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## **Baptismal *Memrā*’ of Anonymous Author of the Ninth Century**

Exposition of the Church Services (*ECS*)<sup>1</sup> is a 9<sup>th</sup> century liturgical commentary, the first and integral liturgical work about the East Syrian liturgy after the great liturgical reformation of Patriarch Išo’yahb III. It is a theologically well-developed and liturgically highly organised commentary which explains the divine dispensation within the framework of seven *memrē*<sup>2</sup>. Though the Author of the *ECS* comments on the various *memrē*<sup>3</sup> of the Church of the East, we shall pay attention mainly to the baptismal *memrā*’, which is the most remarkable among the *memrē*’ commented on by the Author.

At first, we shall discuss the different terms and methods of baptism together with the manuscripts and editions of East Syrian baptismal liturgy. We shall expose a synopsis of the nine chapters of the baptismal *memrā*’ of the Anonymous Author, which contains the theology of the baptism. The Author highlights the Pauline theology that baptism is a participation in the death and resurrection of Christ. Then we shall move towards a possible structure of the baptismal rite based on the baptismal *memrā*’ of the *ECS*.

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<sup>1</sup> Hereafter we use the short form *ECS* to signify the *Exposition of the Church Services*. The text of *ECS* is quoted as: Volume number + *Memrā*’ number + Syriac pagination + line number.

<sup>2</sup> The first *memrā*’ of the *ECS* deals with Išo’yahb’s arrangement of the Liturgical year, the second explains the *Ramša*, the third is of the *Lelyā* and the *Saprā*, the fourth treats of the Holy Mysteries, the fifth is on Baptism, the sixth deals with the Consecration of the Church and commemoration of Saints, and the last *memrā*’ is about Funeral Service and Marriage.

<sup>3</sup> J. PAYNE SMITH, *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary*, Oxford 1903, p. 247. *Memrā*’ (ܡܡܪܐ) means speech, diction; a discourse, sermon, homily, especially, a metrical homily; a treatise, a division of a book; a proposition.





“Order of the Holy Baptism”. There are a few important editions on the baptismal rite. There was no edition of East Syrian baptismal liturgy until 1728 when J.S. Assemani edited and published an East Syrian baptismal text based on Vat. Cod. 65 in his *Bibliotheca Orientalis*<sup>9</sup>. G.P. Badger also edited a baptismal text in 1852 with the title *The Nestorians and Their Rituals*, in which he describes the baptismal liturgy of the then time<sup>10</sup>. Denzinger’s Latin edition on the baptismal rite is also noteworthy<sup>11</sup>. The order of the baptismal liturgy of the Church of the East was published in 1890 by the Anglican Archbishop’s Mission in Urmia and its English translation was published in 1893<sup>12</sup>. G. Dietrich edited and published the baptismal rite of the East Syrians in German language under the title *Die Nestorianische Taufiturgie* in 1903<sup>13</sup>. An English translation of Kelaita’s edition (1928) was made by K.A. Paul and G. Mookken and published in 1967<sup>14</sup>. P. Yousif made an Italian translation of the Chaldean version of the Syriac text published by the Dominicans in Mosul<sup>15</sup>. Syro- Malabar Church has published the Malayalam and English texts of the sacraments in 2004, 2005 which include Child baptism and Chrismation, and Adult baptism and Chrismation.

### 3. Background of the Fifth Memrā’

Fifth *memrā’* of the *ECS* is uniform neither in structure nor in literary style and content. The formal style of it is like a letter with questions and answers. Sometimes the questions and answers go hand in hand and sometimes not in proper direction. Originally, the Author of the *ECS* gives the answers first and then forms the questions proper to it. If we compare the Mss, the chapters are not

<sup>9</sup> *Bibliotheca Orientalis Clementino-Vaticanae de Scriptoribus Syris, I-II-III, 1-2*, J.S. ASSEMANI, ed. & tr., Rome 1719–1728; repr. Hildesheim/New York 1975, BO, III, 2, CCXLI.

<sup>10</sup> G.P. BADGER, *The Nestorians and Their Rituals*, vols. I–II, London 1852, repr. 1987, p. 195–212.

<sup>11</sup> H. DENZINGER, *Ritus Orientalium*, vol. I, Romae 1863, p. 364–383.

<sup>12</sup> *Liturgia Sanctorum Apostolorum Adaei et Maris, cui accedunt duae in quibusdam festis et feriis dicendae, necnon ordo baptismi, Urmiae, Typ. Miss. Archiep., Cantuariensis, 1890; The Liturgy of the Holy Apostles Addai and Mari together with two additional Liturgies to be said on certain feasts and other days and the order of baptism*, New York 1893.

<sup>13</sup> G. DIETRICH, *Taufiturgie*, p. 3–52.

<sup>14</sup> *The Liturgy of the Holy Apostles Addai and Mari Together with the Liturgies of Mar Theodorus and Mar Nestorius and the Order of Baptism*, K.A. PAUL, G. MOOKEN, trans., Trichur 1967.

<sup>15</sup> *Taksa d’Raze d’Mamodita; Rito del Battesimo*, p. 1–53.

in the same manner. For example, chapter three of the 5<sup>th</sup> *memrā'* is divided into 2 chapters in some Mss<sup>16</sup>.

The source for the answers has been the short explanations of the rubrics of the celebration of the rite. One important source might be the '*Penqitā* of Canons' of Išo'yahb III<sup>17</sup>. Another source might be the liturgical writings of Išo'yahb I. Regarding the sources of the Anonymous Author, R.H. Connolly writes "Beyond Abraham Bar Lipha, the other Syriac writers that the Anonymous Author refers are St. Ephrem, Catholicos Išo'yahb III (c. 660); Daniel Bar Maryam, contemporary of Išo'yahb III, Catholicos George (680), successor of Išo'yahb III, and Catholicos Timothy I (821)"<sup>18</sup>. Sometimes, the Author follows the regulations of the Holy Fathers too<sup>19</sup>.

#### 4. A Road Map to The Baptismal *Memrā'* of ECS

The first chapter of the 5<sup>th</sup> *memrā'* of ECS opens with the discussion about the date of baptism<sup>20</sup>. It analyzes Išo'yahb III's commandment that 'baptism should be on Easter vigil and not on *Denhā'*. In the early Church, baptism took place either at *Denhā* or at Easter, depending on the local traditions. But the Anonymous Author justifies the liturgical arrangement of Išo'yahb III that the candidate should be baptized on Easter vigil because he is baptized into the death and resurrection of Christ and not to the baptism of Christ. The Author makes use of Pauline theology to affirm his argument<sup>21</sup>. He interprets the baptism of Jesus as a symbol of the mystery of His death and resurrection. If it is so, one is to be baptized at the date of his death and not on the date of his baptism. The final victory of Jesus over Satan was at the time of his death, namely, at Easter. The faithful

<sup>16</sup> ECS II, V: 101, 1; C. LEONHARD, *Die Initiation nach der Expositio Officiorum Ecclesiae*, in: M. TAMCKE (ed.), *Syriaca. Zur Geschichte, Theologie, Liturgie und Gegenwartslage der syrischen Kirchen*, Wittenberg 2002, p. 325.

<sup>17</sup> ECS II, V: 101, 4.

<sup>18</sup> R.H. CONNOLLY, *Preface to Latin Text*, II, p. 2–3.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. ECS I, I:19, 1–20.

<sup>20</sup> ECS II, V: 96–97. The present Syro-Malabar baptismal text suggests that the rite of baptism be performed once a month when many people can participate. Cf. *Sacraments of the Syro-Malabar Church*, p. 10.

<sup>21</sup> ECS II, V: 96, 20–22. According to I. Emlek, the "baptismal catechesis" (cf. Rom 6,3-11) of St. Paul is the model for the Anonymous Author to explain his baptismal theology. Cf. I. EMLEK, *Mysterienfeier der Ostsyrischen Kirche im 9. Jahrhundert. Die Deutung der göttlichen Liturgie nach dem 4. Traktat einer anonymen Liturgieerklärung*, Münster 2004, p. 58.

conquer the power of Satan and death at the time of baptism, participating in the death and resurrection of Christ.

The second chapter<sup>22</sup> begins with the question regarding registering the name of the baptismal candidates on the Monday of the middle of the Lenten season<sup>23</sup> and the recitation of the *Syāmidā* upon them on the Wednesday of the same week. The Author hints at the chief *rationale* underlying Išo‘yahb’s liturgical reforms saying that ‘this blessed man was eager to depict in all the services a delineation of both the Old and the New (Testaments)<sup>24</sup>. As Išo‘yahb III prescribed, the baptismal candidates inscribe their names before the priest to typify the obedience of Abraham and to manifest the obedience of the candidates to God<sup>25</sup>. Just like Moses who stood between Abraham and Christ, the candidates who are like Moses, register their names at the middle of the Lent (Monday). The promises made to Abraham were fulfilled later in Moses. On the Friday of the fourth week, the reading is from the Pentateuch, which mentions the manner of the life of Abraham and his sons (cf. Gen 15,15)<sup>26</sup>. The renunciation of Satan and confession in God by the candidates signify the renunciation of idols of his father and confession of faith by Abraham. The procession of the priest- the symbol of Jesus’ baptism from John – is accompanied by two deacons<sup>27</sup> after the manner of Abraham who was accompanied by two angels. The priest goes with luminous dress as God appeared to Moses in the burning bush. He recites the *Syāmidā* upon the candidates at the evening and morning of the Wednesday of the Middle of the Fast. The reason for the recitation of the *syāmidā* prayer twice in a day is to signify the two lambs which were offered daily in the Tabernacle, one in the morning and the other in the evening<sup>28</sup>.

In the third chapter, the Author describes three things, namely, the entrance of the candidates to the baptistery in the Holy week, the prayer of the priest upon the candidates and the role of sponsors in baptism. Išo‘yahb III states that the candidates enter the baptistery in the morning, for Jesus and John came in the morning to Jordan<sup>29</sup>. The candidates come to the baptistery six days before baptism just like an-

<sup>22</sup> ECS II, V: 97, 28–98.

<sup>23</sup> ECS II, V: 97, 27. The fourth week comes at the middle of the Lent.

<sup>24</sup> S. BROCK, *The Baptismal Anointing’s according to the Anonymous Expositio Officiorum*, Kotayam 1995, p. 37.

<sup>25</sup> ECS II, V: 98, 2–6.

<sup>26</sup> ECS II, V: 98, p. 18–19; C. LEONHARD, *Die Initiation*, p. 332.

<sup>27</sup> ECS II, V: 98, 27–28; 99, 9. Two deacons who accompany the priest in the procession represent Michael and Gabriel who are the symbols of the OT and NT respectively.

<sup>28</sup> ECS II, V: 98, 6; 99, 3–6; 100, 12, 19.

<sup>29</sup> ECS II, V: 99, 22. ECS states, “the nature of his (Jesus) preaching was referred as ‘morning’”.

nunciation of Jesus was on the sixth month<sup>30</sup>. During Holy Week the candidates 'are exorcised' only once daily – in the evening<sup>31</sup>. It is due to the fact that while John baptized, he observed the laws of the Old (Testament) and fulfilled both the Old and the New. In the morning, the priest baptizes while in the evening he recites the *Syāmidā* – the type of the law – over the candidates. He speaks about the holders of light, candles and censers, *flabella* and horn and their symbolisms. The altar of the baptistery symbolizes the tomb and throne of Christ<sup>32</sup>. The role of the sponsors is highlighted clearly in this chapter. According to him, the sponsors, the symbol of the holy apostles – are those who become a surety for the souls of the candidates<sup>33</sup>. They guide and present the candidate and sponsor his souls to the priest that he shall be without blemish in his service<sup>34</sup>.

The fourth chapter explicates the entrance of the priest in splendid vestments accompanied by two deacons with candles and incense which signifies the apparition of God to Abraham and to Moses<sup>35</sup>. The vestment of the priest is shining just like Moses's dress when he was coming down from Mount Sinai. The Author compares the priest with John since his shining clothes are like the shining angles who served him. The teaching of the priest corresponds to the preaching of John who said to the people, "repent because the heavenly kingdom has approached" (Mk 1,15)<sup>36</sup>.

The Author refers to the custom that the priest puts a white hood (*mapra*) on his head to show that he already is whitened from the original sin which was black by the sin of Adam. He wears it before he goes to baptize and purify the candidates from the original sin<sup>37</sup>. In the last part of the fourth chapter, the Author emphasizes the soteriological aspect of Incarnation stating that Jesus became under the law in

<sup>30</sup> ECS II, V: 100, 11.

<sup>31</sup> C. LEONHARD, *Die Initiation*, p. 327–328.

<sup>32</sup> ECS II, V: 102, 8–9; 108.

<sup>33</sup> ECS II, V: 100, 19–29. The SMC baptismal text states that the sponsors bring the child in front of the main door of the church and the god mother holds the child in such a way that the child's head rests in her right arm. Cf. *Sacraments of the Syro-Malabar Church*, p. 9.

<sup>34</sup> ECS II, V: 98, 23. Bar Salibi points out the duty of the sponsor to visit, correct and admonish the baptismal candidate. BAR SALIBI, *Commentaries on Myron and Baptism*, p. 120.

<sup>35</sup> ECS II, V: 102, 23.

<sup>36</sup> ECS II, V: 103, 15–16.

<sup>37</sup> ECS II, V: 102, 23–25. The same idea is seen in the baptismal commentary of Timothy II who also criticises the opinion of some that the head of John was covered with much thick hair due to the lack of hair cutters, so the priest covers his head with hood. But Timothy II says that the priest wears white hood to show that he is about to cleanse men from sin. Cf. P.B. KADICHEENI, *The Mystery of Baptism: the text and translation of the chapter on Holy Baptism from the Causes of the Seven Mysteries of the Church of Timothy II, Nestorian Patriarch (1318–1332)*, Bangalore 1980, p. 76.

order to redeem those who were under the law. The Author allegorises the pre-baptismal *rušmā* upon the baptismal candidates with circumcision of Abraham and the promise that was given to him<sup>38</sup>.

The fifth chapter reiterates the importance of horn and oil in baptismal rite. It is especially concerned with four stages of baptism and its significance in relation to the OT and the NT<sup>39</sup>. Pointing out the importance of this chapter S. Brock writes:

In this chapter the author offers a very interesting and at the same time idiosyncratic interpretation of the significance of the four different points at which the oil was originally used in the East Syriac baptismal rite, namely at the *rušmā*, or ‘marking’ ‘signing’, at the *mšihutā*, or anointing’, the pouring of oil on the baptismal water at its consecration and the post-baptismal *huttāmā*, ‘sealing’<sup>40</sup>.

The Author describes the blessing of water, which stands as the symbol of absolution of sins. According to Išo‘yahb III, oil should be blessed first and then water. After their consecration, the priest uses the oil and water for the baptism. In the *ECS*, the allegory is more important than the baptismal rites. The signing of the candidate with the oil is compared to the promise given to Abraham. According to the Author, journey through the rite of baptism is a journey through the salvific plan from Abraham up to Pentecost.

The *ECS* points out the difference between the oil in the horn and in the flagon (bowl). While the oil in the horn is perfected, the oil in the flagon is not fully perfected. *ECS* mentions about three *rušmā* and their symbolisms.

1. First signing (*rušmā qadmāyā*) is compared to the call of Abraham<sup>41</sup>.
2. Second anointing (*mšihutā d'amidē*) stands for the anointing of priests and kings of the OT<sup>42</sup>.

<sup>38</sup> *ECS* II, V: 105, 2–4.

<sup>39</sup> P.B. KADICHEENI, *The Mystery of Baptism*, p. 88–93; S. BROCK, *The Baptismal Anointings*, p. 35.

<sup>40</sup> S. BROCK, *The Baptismal Anointings*, p. 28.

<sup>41</sup> Theodore of Mopsuestia interprets the pre-baptismal *rušmā* on the fore-head with the holy Chrism as a type of stamping as a lamb of Christ and as a soldier of the heavenly King. The candidate is stamped on the forehead because it is higher than the rest of the body and it is placed above all the body and above the face. Cf. THEODORE, *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Lord's Prayer and on the Sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist*, A. MINGANA (ed. & trans.), WS 6, Cambridge 1933, p. 46.

<sup>42</sup> Theodore interprets the anointing of the whole body of the candidate with holy chrism as a symbol of the covering of immortality. THEODORE, *Commentary on the Baptism*, p. 54.

3. Post-baptismal *rušmā (huttāmā hrāyā)* stands for the baptism of Jesus with the fullness of the Holy Spirit<sup>43</sup>.

The sixth chapter articulates the theme of signing the candidates with oil and the role of the sponsors in the ceremony of baptism<sup>44</sup>. He writes:

Also in fact, and in this point, the sponsors come with the baptismal candidates; they sponsor their souls to the priest that they shall be without defect in their service. And the sponsors are placed in the place of the holy Apostles who sponsored the nations and granted to them the forgiveness of sins<sup>45</sup>.

The candidates enter the baptistery only after the signing just like the sons of Abraham who were circumcised first and then entered into the Promised Land.

The seventh chapter highlights the different traditions regarding the Gospel reading. Some read it in the Baptistery and some others in the church. The Author points out three reasons for reading the Gospel inside the baptistery. According to him, the Gospel should be read where the OT promises and NT perfections were ministered. Inside of the baptistery is preferable because the circumcision of the sons of Israel and the baptism of Jesus by John were in Jordan<sup>46</sup>.

*ECS* clarifies that *Lākumārā* and *Sanctus (Trisagion)* were not in the structure of baptismal rite prescribed by Išo'yahb III<sup>47</sup>. Speaking about the architecture, the Author states that the baptistery should be on the southern side of the altar as Jordan to Jerusalem, while the throne is in the western part<sup>48</sup>. In the last part of this chapter, the Author becomes too defensive of the prescriptions of Išo'yahb III, warning that the angel of the heaven will be cursed, if he proclaim against what they have proclaimed (cf. Gal 1,8)<sup>49</sup>. Thus the seventh chapter is polemic in nature and defensive in content.

<sup>43</sup> *ECS* II, V: 106, 13.

<sup>44</sup> Theodore mentions about the custom of putting the linen towel upon the head of the candidate by the sponsor. According to him, it is the emblem of the freedom to which the candidate is called. Free men put linen clothes upon their heads as an adornment both in the house and in the market place. THEODORE, *Commentary on the Baptism*, p. 47.

<sup>45</sup> *ECS* II, V: 100, 25–29; C. LEONHARD, *Die Initiation*, p. 341.

<sup>46</sup> *ECS* II, V: 111, 10–11.

<sup>47</sup> *ECS* II, V: 112, 4. G. Diettrich argues that *Lakumara* and *Trisagion* are intrusion into the baptismal liturgy. Cf. G. G. DIETRICH, *Taufliturgie*, p. 24.

<sup>48</sup> Išo'yahb III commanded that the baptistery should be at the south side of the church (*ECS* I, II: 112, 23–24). But according to *ECS*, “blessed Išo'yahb had prescribed these things so that they typify a mystery, but not setting them as if they should be necessarily thus” (113, 7–9).

<sup>49</sup> *ECS* II, V: 113, 5–7.

Chapter eight introduces the issues concerning the destruction of the baptismal water, signing and the imposition of the hands<sup>50</sup>. The Author allegorizes the destruction of water together with the oil of anointing to the end of the baptism of John the Baptist. Jesus unties the baptism of John and Holy Spirit accomplishes the baptism of Jesus. Finally the Author mentions about the reading of Epistle, Gospel and the *šurāyā* together with the canon<sup>51</sup>. After coming to the *qankē* with the deacons, the priest uncovers his *sudarium*<sup>52</sup> to typify that the dispensation of Jesus is accepted with His death<sup>53</sup>.

Last chapter of the fifth *memrā* ' explores the theological summary of the effect of the whole celebration<sup>54</sup>. The ninth chapter narrates the meaning of covering the head of the priest when he baptises. According to the Author, the priest places *sudarium* upon his head due to two reasons, firstly, to show that priest is clean from sins and secondly, the covered head signifies the old Adam. The priest uncovers his head in the *qankē* and at the time of consecration of the holy Mysteries<sup>55</sup>. The *ECS* sees the covering of the head as a symbol of death and its removal as a symbol of liberation from death.

## 5. Structure of the Baptismal Rite

It is not easy to reconstruct the structure of baptismal liturgy from the liturgical commentary of the Anonymous Author of the 9<sup>th</sup> cent., since he does not give a continuous and methodological description of the elements of baptism. Further, he does not indicate clearly enough the mutual relation between the different elements of the baptismal liturgy. His interpretation of baptismal rites does not correspond fully with the traditional order of the baptismal liturgy. So we shall try to find out a possible structure of the baptism envisaged by the Author by putting together the various elements seen in the baptismal commentary

<sup>50</sup> *ECS* II, V: 113, 20–115, 25. In the later period, the destruction of the water was only after the post-baptismal *rushmā*. Cf. G. DIETRICH, *Taufliturgie*, p. 94. Išo'yahb I states that the destruction of water is after the signing. *ECS* has put this rite before the signing in order to highlight the allegorical importance of it. Cf. C. LEONHARD, *Die Initiation*, Footnote nr 63.

<sup>51</sup> *ECS* II, V: 114, 23–26.

<sup>52</sup> The word *Sudarium* (ܫܘܕܪܝܘܡ) means a cloth, binder, linen girdle, loin-cloth; handkerchief etc. Cf. J. PAYNE SMITH, *Syriac Dictionary*, p. 364.

<sup>53</sup> *ECS* II, V: 115, 11–13.

<sup>54</sup> *ECS* II, V: 115, 26–116, 24,

<sup>55</sup> *ECS* II, V: 116, 15.

of the *ECS*. Thus we may often compare the baptismal structure of the Assyrian and Syro-Malabar rites.

### 5.1. Inscription of the Name

The Anonymous Author mentions the inscription of the names of the candidates in connection with the beginning of the catechumenate. According to him, the fourth week is the time to inscribe the names of those who are to be baptised on the Easter vigil. He writes, “On the Monday of the middle of the week, the candidates come and register their names before the priest”<sup>56</sup>. The Author considers this rite as a symbol of the obedience of Abraham who obeyed God, leaving his father’s house and went with God. So the candidates, who are in the place of Abraham, obey the priest and register their names before him.

The names of the baptised are written as to indicate that they have been inscribed and numbered with those who have been redeemed from the slavery of death and Satan. They have been inscribed in the Church of the first-born, *who* are inscribed in heaven with saints (cf. Heb 12,23). It is an ancient element in the baptismal rite since Theodore mentions about registering the names of the baptismal candidates in the baptismal register book of the Church<sup>57</sup>. Narsai too indicates that the priest inscribes the name of the candidate in the archives of the King’s books<sup>58</sup>.

### 5.2. Prayer of the Imposition of Hands (*Syāmidā*)

The Author of the *ECS* prescribes that on the Wednesday of the middle of the Lenten season, the priest goes out with two deacons (Gabriel and Michael) and recites the prayer of the imposition of hands (*syāmidā*) at the evening and morning<sup>59</sup>. The Author gives a long description about the time, manner and content of this

<sup>56</sup> *ECS* II, V: 97, 19–20; 27–28: 98, 5–6; P.B. KADICHEENI, *The Mystery of Baptism*, p. 119.

<sup>57</sup> THEODORE, *Commentary on the Baptism*, p. 25. Theodore compares the enrolment of the names of the baptismal candidates to the enrolment of the name of Joseph and Mary in Bethlehem. *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>58</sup> NARSAI, *Mysteries of the Church and Baptism, in The Liturgical Homilies of Narsai*, R.H. CONNOLLY, trans., TS 8, Cambridge 1909, p. 40. Moses Bar Kepha exposes three reasons for the enrolment of the names of the baptismal candidate in the baptismal book. First, after enrolling the name, the *baptizandi* will be numbered among those who are saved from the slavery of Satan and sin. Secondly, he is enrolled among the sons of God. Thirdly, he is enrolled in the church of the first-born (Heb 12,23). Cf. MOSES BAR KEPHA, *Commentary on Baptism*, B. VARGHESE, trans. “The Harp” XXIV (2009), p. 71. The same idea is proposed by Bar Salibi in his baptismal commentary. BAR SALIBI, *Commentaries on Myron and Baptism*, B. VARGHESE, trans., Kottayam 2006, p. 116.

<sup>59</sup> *ECS* II, V: 98, 20–21.

prayer. It is recited upon the candidates twice a day to typify the offering of the two lambs daily in the Tabernacle of the OT<sup>60</sup>.

### 5.3. Entrance of the Candidates into Baptistry

Following the prescription of Išo‘yahb III, the Anonymous Author explains this element in the commentary. The catechumens enter into the baptistry in the morning at the beginning of the Holy Week, i.e, six days before their baptism<sup>61</sup>. Their procession is from *Hykala* to the baptistry accompanied by Cross and Gospel<sup>62</sup>. The Author speaks about the holders of light, censers, Cross and horn in connection with the entrance of the candidates into the baptistry<sup>63</sup>. According to him, the entrance of the candidates into the baptistry signifies the entrance of the Israelites into the Promised Land<sup>64</sup>.

### 5.4. Pre-baptismal *Rušmā*

Regarding the pre-baptismal *rušmā*, the Author of the *ECS* writes “he [priest] signs, anoints, baptises and seals from the single horn”<sup>65</sup> in which the word “signs” will be referring to the pre-baptismal *rušmā*. Now the priest signs on the forehead of the candidate with one finger because the power of God has not been revealed fully but partially<sup>66</sup>. Further, the priest signs the first *rušmā* from the horn of oil to typify the promise of God to Abraham which took place without the labour of laws<sup>67</sup>. The first *rušmā* is signed upon the blessed Abraham by God freely. Therefore, this *rušmā* is signed [*methrshem*] upon the foreheads of the candidate to show that one who blesses the gentiles comes from his (Abraham)

<sup>60</sup> *ECS* II, V: 99, 3–9.

<sup>61</sup> *ECS* II, V: 99, 21–22.

<sup>62</sup> *ECS* II, V: 99, 21; 100–19.

<sup>63</sup> *ECS* II, V: 101, 9–22.

<sup>64</sup> *ECS* II, V: 109, 21–25.

<sup>65</sup> *ECS* II, V: 108, 23–24.

<sup>66</sup> *ECS* II, V: 106, 9, R.H. CONNOLLY, *Preface to Latin Text* II, p. 2; Timothy II holds the same idea regarding the signing of the forehead of the candidate with one finger of the priest. Cf. P.B. KADICHEENI, *The Mystery of Baptism*, p. 78; G. DIETRICH, *Taufliturgie*, p. 61.

<sup>67</sup> *ECS* II, V: 106, 15–17; G. DIETRICH, *Taufliturgie*, p. 61. According to the SMC baptismal text, the first anointing is done with the blessed oil of the previous baptism. The celebrant anoints the forehead of the child with the oil in the name of the Trinitarian persons. *Sacraments of the Syro-Malabar Church*, p. 18. The already consecrated oil is called *Qarna d-meshihuta* which is identified with the oil of unction in the liturgical texts (*mesha da mshihuta*).

seed<sup>68</sup>. The Author compares this *rušmā* (pre-baptismal *rušmā*) upon the baptismal candidate to circumcision of Abraham and the promise given to him<sup>69</sup>.

The first signing is in connection with the rite of renunciation of Satan. The signing made on the forehead shows that Satan has no more power over the candidate, from now on the property of Christ, and that the seal of Christ on the forehead is a sign of protection against devil, and a sign of dedication to Christ<sup>70</sup>.

### 5.5. Liturgy of the Word

The Anonymous Author criticizes those who add *Lākumārā* and *Sanctus* (*Trisagion*) to the Baptismal liturgy. He writes, “They recite *Lākumārā* and *Sanctus* thinking that an addition to the prayers becomes the profit, while it is not required for the excellence”<sup>71</sup>. He mentions about the *šurāyā* and *zummārā* in connection with the baptismal liturgy. According to him, the first *šurāyā* is the symbol of the vision of Moses on the Mount Sinai and the proclamation of the deacon signifies the miracles that God performed through the staff of Moses. The inclination of the priest before the altar symbolizes that all the miracles were done by the supplication of Moses before God. The second *šurāyā* typifies the signs that Moses performed before Pharaoh. The second *kārozutā* signifies the slaughter of the first borns in Egypt<sup>72</sup>.

The *šurāyā* with its canon signifies the crossing over the sea. The reading of the Epistle symbolizes the carnal commandments that God gave to Moses on the Mount Sinai. The *madrāsā* (*estationa*) signifies the establishment of the Tabernacle and the properties that were offered to it. The reading of the Gospel symbolizes the power of God that filled the Tent. The *kārozutā* after the Gospel typifies the intercession of the people for the remission of their sins who adorned the calf<sup>73</sup>.

Further the Author states that one should not read from the Law and Prophets during baptism, for the OT depicts old dispensation, which was before the Law and the Law itself. So during the baptismal liturgy one should read only the NT which

<sup>68</sup> ECS II, V: 106, 5–7; 108, 4–5.

<sup>69</sup> ECS II, V: 105, 2–4.

<sup>70</sup> According to the Antiochene tradition, the pre-baptismal anointing of the head represents two factors; firstly, the marking or ‘branding’ of the newly baptized as sheep in Christ’s flock (corresponding to OT circumcision) and secondly, the conferring of them of the royal priesthood (based on the OT anointing of kings and priests). Cf. S. BROCK, *The Holy Spirit in the Syrian Baptismal Tradition*, p. 49.

<sup>71</sup> ECS II, V: 112, 3–5.

<sup>72</sup> ECS II, V: 109, 28; 110–6.

<sup>73</sup> ECS II, V: 110, 11–18.

brings forth the dispensation of Jesus Christ<sup>74</sup>. The Epistle and the Gospel should be read in the baptism, because the candidate has to be cleansed first through the hearing of the Holy Scriptures and by the living words of the Gospel.

### 5.6. Creed

Before being baptised, the catechumens have to make the profession of faith. The basis of this rite appears to have been the old baptismal creed of Jerusalem<sup>75</sup>. Theodore states that creed is an engagement and a promise to God that the *baptizandi* will remain in the love of the Divine nature<sup>76</sup>. Narsai also mentions the confession of faith by the *baptizandi*<sup>77</sup>. Išo‘yahb III has inserted the creed, formulated by Narsai from the definition of the 318 priests of the Council of Nicea, into the rite of baptism<sup>78</sup>.

### 5.7. Procession to the Baptistery

The lights that go before the procession indicate that the baptised is departed from the darkness and ignorance of sin. He has turned towards the light of the knowledge of God and to the works of righteousness. The incense burned during this time symbolizes the fragrance of the Holy Trinity. The SMC mentions about the hymn of “Praise and Glory” which may be sung during the procession to the baptistery<sup>79</sup>.

### 5.8. Blessing of Oil and Water

The fifth chapter of the *ECS* gives a short description of the rubrics and meaning of the blessing of oil and water. It says “At the middle of the consecration, the priest

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<sup>74</sup> R. MATHEUS (ed.), *A Commentary on the Mass (which has been attributed to, but it is not really) by the Nestorian George, Bishop of Mosul and Arbel (10<sup>th</sup> Century)* Translated from the Syriac by R.H. CONNOLLY, Kottayam 2000, p. 142–143.

<sup>75</sup> G. DIX, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, London 2001, p. 485.

<sup>76</sup> THEODORE, *Commentary on the Baptism*, p. 35.

<sup>77</sup> NARSAI, *On Baptism*, p. 38.

<sup>78</sup> G. DIETRICH, *Taufliturgie*, p. 31.

<sup>79</sup> *Sacraments of the Syro-Malabar Church*, p. 41. J. Vellian writes that the office of the procession to the baptistery has the following structure: anthem of baptism, first supplication *šurāyā*, second supplication *Tešbohtā* (hymn) and *Trisagion*. The anthem of baptism (*onitā d’amādā*) is sung during the procession to the baptistery. J. VELLIAN, *Immediate preparation for baptism*, “The Harp” 24 (2009), p. 410.

signs the oil and then comes towards Jordan<sup>80</sup>. It means that the consecration of oil and water takes place at the middle of the consecration corresponding to the consecration of the elements of bread and wine in the Eucharistic liturgy.

The Author says that “he [the priest] does not leave the oil [in the bowl] without consecration”<sup>81</sup>. The oil in the bowl (flagon) is blessed by the invocation of the Holy Spirit and by its mixing with the oil of the horn that had been consecrated earlier. Most of the commentators give great importance to the blessing of the oil. For example Narsai writes, “the three names he casts upon the oil, and consecrates it, that it may be sanctifying the uncleanness of men by its holiness”<sup>82</sup>.

The Author testifies that the priest signs the water with the oil of the horn in order to unite the OT and the NT<sup>83</sup>. He compares it to John who sanctifies Jordan and its sealing through the Holy Spirit. He writes, “the Spirit descends to consecrate the water that it shows what actions of the Law are not perfected until the baptism of our Lord. He mixes the (oil) of the horn (with the new), so that the baptism of John is perfected with the Holy Spirit and thus all the orders are completed”<sup>84</sup>. It contains the prayers for the consecration of water and oil. Narsai says: “with the name of the Divinity, the three Names, he [the priest] consecrates the water that it may suffice to accomplish the cleansing of the defiled”<sup>85</sup>. In SMC tradition, during the blessing of the water, the celebrant makes the sign of the cross in the water reciting the prescribed prayer<sup>86</sup>.

## 5.9. Anointing

It is an important ceremony, which takes place after the blessing of oil and water. Theodore mentions the anointing of the whole body of the candidate with the holy chrism<sup>87</sup>. The Anonymous Author reports about the anointing of the whole body of the *baptizandi* saying “he is anointed” [*methmesāh*] by the deacon and not by the priest, because the anointing belongs to the OT and it corresponds to the

<sup>80</sup> ECS II, V: 106, 21–23; P.B. KADICHEENI, *The Mystery of Baptism*, p. 38–39.

<sup>81</sup> ECS II, V: 106, 27.

<sup>82</sup> NARSAI, *On Baptism*, p. 42.

<sup>83</sup> ECS II, V: 107, 8–9.

<sup>84</sup> ECS II, V: 111, 1–3.

<sup>85</sup> NARSAI, *On Baptism*, p. 50.

<sup>86</sup> *Sacraments of the Syro-Malabar Church*, p. 45.

<sup>87</sup> THEODORE, *Commentary on the Baptism*, p. 54.

anointing of the OT priests and kings<sup>88</sup>. The deacon anoints the whole body of the candidate with the oil in order to deliver him from the Evil<sup>89</sup>.

It is performed with three fingers on the breast of the candidate and followed by the anointing of the whole body<sup>90</sup>. According to G. Dietrich, the anointing is done from above to below to signify that one is putting on Christ<sup>91</sup>. In the present baptismal liturgy of the SMC, the celebrant dips the thumb in the oil and anoints the chest of the candidate<sup>92</sup>.

### 5.10. Baptism

The baptism comes immediately after the anointing of the whole body of the candidate. For the baptism, according to the Anonymous Author, John was baptising the whole body of the Son of Man, so also he (priest) baptises the whole body in the water<sup>93</sup>. The Author says, “Now here at baptism, along with “is baptised” – in the name of the Trinity – he also baptises (the candidate) three times. He indicates the name and completes the action in practice”<sup>94</sup>. Even though the Author does not give the exact formula of baptism, he mentions the Trinitarian formula for baptism. Narsai mentions the baptismal formula where the priest prays in the name of the Trinity. The priest baptises the whole body three times to show that Christ was three days in the tomb<sup>95</sup>.

### 6.11. New Clothes and Lighted Candles

This ceremony of putting ‘white robe’ upon the candidate comes soon after the baptised coming out of the water. It symbolizes putting of the ‘robe of glory’ which was darkened by the sin of Adam<sup>96</sup>. Theodore and Narsai comment on the rite of

<sup>88</sup> ECS II, V: 108, 7–8.

<sup>89</sup> Moses Bar Kepha compares the anointing of the baptized with oil to the anointing of the wrestler, so that the hands of his adversary may slip from him. The baptized too is anointed that he may not be held fast by the demon. MOSES BAR KEPHA, *The Commentary on Baptism*, p. 75.

<sup>90</sup> G.P. BADGER, *Nestorians and Their Rituals II*, p. 207.

<sup>91</sup> G. DIETRICH, *Taufliturgie*, p. 64.

<sup>92</sup> *Sacraments of the Syro-Malabar Church*, p. 46.

<sup>93</sup> ECS II, V: 108, 10.

<sup>94</sup> ECS II, V: 108, 17–19. The candidate is immersed three times in the water in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Cf. *Sacraments of the Syro-Malabar Church*, p. 46.

<sup>95</sup> NARSAI, *On Baptism*, p. 51.

<sup>96</sup> THEODORE, *Commentary on the Baptism*, 49; NARSAI, *On Baptism*, p. 52.

clothing the newly baptised. In the SMC, the celebrant puts the white dress on the child after the baptism symbolizing his purification. The priest gives the lighted candle also to the child<sup>97</sup>.

### 5.12. Destruction of Baptismal Water

*ECS* mentions about the pouring out of the water soon after baptism, and before the post-*rušmā*<sup>98</sup>. The priest pours out (destroys) the water together with the oil of the anointing (*meshad'meshihutho*) because that Old (Testament) oil is of the priests and kings. It indicates the high sense of sacredness attached to the blessed water and oil. The Author allegorises the time of the destruction of water with the end of the mission of John. Thus the baptism of John through the water was loosened. The baptism of our Lord remained and John departed with his baptism, because he had come to cleanse the heap prior to the bridegroom<sup>99</sup>.

### 5.13. Post Baptismal *Rušmā*

Post baptismal *rušmā* has its basis in the Gospel narratives because the Holy Spirit appears at Christ's baptism only after he has gone up from the water. While the conferring of the royal priesthood is connected with the pre-baptismal anointing, 'putting on the robe of the glory' and 'putting on the Spirit' is connected with post-baptismal *rušmā*<sup>100</sup>. The first indication about this rite is seen in the baptismal homilies of Theodore of Mopsuestia. He writes that the priest signs on the forehead of candidate saying: "So and so signed in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"<sup>101</sup>. Timothy II says that the third signing is from below to above to signify that the candidate is raised from earth to heaven through baptism.

*ECS* says "he signs, anoints, baptises and seals from the single horn"<sup>102</sup>. It means that the final *huttāmā* signifies the fulfillment of the candidate in the Holy Spirit"<sup>103</sup>. The Anonymous Author compares the post-baptismal *rušmā* to the coming down of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles on the day of Pentecost. He says, "through it the

<sup>97</sup> *Sacraments of the Syro-Malabar Church*, p. 46–47.

<sup>98</sup> *ECS* II, V: 113, 21–22.

<sup>99</sup> *ECS* II, V: 114, 1–5.

<sup>100</sup> S. BROCK, *The Holy Spirit in the Syrian Baptismal Tradition*, p. 48–49.

<sup>101</sup> THEODORE, *Commentary on the Baptism*, p. 68.

<sup>102</sup> *ECS* II, V: 108, 23–24.

<sup>103</sup> *ECS* II, V: 106, 13–14.

Spirit descends like tongues of fire and sets upon each one of them (candidates)<sup>104</sup>. It is done on the forehead of the candidate in the form of the Cross. Thus the Holy Spirit is conferred upon the candidate through the sacrament of chrismation. Kelaita text and Syro-Malabar text speak of the third *rušmā* with the holy oil from the horn after baptism<sup>105</sup>. But J. Assemani and G.P. Badger are of the opinion that after baptism there is no anointing<sup>106</sup>.

## Conclusion

We were critically analysing the structure and content of the baptismal *memrā*’ of the *ECS*. A look at the manuscripts and editions of East Syrian baptismal liturgy has been a great help to delve deep into the baptismal *memrā*’ of the *ECS*. The prescriptions of Išo’yahb I and Išo’yahb III were the impetus for the Anonymous Author to write such a voluminous commentary on baptism. The baptismal *memrā*’ contains nine chapters and an analysis of the content of each chapter provides us with a clear outlook about the content of the text. The Author speaks about three anointings upon the candidate, namely, pre-baptismal *rušmā*, anointing of the whole body and the post-baptismal *rušmā*. He emphasizes the pouring out of the consecrated water before the post-baptismal *rušmā*. He sets the baptismal rite within the framework of Eucharistic celebration, and the reception of the Eucharist by the baptised is presupposed in the commentary. A lucid idea is depicted in the commentary about the rights and duties of the sponsors too. In short, the baptismal commentary of the Anonymous Author of the 9<sup>th</sup> century provides us with a holistic view about the East Syrian rite of baptism.

## Abstract

“Exposition of the Church Services” (*ECS*) is a 9<sup>th</sup> century liturgical commentary, the first and integral liturgical work about the East Syrian liturgy after the great liturgical reformation of Patriarch Išo’yahb III. Though the Author of the *ECS* comments on the various *memrē* of the Church of the East, we shall pay attention mainly to the baptismal *memrā*, which is the most remarkable among

<sup>104</sup> *ECS* II, V: 108, 20–21.

<sup>105</sup> J. KELAITA (red.), *T<sup>u</sup>ksa d-k<sup>a</sup>hne: d-<sup>u</sup>ḏta d<sup>a</sup>-md<sup>a</sup>nha*, Mosul 1928, p. 163; *Sacraments of the Syro-Malabar Church*, p. 51.

<sup>106</sup> *B.O* III, 2, 283; G.P. BADGER, *Nestorians and Their Rituals* II, p. 153. G.P. Badger affirms that no oil is used for the final *rushmā*.

the *memrē* commented on by the Author. At first, we shall discuss the different terms and methods of baptism together with the manuscripts and editions of East Syrian baptismal liturgy. The baptismal *memrā* contains nine chapters and an analysis of the content of each chapter provides us with a clear outlook about the content of the text. The Author highlights the Pauline theology that explains baptism as a participation in the death and resurrection of Christ. The Author speaks about three anointings upon the candidate: pre-baptismal *rušmā*, anointing of the whole body and the post-baptismal *rušmā*. He emphasizes the pouring out of the consecrated water before the post-baptismal *rušmā*. He sets the baptismal rite within the framework of Eucharistic celebration, and the reception of the Eucharist by the baptized is presupposed in the commentary. A lucid idea is depicted in the commentary about the rights and duties of the sponsors too. In short, the baptismal commentary of the Anonymous Author of the 9<sup>th</sup> century provides us with a holistic view about the East Syrian rite of baptism.

**Keywords:** Baptism, East-Syriac Rite, Liturgy, *Memrā*.

### ***Memrā'* chrzcielne anonimowego autora z IX wieku**

#### **Streszczenie**

Datowany na IX w. komentarz liturgiczny *Wykład misteriów Kościoła (ECS)* jest pierwszym liturgicznym dziełem Kościoła Wschodu po wielkiej reformie dokonanej przez patriarchę Išo'yahba III. Choć autor komentarza podejmuje w nim wiele tematów, w niniejszym studium refleksja koncentruje się na *memrach* chrzcielnych. W pierwszej części omówiono metody oraz terminologię chrzcielną wraz ze wskazaniem konkretnych źródeł rękopiśmiennych. Następnie kolejno zaprezentowane zostały poszczególne elementy opisanej przez autora celebracji wraz z obecnymi w nich elementami teologicznymi. Należy zaznaczyć, że prezentowany komentarz jawi się jako cenne źródło liturgiczne holistycznie ukazujące syro-orientalny obrzęd chrztu.

**Słowa kluczowe:** chrzest, ryt wschodniosyryjski, liturgia, *memrā*.

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