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MÖRĀN 'ETHŌ

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**DIONYSIUS BAR SALIBI:
COMMENTARIES ON MYRON
AND BAPTISM**

by
BABY VARGHESE



ST. EPHREM ECUMENICAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE (SEERI)
BAKER HILL, KOTTAYAM - 686 001
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Contents

BIBLIOGRAPHY

INTRODUCTION

1. Dionysius Bar Salibi: on the Holy Myron
2. Dionysius Bar Salibi On the Holy Baptism

ܘܢܘܩܘܢܐ ܕܘܢܘܩܘܢܐ

ܘܢܘܩܘܢܐ ܕܘܢܘܩܘܢܐ ܘܢܘܩܘܢܐ ܕܘܢܘܩܘܢܐ

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ܘܢܘܩܘܢܐ ܕܘܢܘܩܘܢܐ ܘܢܘܩܘܢܐ ܕܘܢܘܩܘܢܐ
ܘܢܘܩܘܢܐ ܕܘܢܘܩܘܢܐ ܘܢܘܩܘܢܐ ܕܘܢܘܩܘܢܐ
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ܘܢܘܩܘܢܐ ܕܘܢܘܩܘܢܐ ܘܢܘܩܘܢܐ ܕܘܢܘܩܘܢܐ

Anyone who asks for this volume, to read, collate, or copy from it, and who appropriates it to himself or herself, or cuts anything out of it, should realize that (s)he will have to give answer before God's awesome tribunal as if (s)he had robbed a sanctuary. Let such a person be held anathema and receive no forgiveness until the book is returned. So be it, Amen! And anyone who removes these anathemas, digitally or otherwise, shall himself receive them in double.

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INTRODUCTION

Dionysius Jacob Bar Salibi, bishop of Mardin (died in 1171) is one of the most prolific writers of the West Syrian tradition. The main source of our information about Bar Salibi's life and work is the Chronicle of Michel the Syrian, his intimate friend.¹ Bar Salibi's works include a commentary on the whole Bible and the Exposition of the Eucharist, Baptism, Myron and the Ordination. An English translation of the Commentary on the Eucharist has already been published in this collection.

The Syriac text of the commentaries on the Baptism and the Myron has not yet been published. The present work is the first translation of the Syriac text, preserved in a manuscript of the Mingana Collection, Birmingham, England (Mingana 25, fol.9r-15r : On Myron and fol.15r-24v on Baptism).

My sincere thanks to Dr. Sebastian Brock (Oxford) for correcting my translation. He has also pointed out a few variant reading of Harward Syriac 47. Revd. Fr. Joju Anto and Revd. Sr. Jincy.O.U. typed the Syriac text on the computer. I am grateful to my friend Dr. Jacob Thekkeparampil for his supports and for accepting the text for publication in the collection *Môrân 'Ethô*.

1 For the life and works of Bar Salibi, see: B. VARGHESE, *Dionysius Bar Salibi: Commentary on the Eucharist*, Môrân 'Ethô 10 (1999).

Commentary on Myron and Baptism:

Bar Salibi's liturgical commentaries are of great importance for the study of the West Syrian liturgy. As one can easily note, in all his commentaries, Bar Salibi had made use of the works of Moses Bar Kepha (+ 903). In addition to Bar Kepha's works, which he had often freely reproduced, Bar Salibi had made use of the following commentaries.

1. A fifth century commentary on Baptism (cfr. BROCK, *SEBC*).

2. A Syriac version of the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy of Pseudo-Dionysius.

3. Jacob of Edessa's commentary on Myron and his letters related to the administration of Baptism.

4. The liturgical commentaries of George, bishop of the Arabs.

Other possible sources are the works of John I (on Myron), Antony of Tagrit (on Myron) and Lazar bar Sabta of Bagdad. Bar Salibi, like most of the later West Syrian writers, was a compiler rather than an original thinker. Though his commentary on the Myron is a faithful summary of the work of Bar Kepha, that on Baptism witnesses to his knowledge of patristic sources and is a rather original presentation of the material he had collected.

Outline of the Liturgy of the Consecration of the Myron:

We shall give the outline of the consecration of the

Myron as it is found in the Nomocanon of Bar Hebraeus.²

Maundy Thursday at the third hour, the singers are grouped in three choirs: one stands in the sanctuary, other on the *Bema* and the third in the *Questroma*.³ The bishop puts on white robes and sits on his throne in the sanctuary. After a few canons, the bishop reads *Sedro*. Then he censes the whole nave in a procession accompanied by fans and candles. Then follows the reading of the Old Testament and the archdeacon's litany.

Then the bishop alone enters the sanctuary and mixes the balsam oil with the perfumed olive oil. Then the bishop carries the bottle of Myron around the nave in a solemn procession. A canopy (*qubto*) is held above his head. The procession is accompanied by twelve priests with twelve censors, twelve deacons with fans and twelve sub-deacons with candles. The Gospel and a cross are also carried. The archdeacon cries out: *Depart those who are to leave*. The procession returns to the sanctuary and the bishop places the bottle on the altar and covers it with a veil. Then begins the second part.

The priests, deacons and the sub-deacons stand around the altar with their censors, fans or lights. The bishop begins

2 *Nomocanon* 3:4, pp.31-34. this outline is identical with that of the Pontifical of Michel the Syrian. See Varghese, *Onctions*, pp.310-27; *Studies*, pp.65-73.

3 *Bema* is a raised platform in the middle of the nave and *Qestroma* is the part between the nave and the sanctuary. The daily offices are celebrated at the *Qestroma*.

the service as in the Holy Eucharist. The veil over the bottle is lifted up. After the prescribed prayers, comes the Epiklesis, during which the bishop waves his hands over the bottle of the Myron. After a litany by the deacon, the bishop ascends on the Bema and exalts the bottle towards four sides. Then he blesses the people with the bottle. After the homily, the bishop returns to the sanctuary and places the bottle on the altar. The service is concluded with the deacon's litany.

The most striking ceremonies are the mixing of the Balsam oil and the olive oil, the solemn procession with the bottle of the Myron, the consecration of the Myron on the altar with an Epiklesis and the exaltation of the Myron on the Bema. Thus Bar Salibi comments on these rites. He seems to have known the ceremony as it was arranged by Michel the Syrian.

Outline of the Baptismal Liturgy known to Bar Salibi:

The Baptismal Liturgy known to Bar Salibi consisted of two parts (2:1). This arrangement was already attested by Jacob of Edessa. The rites included the following elements:

- Inscription of the names (5:6-7)
- Stripping of the clothes and the shoes (6:2-3)
- Exorcism (6:4)
- Signing of the forehead without oil (6:5-7)
- Renunciation of Satan: Repels with the hands and blows on Satan (6:9)

- Adhesion to Christ with hands stretched out (7:1-2)
- Creed (7:3)
- Anointing of the forehead (and the whole body?) with the olive oil (7:4)
- Consecration of the water (7:6-8))
- Pouring of the Myron upon the water (7:7)
- Breathing over the water, signing and Epiklesis (7:8)
- Anointing of the whole body with the olive oil (7:9)
- Immersion (8:1-10)
- Chrismation (9:6-8)
- Orarium is tied on the head
- Crowning
- Putting on white garments
- Lord's Prayer (9:10-11)
- Procession with lights (9:12); incense (9:13)
- Entry of the male children to the sanctuary (9:15)
- Holy Communion (9:16).

In the present baptismal liturgy used in the Syrian Orthodox Church, whose structure and contents were more or less fixed by the seventh century, the Lord's Prayer and the procession with lights and the incense are absent.⁴ Thus we can rightly assume that Bar Salibi comments on a rite which was followed in his diocese, and that this rite was slightly different from the baptismal ordo currently used in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

4 Cfr. BROCK, *Studies*.

DIONYSIUS BAR SALIBI : ON THE HOLY MYRON

By the divine power, we have spoken at length on the mysteries of the cross.

We next write about the divine and life-giving mystery of the Holy Myron.

CHAPTER 1

Now that discourse on the holy cross, has reached a conclusion, (the discourse) proceeds speedily in order to indicate briefly concerning the holy and divine Myron.

(The word) ‘myron’ is translated in the Syriac language as ‘*muro*’⁵. Etymologically (the word) *muro* – with which the dead are embalmed – signifies mortality. Thus it signifies the mortality of Our Lord for our sake. Solomon also called Him “Oil of Myrrh” (Songs 1:2). The Greeks too call it myron in the Greek language. In two ways, it is called myron. First, (because of) the fragrance. Every (kind of) oil composed from many fragrant plants is called myron. Aromatic herbs are also called myron.

5 Bar Kepha, *Myron*, ch. 3-4.

CHAPTER 2

The discussion investigates from which oils is Myron made?

We say from the oil of Balsam or the balm that comes from Egypt and from the olive oil that is found every where.

CHAPTER 3

It is necessary to contemplate on the Balsam oil. Josephus the historian says: Jericho is one of the places of the Hebrews which was rich in Palm trees, and as well as other plants, there was also the Balsam plant. When they cut its roots with sharp stones, they collected the gum that oozes out from its roots, because of its fragrance, warmth and sweetness.

Epiphanius, bishop of Cyprus says, when he explains the verse '*the bunch of Cypress flower is my beloved in the garden of Engedi*' (Song 1:14). Engedi is a place in Judea, in which the Balsam is produced, and there are gardens⁶ that provide it.

6 Fol. 9v.

When this wood is cut, that is sliced, it gives the gum of myron.

CHAPTER 4

People may ask: From where has the tradition of the Myron come down to us? We say: From the time of Moses. When God took him up to the mountain and taught him the mysteries of the Church, He also commanded him saying, *'Take the finest aromatics: the flower of chosen Myron five hundred shekels, Cinnamon, Cassia and Olive oil etc. and make the oil of anointing, and you shall anoint the tent of the testimony, etc.'* (Ex.30:23-26). And this type was handed down till Christ and the old anointing of Moses came to an end, when (Our Lord) handed over the key to Simon on the Mount Tabor. And (thus) the new anointing originated. These things are enough.

CHAPTER 5

People again ask⁷ : From where did the apostles learn to consecrate the Myron? Some of the doctors say they have learnt it in the Upper room, when they ate the Passover, and He taught them to perform the memory of His death through the bread and wine. Similarly,

7 Bar Kepha, *Myron*, ch.1.

He taught them to consecrate the Myron. This is evident from (the fact) that on the same day Myron is consecrated on an altar and the bread is blessed, as in the Upper room. On a single evening, He taught them to do the memory of His death through the *Qurbana* and His anointing through the Myron.

Others say that He taught them about the Myron on the Mount Olives, when He ascended to heaven. This is evident from (the fact) that He blessed His disciples and stretched (His hands) over them there. Others say that the Holy Spirit taught the apostles to make the Myron, when He descended upon them in the form of the tongues of fire. This is evident from what the Son had said: ‘*From what which is mine he takes and informs you*’ (cfr.Jn.16:13-15).

CHAPTER 6

The Nestorians⁸ (who) oppose the truth as well as the faith ask: Did the apostles consecrate the Myron or not?

We say against them: Show us, where is it written that there was the horn of oil for the apostles? You say that it was raised up amongst you. Again, show us, where is it written that the apostles consecrated the Myron for baptism, and that they anointed the baptized with it, as your elders do, for when one wishes to baptize, he consecrates the oil. If you say that it is not written that

8 Bar Kepha, *Myron*, ch.2. instead of *Nestorians*, Bar Kepha gives *heretics*.

the apostles consecrated the Myron, and therefore we do not consecrate (it), then show us, where is it written to adore the cross, to build the churches in the eastward direction, to celebrate the baptism in the church? Therefore (according to this logic) you should not practice these things either.

That the apostles did consecrate the Myron, is evident from what James says in his Epistle: *‘ If anybody is sick, let him call the elders of the Church and let them pray over him⁹ and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord, and the prayer with faith will heal the sick man’* (James 5:14-15). And in the Gospel, it is written that they anointed the sick with the oil (Mk.6:13). This oil which is named (here) is the one over which all the elders recite a prayer when they are assembled for the consecration of the Myron. From this oil, and from (the oil) that the Lord blessed and sanctified and gave to His apostles to anoint the sick and possessed, it is evident that the apostles consecrated the Myron. It is further evident from what Dionysius (the Areopagite) had written at length on it,

9 Fol. 10r.

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in the second discourse on its (= the myron's) mysteries and its consecration¹⁰.

Mar Dionysius learnt of the consecration of the Myron from the apostles. Let these things stop here.

CHAPTER 7

People ask: What does the Myron depict? In his letter to John the Roman, Saint Severios said that the Myron signifies the Holy Spirit, the giver of gifts¹¹. Others also say that the Myron depicts the Spirit, (basing themselves) on what David says: '*Like the oil that descends upon the head and upon the beard*' (Ps.133:2), calling the Holy Spirit 'the oil that descends upon the head', that is upon Christ in (His) baptism. Other doctors including Moses Bar Kepha say that the Myron indicates Christ, as it is written: '*Your name is Myron poured out*' (Songs 1:3)¹². (These things are evident) from its composition and its operations, as we are going to show below.

CHAPTER 8

Why is Christ called 'Myron'? We say that as the Myron possesses fragrance,

10 *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy IV*, PG. 3, 472-485; Eng.tr. Luibheid, pp.224-232; B.Varghese, *Les onctions*, p.151-161.

11 Brock, *Severus' letter*, p.73. Moses Bar Kepha also quotes this letter, *Bar Kepha, Baptism*, # 13; *Myron*, ch.5. See also, Jacob of Edessa, *Myron*, # 7.

12 *Your name is myron poured out* (cfr. LXX) is neither from Peshitta nor Syro-hexapla. On the possible origin of this quotation, see, S.Brock, *Jacob of Edessa, Myron*, p.31. n.63.

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the Word also has holiness and fragrance naturally. Whenever the Myron is hidden in a vase and not revealed and not known, it does not give out fragrance. But when it is revealed and seen, it gives out fragrance. Similarly, when God the Word was hidden in His Father, He was concealed and hidden. When He was ‘poured out’ into the Virgin, it was known that He is the God incarnate¹³.

CHAPTER 9

How many anointing did the incarnate Word receive? We say five¹⁴.

First, when the Word was anointed by the Spirit in the flesh, (that is) by the Holy Spirit, when He was in the womb (of the Virgin).

Second, when He anointed His humanity with His divinity.

Third, when He was anointed in His body by His mother, as the rest of the children.

Fourth, when He received the anointing in His body, that is, the Holy Spirit at the baptism.

Fifth, the anointing with the fragrant Myron, when He was anointed by the women.

CHAPTER 10

When Myron is rubbed on the wings of doves, it gives fragrance,

13 Bar Kepha, *Myron*, ch.6; cfr. George, *Homily*, lines 1-6.

14 Bar Kepha (ch.6) speaks of two anointings.

and it attracts other doves to this dove. When it is rubbed on the nostrils of impure vultures¹⁵ they die¹⁶. Similarly, by the true Myron oil, many live and many others die. The saints who believe in it and are saved, live by it. The wicked who have renounced it, die by it¹⁷.

CHAPTER 11

Again Christ is called 'Myron' because He received it, when He was anointed by the women¹⁸. *On the fragrance*: When the Balsam oil is squeezed and pressed out, it gives out fragrance. Similarly, Christ was pierced with the lance and He gave us pleasant and sweet odor of His divinity.

Again it is called 'myron', because of the mortality that He received in the flesh for us, according to the indication of the Syriac language, as have said above etc.

CHAPTER 12

Why is the Myron composed from two oils?¹⁹ We say that (it is) because Christ is known

15 Fol. 10v.

16 Cfr. Bar Kepha, *Myron*, ch.6:4. Probably based on Gregory of Nyssa's commentary on the Canticle. *Sermon*, 3, PG.44,825. Eng.tr. H.Musurillo, *From Glory to Glory: Texts from Gregory of Nyssa's Mystical Writings*, (St.Vladimir Seminary Press, New York, 1979), p.165.

17 Bar Kepha, *Myron*, Ch.6.

18 Ch.11 is based on Bar Kepha's commentary (ch.6). Oil as a symbol of mortality is an idea found in St Ephrem also. See. *Homily on Our Lord*, # 47 : Ephrem speaks of the anointing by Mary (Math.26:17) " Mary by the oil showed forth the mystery of His mortality, who by His teaching mortified the concupiscence of the flesh", *NPNF* . XIII/2 (1956), p.326.

19 cfr. Bar Kepha, *Myron*, ch.7ff; George, *Homily*, lines 325-29.

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from (His) divinity and humanity. The high priest pours the Balsam oil over the olive oil, symbolizing that he had poured the divinity over the humanity. The Balsam oil shows that the divinity is hidden and the olive oil indicates that the humanity is present²⁰.

Again Myron is composed from two oils, as the Word is compounded²¹ with the flesh. As the Balsam naturally possesses fragrance, the Word naturally possesses holiness. As the olive oil helps those who are anointed with it, the body of the Word confers help and healing to men. As the Myron is of one composed nature, Christ is of one incarnate nature. The oil of Balsam is brought from Egypt, so also God said: *'From Egypt, I called my Son'* (Hos 11:1).

Again it is made from two oils in order to show that Emmanuel is composed from divinity and humanity. The Word, being God and con-substantial

20 Litt. *to be found*.

21 Or *composed*. It is a favorite expression of Severus of Antioch (*synthesis*).

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with the Father and the Spirit, took upon Himself the economy with the flesh. The same one is visible and invisible.

Just as the constitution of the Myron is from oils and substances that are separate and different in essence, yet nobody says after the composition of Myron that there are many oils, but a single Myron, similarly, it is not right to separate Christ, that true Myron, into two natures after the union with the flesh.

CHAPTER 13

We say that the union of the Word with the body took place, not in confusion, in the way in which the oil of Myron is mixed, that is, the oils (mix) with each other. But Christ's (union was) like that fire with iron, and light (with heat?) and fire with wood, so that we do not provide an excuse²² for those who divide (the natures) (i.e. to attack our position).

CHAPTER 14

Again through the 'fatness' of the olive, we see, the holy flesh. The olive plant is abundant in blessings and helps, and it is of advantage to all species (of things) with which it is mixed. Cold plants when

22 Fol. 11r.

compounded with it become cold; when it is mixed with hot ones, it becomes hot. Similarly, the economy of Christ also gave healing to the sick and binding up to the bruised and resurrection to the dead.

(From) the Balsam we understand the eternity of the Word. As this oil that oozes and flows from a stem, is simple and naturally possesses fragrance, the Word, who is from the Father, is simple in His eternal glory. He has no need to enrich His naturally possessed magnificence, from another (source). These things are sufficient.

CHAPTER 15

It has been asked: Why do the bishops (alone) compose the Myron?

We say as an argument that Christ united to Himself with an animated body [and so] the bishop alone compounds it, for one is the Only-Begotten Son who is from the Father. Again, for He alone, and His Holy Spirit, know how He was 'compounded' with the flesh²³.

CHAPTER 16

He compounds it secretly in a special place

23 Cfr. Bar Kepha, *Myron*, ch.10.

in order to indicate the particular intention of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit, in which the mystery of the emptying out and the economy of the Word is hidden. Secondly, this place indicates the Virgin Mary, in whom the Word was united with His flesh²⁴.

CHAPTER 17

Again the bishop pours the Balsam oil over the olive oil, indicating thus, that the divinity, which is exalted from all things, poured out its essence upon the humanity. The Word empties out Himself into womb of the Virgin without being poured out, yet remaining completely in the bosom of His Father. That is why, He is called '*the Myron emptied out*' (*Songs 1:3*). The fact that He was poured out teaches us this: his blood was poured out and He descended into the womb of the Virgin, without His having departed from His Father.

CHAPTER 18

The bishop is clothed in white, corresponding to the light of his soul, and with the purity of his person, as the mystery indicates to him that it should be offered to God in purity.

Again, having put on white garments, he consecrates it, because it is necessary that he should be illuminated in the contemplation and

²⁴ cfr. *Ibid.*, ch.11.

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divine knowledge.

Again (it indicates) that he should be pure from all kinds of sin and perfect in a holy way of life; also so that he should indicate through the white (garments), that the divine gifts which he has received from above are pure and luminous. Again, the bishop is in the place of Christ and as Christ is light as He said²⁵ *'I am the light of the world'* (Jn 9:5). Thus the bishop wears white (garments) that are luminous. Again he puts on white (garments) because he is the image of the Father, who dwells in unapproachable light²⁶. These are enough.

CHAPTER 19

Let us now come to other things. The fact that the bishop leaves the Holy of Holies, and goes around and comes up to the other end of the church, carrying the Myron indicates that the divinity of the Only-Begotten Word who descended and came to us when He became man. As the Word was hidden in the bosom of His Father, so too Myron is hidden

25 Fol. 11v.

26 Bar Kepha, ch.29. All the Syrian Orthodox commentators say that in the consecration of myron, the bishop was dressed in white garments.

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in the hands of the bishop and is veiled when he goes around the nave. When he goes out, the bishop is veiled, symbolizing that, even though the Word was revealed and came to us, yet when He became man, His dispensation is concealed from us²⁷

CHAPTER 20

As the Myron is hidden, so too the divinity of the Word is concealed from the angels and created beings do not comprehend it. Again, Myron is veiled, just as the divinity of the Word was veiled in the flesh, when He came to the world. And again it indicates the virtues of the saints that are concealed, as (it is written) : *'Let your left hand do not know, what the right hand does'* (Mt.6:3).

CHAPTER 21

Myron leaves and goes around the nave and returns just as the Word, when He became flesh, He left the heaven, just as the Myron (leaves) the Holy of Holies. And He went around the world, just as Myron (goes around) the nave. He fulfilled the divine economy and returned to the heaven, from where He descended.

CHAPTER 22

In the middle of the church, it is revealed and consecrated, as

27 Bar Kepha, *Myron* 13. Bar Kepha does not say that the bishop is veiled.

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the Word, when He became flesh, did realize the salvation in the middle of the earth. As David said: *'In the midst of the church will I give praise'* (Ps. 22:22 LXX).

CHAPTER 23

When the Myron leaves the sanctuary, why does the procession move to the north? We say: The eastern region is luminous and the western is dark; northern is high and elevated; southern is deep and low. East and the North indicate the divinity of the Word, and the West and the South, His humanity. For His divinity is luminous like East, and high and elevated like the North. But His humanity, consubstantial to ours, is dark like the West and lowly like the South. Therefore, it leaves from the East and moves to the North, which is high and elevated, for His eternal divinity is pre-existing and His humanity is temporal.

CHAPTER 24

He leaves the sanctuary, that is from the East, as a bridegroom from the bridal chamber, while the (Psalm) of David is sung

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before him: *‘Like a bridegroom comes out of the chamber’* (Ps 19:5). He cries out from the East: *‘Glorify the Lord with a new song and His glory in the assembly of justice...’* (Ps 149:1). He comes to the North as if to forbid the Accuser who blows from the North. (The following Psalm) is sung before him: *‘I found David my servant. And (with) my oil²⁸ I have anointed him’* (Ps.89:21). And *‘the Mount Sion, on the northern border, I have called him’*. He comes to the West teaching (us) to flee from Satan whose light had set, because of his pride. And we say: *‘In the middle of the church shall I praise you’* (Ps 22:22 LXX) and *“Glorify him who rides to the West, His name is the Lord”* (Ps 68:5 Pesh). And he comes to the luminous South, teaching that the Father comes to everyone who is luminous by his virtues, and also the Spirit and they make their habitation with him. They say: *‘God came from the South and the Holy One from the Mount Pharan’* (Dt 33:2), and *‘You have anointed my head with the oil’* (Ps 23:5), and *‘O Lord our God, illuminate us!’* (Ps 118:27); and *‘Bind our festivals with chains until the horn of the altar’* (Ps 118:27). When they come to the door of the sanctuary, they say: *‘Open to me the doors of justice’* (Ps 118:19). This is enough regarding the

28 Fol. 12r.

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procession of the divine Myron.

CHAPTER 25

On the Myron and its mysteries. It is necessary that we may continue with the same contemplation (= spiritual sense) and compare the types to the truth. Thus the twelve deacons who surround the Myron represent the twelve legions of the angels²⁹. Others say that the deacons represent the Seraphim who surround the Word. Their fans (indicate) the six wings of the Seraphim, who covered their faces with two, that is, from His divinity. With two they (covered) their feet, that is, from His humanity. As someone may say, they do not search out His divinity and investigate about His humanity. And with the middle (wings) they fly (seeing) that they possess an intermediary knowledge about Him, because '*He is the mediator between God and men*', as Paul had said (I Tim 2:5).

Again, the fact that the deacons conceal the Myron is the type of the Seraphim who conceal the divinity on the exalted throne, as they cover their faces with two (wings), and with two their feet. Again they indicate that similarly, God the Word, even after

29 Bar Kepha, *Myron* ch.17.

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His self-emptying for us³⁰, was sanctified divinely by the holy Seraphim, with His Father and the Holy Spirit, even though He had become flesh. Similarly, the holy Myron, after its composition in the Holy of Holies, is concealed and sanctified by the twelve wings. Again the fans indicate the holy prophets who came from the twelve tribes and prophesied on Christ, obscurely and enigmatically. Again Myron is concealed with fans, indicating that it is not right that the divine mysteries should be revealed to those who are unworthy³¹.

CHAPTER 26

Again we say that the twelve priests represent the twelve Apostles³².

CHAPTER 27

The twelve censors (indicate) the preaching of the Gospel. Again the twelve censors filled with incense and go before the Myron, indicate for us the twelve apostles through whom³³ the fragrance of the Gospel of Christ was spread³⁴.

CHAPTER 28

Again the sweet incense symbolizes the fragrance of the faith that is spread

30 cfr. *Phil.* 2:6.

31 Georges, *Homily*, lines 355-368.

32 Cfr. Bar Kepha, *Myron*, ch.18.

33 Fol. 12v.

34 Bar Kepha, *Myron* ch.18

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in the four quarters³⁵.

CHAPTER 29

Again sub-deacons represent the prophets³⁶.

CHAPTER 30

The twelve lamps in their hands symbolize the luminous revelations that descend upon them, in accordance with “*every good gift and perfect grace*” (James 1:17). Again the lamps indicate the light of the divine knowledge that is in the Law and the Prophets. Again the twelve lights symbolize the doctors and interpreters who were like lamps to the Church with their teachings³⁷.

CHAPTER 31

The deacons stand nearer to the Myron than the priests who are superior in rank, because the deacons represent the Seraphim who are nearer to Christ, and the priests, the apostles and the sub-deacons, the prophets³⁸.

CHAPTER 32

The sub-deacons who are inferior go before the priests, because the prophets preceded the Apostles³⁹.

CHAPTER 33

The deacons, priests and the sub-deacons are nearer to the Myron

35 Bar Kepha, *Ibid*; George, *Homily*, lines 369-72.

36 Bar Kepha, *Myron*, ch.19.

37 Bar Kepha, *Myron* ch.19; George, *Homily*, lines 373-76.

38 Bar Kepha, ch.20.

39 *Ibid*.

than the people, because the Seraphim, apostles and the prophets are nearer to Christ than the faithful⁴⁰.

CHAPTER 34

The number (twelve, whether) twelve censors, twelve lamps or the twelve fans, indicates the twelve tribes. As the tribes were twelve, the stones (were) twelve⁴¹, and twelve hours make a day, and (there are) twelve months in a year, and also man is known in twelve parts⁴².

CHAPTER 35

Again, the Myron is slowly carried around in the hands of the high priest and proceeds until (the procession) returns to the sanctuary, and he places the vase on the table. It indicates the course that Christ, followed by His disciples, was traveling little by little in the divine preaching until He arrived at the cross and He was hung on it⁴³. Thus the Myron also is placed on the altar. These are enough.

CHAPTER 36

Now it is necessary to open up the true types of

40 *Ibid* ch.21.

41 cfr. *Gen* 49:28.

42 Bar Kepha, ch.22.

43 George, *Homily*, lines 415-16.

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Myron, so that the hearer might be filled with the mystical fragrance of the noetic Myron. The hymns with which the Myron is consecrated, indicate the hymns of the Seraphim who cry out: 'Holy, Holy, Holy', and the hymns of the Cherubim who say : '*Blessed is the honor of the Lord from His place*' (Ezek 3:12)⁴⁴ .

CHAPTER 37

The high priest places the vase of the Myron on the altar, because it refers to and represents Christ. The altar (represents) also the wood on which He was crucified.

CHAPTER 38

He signs three crosses over it indicating the Trinity who perfects the mystery⁴⁵ .

CHAPTER 39

Why is it consecrated on Thursday?⁴⁶ We say: Since 'myron' in the Syriac language indicates death and on this day Our Lord revealed about His death, as (He said): '*One of you will betray me to death*' (Mt 26:21). Again⁴⁷ because it is close to Friday on which He tasted death. Again, it is consecrated on this day, because

44 Bar Kepha, ch 23.

45 *Ibid* ch 24.

46 Bar Kepha, *Myron* ch 25; cfr. Jacob of Edessa, *Myron*, # 22; George, *Commentary* (ed. Connolly), p.20.

47 Fol. 13r.

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He was anointed three times and on this day, He received the last anointing. As say Mathew and Mark: '*Two days before the Passover...*' (Mt 26:1; Mk 14:1). Between our Passover, that is Sunday, and the day in which He was anointed, there are two days: (that is) Friday and Saturday. This interpretation has been given by Moses Bar Kepha. But we say: '*Two days before the Passover*' (means that) it is on Tuesday that He was anointed. He calls 'Passover' the one of the Jews, and not our Sunday.

It is consecrated on Thursday because on (that day) Christ raised His hands over His disciples and made them bishops. It is therefore meet that Myron should be consecrated on the day in which the priesthood was given.

It is consecrated on Thursday because it should consecrate the five senses of the body and the soul, because it is also sanctification for the five senses⁴⁸. It sanctifies and gladdens the eyes with light and beautiful vision; the ears with sound filled with melodies and lovely songs; the nostril with the sweet odor of the incense; the mouth with praises

48 George, *Homily*, lines 190-204.

וְכִתְּבָהּ כְּכֹהֵן : כְּכֹהֵן
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 מִתְּכֵן אֲפִיקָה . כְּכֹהֵן
 וְכִתְּבָהּ , כְּכֹהֵן אֲפִיקָה : כְּכֹהֵן
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and chants and the hands with the sensation befitting God⁴⁹.

In his epistle to John, Jacob of Edessa has said: Saint Dionysius who spoke spiritually of the service of the Myron, had not handed down in writing why it is consecrated on the Thursday of the Mysteries⁵⁰. The rest of the doctors also have not informed us on it. Is it lawful to consecrate on other days or not, when it becomes necessary to perform it? But I know, in our days, a bishop had happened to be in a city of the pagans. He lodged with a certain Christian who was a deacon. When he was compelled to make this man priest, he did not have an altar, that is the tablet with him, nor had he the Myron, in order to anoint an altar with it and to offer the sacrifice of the body and the blood and after that, to ordain that man; being compelled in one night, to consecrate Myron, and to anoint the altar, and to offer the sacrifice of the body and blood upon it and to make that deacon priest. He performed these things without violating the canons of the Church and those for consecrating Myron (on a day) other than the Thursday

49 Bar Kepha, *Myron*, ch 26.

50 Letter of Jacob of Edessa to Johannan Estunara, in *Synodicon I*, (CSCO.368), 216-17.

אֵין כְּבֹדָא לְכִיּוֹן כְּכֹדָא
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 לְכִיּוֹן כְּכֹדָא לְכִיּוֹן כְּכֹדָא

of the mysteries. But he did it because of necessity. It has been prescribed that it be consecrated on the Thursday of the mysteries, so that it should be nearer to the passion of Christ. As He said about the woman who poured the oil over His head, “*she did it for my burial*” (Mk 14:9; Mt 26:12). Therefore, they have ordered that it be consecrated on Thursday, so that it should be prepared for those who are to be baptized in that noble night and on the feast of resurrection. These are enough.

CHAPTER 40

On the mystery of Myron:⁵¹ It is advantageous for us to add on the same subject. People ask us: Why is Myron consecrated on day? We say, because it is a mystery dressed with light.

CHAPTER 41

It is consecrated at the third hour, for it indicates Christ, who (Himself) indicates the Trinity: Father who anoints, and the Son who is anointed and the Spirit who fulfills the role of oil⁵².

CHAPTER 42

The bishop alone consecrates it, so that he may have some proper function

51 Fol. 13v.

52 Bar Kepha, *Myron* ch 27.

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 למדא : צדקה זיכרא אלהי .
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42 . [אלהי] אלהי אלהי .
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other than that of the priests. Therefore he consecrates altars, that is, tablets, and performs ordinations⁵³.

CHAPTER 43

Again the high priest consecrates it because it is the sanctifying principle of all the ecclesiastical affairs. And therefore the bishop alone consecrates the Myron.

CHAPTER 44

After the consecration, he ascends to the Bema as Christ ascended to the Mount Olives with His twelve apostles and then to His Father⁵⁴.

CHAPTER 45

It is not right for him to remain in the same manner of life, but to advance from (his) first manner of life to another more excellent one.

CHAPTER 46

Thirdly, just as he is exalted in his being, so he should be exalted in his knowledge and manner of life above from the priests, deacons and the whole people.

CHAPTER 47

Again, in order to show the Myron to the people, just as Our Lord was suspended on the cross, in the sight of all the creation (and) He was seen.

53 *Ibid* ch 37

54 *Ibid* ch 30; George, *Homily*, lines 455-462.

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CHAPTER 48

By extolling it, he indicates (the following). When Emmanuel was raised on the cross and extended, He received the anointing of the Spirit, not that He had not yet received the Spirit, for Jesus has not (yet) been glorified.

CHAPTER 49

In the same way as Christ blessed His apostles, when He ascended to heaven, (the bishop) blesses the people when he ascends on the Bema.

CHAPTER 50

He extols it towards the four quarters⁵⁵, because Christ had commanded that His Gospel should be transmitted to the four quarters. Also man is composed of four elements. The twelve hours of the day have been divided into four watches, each of three (hours).

The Sun is directed by four winds. The yearly cycle has been divided into four. Therefore it is extolled towards the four sides, so as to sanctify the entire world. And to each side, three crosses are made with the vase in its being extolled, for the name of Christ indicates the Trinity: the Father who anoints,

55 *Ibid* ch 35; George, *Homily*, lines 363-64.

48. [ܐܝܬܘܢ] ܚܝܢ ܚܝܢ ܚܝܢ ܚܝܢ ܚܝܢ ܚܝܢ
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the Son who is anointed and the Spirit who fulfills the role of the oil. Whenever we sign the cross, we indicate the Trinity. Through Him, who was crucified, we understand the Trinity. The hymn of the bishop, as he extols the Myron (is) Kyrie eleison : five times, (which means) ‘Lord have mercy upon us!’. These are enough.

CHAPTER 51

In the course of contemplation, we proceed and arrive at other things. When the Myron descends from the Bema, it is placed on the altar, indicating that the Word, even after He had ascended to heaven, dwells always on the holy altars⁵⁶. It is not left in the vase⁵⁷ in which it was consecrated, but poured into another, because the vase in which it was consecrated represent the flesh that was united to the Word⁵⁸. The one into which it is poured, typifies our flesh, for through baptism we receive it (= *myron*). Again the Myron is hidden in the Holy of Holies and is not left revealed like the crosses and (the similar) orders in the church, for the mystery of the economy of the Word –whom it typifies– is hidden. His judgements are inscrutable, being a great depth, and therefore

56 Bar Kepha, *Myron* ch 35.

57 Fol.14r.

58 Bar Kepha, *Myron*, ch 36.

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it is not lawful to show the mysteries openly.

CHAPTER 52

It is given by the order and permission of the bishop, because the bishop occupies the place of Christ⁵⁹. It is not lawful to be given without (his) permission, for he holds the keys of the kingdom. Again, so that they should show obedience to him, as Christ was obedient to the Father, and the apostles to Christ. It shall not be given to the heretics and the pagans, in the way that the blessings or the bones of the martyrs are given, because it confers its graces (only) to the souls of the faithful. The souls of the non-believers are injured by its proximity.

CHAPTER 53

Again it is consecrated by the bishop and it consecrates the baptismal (water), the tablets, the baptized (as well as) the churches. Thus the Myron represents Christ Himself, who sanctifies and is sanctified. He sanctifies all, as He is God. He is sanctified as He became man.

Saint John (Chrysostom),

⁵⁹ *Ibid* ch 38.

in the twentieth homily of the commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, says: While referring to the poor, he refers to this sanctuary, that is the altar, of whom the members of Christ are composed. This altar is not from the old one, but from the present awesome one. This is of stone by nature. But it becomes holy because it receives the body and blood of Christ. But that one, since it is the body of Christ, is more awesome than the one near which you stand. You honor this altar, because it receives the body of Christ, while the one that is the same body of Christ, you dishonor and abhor, when you disregard (it).

But people ask, if Myron, *Qurbana* and the altar represent Christ, which is the most worthy among them and bear the sign of excellence? Some of the doctors say that it is myron, as it is evident from its etymology, myron having its origin from the divinity, indicating a time of eternity, for the Word

took this name even before He became flesh : ‘*Your name is the myron poured out*’ (Songs 1:3)

Qurbana and the altar were named during the time of the dispensation and the person of humanity. For until He was united with the flesh⁶⁰ and offered Himself to the Father on the cross, (as) ‘*an acceptable offering (qurbana) in the evening*’ (cfr.*Ps* 141:2), that is in the end of the time, He was not called *Qurbana*.

And He is named altar because our prayers are offered to God, ‘on Him’. Moses Bar Kepha, bishop of Mosul says otherwise: Myron, *Qurbana*, altar or bishop, one is not more valuable than the other, because all four indicate Christ and occupy the place of Christ. Christ is the Myron⁶¹. As Paul had said, ‘*In the end of the world, He offered Himself once (for all) through his sacrifice*’ (Heb 9:26). He is the altar, as ‘an altar, not built by hands’. He is the high priest, as ‘*We have the high priest of our confession*’ (Heb 3:1).

They indicate Christ not in a single way, but in several ways. The Myron indicates the union and the *Qurbana* the offering for us,

60 Fol. 14v.

61 Bar Kepha, *Myron* ch 41.

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the altar Him who became sacrifice on the wood for us. (He is) high priest, because He offered Himself to the Father for us and they sanctify and perfect mutually, and are sanctified and perfected by others.

Myron is consecrated so that things might be anointed with it, and so that churches as well as baptismal water might be consecrated, the baptized might be signed with it, and (so) be distinguished from the non-baptized. (It is consecrated) in order to confer adoption as sons and the garment of life to those who wear it, to anoint our spiritual head, to gladden our faces that were blackened with sins, to help the spiritual athletes and to give virtue to those who have entered the world and good company to those who are sent off.

Qurbana is offered in order to confer us remission of sins, while making us His members, and (to enable us) to acquire divine energies, such that fire gives to iron, when joined with it.

Why is Myron consecrated once a year? We say, because baptism is one, not many; Christ suffered once; each of the festivals

is celebrated once a year and the sheep have one sign⁶².

Why is *Qurbana* celebrated every day? We say, because the sheep receive nourishment daily, and since we sin many times a year, the *Qurbana* is offered, so that he who receives it might be absolved by it every time.

What do we obtain from Myron and from the *Qurbana*? We say that we meditate with the eyes of the soul on God the Word, who unites Himself with the bread and wine and the oil. He is the *Qurbana*; He is the Myron, and the Word of Life to those who are saved, and death to those who perish.

The operations of the Myron precede the *Qurbana* for without Myron, the church is not consecrated, nor the altar, nor the baptism, the *Qurbana* nor the priests⁶³ and these are the fundamental operations. The operations of the *Qurbana* are the final and complete, because the church that is consecrated with Myron, if *Qurbana* is not offered in it, is not completed. Therefore these (do not operate) without the others.

This discourse may take completion here.

End of (the discourse) on the divine and life giving Myron.

62 Bar Kepha, *Myron* ch 46.

63 Fol.15r.

DIONYSIUS BAR SALIBI COMMENTARY ON BAPTISM

Again by the divine help, we approach the mysteries of Holy Baptism.

CHAPTER 1

1. First Chapter of the same laver. Since we have enjoyed the spiritual contemplation of the divine Myron, let us (now) come with alacrity to speak about the divine illumination of the salvific and perfecting baptism.

Regarding it our Lord had said: *Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven* (Jn.3:5). The beginning of the discourse concerns why the ancients were baptized at the adult age of thirty, while later the doctors ordered that one shall receive Baptism at infancy. We say that then there were many who delayed Baptism, for they feared that the grace will be lost if they sin after baptism. But there were others who did not receive baptism because of this (reason), so that they could do wickedness during their life, with desires, laxity and passions. For others again, holy baptism was something concealed and despised.

2. When Athanasius, Basil and Gregory (of Naziansus) saw those harmful practices that are mentioned (above), they looked and observed that many people die without Baptism because of various reasons, and others (die) when they are small, and others since they did not find a minister to baptize (them). (Accordingly) in their teachings, they persistently admonished the Christians to come to Baptism. They always said that it is purification, and (that) one should not delay till the adulthood, because one does not know what happens tomorrow. (Therefore), once the baptism has been decided upon, let an infant or a child receive baptism (immediately).

3. But the pagans talk nonsense and say: how (can) an infant understand the things that are performed in Baptism? And how can one, that is the sponsor, learn the mystery for another, (for) the child is not aware of the renunciation or the confession. Against them we say the word of Basil the Great. In fact, he wrote against those who say that the departed are not aware of the refreshment (rites)

1 *Fol. 15b*

made on their behalf, as follows: 'As the children and the infants are washed in Baptism, they receive the Spirit in the faith of their parents, though there is no discernment or knowledge in them. Thus by the faith of those who perform refreshment (rites) in the name of their departed, a righteous act takes place for to the departed in their tombs.

4. But some ask: which is greater, the gift of Baptism or (that of) the priesthood? We say: that of Baptism. It is known from the fact that the Spirit descends in person upon the baptismal (water), as He descended upon our Lord in Jordan. But His operation in the priesthood (is different?).

5. Again anyone who does not participate in baptism, does not enter the kingdom (of God). But there are many who do not participate in priesthood. Again it is asked: how many baptisms are there? And we say: [Gregory] the theologian and the doctors say that there are five. But we say that there are eight: Firstly, the flood by which the sin was rooted out.

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Secondly, that of the people of Israel, when they crossed the [Red] sea, as Paul said: *Our Fathers were baptized in the sea...* (I Cor. 10:2). Thirdly, the washing (*lit. baptism*) of the vessels and the ablutions prescribed by the Law. Fourthly, that of John [the Baptist]. Fifthly, our [baptism] from water and Spirit. Sixthly, that of tears. Seventhly, that of martyrdom, and eighthly, the torture by fire that [Gregory] the theologian mentions. In that place, he says accidentally about another baptism (namely), that of fire, which is very painful and long. These things are enough.

CHAPTER 2

1. Chapter two on the Holy Baptism. In this chapter we teach that the order of Baptism has two services, as Jacob of Edessa has taught us in his Epistles². The first service (*tekso*) is the cleansing of the baptized, so that he will be fit for the reception of the Holy Spirit and worthy of the filial adoption. This should be performed in front of the sanctuary.

2 "The Order of Holy Baptism", in *Synodicon*, I, (CSCO 368), pp.211-213.

The second service (*tekso*) is the consecration of water so that it will become a womb that gives birth to spiritual beings. Therefore, sometimes our fathers purified the baptized on Monday of the first week of the Lent and prepared them during whole of the Lent. And in the night of the Easter, they baptized them. This practice should be followed when the baptized are prepared to remain in the appropriate order in which each one of them is, according to his rank.

2. In his letter to Addai, (Mar Jacob) said that the baptismal rite has been divided into two orders³. In the first order, first of all, there is a prayer over the catechumens, which is not found in the same way in all the manuscripts. But in one (manuscript) one (prayer is found) and in other another. After this, the second prayer is set down, the one which the priest says silently for the baptized⁴ beginning: *Lord Our God Almighty, who knows the minds of men.*

The third prayer is over the catechumens who are about

3 *Ibid.*

4 fol. 16r

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to be baptized, and is prescribed to be said with incense, (that is) before the baptized are inscribed. Its beginning is: *Giver of light and illuminator of souls and bodies who said let light shine out from darkness.* The fathers had fixed these three prayers to be said in front of the sanctuary⁵ (and) thus they had ordered that three (prayers) should be said before the holy (marriage) blessing also⁶.

Then the baptized are inscribed and are marked (*htm*) on their foreheads in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. After that in an orderly way, the priest turns towards them to the West and says the prayer before the exorcism, of which the beginning is: *To you Lord God, Almighty...* Then he says the exorcism against the adversary.

3. (Each) one of these (prayers that) he says are written and fixed by the fathers and doctors of the Church. This is their canon: ‘ In the formula of exorcism, anything created should not be used at all, neither from these

5 We follow Harvard Syr.47. cfr. SYA, p. 30.

6 Cfr. *Synodicon*, I, CSCO 368, p.212.

visible ones nor from those invisible, nor those things that are said to be of God; but it should be addressed to God. But in the whole formula of exorcism, even though the priest commemorates different operations of God, nevertheless in all his exorcisms he has authority to swear by God only, and not at all by anything else, it being clear that even if by conventional wording he speaks of the name of God when he makes the adjuration, yet God has no name, nor any indicative appellation except from these from our custom we men have established regarding Him in all our languages and tongues. Therefore those who dare to swear against the Accuser, the enemy, by something different except God, besides being laughable to the demons who neglect them, and despise the wording of their exorcism, they should also be considered guilty, along with those who worship created things, by the canons of the Church.

4. Then the fathers have handed down to us that those who renounce Satan and all his works, be required to turn to the West

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and give ‘woe’ (‘yo), that is *woyo*. Then they shall turn at once to the East and confess that they are committed to Christ and obedient to Him, believing in the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit, and confessing also the resurrection of the dead. Then the priest shall make a prayer of confession and thanksgiving for them to God, for they have been held worthy to become Christians. This is the first part and these are enough.

CHAPTER 3

1. Again let us come to the middle part. When Mar Jacob of Edessa⁷ speaks and answers on those things that come later. In fact he says in his letter to Addai:⁸ Those who were worthy of the first order of the baptism, (as) it is said in the previous chapter, and through these (rites) to be called Christians, if they like according to the old custom of the Church, for a certain time they remain as Christians, observing christian (practices) and then (later) they approach the holy Baptism.

7 Folio 16v.

8 The order of baptism described here differs from that which bears Jacob’s name. See *Synodicon*, I, XLVII, CSCO.368, p.214-15; Bar Hebraeus, *Nomocanon* (ed. Bedjan), Ch.2,5.

Later when they desire to be baptized, they entered the baptistery, the things in the second order took place for them. They first say the creed according to the custom of the whole Church, which they learned from the beginning.

Then the priest fills water in the font. Then while saying *Peace be with you*, the priest prays for them the prayer whose beginning is: *Holy Father who through the holy apostles*. Then he seals (*rsm*) them with the holy oil, as they stand stripped and naked, and they are anointed with the holy oil, and they stand naked until the priest consecrates the water of the holy Baptism.

He prays with incense this prayer whose beginning is: *Giver of holiness and Saviour of the race of men*. Then he prays over the water the prayer whose beginning is: *O Lord God Omnipotent, the Creator of the whole creation, visible and invisible*, at the same time blowing three times over the water in the form of the cross, saying: *Let the head of the dragon be bruised, that kills men with*

the sign and form (*tupso*) of the cross.

After the completion of this prayer, he pours the Myron upon the holy water three times in the form (*tupso*) of the cross and prays this prayer whose beginning is:

He who on His only begotten Son, God the Word, established the administration of baptism on the earth

Then he makes them descend into the water, and the priest baptizes them in the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Then he seals them with the Holy Myron as consummation, and as proof that they are soldiers of God, as he says: *Let your servants receive this (seal) in your name*⁹. Then at the end of this second order, he offers a prayer of thanksgiving for them saying, *Blessed are You, O Lord God, omnipotent, the source of all kindness*¹⁰. Or he says another prayer.

And then they go to the church and participate in the Mysteries. Concerning these, it is not lawful to add or to take away anything. These are not left to the authority of the priest; similarly the readings and the canticles.

This is

9 SYA, *Ordo*, p.72.

10 SYA, *Ordo*, p.74-76.

the order of baptism, translated from the Greek language into Syriac. That there are two orders¹¹ for baptism – not one, is evident from the (fact) that twice he places the incense and twice he offers the prayer of confession and thanksgiving to God for those who are baptized.

2. Again thus says Saint Jacob (of Edessa) in the beginning of the Epistle¹²: From the beginning, in the case of the ancients who ministered in the churches, these spiritual things of the Church were performed as it was found written in the ancient manuscripts, by short prayers and by short and compressed words. Then little by little, they received additions with powerful and ordered words and harmonious prayers for the edification of the people. And regarding the present order that has come down to us, there is no need for further additions full of nonsense and deprived of any moderation.

3. Again the (number of) crosses of the Baptism: In the same manner as of the *Qurbana*, they are accomplished by the Trinity:

11 Fol. 17r.

12 Cfr. Synodicon I, XLV-XLVII, CSCO 368, p.211-215.

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(that is), three times over the baptized when they are signed, and three over the water; six times (as) it is commanded regarding them. Crosses over the baptized are these: first, when he signs them (*rsm*) with it on the forehead. Second, when he marks (*htm*) them; third, when he seals (*tb'*) them. The first he shows thus: the Father signs, Son in whom is the signing and the Holy Spirit who consecrates.

Second: the Father is the one who marks, the Son is the one from whom the marking comes, and the Spirit who completes. Third: the Father is the one who seals, the Son is the one from whom the sealing comes, and the Spirit is the one who perfects. For, in the baptism of the Son also, the threefold mystery was revealed over the water: the Father who declares, and the Son who is baptized and the Spirit who witnesses.

4. (Our) Lord had called these mysteries “holy things”: *Take heed you shall not give the holy things to the dogs* (Mt 7:6). Therefore all the mysteries were not written down in the beginning. But the prayers of the Baptism, *Qurbana*, Myron and the Ordination were handed over from mouth to mouth in the beginning of the preaching, because of pagans.

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5. These are the crosses over the water: When he makes the invocation of the Holy Spirit, three; when he pours oil over the water, three; and when he says: *Blessed are these waters*, three¹³. Those of the breathing (over the water) are not reckoned, because sometimes he does not make the cross in the breathing, but he breathes over them, in order that they might receive the former power, that they have lost. Some make one cross, and some three. All are considered as the breathing, and are not counted (as the sign of the cross). This is enough.

CHAPTER 4

1. Chapter four on Baptism. Let us come to other matters. Moses Bar Kepha says that Baptism is called by three names: Baptism, enlightenment (and) regeneration¹⁴.

It is called Baptism for¹⁵ two reasons. Firstly because, it washes spiritually and bodily: spiritually from sins, and bodily from uncleanness. Secondly, because one is baptized in the water, that is, he is immersed and is covered.

13 SYA, Ordo, p.66.

14 Bar Kepha, *Baptism* # 2. (Bar Salibi quotes the text without much modification).

15 Fol. 17v

It is named enlightenment for two reasons: firstly because, darkness of the ignorance of God is expelled from the baptized, and he is enlightened by the three lights, that is to say, the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit, the One God. Secondly, (because) he is made worthy of the light of the Kingdom of Heaven, in which the righteous shine like the Sun (Mt.13:43), in the Kingdom, as the Lord had said, if he keeps baptism by the works of righteousness.

It is designated regeneration, being comparable to the first birth from a woman. The first (birth) is from a woman, but this is from water and Spirit. That (former) one is by reason of sin, but this is for pardon and filial adoption.

2. (Gregory) the Theologian, in (his) homily on Baptism, calls it by eight names: gift, grace, baptism, anointing, light, garment of incorruptibility, laver of regeneration and seal. We have explained and interpreted these names in the explanation and the commentary (given) in the second part of (the homily of)

the Saint.

3. Again we say that it is not lawful that a man receives baptism with his wife or his daughter, nor a woman with her son, nor a brother with his sister, nor a little boy with a little girl. But boys (shall be baptized) with (other) boys, and little girls with (other) little girls. It is also not lawful that a man receives a little girl in the baptism, nor a girl receives a boy. But boys (shall receive) boys, and women, the women.

4. Regarding what (grace) baptism confers upon us- Saint Athanasius says¹⁶: Therefore you who approach the divine water of Christ, do not look at what is visible, nor desire anything like the Jews. But understand and reckon the power that has been added to the water through the invocation. Remember the Lord who suffered for you, and the purifying water (that) He has given you through His passion.

Thus approach, believing that you strip off the old and the earthly man, and you put on completely the new and divine man

16 S.Brock, *Baptismal address*, #2, p.96; tr. p.99).

who is from heaven. Thus you leave the earthly and temporal manner, and (come) to that heavenly and elevated one. And do not leave any worldly desire in you as you come for baptism.

5. (Gregory) the Theologian had said in the homily on baptism, that baptism frees and blots out sins¹⁷. Though it is the remission (of sins), there is the gift of those things that are anticipated. It is a gift¹⁸, but indeed it is a future (gift), worthy to be feared, *lest we will return to the same vomiting* (2 Pet.2:22).

6. John (Chrysostom): Do not say like Nicodemus ‘how is it possible that an old man will be born (again)’ (Jn.3:4). Do not say to the priest as Isaac to Abraham: *Behold the fire and wood. Where is the lamb for sacrifice?* (Gen.22:7) Do not say yourself when you approach the font: ‘Behold the water! (But) where is the Spirit?’ Do not approach with doubt, but as a believer. It is not a matter of something visible to the eyes. The soul of the faithful alone understands it. Bodily birth gives birth to the bodily beings.

17 Gregory of Naziansus, *Homily 40: On Baptism*, SC. 358 (Paris, 1990), p.198-311.

18 Fol. 18r.

Spiritual birth gives birth to the spiritual beings, as says John: *not from blood, nor from the desire of man, but from God*, (Jn.1:13) he is born. Do not think earthly ideas and say, ‘How is man born twice?’ Do not say, ‘How does the water cleanse the sins?’ It is not in ordinary water that you are baptized. (But) hidden fire abides in the water, (the fire) that burns the sins and protects the purity of the bodies as iron is preserved in the fire, but its rust is cleansed. Let the fire of the Babylonians instruct you; (the fire) that consumed (their) fetters and preserved (their) hair (Dan.3:27), as the symbol of Baptism that consumes sins and protects bodies. This is enough.

CHAPTER 5

1. Chapter five on Baptism. Now we come to speak about the sponsor, that is the kinsman. He is called by six names: sponsor, guide, surety, kinsman, teacher and leader¹⁹. The name *sausbino* is a Greek expression. When it passes to the Syriac language, it is translated as ‘sponsor’. He is also called ‘fellow son’, and he is also a ‘surety’ (because), and guardian of the

19 Bar Kepha gives four names. Cfr. *Baptism*, # 3.

mystery. (The role) of *sausbinutho* (role of sponsor, groomsman) was manifested by John, who was the groomsman for Christ.

He is (called) ‘guide’ because he guides and brings (the baptized) to the priests at whose hands baptism is being perfected.

He is (called) ‘surety’ because he guarantees on behalf of him who is baptized, that he will fulfill all things which he promises relating to baptism. Moreover, he pledges to him who is baptized that the baptism confers on him the remission of sins, and that he becomes a son to the Father and a brother to our Lord Jesus, and that he will inherit the kingdom if he keeps the baptism in the purity of life²⁰.

He is called ‘kinsman’ because he is a neighbour and an intimate friend of him who is baptized, more than any other men²¹.

He is named ‘teacher’ because he should teach him how to live according to the customs of the Church, and in virtuous practice.

2. Why do the canons direct that a man shall not marry any of his sponsors or anyone who is related to him by flesh? We say that Moses had commanded regarding him who is related by flesh. The mystical reason is this: because

20 Bar Kepha, *Baptism* # 3.

21 *Ibid*; Brock, *SEBC* # 7 (= p.35).

men are mutually bound by the natural love of family and also by the spiritual (love) of baptism,²² he had commanded (them) to espouse the strangers, so that men should be bound by love and harmony. As blood relationships are united to each other by natural love and sureties and sponsors by spiritual love, so the strangers should be united to each other through marriage by accidental love. For the holy doctors (say) as we have said above.

3. Because of the fear of death of infants, and of other reasons, they have commanded to baptize the infants. Since an infant can neither speak regarding the baptism, nor renounce, nor confess, nor when he promises, can it be believed that he will remain in his declaration, the sponsor is needed to come and to speak on his behalf what is necessary. That the surety receives him (with) both hands, indicates that willingly he stands as sponsor and receives him²³.

4. But in the days of Dionysius, baptism was administered to the fully- grown up. And he who desired to be baptized went and sought

22 Fol. 18v.

23 Bar Kepha, *Baptism*, # 3.

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a sponsor, that is a surety, to come with him and to beseech on behalf of him. In fact Dionysius has spoken (about this) in the second chapter of his homily on baptism²⁴. Thus he who loves the holy fellowship of those who are truly above the world, should come to one of the initiated and request him to guide him on the way to the high priest. He promises that he agrees to receive anything that is revealed and supplicates him to take upon himself the superintendence close relationship throughout his subsequent life. While earnestly desiring for his salvation, he evaluates his human character according to the exalted nature of the action. Suddenly with trembling and confusion he stands. But finally he promises to do what he had asked as an example of kindness. And he leads and brings him to the high priest. Then in the likeness of a sheep on the shoulders, he (= high priest) receives both men with joy. First he worships through intelligent thanksgiving and bodily adoration, the first fruits that effects good things, by which

24 Dionysius, *EH.*, II,ii,2, PG 3: 393B; Luibheid, p.201-202.

those who are to be called, are called and those who are to be saved, are saved. And then he assembles the whole priestly order for assistance and common celebration, for the salvation of the man.

5. But sometimes people ask why do they inscribe the baptized? We say that in ancient times men and women were baptized as adults. Therefore they inscribed their names, as the bishop today (writes the names) of presbyters and deacons, when he ordains (them). The name of him who is ordained is inscribed as a pledge to him who ordains. The bishop marks four dots,²⁵ that is points, and asks him who is ordained to join them together with ink in the form of a cross, so that this cross will be a witness between him and the bishop, that he will perform everything that was said to him before his ordination. Similarly during the time of the apostles, when somebody was baptized, he wrote his name beside that of him who baptized, so that when somebody comes and claims that he is a Christian,

25 Fol. 19r.

they would ask him by whom he was baptized. And when he informs the name and place, he will be believed. But if (the priest) who baptized him has died, they will examine the volume, that is the scroll or the book of baptism, and see whether his name was inscribed in it (or not).

Even today this custom is observed: when a presbyter, deacon, sub-deacon or a reader (*anagnostis*) is ordained, their names will be inscribed in the scroll or in the book of ordinations. And after the death of a bishop, (the names) will be given to his successor for the surety of Christianity.

6. What is the mystery that is contained in the inscription (of the names) of the baptized? And we say that the name of the baptized is written as to indicate that he has already been inscribed and numbered with those who have been redeemed from the slavery of death and Satan. Secondly, that he has been inscribed with the sons of God by grace and he has been inscribed in the Church of the first-born, who are inscribed in heaven with the saints (Heb. 12:23)²⁶.

7. Why is the name of the sponsor also written?

26 Bar Kepha, *Baptism*, # 4.

And we say that the name of the surety is written, indicating that he has become a guide for the baptized, not the one who misleads, and he should not be like what is said: *'Cursed is everyone who leads a blind into the wrong way'*.²⁷ The baptized is called blind, as he is not yet trodden the paths of Christianity. Sometimes, after the prayer *'Give them O Lord, the breath'*,²⁸ they were made to stand in order. And the deacon brought the child close up to the priest or to the deacon who writes his name, and also the name of his surety. And after the inscription of the names, the priest marked the baptized on his forehead with three crosses without oil, while the deacon held the child's head.

Again the name of the baptized is inscribed along with that of him who receives him, indicating that their names have been written in the Book of Life²⁹: the baptized, because he has become worthy for the grace of the adoption of sons; the one who receives him, because through him he has been directed to the spiritual birth, and he has already been made his guide through out his life. These things are

27 Bar Kepha, *Ibid*; cfr. Mt 15:14; Lk 6:39.

28 SYA, *Ordo*, p.32.

29 Brock, *SEBC*, # 8 (= p.35).

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CHAPTER 6

1. On the sponsor. Moses Bar Kepha says that he who serves as ‘surety’, that is, sponsor should not be too much distant in lineage from the baptized. According to him, this is (advised) so that he could always go³⁰ to the baptized and correct him and to admonish him³¹.

It is not appropriate that there should be any business transaction between them. Moreover, the sponsor should not be from a distant place, but from the same city and place, so that he can always teach the baptized the fear of God. But, if he who is to be baptized walks in the evil ways and the sponsor does not admonish him, he deserves to be rebuked. Moreover, he adds that it is not lawful that the monks who had surrendered themselves to Christ to receive the baptized, because the monk who does this, approaches (his) spiritual destruction and ruin, and not (any) profit.

2. That the baptized strips off his clothes indicates that he had stripped off the old man

30 Fol. 19v.

31 Not found in Bar Kepha’s commentary on baptism.

and the former way of life³². Again it symbolizes (that he has escaped³³) from the captivity of the adversary, just as those who flee from captivity, flee naked, so that they will not be caught by their garments³⁴. Again the baptized put off their ornaments, in that they have rejected the pride of this world, and they have loved the humility and renunciation that our Lord had taught us.

3. Then he puts off his shoes indicating that, through the shoes he puts off the lowest and the lesser things. Indeed the baptism purifies him from the base and deficient things of his former ways of life³⁵.

4. Exorcism indicates two things. First, his warfare with Satan. Secondly, (it is) the supplication that the baptized offers to God; that is, he beseeches to be liberated from the evil domination of the Evil one³⁶.

5. That one is sealed (*htm*) with (the sign of) the cross thrice without oil, invoking on him the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit³⁷, indicates that all the christian mysteries

32 Bar Kepha, *Baptism*, # 5.

33 Cfr. Harward Syr.47.

34 Bar Kepha, *Baptism* # 5.

35 *Ibid*.

36 *Ibid*, # 6.

37 SYA, *Ordo*, p.34; Varghese, *Onctions*, p.286-87; Brock, *Studies*, pp.26-28.

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are signed (*rsm*) with the cross, and that without it no mystery is perfected. Though the Father and the Spirit did not approach the passion, (but) the Son alone endured in the flesh for our salvation, since we obtain the knowledge of the Trinity through the cross, therefore we use threefold mark of the cross.

6. However, let us consider also how Saint Dionysius explains these things³⁸ : the seal that has been imparted by the bishop to him who approaches, and the salvific inscription by the priests which counts him with the redeemed, putting (the name) of his guide also in sacred record, in that he became his true friend; the life-giving journey towards truth, and his following the divine guide, that is³⁹, the unerring pathfinder he has followed in ways given by God.. But it is not possible that somebody could share at the same time with any of these things that are very much contrary, or that someone who has any communion with the One should acquire a divided life, if he holds on to true communion with the One.

38 *Dionysius, EH.*, II,iii, 4-5; Luibheid, p.205-7; Varghese, *Onctions*, pp.151-161.

39 Cfr. Harvard Syr. 47.

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7. Again he is marked with the cross to show this:⁴⁰ The cross shows the death of our Lord, and the one who is baptized, is baptized into the death of Christ (*cf. Rom 6:3*). Moreover, he marks him with the cross, because the cross has revealed and show us the Trinity, for (it is) through Him who was crucified (that) we have acquired knowledge of the Holy Trinity.

Again he marks him with the cross, because all the mysteries of the Christians are perfected with the cross. He marks them thrice for two (reasons). In the first place, to show that with these three (crosses) he seals him in the spirit, soul and the body. Secondly, because he invokes the Trinity upon him saying: *In the name of the Father, Amen; and in the name of the Son, Amen; and in the name of the Living and Holy Spirit, Amen.*

He marks him first of all with out oil for this reason. It is as when a painter comes to an image that has already become old, and has the paint rubbed off. First he scours it and cleans it from its oldness and then he puts paint on it. If he puts paint on it, before he scours and cleans it, he would ruin the paints. Similarly, when the priest

40 Fol. 20r.

comes to the baptized, who is old and sullied with sin, he first marks him with the cross without oil, thus cleaning off his (marks of) age, and afterwards, signs him with oil, restoring him to his pristine beauty⁴¹.

8. After these things, he looses his sandal and strips him, and makes him to stand facing the West and to thrust out his hands to the West and he bids him to renounce and blow on the Satan thrice. And as soon as he had renounced him thrice, he turns him to the East and looks at the heaven and stretches out his hands. And he commands him to be ranked with Christ and makes him to confess Him thrice.

9. That the baptized turns to the West, when he renounces Satan shows that he has renounced and rejected all the darkness and error of the dark demons and of the Accuser.⁴² Again, West is the region of darkness and that he turns to the West and renounces Satan shows that he renounces Satan who is darkness and his dark

41 The whole section is quoted from Bar Kepha (*Baptism*, # 7).

42 Brock. *SEBC*, # 3 (= p.33).

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and evil deeds. That he repels with his hands shows two things. First, that he curses Satan and next that he drives away from him the evil deeds of the Accuser. For the hands indicate the deeds.⁴³

10. By blowing, he drives away from him the evil thoughts of Satan. For sin is committed in three ways: by thoughts, by word (and) by acts. By thrusting out hands, he throws away the acts of sins from him; by renouncing Satan, the words of sins; by the three exsufflations, the sinful thoughts⁴⁴.

CHAPTER 7

1. Let us now speak of the turning of the baptized to the East. The East is the region⁴⁵ of light. By turning to the East and confessing Christ, he signifies that he confesses Emmanuel who is light, as (He said): *I am the light of the world* (Jn.8:12) and *He is the Sun of justice* (Mal.4:2), as the prophet has said. (Thus) He acknowledges that He and His Father and the Holy Spirit

43 Bar Kepha, *Baptism*, # 8.

44 Bar Kepha, *Baptism*, # 8.

45 Fol. 20v

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are One, True and Luminous God, and that he is in agreement with the true teaching which was handed over by him and that he promises to do the works of justice⁴⁶.

Again, that he turns to the East, which is the mother of lights, indicates that he turns from darkness to the light⁴⁷.

2. That he (says): *I adhere to you*, that is the confession of Christ. He says (this) following on to his having renounced Satan, and he adheres to him who is truly God and to the heavenly blessings.

By stretching out his hands, he declares that he gladly confesses what he confesses and promises to do what he promises.⁴⁸

3. Then he brings the baptized to the baptistery and water is filled in the font, that is, in the bath (*gurno*) of baptism. The Creed, which is the foundation of Christian life is recited, that is, *We believe in One God*. Then at once he prays: *We confess you Lord*,⁴⁹ that is the thanksgiving for the access to the Holy Baptism, and the freedom

46 cfr. Bar Kepha, *Baptism*, # 9.

47 Brock, *SEBC*, # 4 (= p.33).

48 Bar Kepha, *Baptism*, # 9.

49 SYA, *Ordo*, p.44.

from darkness, that is (from) the Accuser.

4. After these things, he anoints him with the olive oil. He is anointed with the oil, primarily, because he enters on a wrestling contest against Satan. He who enters on a wrestling contest, is anointed with oil, so that the hands of him with whom he is striving may slip from him. Similarly the baptized also is anointed, so that he may not be held fast by the demons⁵⁰.

Secondly, being anointed with olive oil, he shows that he has been a wild olive and stranger to God. Now he is anointed with it, so that he may be grafted on the olive of faith, in the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit in whom he is going to be baptized, and that he may become as a *tree planted by a stream of water* (Ps.1:3), and that he may say with freedom: *I am like a glorious olive in the house of God* (Ps.52:10).

It is as when there is a tree which bears no fruit, the husbandman brings a piece from another tree which bears fruit, and makes an incision into the fruitless tree, and thus engrafts the fruit-bearing branch.

50 Brock, *SEBC*, # 11 (= p.41); # 9 (= p.33).

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So does the priest to him who is to be baptized, because he has been a wild olive that bears no fruit of righteousness. And he anoints him with the oil and thus engrafts him, so that he might confess (*nawde*) the Trinity, that is the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit⁵¹, and bear fruit of righteousness, *thirty or sixty or hundred fold* (Mark 4:8).⁵²

5. Turn back to the first part and the liturgy of Baptism. What is written there, is not mentioned in the order of (baptism by) Jacob of Edessa.

The prayer *Fashion your Christ and give them the breathing*,⁵³ which is written in the first part (*tekso*) has been arranged by Moses Bar Kepha in the second.⁵⁴ *Fashion Christ in them who are about to be reborn*: The name of Christ indicates the whole Trinity: the Father who anoints, the Son who is anointed and the Holy Spirit who is the unguent (*mesho*). For in every unguent (*mesho*) there are three things concurring: the one who anoints, the anointed and the unguent. He who anoints is the Father; the anointed is the Son and the unguent is the Holy Spirit. And therefore the priest says: *Fashion Christ in these people who are about to be regenerated*.⁵⁵

51 cfr. Bar Kepha, *Baptism*, # 10: “thus engrafts on him the fire of the orthodox faith”.

52 Fol. 21r.

53 SYA, *Ordo*, p.48-50.

54 Bar Kepha's commentary on baptism is silent on this arrangement.

55 Cfr. Bar Kepha, *Baptism*, # 11

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6. *You did give us the font of purification.*⁵⁶ Here he begins the prayers over the water.⁵⁷

*Bruise O Lord (the head of the dragon)*⁵⁸, for when the spirits of darkness of Satan see that the grace has been given to the water, they dare to attack with jealousy and wickedness and lie in wait in the water to ambush those who are baptized. And therefore, through the breathing in the form of the cross, the priest fights against them. And through the breathing in, he gets rid of all the works of darkness with the invisible shadows of the evil. And therefore the priest breathes on the water as *God breathed on Adam the breath of life* (Gen.2:7) when he created him. And since baptism is a fashioning anew, it is right that (the priest) should breathe on (the water) as in the first fashioning. Secondly, the priest breathes on the water as our Lord breathed on His disciples and said to them: *Receive the Holy Spirit* (Jn.20:22).⁵⁹

7. The priest pours Myron upon the water, in order to show that for the sake of our regeneration

56 SYA, *Ordo*, p. 58.

57 On the consecration: cfr. S.Brock, *Consecration*; ID., *Holy Spirit*, pp.70-93.

58 SYA, *Ordo*, p.60.

59 Bar Kepha, *Baptism*, # 12.

in baptism, God the Word came down, and emptied Himself even unto the enduring of the cross and death.⁶⁰

Secondly, Myron (that) is poured upon the water indicates the Holy Spirit. For, just as the Spirit of God brooded over the waters in the beginning of creation (*Gen 1:1*), in order to impart to them generative and fertilizing power, similarly, the Holy Spirit broods over the waters through the pouring out of the Myron upon them, so that it may impart to them the power to bring forth spiritual sons of the heavenly Father⁶¹.

Holy Mar Severios also said that Myron indicates the Holy Spirit.⁶² Therefore, Myron should be poured upon the water, not the oil of anointing. Today because of scarcity, people take Myron with a (piece of) wood, stick or thumb and pour (it) upon the water three times.

8. *Your only Begotten Son*⁶³; that is after the above prayers and the breathing with the signs of the cross, he purifies and sanctifies the water through the indwelling of the Spirit, for through the divine invocation, he perfects it.

He pours upon (the water) the divine Myron,

60 SYA, *Ordo*, p.64; Varghese, *Onctions*, pp.292-96.

61 Bar Kepha, # 13.

62 Bar Salibi quotes from Bar Kepha (# 13). Cfr. S.Brock. *Severus' Letter*, p.73.

63 SYA, *Ordo*, p.64-66.

which is the type (*tupso*) of the oil (*mesho*), in the form (*tupso*) of the cross, with the singing of the hymns of the Spirit.

9.⁶⁴ Then he anoints the whole body of the baptized with the olive oil and says: *With the oil of holiness, said God*⁶⁵. That is, after he has been anointed with this as if for a combat with Satan, so that his members shall become invincible to the crafts of the evil one, then immediately, he anoints his whole body with the Myron, so that when the evil one sees that his whole body has been arrayed with divine armour, he will flee and depart, and gnash his teeth, and vanish before the glory that glitters from the earthly beings.

10. Now he is brought down to the font. The font or the pool of baptism takes the place of the tomb of Jesus, and therefore, when the baptized descends, he descends as if to the tomb.⁶⁶ The water in the font (symbolizes) the womb that gives birth to the spiritual sons, as though after the resurrection of the dead. Baptism that he receives is regeneration. . These things are enough.

64 Fol. 21v

65 cfr. SYA, *Ordo* p.68. This anointing is absent in Pampakuda text. On this anointing. Cfr. Varghese, *Onctions*, pp.296-300; Brock, *History*, pp.31-33; OCA. 197, pp.183-218.

66 Bar Kepha, *Baptism*, # 14.

CHAPTER 8

1. Let us again come to the spiritual meaning (*theoria*) of baptism. That the priest plunges the baptized in water indicates his complete death. When the dead is buried, he is completely covered and none of his parts is visible. Similarly, the baptized is completely plunged in water. That he is plunged three time indicates that our Lord was in the tomb for three days and therefore he plunges him in the water to show the death of Christ.⁶⁷

The font typifies his tomb⁶⁸. And Paul witnesses saying: *Do you not know that we who have been baptized into Christ, were baptized into his death? We were buried with him by baptism* (Rom.6:3-4). Therefore one should know that formerly the faithful were baptized when they were adults and men, and they were plunged by this immersion in the font thrice. But now, the baptized are infants and children, and (therefore) we do not plunge them in the font least they will be choked. But instead of immersions they pour, taking a little water with the left hand, and pour over their heads

67 *Ibid*, # 14; Brock, SEBC, # 12 (= p.41); Cyril, MC.,II, 6-7.

68 Brock, SEBC, # 12 (= p.41).

thrice. Instead of three immersions, they pour (water), and by faith they accept the three fold pouring as three immersions⁶⁹.

2. That the priest lays his right hand upon the head of the baptized, who looks eastward and the priest looks westward typifies (this): As God formed Adam with his hands, so the priest makes or forms the baptized in the second creation. Again as John placed his right hand upon the Son, so the priest (places) upon the (head of the) baptized.⁷⁰

3. Again the hand of the priest points out him, who as if with an index finger (pointed out the Son), while the Father cried out *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased* (Mt.3:17). Therefore he gains freedom to say to the Father :*Our Father who art in heaven.*⁷¹

Again that the right hand of the priest (is placed) upon his head, and his left hand that takes up water, is a sign (*otho*) of the hidden and spiritual formation⁷² of the baptized.⁷³ (Thus) through visible types he is drawn to the spiritual and intellectual ones which are understood noetically.

69 Bar Kepha, *Baptism*, # 14.

70 Bar Kepha, # 15.

71 Bar Kepha, # 15.

72 Fol.22r.

73 Brock, SEBC #13 (= p.43).

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4. That he says : *So and so is baptized*, and not *I baptize* indicates his Humility, in that it is not (by) his affair, but by grace, this gift has been conferred on him.

Again that the priest says: *So and so is baptized*, and not *I baptize*, because the baptism is not his, but God's, and He has chosen him by His grace to minister this mystery of baptism.⁷⁴

5. Therefore it is not fitting to reject a celebrant of the baptism on account of his unworthiness or ignorance, because the gift is not his; but he holds the order of a minister. But if there is clear blame of sin, one should avoid him. (Gregory) the theologian witnesses these things in (his) homily on baptism⁷⁵. Do not seek the worthiness of a preacher or the celebrant of the baptism. Another is their judge, and the examiner of things that are more invisible. 'Because man (sees) what is in appearance (*bparsupo*); but God (sees what is) in the heart' (*I Sam 16:7*). But to you, every one is worthy to be trusted for the purification. But should someone be just one of those who are examined, and not from those who are openly blameworthy, then he is not alien to the Church.

Do not judge the judges, for you are in need

74 Bar Kepha, # 15; Brock, *Ibid.*,

75 *Homily* 40:26, SC.358, p.257-59.

of healing. Do not investigate the authority of those who purify you. Do not suspect the progenitors, whether one is better than another, or more humble. Every one is more exalted than you. Think like this. Whether of gold or iron, a signet ring is the same, and the same royal image will be engraved on it, and wax is sealed with the both. What is the difference between this seal and the other seal? Nothing at all! Recognize the material in the wax, and if you are wiser than everyone, say which is the seal of the iron, and which is that of gold? They are the same! But the difference is (only) that of the thought, not that of the image. Thus let every celebrant of baptism be for you. Even if (one is more) exalted in conduct, the power of baptism is the same.

6. And likewise wrote Basil the Great in (his) homily on baptism⁷⁶: Imitate the eunuch who, when he met a teacher, did not despise the teaching. But that rich man made the poor man to ascend to the chariot - that simple and contemptible man, (was invited by) that honoured man. (cfr. *Acts* 8:34-38). And when he was taught the Gospel of the Kingdom, he received

76 In his homily on baptism, Basil does not mention the conversion of the eunuch (Basil de Césarée, *Sur le baptême*, SC 357 (1987). Probably Bar Salibi quotes from Gregory of Naziansus' homily . cfr. *Hom* 40:2

the faith with (his whole) heart. He did not defer the mark of the Spirit. When they arrived at the water he said this word with joy: 'Behold water; behold what is sought! What will prevent me from being baptized?

For where the will is present; it does not let anything pass by. To him who calls and loves (people), a minister is at hand, (and) grace without stint! Only let eagerness be found: then there is nothing that hinders.⁷⁷ There is only one thing that hinders: the one who shuts up our ways to salvation.

7. Again the fact that the face of the baptized looks eastward and (that of) the priest westward has a mystery contained in it. The priest holds the type of Christ. When Christ was crucified, his face was looking westward, because he was crucified in the east of Jerusalem. And baptism represents the type of the cross, burial and the resurrection. Therefore the priest should look westward, because in the baptism, the gift of the Spirit is conferred to the baptized through his mediation. And as the placing of his hand and (conferring) of the gift, should fittingly be in front (of him), just as, when a bishop performs the ordination, he comes from the altar, and hovers (his hands) upon him who is ordained,

77 SC 358, p.257. l.22v

while his face looks westward.

8. That the baptized looks eastward, because when Adam was fell by the transgression of the law, and was deprived of his former fashioning, by the incarnation of Christ, his former fashioning was renewed by baptism, and (by) the blood and water which flowed from his side (*cfr. Jn 19:34*).

And the Paradise was planted in the East and by looking towards the East, the baptized looks to return to it. Therefore the font, that is the baptistery should be separated from the eastern wall, so that there will be place for the priest to stand in the East. As (it is said): *From the East he gave his sound, a mighty sound (Ps.68:35)*. The font should not be attached to the eastern wall, as uneducated priests do, and so look towards the north when they baptize. But the true tradition is this: he should stand in the East and look westward. The ancient tradition was this: the priest stands as if in the South and his face (is turned) northward, in accordance with (the Scripture) *Awake O north wind, and come, O south (wind). Blow upon my garden (cfr.Songs.4:16)*. That is, awake O! corruption unto incorruptibility, that is, let us become spirituals instead of carnals.

His left hand is beneath my head and his right hand will hold me (Song 2:6). And this they used to do,

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8 ܡܢ ܘܚܝܬܐ ܕܠܚܝܬܐ ܨܝܢܐ. ܡܢ ܘܚܝܬܐ

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because the baptistery and the font are built with the wall. We do not approve it, but the order that (was described) above.

9. Again his right hand should be placed on the head of the baptized during the three pourings. He should not change (it) for the left hand as do the disorderly priests. This is in order that they should not transfer the baptized from the light and power, that is the right hand, to the left hand, that is darkness and feebleness. Nor did John place (both) the right hand and the left on the head of our Lord. These things are enough.

CHAPTER 9

1. Chapter nine on baptism. In baptism the Fathers teach that the scriptures and the Gospel should be read. George, bishop⁷⁸ of the Nations says as follows. As an infant is formed naturally in the womb of its mother, and then through birth, it comes (out) to see the light of the Sun, so he who approaches baptism has been formed by the deacons⁷⁹. And he is first cleansed through the hearing of the Holy Scriptures and by the living words of the life-giving Gospels.

78 Fol. 23r.

79 George, *Commentary* (ed. Connolly), p.12.

Therefore it is necessary that the Apostle and the Gospel should be read in the baptism. Also if (texts) from the Prophets are read, it is fair and laudable.

2. But Saint Dionysius has said⁸⁰ : And the high priest, therefore, in the likeness of God, ‘desiring that all men should live and should come to the knowledge of the truth’ (*cf.* 1 Tim 2:4), always preaches to every body the true gospels of God, Who, because of (His) proper and natural grace, is compassionate for those whom He held worthy on earth, through his love for man, so that by good earnestness, we might reach his union. And through the union with him, those who were united with him, like fire would resemble Him, according to their aptitude for divinization. *For to all those who have received him, he gave power to become the sons of God, to those who believe in his name, who are born not from blood, nor from the will of the flesh, nor from the will of man, but from God* (Jn.1:12-13).

3. But some people ask: Why did Christ institute baptism with ordinary things,

80 Dionysius, *EH*, II,ii,1, PG.3: 393A; Luibheid, p.201.

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and his mysteries with the body and blood, that is, (with) bread and wine?

To these things Saint John (Chrysostom) answers in (his) 82nd homily on the Commentary of Mathew, saying: Christ had not handed over to us anything perceptible. But by perceptible action, all spiritual things (come). Similarly in baptism also, through water, a perceptible action, a spiritual gift takes place. This (action) when celebrated, becomes (a means of) regeneration and renewal. If you were incorporeal, he would have handed over to you the incorporeal gift naked (i.e. as they really are). But since the soul is entwined with the body, He hands over to you, through perceptible things, these spiritual things.

4. Again they add, it was possible that baptism should have been from oil and Spirit, not from water and Spirit. For, the priests and the kings were also anointed with oil. But we say baptism has been composed from water, because the first creation of the first man was through water: *'Lord God fashioned Adam from earth'* (*Gen 2:7*). And (so) it is fitting that the second creation too should be from water⁸¹ .

Secondly,

81 i.e. 'He must have used water and earth like a potter. Cfr. Bar Kepha, *Baptism*, # 16.

that the element shall be easily available in all places for the rich and the poor. *Behold water; what is the hindrance that I be baptized?* (Acts 8:36). If by chance, the element is not easily available, many would have been prevented from baptism, which is the salvation of the souls.

Thirdly, so that the filth of the soul might be cleansed by the mysteries⁸². For just as water cleanses the filth of the body, so baptism cleanses the filth of the soul, that is sin.

Fourthly, because it is of the nature of the water to bring forth (the life) that it received in the beginning: *Let the water swarm etc* (Gen. 1:20). Thus in baptism also (water) brings forth spiritual children.

Fifthly: Again when you look at the water, you (will) see in it another like you. Here you should understand that (when) you descend to baptism, you come up as a different person, the new one instead of the old.

(Sixthly): Again, by means of water, writings are blotted out and therefore by the waters of baptism the bill of our debts is (to be) blotted out, and the bond that Adam wrote by which we were made debtors to sin and death.

Again⁸³ water strengthens the weak. Just as iron which is softened by fire, when it is dipped in water, it is made hard. So also,

82 Fol. 23v.

83 Seventh in Bar Kepha.

when those who are weak and languid by the practice of error and wickedness are baptized, the waters of baptism make them strong in the practice of virtues.

Seventhly⁸⁴, because in the beginning, we were formed from earth and our dwelling place was commanded to be on earth. We are now (re)-formed by water because in the end we will dwell above the firmament, which is drawn out of water and spread out. *Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters* (*Gen.1:6*).

Because⁸⁵, from the beginning, these same waters have foreshadowed baptism, and (so has) the sea that was divided (*1 Cor.10:2*), the Jordan which was divided (*Joshua 3:9-17*), the Jordan which purified Naaman (*2 Kg.5:10-14*), the torrent which Ezekiel saw (*Ez.47:1-12*) and the baptismal pool of Siloam (*Jn.4:7*). Moreover, the betrothals of Rebecca (*Gen.24*), Rachel (*Gen.29:1-12*) and Zipporah (*Ex.2:15-22*) took place beside water. So the betrothal of the Holy Church also takes place beside the waters of baptism.

Eighthly,⁸⁶ thus says Saint Basil: Since mortality and resurrection are appointed for us, baptism is perfected through water and the Spirit; water indicates mortality and the Spirit renews us in the resurrection. *You send forth your Spirit and they are created* (*Ps.104:30*).

5. On his ascent from the baptismal font: His ascent from the font signifies three things. First, the ascent

84 Eighth in Bar Kepha

85 9th in Bar Kepha

86 10th in Bar Kepha.

and the resurrection of Jesus from the tomb⁸⁷. Secondly, that these will be an ascent and resurrection for us from the tomb on the last day. Thirdly, that there will be a rising for us above the heaven, if we keep the baptism without blemish⁸⁸.

6. The baptized is sealed with Myron (for the following reasons):⁸⁹

First, that he may acquire the fragrance that pleases God⁹⁰. As the Apostle has said: *We are the aroma in Christ* (2 Cor.2:15).

(Secondly), moreover, it is the perfecter and the fulfiller of these divine gifts. Thirdly, it is a sign of Christ, by which the baptized is separated from alien flock. Fourthly, so that he may become fearsome to the demons and invincible to them. Fifthly, that he seals him on⁹¹ his senses so that they may not be entrances for sin⁹².

7. When he seals his ears, they place an orarium (*urara*) on the baptized, tying it on his head. It indicates the freedom that he has received from Christ, (and) that through baptism, he has freed him from Satan and sin⁹³.

Again the orarium which is placed on his head symbolizes a crown⁹⁴, for it indicates that by baptism, he has become a new son to the Father and a brother to Christ.

87 Brock, SEBC, # 15 (= p.43).

88 Bar Kepha, # 17.

89 *Ibid.*, # 18.

90 Brock, *op.cit.*, # 16 (= p.43).

91 Fol. 24r.

92 Bar Kepha gives eight reasons. (# 6 – 8). See below # 8.

93 Bar Kepha, # 20.

94 Brock, SEBC, # 17 (= p.45).

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When a king (begins to) rule, they place a crown of gold on his head; (same is for) a bridegroom on the day of his marriage. So also on the day of his baptism, (a crown is given) as he has become a spiritual son to the Father and a brother to Jesus by baptism.

Again the crown symbolizes the incorruptible crowns with which the soul is crowned in baptism, as well as the primacy and power that he gains over the passions of the flesh and the demons, and his being ranked in the heavenly service.

8. He seals him with Myron on the forehead, so that he may be terrifying to demons. Just as what happened in Egypt, when the destroyer did not approach the house which had the sign of the blood of the lamb, that is the sign of the cross. He is sealed with Myron upon the heart, lest he become an abode of evil thoughts. He is sealed upon the joints, so that they may be instruments of justice, as said Paul (Rom.6:13)⁹⁵.

9. Then he puts on white robes, indicating that he has become a son of light⁹⁶. Through the softness of the robes he shows the freshness of the spiritual generation. And the baptized should wear white (robes), more than all other colours⁹⁷.

Again he puts on white indicating that he was darkened

95 Bar Kepha, # 18. (Reasons 6-8 in Bar Kepha).

96 Brock, *op.cit.*, # 18 (= 45).

97 Cfr. Harvard Syr. 47: *gawne* (= colours) which is a better reading (S.Brock).

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9 מַחְבֵּרֵינוּ לֵאמֹר מַחְבֵּרֵינוּ. בְּ. יֵשׁוּעַ
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 אֲבִיךָ לֵאמֹר מַחְבֵּרֵינוּ בְּ. יֵשׁוּעַ.

with ignorance and through baptism and the divine knowledge, he has become white and bright. Again it symbolizes that he has stripped off the old man and has put on the new (Col.3:10), and formerly he was without form or adornment, and (now) by baptism, he has acquired form and adornment. (It symbolizes also that) after resurrection, he will put on a robe of incorruptibility and glory, that Adam wore before the transgression of the commandment.

Moreover, that after the resurrection he will dwell in heaven like the luminaries, and that he will shine in heaven as the Sun of justice with the righteous one (Mt.13:43)⁹⁸. And some people say that after he puts on white (robes), they tie the orarium on his head.

10. Jacob of Edessa and Moses Bar Kepha do not approve the prayer of *Our Father* in baptism. Other doctors had introduced many prayers in baptism and had arranged nine ordos of baptism, which do not agree mutually.

11. The prayer *Our Father* : It is the prayer of freedom which shows that we are sons of God and there is in it the confession of the Creator, love

98 Bar Kepha # 19.

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of virtues, departure from evil, hope and forgiveness of sins and supplication for supper⁹⁹.

12. The lights that go before the baptized indicate that he has departed from the darkness and ignorance of sin for the light of the knowledge of God and the works of righteousness, and that he has been summoned to the heavenly light¹⁰⁰.

13. The incense¹⁰¹ which is burned before him (symbolizes) the sweet fragrance of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit that he has received from baptism. Again (it symbolizes) the sweet fragrance of the holy life, that he is about to offer to God, as Noah offered¹⁰².

14. The service by which he comes to the church signifies the spiritual nuptials which have fallen to him and the joy with which the angels rejoice on his behalf, and his invitation to the Kingdom, if he keeps the baptism. Moreover, their entry in a service signifies their entry into the Kingdom of heaven and into the Paradise from which Adam had come out¹⁰³.

15. The entry of the male children to the holy of holies (symbolizes) the approach to the tree that was forbidden to him

99 Brock, SEBC, # 28 (= p.51).

100 *Ibid.* # 21 (= p.47).

101 Fol. 24v.

102 Bar Kepha, # 22; Brock, *op.cit.*, #20 (= p.47).

103 Bar Kepha, # 23; Brock, *Ibid*, # 22 (= p.47-49).

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in the beginning because of the transgression of commandment¹⁰⁴.

16. The reception of the mysteries indicates that he is (fully) initiated and perfected in the gifts, that he has been united to the Word and that he has become his member¹⁰⁵. And the fatted calf has been slain for him (*cfr. Lk 15:23-24*). And as the bodily children when born, are nourished with bodily nourishment, similarly the spiritual children frequent spiritual nourishment. Again it signifies also the¹⁰⁶ banquet that has been prepared for the saints in the Kingdom of heaven¹⁰⁷.

17. Those who are baptized do not wash for seven days¹⁰⁸, indicating that the hidden power they have received from baptism cannot be washed off, is invincible, for all the cycle of the time of their sojourn in the world. The baptized do not wash or bathe for seven days because the number seven is sacred for the Hebrews. The world moves about in the number seven and (the number) eight represents the coming (age). In the world, we should keep the baptism in purity. When we reach the world of (the number) eight, we will be seen pure and without blemish. As the Israelites were separated with circumcision, by baptism

104 Bar Kepha, # 24; Brock, # 23 (= p.49).

105 *cfr.* Brock, # 26 (= p.51).

106 Bar Kepha, # 26; Brock, # 27 (= p.51).

107 *cfr.* Bar Kepha, # 25.

108 Bar Kepha, 326; *cfr.* Brock, # 27 (= p.51). This custom has been attested in the Ethiopic biography of Severus. *Cfr.* E.J.Goodspeed (ed & tr), *The Conflict of Severus, Patriarch of Antioch by Athanasius, Patrologia Orientalis 4*, pp.599-600.

that symbolizes circumcision, we are separated from the gentiles, as Paul had said. *You have been circumcised with a circumcision without hands, by the stripping off of the flesh of sins* (Col.2:11). Just as the Hebrew priests who were anointed, remained for seven days, adorned with the anointing, so too bodily bridegrooms also remain in nuptial robes for seven days.

18. Moreover we say this also, that the baptized is called king, priest and prophet. King, as he repudiates in baptism all the acts of evil and kills the sin. Priest, as he sacrifices his body and kills it by actions and is buried with Christ. Prophet, as he learns about the coming things. And these things are enough.

Here ends the commentary of holy and salvific baptism.

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