

The Particular Law on the Sacraments of Initiation in the Syro-Malabar Church*

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SUMMARY: Introduction; 1. Some Features of the Sacraments of Initiation in ES Liturgical Tradition; 2. Sacraments of Initiation in the pre-Diamper St. Thomas Christian Church; 3. The Implementation of the Tridentine Decisions in the Church of Malabar at Diamper; 4. Diamper Teaching on the Sacraments of Initiation; 5. Appraisal of the Synod's Teaching; 6. The Rite of the Sacraments of Initiation in SMC in the post-Vatican II Period; 7. SM Particular Law on the Sacraments of Initiation; Conclusion.

Introduction

We are dealing with a Church, in which the history of the celebration of the holy mysteries has to be divided at least into two periods, the one before and the other after the Synod of Diamper (1599). As to the existence and the celebration of the holy mysteries in this Church in the former period, we have very few written documents.¹ We have to depend mostly on the Diamper documents, which give us but a partial view. As regards the latter period, we are better furnished with

* Common abbreviations used in this study: ES – East Syrian, PL – particular law, SM – Syro-Malabar, SMC – Syro-Malabar Church, SMPL – Syro-Malabar particular law.

1 Unfortunately we have only very few primary sources in the form of MSS on the liturgical celebrations of the pre-Diamper period, because, being suspected of the heretical content, the MSS were burned at the order of the Diamper. That was, and still is, a great loss not only to the St Thomas Christians, but also to the whole Church and to the entire humanity.

documents. This latter period can be further divided into two, the Vatican Council II occurring in between. In order to understand the present particular law on the sacraments of initiation of this Church, and the struggles to restore its rite, we need a short exposition of what has gone before. However, for brevity's sake, we will limit ourselves to the reformation introduced by the Synod of Diamper and the norms of the present particular law. As the Syro-Malabar (SM) liturgy belongs to the East Syrian (ES) family, it is proper to highlight certain characteristic features of the sacraments of initiation of that tradition.

I. Some Features of the Sacraments of Initiation in ES Liturgical Tradition

In this study we take the liturgical tradition of the Assyrian-Chaldean Churches together.

In ES baptismal rite there has been three anointments: two preceded baptism proper and one followed it. The original rite had probably only one anointment, but later the other two were introduced.²

The baptismal rite mentioned in the *Acts of Thomas* includes an anointment, immersion in water and the Eucharist.³ There is no anointment between baptism and the Eucharist. This rite could be the most ancient extant reference to the rite of the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist in ES tradition. Scholars generally hold that the *Acts of Thomas* was written in ES milieu and that it reflects the contemporarily developing liturgy of that Church.⁴

2 Gabriele WINKLER, "The Original meaning of the Prebaptismal Anointing and Its Implications," in Maxwell E. JOHNSON (ed.), *Living Water, Sealing Spirit: Readings on Christian Initiation*, Collegeville [Mi.] 1995, 58–81, at pp. 61–62.

3 See Albertus F. KLIJN (ed.), *The Acts of Thomas. Introduction, Text and Commentary*, Leiden-Boston 2003. For references to anointment, baptism and the Eucharist, see chapters 25–27, 121, 132–133 and 157–158. Ch. 49 refers to baptism and the Eucharist without any mention of anointment before baptism.

4 See KLIJN (ed.), *The Acts of Thomas* (nt. 4), "Introduction", *passim*; Jacob VEL-

According to Mar Abdiso (†1318), there are seven sacraments; but they are not exactly the same as those in the Catholic Church. They are priesthood, baptism, oil of unction, oblation of the Body and Blood of Christ, absolution, the holy leaven,⁵ and the sign of the life-giving cross.⁶ These are the seven sacraments recognised in the Assyrian Church even today. However, there exists another list of seven sacraments made by Mar Timothy II (patriarch, 1318-1332). According to his list the sacraments are priesthood, baptism, Eucharist, marriage, consecration of monks, consecration of altar and funeral rites.⁷

LIAN, *Pre-Diamper Sources of the Syro-Malabar Liturgy*, in Bosco PUTHUR (ed.), *The Life and Nature of the St Thomas Christian Church in the Pre-Diamper Period*, Kochi 2000, 60–84, at p. 62.

- 5 This sacrament (in Syriac, *Malka*) is peculiar to the Church of the East. It is celebrated annually on Holy Thursday before the mass. The service consists mainly of prayers and psalms, and in mixing of fine wheat-flour with olive oil, salt and water and the remaining from the previous year's holy leaven (if there is). It will be kept inside the tabernacle (which is kept on the altar) throughout the year. The holy leaven is necessary to make host, which is freshly made for each mass. The ordinary minister of making the holy leaven is priest. It is a solemn function in which as many priests and deacons as possible participate. According to a legend, when Nestorius was forced to flee from Constantinople he took away all the holy leaven with him, depriving the rest of the Christendom of it: see Mar Aprem [MOOKEN], *Sacraments of the Church of the East*, Trichur 1978, 38–41; Bawai SORO, "The Sacrament of the Holy Leaven '*Malka*' in the Church of the East", in *Syriac Dialogue* 5 (2003) 89–102.
- 6 Mar Aprem, *Sacraments* (nt. 6), 13. The Latin translation reads, "Sacramenta Ecclesiae septem sunt... Primum est sacerdotium, quod et reliqua sacramenta conficit. Secundum, sanctum baptisma. Tertium, chrisma unctionis. Quartum, oblatio corporis et sanguinis Christi. Quintum, remissio peccatorum. Sextum, fermentum. Septimum, signum vivificae crucis": see "Liber Margaritae", in Angelo MAI (ed. & trans.), *Scriptorum veterum nova collectio*, vol. 10, Romae 1838, p. 355.
- 7 Bawai SORO, "Understanding Church of the East Sacramental Theology: the Theodorian Perspective", in *Syriac Dialogue* 4 (2001) 22–43, at p. 43.

The sacrament of oil of unction cannot be considered corresponding to the chrismation. It is done before the baptism of water.⁸

In the ancient (prior to the 7th century) texts of ES baptism rite and in their commentaries, a post-baptismal anointment is not found. From the 7th century we can see in the baptismal rite of that Church the imposition of hands accompanied by prayer and an anointment between baptism proper and the Eucharist.⁹ The introduction of this rite is attributed to Patriarch Ishoyahb III (652-661), in the middle of the 7th century.¹⁰ One of the formulas of this anointment was “N. has been baptised and perfected.”¹¹ Some scholars interpret this anointment (the third one in the same rite) as the sacrament of confirmation. However, it may be noted, “As well known, the practice of performing the third signing as an anointing has been far from constant in the East Syrian tradition.”¹² In the commentaries of Aphrahat († ca. 345), Ephrem (ca. 306-370) and Narsai (ca. 399-502) the pattern of the baptismal rite consists of “prebaptismal anointing(s), baptism itself and participation in the Eucharist.”¹³ They do not speak of a post-baptismal anointment. As we will see later the third anointment marked the conclusion of the ceremony of baptism, and not baptism itself neither confirmation.

8 Percy G. BADGER, *The Nestorians and their Rituals*, 2 vols., London 1852, reprint: 1987, vol. 2, 153-154.

9 Alphonse RAES, “Où se trouve la confirmation dans le rite Syro-Orientale?,” in *L'Orient Syrien I* (1956) 239-254, at pp. 246, 248.

10 Emil HERMAN, “Confirmation dans l'Église orientale,” in *Dictionnaire de droit canonique*, René NAZ (par), tom. 4, Paris 1944, col. 113.

11 Paul BLAIZE KADICHEENI, *The Mystery of Baptism in “The Seven Causes of the Mysteries of the Church” of Timothy II, Nestorian Patriarch (1318-1332)* (Diss. Universitas S. Thomae Aquinatis), Rome 1972, 169.

12 BLAIZE KADICHEENI, *The Mystery* (nt. 12), 173-176, citation from p. 174.

13 Maxwell E. JOHNSON, *The Rites of Christian Initiation: their Evolution and Interpretation*, Collegeville [Mi.] 1999, 113.

A question which can naturally arise is whether in ES baptismal rite we can identify the elements of the sacrament of confirmation. A close look at the prayer accompanying the imposition of hands reveals that in this prayer the minister prays for the grace required for living a life totally dedicated to Christ even in the midst of evil. It speaks of the grace of the H. Sp. already received at baptism, which will help the baptised to live always as God's servants. Thus it contains mention of the grace of the H. Sp. and the need to be engaged in witnessing to Christ in a life dedicated to his service. Therefore, the imposition of hands with the accompanying prayer together with the anointment in the rite can be considered the sacrament of confirmation/chrisation.¹⁴

The Chaldean Catholic Church made some changes in the rite in order to make the presence of the sacrament of chrisation explicit. Retaining many elements of the original ES rite, the Chaldean rite made the anointing "more perfect" and received the formula of the Roman rite.¹⁵

The use of holy Myron was absent in ES rite of the sacraments of initiation, but the present Chaldean rite uses it. In ES tradition the oil of horn (blessed pure olive oil) was used for anointment;¹⁶ and the baptismal rite was concluded with the Communion.¹⁷

2. Sacraments of Initiation in the pre-Diamper St. Thomas Christian Church

We can reasonably presume that the sacraments of ES Church had been accepted and celebrated in the Church of the St Thomas Chris-

14 RAES, "Où se trouve... ?," (nt. 10), 251–254.

15 RAES, "Où se trouve... ?," (nt. 10), 248.

16 BLAIZE KADICHEENI, *The Mystery* (nt. 12), 144–145. Oil of horn is the oil for anointment used in ES tradition, kept in a horn of an animal. Horn of oil is the horn for keeping holy oil.

17 BLAIZE KADICHEENI, *The Mystery* (nt. 12), 180–182.

tians in the pre-Diamper period. “The Syro-Malabar Church kept the East Syrian Liturgy until the 16th Century with certain modifications and Indian adaptations.”¹⁸

We get a glimpse into the celebration of sacraments in the St Thomas Christian Church in the pre-Diamper period from the narration of Joseph the Indian, a priest from India who visited Lisbon, Rome (where he was received by Pope Alexander VI) and Venice in 1501.¹⁹ According to him,

The children are not baptised before forty days, except in danger of death. They [the St. Thomas Christians] confess as we do and they receive the Eucharist sacredly. They do not have extreme unction, but in its place they bless the body... They consecrate the Body and Blood of Christ, if possible, in azymis i. e. with unleavened bread, as we do. And there they do not have wine, because vine do not grow in those regions; they immerse raisins in water and then squeeze the juice which they use for wine, for many raisins are brought there from China.²⁰

In this account mention is made of the sacraments of baptism, confession and the Eucharist. One can easily presume that the chrismation was celebrated together with baptism, or they were regarded as a single sacrament, as it was then ES custom. He says that there was no anointing of the sick, as a sacrament, but there was the ceremony of blessing the body of the sick people.

With the arrival of the Latin missionaries in the 16th century a process of Latinisation of the liturgy and discipline of the St. Thomas Christian Church began. The bishops of the St Thomas Christians in the 16th century (Mar Jacob, Mar Joseph and Mar Abraham), forced by the Latin

18 VELLIAN, “Pre-Diamper” (nt. 5), 74.

19 Antony VALLAVANTHARA, *India in 1500 AD: The Narratives of Joseph the Indian*, Kottayam 1984, XIX–XX.

20 VALLAVANTHARA, *India* (nt. 20), 173–175. It is clear that the account is written by someone who listened to the said Joseph the Indian. Thus the Indian Christians are referred to as “they,” and the “we” refers to the writer and his community.

missionaries, introduced many Latin practices in the Malabar liturgy and discipline, such as Latin vestments, Portuguese wine and leavened bread for the Eucharistic celebration, obligatory annual confession and Communion, confirmation separated from baptism, clerical celibacy, and forbade the married clergy to celebrate the liturgy.²¹

3. The Implementation of the Tridentine Decisions in the Church of Malabar at Diamper

The Synod of Diamper was only putting the seal of approval on the process of Latinisation which had been under way for about half a century or more. Diamper deals elaborately with the sacraments in its sessions IV-VII.

At the Diamper Synod, the Church of St Thomas Christians received definitively the sacramental doctrine and discipline of the Council of Trent, abandoning those of the Church of the East, which the Church of St Thomas Christians had followed for about 12 centuries. In its session 2, decree 1 it is openly declared that the Synod would be following particularly the teachings of the Council of Trent. In the profession of faith, the participants said, "I do confess likewise, that there are seven true and proper Sacraments of the New Testament... they are baptism, confirmation, the Eucharist, order, penance, matrimony and extreme unction..."²² The decision to follow the Council of Trent is formulated as follows,

21 Jacob KOLLAPARAMBIL, "The Impact of the Synod of Diamper on the Ecclesial Identity of the St Thomas Christians," in *The Synod of Diamper Revisited* (Kanonika 9), George NEDUNGATT (ed.), Rome 2001, 147-172, at pp. 155-158; VELLIAN, "Pre-Diamper" (nt. 5), 76.

22 Scaria ZACHARIA (ed.), *The Acts and Decrees of the Synod of Diamper*, Edamattam 1994, 79. In the present study, all the citations of the Diamper synodal acts are from this book. In this book the editor reproduces the translation of the synodal acts from Michael GEDDES, *The History of the Church of Malabar*, London 1694.

Furthermore, this present Synod, with all the priests and faithful people of this diocese, doth embrace the last holy and sacred council of Trent, and does not only believe and confess all that was determined and approved of therein, and reject and anathematise all that council rejected and condemned; but doth moreover receive and embrace the said council as to all matters therein determined, relating to the reformation of the church, and all Christian people, promising and swearing to govern itself according to the rules thereof, and to observe the same forms that are observed in the catholic church, and as are observed in this province of the Indies, and in all the other provinces and suffragans to the metropolis of Goa; in order to the removing of all abuses and customs that are contrary to the decrees of the said council of Trent; by which only it is resolved to govern itself as to all matters relating to the government of the church, and the reformation of the manners of this faithful and catholic people, any customs, though immemorial, in this bishopric, to the contrary notwithstanding (Session 3, decree 21).

In the light of this declaration of the Synod, it is clear that it was implementing the sacramental theology and discipline of the Council of Trent in the Malabar Church.

4. Diamper Teaching on the Sacraments of Initiation

The Synod of Diamper, together with the norms it enacted, often gives a short historical background as justification for its legislation. Such historical notes are a precious source of information on the pre-Diamper discipline of Kerala Church. We take a quick look at the Diamper decrees which deal with the sacraments of initiation.

Baptism (Session 4 part 1): It is conceived as necessary for salvation (a belief which was alien to St Thomas Christians),²³ the gate of all

23 Among the St Thomas Christians there existed the belief that “everyone may be saved in his own law, all which are good ... lead men to heaven.” The Synod condemned this view in its session 3, decree 4.

spiritual life whereby we become worthy of receiving other sacraments. Through it we, being born again of water and the Spirit, become members of Christ and are incorporated into the Church. It frees us from the original and current sin. Its matter is natural water, and its ordinary minister is a priest, although in emergency situations anybody, who is willing to do what the Church intends, can be the minister.

The forms existed in the St Thomas Christian Church were judged defective and thus condemned. It is stated that there existed two different forms, 1) “N. is baptised and perfected, in the name of the Father, amen, in the name of the Son, amen, in the name of the Holy Ghost, amen;” and 2) “Baptizetur servus Christi, in nomine Patris, amen, in nomine Filii, amen, in nomine Spiritus Sancti, amen” (decree 1). The Synod suppressed these and forbade under pain of excommunication any further use of these forms. Instead, it introduced the Latin form, “I baptise thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (decree 1). The Synod introduces the use of holy oil (blessed by a bishop) in the administration of the sacraments in accordance with the Roman ceremonial (decree 14). On godparents and the spiritual relationship the Synod teaches, “Whereas hitherto the ancient custom of the church of having godfathers and godmothers, has not been in use in this bishopric, by which means there has been no knowledge therein, of the spiritual affinity that is contracted betwixt the party baptised, and the parents thereof, and the godfathers and godmothers; therefore the Synod does command, that all that are baptised, shall have one or two godfathers and godmothers” (decree 15). The minimum age prescribed for them is 14 for men, and 12 for women. In conformity with the instructions of the Council of Trent, the Synod of Diamper lays down that all the parishes should keep a baptismal register (decree 20).

Confirmation (Session 4 part 2): After expounding the doctrine and meaning of this sacrament, the Synod stated that in the Church of St Thomas Christians no such sacrament had existed, and ordered that it be introduced in that Church.

The Synod teaches that the sacrament of confirmation is instituted by Jesus Christ in order to confirm the Christians in faith through the power of the Holy Sp. The matter of this sacrament is holy oil of chrism, made of olive oil and balsam, blessed by the bishop. Its form is “I sign thee with the sign of the cross, and do confirm thee with the chrism of health, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” which the bishop says while he makes the sign of the cross on the forehead of the confirmed person. To this prayer the bishop adds three other prayers, “wherein he beseeches God to fill those that are confirmed with his Divine Spirit.” Its ordinary minister is bishop, although when necessary, with the special permission from Roman See, simple priests may also be the ministers. Its effect is to strengthen and fortify the soul, “that Christians may with boldness confess the name of Christ and his catholic faith” (session 4, confirmation, introduction).

The Synod prescribed that confirmation be administered at the age of reason. Besides, in keeping with the Council of Trent, the Synod decreed that the spiritual affinity between the godparents and the confirmed and their parents would impede marriage between them as in the case of baptism (decree 3).²⁴

The Eucharist (Session 5 part 1): The session 5, on the Eucharist, is divided into two parts: 1) the doctrine of the holy sacrament of the Eucharist, and 2) the doctrine of the sacrifice of the Mass.

On the sacrament of the Eucharist the Synod teaches,

...in veneration, sanctity and dignity it [Eucharist] is the first and most excellent [sacrament], for containing in it the true, real and substantial body and blood, together with the soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, true God, and true Man, our Saviour and Redeemer; which was instituted by him the day before he suffered for us,

²⁴ Council of Trent, session xxiv, “*Canones super reformatione circa matrimonium*,” chapter 2.

as the most sweet remate, or conclusion of all his work, and a memorial of his passion, the fulfilling of all the ancient figures, the greatest of all the miracles that ever he wrought, and for the singular consolation of the faithful in his absence (session 5, Eucharist, introduction).

The matter of the sacrament is the bread of wheat and wine of grape. No other substance such as bread of rice can be used as its matter. A small quantity of water should be mixed with wine before consecration. This represents the mystery of flowing water and blood from the side of Christ on the cross. The effect of this sacrament is the union of the faithful with Christ. The form is the words of consecration said by the priest. Since in every particle of the consecrated bread and every drop of consecrated wine Christ entire is present, it is sufficient to communicate under one species. Veneration, adoration and worship are due to this sacrament (session 5, Eucharist, introduction).

Introducing the feast of the Blessed Sacrament, the Synod lays down,

The Synod desiring that in all things this church [St Thomas Christian Church] may conform herself to the customs of the holy mother, the universal Church of Rome doth command the festivity of the most holy sacrament to be celebrated in all the churches of this diocese, on the Thursday after Trinity Sunday, ... and that thereon, either before or after mass, they make a procession throughout the town, or in some convenient place with all possible solemnity (decree 1).

The reception of this sacrament, at least once a year, in Lent or at Easter, from one's own parish priest, is made compulsory for those who have reached the age of discretion (men 14, women 12). Failure to abide by this norm would incur excommunication (decree 2). However, the faithful are forbidden to receive it without confession (decree 3). Priests are to receive communion on all solemn festivities, and at least once a month, preferably on every Sunday, with due preparation and reverence (decree 7). This norm reveals that daily mass was not a custom in Malabar, indeed not even on every Sunday.

5. Appraisal of the Synod's Teaching

There is no doubt that the Synod was a great help in establishing order and having clarity in the doctrine of sacraments and their celebration in the Church of St Thomas Christians. The observations of the Synod point to the fact that the sacramental theology and their celebration in St Thomas Christian Church was in need of reformation in many respects. The Synod briefly explains the doctrine of all the sacraments, which is a great help for catechetical purpose. It corrected many of the abuses, arising both from malice and ignorance. For this we have to be grateful to the Synod.

However, certain observations of the Synod make us believe that the Synod misunderstood and misinterpreted St Thomas Christians' rite. The Synod, without a proper assessment of the existing sacraments in the St Thomas Christian Church, proceeded to correct the practices.

The words "N. is baptised and perfected, in the name of the Father, amen; in the name of the Son, amen; in the name of the Holy Ghost, amen," which the Synod mistook as one of the formulas of baptism, and prohibited its further use under pain of *ipso facto* excommunication (session 4, baptism, decree 1), were not, in fact, a formula of baptism. This existed in ES baptismal liturgy also. This was the declaration of the conclusion of the act of baptism, not a formula of baptism, the proclamation that the candidate had just been baptised.²⁵

The other formula similarly prohibited by the Synod, was "Baptizetur servus Christi, in nomine Patris, amen; in nomine Filii, amen; in nomine Spiritus Sancti, amen," was the accepted passive formula

25 Giuseppe S. ASSEMANI, *Bibliotheca orientalis clementino vaticana*, t. 3, pars 2, Roma 1728, p. 255; Joseph THOOMPUNKAL, *The Laws on Divine Worship and Especially on Sacraments in the Malabar Church in their Sources* (PIO, unpublished doctoral dissertation) Rome 1986, 51. See also RAES, "Où se trouve... ?," (nt. 10), 250–251.

in Malabar, and it was one of the formulas approved in the Council of Florence.²⁶ Instead of this passive formula, the Synod imposed the Latin formula “I baptise you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” and ordered to blot out all the other formulas from the baptisteries and books (session 4, baptism, decree 1).

The reforms introduced by the Synod of Diamper steadily continued under the bishops who governed SMC after the Synod, even after the institution of SM hierarchy in 1923.

6. The Rite of the Sacraments of Initiation in SMC in the post-Vatican II Period

The post-Vatican II period marked a turning point in the history of the celebration and discipline of the holy mysteries, especially of the sacraments of initiation, in SMC. The domain of CCEO also belongs to this period.

The work on the restoration of the rite of the sacraments of initiation began in 1965. After wide consultations and deep studies different drafts were made, and they were discussed in SM synod in the 1990's. SM synod, after having approved the text of the rites, sent the text to Rome in 1997 for approval. With certain practical suggestions for modifications, Rome returned the text without approving. The draft was further modified accordingly, and then sent to Rome in 2001. This text was approved with certain modifications on 22 June 2004.²⁷ The Roman-approved text of the rites was promulgated by the major archbishop on 1 December 2004, and the rite prescribed in it

26 Bull of Union with the Armenians of 22 Nov. 1439, see Norman P. TANNER (ed. & trans.), *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, London/Washington 1990, vol. 1, 542.

27 Antony NARICULAM, *Sacraments of the Syro-Malabar Church [in Malayalam]*, Aluva 2005, 13–16. The author was the secretary of SM Liturgical Commission for 21 years.

came into effect on 6 January 2005. This sacramentary includes the rite of baptism (separate forms for children and for adults), chrismation with holy myron, sacrament of reconciliation, matrimony and anointing of the sick.²⁸ The rites of ordination and the Eucharist are in separate books.

SMC infant baptism-chrismation rite consists of the following ceremonies:

1. The initial rite begins at the entrance of the church. It ends with the first anointing on the forehead of the child with the oil blessed in the previous baptism. The formula of anointing is “In the name of the Father and of the Son ✠ and of the Holy Spirit N. is anointed with the holy oil.”
2. Liturgy of the Word. There are two readings from OT (Gen. 12: 1-4; Ezek. 36: 24-28), which are optional, one from Rm. 6: 3-11 or Gal 3: 26-29, and the gospel from Jn. 3: 1-8 or from Mt. 3: 13-17.
3. Blessing of oil and water, to be used in the present baptism, with holy Myron.
4. Pre-baptismal anointing on the chest of the infant with the oil which has been just blessed. The formula is “N. is anointed with the holy oil in the name of the Father and of the Son ✠ and of the Holy Spirit.”
5. Baptism by immersion or by infusion (there are 3 options: 1. pure immersion; 2. seating the child in water and pouring water on its head; 3. pouring water on the head as is normally done in Latin rite). The formula is “N. is baptised in the name of the Father ✠, amen, and of the Son ✠, amen, and of the Holy Spirit ✠, amen.” Then the child is given white dress and a lighted candle.

28 See the decree in SYRO-MALABAR BISHOPS' SYNOD [COMMISSION FOR LITURGY], *The Sacraments of the Syro-Malabar Church: Infant Baptism and Chrismation (Confirmation), Adult Baptism and Chrismation (Confirmation), Holy Matrimony, Reconciliation, Anointing of the Sick*, Kochi 2005, 3.

6. (For chrismation) imposition of hands and chrismation with holy Myron. The formula is: “N, having been baptised, is now perfected and confirmed. In the name of the Father and of the Son ✠ and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. The anointment is on the forehead.
7. Crowning (optional).
8. Concluding prayers.

Adult baptism-chrismation

The rite of adult baptism-chrismation is celebrated in four stages with sufficient interval between each stage. The period of intervals could be months or years. For sufficient reason, all the stages could be reduced into one service. Each stage has its prayers and readings. This rite consists of:

I stage: Entrance to the catechumenate. The first anointing is part of this stage. The catechumen is given the book of the gospels.

II stage: Christian formation of the catechumen. The creed is recited at this stage. Towards the end of the ceremony of this stage the catechumen is given the cross.

III stage: The Lord’s prayer and the pre-baptismal anointing, with the oil blessed during the ceremony of this stage.

IV stage: Blessing of water, baptism (3 possibilities as in the case of infants) and chrismation with holy Myron.

The rite of the child baptism is an adapted form of the East Syrian baptismal rite.²⁹ The oil of coconut, olive or sesame can be used for anointment. This oil is blessed by the minister of baptism in the rite itself, and not blessed before. In the new rite the sacred vestments for baptism are the same as those used for the Qurbana. The restored rite gives three options for the way of baptising, namely, “...by immersing the child in water thrice, or by making the child sit in water and pouring water over the head thrice in the form of the cross, or by

29 NARICULAM, *Sacraments* (nt. 28), 41, 49.

pouring water over the head thrice in the form of the cross” (general instruction, n. 10). There should be a godfather and a godmother.³⁰

If the baptism-chrismation ceremony is inserted in the Qurbana, the latter continues with the offertory. Otherwise, the rite of these two sacraments is concluded with the final prayers and blessing. The baptised can receive the Communion immediately after baptism. If the baptism-chrismation ceremony is not followed by the Qurbana, normally the baptised receives the Communion on the next day by participating in the Divine Liturgy. The rite of baptism-chrismation is well-fitted and inserted in the rite of the Qurbana. That demonstrates the unity of these three sacraments.

7. SM Particular Law on the Sacraments of Initiation

The norms contained in the liturgical texts of a *sui iuris* Church are part of the particular law of that Church (CCEO c. 1493 §2). We do not deal with liturgical rubrics (to which CCEO c. 3 refers) of SMC in this section. Here we are interested in SMPL on the sacraments of initiation, enacted by SM synod as required by CCEO, and not contained in the liturgical texts.

SM synod has codified its PL and published in a volume of *Synodal News* (vol. 11, May 2003),³¹ the official bulletin of SMC. In this section we make a brief survey of the important norms on the sacraments of initiation contained in SMPL.

30 This is the custom. The liturgical text prescribes that the godmother should carry the child (general prescriptions for baptism, n. 2). During the procession towards the sanctuary, after the chrismation, the godfather carries the lighted candle, which has been given to the child (rubric on p. 48 in the liturgical text). CCEO requires at least one godparent (c. 684 §1).

31 *Synodal News* 11 (May 2003) is the main source of this section. The articles referred to are from the section “Divine Worship and especially on Sacraments.”

The ordinary minister of baptism is the parish priest of the baptised. If the one to be baptised is below the age of fourteen, the parish priests of the father and of the mother have equal competence (art. 134 §§1, 2). Evidently, CCEO c. 678 §1, which prohibits someone to baptise in the territory of others, has to be respected here. SMPL prescribes that the godparents should have completed 18 years of age, and if they are from outside the parish of the baptism, they should present testimonial letters from their own parish priests (art. 135 §§1 and 2). “Only for a just and grave reason shall baptism be administered in private houses” (art. 136). “The sacrament of the Holy Eucharist is to be solemnly administered at the age of reason. There is however, provision for giving Holy Eucharist earlier together with baptism” (art. 137 §1). “The sacrament of baptism and chrismation are to be administered together as per norms of canons 694-695 and according to the prescriptions in the liturgical texts” (art. 137 §2).

The Eucharistic bread is to be made of wheat flour and shall have sufficient thickness (art. 139). The vestments approved by SM synod are to be used for the liturgical celebrations (art. 140). Holy Qurbana is to be celebrated only in churches; in other places it can be celebrated as per the eparchial norms (art. 141). One-hour Eucharistic fast is obligatory, but fast of longer time is recommended (art. 143). Frequent reception of communion is encouraged outside the paschal season also (art. 144). Deacons are also ministers of communion (art. 145). In case of necessity the religious and trained lay people can also distribute it as extraordinary ministers. The extraordinary ministers of the Communion need the approval of the eparchial bishop (art. 146). They may not distribute it when there are sufficient priests and deacons (art. 146 §2). Such ministers can be major seminarians at least with the order of *Karoyusa*, religious brothers who have made their final profession, superior or assistant superior of a convent or any religious sister who has made her final profession, and lay people of good standing (art. 146 §3). Religious and lay people must be presented and commissioned as extraordinary ministers of the Holy Communion

by the eparchial bishop (art. 146 §4). All these extraordinary ministers must receive special training (art. 146 §5). They have to carry out their services according to the directions given by the parish priests (art. 146 §7). As for the offering for the Divine Liturgy (mass stipend), the eparchial norms have to be followed (art. 147).

As we see, SMPL gives clear norms on the sacraments of initiation. CCEO together with SM liturgical prescriptions and SMPL constitute a complete code of law for the liturgical celebrations and administration of sacraments in SMC.

However, there are a few factors which we have to consider as people engaged in the study of canon law.

The major archbishop in the decree of the promulgation of the text of the sacraments of baptism, chrismation, reconciliation, matrimony and anointing of the sick (1 Dec. 2004), declared that the new rite of these sacraments would come into effect from 6 Jan. 2005, and that “all other texts [of the rite of these sacraments] hitherto in use for administering the above-mentioned sacraments stand abrogated from 6th January 2005.”³² This decree is also part of SMPL.

After this decree was issued, some eparchial bishops including that of Ernakulam (the eparchy of the major archbishop) permitted the priests to use the abrogated texts, and to administer the sacraments of initiation separately as it was the practice until then. These bishops may have used their authority to give dispensation from following the liturgical laws. They are entitled to do so, since the eparchial bishops can dispense from PL and common law under certain condition, and since SM synod has not reserved to itself the dispensation from liturgical laws (c. 1538 §1). The canon says “An eparchial bishop, whenever he judges that it contributes to their spiritual good, is able to dispense in special cases the Christian faithful, over whom he exercises power according to the norm of law, from laws of the common law and laws

32 See the decree in SYRO-MALABAR BISHOPS' SYNOD, *The Sacraments* (nt. 29), 3.

of the particular law of his own Church *sui iuris*, unless a reservation has been made by the authority which issued the law” (1538 §1). It is not clear what is meant by “special cases.” Dispensation is generally given only in single cases (eg., c. 414 §1 n. 2).

Since in this case the dispensation is given by competent authority we can reasonably presume that it is valid (c. 1536 §1), and the sacraments celebrated according to the old form (against the new norms of PL) are valid. Hence from a purely juridical point of view, things look alright.

However, there is still the question whether the eparchial bishop can give such a “sweeping” dispensation, that is, so general as to affect all priests in the whole eparchy in all cases? Can the opposition of some priests of certain eparchies be taken as special cases? Does this dispensation contribute to the spiritual good of the Christian faithful? Besides, this has created a great amount of confusion in the SMC: some eparchies follow the new rite of sacraments, and other eparchies follow the old rite; and in certain eparchies some priests follow one way and other priests follow other way.

Promulgating the new regulations for the administration of sacraments and other norms of ecclesiastical discipline in 1606, Bishop Francis Ros SJ, the first Latin bishop of the St. Thomas Christians, wrote, “... as there are no regulations for our Malankara Church until now, among priests and laity there is no peace and concord. Everyone acts independently as one wishes. Grieved with this state of affairs, we determine to write the laws.”³³ Bishop Ros was referring to the confusion existed before he promulgated the regulations, whereas I refer now to the confusion which exists after the promulgation of the regulations. The confusion then was much more justifiable than today.

33 The MS of Bishop Ros is kept in the Vatican Library, “Fondo Vat. Codex Borgiano-Indiano” 18, f. 3, as cited in THOOMPUNKAL, *The Laws* (nt. 26), 20, see also p. 19 fn. 39.

Conclusion

Today SMC, being a major archiepiscopal Church, is free to go beyond the imposition of the Synod of Diamper, to receive what is helpful for its organic growth and to abandon what is not helpful. This freedom has been relatively well used by SM synod to trace to the origins of SM liturgical rite, and to restore the rite of the administration of the sacraments and their theology in keeping with the genuine tradition of this Church. This is evident from the new sacramentary of SMC promulgated in 2004. Such was part of the response of SMC to the call of Vatican II to return to its ancestral traditions (OE 6). This return to the rite of the ancestors in SMC is not a return pure and simple or blind, but is part of the organic progress as willed by the same Council. The restored rite is the adapted version of the ancient rite.

The struggle of this Church to trace itself back to its liturgical roots has not been easy, and often led to open quarrels between rivals, one wanting to retain the Latinised version and the other wanting to restore the Church's ancient rite. The Latinisation which began in the early 16th century continued until recently, and we would be right in saying that its repercussions still continue.

The work on the texts of the liturgical rite of all the sacraments having been completed, now it is up to the celebrants to restore their spirit, adapting it to the genuine tradition of this Church, and to the prescriptions of both the common code and the PL.

abstract

The Particular Law on the Sacraments of Initiation in the Syro-Malabar Church

The liturgy of the Syro-Malabar Church (SMC) belongs to the East Syrian family. This fact is true also for the liturgy of the sacraments of initiation. Just like in any Eastern Church, in the SMC these sacraments were celebrated together, namely, together with the baptism, the baptised was given confirmation and the Holy Communion. Its sacramental theology, liturgy and law were consonant with this practice. With the intervention of the Latin missionaries in the 16th century and afterwards the Syro-Malabar liturgy underwent drastic changes and it adopted the Latin sacramental theology, liturgy and law with some minor changes. After Vatican II, the SMC made attempts to restore its ancient liturgy. The revision process took many years. The revised text of the liturgy of the sacraments was approved on 22 June 2004. The Roman-approved text of the rites was promulgated by the major archbishop on 1 December 2004, and the rite prescribed in it came into effect on 6 January 2005. The present study makes an overview of the ancient liturgy of the sacraments of initiation, the changes made under the Latin influence and the revised liturgy from the perspective of law.

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