

West Syrian Marriage Rites

by

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C. A. Abraham in his very helpful article on the sacrament of matrimony says that “the order of service used by the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church as well as the Syrian Orthodox church in India is the same as the one in the West Syrian rite under the Patriarch of Antioch.”¹ This is an oversimplification of the situation. The rites are similar but not quite the same. Indeed, Archbishop Athanasius Yeshue Samuel admits that there is a Mosul tradition of marriage that “differs significantly from the marriage rite employed by the Western Fathers of our Church.”² In the absence of a detailed study of Syrian marriage services, this article compares three different English translations of the rite. The first is that of the Syrian Orthodox in North America, which I have called Hackensack (H) after its place of publication. The second is that made by missionaries in India from the Church Missionary Society, which I have called Madras (M).³ The last is that of the Mar Thoma Church, which I have called Tiruvalla (T), also after its place of publication.⁴ The Malayalam edition of this rite includes extra prayers which will be indicated by [mal]. The rite of marriage for widows is then compared with that of first marriage. All of these rites reveal the rich heritage of the Syrian church and the variety that exists within the tradition.

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¹ C. A. Abraham, “The Order of Service of the Sacrament of Matrimony of the Syro-Malankara Church,” *Christian Orient* 9 (1988) 68.

² Metropolitan Mar Athanasius Yeshue Samuel, *The Order of Solemnization of the Sacrament of Matrimony, according to the ancient rite of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch*, translated by Deacon Murad Saliba Barsom (Hackensack, NJ 1974), Introduction.

³ J. Hough, *History of Christianity in India* 4 (London 1845) 673-9.

⁴ Mar Thoma Syrian Church, *Order of Services: Baptism, Matrimony, Prayer for the Sick, House Dedication & Funeral* (Tiruvalla: The Mar Thoma Sabha Book Department 1988) 24-47.

I. Betrothal

Our three rites all divide the marriage into two services, betrothal and crowning. At one time they were separate events; now they are one.⁵ The rubrics of **H** require that the couple go to confession and receive the Qurbana prior to the ceremony.⁶ The Orthodox tradition is the same in India, the couple often receiving communion on the day of the marriage. However, the Mar Thoma Church insists that they receive communion the Sunday before, and there is no private confession in this church.

Table 1 immediately shows that there is an almost identical structure to the rites, the minor variations being in the omission or addition of various hymns and prayers. Having said that, there is considerable variety in the content of the prayers. I have tried to indicate this with symbols: * if the prayer is the same, () if it is similar, (s) if it is shorter, (l) if it is longer. **M** and **T** are more closely related than **H** and **M**. Indeed, **T** has stuck closer to the Syrian tradition than might be expected from its position as a reformed church.⁷

H has introduced a “Betrothal Service” before the marriage and questions of consent at the beginning of the wedding. Kenneth Stevenson has interpreted this rite in western terms, seeing the rings in the betrothal as engagement rings and the rings of the first service as wedding rings.⁸ But this is a misunderstanding of the rite. The first service is one of betrothal. **T** even entitles it “engagement.” It would seem that this preliminary material in **H** is an adaptation to the American context, but liturgically it is a duplication. Western Christians find it difficult to come to terms with a wedding that has no consent, wedding rings, or vows made by the couple. As **M** makes it clear, this preliminary is not a part of the original service. Abraham comments that “mutual consent . . . is clearly implied in the first part . . . but no legal format is given to this within the frame of the service.”⁹

T has introduced an exhortation to the beginning. Such material is one of the features of the Mar Thoma Church, and of the reformed churches of the West. It exhorts the couple to a deep experience of the forgiveness of God.

⁵ K. Valuparampil, “The Theology and Spirituality of Holy Matrimony According to the Malankara Syrian Church,” *Christian Orient* 11 (1990) 137.

⁶ Mar Athanasius, *The Order of Solemnization of the Sacrament of Matrimony*, 8.

⁷ For Mar Thoma theology of marriage, see K. V. Mathew, *The Faith and Practice of the Mar Thoma Church* (Kottayam: CMS Press 1985) 58-66.

⁸ K. W. Stevenson, *To Join Together* (New York: Pueblo 1987) 63.

⁹ C. A. Abraham, “The Sacrament of Matrimony of the Syro-Malankara Church” in J. Vellian (ed.), *Crown Veil Cross*, Syrian Churches Series 15 (Poona: Anita Press 1990) 48.

Table 1

Hackensack (H)	Madras (M)	Tiruvalla (T)
Bethrothal		
Question to fiancé		
Question to guardian		Signing of register
Joining of hands		
Blessing		<i>Part 1</i>
		Introduction
Consent		Kauma
<i>First Service</i>		
Glory be	Glory be	Glory be *
Make us worthy	Make us worthy ()	Make us worthy ()
Ps. 51	Ps. 51 *	[Ps. 51 mal]
Hymn	Hymn ()	Hymn (s)
Prayer	Prayer	Prayer ()
Quqal'yon Ps. 45:1-2,9	Kuklion Ps. 45:1-2	Kuklyon Ps. 45:1-2
Eqbo SoS 5	Eqbo * SoS 5	Ekba * SoS 5:10,15
Husoyo		
Proemion	Proemion ()	Promion ()
Sedro	Sedra	Sedra (s)
	Diaconal Hymn	Hymn
Hymn	Hymn (s)	Hymn *
Etro	Incense *	Prayer
Blessing rings	Glory be	Eternal praise
May these rings	I bless	These rings are blessed
May the right hand	May the right hand	May our Lord Jesus [May the right hand mal]
Prayer for bride/groom	Prayer for bride/ groom	Prayer for bride/ groom *
	Sogheesah	Sugheeso *
Final Prayer	Hoothmah *	Blessing
St James		
Trisagion	Trisagion	
Lord's Prayer	Lord's Prayer	

It also gets to the heart of the Syrian view of marriage: “Jesus Christ is the true bridegroom and the Church is the bride. He loved the Church and gave himself for her. We remember this ideal in the marriage service.”¹⁰ The service celebrates this relationship. Indeed it remembers it, not in only a mental way, but in the participatory nature of the biblical meaning of “remember.” Marriage is a particular mode of participation in this love relationship.

The Sedro has similar themes in **H**, **M**, and **T**, but **H** and **T** are shorter. **H** starts with the incarnation and sees baptism as the point at which the Church is made “Your glorious betrothed.” The ring is seen as the manifestation of unity and thus the prayer proceeds to petition for the blessing of the ring and the couple. **M** follows the same line of thought but develops it in slightly different ways. It also sees the ring in eucharistic terms: “who hast given her thy holy body and conquering blood as a ring.” All the Sedros ask for the blessing to continue into the age to come: “make them joyful together all the days of their life through this banquet, which is temporal, and graciously conduct them to the heavenly banquet, where the angels incessantly rejoice” (**M**). Indeed, **H** puts this in nuptial terms: “may they, with joy and delight, [who] attain the present bridal chamber, be worthy of the eternal chamber of gladness.”

Abraham regards the hymn after the Sedro as “short but very significant.”¹¹ It reads as follows:

When the heavenly bridegroom espoused the faithful and holy Church,
He called Peter and John, and appointed Peter as a householder and
John as a preacher, and commanded them to watch over the Church
which he purchased with his precious blood.¹²

In this is a reminder not only of the nuptial relationship of the Church but of the provision by the Bridegroom of the apostles, their role of “watching over” being continued in the ministry of the word and in the sacred orders. However, it would be too much to suggest that this hymn supports the claim of any one particular see. It is included in **T**, which clearly does not regard it as indicative of anything save a general statement of the apostolicity of the Church. Leslie Brown has a longer version of this hymn, which moves away from ecclesiology and stresses the sacredness of the mysteries: “Everyone who comes to thee apart from me who begat thee with water/Thou shouldst

¹⁰ Mar Thoma Syrian Church, *Order of Services*, 24.

¹¹ Abraham, “The Order of Service of the Sacrament of Matrimony,” 69.

¹² Hough, *History of Christianity in India* 4:674.

not allow him to learn the mysteries which are kept sacred among the faithful.”¹³ This is almost a call for the *disciplina arcani*.

M puts the blessing of the rings in the active, “I bless these rings.” This is most unusual. **H** and **T** both use the passive, “May these rings be blessed.” Abraham reports the passive in the Syro-Malankara Church,¹⁴ and the passive is found in the Pampakuda text. It may be at this point that **M** reflects a corrupted text suffering from latinization. The blessing of the crowns in **M** is also active (“I bless these crowns”), which again stands in contrast to the use of the passive in **T**, **H**, and Pampakuda.

The extent of the use of material from the royal marriage psalm (45) and the Song of Songs varies from rite to rite. The use of these passages is however very significant, for they contain the bride praising the bridegroom. This theme is greatly developed in the Sogheesah: “I am the Church and the bride of the Most High.” **M** and **T** have a much shorter version of this than that translated by Brown.¹⁵ In **M** and **T** the Church sings her wedding song, praising the Most High who took her from idolatry and brought her to the hidden mysteries.

I am blessed because he has married me.

I worship the Bridegroom who came and espoused me.

All creation rejoices, for in my poverty I was made rich on the day he betrothed himself to me.¹⁶

Christ is praised for his redemption, for the spiritual armour of baptism, and “the ring of His holy body and blood.” Brown’s longer text continues the hymn with the church searching after her lover.

I went round by sea and land;

None could tell me where he was;

I searched for him in Bethlehem;

They said to me, “He has departed for Egypt.”¹⁷

The search motif of the song is reminiscent of the quest of the beloved in the Song of Songs: “I looked for the one my heart loves; I looked for him but did not find him” (3:1). The Church searches in Bethlehem, Egypt, Nazareth,

¹³ L. Brown, *The Indian Christians of St Thomas* (Cambridge University Press 1956, 1982) 256.

¹⁴ Abraham, “The Order of Service of the Sacrament of Matrimony,” 69.

¹⁵ Brown, *The Indian Christians of St Thomas*, 256-8.

¹⁶ Mar Thoma Syrian Church, *Order of Services*, 32.

¹⁷ Brown, *The Indian Christians of St Thomas*, 257.

Jordan, the wedding feast (at Cana), the wilderness, Zion, and is always one step behind. She weeps bitterly at the news of the Lover's crucifixion and burial but finally she meets the risen Lord.

An angel answered me and said, "Weep not! He is risen from the tomb."
I heard his voice and rejoiced;
My face shone and I was full of joy,
I answered him and embraced him,
He answered me lovingly and said:
"Peace be to thee, O worthy woman,
Who has been betrothed to me on the cross,
I ascend to the Father and I send to thee the Holy Spirit."¹⁸

The last stanza is based on the encounter between Mary Magdalene and Jesus (John 20:10-17). This remarkable song is not found in **H**.

The discussion above illustrates the differences in the prayers, and many more minor variations exist. Yet at the same time there is a common structure to the first service in all three rites.

II. Crowning

The second part of the service is the crowning. In India this is done with necklaces that have a cross attached to them. There is also the addition in India of the local custom of the minnu and sari.¹⁹

The hymn of blessing after the introductory prayer is considerable longer in the Indian rites. In **H** it has three stanzas; in **M** and in **T** it has six stanzas. Only the first two stanzas in **H** are common to all rites, and **H** addresses the first stanza to Christ, while **M** and **T** direct it to God. Here the rites look to the patriarchs, Adam and Eve, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, Jacob and Rachel. Joseph is also included, but there is no reference to his wife. In each petition the request is that God "bless these your servants with his abundant grace." The Mar Thoma rite includes a ✠ in the text just before the word bless. At this point the sign of the cross is made over the couple, who also cross themselves. This makes a most moving ceremony.

The Sedros in **M** and **H** are very different. **H** starts from the creation of Adam and Eve and then prays for the couple and their life together, including the gift of children and wise parenting. **M** by contrast begins with the worship

¹⁸ Ibid., 258.

¹⁹ M. Korikara, *The Sacredness of Marriage and Family in the Cultural Milieu of the St Thomas Christians* (Rome: Pontifica Universitas Lateranensis 1988) 4-13.

of the angels and prays for the healing and salvation of God's servants. Indeed this prayer seems to have no distinctive marriage themes in it at all. T would seem to be a shortened version of this prayer in M.

The hymn after the Sedro is a song of praise of the Church:

O Holy Church, thou art exceedingly fair.

Solomon did sing of thee, that thy lips drop as the honey comb,
and the smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon. . . .

O daughter of the Gentiles how fair thou art!²⁰

Again there are allusions to the Song of Songs. The "lips that drip honeycomb" is from 4:11, as is the fragrance of the garments being like "the smell of Lebanon" (M). The cry "how beautiful you are" is from 4:1. The Song of Songs uses the phrase "Daughters of Jerusalem" (e.g., 1:5); Isaiah uses Daughter of Zion (e.g., 1:8), as does Jeremiah (e.g., 6:2). The expression "Daughter of the Gentiles" would seem to be a variation on this, pointing out that the Church is now composed of the Gentiles as distinct from Old Testament times. In the second half of the hymn H meditates on Ps. 45:9b, "at your right hand is the royal bride." M and T envisage the Church as like "the sun that enlightens the whole world." In this hymn we have the Church of Christ being praised. This is analogous to the Lover praising the beloved in Song of Songs 4. Later we will also see the converse, the Church praising Christ.

There is considerable variation in the lessons, as can be seen in Table 2. Indeed the situation is even more complex; for the epistle, Brown has Eph. 5:20-6, 31; Pampakuda, Eph. 5:20-6:3; and Abraham, Eph. 5:20-33; but they all agree (against our texts) that the gospel is Matt. 19:1-12. These are of course minor variations, but again they illustrate the diversity in the tradition.

M has the joining of the hands at the time of the reading of the epistle. H has it later in the service at the time of the admonition. Brown reports this as the practice in the Orthodox Church in India. Interestingly, the Malabar Independent Syrian Church has another variation, joining hands at the time of the reading of the gospel.²¹ This is also the tradition in the Mar Thoma Church. Each rite is therefore different.

The crowning itself is basically the same in all three rites, even if the words are only similar. H adds a prayer over the crowns which is rich in allusions to crowning in the scriptures:

²⁰ Hough, *History of Christianity in India* 4:676-7.

²¹ J. R. K. Fenwick, *The Malabar Independent Syrian Church* (Bramcote: Grove Books 1992) 54.

Table 2

Hackensack (H)	Madras (M)	Tiruvalla (T)
<i>Second Service</i>		<i>Part 2</i>
Glory be	Glory be	Glory be *
Make us worthy	Make us worthy ()	Make us worthy *
Hymn	May God who blessed (l)	May God who blessed
	Prayer	Prayer
Quqal'yon Ps. 21:1-4	Kukilion Ps. 21:1,3	Kuklyon Ps. 21:1,3
Eqbo	Deacon's prayer	[Eqbo mal]
Husoyo		
Proemion	Promion	Promion *
Sedro	Sedra	Sedra (s)
Hymn	Kookayah ()	Chant *
Etro	Incense	Prayer *
Ps. 93:1		
Eph. 5:21-33	Eph. 5:20,22-8	Eph. 5:21-8
Canticle	Ps 21:1	
Matt. 19:3-6	Matt. 19:1-6	Matt. 19:1-6
Prayer	Prayer	[Chant mal]
Prayer over crowns		
Blessed and perfected be	I Bless	These crowns are blessed
Elevation	Elevation	Elevation over groom
Diaconal hymn	Diaconal hymn (l)	Crowning
		Elevation over bride
Crowning	Crowning	Crowning
Prayer for best man		
Prayer for bridesmaid		
Prayer for couple	Blessing of couple (l)	Blessing of couple (s)
	Song	Song minnu & sari
St James	Mar Jacob	Mar Jacob
Admonition	Conclusion	Hoothma
Joining of right hands		Blessing
Removal of crowns		
Lord's Prayer		
Nicene Creed		
Quqal'yon Ps. 45:9-12		
Cup of wine		

O Lord . . . who did crown the earth with its fruits . . . who did crown kings, priests, and prophets . . . who crowned king David with the crown of victory. . . .²²

M has the strange “I bless these crowns,” which has been commented upon above. **M** includes a long diaconal hymn with material not found in the other rites. This includes petitions such as:

O bridegroom of truth, who art ever exalted, come to us quickly, that we may ever rejoice with thee.

Eve was released from the curse, because our Lord was crowned with a crown of thorns.²³

In **T** some of this material is used at the elevation of the crown over the bride.

The prayer for the blessing of this couple is much fuller in the Indian rites. It looks to the relationship of Christ and the Church:

May Christ the heavenly Bridegroom seal your marriage with his own true seal.

May you be happy with each other as Christ delights in His Church.²⁴

But it also goes through various patriarchs asking that the blessing they received be meted on the couple:

May you attain the blessing of those who believed in God, and were counted worthy to hope in him.²⁵

Thus it is the God who “descended on Mount Sinai to make a covenant with the bride which was brought out of Egypt” who metes out blessing and in whose love the couple are participating.

M and **T** introduce a song after the blessing of the couple, “O Gardener of Eden.” Another version of this hymn is translated by George Theckedath, who calls it “perhaps the most delicate and exquisite love poetry in all literature.”²⁶ Here we have a song of the Church singing of her love for her Bridegroom.

²² Mar Athanasius, *The Order of Solemnization of the Sacrament of Matrimony*, 44.

²³ Hough, *History of Christianity in India* 4:677-8.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 678.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 678.

²⁶ G. Theckedath, “Romantic Poetry in the Antiochene Marriage Rite,” *The Harp* 5 (1992) 229.

My soul is thrilled with burning love,
And my poor stricken heart is set on fire;
Passion's onslaught makes my limbs tremble,
On thy shoulders strong let me lean.

Indeed, the poem continues in such a vein:
At my beauty deign to cast thine eyes,
And lead me gently to the bridal chamber;
And as I receive, thy sweet embrace
In reckless slumber may I fall.²⁷

This and the other similar hymns are remarkable compositions and the gems of the rite.

There is no mention in **H** of the tali and sari, for these are Indian customs. What is more surprising is their omission from **M** (although they are included in the Indian Orthodox Malayalam text). This is not to say that tali and sari were not practiced in the last century; rather they are not included in the text. Brown reports that the priests sing a particular song about the cross at this ceremony,²⁸ as does Abraham.²⁹ This is not, however, sung in the Mar Thoma Church.

The cross is the sign of union.
The cross is the symbol of victory.
By the cross we are saved.
In the cross we glory.

"The cross . . . is sacred as the symbol of the indissolubility of marriage."³⁰ This song is not found in our texts, but exists in customary practice. It is also interesting to note that in the Mar Thoma Church this ceremony is never done by bishops (again this is a custom; there seems to be no theological reason for this). However, this practice sometimes is performed by Orthodox bishops.

All services finish with an admonition. **T** has divided this into three sections, hoothma, exhortation to all, and exhortation to the bride and the groom. Only the first two parts of this are paralleled in **M**. In **H** the exhortation is quite different, save for the passage at the point of the joining of

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Brown, *The Indian Christians of St Thomas*, 259.

²⁹ Abraham, "The Order of Service of the Sacrament of Matrimony," 71.

³⁰ C. K. Mattam, "Malanakara Marriage Rites," *Pax* 24/150 (April 1934) 10.

hands. This is a section common to all three rites in which the couple are reminded that they stand before the altar of God, that they are united to one another, and that the priest is innocent of the faults of the couple. Although united by God the couple are expected to work at their marriage that it might continue to exhibit the grace of God.

There is some variation in the ending of the rites. **T** adds a blessing. **M** in a similar vein finished the conclusion with “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with us.” This is in contrast to **H** which has much more material in the ending. **Abraham reports that in the Syro-Malankara Church the Creed and the Kuklion are sung.³¹ Brown only knows the Lord’s Prayer.³² Pampakuda omits the prayer for the removal of the crowns, and includes as a rubric the Lord’s Prayer, Creed, and the Kuklion to the Theotokos. In India the crowns are necklaces, and thus the prayer for the removal of the crowns becomes obsolete. But the inclusion or not of the Kuklion seems to have no rime or reason. It is expected that it might be omitted in **T**, but not in **M**.**

Once again considerable variation in the prayers is seen within a common structure. Turning to another order of marriage, that for widows and widowers, reveals further the nature of the marriage rite and the Syrian theology of marriage.

III. Order for the Marriage of Widows and Widowers

This service is said to have been written by Isaiah of Basibrina (+1425).³³ Although divorce is known in the canons of the church, this is a service for those who have suffered bereavement. The rubrics say that, if one of the partners has not been previously married, then the normal service should be followed, except that sections will be left out for the person who is remarrying. There is a Byzantine order of second marriage³⁴ and some evidence for western forms.³⁵ **The text is found in **H**.**

At first sight the service is the same as the first wedding except for the omission of the blessing and giving of the betrothal rings. This service is, however, very different in tone. As can be seen from Table 3, there are only

³¹ Abraham, “The Order of Service of the Sacrament of Matrimony,” 71.

³² Brown, *The Indian Christians of St Thomas*, 259.

³³ Mar Athanasius, *The Order of Solemnization of the Sacrament of Matrimony*, Introduction.

³⁴ I. F. Hapgood, *Service Book of the Holy Orthodox-Catholic Apostolic Church*, 6th edn (Englewood, NJ 1983) 302-5.

³⁵ J. Madey, “The Second Marriage in the Syrian Church of Antioch” in J. Madey and G. Kaniarakath (eds), *The Church I Love*, EBOSC Publications 9/Orientalia 2 (Kottayam: CMS Press 1977) 119-30.

Table 3

<i>First Service</i>	
First Marriage	Second Marriage
Consent	Consent
Glory be	Glory be
Make us worthy	Make us worthy
Ps. 51	Ps. 51 *
Hymn	Hymn
Prayer	Prayer ()
Quqal'yon Ps. 45:1-2,9	Quqal'yon Ps. 45:1-2
Eqbo SoS	Eqbo
Husoyo	Husoyo *
Proemion	Proemion
Sedro	Sedro
Hymn	Hymn
Etro	Incense
Blessing rings	
May these rings	
May the right hand	
Prayer for bride/groom	
Final Prayer	St Ephrem
St James	Concluding prayer
Trisagion	Trisagion *
Lord's Prayer	Lord's Prayer *

a few prayers in common between the two services (as indicated by *). The second marriage service has a much more penitential tone. The Sedro asks:

Remember . . . your mercies, your covenant, and your promise made to Abraham; let your merciful countenance shine on these your servants who have consented to be united in holy wedlock. . . . Turn them not away with empty hands from the treasure of your mercies.³⁶

The joy that fills the first wedding is now tempered. The omission of the blessing of the rings leads to the omission of much of the theology of betrothal. Indeed the title is merely the “first service,” whereas in a first wedding it is also subtitled “the blessing of rings.” Clearly there is joy for the

³⁶ Mar Athanasius, *The Order of Solemnization of the Sacrament of Matrimony*, 68.

couple and the blessing of God is being sought: “Grant them to rejoice in each other in accordance with your will. . . .” But, apart from the Eqbo, Quqal’yon, and St Ephrem, the celebration of the relationship between Christ and the Church is muted. All the material from the Song of Songs is omitted.

In the “second service” (Table 4) the crowning is omitted. But once again further subtle changes have been made. The altering of the lessons is significant. 1 Cor. 7:1-11 is somewhat negative, suggesting that singleness is a better option. Mark 10 includes Jesus’ saying that because of hardness of heart divorce was allowed in the Old Testament, and goes on to reiterate the one flesh relationship. The challenge of lifelong union is there, but against a background of concessions.

The Sedro talks of the blessing on Abraham in his visit by God. The petition is that God should bring similar blessing to the couple. This is a much shorter prayer than that for a first marriage, which had rejoiced in the creation of male and female. There is considerable use of material from the patriarchs:

Bless this bridegroom as Jacob was blessed
May the bride become like Rebecca.

As in the first service, the material on the relationship of Christ and his Church is more circumspect.

Madey concludes his discussion of this service by saying: “this rite which is lacking the essential parts of the rite of matrimony . . . makes clear that marriage is a sacred institution joining husband and wife together for ever. But since marriage is lived on earth, there may be serious reasons for a second union which has to be tolerated by the church.”³⁷

The Mar Thoma Church has no rite of second marriage for widows or widowers. The practice is to bless the rings, as in first marriage, but to omit the crowning. There is no difference in the prayers and chants from the first marriage. This implies a very strong understanding of betrothal, for those who are married in this way are viewed as married (and not half married). Divorce is very rare, and only in unusual circumstances. Those who divorce may well be excommunicated.

³⁷ Madey, “The Second Marriage in the Syrian Church of Antioch,” 130.

Table 4

<i>Second Service</i>	
First Marriage	Second Marriage
Glory be	Glory be *
Make us worthy	O Lord, who is the hope
Hymn	Hymn
Quqal'yon Ps. 21:1-4	Quqal'yon Ps. 21:1-2
Eqbo	Eqbo
Husoyo	Husoyo *
Proemion	Proemion
Sedro	Sedro
Hymn	Hymn
Etro	Etro
Ps. 93:1	Ps. 93:1
Eph. 5:21-33	1 Cor. 7:1-11
Matt. 19:3-6	Mark 10:2-9
Prayer	Blessing prayer
Prayer over crowns	
Blessed be	
Elevation	
Diaconal hymn	
Crowning	
Prayer for best man	
Prayer for bridesmaid	
Prayer for couple	
St James	St Ephrem
Admonition	Joining of right hands
Joining of right hands	Admonition
Removal of crowns	Blessing ()
Lord's Prayer	Lord's Prayer *
Nicene Creed	Nicene Creed *
Quqal'yon Ps. 45:9-12	Quqal'yon Ps. 45:9-12 *
Cup of wine	

IV. Conclusions

The essential parts of the rite of marriage are the blessing of the ring and the crowning. This is demonstrated by their omission from the rite of second

marriage. **Christian marriage itself is a mystery, a reflection of the relationship of Christ and the Church. "The union of husband and wife is at once elevated and sanctified by linking it to the union between Christ and His Church."**³⁸

It is because this is the central motif in the rite that second marriage is only tolerated. There is no failure in Christ's love for his Church, and this is not ended by death. Unfortunately, humans are mortal (and sinful) and thus second marriage may become necessary for widows and widowers.

This study has shown that there is considerable variation in individual prayers between the different rites but that the overall structure is the same. This reflects a tradition that has only recently used printed texts, and which therefore allows variations to develop in the manuscript tradition through the influence of malpans and bishops. If more could be found out about the Mosul rite, then even greater variation might be discovered (even perhaps in structure). The Mar Thoma reforms seem to have had little effect on the rite save to remove any prayers to the Virgin. Indeed the Mar Thoma rite stands in the Syrian tradition, and has not given way to any western marriage liturgy (consent and vows have not been introduced). **H** has added consent, but this seems to an adaptation to life in the United States.

There seems to be some relationship between the Mar Thoma translation and M. I should like to conjecture that M was consulted in drawing up the English rite T. M, however, at various points is a very strange text, and diverges from Pampakuda. It was obtained in India in the early nineteenth century and contains corruptions, but may also include earlier strata than the present text. Perhaps the latter has undergone correction after the patriarchal visits. The history of West Syrian liturgy in India has yet to be written, and only conjectures can be made at the present time.³⁹

The Syrian marriage rite is very beautiful, one of the gems of the church, with some unique hymns. Of particular importance are those where the Church sings of her love for Christ, and those where Christ praises the Church. It is in India that these seem to have been preserved in their fullest forms. This rite deserves to be better known, and more fully researched. It is hoped that this article is a step towards its greater appreciation.

³⁸ Abraham, "The Sacrament of Matrimony of the Syro-Malankara Church," 48.

³⁹ See Fr. Cyril, "The Antiochene Rite in the Malankara Church" in J. Vellian (ed.), *The Malabar Church*, *Orientalia Chritiana Analecta* 186 (Rome 1970) 137-64.