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THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE SYRO- MALABAR RESTORED ADULT BAPTISM (INITIATION)

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Abstract

Imitating the early practice,¹ the Syro-Malabar Church for the first time has introduced adult initiation in 2005.² The four stages within the proposed intervals of months, years, or different liturgical seasons resemble 2/3/4 years of early catechumenism.³ To make the children of God perfect, the Church has always maintained the unity of the sacraments of initiation as the gateway/door to the Church (AG, 7). Baptism with new birth, chrismation with new strength, and Eucharist with new nourishment equip to run a good run to attain the awaiting heavenly crown of justice (2 Tm 4:7-8).

Keywords: Aphrahat, Baptism, Chrismation, Crowning, *Effata*, Ephrem, Eucharist, Fonts, *Muron*, Narsai, Olive Oil, *Viaticum*

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¹A.F.J. Klijn, ed., *The Acts of Thomas*, Leiden: Brill, 1962; E.J. Yarnold, *The Awe-Inspiring Rites of Initiation*, Insburgh: T & T Clark, 1994, 1-54.

²*Sacraments of the Syro-Malabar Church*, Kakkanad: Secretariat, Commission for Liturgy, 2005, 58-118.

³*Sacraments of the Syro-Malabar Church* 57.

Introduction

The Syro-Malabar Church following the East Syrian tradition⁴ continued to use it as the St Thomas apostolic tradition until the liturgical Latinization process of the Diamper Synod in 1599, which disrupted the integrity of sacraments of initiation. The restoration took place in 2005 by the Syro-Malabar synod publishing the new text for the administration of sacraments, which includes also the adult initiation.⁵ This is a new attempt in imitation of the ancient practice of the four stages of initiation process within two/three/four years as pre-catechumenate, catechumenate and enrolment, purification and enlightenment, and initiation.⁶

The proposed intervals between four stages are months, years, or different liturgical seasons. The four stages may be celebrated together only in case of urgency with special permission of the hierarch. Construction of baptismal pools are recommended in cathedral parishes.⁷ The structure and theology of four stages manifest the significance of seeking, listening, following up, and becoming Christ in Christian life as follows.

1. Structure

The text in four stages is integrated with *Qurbana*. The first stage integrated only with the *Enarxis* (introductory part) and the liturgy of the Word seeks entry to the sheepfold of Christ. The second stage integrated again only with *Enarxis* and the liturgy of the Word trains and teaches Gospel truths. The third stage integrated with *Enarxis*, the liturgy of the Word, and the preparation rite enlightens and purifies the candidate to be closer with Christ. The fourth stage integrated with the whole *Qurbana* administers mystagogically⁸ the baptism, chrismation, and Eucharist as the sacraments of initiation.

⁴J.E.Y. de Kelaita, ed., *The Liturgy of the Church of the East: Compared in Details with Many Ancient Manuscripts, with their Name and Date is Given in the Syriac Introduction*, Syriac, Mosul: The Assyrian Press, 1928, for the Order of Baptism, see Pages 107-160; G. Mookan, K.A. Paul (trans.), *The Liturgy of the Holy Apostles Adai and Mari together with the Liturgies of Mar Theodorus and Mar Nestorius and the Order of Baptism*, Trichur, Kerala: Mar Narsai Press, 1967, 117-173; G. Diettrich, *Die Nestorianische Tauf liturgie by Iso Yahb, Adiabenus*, Giessen: Rikersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1903.

⁵*Sacraments of the Syro-Malabar Church*, Kakkannad, Kochi: Secretariat, Commission for Liturgy, 2005, 57-118.

⁶Yarnold E., *The Awe-Inspiring Rites of Initiation: The Origins of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, Edinburgh: T & T Clark Limited, 1994, 1-54.

⁷*Sacraments of the Syro-Malabar Church*, 57.

⁸Moolan. J., "Liturgical Mystagogy," Part I, *Christian Orient* 33, 1 (2012) 2-18; Part II, *Christian Orient* 34, 1 (2013) 22-38.

2. Theology

Four stages contain the theology of preparing, edifying, enlightening, and sanctifying the candidates. The first stage seals the candidates to identify them as Christ's own. The second stage catechises Christian faith for a worthy entry to the next stage. The third stage enlightens Christian values as foundations of life. The fourth stage completes the attempt to become perfect members of the Church through participation in the paschal mysteries of Christ's death, resurrection, power of the Holy Spirit, and union with the mystical body.

a. First Stage of Entrance to the Catechumenate

This stage of identifying the true aspirants includes enquiry, laying on of hand, renunciation, declaration, anointing, and handing over of the Gospel to the aspirant.

1) Enquiry

This enquiry verifies the sincerity in seeking Christ as the redeemer and the grace giver in order to proceed with the service.

2) Laying on of Hand

This is a sign of welcome given to the aspirants. Placing the right hand on their heads the celebrant requests the Lord to accept them to fulfil their wish.

3) Renunciation

Renunciation liberates the candidate from the slavery of Satan by putting away the old person (Eph 4:22; Col 3:9). For this rite, in the early Church, all had to face the west standing bare-footed on sackcloth and to remove outer garments, and then to stretch out hands to God in an attitude of prayer, and kneel down signifying the ancient fall (Gen 3:23-24; Acts 26:14) and the present adoration to Christ (Heb 2:10).⁹ The stripping signified the avoidance of sin resembling Adam's original innocence in Paradise (Gen 2:25) and Christ's naked entry to and departure from the world (Col 2:15).¹⁰ Then the celebrant had to breathe on their face to blow the devil away.¹¹ Breathing was a conventional gesture of contempt. Breathing

⁹West being the place of sunset to the entry of night symbolizes darkness (Satan). Cyril of Jerusalem, *Mystegogical Catecheses* 1.2.: PG 33, 1069 A; Ambrose, *De mysteriis* 2.7.

¹⁰Ambrose, *Ps.61 Enarr* 32: PL 14, 1180; Cyril of Jerusalem, *Mystagogical Catecheses* 1.2-8.

¹¹Pseudo Barnabas, *Epistle* 16.7.

on emperor's statue was treason.¹² Abbot Anthony used to blow out on devils when they appeared to him.¹³ The Byzantines used to blow out the devil and spit on his face.¹⁴

4) Declaration

Acceptance of Christ as the sole Leader and Saviour is the declaration of seeking refuge in Him (Ps 34:2-5). For this, in the early Church, all turned to the east and declared directly their allegiance either to Christ or Trinity proclaiming, "I enter into your service O Christ" or "I believe in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and in one baptism of repentance."¹⁵ East is the place of Paradise (Gen 2:8) and the mother of luminaries. The glory of the Lord came from the east (Ezek 43:2; 47:1); at incarnation a star appeared in the east (Mt 2:2); ascension took place in the east of Jerusalem (Acts 1:11); and the second coming will be from the east (Mt 24:27).

4) Anointing

Signing on forehead, with reserve oil by thumb, symbolises sealing/branding of the sheep as Christ's own.¹⁶ It protects from devil, enables to inherit heavenly glory and helps to put off the old sinful person.

a) Forehead Stamping

Forehead being the highest and the noblest part of the body to where one looks at while talking, manifests the Christian dignity of meeting the Lord face to face, proclaiming public allegiance to Him (1 Cor 13:12; 2 Cor 3:18). Demons, seeing this seal on forehead from far away, make a long way off and fear to come closer to harm, but will still continue to declare war from afar seeking occasions to attack. Earlier, the whole body was anointed as armour against the weapons of demons (Eph 6:14-17)¹⁷ and a symbol of fortifying athletes to run a good race of victory (2 Tm 4:7-8).

Earlier, the slaves and soldiers were marked with their master's/emperor's sign on foreheads or hands to indicate to whom

¹²Augustine, *Op. imperf. Contra Jul.* 3.199: PL 45, 1333.

¹³Athanasius, *Vita Antonii* 40: PL 26, 901; see also Tertullian, *Apologeticum* 23.16: PL 1, 415.

¹⁴Pseudo-Dionysius, *De ecclesiastica hierarchia* 2.5: PG 3, 420; Ambrose, *De mysteriis* 2.7; E.C. Whitaker, *Documents of the Baptismal Liturgy*, London: SPCK, 1960, 111.

¹⁵Cyril of Jerusalem, *Mystagogic Catecheses* 1.6, 9; Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Baptismal Homilies* 2.12, 21.

¹⁶Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Baptismal Homilies* 2.23; John Chryostom, *Baptismal Instructions* 10.16.

¹⁷*Didascalia Apostolorum*, 16.

they owed their service. Likewise, Christians are signed on foreheads to show their belongingness to Christ, urging them to witness Christ boldly.¹⁸ Forehead, being the first place of blushing to reveal shame or embarrassment while talking, becomes proud of Christ with this signing.¹⁹

East Syrians – except the Syro-Malabarites who sign with the thumb – make this signing with the right index finger from below upwards and right to left to symbolise absolution of sins by disrobing the old person with all his deceitful lusts (Rom 6:6; Eph 4:22; Col 3:9). From right to left manifests that in Christ the “right” reigns over the “left” by raising the baptised to the heavenly abode (Ps 110:1; 118:15-16; Lk 23:33, 42-43).²⁰ The index finger indicates the downfall of Adam and Eve in Paradise.

b) Salting of the Tongue

Earlier practice of salting the Tongue after the anointing symbolised three things: 1) Healing by the physician of physicians, 2) Preservation in the rampart of salvation, and 3) Intellectual maturity of wisdom.²¹ Pre-Christian Romans used salt for the rite of casting out of demons.²² Salting of the tongue was a part of the Latin baptismal rite until 1969, whereas the easterners never had it, and even today it is not there.

5) Gospel Handing Over

This promotes desire to search for Gospel values to lead a righteous life (Rom 13:11b-14). Gospel helps the aspirants to be acquainted with Christ.

b. Second Stage of Training and Study

This stage trains the aspirants to practice divine truths towards the preliminary knowledge of Christianity. It includes the rites like *effata* (to be opened) prayer, enquiry, liberation prayer, handing over of the Cross, and forehead marking with the sign Cross.

1) *Effata* Prayer

Effata prayer requests to open the way to eternal life, signifying the opening of faculties to understand the manifold rites in the following stages.

¹⁸Ambrose, *De obitu Valentiniani*: PL 16, 1376-1377.

¹⁹Augustine, *Sermon* 215.5: PL 38, 1072; *Sermon* 317.4.5: PL 38, 1437.

²⁰Timothy II, *The Mystery of Baptism* 16.

²¹John the Deacon, *Ad Senarium virum illustrem* 3: PL 59, 402.

²²H.A. Kelly, *The Devil at Baptism: Ritual, Theology, and Drama*, Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1985, 111.

Earlier in the West, this was an elaborate rite. Imitating Jesus (Mk 7:34), the bishop touches the candidates' ears and nostrils uttering *effata* – be opened. This empowers the ears to grasp the true meaning of faith (Job 27:3; Cant 1:3; Rom 10:17), and the nostrils to enjoy the fragrance of Christ (2 Cor 2:15).²³

2) Enquiry

It verifies the sincerity of searching Jesus in Gospel given to them in the previous stage and indicates the candidates' readiness to embrace Jesus as good shepherd, safeguard, and redeemer (Ps 23:1-6). The purpose is to strengthen them to fight against temptations to delay baptism until the end of sinful youth time, and to avoid the fear of difficulties involved in getting absolution after baptism. Since baptism demanded a radical change, some would not receive baptism until they felt completely ready for it. For example, St. Ambrose remained a catechumen until people chose him to the bishopric of Milan in 347.²⁴ So too St Augustine (d. 430) remained unbaptised until his conversion.²⁵

3) Liberation prayer

This payer of exorcism liberates from the bondage of devil and the occasions of sins. Exorcism was an elaborate rite in the early Church.²⁶ For this rite the catechumens, wearing sackcloth of goat's hair, stretching out hands, and lowering eyes in an attitude of silent prayer, stood barefooted before the exorcist. Sackcloth signified penitence and repentance. Goat's hair indicated the tunic of Adam and Eve after fall, and reminded of original sin due to slavery to devil. Standing indicated the wish to count as sheep rather than goats at the final judgement (Mt 25:32-33). Then, one of the ministers would remove the candidates' outer garments and breathes on their faces to fill them with the fear of God and make them alert in the following up of Christ. Then the bishop, laying his right hand on them, says the prayer of exorcism to drive the devil away.

4) Handing over of the Cross

This ceremony helps to carry joyfully the daily crosses in life (Mt 10:38). "There is no crown without Cross," should be the Christian

²³Hippolytus, *Ap. Trad.* 20.28; Ambrose, *De sacramentis* 1.2; 3.1ff; John Deacon, *Ad Senarium* 4: PL 59, 402.

²⁴Paulinus, *Vita Ambrosii* 7: PL 14, 29.

²⁵*Confessions* 1.11.17.

²⁶Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Baptismal Homilies* 1.12; John Chrysostom, *Baptismal Instructions* 10.14-16; Cyril of Jerusalem, *Procat.* 9; Augustine, *Sermon* 216.10-11: PL 38, 1082; Egeria, *Peregrinatio* 46.1; Hippolytus, *Ap. Trad.* 20.3.

motto of life. The four scripture lessons of this stage ask to profess faith in Christ the son of the living God (Mt 16:13-18) with ardent love (Deut 6:1-7) to become the children of God (Gal 4:4-7) and the bride of Christ (Is 62:1-5) even amidst difficulties. Cross is the symbol of salvation, zeal, trust, and love to fortify the fight against devil.

5) Marking the Sign of Cross

At the beginning of the period of Great Fast of the final year of catechumenate, the bishop makes the scrutiny on the candidates with their sponsors. If found satisfactory, the bishop makes the sign of the Cross on their foreheads and blesses them. Then, their names are registered in the book of life as an immediate preparation for baptism on Easter Sunday.²⁷

c. Third Stage of Lord's Prayer and Anointing

This stage to renew candidates through Lord's Prayer and Anointing includes enquiry, Lord's Prayer, laying on of hand, oil blessing, and anointing.

1) Enquiry

Scrutinises faith in Christ's Cross handed over in the previous stage to increases thirst for Christ (Ps 42:1-3, 5, 8, 11) and to promote desire to live up to the baptismal mysteries.

2) Lord's Prayer

Only now the Lord's Prayer (Mt 6:9-15) is proclaimed to them, because they were not competent for it earlier. This custom of withholding certain matters from unworthy is known as the rule of secrecy (*Disciplina arcana*) in accordance with the Lord's command, "Not to give dogs what is holy, and not to throw pearls before swine" (Mt 7:6). The purpose is to increase desire to know hidden matters.²⁸ Other scripture lessons in this stage on Abraham's call to become a great nation (Gen 12:1-4), Good News of liberation (Is 61:1-3, 6, 8- 9), and call for unity (Eph 4:5-6) help to increase thirst for divine sonship.

3) Laying on of Hand

This rite makes the dwelling places of the Holy Spirit for a worthy entry to the fold of the elect to adore the Lord in truth and spirit and to offer Him the sacrifices of praise (Ps 140:3; 1 Pet 2:5; Heb 13:15).

²⁷During the fourth century, they preferred baptism on Easter Sunday. See Pope Ciracus (384-399), *Letter to Himerius* 2.3: PL 13, 1134; Tertullian, *De baptesimo*, 19; Augustne (d.430), *De fide. et op.* 6.9: PL 40, 202; *Sermon.* 216.1: PL 38, 1077.

²⁸Augustine, *In Joannis Evagelium* 96.3: PL 35, 1875.

4) Oil blessing

Oil blessing and its mixing with *muron* in anaphoral form give thanks to God the loving and merciful Father for sending His beloved Son with the promise of resurrection and remission of sins. This rite infuses Holy Spirit in the oil to make it the oil of immortality. Thus the natural oil becomes the holy oil of life, sanctity, eternity, and priesthood that provides deliverance from sinful passions.

5) Anointing

This pre-baptismal anointing with thumb on forehead helps to put on new person and sets apart to Christ alone. East Syrians, Except for Syro-Malabarites, this anointing is done with three central fingers from up downwards and right to left for the uplifting of spiritual life.²⁹ Three central fingers represent Holy Trinity imprinting the gift of knowledge on Trinity.³⁰ From up downwards signing symbolises the putting on of new persons from above to create the true image of God (Eph 4:24; Col 3:10). From right to left manifests that in Christ the “right” reigns over the “left” by raising the baptised to the heavenly abode (Ps 110:1; 118:15-16; Lk 23:33, 42-43).³¹ The final blessing empowers to glorify God always and to receive worthily the initiation in the next stage.

d. Fourth Stage of Baptism (Initiation)

This stage of initiation integrated with *Qurbana* includes water blessing, *muron* mixing, baptism, chrismation, and Eucharist to create, perfect, and unite the Children of God.

1) Water Blessing

This rite in anaphoral form invokes the Holy Spirit to come down and dwell in the water to make it the life-giving water. Parallelism to this act is found in the brooding of the Spirit over the primordial water that caused creation (Gen 1:2).

2) *Muron* Mixing

The celebrant marks in water the sign of the Cross with *muron*, but no stirring allowed, because the angel’s stirring of Shiloham water was for the recovery of sickness (Jn 5:1-9), but baptismal water is for the adoption of the children of God, not for healing. *Muron* mixing destroys the evil elements and vivifies the vital elements in water.

²⁹T. Spidlik, *The Spirituality of the Christian East*, 104.

³⁰Timothy II, *The Mystery of Baptism*, 16, 17.

³¹Timothy II, *The Mystery of Baptism* 16.

Just as the water of deluge destroyed evil ones and saved good ones (Gen 8), so also the baptismal water destroys sin and saves life. Just as the water of Red Sea destroyed Pharaoh and saved Israel (Ex 14), so also the baptismal water destroys Satan and saves the baptised. This rite makes the baptismal font the womb of Church to give birth to Her children. The womb imagery of baptismal font is predominant both in the East and in the West.³² There are five types of fonts in Church as the quadrilateral, polygonal, octagonal, hexagonal, and quatrefoil with rich symbolisms.

(1) Quadrilateral

This mid-third century four-sided irregular-rectangle coffin shaped fonts resembled tomb as the symbol of burial with Christ (Rom 6:4; Gal 2:20; Colo 3:3).³³ There were also rectangular fonts, seemingly older than quadrilateral font, but without any specific paschal symbolism other than mere water containers for baptism.

(2) Polygonal

Fourth century round/oval shaped fonts symbolised the virginal womb of the mother Church, the place of rebirth in the stream surged from the pierced side of Christ (Jn 19:34)³⁴ to cleanse from original sin.³⁵

(3) Octagonal Font

Fourth century eight-sided fonts symbolised the eighth day of resurrection as the eschatological dawning of a new age of our own resurrection (Rom 6:4b, 9-11; Col 3:1).³⁶ Ambrose of Milan (374-397) propagated them to signify cleansing and rebirth through burial and resurrection.³⁷

³²Irenaeus of Lyons (177-202), *Adversus haereses* 4; Tertullian of Carthage (d. 220), *De baptismo* 1; Ambrose (374-397), *De mysteriis* 9.59; Aphrahat (d. ca. 345), *Demonstration* 6.14; Ephrem (306-373), *Hymnen de virginitate* 7.7; *Hymnen de Nativitae* 8.9; Narsai (399-502), *Liturgical Homilies* 21.46; Theodore of Mopsuestia (392-428), *Catechetical Homilies* 14.

³³J.G. Davies, *The Architectural Setting of Baptism*, London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1962, 19.

³⁴R. Krautheimer, "Introduction to an Iconography of Medieval Architecture," in R. Krautheimer, *Studies in Early Christian, Medieval, and Renaissance Art*, New York: New York University Press, 1969, 121.

³⁵P.A. Underwood, *The Fountain of Life in Manuscripts of the Gospels*, Dumbarton Oaks Papers 5, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950, 55.

³⁶R. Krautheimer, "Introduction to an Iconography of Medieval Architecture," 149-150.

³⁷Ambrose, *De Sacramentis* 1.12; 2.19-20, 23; 3.1; *De Mysteriis* 3.11; 14.21.

(4) Hexagonal Font

This fifth century six-sided fonts symbolised dying with Christ on sixth day of the week (Friday) when Adam was created to be united with Christ (Rom 6:3, 5-6; Gal 2:20; Col 3:3).³⁸ Hexagonal fonts in octagonal baptisteries symbolised dying with Christ for rising with Him.³⁹

(5) Quatrefoil Font

Fifth or sixth century cruciform fonts symbolised crucifying and rising with Christ (Rom 6:3-11) to overcome victory over death.⁴⁰

3) Initiation

The initiation rite includes baptism, Chrismation, and Eucharist in Trinitarian formula for new birth, new strength, and new nourishment.

a. Baptism

Four ways of baptism in the Church are submersion, immersion, effusion, and aspersion. The restored text permits baptism either by immersion or effusion aspersion.⁴¹ Orientals follow submersion or immersion, while the Occidentals follow effusion or aspersion. Jesus' baptism in Jordan River by submersion made Jordan the first baptismal font (Mt 3:13, 16) in history and declared no further deluge on earth (Gen 9:14-16).

All methods signify dying and rising with Christ. In submersion the whole body is dipped in and raised from water. In immersion the head alone is dipped in and raised from water. In effusion water is poured over the head as baptismal washing and cleansing. In aspersion water is sprinkled on the head of the sick one, known as clinical baptism.

b. Chrismation

This post baptismal anointing makes perfect the grace received in baptism. Holy Spirit enlightens the minds and hearts to become courageous to proclaim Gospel to the world.

1) Enquiry

Examines the sincerity of witnessing Christ to the world and the acceptability before God when signed and sealed with chrism.

³⁸C.F. Rogers, *Baptism and Christian Archaeology*, Oxford: Gorgias Press, 1903, 347.

³⁹J.G. Davies, *The Architectural Setting of Baptism*, London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1962, 21.

⁴⁰J.G. Davies, *The Architectural Setting of Baptism*, 122.

⁴¹S.A. Stauffer, *On Baptismal Fonts: Ancient and Modern*, Nottingham: Gorgias Press, 1994, 46-47.

2) Laying on of Hands

Laying both hands on candidates' head, the celebrant invokes the Holy Spirit to come and seal the soul with His gifts (1 Cor 1:21-22). This rite makes them soldiers of Christ to become loving and charitable to others in communion with God. Holy Spirit strengthens faith, cherishes hope, and eradicates disappointments.

3) Chrismatic Anointing

Laying right hand on the head, prays to make the baptised the fragrance of Christ, and anoints *muron* with right thumb on the forehead. The East Syrian Chaldeans and Assyrians make this anointing from below upwards and right to left signifying Christ's predominance of right over the left and the entry to the glory of God.

(a) Messianic Anointing

This is a messianic anointing of the Anointed One (Christ) to make Christians the anointed ones by sealing with the gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 1:21-22).⁴² Holy Chrism's (*Muron*) real presence of the Holy Spirit in it is just like the real presence of Christ in Eucharistic bread and wine.

(b) Olive Oil

Olive oil symbolises divine blessings (Deut 7:13f; Jer 31:12.), love (Canticle 1:3), joy (Ps 23:5), happiness (Ps 92:10) and fraternal union (Ps 132:1-2). It is believed to be an ideal conductor to transmit the Spirit's power of the Holy. For Ephrem, olive oil is the symbol of Christ, the anointed One, and a dear friend of the Holy Spirit.⁴³ Anointing with it represents the uncorrupted garment of divine sonship.⁴⁴

The olive tree symbolises the just man blessed by God⁴⁵ and the divine wisdom given through revelation.⁴⁶ The two olive trees on the right and left of the seven-lamp golden stand and the two olive branches by the side of the two golden pipes of oil supply to the lamps in the vision of Zechariah represent the two sons of oil (Zech 4:11-14). They are the king and the high priest, the two anointed ones of God, to guide and enlighten people to find salvation.

⁴²Ambrose, *Sermons* 3.8; Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Baptismal Homilies* 3.19.

⁴³*H. Virg.* 7.6.1-2.

⁴⁴Is 6:1; Ps 45:8; Lk 4:8; Acts 10:38.

⁴⁵Ps 52:8; 128:3; Sir 50:10.

⁴⁶Eccles 24:14, 19-23.

(c) Effects of Anointing

The effects are, setting apart, empowerment, and protection that help to witness Gospel truths to achieve entry to the kingdom of God.

(1) Setting Apart

Anointing sets apart persons to God through the seal of ownership and illumination (2 Cor 1:21-22), providing power to do good works (2 Co 5:17).

(2) Authorizing

Anointing authorises to do wonderful things like the anointing at Jordan that enabled Jesus to fulfil manifold ministries like release to the captives, sight to the blind, freedom to the oppressed, and execute an acceptable year of the Lord (Lk 4:18-19). Like manner, Chrismation authorizes the chrismated to fulfil different ministries in the Church (1 Jn 2:27).

(3) Protection

Anointing protects from all harms. When the Jews picked up stones to throw at Jesus (Jn 8:59), He walked away unharmed. When the Jews determined to kill Paul, God protected him in Jerusalem (Acts 21:27f). The chrismated are protected to serve those who try for salvation (Heb 1:14).

c. Eucharist

Holy Communion, through perfect union with Christ, makes the perfect members of the Church.

1) Integrity

Just as the natural new-borns are immediately nourished with natural food (milk), so also the spiritual new-borns should immediately be nourished with spiritual food (Eucharist). Thus, Eucharist is the integral part of the initiation. The basis of this integrity is based on two ordinances of Jesus on baptism and Eucharist, and on Church tradition.

a) Ordinances

On the basis of Jesus' two commands, one on baptism to be born again (Jn 3:5) and the other on Eucharist to take, eat, and drink (Mt 26:26-28), Aphrahat (+345) and Ephrem (306-373) relate baptism with Eucharist.

(1) Aphrahat

For Aphrahat, the washing of the feet of the apostles and the immediate serving of the Eucharist to them (Mt 26:26-28), and Peter's

request to wash the whole body, and Jesus' answer, "Those who have bathed are clean and need only feet washing" (Jn 13:6-10), signify the baptismal cleansing of all impurities before the Eucharist. Again, he compares Israelites' Pasch with the Eucharist, and their crossing of the Red sea with baptism. Israelites ate the Pasch first and then were baptised in cloud and sea, whereas the Apostles were baptised first and then the Eucharist was served to them. This shows the right of Eucharist for the baptised, and the right of baptism to receive the Eucharist.⁴⁷

(2) Ephrem

For Ephrem, the washing of the feet signifies the anointing of the sick to free the apostles from all post baptismal impurities before the Eucharist is given. Though they were baptised in Judea (Jn 3:22; Jn 4:1-2) earlier, they needed absolution before receiving Eucharist as *Viaticum* (money for journey) to their heavenward pilgrimage.⁴⁸ This integrity is reflected also in the purifying water of baptism and the absolving blood of the Eucharist flowed from the pierced side of Christ ((Jn 19:34).

Again, the typological integrity between Adam and Eve signifies the realistic integrity between Christ and the Church. Eve, the new-born bride of Adam taken from his side, was nourished immediately with the immortal fruit of the tree of life in Paradise. Like manner, the Church, the new-born bride taken from His side through the purifying water, was nourished immediately with the immortal fruit of absolving blood flowed from the Cross, the real tree of life on Calvary (Jn 19:43-35).

b) Tradition

The early Church practices like sending out of the non-baptised, invitation to receive *Qurbana*, communion distribution words, position of the baptismal font, and *viaticum* indicate the close relation between baptism and Eucharist as follows.

(1) Sending out of the Non-baptised

This practice in the early Church before the Eucharist of the faithful indicates the close relation between baptism and Eucharist. It is the Eucharist that helps the baptised to keep up their baptismal purity throughout life.

⁴⁷*Demonstration* 12, 10; PS I, 528,532.

⁴⁸*H. Armenian* 49; *H. Virg.* 46,17-18.

(2) Invitation to Receive Eucharist

Celebrant's invitation to receive Eucharist saying, "The Holy *Qurbana* is for the holy people,"⁴⁹ before the communion service manifests the right of the baptised for the Eucharist. This invitation reminds the baptised of their responsibility of retaining the baptismal purity through Holy Communion.

(3) Communion Distribution Words

The East Syriac communion distribution words of forgiveness, "May the body and blood of Christ be unto the forgiveness of sins and the eternal life,"⁵⁰ manifests the role of Eucharist to purify the baptised, while the West Syriac words of forgiveness at this time, "The purifying live-coal of the body and the blood of Christ, our God, is given to the faithful servant, for the remission of faults, pardon of sins, and life everlasting,"⁵¹ explains the process of sanctification through Eucharist. Just as the fire purifies metals to shine like fire, so also the Eucharist purifies its recipients to shine like Christ, i.e. when we consume Christ, we should permit Christ to consume all our impurities in His burning flames of Eucharist.

(4) Position of the Baptismal Font

The East Syriac position of baptismal font, close to the left side of the sanctuary where wine is mixed with water as the symbol of water and blood that flowed from the pierced side of Jesus (Jn 19:34-35), manifests the close relation between the baptism and the Eucharist. The baptised have to make frequent recourse to Eucharist from sanctuary to lead a holy life.

(5) *Viaticum*

When the baptised cannot frequent church for the Eucharist, then it is served at their sick bed as *viaticum* (money for journey) or *Trupadheyam* (in Malayalam, meaning travel food-packet), a support to continue the heavenward journey to attain the communion of saints in heaven. In the East Syriac tradition, this communion of saints on earth is symbolically represented by the *martyrion* or *betsahde* (depository of holy relics) situated close to the right side of the sanctuary near to the sacristy. This shows that the Christian life is a life around baptism and the Eucharistic altar before attaining the communion of saints in heaven.

⁴⁹The Order of the Syro-Malabar *Qurbana*, Kakkanadu: Commission for Liturgy, 2005, 67.

⁵⁰The Order of the Syro-Malabar *Qurbana*, 69.

⁵¹J. Redlinger *The Holy Mass according to the Syrian Rite of Antioch: With Anaphora of the Twelve Apostles*, Jacksonville: Fair Labor Association, 1955, 45.

d. Crowning

Crowning as the symbol of God's image in humanity signifies the spiritual joy and glory at the inheritance of heaven. When Adam lost it through disobedience, God sent His only Son to die for Adam to re-crown him with the original glory. The baptismal waters extinguish the darkness of sin and the fury of Hell (Gal 3:27-28), and the Eucharist transforms the baptised to the glory of Christ. Finally, praying for the grace of witnessing Christ, pardoning of sins, help in dangers, heavenly bliss, and the communion of the Church, the congregation is blessed and sealed with the sign of Cross.

Conclusion

The adult initiation reminds of the early Christian catechumenate, which highlighted the Church's care for the purity of the initiated. Different shapes of baptismal fonts and the methods of baptism with manifold symbolisms elucidate the Church's beauty of unity in diversity. The *muron* with the personal presence of Holy Spirit perfects the priestly, prophetic, and royal missions of the chrismated. The ceremonies like the laying on of hand, anointing, and crowning manifest Lord's close attachment to the baptised to protect and guide them to salvation. Baptism, chrismation, and Eucharist, administered together, lay the foundations of Christian life. Baptismal bath sanctifies, chrismatic anointing strengthens, and Eucharistic nourishment unites the initiated with Christ to become the perfect members of the Church. Adults are initiated to faith after enrolment as catechumens, either formally or informally, to share the image of God through new birth, new strength, and new nourishment.⁵²

Baptism forms God's people, pardons sins, rescues from darkness, and identifies the dignity of the children of God. Chrismation forms the soldiers of Christ and perfects the body of Christ. Eucharist forms the unity of the people of God and leads to eternal life. Thus, the three sacraments of Christian initiation closely combined bring the faithful to carry out the mission of the entire people of God in the Church and the world.⁵³ For this purpose, baptism welcomes, Chrismation seals, and Eucharist nourishes the mystical body of Christ in Her pilgrimage to heaven.

⁵²*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §1212.

⁵³CCC §1229; *Ad Gentes*, §14, 2.