as a healing technique has for long been difficult to understand for the modern western rational mind... Ritual is participatory community act, in which words, actions and symbols combine to communicate to the participant meaning which cannot be expressed in words alone... Jesus the Healer some times healed by the mere word, sometimes even without a word... The role of ritual in healing cannot be neglected in any new theory of healing and health".¹

Referring to his own pastoral vocation, he once told a secular and non-Christian audience of doctors and other persons interested in the art of healing: "I am an eastern Orthodox bishop. My people call me *Hasyo deelan*, which means 'our healer'. True spiritual ministry is the healing of the people – body and soul. In our tradition, salvation means healing, giving life where death rules"²

The ancient connection of healing with nature and sane eco-systems is being recovered in our age of ecological awareness.³ The sacrament of healing, so precious to the life and mission of the Church, needs to be restored from its reductionist ritualism and morbid association with the end of life. Instead, it has to be set in the joyful context of abundant life in Christ and in the wholeness of a sacramental universe.

George Alencherry

"A REPLY TO THE PAPER OF K. M. GEORGE

Ever since the Diamper "Synod" (1599) the Syro-Malabar Church is making use of a sacramentary prepared by Portuguese missionaries and translated into Syriac language. The rites of sacraments except that of the Holy Eucharist are very much similar to those of the Roman Rite. After the Council Vatican II there have been attempts at restoration of the liturgy. But they have not proved successful. Therefore if we have to understand the original and authentic tradition of the Syro-Malabar Church regarding the Anointing of the Sick we should make a search into the pre-Diamper period, of this sacramental tradition.

1. Among the St. Thomas Christians

As far as the available historical evidences testify the Christians in India, before the arrival of Portuguese missionaries, followed the East Syrian liturgical traditions. The community of Christians called themselves St. Thomas Christians tracing back their tradition of faith to the preaching of St. Thomas the Apostle. In 1711 Ziegenbalg, founder of the Lutheran Mission in Tamilnadu, was in Madras as a guest of the Armenian Fathers. From there he wrote:

¹ Ibid., p.44 f.

² Ibid., p. 64

³ K.M.George, *Compassion and Healing: the Wider Circle*, 12th Annual Day Oration, Institute of Cardio-vascular Diseases, Chennai, 1999.

⁷ Rajbeli Pandey, *Hindu Samskaras' Socio-Religious Study of the Hindu Sacraments*, Motilal Banarsidass, Revised Edition 1998, Delhi

⁸ Paulos Mar Gregorios, *Healing: A Holistic Approach*, Mar Gregorios Foundation, 1995, Kottayam, p.42f.

"Vom ersten Advent bis zum neuen Jahr sind bei den Römisch-Katholischen alle Tage feste, sintemal das Volk weit und breit von vielen Orten zusammen kommt und Messe mit anhört. Sie ziehen auf mit Fahnen, Trommel und Pfeifen und lösen täglich kleine Stücke vom Berge nach Art der Malabarischen Feste".⁴

The pieces of earth solemnly taken from the Mylapore mount were certainly for preparing Hanana.

2. *Hanana* in the East Syrian Church

It is from the East Syrian Church the practice of Hanana, of which Ziegenbalg speaks, entered into the tradition of St. Thomas Christians. The sacrament of anointing of the sick as understood in the western tradition was unknown to East Syrians. In its place Hanana (ܚܢܢܐ)⁵ used to be administered to the sick as a spiritual medicine in liquid form. Audio explains the nature of Nanana as follows:

[illegible]

مقتلہ صبح محبت (جسٹس) (محبت) و عطا .

“Among the East Syrians, the mixture prepared out of oil, dust from the graves of saints and water and given to the sick, those in labor etc.”

Payne smith gives the following meaning for Hanana:

“Massa ex oleo, aqua et pulvere, seu reliquiis alicujus sancti composita, qua ad infirmos unguendos, in sponsalitiis etc. utuntur Nestoriani.”⁶

Payne Smith is wrong in giving meaning of Hanana as a mixture for anointing.

2.1. Prayer for the Sick

During the pre-Diamper period there was the practice of priests blessing the sick or praying for them. Three elements of that prayer are:

2.1.1. Prayer or Blessing

2.1.2. *Reading the Gospel over the sick or placing pieces of palm leaf or paper on which were written verses from the Bible, upon the bodies of the sick.* This practice was in vogue even after the "Synod" of Diamper. Blessed Francis Donati OP who was in Kaduthuruthy around the year 1630 used to cure many sick people by reading over them the Gospel of St. Mark.⁷ It may be asked why the Gospel of Mark enjoyed the preference to be read on the sick. In a biblical perspective the following reasons may be adduced: Unlike the other Gospels, the Gospel written by Mark starts with a series of cures done by Jesus (1,21-2,12). Amidst these narratives we have the following summary statement of the healings that Jesus performed at Simon's House. The day Jesus healed Simon's mother-in-law "at sundown, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. And the whole city was gathered around the door. And he cured many who were sick with various disea-

⁴ Quoted by Germann. *Die Kirche der Thomaschristen*. Gütersloh 1877, p.293

⁵ The word Hanana in Syriac literally means mercy.

⁶ Audo Syriac Dictionary I, p.354

⁷ cfr. Joseph Sebastiani, *Life of the Bl. Francis Roman Donati* (in Italian) 1672, p.49

ses, and cast out many demons, and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him" (Mk 1,32-34).

It is also the Gospel of Mark that states clearly the mission of the twelve to cure the sick. "They cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them" (6,13). This is in reference of the Galilean ministry of the disciples. When Jesus commissions the disciples after his resurrection, Mark reports Jesus' words that "those who believe in him will lay their hands on the sick and they will recover" (16,18).

2.1.3. 'Laying on' of Hands

This is the third element that we note in the tradition of prayer for the sick during the pre-Diamper period.

In the prayer of Imposition of the hands in the priestly ordination in the East Syrian Church the Bishop prays:

"... Lord, mighty God, elect these (Candidates) to priesthood that they may be laying their hands over the sick and cure them...." ⁸

محمد اسم، محمد اسماء، محمد احمد، سلاله، وسميه، همام، ابراهيم، حلا فهد

... محمدا

The Pontifical presently used by the Syro-Malabar Church too contains this prayer. During this prayer the ordaining bishop holds on the right hand of the candidate thereby denoting that the gift of the Spirit is passed on to the candidate as the power of curing the sick. Therefore, according to this prayer, the essential element of the sacrament of the sick is the imposition of hands on the sick and the accompanying prayer.

The Gospel traditions and the tradition of the first Christian communities attest the prayer over the sick with or without anointing :

Jesus Himself laid His hands upon many people and cured them. Thus:

The blind man Mk 8, 23.

- upon many people afflicted with diseases of any kind Lk 4,40
- upon a few Mk 6,5
- upon the woman Lk 13,13

There was even the popular belief that Jesus could effect cures by laying His hands Mt 9,18 (the case of the daughter of the synagogue leader).

All these refer to healing. Even in the text adduced as the basis of the sacrament of 'extreme unction' it is clear, that the prayer over the sick accompanies the anointing.

"Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. The Prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise them up, and anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven" (James 5,14-15).

Anointing itself is to be done in the name of Jesus.

The risen Lord told the Apostles that those who believe in Him would lay their hands over the sick and these would recover (Mk 16,17).

The power the Apostles received came from the name of Jesus. Thus in the name of Jesus Peter made a lame man walk (Acts 3, 6-16, 4,10, 9 .34) .

^x Chaldean Pontifical. Rome 1957, p.158

Even some unbelievers tried to cast out devils by pronouncing the name of Jesus over some possessed (Acts 19,13-15).

The laying of hands over the sick performed some cures. Ananias laid his hands upon Saul and immediately the latter got his sight back (Acts 9, 12-17).

Paul laid his hands upon the father of Publius in Malta and cured him (Acts. 28,8).

3. Testimonies regarding the 'sacrament of the sick' among the Malabarians

Many foreigners testify that the Malabarians did not have any anointing of the sick:

1. Valignano SJ in his report written at Goa towards the end of 1557 about the journey of Melchior Carneiro to the St. Thomas Christians says: The Thomas Christians do not have all the sacraments, particularly the sacrament of Extreme Unction.⁹

2. Monserrate SJ to the Jesuit General Mercuriano from Chochin on the 12th January 1579. They do not have in use the sacrament of Extreme Unction and of confirmation.¹⁰

3. Mar Abraham of Angamaly to the Jesuit General, Mercuriano from Cochin January 15, 1580: Formerly the sacrament of confirmation and of extreme unction were never in use in this Christianity which up to now was not using it for lack of means and of oil which we decided to bless.¹¹ Here the lack of means refers evidently to the lack of liturgical texts.

4. Matheo Ricci SJ from Cochin January 18, 1580: They never frequent all the sacraments. Now they have added confirmation and extreme unction, which until now they did not have.¹²

5. Vicente, Vice Provincial to the Jesuit General Mercuriano from Cochin, January 3, 1581. The Archbishop of the Sierra (Mar Abraham) and the Archdeacon came here twice after my arrival. They appeared benevolent and friendly and were desirous of introducing in their churches the customs of the Roman Church. They remain still here in the college and yesterday, on the 12th December; they dealt with the translation work into Chaldean of the office of consecrating the oil to consecrate oil this year. They want to start using it for the sacraments of Extreme Unction and confirmation, which they never had. They did not start last year for the lack of a translated text.¹³

The author signed the letter on January 3, 1581 and so "this year" means 1581. Hence the latin text was not translated at least until 1580 and the translated text was used slowly perhaps in 1581 or afterwards. Anyway Diamper imposed it over the Malabarians.¹⁴

⁹ Nao tem todos os sacramentos principalmente o sacramento de la extrema uncao: Josef Wicki. Documenta Indica III, p.804

¹⁰ No usan el sacramento de la extrema uncion e de la confirmation: Wicki. XI, p.518

¹¹ Por diante mais en uzo nesta christendade os dous santos sacramentos da confirmacao e Etrema uncao, que ategora se nao usavao por falta de aparelho oleos, que determinamos de benzer: Wicki. XI, p.827

¹² Frequentao mais todos os sacramentos, e agora juntarao o da confirmacao e da Extrema uncao que te agora nao tiverao: Wicki: XI, p.844

¹³ Arcebispo de la Sierra y el Arcediano han venido aqui dos vezes despues que yo vine. Muestranse benevolos y amigos, y desseosos de introducir en sus iglesias los costumbres de la iglesia Romana. Agora estan aqui en este collegio y ayer, que fueron 12 de Deziembre, trataron de traduzir en Chaldeo el officio de hazer el olio sancto, para hazerlo este ano y comenzar a usar del sacramento de la extrema unction, y del sacramento de la confirmation, de los quales nunca usaron y no comencaron el ano passado por no tener este officio traduzido. Dixime que el escriviria al Summo Pontifice y a V.P. Wicki. XII, p.204/5.

¹⁴ Cfr. Mansi. Vol. 35 Synodus Diamperianus no.153-55, col. 1270-1274.

Evidently the Jesuits present Mar Abraham and the Archdeacon as asking for latin texts to be rendered into Syriac. It is also possible that they might have put their own ideas into the mouths of Mar Abraham and the Archdeacon.

4. The Tradition of the Western Church

During the first millennium anointing of the sick was not considered a sacrament. St. Peter Damian (died 1072), for example gives a list of sacraments, which did not include anointing of the sick.¹⁵ It was Trent (1521-1545) that fixed the number of sacraments as seven and proclaimed that extreme unction is of divine institution.

During the first eight centuries oil blessed by a Bishop or a priest, was used by the patient himself or by others. This was later reserved only to the priests.¹⁶

In the Apostolic Constitution Sacram Unctionem infirmorum (30 November 1972)¹⁷ Paul VI says that anointing the sick is a tradition of both the East and the West. But we should say that it was not in practice in the East Syrian Church, nor among the Armenians.

The same Pope allowed any other oil, provided it is derived from plants, for the anointing. 'The reason for this permission is', the Pope said 'olive oil is not available everywhere'.¹⁸

Of late the Latin Catholic Church admitted that the laying of the hands is an important element in the administration of this sacrament.

"The celebration of this sacrament consists especially in the laying on of hands by the priests of the church, the offering of the prayer of faith, and the anointing of the sick with oil made holy by God's blessing. This rite signifies the grace of the sacrament and confers it."¹⁹

The earliest reference to such an anointing based on James 5,14-15 is seen in the letter of Pope Innocent I (401-417) to Decentius, Bishop of Gubbio. It seems that Innocent I was writing about the "Romanae Ecclesiae Consuetudo".²⁰

5. The New Liturgy

In the Syro-Malabar Church, attempts are now being taken to restore and renew the liturgical texts. Recently the texts of the sacraments of Baptism + Confirmation, Reconciliation, Matrimony and Anointing of the Sick have been finally approved by the Synod (November 2001). The text of the Anointing of the Sick is prepared by incorporating the prayers and rites of the latinized Ritual already in use and the Hussaya of the Assyrian Church. In the new text the Prayer cum Imposition of Hands (ܡܨܝܒܐ) and the anointing of the forehead, eyes, ears, lips, palms and feet are the principia sacramental acts. In the case of priests the anointing of the forehead is avoided.

The prayer of the Syamida is as follows:

Extending the right hand over the patient the celebrating priest says:

¹⁵ Patrologia Latina 144, p.897

¹⁶ Righetti. Manuale di Storia liturgica. Vol. IV. I sacramenti, p.15

¹⁷ AAS 1973, 5-9 and in Documents on Liturgy 1963-1979, no 2216

¹⁸ Ibidem no.3317

¹⁹ Congregation for Divine Worship. Rites of Anointing and Viaticum. December 7, 1972. Cfr. Documents on Liturgy. No 3316

²⁰ This prayer is translated into English from Malayalam. Cfr. The text of the Liturgy of the Anointing of the Sick in the Syro-Malabar Church approved by the Synod of bishops in November 2001.

The Huttamma (Final Blessing) also contains prayer and supplications of the same orientation.

From the historical evidences and the liturgical traditions of the Assyrian and Chaldean Churches of the East, which are the ecclesial counterparts of the Syro-Malabar Church it becomes evident that the Anointing of the Sick as a sacrament was not prevalent in the Pre-Diamper Church of St. Thomas Christians. Instead there seems to have existed the tradition of praying for the sick with the laying of hands over them and the reading from the gospels. There seems to have existed also the practice of the Hanana. The anointing with the holy oil must have been introduced in the post Diamper sacramental tradition of the Syro-Malabar Church. To search for a sacramental perception of the post Tridentine Western Church in the tradition of an Eastern Church is really a futile work. The present practice of the administration of the sacrament of Anointing of the Sick in the Syro-Malabar Church upholds the primary importance of the prayer of healing accompanied by the imposition of hands over the sick. At the same time it keeps up also the tradition of anointing introduced from the western tradition.

Hannoncourt: I have a question to Fr. George. You talked about the use of oil in the Syriac tradition, you did not mention any kinds of oil when you spoke about Hinduism. Is there no material similar to oil which is used in the Hindu tradition?

Hainthaler: Fr. George, you mentioned on p. 5 that the act of Anointment follows the act of forgiveness of sins. Do you have a priestly prayer after the confession of sins?

Hainthaler: On p. 6 you refer to the renewed perspective on extreme unction in the Western Church. In the 1950s and '60s an effort was made by Western theologians to look in a different way at the sacrament of extreme unction, especially from a Patristic point of view. In recent years, there have also been made studies about the connection between the priesthood and the ministry of healing. Let me also make a comment on the paper of Your Grace, p. 6. The Council of Trent simply put down ideas which had been expressed 300 years before. Already in the 12th and 13th centuries, there was this septenary which included the anointing of the sick.

Varghese: Regarding the quotation from Ziegenbalg on p. 1 of Mar George's paper, this testimony refers to the late 17th or early 18th century, and it is difficult to say that it reflects the pre-Diamper period.

Alencherry: The idea of *hnana* having a sacramental significance came from the entry in Payne-Smith. *Hnana* is earth from the sacred mountain which is brought to the terminally sick for consolation.

Varghese: There are similar practices in the West, e.g. taking parts from shrines of saints.

Georges: On p.67 of Mar George's paper, the translation should read "those who are engaged (*lamkhire*)", i.e. spouses.

Mar Bawai: I have a question for His Grace, Mar George. On p. 68 of your paper you are dealing with the testimonies of the Portuguese concerning post-16th century practices of the Syro-Malabar Christians. In point no. 1 they say: "The Thomas Christians do not have all the sacraments, particularly the sacrament of Extreme Unction". In point no. 2 on p. 69 they say: "They do not have in use the sacrament of Extreme Unction and of confirmation". In your opinion, is this a misreading by the Portuguese or is it a genuine representation of the current practice of the Syro-Malabar Church?

Alencherry: Regarding extreme unction, what they say is perfectly right, there was no rite of anointing, there was only prayer for the sick and also a reading from the holy Gospel. The St. Thomas Christians may not have named it a sacrament, but the reality was there, with grace being imparted (so in this sense they are not right). Regarding confirmation, they were wrong, because baptism and confirmation were done together and the Latin missionaries did not understand this. Now we administer them together again.

Mar Bawai: In that case, I have a follow-up comment. Had the Portuguese missionaries come to Mesopotamia instead of India, in my opinion their observations and testimonies would have been exactly the same.

Bonny: I simply would like to continue on what Mar Bawai Soro said. I had the impression that you had a rite of anointing the sick and prayers. Where does this rite in the Assyrian tradition come from?

Mar Bawai: I agree with you, we have these elements and the Syro-Malabar have them as well, but they were not expressed in the way the set mentality of the Portuguese missionaries would have expected.

Bonny: It is still not fully clear to me.

Mar Bawai: We have the rite, but it is not recognised as a sacrament.

Koshaba M. Georges

A REPLY TO THE PAPER OF K. M. GEORGE

The seven "Razi" or Mysteries" of the Church that we recognize are as follows: The Priesthood which is the ministry of all other Mysteries. The Holy Baptism, The Oil of Anointing, The Qurbana Qaddisha (which is our ordinary name for Eucharist), Absolution, The sign of the life giving Cross, The Holy leaven, namely, the King.

1. The Oil of Anointing

ه، انه منحه، بهاء، كاهنك، بهاء، قزلا . ه، س، بهاء، مرقب . ه، حبه، بها
لحمققل وحرل، هرلم، حلم، بهمهسه بهس جعصه ومن . هرحمل
وهمنهل مسلمل له لهه وهله ومهمم له من . (حمفد 5:13-15)

The oil of Anointing is an apostolic tradition, originating from the oil consecrated by the Apostles themselves, and which by succession has been handed down in the Church of God to this day, said Mar Abd Yeshua of Nisibin (+1318). The purpose of its use we learn from its own physical properties, and from the sacred Scriptures. The Divine book instructs us that, according to the Law, such as were set apart for the symbolical priesthood, or for earthly sovereignty, were anointed with the oil of anointing- And in like manner with us: such as are set apart for the kingdom of heaven and for the true priesthood, must be anointed with this same oil; in order that they may be truly anointed ones and brethren of Christ, who by oneness and His union with God is truly and supernaturally anointed.

The matter of the Oil of Anointing is pure olive oil. The form the apostolical benediction. Every sacred anointing is performed by the Nestorian church with pure olive oil, and no other is allowed by her canon. Chrism, such as is used in the Roman and other churches, is strongly censured by Nestorians. as will appear from the following extract from the writings of Yohanan bar Zo'bee:

They ordained that this should be unguent (مَلِيحَة) used for four reasons:

2. Because olive oil is easily procurable both by rich and poor, which is not the case with the precious Unction of *Meiroon*; and hence the poor may be prevented from being anointed.

4. Because of the effects of this oil. We see that the leaves of the olive tree do not wither, neither do they fall off. In like manner, such as are anointed with the oil of the horn shall live for ever, they shall not wither at the day of judgement, neither shall they fall away into hell. And as olive oil is fat and possesses a good odour, and affords support to the bodies of men, and is useful in most things, so every one who is anointed with the oil of the horn, shall be fat with grace of the Holy Spirit, his odour in Christ shall be good, he shall nourish others by his wisdom, and he shall be useful in the church in every way.

honourable things; for by the ashes of an heifer He cleansed the Israelites from their uncleanness, and through vile blood He forgave their iniquities and their sins.

Now the sacred Oil of Anointing in the church of the East, is used only for anointing that follows on Baptism, and which corresponds to the Western Confirmation.

The custom of anointing the sick has not been preserved among the church of the East, though it is not very long since it was practiced, and it is still the use of our neighbours the Chaldeans. Some think that the anointing oil was used medicinally, according to the custom of the Jews; but I rather think it was used as a sign of miraculous healing, by the appointment of Christ, though not mentioned; and it was afterwards used by those elders of the church to whom by the Spirit it was given the gift of healing (*James 5, 14*). It is certain here, and therefore probable there, that anointing of the sick with oil, is appropriated to that extraordinary power which has long ceased and therefore that sign must cease with it.

With us however, there is this of interest in the matter, that these customs are so very ancient. I think that these amulets are almost exactly the same as the amulets written on the clay tablets in ancient Babylon, now in the museums of Europe. Hence it would appear that these methods of healing have been used continuously in our land since about 5000 BC. and the practice of them in our people is an other indication that we are of the ancient Assyrian and Chaldean stock.

This that: *They anointed the sick with oil and they were healed (Mark 6,13)*. Ishodad of Merv states that. every where that they went about in Judea and healed, they carried oil that had been blessed by our Lord-Bur *Babhai the Persian* says that that oil had not been blessed by our Lord, nor did they carry it round with themselves to every place they came to, they asked oil from the house; they blessed it in the name of the Christ, and then they gave it.

¹ The Liturgy of the Church of the East, printed by Joseph Kelaita, at the Assyrian School and Press. Mosul 1928, p.244

Discussions

Konat: I have never heard of holy *Myron* being used for anointing the sick. In which tradition is this done?

Georges: In our Church no *Myron* is used. In the Western church *Myron* of different constituents is used, but we use pure olive oil.

Konat: But this *Myron* has nothing to do with the anointing of the sick, it is used only for baptism.

Georges: We do not have the anointing of the sick in our Church and we do not use *Myron* either for baptism or for anointing or for blessing of a church.

Harnoncourt: *Myron* or chrism is never used for the sick, it is used for baptism, for the ordination of priests and bishops, or for consecration of holy vessels. Chrism not for healing, but to show holy glory.

Yousif: I would like to comment on the Western rite of anointing the sick. My first point is that the Westerners (scholars or others) judged the situation in good faith according to their own schema of the sacraments and they thought that there was no anointing of the sick. We must understand the missionaries, sometimes we are too severe with them. My second point is that what contributed to a possibly mistaken evaluation of the situation was that the missionaries saw the Church of the East not in its glorious period, but in difficult times, both in Mesopotamia and in India. For example, when *Sulaqa* was presented to Rome and was asked whether they had confession, he said that it had been suppressed. In fact, they had no auricular confession, but they had three ways of forgiving sins: first, in the Mass, second, through public confession, and third, a person who committed a great sin could go and see the bishop, present his or her soul to him and gain forgiveness from the bishop or a priest. Regarding the anointing of the sick, we have early testimonies, e.g. in Aphrahat. It is quite possible that this practice was obscured, perhaps there was also difficulty to obtain olive oil at a certain period. It is very likely that since the fourth century there was some kind of ceremony, although it was not called a sacrament. But was it a period in which we see which of the ceremonies of the Church was a sacrament?

Matar: We have the same problem here as with marriage, whether or not it is considered a sacrament. In our Catholic theology, the definition of a sacrament is clear, it is a sensible sign giving an invisible gift. In the paper of Fr. Georges on p. 2, Yohanan bar Zo'bee is quoted: "Everyone who is anointed with the oil of the horn, shall be fat with grace of the Holy Spirit, his odour in Christ shall be good, he shall nourish others by his wisdom and he shall be useful in the church in every way". Don't you think that all the elements of the sacrament are here? If we find the elements, we can understand the two traditions. I think we are not far from one another.

Sako: I think in the Church of the East the oil of unction itself is regarded as a sacrament in ample sense, just as malka and sign of the cross. I found a special prayer in the pontifical book for the ordination of priests when they are signed with the oil. We lost the practice of using the oil for the sick, perhaps for economic and social reasons. According to the Fathers of the Church of the East, the oil is a particular sacrament. It is used in the consecration of churches, ordination of priests, celebration of penance aside of baptism.

Mar Cyril: First, I would like to affirm the notion of laying on of hands for healing which is practised in our church and is distinguished from the service of *Candeelo*. When a priest visits a sick person in a hospital, he lays his hands on that person and prays. I do not know

whether there is parallel to the laying on of hands in confirmation, which is done in combination with *Myron*. Second, regarding the service of *Candeelo*, the laying on of hands is done on each person in the congregation, it is a community act. Third, regarding the anointing of a deceased person, when the *Candeelo* has been performed, then this person is not anointed at the funeral service. What does this practice mean, perhaps the *Candeelo* is understood as extreme unction? Fourth, regarding *Hnono*, people go to monasteries, they take dust, oil etc. – this is popular piety. It is like visiting the tombs of the saints and sleeping there. The idea is Biblical, it is like being healed by touching the clothes of the apostles, but it is not considered a sacrament.

Mar Bawai: Fr. Georges, you mention the term "Nestorian Church" twice on p. 1 of your paper. While preserving all dignity and respect for the term "Nestorian", may I suggest that for the sake of being sensitive to other Oriental Orthodox Churches you replace the term with "Church of the East"?

Georges: I have no objection to your proposal, but this Church was actually known to Eastern writers as "Nestorian Church".

Brock: Fr. Georges, in the use of *hnana* in the Church of the East today, are there special prayers accompanying this, or is this just something anyone can do?

Georges: There is a special prayer for the *hnana*, it is sprinkled and then given to bride and groom.

Brock: In that case it is really a different situation from the use of *hnono* in the West Syriac and Syrian Orthodox traditions, and it is much closer to the anointing of the sick with oil. Would this also be the case in the Assyrian Church of the East?

Mar Bawai: Yes, there is no distinction in our practices.

Vazheeparampil: Fr. George, you explain the order of service for the Anointment of the sick on p. 67/8 of your paper. Which of the oils is used for the Anointment of the sick? Is there a strong Byzantine influence in the service of *Candeelo*?

Mar Gregorios: Can I ask you another question? On the same page, when you speak about the service of the blessing of the oil, you say that there is no real distinction between the oil used for the Anointment of the sick and the oil used for the catechumens. Do you mean that you use only one kind of oil or that the prayer for the blessing of the oil is the same?

George: My description is based on the actual practice of our Church in India. It is the same oil, but there are two different prayers.

Mar Gregorios: In my tradition there are two different oils and two different prayers, and we distinguish between the oil used for baptism and the oil used for the anointing of the sick, but then we have another kind of oil which is used for the dead. This oil is different, it is not blessed and we use it for everyone, even for those who were blessed by the *candeelo*.

George: In response to Sr. Prasanna's question, the oil which is blessed during the service of *candeelo* is not kept. Because everyone is anointed, it is actually exhausted. The oil for the sick is blessed by the bishop and sent out to the parishes. In the Byzantine Churches, the blessing of oil and the anointing takes place on the eve of Maundy Thursday. We do not have the blessing and the anointing specifically on Maundy Thursday.

Sako: In the liturgical books there is nothing about a blessing of oils for *hnana*. *Hnana* for the new married means they are the children of the martyrs and also they should give up themselves for each other.

Georges: *Hnana* is dust from the relics of martyrs which is mixed with oil and water, left over night to dry, then crushed and kept in small vessel. It is used for the sick and for matrimony services. It is like powder and oil is used to prepare it.

Mar Saliba: There is a distinction between the oil of catechumens and the oil for anointing the sick. We add a few drops of holy *Myron* to the oil of catechumens.

Georges: Is this a common tradition in Syria?

Mar Cyril: No, it is done only in our Church.

Konat: Are the oils kept in two separate vessels? And do all the bishops in Syria consecrate the oils or just the Patriarchs?

Mar Gregorios: The oils are kept in two different vessels. The rite of consecration is performed by all the bishops. There are some common prayers and at the end a few separate prayers for the separate oils. As Mar Saliba said, we put a few drops of *Myron* into the oil of catechumens.

George: In Kerala olive oil is very expensive and is sold only in medical shops. Are other oils used in Syria too?

Mar Gregorios: Before answering this question I would like to ask Mar George whether you use holy *Myron* for the dead clergy, as in the Armenian tradition.

Alencherry: No, we don't.

Khalifé: The oil of *Candeelo* was the only oil used for the sick. At the end of 16th century the missionaries said that the Maronites did not have extreme unction, because they used only the *Candeelo*, which was blessed by priests in the houses of the sick. The Maronites did not use other oils for the sick. In the Syrian Orthodox church the priest consecrates the oil for the sick himself.

Yousif: The impression I have is that the rite of anointing the sick insists more on the healing power of the sacrament, whereas the idea of death is rather avoided. So what happens when the person dies after the anointing, as indeed it may happen. There is an ambivalence here.

George: This question is similar to the questions asked by Western theologians what happens to an unbaptized child or what happens if someone dies without anointing and holy communion. Such a question not meaningful in the Eastern tradition.

Alencherry: Based on the acts of St. Thomas, the healing is instant. The main stress is on healing, not just for the body, but for the whole person. Even if the person dies, there is spiritual healing.

Mar Cyril: In practice, Fr. Yousif, we have this problem. When I once suggested to someone that he should receive *candeelo*, he said, "oh no, no, it's too early". He was afraid of dying. This is common among our people, because they are ignorant and think *candeelo* means that they will die soon. Regarding *hnono*, I heard from Fr. George about the Indian custom of mixing oil with dust etc. Is this a specifically Indian custom?

Mar Bawai: I would like to follow up on Fr. Yousif's comment. Anointing of the sick does not appear on the Church of the East list of sacraments. I wished that the papers would have dealt with the sin of Adam and its consequences, because then you would have seen the meaning of this sacrament. We are speaking here about a sacrament that is excluded by the Church of the East, and the reason seems to be the preconceived notion in the Church of the East that anointing is about healing of the body rather than forgiveness of sins.

Vellanickal: First, regarding the effect of the sacrament of anointing the sick I think the text of St. James is to be taken into account seriously. "The prayer of faith will save the

sick" – the meaning of the term "save" is not just physical healing – "and the Lord will raise them up and anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven". There is also an effect of uniting the sick person with the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and therefore the eschatological significance of this sacrament should not be forgotten. Even if a man dies, he has been united with the Lord in the full sense of the term. Already in baptism he died and was raised with Jesus Christ and this process of being united with Christ is now completed. The anointing of the sick also has great significance in that sense and therefore it is not a problem whether or not a man dies. Perhaps the redemptive value of sickness should also be considered. Jesus Christ has given a new perspective on suffering and illness. There is a redemptive value in being united with Christ, in completing what is lacking in the suffering of Christ, as St. Paul says. So we have to consider the integral sense of the term healing. Second, Macquarrie says that John 9 can be seen as the Biblical basis for the anointing of the sick. This passage is also a reference to baptism. Jesus is the light of the world and in the early Church baptism was known as enlightenment (*photismos*). The man comes to see the light of the world and he is healed by going to pool of Shiloah. There are so many elements of baptismal significance here. I do not know whether this can also be applied to the anointing of the sick.

Georges: There are different ways of translating James 5:13-15. The Syriac version speaks of bodily healing, not saving the soul.

Hainthaler: In the Greek text of the New Testament the verb is "save" (*sozein*).

Georges: In the Syriac it is "heal" (*achlem*).

Vellanickal: "Healing" should also be understood in the sense of saving, it is not restricted to physical healing. *Sozein* is a term that is applied to all sorts of spiritual healing.

Harnoncourt: We should realise that healing and saving are two aspects of the same act. Christ is the Saviour – "Heiland" in German – who heals not only the soul but the whole person.

Mar Cyril: It seems that healing is more spiritual than physical.

Winkler: In the Biblical texts it is clear that a person's faith brings about the healing. The bodily healing is the physical sign of Christ's saving action.

Mar Bawai: This leads us to the core issue. In the Church of the East death is not associated with sin, while in the Augustinian understanding of grace and nature the death of Adam is the consequence of his sin. According to the Theodorian school of thought, which is underlying our understanding of the human body and which is contrary to rest of Christianity, man was created mortal and death is part of our nature. So when the priest prays over a sick person, the issue is healing of the body. Therefore if we want to understand the sacrament of anointing the sick, we must consider the anthropological background.

Mar Gregorios: On the same line I have a question to Fr. George. On the last page of your paper you mention that Metropolitan Paulos Mar Gregorios was called by his people *ha-syo deelan*, which means "our healer". What do you mean by "healer" here, is it physical or spiritual?

George: It means not only physical healing, but also forgiveness and spiritual healing.

Hainthaler: I would suggest not to distinguish too much between physical healing and spiritual healing or saving, because in the Bible they are connected. The aim of Jesus Christ was to save us and healing is one aspect of his saving power.

Alencherry: I think it would be useful to provide a list of the different traditions on the anointing of the sick, including the blessings which are used in various Churches. It would be very important to spell out the differences in a separate document.

George: This is really a question which should be studied in depth by scholars.

Matar: What is the best way to translate *hasyo*?

Brock: *Hasyo* is very difficult to translate into English, sometimes it can mean “the holy one”, sometimes “he who forgives”.

Mar Gregorios: There are many meanings, but it certainly is both physical and spiritual.

Winkler: I have a different question about the Indian context. Was there an influence of the Syriac tradition on the Hindu tradition or vice versa? It seems that some kind of anointing was already there in Indian culture. Is there evidence for anointing in pre-Diamper period or did you never have anointing, but only the prayers?

George: I simply drew a parallel, I did not suggest a connection between the Syriac and the Hindu traditions. The use of balm and Anointment with balm is part of the Indian medical system. This is done not merely for scientific reasons, but also has a religious dimension. It is perhaps an allusion to a sacrament, but I am not suggesting a direct connection.

Winkler: Mar George Alencherry has spoken of *hnana* as a medicine taken in liquid form. Is this just a parallel?

Matar: The big difference is that in Christianity Christ gives the oil to you, in other traditions you give oil to yourself.

Alencherry: It is indeed essential that Jesus Christ gives the oil to you and heals you. However, the rites and ceremonies were created by men in different cultures. There was an interaction with Hindu culture in India when the rites were created.

Hofrichter: I am asking for a clarification. You spoke a lot about *Candeelo*. What is the significance of this rite, is it considered a sacrament?

George: In my Church *candeelo* is the sacrament of anointing the sick. It also has a communal dimension, because everyone is anointed, not just the sick person, as in the shorter form.

Mar Cyril: I would like add to Fr. George’s comment that *Candeelo* is connected to the text from St. James, because all priests who are present lay their hands on the sick person.

Alencherry: It is a custom that people offer oil as a gift to the church. This oil is used for sanctuary lamps and hence sanctified. People then take the oil again and anoint themselves with it. This is a pious tradition with a sacramental meaning.

Mar Gregorios: I have a question to both of you, Fr. George and Mar George. Sometimes we are asked to come and pray for a sick person, but we do not take oil with us. Do you distinguish between anointing the sick with oil and laying on of hands?

Alencherry: The prayer for anointing the sick is something liturgical and is done by the priest alone. Praying over the sick is different and very common.

George: There are different ways of praying for the sick. In our tradition touching is very important, so we practise the laying on of hands.

Winkler: Anointing of the sick is not listed as a sacrament by Abdisho, there is only “the oil of anointing”.

Mar Bawai: This is confirmation.

Winkler: Do you have a rite of anointing the sick?

Mar Bawai: Yes, we have blessed oil which are preserved in the church. It is simple olive oil that is prayed over and consecrated for the use of anointing. This oil is used for anointing the sick, but we do not call it a *raza*.

Sako: The synod held by Mar Joseph I in 554 says something anointing the sick. Canon 19 of that synod lays down the following rule for “those who deliberately give themselves to devilish works”: “When one of those who have fallen into this serious illness is converted let them offer him as a means of healing, the oil of prayer that has been blessed by the priests, along with the water of prayer, just as they would to those who are sick in the body”²¹.

Mar Bawai: What we have in our liturgy reflects this canon.

Yousif: There are two kinds of anointing here, the first one is for those who are sick in the body and the second one is against possession of the devil, which is what this canon speaks about.

Winkler: Is this anointing a *raza* in substance?

Bawai: This depends on whether we agree what a sacrament is and establish a definition. I would support such an exercise and suggest that a sacrament is an act through which God communicates grace to the believer. If we can agree on this, then anointing falls under this category.

Sako: I would like to add that anointing is also used for penance.

Hofrichter: I notice some contradiction here. Mar Bawai, you have told us that you really practise some rite of anointing the sick. We have heard from His Excellency that this rite was lost in India and we have heard that if the Latins had come to Mesopotamia they would have noticed this too. So when did you restore this rite?

Mar Bawai: There was a misunderstanding on my part. I was under the impression that the Indian Christians practised the anointing and that the missionaries did not realise this. But my understanding was not correct.

Hofrichter: So the anointing was not practised in India or Mesopotamia.

Mar Bawai: No, it was practised in Mesopotamia.

Hofrichter: When and how was it introduced there? Was it introduced to the Chaldeans by the Western missionaries?

Mar Bawai: Fr. Yousif thought that perhaps Mar George did not cover the whole history. There is some evidence from Aphrahat for the anointing and we cannot claim with certainty that it was not practised at all.

Alencherry: We cannot say categorically whether the anointing existed in India when missionaries came. It existed in the Chaldean or Assyrian Church, but this is no evidence for the situation in India for which do not have documents. The text of the ritual which we now use is from the Latin tradition.

Vazheeparampil: There are indications that the Malabar Church had prayers for the blessing of oil for the healing of the sick, as is shown by Kelaita, *Liturgy of the Church of the East*, p. 195.

Harnoncourt: We should acknowledge that the Jesuit Fathers who came to India in the 16th century understood the sacraments according to the dogmatic declarations of the Council of Trent. In Catholic sacramental theology the Tridentine understanding is no longer do-

²¹ J. B. Chabot, *Synodicon Orientale*, quoted after: A. G. Kollamparampil and J. Perumthottam (ed.), *Bride at the Feet of the Bridegroom: Studies in East Syrian Liturgical Law: A Tribute to Archbishop Mar Joseph Powathil* (Catholic Theological Studies of India, 1), HIRS Publications: Changanassery 1997, 387.

minant. Today we speak of significant “acts” rather than “signs”. Although we still use the categories of form and matter, we do no longer follow scholastic analytic sacramental theology.

George: Fr. Sako has raised an important point, which is the connection between penance and Anointment. In the Syrian Orthodox ritual there is a close relationship between sin and sickness.

Winkler: Prof. Harnoncourt has addressed an important methodological problem in our discussion. We are taking models from scholastic theology, such as the number seven or the categories of form and matter and then we are looking how the *raze* fit in. However, these models are so late and today they are not even up to date in the Roman Catholic Church. We have to rethink our method which is perhaps not the right one to discuss the *raze*.

Fourth working session: Thursday, 28th February 2002

Chairman: *Archbishop Paul Matar*

Mar Bawai: Before beginning to read the paper, I ask you to keep in mind three points. First, this paper deals with the usage of the holy leaven in preparing the Eucharistic bread. As you know, the Church of the East has a particular or unique practice of keeping and maintaining holy leaven in its churches. This paper talks about the historical existence of this holy leaven. Second, this paper will also talk about recognizing this usage as a sacrament. Until the 13th or 14th century holy leaven was used without being recognized as a sacrament. Third, keep in mind the distinction between the leaven used to leaven the bread for the Eucharist in the Orthodox Churches – I am going to call it “simple leaven” – and the holy leaven that we have.

Mar Bawai Soro

THE SACRAMENT OF THE HOLY LEAVEN “MALKA” IN THE CHURCH OF THE EAST

1. An Overview of the Holy Leaven

One of the most unique practices in Christianity is found in the Church of the East’s Sacrament of Leavening or commonly called *Malka*, The King. Its origins are unclear and it has scarce documentation. Despite this, the Church of the East places great value upon the Holy Leaven, especially among the faithful. Thus, it beckons a thorough investigation to discover its historical place and the theological significance in the faith life of the believers.

According to the practice of the Church of the East, the Holy Leaven is added to the Eucharistic bread prior to baking. Although a minute ingredient by percentage, the Holy Leaven is far from being insignificant. Canon law stipulates that no Eucharistic bread is to be offered for consecration without this Holy Leaven.¹ It is also important to note that its only use is in the Eucharistic bread. This addition is similar to the addition of the Oil of Unction to the oil blessed at Baptism. Thus, in practice there is an analogous relationship between the addition of the Holy Leaven to the Eucharistic Bread and the addition of the Oil of Unction to the Oil of Baptism. This correlation will be developed in more detail.

The actual contents of the Holy Leaven are: wheat flour, salt, olive oil, and a few drops of water and then it is dried. Obviously there is no actual leavening agent. The real act of leavening the Eucharistic bread is accomplished by the addition of baker’s yeast, traditionally taken from a previous preparation and reserved for the next baking. So the nomenclature Holy Leaven seems to be a bit misleading. However, as we shall see both the Oil of Unction and the Holy Leaven are referred to as “leaven” as they have a special function with regard to their respective sacraments.

So, the Holy Leaven is numbered as one of the seven Sacraments of the Church of the East. Two of these seven sacraments – Holy Leaven or *Malka*, and the Sign of the Cross – are not counted as such in any other Apostolic Church. In fact, the Holy Leaven is only practiced in the Church of the East. The Church only began to enumerate a list of sacraments rather late and as we shall see there was some internal difference about which ones should make the list of SEVEN. Let us remember that all churches only codified the list of sacraments at a rather late date, namely, after the dawn of the second Christian millennia. Mar Abdisho, Metropolitan of Nisibis and Armenia, in his thirteenth century work entitled “*Marganitha*,” or “The Pearl,”² is the first to grant *Malka*’s status as a sacrament. As we shall see, earlier authors describe this practice in a similar approach, but do not speak in terms of specified list of the Sacraments. A presentation of the historical sources shall begin this study then a look at the liturgical prayers will help develop a more profound theological understanding of this sacrament. An overall evaluation of our findings about the Holy Leaven follows and it will help to provide a more balanced understanding of the sacrament in light of its history and theology.

¹ See footnote 4.

² See footnote 11.

2. Historical Review of Relevant Sources

The history of this sacrament, as addressed above, is provided in only a few of the fathers of the Church of the East. The fathers are presented in chronological order with special attention to their own *Sitz im Leben* or historical context facilitating a more complete elucidation of their teaching thus aiding us to comprehend more accurately their teachings on the Holy Leaven.

2.1. Yohanan bar Abgareh († 905)

Patriarch Yohanan bar Abgareh († 905), of the Church of the East, legislated patriarchal canons called "*On the Disciplines of the Altar*." In two of these canons he has decreed the usage of the Holy Leaven, the *Malka*. Scholarly consensus agrees that bar Abgareh's work is the first to mention the Holy Leaven in the Church of the East. As we shall see the following two canons are the most important as they specifically sanction the usage of the Holy Leaven. Let us take a look at their basic contents:

- Canon 11 (*Kelaita*) or Canon 13 (*Assemani*): A priest is prohibited from preparing (i.e., baking) the Eucharistic bread and from giving the Holy Leaven to any non-Christian person, so that its sanctity may not be compromised.³
- Canon 15 (*Kelaita*) or Canon 12 (*Assemani*): A priest is obligated to prepare (i.e., bake) the Eucharistic bread for the Holy Qurbana and to mix the Holy Leaven with it, in addition to the simple leaven.⁴

Bar Abgareh legislates the addition of two leavens to the Eucharistic bread: one of the leavens he calls *Holy* and the other is *simple*. Whether this introduction was a local one for the patriarchal see in Seleucia-Ctesiphon, having been the norm elsewhere, or whether it was actually influenced by an older dispersed tradition using the ingredients of the Holy Leaven, remains uncertain. Nor can we speculate that this legislation constitutes the "invention" of the Holy Leaven. The connection of this Holy Leaven to the Last supper is detailed in popular legends, which will be treated in one of the later fathers. The important aspect is that they connected the on-going celebration of the Holy Qurbana to the Last Supper by means of this Holy Leaven.

Let us look at the *Sitz im Leben* of this account. Our source emanates from the early 10th century historical context of the Church of the East. The Church of the East was at that time for, many decades, rapidly becoming one of the largest missionary enterprises the world had ever known. Through these missionary efforts the Patriarchate in Seleucia-Ctesiphon became a center of evangelical commissioning and ecclesial communication with

³ For Canon 11, see Joseph Kelaita, ed., "*The Liturgy of the Church of the East*" (Musil (Iraq): 1928), 211. For a critical text of Kelaita's Canon 11 see, Assemani, ed., *Bibliotheca Orientalis* (III/1), 241-242; Canon 13. Please note that the canon numbers are different between Kelaita and Assemani. However, for a historical perspective on this issue refer also to MacLean & Browne, *The Catholicos of the East and his People*, (Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, London: 1892), 248.

⁴ For Canon 15, see Joseph Kelaita, ed., *The Liturgy*, 213. Again, for a critical text of Kelaita's Canon 15 see, Assemani, ed., *Bibliotheca*, 242; Canon 12. The different between Kelaita and Assemani enumeration is also present here. Yet, one must note here that there is a rather peculiar word in Assemani, which reverses the meaning of the text in Kelaita. Assemani's text maintains that Patriarch bar Abgareh obligates the priest who is preparing (i.e., baking) the Eucharistic bread for the Holy Qurbana NOT to mix the Holy Leaven with it. It is very inconsistent with the previous canon, which established the high value and sacramental sanctity of the Holy Leaven. In my opinion, it must be an error by the copyist of the manuscript.

the various missions of priests and monks, who traveled east as far as China and Japan. Would the sudden canonical legislation on the mixing of the Holy Leaven into the Eucharistic bread indicate a sign or a practice through which the missionary branch was always connected to the mother church? Can one assume that Malka served as a sign of communion bonding the missionaries with their patriarch in Babylon?

It is widely held that the ancient tradition of the Church of the East mandated that only the Bishop would consecrate the Holy Leaven on Holy Thursday. Today, this tradition is still preserved in our church in India. On Holy Thursday, it is the bishop who celebrates the renewal of the Holy Leaven and sends small portions of it to the various churches under his jurisdiction. In the rest of the Church of the East the priest in his own parish performs this rite of renewal. The clear emphasis of this ancient tradition is upon the unity of the church under the guidance of the Bishop. Can we establish any connection between the missions that went to China, the legislation of bar Abgareh and this custom in India? Taking the Liturgical Law of Anton Baumstark that the churches on the periphery are more conservative than those in the center, it is clear that this tradition is very ancient. So it seems that the practical situation of the great missions demanded some sort of sign of unity and authenticity, which was answered by the Holy Leaven. Churches and missions celebrating the Holy Qurbana were connected not only vertically to their Bishop, but also horizontally to the Last Supper itself.

So this first account of Bar Abgareh provides some interesting information regarding the Holy Malka. It stimulates us to push the envelope of history and try to understand this Sacrament as it was experienced by his contemporary believers.

2.2. Pseudo Gewargis of Arbela (10th Century)

Our next father is the *Pseudo* Gewargis of Arbela or Atour (The Anonymous Commentator) who wrote sometime in the mid 10th century.⁵ He provides some interesting information regarding the history of this practice. In his commentary on the Holy Mysteries (i.e., the Holy Qurbana), he maintains that earlier Church of the East fathers never had mentioned the usage of the Holy Leaven. Gewargis presents two arguments. The first point is the fact that the first liturgical reformer in the Church of the East, namely, Patriarch Mar Isho'Yahb III († 658/59) never ordered how the Eucharistic bread and wine should be prepared. The second point is that according to the same Mar Isho'yahb III, he never had any mention of the practice of the Holy Leaven.⁶

This statement may well have been a reply to bar Abgareh's patriarchal legislation on the Holy Leaven. His strong disagreement with bar Abgareh is an important component of the Church of the East's liturgical and sacramental history. That he clearly differs with a Patriarch on such an important issue is a clear example of the dubious nature of the evolution of the practice of the Holy Leaven. So this almost contemporaneous author to bar Abgareh helps to broaden our understanding of the Holy Leaven, its place in the history of

⁵ See "Anonymi Auctoris Expositio Officiorum Ecclesiae, Giorgio Arbelensi Vulgo Adscripta," Vol. II, ed. & trans. R. H. Connolly, CSCO 76/SS 32, Rome 1915/ Paris 1913, Latin trans. 36, Syriac text 36-37, CSCO/SS 29. For a good English translation of this work, please refer to "A Commentary on the Mass by the Nestorian George, Bishop of Mosul and Arbel," ed., Robert Matheus, trans., R. H. Connolly, OIRSI no. 243, (Department of Publications of Paurastya Vidyapitham, Pontifical Oriental Institute of Religious Studies, Kottayam, India: 2000).

⁶ Matheus, *A Commentary* 71-72.

the Persian Church as well as the reception of the canons by others in the Church of the East. We, the Church of the East, clearly need to be attentive to this question and seriously evaluate this tradition, given Gewargis' objections. It may be uncomfortable to face the historical discoveries of one of our sacraments, but it is only in truth and honest investigation that we can truly proclaim our Christian tradition.

2.3. Shlemon d-Basra (13th Century)

Shlemon d'Basra, another Church of the East father from the thirteenth century, breaks the three hundred years silence on the Malka and writes on our subject. His statement is present in his famous work, the "*Book of the Bee*".⁷ In retrospect, his statement makes clear how a theological "impetus" in favor of the Holy Leaven was being seriously initiated in this church. In section thirty-nine from Shlemon's "*Diburita*" (or the *Bee*) seems to be speaking of teachings that were already known and accepted by the church of his times, but with a unique scenario.

According to Shlemon, during the Last Supper, the Eucharist, which Jesus gave to his disciples, was consumed by all except John; he preserved a piece of it. After the Resurrection the Lord appeared for the second time to his disciples, when Thomas was present this time. Jesus told Thomas "*Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.*" (Jn 20,27) After Thomas' confession, John the Beloved, Shlemon maintains, put the small piece of the preserved Eucharist from the Last Supper into Jesus' side so that his Blood is mixed with his Body.⁸ Shlemon continues to state that after this event the small piece of the Eucharist was given to those who disciples the East, namely, Addai and Mari and they in turn gave it to the Church of the East as the Holy Leaven. According to Shlemon, the Holy Leaven was exclusive for the Church of the East because the other disciples did not take from John's Bread.

2.4. Yohanan bar Zo'bee (14th Century)

In the next century, Yohanan Bar Zo'bee, a fourteenth century Church of the East commentator, gives us our most extensive treatment of *Malka*.⁹ I quote here from a translation of the original manuscript made in the nineteenth century by Badger:

I confess two sacraments in the holy Church, - one the sacrament of Baptism, and the other the sacrament of the Body and Blood. The foundation of these two is laid in the flesh of our LORD, and it is fit that I should explain this for the edification of the sons of the Church. Peter the Apostle wrote this account, and I am therefore bound to record it without any alteration. When our SAVIOUR was baptized of John in the river Jordan, John beheld His greatness, i.e., His Divinity and humanity, and understood that He did not submit to be baptized on His own account, but in order to set us an example that we should be

baptized even as He was. And this blessed John was graciously inspired to take from CHRIST'S baptism a little leaven for our baptism. So when our LORD went up out of the water whilst the water was yet dripping from His body, John approached our LORD, and collected these drops in a phial; and when the day of his martyrdom arrived he committed it to his disciple, and commanded him to preserve it with great care until the time should come when it would be required. This disciple was John the son of Zebedee, who he knew would become our LORD'S steward. Accordingly, after His baptism, our LORD called John, and made him His beloved disciple; and when He was about to close His dispensation, and His passion and death drew nigh, on the evening preceding the Friday He committed His Passover to His disciples in the bread and wine, as it is written, and gave to each a loaf; but to John He gave two loaves, and put it into his heart to eat one and to preserve the other, that it might serve as leaven to be retained in the Church for perpetual commemoration. After this, when our LORD was seized by the Jews, and the disciples through fear hid themselves, John was the only one who remained. And when they crucified the LORD in much ignominy with the thieves, John alone was present, determined to see what would become of Him. Then the chief priests ordered that the crucified ones should be taken down from the cross, and that their legs should be broken, in order that if yet alive they might die outright. The soldiers did this to the thieves, but when they came to our LORD and found that He was dead already, they brake not His legs, but one of them with a spear pierced His side, and straightway there came out blood and water, of which John was witness. Now this blood is a token of the sacrament of the Body and Blood in the Church, and the water is a token of the new birth in believers. John was the only one who perceived this separateness of the water and the blood, and he bear witness thereof, as he says, that we might believe. He declares that he saw them unmixed, in that he did not take of them together, but of each separately. He took of the blood upon the loaf, which he had reserved from the paschal feast, and he took of the water in that same vessel which had been committed to him by John the Baptist. The very blood of His body, therefore, mixed with the bread, which He had called His body, and the water from His side mingled with the water from His baptism. After He rose from the grave and ascended up in glory to His FATHER, and sent the grace of His Spirit upon His disciples to endow them with wisdom, He commanded His apostles to ordain in His Church that same leaven which they had taken from His body to be for the sacrament of His Body, and also for the sacrament of Baptism. And when the disciples went forth to convert the nations, they divided this leaven amongst themselves, and they took oil of unction and mixed it with the water, which was kept in the vessel, and they divided this also amongst themselves to be a leaven for Baptism. The loaf which John had, and which was mixed with the blood which flowed from His side, they bruised into powder, then mixed it with flour and salt, and divided it among them, each portion being put into a separate vessel to serve as leaven for the Body and Blood of CHRIST in the Church. This is the account, which I have read, which bore the sign of Peter, and I have written it as I found it for the benefit of such as may read this our Epistle. The presbyter Rabban Shimon, who first related the narrative to me, and then afterwards showed me the written account, can witness to the truth.¹⁰

The number of sacraments confessed by bar Zo'bee is only two, Baptism and the Eucharist. Note that not only Malka is not counted as a sacrament but the priesthood is not

⁷ For definite reference, see *Diburita* or "*The Book of the Bee*" by Shlemon of d'Basra, edited by Budge (Oxford, 1885). This author was born near Lake Van (in South-East Turkey) at the end of the twelfth century and died in the year 1240. He was made the Archbishop of al-Basra during the first quarter of the 13th century. "*The Book of the Bee*" includes both theological and historical treatises written specifically for Solomon's friend, Narsai, the Bishop of Koni-shapour. For further details on Shlemon see Aboona, Albert, *Adab Al-lu'-gha Al-Aramia*, (Beirut: Dar Al-Machreq, 1996) 395-396.

⁸ *The Book of the Bee*, 116.

⁹ George Percy Badger, *The Nestorians and their Rituals*, Vol. II, London 1853, pp.151-153.

¹⁰ Badger, pp.151-153.

also mentioned. In a classical manner he, however, establishes that any act or a thing that is taken to be a sacrament must absolutely be related to Christ and, additionally, its benefits must also be for "the edification of the sons [and daughters] of the church."

Bar Zo'bee's account obtains the highest apostolic credentials due to its authorship by, and linkage to, Peter, the head of the Apostles. His thesis is unique in that he artfully integrates the Sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist, with two other "underlying" sacraments. The "underlying" sacraments are sacramentally the "leavening" agents, which links Jesus' Baptism and the Last Supper with our own celebration of Baptism and Holy Qurbana. Due to bar Zo'bee's thesis, it seems that, the "Holy Leaven" and the "Oil of Unction" get eventually recognized in the Church of the East as stand alone sacraments, about a century later by Abdisho of Suba. The two "leavens" transmitted by John the Evangelist are of crucial importance, for Zo'bee, for Abdisho and eventually for the rest of the Church of the East. The point of both is that Jesus' baptism at Jordan and the Holy Qurbana he celebrated at the Last Supper are still both celebrated in every act of Baptism and Eucharist of the Church, through the usage of these "Holy Leavening" agents. Such Sacramental theology is rather unique. It may be that only in the Church of the East, the Sacraments of Holy Leaven and Oil of Unction, namely, the Sacraments of Initiation, are brought and validated together within the same theological argument and with the same historical premise.

The unique value is in the expression of the continuity of succession from Jesus to our modern times. It seems that this concrete usage of Holy Unction and the Holy Leaven have become the visible, tangible expressions of what all Christians believe that Christ is acting and present in the sacraments even today.

2.5. Abdisho of Suba (14th Century)

Mar Abdisho of Suba, an early 14th century canonist and theologian, has an entire chapter in his famous work, the *Marganitha*, The Pearl, dedicated to the reference of the Holy Leaven, as a Sacrament. Chapter Seven clarifies the origins and the usage of the Holy Leaven in the Church of the East in this manner:¹¹

The Holy and blessed Apostles, Thomas and Bartholomew of the Twelve, and Addai and Mari of the Seventy, who discipled the East, committed to all the churches in the East the Holy Leaven, to be kept for the perfecting of the administration of the Sacrament of our Lord's body until His coming again. And should any Christian dispute the fact of the above mentioned Apostles having committed to those of the East this sanctified Leaven, on the ground that Peter, the head of the Apostles, and his companions did not commit it to the Western [churches, those within the Roman empire],¹² and should object to us on this wise: "If what you say is true, then one of these two consequences must result; either the Apostles did not agree in their mode of discipling, which is unseemly to think, or this tradition of yours is false." Against this we reply; The Easterns from the day of their discipleship up to this day have kept their faith as a sacred trust, and have observed, without change, the Apostolical Canons; and notwithstanding all the persecutions which they have

¹¹ Mar Abdisho of Nisibis and Armenia, *Marganitha*, tr. Mar Eshai Shimun, Trichur 1965; reprinted by Assyrian Church of the East Literary Committee: Chicago 1988) 58-59. By Westerns here is meant the followers of both the Latin and Byzantine traditions.

¹² Editorial note: bracketed text [...] indicates additions for the sake of better understanding.

suffered from many kings, and their subjection to the severe yoke of a foreign power, they have never altered their creed nor changed their canons. Such as are well versed in such matters know full well the labor and care required on the part of Christians to observe these canons, and more especially to preserve this Leaven, in a difficult country, where there is no Christian sovereign to support them, nor any commander to back them, and where they are continually persecuted, vexed, and troubled. Had this Leaven not been of Apostolical transmission they would not, most assuredly, have endured all these afflictions and trials to keep it together with orthodox faith. Then, as to their argument drawn from Peter and the great Apostles who discipled the West, we have this to oppose them, - that those Apostles did transmit the same to the Westerns but that with their alteration of the faith, the canons also were corrupted by their (Western) subjection to the will of heretical kings. And, in proof of this statement, we urge that if they all held the traditions of the Apostles, the Franks [Romans] would not offer an unleavened [bread], and the Romans [Greeks] a leavened oblation; since the Apostles did not transmit it in two different ways. Therefore, the Westerns have changed the faith and the canons, and not the Easterns.

The obvious apologetic attempts made above by the metropolitan need little examination; if the Holy Leaven were not of apostolic origin, it would not have survived for 13 centuries in a land hostile to the Christian faith. And if the other churches are lacking the Holy Leaven, it must be because they have lost the tradition of leavened Eucharistic bread in the jurisdiction of the Franks.

No mention is made of the Armenians, although Mar Abdisho has within his metropolitan see part of Armenia and he surely would have been acquainted with their use of unleavened bread for the Holy Offering (Qurbana) they term the *Badarak*. Nor is the use of "a leavened oblation" by the Romans (the churches of the Byzantium tradition and rite) supportive of the validity of the Holy Leaven; this is undoubtedly due to the non-leavening nature of the Holy Leaven. While unsatisfactory as an apologetic attempt, the metropolitan does shed light on the necessity the Church of the East seems to find to defend her use of the Holy Leaven, apparently from the objections of other Christian traditions.

Looking once again to the greater historical context, we see that his commentary is marked by the invasion of "others" Muslims Mongols and the destruction of the Church of the East historical lands. Mar Abdisho is a man that is facing persecution and the very destruction of his own church. Given this statement, his adamant objection to the other churches is clearly understandable as he has not the time or ability to develop a refined theology. Rather he is trying to keep his own people faithful to their church and its practices.

2.6. Timothy II (14th Century)

In Mar Timothy II, Catholicos (1318-1328) we find a reversal to the case in which has been built by previous church fathers, namely, from bar Abgareh to Abdisho, in order to elevate the Holy Leaven to a full sacrament. In his famous work the "*Book of the Seven Causes of the Church Sacraments*," Timothy excludes the Holy Leaven (*Malka*) from the Church of the East's list of sacraments, and instead, he presents the following list of Church Sacraments: (1) Priesthood, (2) Baptism, (3) Consecration of Altars, (4) Eucharist, (5) Consecration of Monastic Life, (6) Funerals, (7) Marriage.¹³ Nevertheless, for circum-

¹³ Timothy II, *Book of the Seven Causes of the Church Sacraments*. (Vatican Siriace Manuscript # 151: Vatican Apostolic Library) folio 6-7. Nonetheless, the list of Abdisho in the *Marganitha* presents a different list

stantial reasons, Mar Abdisho's list became more available and consequently recognized and adopted in the Assyrian Church of the East. Since it included the Holy Leaven as a Sacrament of the Church, the practice of the Holy Leaven was confirmed and question of the validity of the Malka as a sacrament was established. But, once again, we have a clear witness for a different tradition within the Church of the East. *Perhaps the real problem is the limiting of the number of sacraments to only seven.*

2.7. Isaaq Eshbadhnaya (15th Century)

The Scholion of Priest Isaaq (*Eshbadhnaya* or *Shabidhnaya*) is our last historical source to be considered. The Scholion (in Latin Scholium) is a Commentary on specific theological topics, but this particular one is an acrostic poem, called by the name Scholion. The work we are about to consider belongs to a 15th century Church of the East priest by the name Isaaq (†1480) which is a rare (and most probably lost) manuscript, which in 1892 McLean & Browne published in an abridged translation.¹⁴ The same piece of poetry is also published by Baumstark in 1922.¹⁵ It maintains that John the Baptist gave John the Evangelist a baptismal vessel of water from Christ's baptism (collected by John the Baptist from water dripping from Christ after his baptism in Jordan River). Likewise, Jesus gave each disciple a "loaf," at the Last Supper, but to John he gave two with the instructions to eat only one and to save the other. At the crucifixion John collected the water from the Lord's side in the vessel and the blood he collected on the loaf from the Last Supper. After the descent of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, they (the disciples) took the vessel and mixed it with oil and each took a horn¹⁶ of it, while the loaf they ground and added to it flour and salt. Each took a portion and thus the Chrism and Holy Leaven were distributed in every land by the hand of those who missionized there.

This is basically the same account like bar Zo'bee with the difference that instead of John the Evangelist, it is the college of the Apostles that After Pentecost, they took the vessel of water from Jordan and mixed it with oil and each took a share of it, while the loaf given to John the Evangelist is ground and added to it flour and salt and distributed among them. It accordingly could also be considered as an affirmation for what Abdisho has established by including Malka in his Sacramental list. Once again the clear desire of an historical links to the life-saving acts of Jesus Christ and our own liturgical actions is clearly the underlying theological principle active in these descriptions.

2.8. Conclusion

From reviewing the historical data, it becomes clear that the practice of the Holy Leaven, its mixture in the Eucharistic bread and its elevation to Sacraments level took place gradually in the history of the Church of the East. Evidence illustrates to us that this

and order of Church Sacraments: (1) Priesthood; (2) Baptism; (3) Oil of Unction; (4) Holy Qurbana; (5) Absolution; (6) Holy Leaven; (7) Sign of the Cross.

¹⁴ MacLean & Browne, *The Catholicos of the East and his People*, Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1892, pages 247/8.

¹⁵ See A. Baumstark, *Geschichte Der Syrischen Literatur Mit Ausschluß Der Christlich Palästinensischen Texts*, (Bonn: 1922), 330. See also Partuteh, *The Book of Crumbs* (Uremia: 1898) 143-149.

¹⁶ A horn, or Syriac Qarna, is a common method of keeping oil and even today the vial holding the Chrism is called a "horn".

process started with Patriarch Yohanan bar Abgareh on the turn of the 10th century. Yet, in the same century we hear another father, the so-called Pseudo Gewargis of Arbela dismissing this practice on the strength of previous patriarchal authority of Isho'yahb III.

According to the above listed sources, the argument of the legitimacy of the Holy Leaven, its practice and importance is picked up again by fourteenth century by another Church of the East apologist, Yohanan bar Zo'bee. This time there is a more theological synthesis provided connecting the Holy Leaven to the Last Supper and integrating it with the other sacraments of initiation, i.e., Oil of unction and Baptism. The argument supporting this practice becomes perfected with complete apologetical tools advancing the faith of the believers further toward the concept of "Mdabranuta," divine providence, especially important in light of the deplorable living situation of the faithful in Mesopotamia, Persia and the rest of the East.

In the same fourteenth century a very interesting discussion emanates from two contemporary Church of the East fathers, Abdisho of Suba and Timothy II. We saw how Abdisho takes the line of bar Abgareh and bar Zo'bee, but he furthers the discussion by introducing to the case two new elements – the elevation of the Malka to the level of the Sacrament and the setting of an (ecumenically) polemical context for the Holy Leaven. In his words the other Churches have ceased to practice what the Apostles have taught them, but the Church of the East did not and to prove that she continues to have the Holy Leaven practice despite all the hardship and persecution her faithful have endured for thirteen centuries. Once again, the polemical attitude only starts with the decline of the Church of the East and its subsequent persecution.

Abdisho's theological reflections do not pass without being challenged, at least indirectly. Abdisho's patriarch, Timothy II, who passed away a few years after him, was a sacramentologist, as well, and has developed his own list of the sacraments. Timothy II disagreed with Abdisho in that he did not view Malka as a sacrament but, for example, taught that the act of marriage was a sacrament, instead.

Throughout the history of the Church of the East we have seen a certain continuing challenge to the practice of the Holy Leaven. Abdisho, bar Zo'bee, Shlemon d'Basra, bar Abgareh and Isaaq Eshbadhnaya are all in favor of the Holy Leaven while Timothy and *Pseudo* Gewargis are unfavorable. These two camps provide grounds for a continuous debate within our church today. Clearly the theological development of the Holy Leaven within the Church of the East is open to further development. The real issue for today is not so much whether this practice is historical or not, but rather what does our church choose to teach her faithful about the most important experience of God in this life. As I have indicated earlier, the real problem seems to be limiting the sacraments to only seven. Our people certainly consider the sanctity of marriage as a sacrament, as can be seen by our liturgical celebration of the act, despite it not being included in the official seven.

So, there is plenty of room for theological debate and reflection as presented in the church fathers. This does not demean our tradition, but rather it bespeaks of great openness to inquire and investigate the theological truths we espouse. The teachings of Malka, the Sacrament of the Holy Leaven, apparently have contributed to the faith and served as a tool of bringing God's grace to the believer.

3. Liturgical Evidence

3.1. The Liturgical Material

Finally, we shall look at the liturgical material preserved and in use by the Church of the East pertaining to, and regulating, the usage of the Holy Leaven, the foremost of which is "The Order of the Renewal of Holy Leaven, Which Is *Malka*."¹⁷ This Rite of Renewal, like other sacramental rites, may only be performed by a validly ordained priest, although the assistance of deacons is common. The Rite begins with these rubrics:

"First, on the day of Passover Thursday they bring pure fine flour, that is, of the finest wheat – two thirds, and another third of pure pounded and sifted salt – and they sprinkle on it a little pure reserved olive oil and three drops of water. And they mix them together well upon the stone for the preparation of the Host. Then the Sacristan and another Priest, or more, and the Deacons with them, place the Cross and Gospel with the Censer and lights in the place of the preparation of the Host."

Though commonly performed on Passover Thursday, the rubrics indicate that this Rite of Renewal can be done whenever necessary (*see below*). The ingredients of *Malka* are those of the Eucharistic bread itself, with the exception of yeast, though in vastly different amounts. Following the form of the Holy Offering, and also that of the Rite of Baptism, the Rite of Renewal begins with the usual "our Father" complete with farcings (or doxological rubrics). After a number of prayers, anthems and Psalms, this prayer is offered as an introduction to Psalm 84:

"Glory to you, O Most High, who descended and put on the body of our humanity, and fulfilled your dispensation for the sake of our salvation. On holy Passover you broke bread and gave to us, then delivered yourself up to redemptive suffering, undergoing the Cross of shame; and through the blood and water which flowed from your side you purged, washed away, and purified our defilements through your grace and mercies, O Lord of all ... While avoiding addressing the Holy Leaven as the commingled remains of the actual bread of the Passover Thursday meal (and the blood which flowed from our Lord's side) clearly the allusion is unmistakable."

The Rite continues in the usual format with a litany to "You, Lord of All" followed by the Trisagion. Next, other prayers are offered; an anthem that recalls the Gospel ministry of the Messiah, beginning with his baptism and addressing the foundation role of Simon Kepa (Peter) in the "Catholic" church.

"O Lord, you have set me firmly upon the foundation of the rock of Simon Peter's truth, and through Baptism you promised me a true adoption, but I, by my deeds, have become like the heir who squandered his possessions. In his likeness I supplicate and beseech, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and am not worthy to be called your son. O merciful Father, have mercy upon me. Which shall not be moved forever and ever. O Lord, you created your Church upon the foundation of Simon Peter's faith, and because of your promise to him the billows and tempests of paganism have not shaken her."

When Satan saw that he was not able to overcome the Catholic Church through his angels, he provoked her disciples in all regions to destroy one another with the arrows of envy. Remove from her the vainglorious who envy and despise one another, and make your peace to reign over her children. Add, to the tune "Who is wise":

¹⁷ Rev. M. J. Birnie, Chorepiscopus of Seattle, WA. *Takhsa*, an unpublished translation.

"I will extol you, O my Lord the king. O Christ the Son, remember your Church, which you purchased of old, and subdue before her the divided peoples who desire war. As you promised to Peter her founder, that the gates of Sheol and of its tyrants will never conquer her, confirm for her your word, O our Savior, for you are her King and the Guide of her children and the boast of her inhabitants."¹⁸

Then a *gehantha*, or kneeling prayer, is offered for the efficacy of the Rite: "O Lord God of Hosts, support our weakness in your mercy, and through the assistance of your grace make us worthy (by your help) to draw near and seal this material,"¹⁹ and to hallow it, that it might be for the signing and completion of the fashioning of the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ."²⁰

An alternative *gehantha* is even more specific: "You who appointed in your holy Church spiritual stewards...and the Apostles gave this symbol, delivering it to the priests and leaders of the flock of Christ, and on the strength of authority we too...through the grace of the Holy Spirit, are perfecting and renewing this holy Leaven, that it may impart holiness to the mingling of the holy and life-giving Mysteries."²¹

This is then followed by the Apostolic Canon, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, ..." with a signing over the ingredients. Next, the Church of the East version of the *Sursum corda* is proclaimed, followed by another *gehantha* in which God is supplicated to "hallow and fill this material through the mediation of these, your servants." Following this *gehantha* we find the *Sanctus*, which is found in other non-Eucharistic contexts.²²

Lastly, we come to the final *gehantha*, which draws directly from the epiclesis of the Eucharistic liturgies of the Church of the East. The text reads:

"In your name, O Lord God, compassionate Father, and in the name of your Only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Merciful One, and in the name of your living and holy Spirit, we call upon you and beseech you to send the power of your grace, with the gift of the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, to bless the Leaven and sanctify it, that your Godhead may dwell in it and your Lordship be honored in it, so that the life-giving Mysteries, which on the Throne of your Lordship are offered, may be filled with it and perfected by it for the pardon and forgiveness of sins, amen."²³

The Rite of Renewal concludes with the priest signing over the ingredients, and then taking some of the old Holy Leaven from the Altar and with it signing the new flour, saying:

"This flour is signed, hallowed, mingled, renewed, and made one with this holy and ancient Leaven of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was handed down to us from our spiritual fathers, Mar Mari, Mar Addai, and St. Thomas, the blessed Apostles who disciplined this eastern region, that it may be taken from place to place, and from one land to another, for the completion and mingling of the living Host of the life-giving Mysteries, as often as a reason of necessity calls, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."²⁴

¹⁸ The text of this prayer is from Birnie's translation of the *Takhsa* (The Liturgy of the Church of the East).

¹⁹ I.e., the ingredients to be mixed with the old Leaven.

²⁰ Birnie's translation of the *Takhsa*.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Jones, Wainwright & Yarnold, S.J., *The Study of Liturgy*. Oxford University Press, 1978, page 49.

²³ Birnie's translation of the *Takhsa*.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

A variation of this same prayer is used in the Rite of Baking the Eucharistic bread when the Holy Leaven is added to the dough.

Schema of Renewal of Holy Leaven
• “Our Father” complete with farcings
• Prayers, anthems and Psalms
• Prayer: “Glory to you, O Most High, who descended . . .”
• Litany: “To You, Lord of All”
• Psalm 84
• The Trisagion
• Prayer: “O Lord, you have set me firmly upon the foundation . . .”
• Gehantha, or kneeling prayer: “O Lord God of Hosts . . .”
• Apostolic Canon
• Signing over the ingredients
• Church of the East version of the <i>Sursum corda</i>
• Another gehantha “hallow and fill this material . . .”
• Sanctus
• Final gehantha (Epiclesis): In your name, O Lord God, compassionate Father
• The Priest signs over the ingredients, and then takes some of the old Holy
• Leaven from the Altar and with it signs the new flour

(Chart to guide the reader through the liturgical structure of the Holy Leaven renewal service)

3.2. An Evaluation of Liturgical Data

In review of the Rite of Renewal, three theological aspects of the sacramental nature of the Holy Leaven become evident:

1) First, there is the necessity of a validly ordained priest to perform the Rite. Mar Abdisho (fourteenth century), in enumerating the Sacraments, writes “The Sacraments of the Church, according to the Divine Scriptures, are seven in number: The first is the priesthood, which is the ministry of all the other Sacraments.”²⁵ The other sacraments listed are, in order, Holy Baptism, Oil of Unction, the Body and Blood of Christ, Absolution, the Holy Leaven and the Sign of the Cross. Clearly, according to Mar Abdisho and the tradition of the Church of the East after him, the Holy Leaven is granted full status as a Sacrament and cannot be made present or renewed without the priesthood.

2) The second aspect is found in the priest calling down the Holy Spirit (epiclesis), begging God by pleading “send the power of your grace, with the gift of the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, to bless the Leaven and sanctify it.” Obviously, this is a constitutive element in this prayer of consecration and further indication of this is found in the concluding clause of the prayer, “so that the life-giving Mysteries [the Body and the Blood of Christ], which on the Throne of your Lordship [the Altar] are offered, may be filled with it and perfected by it for the pardon and forgiveness of sins.” This prayer of consecration clearly reveals the canonical harmony of the Holy Leaven in the Eucharistic bread (and by signing

²⁵ Mar Abdisho of Nisibis and Armenia, *Marganitha*, tr. Mar Eshai Shimun, (Mar Narsai Press: Trichur, India) 1965, reprinted by Assyrian Church of the East Literary Committee: Chicago, 1988, p.45.

and commingling, the Eucharistic wine as well). The Eucharistic bread is “filled,” a leaving reference, with the sanctity of the Holy Leaven, which “perfects,” or completes it. We may well argue, as St Cyril of Jerusalem,²⁶ that just as the Eucharistic bread is no longer simple bread, but by the coming of the Holy Spirit it is the Body of Christ and the plain oil of anointing is no longer plain or common after the invocation of the Holy Spirit, but is the gift of Christ given for the imparting of the Godhead, so too, with the coming of the Holy Spirit this flour and salt have become the Holy Leaven so that the Godhead might dwell in it as well. Having said the above, however, the liturgical practice of including the Holy Leaven in the Eucharistic bread has no consecratory value, in so far as the consecration of the Eucharist is concerned. For if the Malka is mixed with the Eucharistic bread, this bread only becomes truly Eucharist (the Body of Christ) when it is consecrated during the Holy Qurbana.

3) The third aspect of the sacramental nature of the Holy Leaven found in this Rite is demonstrated by its relationship to the Rite of Holy Baptism. We have previously mentioned allusions to Baptism, but here we find incontrovertible evidence. The Rite of Renewal of the Holy Leaven corresponds to the Rite of Holy Baptism in that olive oil is consecrated and signed with the addition of the Sacred Oil, the Chrism, thus renewing the Sacred Oil. So too, the Eucharist is signed by the addition of the Holy Leaven.

3.3. Conclusion

In contemplation of the three aspects of the sacramental nature of the Holy Leaven given above, it is easy to draw a simple, yet profound conclusion; the use of the Holy Leaven is parallel to that of the Holy Chrism; both are consecrated in like formula, both are used prior to the Sacrament they perfect (although the Holy Chrism is used in “sealing” or confirmation as well in post-Baptism anointing) and both are maintained in the Church in special vessels set apart for their use. In the spirituality of the Church of the East, it may be said that the Holy Leaven and the Holy Chrism are the underlying spiritual natures of the Sacraments they complete; the former as the continuance of the first Eucharist in all Eucharistic celebrations of the Church, the latter the receiving of the Holy Spirit who gives the Anointing of the Anointed One. Perhaps it is for this reason that the Church of the East refers to both the Eucharist and Holy Baptism in the plural, as sacraments, for in receiving each the individual receives the underlying sacrament as well.²⁷

4. Evaluation of the Holy Leaven

The Holy Leaven is laden with many levels of historical understanding. The actual apostolicity of this sacrament is not clearly established by any indisputable historical proof. Furthermore, the voice of dissenting theologians Pseudo Gewargis, who questioned

²⁶ St Cyril of Jerusalem. *Mystagogical Catecheses*, as found in *The Faith of the Early Fathers*, Vol.I, W A Jurgens, Liturgical Press, 1970, p.360.

²⁷ Reflecting on the Liturgy of the Church of the East, Badger maintains, “Further, it is worthy of remark, that the Nestorians frequently speak of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper in the plural number, as if each was made up of several mystical significations addressed to faith. Accordingly we find more than once in the Baptismal office sentences like the following: ‘We thank Thee, O LORD, that Thou hast made us partakers of Thy sacraments;’ and in other parts of the Nestorian Ritual, where from the context it is clear that the reference is made to one individual sacrament, and not to the sacraments generally.” Badger *The Nestorians*, pp.150/1.

the practice, and dissenting Patriarch Timothy II, who did not count it as a sacrament, lead us to a more critical approach to this practice.

The sacrament needs much further study both historical and theological. The lack of a clear undisputable historical links to the last supper should not lead us to question the validity of the practice. Rather, one needs only to look at the theological truth conveyed, namely, that through the offering of the Eucharist we are uniquely present at the sacrificial mystery of Christ, anamnesis. It might be best to understand the Holy Leaven as a clear manifestation of this teaching.

The historical reality of the Holy Leaven may sound awkward to the person unacquainted with the Church of the East, but that should not immediately prejudice the observer. Rather, when one enters into the *Sitz im leben* of the communities of the Church of the East, he or she finds a real and deep appreciation of this mystery of the Holy Leaven. Such an insight expresses a profound faith and a certain practical theology of the people. The real issue is whether the Church of the East should have limited the list of her sacraments to number seven, as in the west. It has already been established in other discussions – the Catholic-Assyrian Dialogue – that in sacramental theology we must address realities and not only things or numbers. With this approach it is clear that all would agree on the reality of the theological truth expressed by the Holy Leaven.

Finally, let me close with the words of a great Syriac prophet, Mar Ephrem, who in my opinion synthesizes this teaching, so well.

See, Fire and Spirit are in the womb of her who bore you,
See, Fire and Spirit are in the river in which you were baptized.
Fire and Spirit are in our baptismal font,
In the Bread and Cup are Fire and Spirit.²⁸

Baby Varghese

COMMENT ON HOLY LEAVEN

The sacramentality ascribed to the Holy Leaven or *Malka* is the most striking characteristic of the East Syrian liturgical tradition. As Mar Bawai Soro rightly observes, its origin is unclear and is attested by relatively later sources. Abdisho of Suba is the first East Syrian writer to include it among the 'mysteries' of the Church.

Before commenting on Mar Bawai Soro's interesting paper, I would like to discuss how the West Syrians viewed the leaven, which would perhaps throw light into the question of the origin of this liturgical practice.

1. Symbolism of Leaven in the Bible and in the West Syrian Tradition

1. Jewish interest in the symbolism of leaven is connected with the Passover ceremonies. Leaven is fermented dough, and the Jews identified fermentation with putrefaction.

²⁸St. Ephrem, *A Garland of Hymns From the Early Church*, translation by Sebastian Brock, St Athanasius' Coptic Publishing Center, 1989, p.56. Taken from Sebastian Brock, *The Harp of the Spirit*, Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius, 1983, p.16.

On the preparation day of Passover, in every Jewish home, there was a ceremonial search for leaven. By mid-day every particle of leaven was cleared out¹. Here leaven was seen as a symbol of evil, and to clear out the leaven symbolized the eradication of all evil. Following this, in the New Testament, leaven is presented as symbol of evil.² This has left its traces of influence on the patristic and liturgical texts.

In a *Sedra* of the West Syrian Passion Week offices (Thursday Evening) we find:

"Today, from heaven the bread of life has been entrusted to us in mysteries. Today we should celebrate the feast of purification and atonement; not with the old leaven of evil and bitterness; but with the leaven of purity and holiness."³

Thus leaven is seen as the symbol of evil on one hand, and that of purity and holiness on the other. The basic idea seems to be that the leaven symbolizes an influence of good or evil that radically transforms man.

2. The parable of the leaven as symbol of the kingdom of heaven (Mt 13,33; Lk 13, 20-21) and Christ's discourse on the bread of life (Jn ch.6) were also decisive in shaping the symbolism of the leaven.

3. Saint Ephrem was perhaps the earliest Church father to expound the symbolism of the leaven.⁴ Commenting on Mt 13,33, the poet theologian says that the Gospel reaches out like the leaven⁵. Elsewhere he says: "May your truth which is in us be the leaven that attracts us".⁶

4. In the Syro-antiochene tradition, Severus of Antioch was one of the earliest fathers to qualify Christ as the leaven that transfigures humanity. Thus in his 63rd Cathedral homily Severus writes:

"He who created and fashioned (man) came to restore and to re-create, not another creature, but that which was fallen and underwent corruption of sin, by means of divine incarnation, by putting himself as a leaven (*hmiro*) in the whole dough of human race, by becoming a second Adam, he delivered us by his resurrection, and by making us to pass from the mortal and earthly state over to the incorruptible and heavenly life".⁷

Following this tradition, the concluding prayer of the West Syrian Anaphora of Mathai Royo ("Mathew the Shepherd") qualifies Christ as the "leaven of life".⁸

The early East Syrian tradition was not very much interested in using the imagery of leaven to describe the work of Christ, probably because of its aversion to the allegorical exegesis. Thus, even in the ninth century, when Isodad of Merv (c.850) gives an allegorical interpretation to Mt.13:33, he does not compare leaven to Christ. For Isodad, leaven symbolizes rather the influence of heresies. Thus "three measures of flour" (Mt.13,33) indicates Judaism, paganism and Samaritanism, as well as "the three sons of Noah from

¹ Cf. William Barclay, *The Lord's Supper*, SCM, London, 1978, p.19.

² Mt.16:6; Mk.8:15; Lk.12:1; 1 Cor.5:6; Gal.5:9.

³ This seems to have been inspired by an expression borrowed from Gregory Nazianz's Second Oration on Easter (Oration 45,15), NPNF VII, 1955, p.428 ("Then the removal of leaven"; that is, of the old and sour wickedness"). In the same oration (45,15) Gregory speaks of leaven as "relic of Pharisaic or ungodly teaching.

⁴ See P. Yousif, *L'Eucharistie chez Saint Ephrem de Nisibe*, OCA 224, Rome, 1984, p.84-85.

⁵ Hymn on the Faith 79:3; E. Beck (ed), *Des Heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Hymnen de Fide*, CSCO 154, SS 73, (Louvain, 1955), 242

⁶ Carmina Nisibina 49 (Refrain): E. Beck (ed), *Des Heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Carmina Nisibina (Zweiter teil)*, CSCO 240, SS 102 (Louvain, 1963) 64.

⁷ Homily 63, PO 8, p.298.

⁸ "Christ who gave Himself to be consumed and to become the leaven of life", see *Ktobo d-tekso d-annapuro*, Pampakuda, 1986, p.177.

whom the kingdom and races" have their origin.⁹ This interpretation was known to Dionysius bar Salibi (+1172) and he modified it by identifying the leaven with God the Word: "(This) leaven (*hmiro*) is the Word (of God) who placed (lit. kneaded) Himself in the three families of Noah and unleavened them with true faith."¹⁰

5. The beginning of the second millennium was a time of decadence for the Syriac tradition as a whole. Thus theological creativity became stagnant. The East and the West Syrians shifted their interest from the theological significance of the essentials to a rather naïve allegorisation of the 'accessories' of the liturgical celebration. Thus the West Syrian commentaries were increasingly interested in the ingredients of the Eucharistic bread, namely flour, water, salt, olive oil and leaven. Arbitrary interpretations were given to these elements, often disregarding the unity of the celebration and the theological consequences. Some of the ideas were freely borrowed from earlier commentaries. Occasional controversies with the Armenians included the discussion of the symbolism of leaven. A detailed discussion of the question is found in a letter of the Patriarch John X bar Susan (1064-1073) addressed to the Armenian Catholicos Gregory II (1065-1105).¹¹ The Patriarch explains the symbolism of salt, olive oil and the leaven that are used for the preparation of the Eucharistic bread. According to him, Adam was created from five "things": earth, water, fire, air and soul, and Christ also was 'composed of five things so that He may not be inferior to Adam in any way'. Then he continues:

"Therefore the Church offers the body and blood of Christ in memory of His death, as He had shown in the Upper room and revealed it to His disciples and it is meet and reasonable that we put leaven, salt, oil in the flour (along) with water so that there lacks nothing for the perfection of the body of Christ, and that we may not be deprived of the salvation in Christ".¹²

Then the patriarch insists that the unleavened bread is not enough and that the bread should be made with salt, leaven and oil and he claims apostolic authority for this practice:

"The holy doctors had given us this instruction and the apostles had taught it all the nations when they kept us away from the observation of the Jewish laws and the curses pronounced against them. Let us therefore put water, symbol of primordial waters, flour, symbol of earth, leaven, symbol of air, salt in the place of fire, and oil symbol of God's charity on account of which the first man was created".¹³

Here leaven has been compared to air, probably because of its traditional association with life ('breath of life'). However, the Patriarch John uses other symbols as well to demonstrate the significance of leaven and the other ingredients of the bread:

"Or in another way, as said Holy Mar Ephrem and Saint Cyril in the commentary on Genesis, leaven is the symbol of the faith in the Holy Trinity. As a little portion of leaven

draws the whole dough that has been kneaded, with its odour and taste and softens it, Christ through the body that He took and through which He endured passion, cross and death, draws the whole humanity to the faith in Him, His Father and the Holy Spirit, as He has said: I, when I am lifted up from earth, will draw all men to myself (Jn 12,32). It is written in the Gospel that the leaven represents Christ: which the woman, the mistress of the house etc (Mt 13,33). Therefore, leaven shall be put in the Eucharistic bread".¹⁴

Here the Patriarch follows the traditional interpretation, according to which leaven is a symbol of Christ, who, by His Incarnation, "leavened" humanity. However, he does not show any preference to leaven over the other ingredients of the bread.

6. Patriarch John's contemporary Syrian Orthodox writer Yahya ibn Garir (c.1083) defends the offering of the leavened bread. According to him, it is "more perfect". He ignores the symbolism of leaven and develops that of the oil:

"Les Francs (latins) et les Armeniens offrent du (pain) azyme, parce que le Christ, disent-ils, a offert du pain azyme.... Tandis que toutes les autres communautés chrétiens offrent du ferment, c'est-à-dire du pain fermenté, parce qu'il est plus parfait d'après eux. Les Melkites n'y mêlent pas du sel, les Jacobites et les Nestoriens y mêlent de l'huile et du sel et le fermentent.... La raison pour laquelle on mêle de l'huile dans le pain Eucharistique; c'est parce que l'huile est louée dans l'Ancien et le Nouveau Testament:... Elle (l'huile) est dans l'hostie comme l'âme dans le corps....".¹⁵

It is interesting to note that both Patriarch John X and Yahya are silent on the East Syrian attribution of special sanctity to the leaven.

7. In his treatise against the Armenians, Dionysius bar Salibi (+1171) gives a rather elaborate treatment of the symbolism of leaven, which is the best available summary of the Syrian position.¹⁶ For him, the symbolism of leaven is manifold. Quoting from the works of St. Ephrem and Gregory Nazianz, bar Salibi argues that leaven symbolizes Christ, as well as the presence of the Holy Spirit:

"Saint Ephrem said in his discourse on the Passion: 'And in the place of this heavy azym which weighs on the stomach, I will give you living bread, which is leavened with the Holy Spirit'." (ch. IV, Mingana, p.24)

"And the Theologian (=Gregory Nazianz) said in the second discourse on the Son:¹⁷ 'In order that He may also sanctify man with His hands and become leaven to all His creation, He joined to Himself all that had been condemned in it so that He should save it from condemnation'." (ch. IV, p.25).

"Saint Ephrem says also in his discourse on the sentence of the Gospel (The leaven which a woman took: Mt 13,33): The living Word of God came down, put on a body and became leaven to our creation, the taste of which had lost its saviour through sin. He compared Himself with leaven, and He explained to us the three faculties of the soul by means of simple flour. You eat everyday the leaven of His divinity in bread" (ch.4, p.26).

⁹ M.D. Gibson, *The Commentaries of Isodad of Merv, Bishop of Hadatha (c.850) in Syriac and English*, Cambridge, 1991. Malayalam translation by G.Chediath, (Kottayam 1997), here p.90.

¹⁰ B.Varghese (tr), *Dionysius bar Salibi: Commentary on the Eucharist*, Moran 'Etho 10, Kottayam, 1998, ch.6:8, p.32. Probably bar Salibi quotes from Jacob of Serugh's Homily on 'The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto Leaven', see, P.Bedjan (ed), *Homiliae Selectae Mar Jacobi Sarugensis*, (Paris-Leipzig, 1905-1910), Vol. III, 411-424.

¹¹ F. Nau (ed.&tr.), Lettre du Patriarche Jacobite Jean X (1064-1073), *Revue de l'Orient Chrétien*, VII (1912), 145-198; (on leaven III, p.180-182).

¹² Ibid. p.181. According to some Jewish sources, the four ingredients of the incense (Ex.30:34) signify the four elements, viz., 'water, earth, fire and air'. See, Nigel Groom, *Frankincense and Myrrh. A study of the Arabian Incense Trade*, London-New York 1981, p.2.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid. Elsewhere the Patriarch John says: "Le Christ fut comme le ferment qui, par son incarnation humaine, personnelle, divine s'unit à nous Il faut, donc que nous mettions du ferment dans le pain d'Eucharistie". Text quoted by P.Hindo, *Disciplina Antiochena Antica. Siri III, Textes concernant les Sacrements*, (Vatican, 1941), p.176.

¹⁵ Yahya ibn-Garir, *Al-Mursid*, ch.53. Text quoted by Hindo, p.178.

¹⁶ A.Mingana (ed. & tr.), *The Works of Dionysius bar Salibi against the Armenians*, Woodbrooke, Studies IV, (Camb. 1931), ch.IV-V. Arguments summarized in his *Commentary on the Eucharist*, ch.6:8-9 (p.31-32).

¹⁷ Here bar Salibi quotes from the fourth theological oration of Gregory. Cfr. Oration 30:21, SC.250 (Paris, 1978), p.273.

Bar Salibi does not insist on the christological symbolism of the leaven. Leaven is also a symbol of life (ch. IV, pp.21-26):

“Bread has life in it and is leavened; while the name of azym denotes death and not life.

Bread denotes life and azym signifies something in which there is no leaven of life.”

In the same treatise, bar Salibi says that leaven symbolizes air, intelligence or true faith.¹⁸ However, the bishop of Amid, like his predecessors, does not exaggerate the significance of leaven and makes a balanced treatment of the symbolism of the ingredients of the bread. Thus he comments on leaven and salt.

“Again, leaven symbolizes the soul which was united with the Word, and salt found in the Eucharistic bread symbolizes the mind that the Word took in His humanity” (ch.V, Mingana, p.27-28).

8. Jacob bar Sakko (+1241) summarizes the arguments of his predecessors. Thus leaven is the symbol of air. Following bar Salibi, he writes: “Again leaven indicates Christ, the faith and the soul.”¹⁹ For bar Sakko, olive oil is also a symbol of the soul that our Lord had united to Himself.

To conclude this part, we shall note that the main concern of the West Syrian writers was to demonstrate that the Eucharist is indeed the re-presentation of our Lord's offering on the cross and therefore the bread in its very composition symbolizes Christ. As an ingredient of the Eucharistic bread, they did not ascribe any special sanctity to leaven. It is significant that they are silent on the East Syrian practice. In fact, bar Salibi had a respectable knowledge of the East Syrian literature, and had made use of the biblical commentaries of the East Syrians like Isho'dad of Merv.

The available documents attest that, unlike the West Syrians, the East Syrian writers were not much interested in the symbolism of the ingredients of the bread. However, it is likely that they were also aware of these West Syrian discussions. Can we say that the medieval West Syrian (and perhaps also East Syrian) interest in the symbolism of the ingredients of the bread finally led to consider ‘Holy Leaven’ as a sacrament?

2. East Syrian Sources: Some General Observations

1. John bar Abgareh (+905) is perhaps the earliest East Syrian writer to mention the ‘Holy Leaven’. The liturgical commentaries of Theodore of Mopsuestia (+428), Narsai (+503) and Gabriel Qatraya bar Lipah (c.615-625) are silent on the Holy Leaven or on the symbolism of the Eucharistic bread. Unlike Theodore and Narsai, Gabriel Qatraya comments on the ceremonies, prayers and liturgical symbols²⁰. Thus he deals with the symbolism of the cross, candles and incense. The tradition of the Holy Leaven was apparently unknown to him. A passage in the Book of Governors by Thomas of Marga (c. 820) suggests that the author did not know the use of the Leaven.²¹

¹⁸ Ch. V, Mingana, p.27. Leaven as symbol of air is an idea that we have found in Patriarch John X.

¹⁹ Jacob bar Sakko, *Book of Treasures*, ch.37. Vatican Syriac 159, fol.160. French translation by HINDO, p.179-180. cfr. bar Salibi, *Commentary on the Eucharist*, ch.6:9, p.32.

²⁰ English translation (of British Library Or.3336 fol.182-211) by Placid J. Podipara, in *Homilies and Interpretation on the Holy Qurbānā*, Changanacherry 1977, pp.87-104. Latin translation by: S.Y.H. Jammo, *La structure de la messe chaldéenne*, OCA 207, (Rome, 1979), pp.29-48.

²¹ In his introduction Thomas writes: “And behold I will go into the gardens of their (=monastic fathers) victorious deeds as into a field, and, as it were, I will glean and gather up together the choice and well-filled ears of corn, and I will pile up into one sheaf the heap of their bundles, and from thence they may go into the three-

2. George, Bishop of Mosul and Arbel (+960) had dedicated an entire chapter of his Commentary on the Eucharist to comment on the ‘Preparation of bread and wine’.²²

“Why, whilst they are saying the anthem in the nave, the deacons repeat it in the apse, and why he [Ishoyabh]²³ here says, they prepare the mysteries; and why he did not indicate how the bread should be backed and the wine mingled.... But let us explain why he did not teach how they should prepare them, and whence they have come: even as he has spoken of such small matters as the washing of the lamps and the rattle, and the like”.²⁴

Apparently George did not know the practice of adding ‘Holy Leaven’ to the Eucharistic bread. There is no trace of any ‘disagreement’ with an existing practice, nor can we think that George had simply ignored it.

3. The authenticity of the canons attributed to John bar Abgareh needs to be verified along with the dates of the manuscripts used by Assemani and Joseph Kelaita to establish convincingly the existence of ‘Holy Leaven’ before the 10th century.

4. Another early source to mention the use of ‘Holy Leaven’ is an anonymous collection of questions and answers, probably compiled in the 11th century or later. In some manuscripts, the collection had been attributed to George of Arbel (+960). W.C. van Unnik argues that it was made by Ishoyabh IV in 1010 A.D. (Surprisingly Mar Bawai Soro does not refer to this document).²⁵ This document is silent on the origin or meaning of the Holy Leaven and gives the impression that the custom has been existing for long time.

5. Mar Bawai Soro gives a long quotation from a treatise on Malka attributed to John bar Zo'bee (c.1235), as translated by G.P. Badger. Badger does not give the details of the source that he has used. He simply says: “From an ancient work by Yohannan bar Zo'bee”.²⁶ Surprisingly, bar Zo'bee's Explanation of the Divine Mysteries, a detailed treatment of the Eucharistic celebration, is silent on the Holy Leaven.²⁷ bar Zo'bee comments on almost every element, including prayers, gestures, liturgical objects, nave and the sanctuary. On the Eucharistic bread he says:

“The body placed on the ‘Tronos’ represents Christ the King seated in glory at the right hand of the Father who sent Him”.²⁸

Does it explain the origin of the name Malka (=King) used for the Holy Leaven? This needs to be further investigated.

The treatise on the Holy Leaven attributed to bar Zo'bee does not say that the Leaven is a sacrament. The author's aim was to demonstrate that the two sacraments of the Church (i.e. Baptism and the Eucharist) had their origin in the Person and work of Christ. To this

shing-floors of hearing, and be ground in the mill of discernment, and be kneaded in the kneading-trough of belief, and be baked in the oven of love, and laid as a glorious offering upon the altar of the mind of the Holy of Holies”. Book I, ch.ii: E.A.W.BUDGE, *The Book of Governors: The Historia Monastica of Thomas, Bishop of Marga A.D.820*. Vol.II (Eng.tr), London, 1893, p.21-22.

²² R.H. Connolly (Eng.tr.), *A Commentary on the Mass by the Nestorian George, Bishop of Arbel*, Edited by Robert Matheus, Vadavathoor-Kottayam, 2000, ch.15, pp.71-72.

²³ Isho'yābh III (+658/59).

²⁴ *Commentary on the Mass*, p.71

²⁵ W. Cornelis van Unnik, *Nestorian Questions on the Administration of the Eucharist*, by Isho'yābh IV, Haarlem 1937. On Holy Leaven see Qns. 52,53, 57,58 and 83 (p.171-3; 176). The Questions and answers deal with the practical issues such as to be careful not to desecrate the dough and the holy Leaven.

²⁶ G.P. Badger, *The Nestorians and their Rituals*, Vol.II (London, 1853), p.153.

²⁷ Albert Khoraihe, “L'Explication de tous les mystères divins de Yohannan bar Zo'bi selon le manuscrit Borgianus Syriacus 90” *Euntes Docete* 19 (Rome 1966), 386-426 (French transl.). - Engl. transl. Thomas Mannorampampil, *John bar Zo'bi: Explanation of the Divine Mysteries*, Kottayam, 1992.

²⁸ Fol.68a; Khoraihe, p.425; Mannorampampil, p.27.

end he quotes two legends for which he claims the authority of a work allegedly composed by St. Peter. The Syro-antiochene tradition, since the time of Ignatius of Antioch, understood the Baptism of Christ in Jordan as the institution of Christian Baptism.²⁹ The patristic tradition always related Jn.19:34 with the sacraments of Eucharist and Baptism.³⁰ bar Zo'bee's stories seems to have been inspired by these traditions. bar Zo'bee's contemporary Solomon of Bosra gives several of such stories (text quoted below). However, bar Zo'bee does not provide any theological argument, nor he shows any interest in the symbolism of leaven, flour or salt.

6. Abdisho of Suba is the first known East Syrian writer to ascribe sacramentality to the Holy Leaven. His argument is polemical and can be summarized as follows. The Church of the East has preserved the Apostolic faith and canons without alteration, and that it has received the Holy Leaven from the apostles. Regarding the origin of the Holy Leaven, he does not give any detailed explanation, nor he gives a theological discussion of its sacramentality. In the introductory chapter of the section on the Sacrament, he includes Leaven in the list of the Seven Sacraments:

"On the number of the Church Sacraments: The Sacraments of the Church, according to the Divine Scriptures, are seven in number: 1. The Priesthood, which is the ministry of all the other Sacraments. 2. Holy Baptism. 3. The Oil of Unction. 4. The Oblation of the Body and Blood of Christ. 5. Absolution. 6. The Holy Leaven, namely, the king. 7. The sign of the life giving Cross".³¹

He comments on six of them (the Sign of the Cross has been omitted), in brief chapters.³² His list of Seven Sacraments has obviously been inspired by the Medieval Latin scholastic theology. Thus on the sacramentality he writes:

"Should any from without inquire what constitutes the holiness and sacramental nature of each of these Seven Sacraments, we reply that these three things sanctify them: First, a true priest, who has attained the priesthood rightly, according to the requirements of the Church. Secondly, the word and command of the Lord of Sacraments, whereby He ordained them. Thirdly, right intention and confirmed faith on the part of those who partake of them, believing that the effect of Sacraments takes place by a heavenly power."³³

Thus Abdisho was probably the first East Syrian writer to present the sacramental theology within a scholastic framework. Thus the meaning of the sacramentality has been presented in terms of validly ordained priest, matter, form and grace.

In fact there was a Dominican mission among the East Syrians during the Patriarchate of Yabhallaha III.³⁴ Rinaldo de Monte Croce, a Dominican, preached in the East Syrian churches of Baghdad in 1290. He was well received until he used the term "Mary, Mother of God" in his sermon. He was immediately expelled. However, he was permitted to celebrate the Eucharist in a church, with the condition that he will not preach. Later, he was invited by Mar Yabhallaha III for talks in the presence of other bishops and clergy. The Patriarch permitted him to preach freely in the church. He seems to have won the confidence of several of the East Syrian clergy. Thus Abdisho might have got the idea of Seven

²⁹ B. Varghese, *Les onctions baptismales dans la tradition syrienne*, CSCO 512, Subsidia 82, Louvain 1989

³⁰ S. Brock, "Mysteries hidden in the side of Christ", *Sobornost*, 7-6, (1978), pp.462-472.

³¹ *Marganita* by Mar Odisho Metropolitan, Tr. by Mar Eshai Shimun 23 (Trichur 1965) Part IV, ch.1, pp.45-47.

³² Ch.1. On the number of the Church Sacraments; ch.2. Priesthood; ch.3. Baptism; ch.4. Oil of Unction; ch.5. Oblation; ch.6. Holy Leaven; ch.7. Remission of sins and Repentance; ch.8. Matrimony and Virginity.

³³ *Marganita* IV.1, p.47.

³⁴ E. Tisserant, 'Nestorienne (L'Eglise)' DTC XI (1931), pp.222-224.

sacraments from the Dominican preacher. Imitating the Latin lists of Sacraments,³⁵ Abdisho might have composed his own list of the Sacraments, a hitherto unknown tendency in the East Syrian Church. The identification of sacramentum with rozo might be reason for including the sign of the cross and Holy Leaven in the list.

On the sign of the cross Abdisho writes: "The sign of the life-giving Cross is that by which Christians are ever kept, and by it all the other Sacraments are sealed and perfected"³⁶ In the *Marganita*, this is the only comment on this 'sacrament'. In fact this is a quotation from a widely circulated Syriac document (which we shall call 'On the sign of the Cross') under the name of Jacob of Edessa or as an anonymous work.³⁷

To conclude this part, we may note that Abdisho's list and theology of the sacraments is the result of an encounter between the Latin Church and a rather declining East Syriac theological tradition. His list and theology do not represent the authentic East Syrian tradition, whose foundations were laid down by Saint Ephrem, Theodore of Mopsuestia and Narsai. It is significant that Timothy II (1318-28) did not include the Holy Leaven and the sign of the Cross in his list of the Seven Sacraments. In spite of his insistence on the number seven, his list follows a common eastern theological tradition shared by the Byzantines and the West Syrians, whose origin can be traced back to the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy of Pseudo Dionysius the Areopagites. Significantly, Timothy's list of the Sacraments (Priesthood, Baptism, Consecration of Altars, Eucharist, Monastic consecration, Funeral, and Marriage) is nearly similar to that of the Syrian Orthodox writer Gregory bar Hebraeus (1226-1286). According to bar Hebraeus, who does not insist on the number of sacraments, Ordination, Holy Myron, Baptism, Eucharist, Funeral and the Consecration of the church are the divine mysteries of the Church. (In his work, called *Light of the Sanctuary* he deals with the first five and in *The Rays - Zalgé* - he comments on all the six).³⁸

However, as Mar Bawai Soro says, "for circumstantial reasons, Mar Abdisho's list became more available and consequently recognized and adopted" in the East Syrian Church. The circumstantial reasons include perhaps, the popular fascination with the apocryphal fables widely circulated in the East during the Middle ages and a decline in the study of the rich patristic and liturgical traditions of the Church of the East.

3. Holy Leaven and the East Syrian Tradition of Its Apostolic Origin

Since the eleventh century, several apocryphal stories regarding the origin of sacraments and liturgical practices widely circulated among the Syrians. Some of them were attested in earlier sources. In his *Book of the Bee*, Solomon of Bosra (early 13th century) gives another version of the story given by John bar Zo'bee.³⁹ According to Solomon,

³⁵ Peter Lombard's (+1160) book *Sentences* was of decisive importance for the official adoption of the number seven in the Latin Church. Sicard of Cremona (1160-1215), a German liturgist was the first to give the present Latin list of the Seven Sacraments.

³⁶ *Marganita* IV.1, p.46.

³⁷ In fact in their commentaries on the Eucharist, bar Kepha and bar Salibi quote from it. See Moses bar Kepha, *Commentary on the Eucharist*, in R.H. Connolly & H.W. Codrington, *Two Commentaries on the Jacobite Liturgy*, (London-Oxford 1913), p.70-71; bar Salibi, *Commentary* (tr. B. Varghese), ch.15:8-13, pp.88-90.

³⁸ Robert Kohlhaas, *Jakobitische Sakramententheologie im 13. Jh. Der Liturgiekommentar des Gregorios Bar-hebraeus*, Münster, 1959; W. de Vries, *Sakramententheologie bei den Syrischen Monophysiten*, OCA 125, Rome, 1940.

³⁹ E.A.W. Budge (transl.), *Solomon of Bosra. The Book of the Bee*, (Oxford, 1886), ch.47, p.102/3.

John, Son of Zebedee kept the piece of the bread given to him at the Last Supper till Christ's resurrection. When the Apostle Thomas put his finger in the wounds of Christ, "John took that piece of consecrated bread, and wiped up that blood with it. And the Easterners Mar Addai and Mari, took that piece, and with it they sanctified this unleavened bread which has been handed down to among us".

Regarding the oil of Baptism and the consecration of water, he has similar stories: "As for the oil of baptism, some say that it was part of the oil with which they anointed the kings; others say that it was part of the unguent where with they embalmed our Lord⁴⁰; and many agree with this (statement). Others again say that when John took that piece of consecrated bread of the Passover in his hand, it burst into flame and burnt in the palm of his hand, and the palm of his hand sweated, and he took that sweat and hid it for the sign of the cross of baptism".⁴¹

William of Roebryck records another legend regarding the oil that is added to the Eucharistic bread. According to it, the oil comes from that which was used by Mary Magdalene to anoint the feet of our Lord.⁴²

Similar stories were known to the West Syrians as well. Thus Jacob of Edessa says that, during the Last Supper, Christ instituted the consecration of Myron.⁴³ Dionysius bar Salibi gives a summary of such legends:

"Again we say, that on the Sunday of the Pentecost the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles; on Monday they consecrated the Myron, on Tuesday they consecrated *tablito*, that is the madbaho; on Wednesday, Jacob, brother of our lord offered the *qûrôbô* which is to be his (work and which begins); God of all and the Lord etc. When he was asked from where he has received it, he answered: As the Lord lives! I have neither added nor omitted (anything) from what I have heard from our Lord. Therefore, this is the oldest and the first *qûrôbô*."⁴⁴

John of Dara (9th century) has a similar story, according to which on Monday of Pentecost, the apostles consecrated Myron in the Upper-room that belonged to Lazarus, one of the Seventy Evangelists, and on Tuesday, 'the *qûrôbô* was given by Christ to Jacob, His brother'. John of Dara claims the authority of 'St. John (the Evangelist?)' and says that Christ Himself entrusted it to Jacob from 'mouth to mouth' then Jacob to John the Evangelist. Then the bishop of Dara adds that St. John the Evangelist baptized the Mother of God on Wednesday and offered the Anaphora of Mar Jacob on Thursday to communicate the Holy Virgin, "for he was more pure than all other holy apostles".⁴⁵

Thus biblical traditions, apocryphal stories and pure legends were intertwined to suit the minds of ordinary clergy, monks and the faithful. Their claim of apostolicity should be

⁴⁰ A similar legend circulated among the Copts, according to which St. Mark took with him some of the spices with which Our Lord's body was embalmed and a portion was added to the Holy Chrism each time of its consecration. See, O.H.E. Khs-Burmester, "A Coptic Tradition concerning the Holy Myron (Chrism)", in *Publication de l'Institut d'Etudes Orientales de la Bibliothèque Patriarcale d'Alexandrie*, No.3, (Alexandria 1954), pp.52-58.

⁴¹ Budge, p.103.

⁴² J. Dauvillier, "Ebedjésus", *Dictionnaire de Droit canonique* V (Paris, 1953), 129. - Also, William W. Rockhill, *The Journey of William of Rubruck to the Eastern Parts, 1235-55*, London 1900 (not consulted).

⁴³ S. Brock (ed.&tr.), "Jacob of Edessa's Discourse on the Myron", *Oriens Christianus* 63, 1979, pp.21/2.

⁴⁴ bar Salibi, *Commentary on the Eucharist*, 2:7, p.6-7.

⁴⁵ B. Varghese (tr), *John of Dara: Commentary on the Eucharist*, Moran 'Etho 12, Kottayam, 1999, Intr., 4, pp.14-14. cfr. J.Sader (ed.& Fr.tr), *Le 'De Oblatione' de Jean de Dara*, CSCO 308-309. SS.132-133, Louvain, 1970.

taken with great caution. They are the surviving elements of the ancient Mesopotamian civilization, which was always interested in mythopoetic language and legends rather than in the logical discourses of the Greco-roman world.

4. Renewal on the Holy Leaven on Maundy Thursday

Renewal of the Leaven on Maundy Thursday has been related to the tradition that the Apostle Saint John preserved his portion (or one of the loaves) given to him by Christ at the Last Supper. We have evidences that in Mesopotamia there was a custom of preserving a portion of the Eucharist of the Maundy Thursday for the entire year for occasional communion, and apparently ascribed a special 'sacredness' to it over the Eucharist celebrated on ordinary Sundays or feasts. We do not know, whether this custom is of monastic origin. The monks usually preserved the Eucharist in their cells for their own communion. Jacob of Edessa (+708) condemns this practice. Thus to a question that the Presbyter Addai asked, Jacob answered:

"Addai: Is it right that (something) of the elements of the Thursday of the Mysteries shall be preserved for the entire year?

Jacob: This is of the same insanity. We have already said that the elements are the same. It is not right at all that they shall be preserved".⁴⁶

A similar custom existed in some places in the West. J. Gaillard refers to a manuscript of Regensburg read by J. Mabillon. According to it, the Pope consecrated fermentum (not the Holy Leaven, but the Eucharist: see below), on important feasts of the year such as Holy Thursday, Paschal Vigil, Easter, Pentecost and Christmas. This was preserved for the days in which the Pope was away, and it was added to the Sunday Eucharist at the commixing.⁴⁷

We do not know whether the East Syrian custom of the Renewal of the Holy Leaven is a survival of a similar practice. However the East Syrian sources are silent on it.

5. Holy Leaven as a Symbol of the Unity of the Church

Mar Bawai Soro makes a very interesting suggestion that the Holy Leaven is a sign of the communion of the churches with the bishop or the Patriarch. He points out that the Ceremony of the Renewal practiced in India as a survival of this 'ancient custom'. I shall make the following observations.

1. The present East Syrian Church in India has its origin in the last quarter of the 19th century, and its current liturgical practices have been introduced by the prelates from Iraq. It is difficult to say that it is the survival of an ancient custom.

2. The East Syrian sources are silent on the meaning of the Holy Leaven as a sign of ecclesial unity. The relationship between the Patriarchate of Babylon and the churches in China, Central Asia or India is rather poorly documented.

3. In Rome, at the time of the Pope Innocent I (402-417) acolytes brought fragments of the bread consecrated by the Pope to the priests of the titular churches every Sunday. This custom, known as fermentum, seems to have existed for long time. It was probably

⁴⁶ A.Vööbus (ed.& tr), *The Synodicon in the West Syrian Tradition*, Vol.I, CSCO.367-368. SS.161-162 (Louvain, 1975), p.239.

⁴⁷ J.Gaillard, "Fermentum", *Catholicisme* IV (Paris, 1956), 1191-93; here, col.1192.

known to Irenaeus.⁴⁸ Fermentum was understood as a sign of unity between the bishop and his priests. However, in Rome, fermentum was not sent outside the city. Apparently this custom did not continue for more than a few centuries.⁴⁹

In the East, the documentary evidences are scarce regarding the use of fermentum and its theological significance⁵⁰. In fact the Council of Laodicea (c.350) forbade sending the Eucharist abroad (Canon 14). The Eastern Churches, on the contrary, saw the Antimension (tablito) consecrated by the bishop and the commemoration of the bishop's name as the liturgical means of expressing the ecclesial unity.

6. Conclusion

The attribution of sacramentality to the Holy Leaven and the rite of the Renewal of the Holy Leaven are of later origin in the East Syrian Tradition. In a sense, they are legitimate developments. The sacramentality is the very nature of the Church, the Body of Christ, and is manifested in every aspect of the Church's life. In other words, sacramentality cannot be limited to a specific number of liturgical rites. In the Medieval Latin Church, there existed much longer lists of Sacraments. Thus, in Milan, the Washing of the feet on the Maundy Thursday was regarded as a Sacrament. Hugh of Saint Victor's (+1141) list of the Sacraments includes Holy Water, Ashes, the Blessings of Palms and Candles, Consecration of sacred vessels and vestments etc. Thus the attribution of sacramentality to secondary rites or liturgical objects is a rather medieval phenomenon.

In the case of the Holy Leaven, as Mar Bawai Soro observes, the real problem seems to be limiting the number of Sacraments.

The Renewal of the Holy Leaven, though of later origin, is a genuine liturgical development. We can find similar developments in different Churches. [E.g. The West Syrian liturgy of the 'Arrival at the Harbour in the night of the Monday of the Holy Week, or the 'Service of Pardon' on the first and the last days of the Great Lent].⁵¹

The attribution of sacramentality to an ingredient of the Eucharistic bread raises questions. Will it lead to a rather materialistic approach to the Eucharist? Does it suggest that the bread is already sacred at its offering? Will it deny the principle that 'ordinary bread' ('the fruit of the earth and the labour of man') shall be offered in the Eucharist? If the East Syrians believe that the Holy Leaven is a pre-requisite for a 'valid' Eucharistic celebration, its ecumenical implication needs to be discussed. From the point of view of liturgical/sacramental theology, the real issue seems to be shifting the meaning from the 'essential' to an 'accessory'.

The content of the following two liturgical practices has been adapted from Assyrian Church of the East approved dialogue texts. For the purpose of further clarifying the position of the Assyrian Church of the East on marriage and the anointing of the sick they

⁴⁸ In. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* V.24.16, SC 41 (Paris, 1955), p.71; NPNF I (1961), p.243, n.18.

⁴⁹ See. J.A. Jungmann, "Fermentum", *Colegiere fragmenta: Festschrift Alban Dold*, ed. B. Fischer, (Beuron, 1952), 185-190. ID., *Missarum Sollemnia III* (Paris, 1954), p.237-240; G.DIX, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, London, 1982, p.285; J.P. de Jong, "Fermentum", *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, V, 889; see *supra* n.46..

⁵⁰ Metropolitan John of Pergamon (= John D. Zizioulas) discusses the tradition of *fermentum* as a sign of the unity between the bishop and the Eucharist celebrated in a parish. See, *L'Eucharistie, l'Evêque et l'Eglise durant les trois premiers siècles*, (Paris, 1994), pp.229-231.

⁵¹ On this rite: B. Varghese, "Holy Week Celebrations in the West Syrian Church" in A.G.Kollampampil (ed), *Hebdomadae Sanctae Celebratio*, (Rome, 1997), 166-186 (with Bibliography).

are being proposed to Pro Oriente's Fifth Consultation of February/March 2002 on the Sacraments in the Syriac Tradition – Part II.

Submitted by Bishop Mar Bawai Soro

I. CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

The Church of the East holds that marriage is invested with special importance and meaning expressing the order of creation and God's eternal plan for salvation culminating in Christ. The holiness character of this institution is clearly expressed in its liturgical celebrations. Marriage rite, in fact, is called in the Church of the East ceremonials the "Rite of Blessing" or "*Takhsa d'Boorakha*". The main dimensions of marriage are understood from the following perspectives:

1. Marriage in God's plan: The marriage is a covenant by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of their whole life, which of its own nature is ordered to the well-being of the spouses and to the procreation and up-bringing of children. This intimate communion of life and love has been established by the Creator and endowed by Him with its own proper laws. God himself is the author of marriage. The mutual love of a man and a woman in the marriage is an image of the absolute and infinite love with which God loves man.

2. Marriage in the Lord: The model of the Christian marriage is the covenant between Christ and his Church, as made clear by the Apostle Paul: "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up to her, that He might sanctify her" (Eph 5,25-26).

3. Marriage in the Church: The parties to a Christian marriage are a baptized man and woman, not impeded to contract marriage, and each freely expressing their consent. The priest who assists at the marriage receives their consent in the name of the Church and blesses their union with the liturgical celebration of the Church. The presence of the Church's minister (and also of the witnesses) visibly expresses the fact that marriage is an ecclesial reality.

The characteristics of the Christian marriage in the Church of the East:

1. The unity and indissolubility of marriage:

The unity of marriage, distinctly recognized by our Lord, is made clear in the equal personal dignity, which must be accorded to husband and wife in mutual and total affection. The indissolubility of marriage is clear in the Lord's saying: "So they are no longer two, but one flesh, and let no one separate what God has united" (Mt 19,6). As it is also stated in the opening prayer of the rite of marriage in the Church of the East "O' Lord, unite your servants with a unity that is indissoluble, join your worshipers with a love that is completely inseparable, and grant them by your mercy one single undivided mind, and fulfill and perfect this their deed by help from you, O' Lord of all ..."

2. The fidelity of conjugal love:

Through the blessing given in the Church, the spouses receive the grace, which enables them to represent in their conjugal love the fidelity of God to His covenant and of Christ to his Church, and to bear witness to this fidelity.

3. *Openness to fertility:*

Marriage is ordered to the procreation and upbringing of the offspring. Spouses to whom God has not granted children can nevertheless have a conjugal life full of meaning, in both human and Christian terms. Their marriage can radiate a fruitfulness of charity and of sacrifice. In our time, in a world often alien and even hostile to faith, believing families are of primary importance as centers of living, radiant faith. It is in the bosom of the family that parents are by word and example the first heralds of faith with regard to their children. They should encourage them in the vocation, which is proper to each child, fostering with special care any religious vocation.

2. *ANOINTING OF THE SICK*

The Assyrian Church of the East liturgical tradition makes provision for the anointing of the sick. This anointing has to be administered by an ordained minister, namely a bishop or a priest. The efficacy of this anointing is attributed to the healing power of Jesus Christ and the presence of the Holy Spirit. The corresponding prayers do not only indicate this, but also by the fact that the oil has to be blessed by an ordained minister and that the anointing is accompanied by the Sign of the Cross. Those elements are an expression of the sacramental character of this anointing rite.

The main provisions of anointing of the sick in the liturgical Tradition of the Church of the East:

1. *The Rite of Anointing:*

It is the priest (bishop or presbyter) who is the minister of this rite by virtue of the commission given to the Apostles by Christ as indicated in Jn 20,21-23; Mt 16,19; 18,18. Hence it is not a mere medical remedy or magical power, but symbolizes the healing presence and power of the Lord, Jesus Christ. The efficacy of the rite is attributed to Jesus' power of healing. This is indicated by the fact that the anointing with oil is accompanied by the sign of the cross and the oil is blessed by the priest or bishop. This points also to the sacramental character of this rite.

2. *The Prayers:*

In the liturgical tradition of the Church of the East there is a prayer for the sick entitled "Prayer for the Sick" as follows:

"O' Lord, giver of life by his mercy, the resurrector of everyone by his will, the chaser of every pain and illness by his compassion; heal O' Lord by your mercy this your servant, raise him from his illness by your abundant grace, so he may give you thanks for your salvation unto him, now and for ever. Amen." (Kelaita, page 194)

We also find in the liturgy of the Assyrian Church of the East this prayer for the oil of the sick "O' true physician whose word is full of all well-being, aid, care and healing;

O' Lord let your grace dwell on this oil and make it to be a helper and healer of all our illnesses, a reliever of our pain, tensions and hardship, a cure for our wounds, a cleanser of our infliction, may we find in it the cure for our illnesses ... now and for ever. Amen". (Kelaita, page 194f)

3. *The Effects:*

As the liturgical rite and the prayers indicate, the effects of this anointing are healing of the body and soul, union with the passion of Christ, sanctification of the Church and fortification of the person for the final struggles before entering the Father's House.

Fr. Louis Sako

A COMMENT ON THE PAPER OF MAR BAWAI SORO ON "HOLY LEAVEN"

I thank His Grace Mar Bawai Soro, for his efforts in explaining the usage of the "Holy Leaven - Malka", in the Church of the East. His paper is out come of a deeper study of the background and the doctrine of Malka, as it is kept and lived in his Church up to-day. However, in his paper three major points may be singled out.

1. *The Notion of Sacrament*

The notion of sacrament "raza" in the church of the East is not very clear. It seems to me that "raza" is used in a wide sense. They call sacrament, sacred signs and things, just as the West Christianity used in patristic and Middle Ages.

Saint Augustine (died 430) lists 304 sacraments. Peter Damian (died 1072) knows 12. Two of them are consecration of monks and dedication of a church. His list is nearly similar to that of the Catholicos Timothy II (died 1331). The meaning of the sacrament, in the proper sense of the term has not yet evolved. The restriction of the number to "seven" was still unknown at this point. Later theologians distinguished sacraments from other sacred rites and determined their number "seven" as a symbol of completion and totality. And the Council of Trent (1545-63) defined the proper sense of the sacrament and determined the number.

Unfortunately, the Church of the East had no chance to search a developed systematic treatment of sacramental doctrine, for political, cultural and ecclesiastic reasons. The Fathers for pastoral care left a satisfactory explanation of the liturgical practices. They regard as sacrament "raza" sacred signs that make holy elements (Qudshe) and symbolize the grace of the Lord, his presence and remind his love for us.¹ Briefly, they are an occasion for meeting.

2. *The origin of Holy "Malka"*

His Grace said in his paper "His origins (of Malka) are unclear and it has scarce documentation"(p.1).

Malka, King, according to saint Ephrem and Narsai, is referred to Christ Himself in the Eucharist. The word is one of the earliest names of the Eucharist. St Ephrem says: "The body and the blood, the mystery "raza" shed of the King. People mixed it in their body with love" (Hymns on Crucifixion 4,6). "In their hands, people put you like a remedy for life" (Hymns on Faith 85,5).² And Narsai, referring to the liturgy of the mass, says: "Like a king they are celebrating Him in their hands" (21,232), and further for the communion he states: "the celebrant gives the bread saying: this is the body of Christ the

¹ Yousif, P. L'Eucharistie chez saint Ephrem de Nisibe, (OCA 224) Rome 1984, pp. 250, 285, 307.

² I was expecting that His Grace had the opportunity to go through the serious study of de Vries, W. Sacramententheologie bei den Nestorianern, in OCA, 133, Rome 1947, and the article of the same author: la theologie sacramentaire chez les syriens orientaux, in OS, vol iv. Fasc.4, 1959. And the several studies of Jones: History of the Nestorian liturgies, sources of the restrain liturgie, the formation of the Nestorian liturgy in Anglican theological revue 46 (1964), 48 (1966).

king" (21,234). Elsewhere he says: "*The body of the king begins to dwell in the visible body*" (21,232). And "*The living Malka is to be hidden in the temple of his body in order that the body of the receiver be sanctified with the body of the Lord*" (17,439).

So Malka added to the Eucharistic Bread has given the term malka to the whole sacrament.

His Grace quoted the Catholicos Yohannan bar Abgar (d.905) as first document that mentions the usage of Malka. bar Abgar says: *Two usages of Leaven: Malka and simple Leaven*, p.2). bar Abgar does not use in his two canons mentioned by His Grace, the term "sacrament". He is simply speaking about the obligation of using "Malka" in preparing the bread for the Eucharist "Holy Qurbana". If this usage was common to the whole Church of the East, why the Catholicos Isoyab III (d. 659) who structured the rituals of the sacraments and the office prayers neglected "malka". Isn't it only an indication of a local tradition? Why also the list of Timothy II and pseudo George of Erbil (died 960) do not mention Malka (Vatican syr 150).

His Grace quoted also the article of bar Zo'bee (12th cent.) on sacraments,³ as a witness of "Malka" as Sacrament. bar Zo'bee is transmitting a tradition without using the term "sacrament". He says literally: *He (The Lord) commended his apostles to ordain in this Church that same Leaven which had taken from his body to be for the sacrament of his Body and also the water (came down from his pierced side) for the sacrament of Baptism*, p.5).

So according to this theologian, the proper sacrament is Eucharist and not the Leaven; so also the sacrament is Baptism and not the water. In the text given above He is not saying that Leaven and water are sacraments.

The Only author who regards the Holy Leaven as sacrament is Odisho of Nisibis (died 1318) in his book "*Marganitha*". He mentions Malka as one of the seven sacraments of the Church of the East "*They use the Leaven in preparing and performing the body of the Lord*" (4,6).

Consequently, the usage of the leaven is reserved to the Eucharist. Malka is a part of the very sacrament of the Eucharist and not a separate sacrament. Theologically one sacrament inside the other (Malka and Body) does not work.

As far as I know, there is no synod in the Church of the East defines the sacraments. The only authors formulated a summery on sacraments with a different list are Odisho and Timothy II. Why the Church of the East did choose the list of Odisho and not that of the Catholicos?

3. Liturgical Evaluation

His Grace founded the basis of Malka as sacrament on these three elements of the Liturgy: the rite (*ordo*), the presence of a priest and the "epiclesis".

1. The existence of a ritual does not mean necessarily a sacrament, nor the presence of a priest. There is, for instance, a ritual for the funeral and the presence of a priest is required canonically, but funeral is not a sacrament.

2. The "epiclesis" on the Leaven does not make a sacrament, also the water and oil. They are only a part (*res*) of the celebration (*form*).

The whole elements form one complex of celebration.

4. Conclusion

I think the Church of the East can easily today accept that "Malka" is not a **Separate Sacrament**, but an important element for the performance of the Eucharist. And this will not betray its glorious Tradition; neither reduces the theological significance expressed by the Holy Malka. However, the seven sacraments do not absorb the whole richness of the sacraments of the Church.

Our theology of the sacrament, today, has to take its stand on the faith of the **Church**, rather than in any historical reconstruction of different traditions and practices. This will facilitate the ecumenical movement and the mutual understanding between apostolic Churches, which look for unity, and in a special way, it helps the common formation of our People.

Discussion

Hofrichter: The steering committee has decided to change the timetable. We are now continuing with the discussion of the holy leaven and we are leaving the sign of the cross for the afternoon.

Chediath: I would like to express my appreciation to Your Grace, Mar Bawai Soro, and also to the comments for bringing out the background of the use of malka. I have a lot of things to ask, but I'll be brief. Malka refers to the continuity of succession from Jesus Christ to the present day and is the particular point of reference to the Last Supper in the Church of the East, as Mar Bawai has explained. Mar Bawai also speaks of particular *Sitz im Leben* of malka. It was necessary to have contact and communion between the Patriarch and the missionaries in far-away places. Fr. Baby Varghese says that the Church of the East may have imitated the Latin Church when the number of seven sacraments was introduced. There is plenty of room for debate and reflection here, and Mar Bawai does not close the discussion, but stresses how important it is to investigate the subject. This is very positive and ecumenical. Just one question, who actually prepares the Eucharistic bread in your Church?

Mar Bawai: It is usually the celebrant priest who prepares the Eucharistic bread.

Chediath: There was also a reference to the Indian custom of preparing the Eucharistic bread. Above the altar there was a room where the Eucharistic bread was prepared at the time of the Eucharistic celebration. Since 1599, when we came under the Latin rule this custom ceased and we followed the Latin custom. Perhaps the Syrian Orthodox may have continued the ancient practice.

Mar Bawai: I would probably find it difficult for the Malankara Orthodox Church or the Patriarchal branch of the Syrian Orthodox Church to have continued the practice of malka which is seen today in the Church of the East of which His Grace Mar Aprem is the Metropolitan. This is one of the points I would like make in response to Fr. Georges, because in becoming followers of the West Syrian tradition instead of the Church of the East tradition that practice, if in existence, would have been abandoned. The Syrian Orthodox Church simply does not hold malka as one of the sacraments, so the renewal of malka

³ A. Khorais, in "Euntes Docete", 19 Rome (1960) pp.386-426 and also D. Webb, in "Le Museum", 88 (1975) pp. 297-326.

would not have been followed in the Syrian Orthodox Church in India in any way. Concerning the Syro-Malabar Church, the Catholic continuation of the Church of the East in India, the practice would have been suppressed under the influence of the Latins. The present Church of the East in India originated in the 19th century. As far as I know, there was a return of the Syro-Malabar Church back to the Church of the East. Along with that return to what we may call the mother church, there was an emergence of a new consciousness which would be more in fidelity with the ancient practices. Therefore I am citing what is there, i.e. the practice of the Bishop renewing malka which is a peripheral practice that we in the Church of the East, in the centre, have totally lost.

Hainthaler: Of course, I share the common opinion that we have had three very beautiful papers full of interesting details. I just want to underline a few points. As for Mar Bawai's paper, I see the malka as the sign of unity of the Church and, as Fr. Chediath points out, as a material connection with the Last Supper. As I understand it, there is a parallel between the institution of the sacrament by Jesus Christ in Catholic sacramental theology and the malka in the Church of the East, in that both guarantee continuity from the time of Jesus Christ to the present. The question of number is not fitting, because if you have different things to count (here: different kinds of sacraments), you cannot speak of the number seven. Therefore I fully agree with Fr. Sako who also said that there is a problem with the meaning and the concept of sacrament and I would like to underline the words of Fr. Varghese that further investigation is needed. I am also grateful to Fr. Varghese for pointing to Ps.-Dionysius whose concept of sacrament may have been influential here. Ps.-Dionysius had six sacraments and I think these ideas were somehow present in the Syrian world and in the Byzantine world. Perhaps Ps.-Dionysius made it easier for the Byzantines to take up the number seven for the sacraments.

Harnoncourt: I am very thankful for what we have heard this morning. We should not discuss "sacramentality" but the theological sense of this rite. I found quite a similar rite in the Ethiopic Church where the bread for the holy Eucharist is baked every day before the celebration by the deacon in a tiny house near the church which is called "Bethlehem" (literally meaning "house of bread"). So there is a connection not only with the Lord's Supper but also with the Incarnation. They have a kind of leaven which is kept from one baking to the next. In the Western tradition we have some signs of identity of the Eucharist, not only identity with the Lord's Supper from generation to generation but also from church to church. The *fermentum* was used not only in Rome, but in other local liturgies too. It meant that this Eucharist is of the same identity as that of yesterday and those of generations before and also of the other churches. In case of necessity *fermentum* was a means of consecration (*consecratio per consecratum*). One could mix consecrated bread or wine with unconsecrated bread or wine and the whole was consecrated. This was also a sign of identity.

Georges: His Grace Mar Bawai Soro mentioned that there are two leavens, holy leaven or malka and simple leaven containing yeast. The Western Church does not use leaven. My question to Fr. Sako is, do you use the simple leaven which containing yeast, so that the bread which is presented for the holy Eucharist is leavened bread, or do you use unleavened bread?

Sako: The Catholics (the Chaldeans) do not use leaven, they use the Latin hosts. I think only the Syrian Orthodox do it. The Assyrians in my opinion use Malka to celebrate the Eucharist in order to emphasise the apostolicity (continuity) and the unity of the Church of

the East. The Chaldean church finds these two points in the Hierarchy (continuation) and also in the sacrament of the Initiation.

Hofrichter: I found all the papers very informative. First, I found it interesting that the holy leaven is distributed every year to all churches, so it gives legitimacy to the celebration of the Eucharist. Perhaps it is, in a more symbolic form, the same as the *celebration* in the Latin Church, i.e. the permission for a priest to celebrate the Eucharist. Priests who do not have this legitimacy or are outside the hierarchy are not allowed to celebrate mass. So every priest has to show his *celebration*. In the East you do not have to show a paper, but the symbol is much more obvious that this celebration is a legitimate one. Second, maybe there is some concept (which has no a dogmatic foundation) that the celebrations of the Eucharist should be linked together. Even today in the Latin Church, the hosts will be preserved for the next celebration and the chalice is always mixed. Often lay-people receive holy communion from the tabernacle and pastors seems very keen on this. It is important for them to link one celebration with the other.

Mar Aprem: I think all the papers are very informative. Let me just comment on a point of history. Fr. Varghese says on p. 11 of his paper: "The present East Syrian Church in India has its origin in the last quarter of the 19th century, and its current liturgical practices have been introduced by the prelates from Iraq. It is difficult to say that it is the survival of an ancient custom". This is not true historically. In my view, the Trichur Church is the faithful remnant of pre-Portuguese Syrian Christianity in India. It is debatable that some customs were introduced by prelates from the Iraq in the 19th century. But there were Bishops from Iraq in India before 1553, as the Portuguese saw, and all of them came from the undivided Church of the East, they were not Catholic Chaldeans. I am not raising a controversial issue, since we share the same tradition, I am just bringing things into a historical perspective because there should be no confusion. The customs of our Church in India are earlier customs, there were, however, breaks in the tradition. A lot of dramatic things happened, nonetheless we have the pre-Diamper traditions and customs. So your statement is very objectionable from our side and in fact misleading.

Mar Cyril: I find I should say a word in response to Mar Aprem's comments. I think in emphasising the East Syrian origin of his Church he is excluding the contribution of the West Syrian Church of Antioch. There is historical evidence as early as the 4th century that our fathers went to India as missionaries; but this is not the issue here. It may be helpful to tell you about a practice in our church which is similar to the malka. Once a year, on March 25th, the day of the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary, unmarried girls from the local parish gather in the church after the evening prayer of the previous day and, while singing hymns and psalms, they prepare the dough for the Eucharistic bread which the priest then blesses. After the service on the morning of Annunciation day, the people take some of the dough to bake their own bread. More significantly, we also have a tradition that we use the yeast or leaven from the previous preparation of the Eucharistic bread and we believe that this goes back to the earliest stages of Christianity, although we have not looked into the origins of this custom. When the priest or deacon prepares the bread for the Eucharist (which must be baked fresh on the day of the celebration), he adds the old leaven from the previous preparation and preserves a little for the next celebration. I have a question to Mar Bawai on the malka. Am I right in understanding that the malka is essential for making the Eucharist a valid one? Can you celebrate the Eucharist in necessity without the malka?

Mar Bawai: This is an important question. There are no documented or known cases that we have celebrated the Eucharist using Eucharistic bread that did not contain the malka. However, in a hypothetical case I would venture to say that the validity of the Eucharistic celebration will not be impeded or affected if the malka is not used. We discussed this point in our Catholic-Assyrian dialogue, because your question has a significant effect on our understanding of the Eucharist. When we say that the malka has no consecratory value, we mean that even if the malka is not used, the Eucharist is valid. But this is my own personal theologising and we do not have a precedence.

Konat: The first point which I wanted to make has already been mentioned by His Grace Mar Cyril. The concept of malka is present in the West Syrian tradition, even though in a different manner. The leaven which you mentioned as simple leaven is not so simple, because there is the concept of continuity from one Eucharist to the other. What is unique to the East Syrian tradition is that you consider it a sacrament, but the concept and the practice are also there in the West Syrian tradition. My second point is that I would like to know your actual practice. Do you use two types of leaven even today or only the malka?

Mar Bawai: Of course, malka does not have any leavening agent in it, it has a theological significance, connecting the present celebration with the Last Supper. The other leaven, if I may call it simple just to distinguish it from the holy leaven, has the yeasting agent, as Fr. Koshaba explained. Sometimes – but I am not sure whether all Church of the East priests do this – we do not use a piece preserved from the previous Eucharistic dough to leaven the present one, but we simply use packaged yeast brought from the market. This is really a deprivation of our tradition because the simple leaven is a element of connecting the Eucharist too, as you have said.

Yousif: I very much appreciate the three communications. With regard to Mar Bawai's paper, there is a clear idea of new bread for the Eucharistic celebration in St. Ephrem. Christ does not become old, so every day there should be new bread for the Eucharist. Fr. Varghese made a very good historical contribution. On a more general note, one sometimes may seem very naive when we speak about apostolicity. Timothy I says that the Church can do new things which are inspired by the Holy Spirit and are for the benefit of the faithful. There are two points here, inspiration by the Holy Spirit and fidelity to the past. So 'apostolic' means that everything the Church does is meant to be faithful to the tradition, that is, to something given. There is no invention but there is development. Besides, when we discuss the question of sacramentality, the idea of analogy will be very important, for theological terms are applied in different degrees. It will be very useful to bear the concept of analogy in mind.

Mar Powathil: I have a suggestion. Although the historical and theological aspects are very interesting and worth being studied further, I think we should concentrate our attention on the ecumenical implications of the position the East Syrian Church has taken on the sacramental nature of the holy leaven. What should we do to reach a common understanding on the holy leaven? This should be our goal in this discussion.

Brock: We also need to focus on the function. It seems to me that the various legends on the origins of the malka in fact express something important going back to the earliest Syriac traditions. It combines the moment of the Last Supper with the pierced side of Christ's in John 19:34, a key verse in all Syriac traditions. The parallel Mar Bawai made with the baptismal oil is very important, because that brought at once to my mind the parallelism between the East Syriac tradition on the malka and the West Syriac emphasis on the my-

ron. It is simply that in the West Syriac tradition the emphasis is put on baptism, in the East Syriac tradition on the Eucharist. The malka and the myron in fact have a dual role, a material one which alone would not perhaps be important in a modern understanding of sacraments, and a dynamic one as an element of unity. This sign of unity is both diachronic, i.e. linking back in time to the New Testament, and synchronic (and this is the individual characteristic both of the myron and of the malka), i.e. linking the individual celebration with the Bishop or the Patriarch. So it is a different dimension of sacramentality.

Chediath: Fr. Sako, when did the Chaldean Catholic Church abandon the use of malka?

Sako: I have no idea. It could be little by little after their union with Rome in 1553 and under the influence of the Latin missionaries in Mesopotamia.

Yousif: Possibly after the middle of the 19th century, because we know from the descriptions of Badger (*The Nestorians and their Rituals* 1852) that the Chaldeans still used it in his time.

Chediath: Mar Bawai, how do you translate malka with "holy leaven"?

Mar Bawai: Malka is the nickname of the holy leaven, meant in a good sense, not jokingly. The Syriac term is *khmira kadisha*, also known as malka. Malka, of course, means the king, referring to Jesus Christ, as mentioned in Fr. Sako's paper.

Hofrichter: I want to continue with what Prof. Brock has said and draw your attention once more to the function of malka and myron. It gives the priest the legitimacy for performing the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist. In the West we have developed a differentiation between validity and legitimacy and validity, maybe the Church of the East can make use of this Western differentiation. As you say, Mar Bawai, the Eucharist would also be valid without the malka, but it is illegitimate. On this line, I would say that the malka as well as the myron belongs more to the sacrament of order than to the sacrament of the Eucharist. In the West the ordination itself does not give the right really to perform the sacraments, you need a permission for the sacraments of penance and the Eucharist. It is a matter of canon law, of being allowed to perform the sacraments rather than an element of baptism or the Eucharist itself. Would you agree?

Vellanickal: In the quotation from Yohannan bar Zo'bee on p. 6 of Mar Bawai's paper, he speaks about two leavens, one for baptism and one for the body and blood of Christ. So it seems that there is an attempt to relate the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist to the events of the baptism and the resurrection of Christ. I think the main purpose of this concept of leaven is not the validity of the sacraments, but the continuity or apostolicity of our faith, our sacraments, our ministry, which are really coming from the Lord to the Apostles. Leaven seems to be a sign, a symbol for this continuity of what we have inherited from Christ. If we put things in that perspective, our discussion will be more positive and perhaps we could integrate the malka into our understanding of the sacramental life in our Churches.

Vazheeparampil: We should be very attentive to the nuances Abdisho uses when he discusses the sacraments. When Mar Abdisho in his *Marganitha* lists the names of the sacraments, he presents the holy baptism, the oil of unction, the oblation of the body and blood of Christ and the holy leaven as four different sacraments. Then he says that the oil of unction is used in baptism and that the holy leaven is used in the spiritual food of the body of Christ. This could mean that a sacrament is used to consecrate another sacrament. Mar Abdisho, therefore, uses the term "sacrament" with two different connotations here. My question to Mar Bawai is this: Does the holy leaven or malka have a consecratory va-

lue or a leavening value, or is it simply a theological symbolism for the ongoing celebration of the holy Qurbana?

Kadavil: In the Byzantine tradition, there is an illustrative symbolism of a pedagogical nature, which comes up especially after the iconoclast controversy and is a way of narrating salvation history and educating the people. It seems to me that holy leaven is such an instance of illustrative symbolism.

Mar Bawai: I'll choose the most important question that was echoed by a number of participants concerning the role of malka and the validity of the Eucharist. Before reading the paper I singled out three issues: first the fact that malka, not just the simple leaven is used in the Church of the East; then I drew your attention to a more developed stage of theological reflection in the Church of the East, when that usage was categorised as a sacrament equal to the other six sacraments in the Church. I agree with you, Sister, it is true that most of our authors, such as Abdisho of Suba, are not systematic in their reflection. They dump on us a lot of material and leave us with the difficult task of sorting out what they mean when we face a new reality which is more ecclesial, canonical, social and psychological. I find myself today in a Church tradition that obliges me to defend the number seven. That is the real problem. If my Patriarch and Bishops told me that I would no longer be obliged to defend the number seven, I would agree with you completely in categorising malka as a sub-sacrament. But canonically I am not supposed to do so, otherwise I would cause a scandal in my Church, the other group of the Church of the East would look at me with suspicion, my Patriarch would send me to Pro Oriente again. I cannot do it.

Varghese: Thank you very much for your comments, especially Fr. Yousif. I just want to point out that there are common elements in our traditions regarding certain practices and claims of apostolic origin to those rites. I never wanted to challenge the apostolic claim which is a way of affirming the ancient character of certain practices. In Mesopotamia people wanted to have things in the form of stories and in poetic language, and this was a way of theologising certain convictions. This is entirely different from the Cartesian mind in which we were trained. Moreover, I agree with Fr. Konat that malka is not a unique practice of the East Syrian Church. There are similar practices in other traditions, for example the West Syrian use of the holy leaven. I think there are several common elements on which we can agree.

Sako: I think the discussion on the subject is not ended. So we have to back to the sources for further theological and historical study.

Hofrichter: There are two things we should clarify regarding the position of the Church of the East. As I understand it, you say, first, that the Eucharist in other Churches is valid without malka and, second, that the Eucharist in the Church of the East is not valid without malka.

Fifth working session: Thursday, 28th February 2002

Chairman: *Mar Joseph Powathil*

Mar Yacub Daniel

SIGN OF THE CROSS

1. The Understanding

The church of the East, among the rest of other Christian Churches, remains unique in its understanding of the Sign of the Cross. It is the only church that considers the sign of the cross as one of its seven Holy Sacraments. While all other churches consider the sign of the Cross as supplementary to their Sacraments, the Church of the East deems it one of its seven Sacraments, and supplementary to all other Sacraments.

1.1. When was the Sign of the Cross First Used

Christians used the sign of the Cross in application of the last words of Lord Jesus to His disciples while still on Earth when He addressed them before His Ascension to Heaven saying:

"Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost." (Mathew 28-19)

On His way up to Heaven He stretched His hands blessing His disciples. Tradition reports that

"He stretched His hands horizontally in order to form with His body, the shape of the Cross. By stretching His Hands, He ascertained to them that through the wood of the Cross, which was a symbol of insult and shame He acquired Exultation, Resurrection and Ascension to Heaven. He aimed at assuring them that by means of this Sign they would overcome all obstacles and would do miracles."¹

The Holy Apostles started to make the sign of Cross after the descent of the Holy Ghost upon them in the Upper Room. It was through making the sign of the Cross that the Holy Apostles made their first miracle in the name of Jesus when they made the paralytic arise. This sign (the Cross) accompanied the apostles throughout their Evangelical Ministry. They made the sign of the Cross while celebrating the Sacrament of Baptism. This sign was made over the baptized after which he would be immersed in water thrice in the name of the Trinity (The Father, The Son and The Holy Spirit²). The sign of the Cross was

¹ Ibrahim Al-Katri, Commentary On Church Rites, copied by deacon Hermiz, Priest Thomas, from the village of upper Achita-Tiary in the Hakkari Mountains, Turkey 1919

² In the Didache, "Having that in mind, they baptized (in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit with current water). If the water is not current, you may baptize with some other water. If you cannot baptize with cold water let it be hot water. If neither of them is available you may pour water over the head thrice in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. - Aphrahat, the Sage also refers to making the sign of the Cross over the baptized, for he says, "Baptism is a feature of a unique life. It is the gift of the beloved soul. It is an early everlasting life with God, whose glorified and sublime attributes are recited over the baptized." Dr. Boulos Faghali, Aphrahat, The Persian Sage, Dar Al-Mashriq, Beirut, 1986. -Theodore of Mopsuestia em-

made while bestowing spiritual gifts,³ for the Apostles used to lay their hands on the disciples to endow them with a spiritual rank in order to serve the faithful. They also made the sign of the Cross during the celebration of the Eucharist,⁴ for casting out Devils and evil spirits and for healing of the sick.⁵ Christians afterwards started to make the sign of the Cross as an indication of their belonging to Jesus and as an expression of their Faith.⁶ The sign of the Cross symbolizes the most elevated Christian Doctrines, namely the faith in one God, the Trinity and the two Sacraments of Incarnation and Redemption. When we make the sign of the Cross we do ascertain our absolute profession that when God, the Father wished to save Humanity, He sent His son to the world; He was incarnated and became man. At the end of His mission He was crucified on the wood of the Cross and was the redeeming sacrifice of God, the Father.

Along with making the sign of the Cross, we recite the names of the Holy Trinity.

1.2. How to Make the Sign of the Cross

In the Introduction to the Prayer Book in the Church of the East, there is a piece of information that elucidates the way the sign of the Cross should be made,⁷ which is as follows: One puts one's hand to one's mouth and says (Glory), then one raises it to one's forehead and says (be to the Father) and brings it down and says (to the Son) and holds it up to one's right shoulder and says (to the Spirit) and then moves it to the left shoulder and says (the Holy).

At the end of (the prayer and Eucharist) the ecclesiastic stands on the southern side, raises his (right) hand up towards the west and then moves it to the East and stretches it towards the South, then to the North concluding, thus with the (Holy). This is due to the fact that the ecclesiastic is directed towards the west, and the congregation is to the East.⁸

When St. Thomas the apostle, as stated in his biography, healed a woman from an evil spirit, she asked him to give her the sign of the lord, so He came to a river nearby and baptized her in the name of the father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. He prayed afterwards over the bread and made the sign of the Cross and started distributing the bread to the ba-

phasizes as well in his commentary on the Sacrament of Baptism that the priest anoints the baptized on his or her forehead in the name of the Trinity, Dr. Boulos Faghali, Theodore, the Bishop of Mopsuestia and the Exegete of Divine Books, Dar Al- Mashriq, Beirut 1993. - Referred to in several places in the rite of baptism in the church of the East.

³ Acts 6,6 "whom they set before the apostle and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them." See also the rite of consecrations in the church of the East.

⁴ Acts 6,6 "whom they set before the apostle and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them." See also the rite of consecrations in the church of the East.

⁵ Biography of Saint Thomas, the Apostle, chapter 7; also referred to in the Biography of Mar Mari, the Apostle when he healed the king of Arbil, who was afflicted with Leprosy "He took oil and water, made the sign of the cross over them and gave them to the king who drank some and anointed himself and was healed at once and his skin turned like that of a child.

⁶ It is mentioned in the Biography of St. Eugene that he used to make the sign of the cross on himself: *Biography of Martyrs and Saints*, p.466, printed in Paris, 1895. In his book, *Mukhtasar Alkawaneen Al-Sanhadusia*, Mar Abdisho Al-Subawi describes in article 5, chp.5, the way those incapable of learning, should pray. He concludes with "afterwards, they make the sign of the cross thrice, the first they make on their faces, the second on their heart and the third on their whole body. Every time they make the sign of the cross, they shall have to say" (in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, save us o Lord).

⁷ Missal, Matins and Vespers, printed in India, p. 15.

⁸ This implies that the priest makes the sign on the congregation and not on himself.

ptized. Making the sign of the cross was also referred to in the context of the Eucharist, of the Liturgy of Mar Addai and Mari; which is the most ancient Christian Eucharistic document according to Theologian Bouille. See Father Dr. Jack Isaac, *Chaldean Liturgy, Analytical and liturgical Study*, printed in Baghdad, 1982.

When the ecclesiastic makes the sign of the Cross during the celebration of Baptism or the Sacrament of Penitence, he does that in an upward movement,⁹ then moves his hand from right to left. When the ecclesiastic makes the sign of the Cross in the Eucharist, He moves his hand from the East to the West and from the North to the South. On the grave he makes the sign of the Cross by moving his hand downward and from left to right. The interpretation of the mode of making the sign of the cross is as follows. Glory be to God, who is in Heaven and to the Son, who descended and dwelt with us, granted the spirit to Priesthood, which is to the right and which, in turn, grants holiness to the Kingdom of Heaven in the North.¹⁰

1.3. Conditions for Making the Sign of the Cross

John Chrysostomos states "It's not enough to make the sign of the Cross only with the fingers, for this act shall have to be preceded by preparedness of the heart and by true faith." In his treatise, written to the students and clergy in the school of Mar Gabriel and Mar Abraham, the Archbishop of Elam states "We have to kneel down in adoration whenever the Trinity or anyone of the Trinity (the Father, the Son or the Holy Spirit) or the Holy Cross is mentioned; and whenever anything is said in the name of the Father, the Compassionate and the Merciful."¹¹ Once you have made the sign of the Cross on your face as stated above, none of the evil spirits would dare approach you as the sign of the Cross is the weapon with which Jesus destroyed the devils' troops. Never, therefore, be ashamed of the greatness of His Grace, so that Jesus would never let you down on His Second Coming in Glory.

1.4. What Is the Sign of the Cross

The wood on which the body of the Lord was crucified has various connotations and meanings. It is, however, through the interpretation of these connotations and meanings that we understand the sign of the Cross. Some of those Connotations are:

The Cross has been the symbol of Divine love of humanity ever since the Creation. Many are the passages in the Holy Book that touch upon the mystery of the Cross. It is referred to in various prophecies and symbols. Scholar Georgis Warda summed them up in a Hymn that reads:

"It's through the cross that the world and creatures were created and through the Cross that the Creator saved His Creation from the very beginning."

⁹ This means that God elevates him upward.

¹⁰ The southern side is for priesthood and the Northern side is for the Kingdom of Heaven, (which means that the ecclesiastic stands on the southern side and the king on the Northern one), the way the pillars of Solomon are set, namely Jachin for priesthood and Boaz for the Kingdom (Kings7,21). As there was no Christian king in the Church of the East, the High priest, therefore, stands on the Northern side, which is the front side; and the young priest stands on the Southern side.

¹¹ Father Ibrahim Shokwana, *Sokali*, p.141 in which he explains the rites and offices in the Church of the East throughout the year. Manuscript written in 1898.

Through the Cross everything came into being: the four elements and the four corners of the world. The sign of the Cross was referred to in Genesis as a river that went out of Eden to water the garden and from thence it was parted and became into four heads.¹² It was also referred to as the tree of life grown in the midst of Heaven,¹³ which was a symbol of the son, who was prepared through His crucifixion to save the perishing race.

The sign of the Cross blessed Noah's Ark,¹⁴ which saved him from the flood.

It was the sign of the Saviour, who saved all Creation with His Cross. Abraham saw this mystery in his revelation when he beheld behind him a ram caught in a thicket,¹⁵ which he took and offered as an offering instead of his son.

Jacob, while sick on his deathbed and Joseph, who brought his sons unto Jacob to bless them, crossed his hands and blessed them¹⁶. The rod of Moses, the Prophet, who stretched his hand out over the sea and divided it saving thus the Hebrew people and made the Egyptians perish.¹⁷ This rod, with which he smote the rock, out of which fresh water¹⁸ came, was a symbol of the Cross, with which our race shall be turned righteous.

When Amalek came and fought against Israel, Moses held up his hand in the shape of the Cross and he prevailed.¹⁹

- The fiery serpent, which Moses set up on his rod,²⁰ was a symbol of the son, who would heal our afflicted race of all sorts of wounds.

- Joshua's spear, which he stretched with his hand towards the city of Ai,²¹ was a symbol of the mystery of Christ by whose Cross Hell was destroyed; and Elisha, who threw the axe head into the water and the iron did swim,²² was also a symbol of Jesus' Cross that raised our mortal race. ... In addition to other signs and prophecies which were fulfilled and accomplished with the Crucifixion of Christ, and God's love for Humanity was revealed according to John the Evangelist, who states:

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life". (3,16).

The Cross, therefore, is the banner behind which the children of God shall march throughout the ages. It is a sign of Salvation and a sign of the Chosen.

2. The Cross, the Slaver of Enmity

It's the Cross that abolished enmity between God and Humanity, made peace and brought people and Angels together. "For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell; and having made peace through the blood of His Cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in Heaven" (1 Col 19-20). St. Paul also says:

¹² Genesis 2,10-13

¹³ Ibid. 2,9

¹⁴ Ibid. 6,14

¹⁵ Ibid. 22: 13

¹⁶ Ibid. 48,13-15

¹⁷ Exodus 14:15-16

¹⁸ Ibid. 17

¹⁹ Ibid. 17,11

²⁰ Numbers 21,8-9

²¹ The Book Of Joshua, ch.8.

²² 2 Kings, ch.6

"But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in His flesh the enmity. Even the law of Commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the Cross, having slain the enmity thereby" (Eph 2,16).

Several hymns in the Church of the East express the same thing such as:

"Your living Cross, O Saviour, has saved creatures, reconciled the two worlds and filled people and Angels with Joy and the latent power in it was revealed, for it is Hope that forms a strong fence and refuge for the church and its children for ever."²³

O Jesus, Our Saviour, It's through your Cross that we have been liberated from sin.

- It's the Cross that raised us after our Fall

- It's the Cross that raised us from tombs and saved us from death.

- It's the Cross that made us out of dust and raised us from the grave.

- It's the Cross that became our Savior.

- It's the Cross that provided us with the promise of renewal.

- It's the Cross, that seated us in Heaven.

- It's the Cross, that would come on the day of Last Judgment and seat us on the Lord's Right hand."²⁴

3. The Cross, a Strong Fence and an Invincible Weapon

It is quite evident, through reading these hymns, that the Cross forms a fence and is an invincible weapon for the Faithful.

The Holy Cross is a weapon made of the spirit, by means of which churches prevail over the oppressor and his troops.

Heaven rejoiced on the day of the discovery of the Cross and the sinful race became triumphant.²⁵

May your Cross, Oh Lord, be a fence for the Communities that glorified you, believed in you and are waiting for your second Coming, so that that they may receive you with palms when you come. May you O Lord, by your power that prevails over all, keep your servants away from stumbling blocks. May you complete and accomplish your will by us, so that we may be obedient to you. O Good Lord Have Mercy on us.²⁶

The Cross is light, life and truth.

It is the light that illuminates the Four Corners of the created world. It's the source of our riches and the weapon that upheld our nature.

May the Lord, through His Cross, cast out the devils that attempt to make the faithful perish.

May the Lord raise the corners of your beloved holy believing church.²⁷

Through your Cross, O Lord, our race has become liberated and through it we have gained life and eradicated death.

²³ Khothra

²⁴ Ibid., p.82

²⁵ Ibid., Vol. III: excerpt from Midrash on the third Sunday of Mar Moses' Week, p.635

²⁶ Ibid., p.62

²⁷ Ibid., p.97

May you, through this Cross of yours, keep those who worship you away from the intrigues of Satan, which is our adversary.

May your Cross be the fence that protects our whole race and in the name of your Cross we are thankful for Your Grace.²⁸

May Your Cross, O Lord, be the Ark for our weakness in this sea of the world which is full of temptations, so that Satan would see that, while delineating him, we are strong, anointed and armored and, therefore, Satan would be expelled. May we be granted strength to mock his power; the way (king) Constantine did.²⁹

4. *The Cross, the Power of God*

The Apostle Paul states in his first epistle to the Corinthians:

"For the preaching of the Cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are served it is the power of God." (1,18).

Mar Narsai states:

"The wood of the Cross is an ordinary piece of wood, yet it is revered because of Christ; for the Cross of Jesus is the seal of our faith. Through the Cross, He has completed His economy for our salvation. We revere the sign of the Cross, on which Jesus is represented and before which we kneel down in adoration, in the same way the subjects of the kingdom recognize the representation of the king which is displayed on the Dinar. All nations worship the one God who rescued them from error by the Crucified Christ."³⁰

Mar Abdisho Al-Subawi states:

"When we kneel down before the Humanity of Jesus, we do in fact worship the divinity within Christ. This applies to the Cross as well. We prostrate before Our Lord, the Saviour because the Cross represents the name of Jesus" (who is God the Father and I am one).

He also states:

"We kneel down before the Cross with reverence. We don't, however, worship the solid material of the Cross, but the one presented on it, namely God who gave His Son to be our cross and who gave us, through His Crucifixion renewal, Salvation and an everlasting life in the Kingdom of God."

John Chrysostomos states:

"Let there be no fear among us of devils and their intrigues as long as we are armored with the Cross. Once you have made the sign of the Cross on your face, none of the evil spirits would dare approach you, The very moment they behold that saber with which they were conquered".

Theodore of Kashkar³¹ states:

"The Cross represents the name of Crucified Jesus and due to the Union of Humanity and God, The Logos, it has become a focus of veneration."

Mar Baselios³² states:

²⁸ Ibid., p.131

²⁹ Ibid., p.25

³⁰ vol. of Ms of poems of Mar Narsai, (Lisan Al-Mashriq) written in Tell Keef, north of Nineva, 1902, by Boutros , son of priest Yousef, son of John, son of deacon Stephanos. Poem on the discovery of the wood of the cross .His Holiness Mar Dinkha IV had it reprinted in America in 1970.

³¹ See above, footnote 11

³² Questions of Mar Baselios, addressed to his brother Gregorios in the Appendix of Ibrahim Al-Katri. *Commentary On Church Rites*, copy of Ms. P.725, 732. See footnote 1.

"When we look at the Cross we behold Jesus in Spirit and recall His Passions and His Death."

Such are the Hymns sung in the Church of the East:

We are never ashamed , Oh Lord Jesus, of Your Cross, because your great power is hidden in it.

Although the wicked and Jews mock Your preaching, yet they can never annul truth. They both cry out against your victory, for the Jews dispersed and the teachings of the heretics perished. Behold, they both witness that your power is great, O Lord.³³

Great and glorious is the leader that Jesus appointed for His Church in order to lead His Faithful, who will be victorious in their battles, through the power of the Cross. On the Day of its discovery , they shall sing Hymns of praise and shall celebrate the revelation of His Glory in the Holy Sanctuary, where they remain waiting for professing His Glory openly.³⁴

5. *The Cross, A Symbol of Resurrection and A Sign of the Kingdom of Heaven*

Lord Jesus explains to his disciples His Second Coming saying

"The sun shall be darkened and the moon shall not give her light and the stars shall fall from Heaven and the powers of the Heaven shall be shaken and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in Heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great Glory." (Mathew 24:29-30).

According to John Chrysostomos, the sign of the Son of man, therefore, is the Cross.³⁵ This is what a hymn in the church of the East emphasizes. It reads:

The Cross of our Lord has become a spring for us that overflows with all sorts of support.

Through the Cross the wicked shall be overcome and the devil shall fall and the power of evil shall be annulled.

Sin shall be eradicated and deviation shall be obliterated; the arrogance of death with which our race has been afflicted shall be no more.

Through the Cross we shall welcome spiritual birth, obtain an everlasting life and embrace the adoption of His glory.

We shall inherit, through His love, the Heavenly Kingdom, which is the Kingdom of Jesus, who achieved victory through His Cross and reconciled Heaven with Earth.

To Him, to His Father and to the Holy Spirit People and Angels sing in Praise.³⁶

Mar Narsai states in one of his (memres) poems published in (Lisan Al-Mashriq):

"Everyone who makes the sign of the Cross on his forehead shall enter the everlasting kingdom."³⁷

³³ First hymn in Khothra, sung on the Day of the cross, p.689

³⁴ Ibid., p.698

³⁵ Elias Kuweiter of the Salvation Order, St John Chrysostomos, The Great Orator of the Church/ Sufferings and passions of Jesus Christ.

³⁶ Khothra, vol.3 Prayer on the Day of the cross, p.722.

³⁷ Poems of Mar Narsai, see footnote 26.

6. The Cross, An Amazing Miraculous Sign

When the Jews required a sign from Jesus, He answered:

"An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it but the sign of the Prophet Jonah." (Mt 12,29).

Paul the Apostle also states:

"For the Jews require a sign and the Greeks seek after wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block and unto the Greeks foolishness." (1 Cor 22/3)

The Cross was formerly a stigma and a mark of torture, but after the Crucifixion of Jesus on the Cross it turned into an object of Honor and Glory. This is what our Lord Jesus stressed when He identified the Cross as a mark of Glory.

"And now O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." (Jn 17,5)

It was on the Cross that the real sacrifice was offered and it was through this sign that we obtained forgiveness and reconciliation.

7. The Cross, the Epithet of the Church and the Focus of Pride for the Faithful

Paul the Apostle states:

"But God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." (Gal 6,14)

Through this sign of the Cross, the creation has been cleansed of the defilement of Paganism and the smell of corruption has been removed. The Cross is what united the Nations of the Earth in one sole body, the Church. Mar Narsai states in (Lisan Al-Mashriq):

"Have faith in His name (Jesus) and Kneel down in adoration before His sign and never have suspicions. Make the sign of the Cross on your bodies. Let everything you do and everywhere you go about be accomplished in His name. Never taste anything without the Cross, for it protects you against all harm or danger whether exposed or concealed."³⁸

The following is one of the hymns sung in the church of the East:

With the Cross of Jesus we have overcome death and thus obtained great reputation.

In His resurrection and in His grief He eradicated the inevitable Judgement. We proclaim with Glory that, God; the Word is the only one, who put on our mortal body. Have mercy on your servants who professed faith in your Cross, O Lord.³⁹

We worship the symbol of your Crucifix O Lord, Son of the King, who came for our salvation.

With Your Cross-you prevailed over the unjust Jews.

With Your Cross you subdued the arrogant head of paganism.

With Your Cross you established the four corners of all churches and you defeated death and brought the departed of Antiquity back to life.

With Your Cross You Kept Humanity away from sin and absolved all peoples. With Your Cross all creatures that had stinking odor and those who were humiliated, because of their subjugation to the powers of the devils, became filled with fragrance.

Now that we are liberated from sin, we do worship in glory your greatness O Lord of all, Glory be to you.⁴⁰

Church prevails over death and overcomes the devil through the power of the Cross.

³⁸ See footnote 26, p.5.

³⁹ Khothra, vol.3/Fourth Sunday Prayer after the discovery of the cross, p.493

⁴⁰ ibid.

Church rejoices in its salvation.

Church Glorifies the Lord's Cross against the enemies of truth.

The Lord raised the Church to prominence by means of the miracles He did; and on the day of the discovery of the Cross, the faithful sing in praise for the Head who glorified her strife. May you, O Lord keep your promise to Church and her Children and in glory to Your Revelation.⁴¹

Our pride lies in the Cross; for through it we eradicated the power of death and obtained salvation, life and hope. From now on we profess our faith in God and praise Him saying Hallelujah.⁴²

8. Conclusion

In conclusion we may state that the Cross is the faithful Guardian of the life of every believer. It is the helper and the protector. It is the Anchor in a tumultuous world and a source that overflows with a new everlasting life.

It is the Saviour of souls from evil spirits; it's the hope for all peoples, the refuge for the faithful and the cause of every good.

Through the Cross we submit ourselves to God and praise Him, The Lord, who lifted all our sins and forgave our errors and reconciled with us. It is the emblem of wonders and the mystery of Redemption.

The Cross completes all Sacraments. It is the salt that flavors all foods. None of Church Sacraments or services would be completed without having the Cross as one of the basic pillars of their celebration.

Mor Cyril Aphrem Karim

THE SIGN OF THE CROSS

1. The Importance of the Cross

While the Syriac Orthodox Church of Antioch does not consider the sign of the Cross as one of its seven sacraments or even one of the sacramental acts of worship, no sacrament or any kind of worship can be performed without the sign of the Cross. The Church places it at the very heart of its life and worship. The eminent place of the Cross in the life of the Christian community comes from the role which the Cross played in the death of Christ. It has become the sign and symbol of Christ's death and resurrection for us. It is not surprising then to see the Church honoring the Cross by considering it as the main event in its life. In the words of Cyril of Jerusalem: The catholic Church glories in every action of Christ, but her glory of glories is the Cross.¹

The Cross is not only the sign of Christ's death and resurrection, it is also the sign of His incarnation and the whole economy of salvation. St. Ephrem explains this by demon-

⁴¹ Ibid., p.60

⁴² Khothra, vol.3, p.697

¹ L. McCauley and A. Stephenson, *The Works of Cyril of Jerusalem*, Vol.2, p.4

strating the relationship between the incarnation and the Cross. For him, whoever dies should also be born. He writes:

"His death on the Cross bears witness to His birth from a woman,

Because whoever dies should also be born

His conception in the womb then, is connected with His death on the Cross

So that whoever denies His birth will be condemned by His crucifixion. SDN.II."²

This great importance which the Cross occupies in the lives of the believers led the faithful to associate themselves daily with it. J. Daniélou remarks that not only did Christians make the sign of the Cross on their foreheads, there is evidence for the practice of actual tattooing.³ In fact, this tattooing of the Cross is still practiced in some parts of the Middle East. Almost all the Christian Egyptians have a cross tattooed on the inner side of their left wrist, as do some women who are members of the Syriac Orthodox Church. My own mother has a cross tattooed under her lower lip and another on her right hand.

2. The Cross in the Holy Scriptures

The Syriac Fathers of the Church place the Holy Cross at the center of their theology. We can justly say that Syriac theology is truly a theology of the Cross. They see the Cross present in God's mind from the very beginning. It is planted in the Paradise of Eden: the tree of knowledge which caused death to humankind⁴ is a symbol of the Cross which gives life, in a typological contrast. On the other hand, the tree of life, which was planted in Paradise to give life to those who approach it,⁵ is a symbol of the Cross which gives life to those who believe in it.

We first encounter the Cross in Paradise, but that is only the beginning as the Cross continues to play a role throughout the history of the people of God. It is present in the life and work of several characters of the Old Testament. From among the Patriarchs we have Abraham, the father of the nations, whose life is related to the Cross in two events. First, he prefigures the Cross when he walks through the length and breadth of the promised land. By doing so, he teaches us that only through the Cross will we inherit the promised land, the heavenly Paradise. Second, by the sacrifice of his only son Isaac. Through it, Abraham knew about the sacrifice of the Only Son of the Father on the Cross, and he rejoiced in it. The sacrifice of Isaac,⁶ on the other hand, makes him a perfect symbol of Christ in many respects: Isaac carrying the wood for his sacrifice is a symbol of Christ carrying the wood of the Cross. Mount Moriah, according to tradition, is the same place where the Cross of Christ was set up, Golgotha. The ram which redeemed Isaac is a symbol of the Christ the Redeemer of the world. The tree which carried the ram is a symbol of the Cross which carried the Lord.

The Patriarch Jacob is also related to the Cross in several events. He acquired the blessings of his father Isaac which were reserved for his brother Esau, who was the first born. Again he did the same thing in regard to the sons of Joseph. He gave his blessings to the youngest son Ephrem by crossing his hands to put the right one on Ephrem and the left

² CSCO, 270, Syr., 1966

³ J. Daniélou, *Primitive Christian Symbols*, p. 138

⁴ Genesis 2:17

⁵ Genesis 3:22

⁶ Genesis 22

one on Manasseh, thus forming the Cross by his hands. As a result, Jacob denied the first born of their rightful blessings, and gave those blessings to others. The Cross likewise took the birthright blessings from the Nation and gave them to the Nations, the young in faith, who deserved it by accepting the Cross.

The prophets of the Old Testament were also acquainted with the Cross. They too were aware of the power of the Cross, and made use of that power several times. Moses is the first among those prophets. His rod was a real symbol of the Cross. By using it, he divided the Red Sea,⁷ and brought forth water from the rock.⁸ The bronze serpent which Moses set up in the desert⁹ was another symbol of the Cross, which heals whoever looks upon it with faith. In his war against Amalek, Moses made of himself a sign of the Cross which defeated his enemies.¹⁰ The Passover¹¹ remains the mystery of mysteries which finds its antitype and fulfillment in the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross.

3. The Cross in Nature

But is it only in scripture that the Cross is revealed to us? For the Syriac Fathers, nature is a second scripture that is opened to us to see God's wonders, as St. Ephrem says in Hymns on Virginity XX:

"Wherever you turn your eyes, there is God's symbol,

whatever you read, there you will find His types."¹²

The Cross, therefore, is present in nature as in the scriptures. It is at the very heart of the world. In it, the four sides of the world meet, thus making it the center of the world. In fact, many creatures and tools (bird, boat, plough ...) would not be able to live or function unless they are related to the Cross in one way or another. Wood in general serves as a symbol of the Cross since Christ's Cross was made of wood.

4. The Cross in Worship

The Cross is the most widely used of all Christian symbols. However, we know very little about the beginnings of the introduction of the sign of the Cross into the worship of Christians. J. Daniélou assumes that the sign of the Cross has its origin in Christ's name and glory, not in His passion.¹³ He goes on to demonstrate that because of the intelligibility of this symbolism in the Greek world, the emphasis was shifted from the Lord's death to His glory. From then on, two shapes of the Cross were used: the shape () as a representation of the instrument of Christ's death, and the shape () which is the first letter of the Greek name of Christ, *Χριστος*, as a representation of His name.¹⁴

One cannot dismiss the existence of these two different interpretations of the origin of the sign of the Cross because we still form the sign of the Cross whenever we pronounce the names of the three persons of the Holy Trinity. In fact, our interpretation of the sign of

⁷ Exodus 14,16

⁸ Exodus 17,6

⁹ Numbers 21,4-9

¹⁰ Exodus 17,8-13

¹¹ Exodus 12

¹² CSCO, 223, Syr., 1962

¹³ J. Daniélou, *Primitive Christian Symbols*, p.145

¹⁴ Ibid, p.142

the Cross is primarily associated with the Holy Trinity, but we also form the Cross whenever we mention the Cross or say: "Who was crucified for us."

It is very probable that this double association came from the fact that the believer is consecrated in the name of Christ, but that this consecration takes place in baptism, when we are baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity.¹⁵ Since baptism is death and resurrection with Christ,¹⁶ the Cross is thus the sign which consecrates the baptized in the name of Christ, the second person of the Holy Trinity.

The sign of the Cross was in use as early as the second century¹⁷ as a private devotion or in connection with the reception of the Eucharist. In fact, Tertullian, in the first half of the third century, confirms that the use of the sign of the Cross comes from apostolic tradition.¹⁸ He tells us that Christians were drawing the sign of the Cross on their foreheads before doing anything. The sign of the Cross, however, did not become an element of liturgical ceremonies until the fourth century. J.H. Miller remarks that it was in Syria, during the fifth century, that a cross was placed on the altar during the Liturgy, a practice that cannot be found in the West until much later.¹⁹

5. The Cross and the Sacraments

In his commentary on the Holy Eucharist, Mooshe bar Kepho, the Syriac theologian and Church Father of the tenth century, answers the question of why the Body and Blood are signed with the Cross. He writes:

"Everything in the Church is consecrated, completed and perfected by the Cross: holy chrism, baptism, communion, ordinations, altars, sanctuaries, prayer houses and others. As Mor Severus the Patriarch and teacher of the universe said in his homily on the Cross, the Cross consecrates the new birth from baptism, completes and perfects the sacrifice which is rational and bloodless and all the service of priesthood and holy ministry. Why is everything in the Church consecrated and perfected by the Cross? Because the Cross portrays Christ Who consecrates all and is not Himself consecrated. Despite the presence of other symbols of Christ in the Church, it is through the Cross that the whole economy was completed. Through it, we received salvation and deliverance. Therefore, let them who baptize the Cross be put to shame. If the Cross is Christ then with what is this Christ to be baptized, or do they have two Christs."²⁰

6. The Cross and the Sacraments of Baptism and the Divine Eucharist

When water and blood came out of the Lord's side on the Cross, the Church was born. As water and blood point to the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist, which are the marks of the Church, baptism and the Eucharist therefore are the immediate fruits of the Cross. This link between the Church and the Cross is baptism and the Eucharist. The Cross works in the Church through baptism and the Eucharist, but it is equally true that without the Cross there is neither baptism nor the Eucharist.

¹⁵ Matthew 28:19

¹⁶ Romans 6:3-4

¹⁷ A. O'Rahilly, *The Crucified*, Dublin: 1985, p.222

¹⁸ K. Richter, *The Meaning of the Sacramental Symbol*, p. 132

¹⁹ J.H. Miller, *Cross*, p.475

²⁰ Mooshe bar Kepho, *Commentary on the Eucharist*, Mardin 1957, pp. 119-120

7. Baptism

To be baptized is to die with the Lord and rise with Him again into a new life.²¹ In one of the inaudible prayers of baptism, the priest prays: "May the victorious Cross of Jesus Christ be signed in his (the baptized) heart and mind that he may flee from the vanities of this world and escape from all the wickedness of the adversary by keeping Your divine commandments."²² For this reason, a small cross is placed inside the baptismal font during the administration of baptism.

Using the sign of the Cross is prominent throughout the service of baptism. The baptized is sealed three times: the first time without oil, the second time with oil of baptism and the third time with holy chrism. But all three times, the seal is done with the drawing of three crosses on the forehead of the baptized. Moreover, the exorcism, consecration of the water and the pouring of water on the head are all done with the sign of the Cross.

8. Eucharist

We approach the Holy Eucharist by way of the Cross. At the same time, the Eucharist makes the sacrifice of the Cross present here and now. In his commentary on the Diatesaron, instructing the one who wishes to approach the Eucharistic table, St. Ephrem writes:

"Extend your arms to the Cross so that the crucified Lord may extend His arms to you.

For the one who does not extend his hands towards His Cross, cannot approach His table." Com. Diat. XX,²³

The whole Eucharistic celebration is to bring to actualization the sacrifice of the Cross which was offered once and for all. Therefore, the sign of the Cross is present in every aspect of the celebration of Eucharist. In *The Lamp of the Sanctuary*, bar Hebraeus writes:

"Eighteen crosses are drawn on the Mysteries on three occasions. The first time when he (priest) says: "When He (Christ) took bread", he draws three crosses on the Body and three on the Blood. The second time when he says: "By His (Holy Spirit) indwelling", he again draws three crosses. The third time he does the same when he breaks and signs the Body and Blood."²⁴

9. Feasts of the Cross

9.1. Elevation of the Cross

The Feast of the Elevation of the Cross, which falls on Wednesday of Mid-Lent every year, is a commemoration of the bronze serpent which Moses put on a pole so that whoever had been bitten, when he looked upon it, would live.²⁵ This event prefigures the crucifixion of the Lord on the Cross as is clearly stated by the Lord Himself:

²¹ Romans 6:4

²² A. Y. Samuel, ed. *The Sacrament of Holy Baptism*, NJ, USA, 1974, p.32

²³ *Sources Chrétiennes*, 121, 1966.

²⁴ bar Hebraeus, *Mnorath Qudshe*, bar Hebraeus Verlag, Holland 1997, p.550

²⁵ Numbers 21,8

“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.”²⁶

Before the evening prayers of the previous day, the priest puts a cross on a special stand in the middle of the chancel. This same cross should be used for services on Good Friday and Easter. Before the conclusion of the Holy Eucharist of Mid-Lent, the priest carries the cross in a regular procession. At the end of the procession, they come back to the chancel and start the veneration of the Holy Cross (*zuyoho*) and the blessing of the four corners of the world.

9.2. Discovery of the Cross

This feast falls on September 14th. It is a remembrance of the discovery of the Cross by Queen Helen, the mother of Emperor Constantine. The service of this day takes place during the Holy Eucharist. It consists of a procession, at the end of which the priest and the deacons stand in front of the altar. After the opening prayer, Psalm 51 is recited and then a response to the psalm which begins with the following verse:

“Sleebo Otho dShaino	Sleebo Neesho dZokhoutho
Sleebo dBehou feeqeenan	beh koolan meshtabhreenan.”
(The Cross is the token of peace.	The Cross is the symbol of victory
We take pride in the Cross	by which we are saved.)

After chanting the *husoyo*, which is made of the *proemion* and *sedro*, parts of a *bo'outho* of Mor Jacob of Sarug is sung. In it, the story of the travel of Queen Helen from the New Rome and the discovery of the Cross is told. The special service is concluded by the *zuyoho*, veneration of the Cross and the blessing of the four corners of the world, and then the Lord's Prayer.

9.3. Service of the Veneration and Adoration of the Cross

This service takes place on Good Friday. At the close of the third hour prayers, the clergy and the deacons vest and start the first procession. The celebrant carries the Cross on his right shoulder. The other clergymen and the deacons carry the gospel book and the censer in front of the Cross, followed by the fan carriers. This procession, unlike others, starts from the southern door of the sanctuary and ends at the northern door. It signifies our Lord carrying His Cross from Pilate's palace to Golgotha.

At the end of the procession, they stand before the sanctuary. The Cross, bare and stripped, is fixed on a stand with two lit candles, one on each side signifying the two thieves who were crucified with the Lord. At the mid-day Gospel reading, where it says: “*but the other rebuked him*,”²⁷ the candle to the left of the Cross, representing the bandit who blasphemed against our Lord, is extinguished.

At the ninth-hour Gospel reading, where it says: “Now it was about the sixth hour and darkness fell upon the whole earth and lasted until the ninth hour,”²⁸ the lights in the church must be put out. And when it says: “And immediately the curtains at the door of the

temple were torn in two, from the top to the bottom,”²⁹ the curtain of the altar must be drawn back to the center.

At the close of the ninth-hour prayers, the clergy and deacons, dressed in their vestments, begin the service of the adoration of the Cross. The service starts with an opening prayer followed by Psalm 51 with its response. Then several verses from Psalms 22, 69 and 113, as well as the Beatitudes, are chanted with their own responses. After the *husoyo* is read, more hymns are sung. The scripture readings are taken from both the Old and New Testaments. After the Gospel reading, which is taken from the four Gospels, a sermon is delivered.

At the conclusion of the sermon, the celebrant stands before the elevated Cross, carries the censer and offers incense, saying the following entreaty three times, and the clergy and the congregation repeat after him. Then each of clergy and the deacons shall say it once and the congregation shall repeat it after them:

“We bow before the Cross, by which we received salvation for our souls, and with the thief we cry out: Remember us, O Christ, when You come.”³⁰

The celebrant then shall carry the Cross on his left shoulder in a second procession from the northern door of the sanctuary to the southern door. At the end of the procession, the celebrant holds the Cross high in his hands and blesses the four corners of the earth.

9.4. Service of the Burial of the Cross

Following the veneration (*zuyoho*) of the Cross, the celebrant carries the Cross on his arms, symbolizing the carrying of the body of our Lord. He puts the Cross on the altar and mixes vinegar with myrrh in a basin. He moistens the four corners of the Cross with the mixture. He then holds it above the basin and washes it with rose water or plain water, symbolizing the washing of the Lord's body by Joseph and Nicodemus before they buried Him. After the washing, the Cross must be embalmed with frankincense, covered with pure cotton and wrapped in a fine linen cloth. A fine burial napkin must be bound around the head, and the loins must be bound up with a girdle. Then the Cross must be buried in a special place under the altar.

During the service some hymns as well as a *husoyo* shall be said. At the conclusion of the Burial Service, the faithful partake of the bitter mixture to remind themselves of the passion and the sufferings of our Savior Who bore our sorrows and carried our griefs.³¹

10. Names for the Cross

10.1. The Living Cross - Sleebo Hayo

In baptism, the believers clothe themselves with the Cross, and thereafter an everlasting relationship is built with it. The Cross becomes the vehicle by which we receive the blessings promised by God. Even those blessings promised to the Fathers of the Old Testament become real and are acquired by the power of the Cross, as Aphrahat says:

²⁶ John 4,14-15

²⁷ Luke 23,40

²⁸ Luke 23,44

²⁹ Matthew 27:51

³⁰ A. Y. Samuel, ed. *Ma'de'dono. The Book of the Church Festivals*, NJ, USA, 1984, p.229

³¹ Isaiah 53:4

"The spiritual blessings which were promised to Abraham, were distributed to the nations from the death of Christ on the Cross."³²

10.2. *The Life-Giving Cross* - Sleebo Yoheb Haye

The Cross occupies such an important place in Patristic theology because in it all aspects of theology are present. In a special way the Cross contains the mysteries of the resurrection. St. Ephrem comments on why Christ died on the Cross by saying:

"And He died the death of the Cross so that in it a mystery should be drawn. That is, through His death shall rise all who die because even at His crucifixion, He was standing up."³³

This notion of the Cross as being a carrier of the power of the resurrection is a prominent feature of Christian theology in general. The Orthodox French theologian, Olivier Clément refers to it when he writes that the Cross is seen as fundamentally life-giving because it is inseparable from the descent into hell, the resurrection and the ascension to the right hand of the Father.³⁴ St. Philoxenos further clarifies this point when he shows the role of both the Cross and the resurrection in our redemption. He writes:

"We believe that death was abolished not by the resurrection of our Lord, but by His death. The resurrection did not abolish death, it uncovered and made clear that death was abolished."³⁵

10.3. *The Saving Cross* - Sleebo Forooqoyo

The Cross is an historical event, which took place to prove Christ's incarnation and serves as His vehicle in accomplishing the salvation of the world. It is through the victory of the Cross over sin and death that we are saved. The Cross has paid our debt, liberated us, renewed our nature and given us baptism as the means by which we acquire the redemption of the Cross.

The two prominent examples of the saving work of the Cross are Adam and the thief.

Instead of being a means of punishment and death to them, the Cross becomes their way to life and salvation. With Adam and the thief then, the whole creation is saved by Christ's Cross because in Christ the past, present and future become a sacred time participating in God's mysteries.

10.4. *The Cross of Reproach* - Sleebo dHesdo

The humiliation of the Cross becomes glory when it carries Christ, just as the chariot of the Cherubim is filled with glory because the Lord is in it. This paradoxical interpretation is found also in St. Philoxenos when he writes in his commentary on John's Prologue:

"He carried the Cross which is connected with disgrace so that we achieve a victory that is full of honour."³⁶

³² Aph. *Demonst.* VIII, 117

³³ Com. *Diat.*, Syr., XXI, I, 14

³⁴ O. Clément, *The Roots of Christian Mysticism*. Dublin: 1993, p.47

³⁵ Phil. *Dissert.* XI,106. A.C. Bridge in his book, *Images of God*, p.94 argues that crucifixion and resurrection are the beginning and ending of one event.

³⁶ Phil. *Com. du Prologue*, p. 127

Mor Jacob of Sarug also uses this term in his homilies on the Apostle Thomas. In the second homily, we read that the Lord tells Thomas to take up the Cross and go to India, without feeling ashamed of it because it is the vehicle by which the Lord went to the land of the dead and destroyed both sin and death. James writes:

By this vehicle I killed the human killer, the evil, and by it
I weakened death who had weakened the course of the earth.

This Cross has become a vehicle for me towards the dead,
and by it I freed the thief³⁷ from all captivity.

11. *The Cross of Light* - Sleebo dNouhro

For the Syriac Fathers, this Cross of light is the same as the one on which Christ was crucified on Golgotha.³⁸ However, the term "Cross of Light" is used mainly in connection with the eschatological Cross, the sign of Christ which will precede His second coming. This is made clear in St. Ephrem's *Serm.* II,341-6³⁹ where he says that everybody will see the Cross of the Son; the Nations will be glad to see the Cross in which they took refuge and the Jews will be disgraced by it because they are the crucifiers of Christ.⁴⁰

Mor Jacob of Sarug, on the other hand makes it clear that the Cross of light is the same one which was set up on Golgotha. He calls it the Cross of light because it dispersed the darkness which engulfed the world when Christ was crucified. He writes:⁴¹

"The Cross of light showed itself on Golgotha,
and scattered the darkness from the four corners by its shining."

Having this in mind, Mor Jacob sees all the saints as rays of light shining from the Cross of light, or as Paul would say, they shine like stars in the world. James praises St. George the Martyr and says to him:

"You are fixed in the Cross of light like a ray,
and your glory shines in the four corners of the universe."⁴²

I wish to conclude with the following statement made by Mor Ephrem about the Holy Cross being everything in our life:

"The Cross is our weapon and wall,
it is our life and light.
The Cross reconciles and renews everybody,
it consecrates and sanctifies everyone
The Cross has become a breakthrough by which
the two sides which were angry are reconciled." (HDisp. XX,2)⁴³

³⁷ Jak. *Apost. Thom.* II, 364-8

³⁸ P., Yousif, *St. Ephrem on Symbols in Nature*, p. 59.

³⁹ CSCO, 320, Syr., 1972.

⁴⁰ In an extreme reaction to the spread of the several versions of the legend of the discovery of the Cross, John Chrysostom declares that Christ took His Cross with Him into heaven to precede Him in His second coming. For details see H. Chirat, "Finding the Holy Cross", in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. IV, p. 481

⁴¹ Cont. Juifs, V, 279-80

⁴² Hom. *Select.* Tom. V, Hom. 181, p. 769

⁴³ T. J. Lamy. *Hymni et Sermones*. Vol. IV

COMMENT ON THE SIGN OF THE CROSS¹

1. Introduction

After having read the paper of his grace the metropolitan Yakub Daniel about the theology of the sign of the cross in the east-syrian tradition and after having read most of the part of the "*Uniatha and qonune dasliba*" in the book called Hudra Vol. III pp.420-577 (Trichur 1962), I observed that this theology resembles in its guidelines that of the syro-maronite tradition. In fact, the two theologies are founded on the same biblical texts and they use the same symbols and images. In both theologies the cross appears as the power of the risen Christ and the instrument of the salvation. For this reason the cross takes a prominent part in the life of the church and the faithful.

As to the fact that the Church of the east considers the sign of the cross as one of the seven sacraments, I did not find any explanation about it in the paper of his Grace. In any case, I believe that the question of the number of the sacraments (the sacramental septenary) was not important in the churches before the middle ages, even in the Latin Church. It was under the influence of the Latin missionaries of the late thirteenth century that "Abdisho" (+1318) asserted that "the sacraments (Rose) of the church are seven according to the divine books" in his "*ktoba d'margonita*". When he defines the sign of the cross as "the permanent guardian of the Christians and as the perfection and the sealer of all the sacraments" (*gomuro w hutomo d kulhun Rose*), he does not say more than the liturgical and patristic texts indicate.

Speaking about the theology of the cross in the east Syrian tradition we cannot neglect the very interesting mimro "on the contemplation of the mystery of the cross", of Isaac of Nineveh, (end of the 7th century), published by Sebastian Brock, CSCO Vol. 554 pp.43-52 (Syriac text) & Vol. 555 pp 53-62 (English translation).

We find in this mimro a theology of the cross expressed in the very genuine terminology of the east-syrian tradition. The cross introduces us in the mysteries of the faith because in it, like in the Christ the Son of God who is born by it, all the divine mysteries are concentrated.

2. The cross in the Syro-Maronite tradition

2.1. The Theology of the Cross

The theology of the cross in the syro-maronite tradition can be drawn from the following main sources:

1. The office of the feast of the life-giving cross on the 14th of September²

¹ Regarding the theology of the cross in other traditions cf: SACRE G., L'office de la fête de la croix dans la liturgie Maronite, PdO XII (1984-85) pp.219-238; Hallit, J., La croix dans le rite byzantin. Histoire et théologie. PdO II (1972) pp. 261-311; Renoux, A., La croix dans le rite Armenien. Histoire et symbolisme Melto (1968) pp. 123-175; Journel, P., Le culte de la croix dans la liturgie romaine, MD 75 (1963) pp. 68-91; Dalmais, L., La glorification de la sainte croix dans l'Eglise Copte, MD pp. 75 (1963) pp. 109-118

² Cf. Phenqito Vol.II, Rome, 1666.

2. The office of Good Friday and the rite of "the adoration of the cross" celebrated on the same day.³

3. The patriarch Estephan Ad-Duwaihi (+1704) in his comment on "the sign of the cross".⁴

All those texts are focused on one basic theme: the whole of creation, from Adam until now and to the end of history, is liberated from error and sin by the cross on which our Lord Jesus Christ died for our salvation. They often repeat in varied forms a formula like this: "Glory to you O our Lord who, by your cross, have liberated all creatures from sin and have converted all people from falsehood to the truth". The cross seems to be planted in the midst of the economy of the universal salvation.

The background of this basic theme is certainly the identification between the Risen Christ and His cross on which he died for the salvation of the world. So the cross becomes a source of salvation, of victory, of power, of glory, of light and immortal life. The faith in the cross is the faith in the person of the Risen Christ: "Come, my brothers, and with a steadfast faith take refuge in the cross to find salvation, and let us proclaim; O son of God who has been crucified for us, guard our souls from all harm".

Identified with the Risen Christ and manifesting his presence, the cross is called the "treasure of the mysteries" (*gazo d-Rose*) and the "perfection of all the mysteries of the church". I believe that in this context 'Abdisho' of Nisibis considers the sign of the cross as a sacrament while the maronite tradition considers it as the sacrament par excellence like the Risen Christ is. In this sense the patriarch Duwaihi wrote: "We must be proud of the cross of our Lord because by its power all the sacraments are accomplished and without its sign nothing is holy, as John Chrisostomos said: By the sign of the cross the body of the Lord is consecrated and the source of the baptism is sanctified and all the degrees of the priesthood in the church..." For this reason, Duwaihi continues: "We sign the cross three times upon the mysteries before they are consecrated, in order that the mysteries will be marked by the icon of the king of kings and they will be selected for his service and become his very honored body..."⁵.

2.2. The Risen Christ

The cross partakes of the power of the Risen Christ manifested in his victory on the Cross over evil, sin and death. The maronite texts often evoke the battle on the cross between Christ and evil, between life and death, between light and darkness in order to emphasize our victory over those adverse powers by the cross: "by the cross we fight against the armies of sin... The cross is a redoubtable sign for the demons, it terrifies them...". Positively the cross is the source of life for the Christians: "You O Christ have placed your cross on top of your church as a source from which life flows toward all creatures".

Isaac of Niniveh wrote in this sense: "Satan himself and all his tyranny is in terror of the form of the Cross, when it is depicted by us against him. And listen to what is greater than all these things: in that ministry (of the old testament), for all the signs and wonders that took place in their presence, they were unable to eradicate even the smallest kind of sin, whereas in the ministry that takes place with the cross, sin has become like a spider's web on which a heavy object is hung and it no (longer) succeeds in standing up. And as for

³ Cf. *Ktoba d'Haso*, jounieh, 1903.

⁴ Cf. Manarat Al-Aqdas, Beirut 1895-6, Vol. I pp. 149-151; Vol. II pp. 206-210.

⁵ Manarat. Vol. II p.208

death, which had been so fearful for (human) nature, now even women and children can hold up their heads against it. Death which reigns over all has now proved easier, not only for believers, but also for pagans as well: fear of it has been greatly diminished from what had been the case previously.⁶

Everywhere in our texts, the cross appears as a manifestation of an irresistible power through all its attributes, its forms, its positions, thus giving rise to an extremely rich and varied development on the different symbolic meanings of the cross. The symbols are borrowed from the figures of the Old Testament:

- The brazen serpent lifted up by Moses in the wilderness (Nb 21,8-9; Jn 3,4)
- Moses praying with his arms in the form of a cross and so ensuring the victory of the people over Amalek (Ex 17,11-12)
- By the power of the cross the walls of Jericho collapsed (Jos. 6:11-12)
- The blood of the lambs by which the lintels of the Jewish houses were smeared to keep away the destroying angel was the type of the cross (Ex. 12: 7-8)
- The staff of Moses which divided the waters of the red sea (Ex.14,15-16), made water spring from the rock (Ex 17,5-6), sweetened the bitter water of Mara (Ex.15,,25), are also the types of the cross.⁷

I give this text as a resume: "The cross explained all the figures (*pelete*) announced and manifested for us the mysteries (Rose) of the prophecy. The cross sealed (*htam*) all the concealed types (*Tufse Kasye*) and the seers (*hazoye*) of the hidden realities spoke about it". Another text invites the faithful to "delight themselves in the glorious and ineffable mysteries of the cross, fixing the eyes of their intelligence on its glorious and delightful memory, discovering its beauties... wondering every time at the treasures hidden in it."⁸

2.3. The Cosmic Dimension of the Cross

The cosmic dimensions of the cross are largely uttered in a great number of maronite texts. Christ has been crucified for the salvation of the world and he has traced the sign of the cross in all things: The height and the depth and the four corners of the earth stand on the vivifying cross. The cross is the pillar of the world. It upholds all its borders and places and it maintains all the creatures and it guides them by its sign... The cross is the beginning and the perfection of all that exist. It bears the height and the depth, and all the regions of the earth fastened by it".

I would end my communication quoting the patriarch Estephan ad-Duwaihi, the great commentator of the maronite liturgy: "In the church nothing is blessed or sanctified without the sign of the cross. The faithful are not baptized, nor the churches and the altars consecrated nor the body of our Lord, the source of life, is consecrated unless signed by the cross. This is what we say in the office of the holy cross: "By the cross the sons of the

⁶ Saint Isaak of Nineveh No.8, p.55

⁷ Isaac of Niniveh compares the cross to the Ark of Covenant (Ex 15) where "the Shekina of God was residing" and he asserts that "the limitless power of God dwells in the cross, just as it resided in an incomprehensible way in the ark which was venerated amidst great honour and awe by the people performing by it miracles and awesome signs... that power which existed in the ark is believed by us to exist in this revered form of the cross, which is held by us in great awe concerning God". Op.cit. p. 54, n°5.

⁸ See Yousif, Pierre. La croix de Jesus et le paradis d'Eden dans la typologie biblique de Saint Ephrem. PdO Vol. VI et VII (1975-1970) pp.29-48.

church are marked as spiritual lambs and the cross is the perfection of all the mysteries (*sumloy Rose*) and the sanctification of the churches".⁹

Discussions

Powathil: I think that all the ten Church traditions present here are in full agreement about the greatness and the power of the cross. The only question which has been left out is the sacramentality of the cross, which we shall discuss after the tea break.

Sako: We are here to deal with the sacraments and we have heard a theological sermon on the sign of the cross, but this is not sufficient for the question whether it is a sacrament. Is the term *raza* (sacrament) used for the sign of the cross or *rushma* (sign)? The sign of the Cross is used several times during the liturgies and also by simple people during their personal prayers! The sign of the cross has really no structure and consistence of a sacrament! *Raza* is used here in an ample sense! His Grace is using various bibliographies: Assyrian and modern Catholic and Protestant!

Mar Saliba: His Grace was going to talk about the cross as a sacrament. We know that certain elements should be present in a sacrament, but His Grace did not speak about these elements with regard to the sign of the Cross.

Mar Yacub: A sacrament according to the Church of the East, as Mar Aphrahat says, is a matter from which spiritual grace springs. Our Church considers the sign of the cross one of the seven sacraments.

Powathil: When did the sign of the cross come on the list of sacraments?

Mar Yacub: In the 14th century.

Casmoussa: There is a distinction between *raza* as sacrament and *raza* as symbol. The Church of the East should clarify the meaning of *raza* as sacrament or symbol. The Oriental Church Fathers have always favoured a symbolical theology which is very rich in the Church. One should be careful with using texts from Scripture. For example, His Grace has said that St. Peter extended his hand on the paralytic in the form of the cross. This is just a symbolic language, but not a sacrament. One should take the Biblical texts literally and not construct theological system arbitrary.

Mar Yacub: Concerning signs and symbols, the Church of the East depends on Ephrem and other Church Fathers. Christ heals the paralytic through the sign of the cross.

Matar: We try to understand this great tradition of the East about the sign of the cross and the holy leaven and we are respectful of the intuition behind it, which is the identification between Christ and his cross, between Christ and his body, the mystical, Eucharistic body. Christ is the sacrament, the mystery himself, he is everything. We can say that Christ saved us by his blood, by his sacrifice, by his cross, and when we adore the cross, we adore Christ, not a piece of wood. It is not extraordinary to consider the cross a part of the mystery of our redemption. Now we ask this tradition to continue with their theology, to distinguish between the mystery and the sacraments like baptism etc. In Arabic we only have the one word *sirr* – in Syriac *raza* – and we have no distinction between sacrament and mystery. We speak of the mystery of redemption, the mystery of the Trinity, the mystery of the Incarnation. We say that the Church is the mystery, the sacrament of Christ, but we do not speak about the Church as the eighth sacrament or as one of the seven. The

⁹ Manarat ... vol. II, p. 208

Church is the source of all the sacraments which are actions in the Church and through the Church. There is something to nourish us in the spirituality of the cross. The text of Mar Yacub is wonderful and there is a rapprochement with what Fr. Khalifé said. We adore the holy cross, but when we deal with theology we have scientific things to elaborate and we need to do this.

Harnoncourt: We totally agree about the central position of the cross. But if we speak about this in a sacramental context, we need to ask for any liturgical realisation. Is it necessary to make the sign of the cross in a particular manner? Is there a special rite, as it is with holy leaven? What is the correct liturgical rite of the sign of the cross?

Mar Severios: The concept of sacrament has been formulated in a later period and there are certain limits to it. When we look at the Church as a whole in earlier times there were lists with many more sacraments both in the East and in the West. *Rozo* in the Eastern tradition also has a wider meaning, it is an act of God through the Church for the salvation of the world. When we have realised that there are many sacraments, we can see that the number seven is the problem for us. However, for the Eastern Churches this number is not really a problem. The number seven came to us from the Catholic Church, before that there were the practice and faith of the early Church. Malka and sign of the cross can be included in the wider sense of sacrament, which is a sanctifying act of the Church. Any act of the Church by the Holy Spirit can be called a sacrament in the wider sense and we should not be confined to the number seven.

Georges: I would like to draw attention to the fact that the word *sliwa* in Syriac is also an adjective. When we use it as a noun, it means “cross”, but when we use it as an adjective, it means “crucified one”, which is one of the names of Our Lord Jesus Christ. I wonder why we cannot recognise the sign of the cross as one of the sacraments of the Church.

Vellanickal: When we speak of the sacraments, it is necessary to study in detail the nuances of the three words *sacramentum* in Latin, *mysterion* in Greek and, *raza* in Syriac. I do not think their meaning is the same, they simply cannot be applied in the same way. It is similar with the words *kyana*, *qnoma*, *parsopa* when we speak about Christological issues. The nuances are different and an identification of these three terms would be very misleading. A detailed and exact study of these three terms is necessary here before finalising our statement on this issue. Regarding the number seven, we should not just dismiss it as unimportant, because it has somehow been accepted quasi universally by the different Churches, and I think there is an importance to this number seven, though not dogmatically or categorically, but rather symbolically. For example, in the Gospel of John, which, as we know is symbolic, the signs of Jesus have prophetic and sacramental dimensions. The word used for the miracles of Jesus, *semeion*, is a typically Johannine term. John narrates only seven miracles in the public ministry of Jesus, not six or eight. In the Apocalypse we have seven letters to the seven churches. There are so many septenaries which you can find in the Bible. The Jewish roots of Christianity have certainly influenced this idea of the number seven, so we cannot simply dismiss it as unimportant, but we should ask what its significance is for the sacraments of the Church. I think there is a significance in it, but this does not mean to exclude malka and the sign of the cross, if we take the number seven as symbolic, as a number of perfection, a number which signifies that the actions of Christ take place in the Church in a perfect manner, in fullness.

Bouwen: Listening to the papers this afternoon, I was struck by the richness of the cross and also by the agreement on the cross as a great mystery. Ever since St. Ephrem it has

been clear that the cross is at the centre of both the West and the East Syrian traditions. The cross is at the centre of the *raze/roze*. In the West we have seven sacraments which were singled out by philosophical categories that do not exist in the east. There are two different languages, two different ways of expressing things here. We should go back to what we said at our last consultation, that is the meaning of *raze/roze*. In the West the question to be asked is what *forma* and *materia* mean today.

Kadavil: If we look at Western sacramental theology today, there is a twofold notion of sacramentality doubled. Before and after Vatican II there was an emphasis on Christ as a sacrament and the Church as a sacrament. Today there is a move to a new category, that is the world as a sacrament. We should go deeper into the study of *raza/rozo*, which is not done very much and may also help Western theology.

Sako: Is there any prayer, any liturgy to consecrate crosses as a sign, as a means of grace? A sacrament is expressed in a liturgical rite. Is there a liturgy of the cross or is it just a notion, a concept?

Mar Yacub: No, there is nothing.

Hofrichter: The sign of the cross is used in several liturgical acts and various contexts, as His Grace said. May I remind you that the sign of the cross either on oneself or in a benediction in the Western tradition is a sacramental, i.e. a sacrament of the second order.

Konat: First, part of what we are discussing now has already been discussed in our last meeting and conclusions have been reached on the notion of *raza/rozo* and its relation to *sacramentum* and *mysterion*. Someone should look at the last communiqué and bring out these points. Secondly, I would like to respond to Fr. Vellanickal's comments. The number seven is symbolic, but we are here to discover the common Syriac heritage, and I do not think the number seven has much of an importance here. We have to break this barrier of the number seven and try to think of *raze/roze* in more common terms. It would be good to consider the number seven as symbolic but for the ecumenical purpose and for advancing our discussion it is better to break the barrier of the number seven.

Kadavil: If we look at the notion of *sacramentum* and *mysterion*, we can see the Platonic or Neoplatonic influence and a dualistic approach which is not there in *raza/rozo*. Not much study has been done on this. The non-dualistic approach of the Syriac tradition is very important and must be brought out more clearly.

Vellanickal: What I said was that we must study the number seven precisely to go beyond it. It is symbolic, which means that it covers more sacraments and should not be understood in a restrictive sense. Why is there such a strong tradition on the number seven in the whole Church, even in the Church of the East? Was this merely to answer the Western Church or does it have a significance in itself?

Casmoussa: First, we must study the ancient texts and see what writers or local Churches make out of a text when they quote it. Second, we should not pay attention only to the texts themselves, but to the faith of the Church and to what the faithful believe really in the concrete life of the Church.

Mar Severios: There is a justification in the Bible for our tradition. We have the number seven because St. John uses it. However, different explanations are possible.

Vazheeparampil: When we consider the sacramentality of malka and the sign of the cross, there is a very important point to be considered, which Mar Cyril has already mentioned. As Daniélou said, the cross comes from Christ's glory, it stands for the name of Christ. Regarding the case of the holy leaven, Mar Abdisho says that malka stands for the person

of Christ. Christ is the *Ursakrament*, and by saying this we do not diminish the value of the sign of the cross, rather we celebrate the exaltation of the cross and the malka, which is Christ.

Bonny: I have three small. First, in the Catholic-Assyrian dialogue we came to the conclusion that instead of speaking of "the sacraments" it is better to speak of "sacramental life". Funeral, consecration of altars, religious profession, sign of the cross are parts of sacramental life, but one should make distinctions between sacraments of primary importance and sacraments of secondary importance. There is a stress on the major sacraments and there is a variety of what we call sacramentals in the Latin Church. We should keep that together, because it is a unity. Second, the sacramental life in the East or in the West has its inner coherence, it is like a language with its own grammar. Some elements may receive priority owing to a particular context or condition. Because of its marginal position outside the Roman Empire, the Assyrian tradition had to show clearly its continuity with the apostolic age, hence the malka. Concerning the sign of the cross, in a world dominated by Persians and Muslims you have to show your identity, hence a visible sign of great importance and we must appreciate this. Third, I hear so many convergences here, but not many contradictions.

Hainthaler: I fully agree with Fr. Bonny. In the first millennium we already had all these different kinds of sacraments which were called sacraments. We also had all these issues, they are not new. It is up to special conditions that certain sacraments were underlined especially. To me it seems that malka and the sign of the cross are very special sacraments in a broader or universal sense. In the Bible the whole economy of salvation is called a *mysterion*, i.e. a "sacrament" in the fundamental sense. The sign of the cross can be called one of the origins or sources of sacramental life.

Brock: I would agree with many of the previous speakers. For me Mar Severios and Frans Bouwen as it were hit the nail on its head. The problem is really caused by our translation of *raza* in Abdisho's *Marganitha* as sacrament. We do this because he uses the number seven. Abdisho was probably faced with Western missionaries saying that they had seven sacraments and asking him what seven he could enumerate. Abdisho enumerates seven essential ones, but it is clear that he does not have a concept of seven sacraments or, better said, *raze*, because in this chapter he does not talk about the cross, but talks about marriage instead. The problem is caused by our translation and by the assumption that he uses sacrament in the scholastic sense rather than in the much wider sense once common in the West and in the East.

Powathil: How did the West arrive at the number seven? Was it only because of the symbolism or were there other reasons? What came first, the sacraments or the number?

Harnoncourt: It is impossible to give a single correct answer. Because there were so many sacraments, there came up a tendency to single out those necessary for salvation. However, the scholastics said that only Baptism and the Eucharist are necessary for salvation. The number seven was used later to enumerate the sacraments, but there were different series, for example, the order of bishops, priests, deacons were numbered separately, baptism and confirmation were counted as one and marriage was left out. On the other hand, in the Latin terminology the meaning of the noun *sacramentum* was changing. The adjective *sacramentalis/-e* is very confusing. In fact, it is difficult to follow the Latin terminology, it depends on the school of theology and the period. With the terminology of *mysterion* this is much easier.

Chediath: In Christology we keep the term *qnoma* untranslated. Perhaps we could do something similar here too and keep the term *raza*.

Bonny: We should be aware of the importance of non-ecclesiastical factors. It was only with the Gregorian reform that marriage was authoritatively considered a sacrament. Before that it was a civil contract from Roman law, which was blessed. The Church insisted on its sacramental character only later. The distinction between sacrament and sacramental was made in Middle Ages to achieve some clarity with all the ritual celebrations. There are four important elements. First, the seven sacraments can be traced back to the will of Christ, to an action in his earthly life. Second, they are constitutive for the Church or for belonging to the Church. Third, they are linked to main moments in the life of a Christian, baptism, marriage, anointing of the sick etc. are linked with a particular moments in human life. Fourth, at the time of the Council of Trent the whole discussion had with a clear anti-Protestant, anti-Reformation emphasis, hence the seven sacraments were affirmed.

Winkler: As Fr. Bonny said, the number seven came up in the scholastic age, but it was defined during the Reformation era, that is, not in a time of controversy with the East. We should be aware of this.

Mar Severios: In the Eastern theological tradition the moments in the life of an individual are taken in a more holistic rather than bifurcating manner. We cannot separate the blessing of a house or of an altar from an individual's life.

Brock: Following on Mar Severios, to me it seems better to look at the question of *raze* as a continuum, from the most important ones, i.e. baptism and the Eucharist, through a whole series of others to the blessing of the house and things like that. This is better than chopping up the continuum into little elements, which goes against the mentality of the whole Syriac tradition.

Varghese: Regarding the sacramentality of the cross, we should not look at it from the perspective of scholastic theology. There was an interest in the sacramentality of the sign of the cross also Moses bar Kepha and bar Salibi, that is, in the West Syrian tradition. Also for us the sign of the cross is very important and we need to study this point more.

Mar Cyril: Prof. Brock's has commented about the sacramentality of life as a whole. In fact, the Syriac Fathers look at the life of a person and the life of the world as a whole in sacramental terms. Fulfilment will only be attained in paradise. Everything in this life is sacramental and will be completed in paradise, and we cannot clearly define this.

Powathil: I think this is a nice ending.

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

of the Fifth Non-Official Syriac Consultation “Sacraments in the Syriac Tradition – Part II”

1. In its task to enable ecumenical encounter and to promote theological understanding, the PRO ORIENTE Foundation (Austria) had invited participants from all the Churches of the Syriac tradition for the Fifth Non-Official Syriac Consultation, which took place from February 26 to March 1, 2002, in Vienna, to continue its discussion on sacramental life in the Syriac tradition.

2. Participants came from eleven different Churches and twelve countries. The Syriac traditions were represented by the Assyrian Church of the East, the Ancient Church of the East, the Chaldean Church, the Syro-Malabar Church, the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch, the Malankara Orthodox Church, the Maronite Church, the Syrian Catholic Church, and the Malankara Catholic Church. Present there were also an observer of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, expert scholars, and staff of PRO ORIENTE.

3. All participants warmly welcomed the initiative of PRO ORIENTE to continue this unique ecumenical dialogue among the Churches of the Syriac tradition. The presence on the first day of H.E. Cardinal Christoph Schönborn, Archbishop of Vienna and Chairman of the Board of Trustees of PRO ORIENTE, was a great honour. The visit to the Cistercian Monastery of Heiligenkreuz near Vienna, where they were welcomed by Abbot Gregor Henckel-Donnersmarck, and the opportunity to share and experience a Catholic monastic Office was particularly appreciated. The vice-president of the Ecumenical Council of Churches in Austria, Chorbishop Emanuel Aydin, also participated in the excursion.

4. An enriching innovation at this Fifth Syriac Dialogue was to begin each day with a short service of prayer, each arranged according to a different Syriac tradition (Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch, Malankara Catholic, Church of the East, Maronite and Syrian Catholic).

5. This Fifth Consultation focused on rites which are identified and listed differently as *raze/roze* by the individual Syriac Churches. In the course of the meeting the following papers and comments were read and gave a good basis for discussion:

- Marriage (presented by Mar Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim and Fr. Pierre Youssif, commented on by Chorbishop Michael J. Birnie)
- Anointing of the Sick (presented by Fr. K.M. George and Mar George Alencherry, commented on by Fr. Khoshaba M. Georges)
- Holy Leaven/Malka (presented by Mar Bawai Soro, commented on by Fr. Baby Varghese and Fr. Louis Sako)
- Sign of the Cross (presented by Mar Yakoob Danil, commented on by Mar Cyril Aphrem Karim and Fr. Elias Khalifeh-Al Hachem).

6. The subject for the **first day** was „MARRIAGE“. The marriage service has basically the same structure in all the Syriac liturgical traditions and indeed the prayer for the Blessing of the Rings is essentially the same. Furthermore, all these traditions make use of the same Pauline lection, from Ephesians 5 where marriage is explicitly stated to be “a great *raza/rozo* concerning Christ and his Church”.

7. The liturgical rites themselves, reinforced by the instructions given for pastoral guidance of the intended partners, indicate clearly the two main foundations required for the sanctification of marriage in all the Syriac traditions, namely the presence of a priest and, on the part of the couple, a commitment to lifelong love, and to procreation. Of central importance, too, is the couple’s mutual covenantal exchange of consent. Implicit in all the traditions there is to be seen an underlying concern for the welfare of the family.

8. All the Syriac Churches teach the indissolubility of marriage (Mt 19,6). In common with the other Eastern Churches the Syriac Churches do not lay stress on the concept of marriage as a contract. The Syriac Churches have never made any clear distinction in language between divorce and annulment. In practice, the only grounds recognized for divorce are adultery (based on Mt 5,32). In the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch, the Malankara Orthodox Church and the Church of the East marriage may be dissolved, and remarriage may be granted for pastoral reasons (on grounds of *oikonomia* as in the Eastern Orthodox Byzantine tradition). In the Eastern Rite Catholic Churches marriages may be annulled in certain exceptional circumstances.

9. Some attention was also given to the presence or absence of marriage from the various listings of seven *raze/roze* found in certain Syriac sources from the 13th century onwards. It had already been recognized in the Communiqué of the Fourth Syriac Consultation that, although the terms ‘sacrament’ and ‘*raza/rozo*’ overlap, they are by no means synonymous and coterminous; as a result it is often preferable to translate the latter as ‘mystery’, or to leave it in transliteration. While originally the term, in the plural, had referred only to the Eucharistic Mysteries, from about the 5th century it had been extended to certain other liturgical rites as well. The identity, however, of these other rites varied in the different liturgical traditions. It was not until the 13th century, however, that (under Latin influence) the idea of using the symbolic number seven to enumerate the *raze/roze* came into practice. This innovation has proved to be appropriate in the context of Latin liturgical tradition where a distinction is made between Sacraments and Sacramentals. When applied to the Syriac traditions, however, where no such distinction is current, its use has led to problems, and as a result different listings have come to be made in the different Syriac Churches. The problems arising from this have been highlighted by the Assyrian Church of the East’s recent synodal decision (2001) that reaffirms the list of seven *raze* which the great 13th/14th century canonist Abdisho had provided in his *Marganitha* (The Pearl; IV.1): this list does not include marriage, although later in the section which discusses the *raze* he in fact includes marriage. Abdisho’s inconsistency over this matter, and the fact that subsequently Timothy II specifically includes marriage in his Commentary on the *raze*, clearly shows that Abdisho’s list of seven *raze* is not to be understood as an exclusive one which would deny the ‘sacramental’ character of marriage. In the same way, Bar Ebroyo’s exclusion of marriage from his list of five *shumloye* (*Mnorath Qudshe* VI.2) certainly does not mean that marriage is not understood as a *rozo* in the tradition of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch; it is in fact specifically included in Patriarch Barsom’s listing of seven *roze*.

10. Although listings of seven *raze/roze* may sometimes be helpful in a certain theological and catechetical context, it needs to be clearly recognized that the adoption of a fixed number of *raze/roze* is inappropriate in the context of all the Syriac Churches, seeing that the Syriac term includes not only Sacraments but also Sacramentals. Recognition of this at once also explains the presence in Abdisho’s list of Holy Leaven and the Sign of the Cross: since these are both *raze* of Christ himself, it is only to be expected that Abdisho should give them precedence over marriage. This means that the different listings of

seven *raze/roze* in the different Syriac traditions is of no particular consequence. What matters is the substance of what each particular *raza/rozo* conveys; in the case of marriage, since St Paul already described it as a 'great *raza/rozo* concerning Christ and his Church' the liturgical rite which effects this can also be considered as a *raza/rozo*.

11. The subject for the **second day** was 'ANOINTING OF THE SICK'. Mindful of Christ's command to his disciples that they should heal the sick as well as proclaim the Kingdom (Lk 9,2), and of the directive in the Letter of James (5:14-15) that the priests of the Church should pray over the sick and anoint them with oil, all the Churches have made, over the centuries, a variety of liturgical provisions in response to the ever present phenomenon of human sickness, both spiritual and physical. From early on in Syriac tradition one of the recurring titles of Christ is "Physician" (*Asya/Osyo*), and the imagery of healing has always been, and still remains, very prominent in the liturgical texts of all the Syriac Churches.

12. Although the early history of the anointing of the sick in the Syriac Churches is very obscure, it is at least clear that different developments took place in different geographical areas and in different cultural and ecclesial contexts. Thus the laying on of hands by the priest might be used alongside, or instead of, anointing with oil; and in the Church of the East the use of *Hnana* (a mixture of oil, water and dust from the tomb of a saint or martyr, specifically blessed by a priest) is also found. What is essential to realize is that, behind the great variety of rites and fluidity of usage, there lies a common fundamental element: a liturgical action whereby a priest conveys divine grace of healing and forgiveness of sins to a sick person (whether or not using oil), whether or not in a eucharistic context.

13. On the **third day** two topics were discussed: the HOLY LEAVEN ("MALKA") and the SIGN OF THE CROSS, both of which are considered by the Church of the East as *raze*, and which Abdisho includes within his list of seven *raze* in his *Marganitha*.

14. In any discussion of the *raza* of the Holy Leaven it is essential to concentrate on the theological sense and function of the rite, rather than its 'sacramentality'. The various narratives concerning the origin of the Holy Leaven have a twofold role: (1) to link in a pictorial way the Institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper with the Piercing of the Side of Christ (John 19,34, a verse which has always been central in Syriac tradition for a theological understanding of Baptism and Eucharist); and (2) to link the Institution of the Eucharist in a tangible way with each individual Celebration of the Eucharist. This indicates that the function of the Holy Leaven is essentially to serve as a *raza* of unity. Furthermore, this *raza* of unity has two different dimensions (1) diachronic, emphasising unbroken continuity of the rite, and indicating apostolicity; and (2) synchronic, emphasising ecclesial *communio* (and in western terminology, also legitimacy).

In its function as a symbol of apostolicity and of unity between the bishop and the parish, the theological significance of the Holy Leaven is not unlike that of the Myron in the West Syriac tradition.

15. The papers on the Sign of the Cross clearly indicated that all the Syriac Churches share in an extremely rich and profound soteriological theology of the Cross. The Sign of the Cross, with its Trinitarian dimension, itself is seen as 'the perfecter and seal of all the *raze/roze*', and without it no liturgical rite would be complete. A contributing factor behind the Syriac Churches' highly developed theology of the Cross may lie in the double sense of the Syriac words *sliwa*, *zqipa/slibo*, *zqifo*, both of which mean 'Crucified One' as well as 'Cross'.

16. IN CONCLUSION, in the course of our study of the Sacraments in the Syriac tradition two things in particular have become abundantly clear:

(a) that the Syriac term *raza/rozo* has a far wider meaning than 'Sacrament' in the scholastic sense, and that in the Syriac Churches there has never been any tradition of distinguishing between different categories of *raze/roze*; rather, they are to be understood as representing a continuum, running from the most important to those of less importance;

(b) that the various Syriac Churches have developed their sacramental life in differing, but equally legitimate, ways.

17. In connection with the first point, we consider it would be helpful to offer the following preliminary definition:

Raza/Rozo, in a liturgical context, is a symbolic action, founded on the economy of salvation in Christ, which is performed by the Church as a salvific action with eschatological dimensions through the ministry of a bishop or a priest. Through a *Raza/Rozo* life-giving grace (*taybutha/taybutho*) is effectively communicated by the power of the Holy Spirit to a believer who receives this grace through faith and prayer.

18. In a wider ecumenical context, it could well be that the distinctive Syriac concept of *raza/rozo* and the profound symbolic theology of the Syriac Fathers can make a contribution to current reflection on the place of sacramental theology in the context of the present growing concern for creation, seeing that this concept of *raza/rozo* points to the holistic and essentially sacramental nature of the whole of creation in the economy of salvation.

Participants in this consultation feel a special mention should be made of the many essential contributions that the PRO ORIENTE Foundation has been offering the Churches of the Syriac Tradition:

(1) The Syriac Dialogue consultations and meetings of the Syriac Commission provided by PRO ORIENTE are the only vehicles by which representatives of our Churches are able to come together and dialogue in the spirit of fraternal relations and truth. This encounter between our Churches has taken place for the first time in 1994 after more than 1500 years of separation, alienation and mistrust.

(2) PRO ORIENTE's efforts in planning and financing our dialogue meetings are highly appreciated by the leadership and faithful of our Churches. During a time when our Churches in their historic homelands (Middle East and India) are witnessing the rise of fundamentalist prejudice in their societies, PRO ORIENTE's encouragement and support strengthens our resolve to continue our Christian witness.

(3) PRO ORIENTE's work for and among our Churches has already had positive results in communities of our Churches also present in the Diaspora. Our faithful in these communities are thus much encouraged to learn about their Churches, with their glorious heritage, encouraging them to represent themselves in a better way to other Christians in Western Society.