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WOMB OF THE SPIRIT:
THE LITURGICAL IMPLICATIONS
OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE SPIRIT
FOR THE SYRIAN BAPTISMAL TRADITION

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WOMB OF THE SPIRIT: 
THE LITURGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE SPIRIT 
FOR THE SYRIAN BAPTISMAL TRADITION

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is not substantially the same as any that I have submitted for a degree or diploma or other qualification at any other University.

I further state that no part of my dissertation has already been or is being concurrently submitted for any such degree, diploma or any other qualification.

I certify that this dissertation does not exceed the word limit prescribed by the Faculty of Divinity of the University of Cambridge.

Simon Jones
April 1999

This dissertation is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration.
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SUMMARY

This thesis investigates the role of the Holy Spirit within the Syrian baptismal tradition and, in particular, assesses its effect upon the liturgical and theological development of initiation in East and West Syria. Primary material includes the Odes of Solomon, Didascalia Apostolorum and Acts of Judas Thomas; the writings of Aphrahat, Ephrem, Narsai, Jacob of Serugh, Philoxenus and Severus of Antioch; as well as the East Syrian and two West Syrian baptismal ordines.

This study provides evidence against any notion of an original Syrian baptismal pattern in which a single anointing precedes immersion, and demonstrates that the tradition witnesses to the existence of a variety of practices at an early stage. At the same time, it argues that the Syrian rite was not originally modelled upon the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan, nor did its theology undergo an identifiable shift from Johannine to Pauline imagery.

Against this background, the incarnational image of the font as womb is identified as the principal characteristic which runs throughout the development of the tradition, functioning as the primary symbolic focus for the activity of the Holy Spirit and thereby interpreting the pre-immersion anointing(s) as a ritual preparation for baptismal regeneration by water and the Spirit.

The Spirit is seen as active throughout the process of initiation. It is the Spirit who identifies the candidate as belonging to Christ; it is the Spirit who prepares and brings to new birth with Christ in the womb of the Jordan; and, not least, it is the Spirit whom the candidate receives as the eschatological pledge of the final birth with the First-born, from death to eternal life.
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This thesis investigates the role of the Holy Spirit within the Syrian baptismal tradition and, in particular, assesses its effect upon the liturgical and theological development of initiation in East and West Syria from the Odes of Solomon through to the formulation of the East and West Syrian baptismal ordines.

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first begins with a brief survey of scholarship undertaken in this area. Alongside this, some initial observations will indicate the approach which this thesis will adopt and an outline of its structure will be presented. The second half of the chapter will introduce the primary material to be considered in subsequent chapters.

HISTORY OF SCHOLARSHIP

1.1 Initiation and the Holy Spirit
Any survey of writings on the Syrian baptismal tradition soon discovers that, as far as twentieth century scholarship is concerned, there is one particular debate which has been dominant and which continues to vex the mind of liturgists; that is, whether certain individual elements within the initiatory process, such as an anointing or the immersion, may be identified with the bestowal of the gift of the Holy Spirit upon the baptizand. As background to this debate, there has been, and in some cases still is, the overriding desire of some scholars to demonstrate the existence of an equivalent to the Western sacrament of confirmation within a liturgical tradition which, in its early history, has shown no
evidence of the performance of equivalent post-immersion ceremonies before the celebration of the eucharist.¹ For example, in 1946 Dix claimed that some writers 'in Syria and Asia Minor place the giving of "the seal" and "Baptism in the Spirit" before Baptism in water'.² Alongside this, Dix's own belief that 'baptism in water bestows remission of sins and incorporation into Christ, but not the gift of the Spirit. That is imparted by "the Seal"'³ should also be born in mind. Throughout this study, the liturgist's tendency to read back strongly-held personal opinions in contemporary debate will require careful consideration.

Dix's position seems to have exerted considerable influence upon subsequent scholarship. Over twenty-five years after The Theology of Confirmation in Relation to Baptism was published, Willis reiterated the same position by describing the Syrian pattern of initiation as confirmation, baptism and communion and criticising those who dissociate the pre-immersion anointing from the gift of the Spirit:

> If this were so, it would leave all the examples ... from Syria as baptism without confirmation, without rushma or seal. This is much harder to accept than a reversed, or, it would be better to say, an unusual order of baptism and confirmation.⁴

¹ Logan has argued recently that a post-immersion anointing may have been practised by some groups in Syria from as early as the second century. AHB Logan, 'Post-Baptismal Chrismation in Syria: The Evidence of Ignatius, the Didache and the Apostolic Constitutions', Journal of Theological Studies, ns, 49.1 (1998), 92-108.
³ G Dix, ''The Seal" in the Second Century', Theology, 51 (1948), 9. Against Dix, Lampe argued that the Spirit was conferred upon the candidate not by any anointing, but by baptism in water. GWH Lampe, The Seal of the Spirit, (London: Longmans, 1951)
⁴ GG Willis, 'What was the Earliest Syrian Baptismal Tradition?', Studia Evangelica, 6 (1973), 652.
To complement the work of Dix, Manson suggested that there is New Testament evidence to support the existence of two biblical traditions, one which bestows the Spirit after immersion and the other which confers the gift as a precondition of the baptismal bath. This difference of view, he argued, 'has left its trace in a difference of liturgical usage, which is otherwise inexplicable'.

It would be wrong, however, to assume that all post-Dixian commentators understood the Syrian pre-immersion anointing as the moment when the pneumatic gift was conferred. Green claimed that insufficient evidence did not permit such a conclusion and saw the pre-immersion unction as a final act of exorcism before the candidate entered the water. Thus, 'an accurate description of Antiochene practice . . . is not that it had the rite of confirmation in an unusual place, but that it lacked it altogether'. For Whitaker, commenting on the Acts of Judas Thomas and Didascalia Apostolorum, the pre-immersion unction was an exorcism and 'the early Syrian Church had no rite of confirmation'.

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5 TW Manson, 'Entry into Membership of the Early Church', Journal of Theological Studies, 48 (1947), 26. As being of particular importance, he cited the reference to 'the Spirit and the water and the blood' in 1 John 5.8. Other texts included: Galatians 4.6f, Romans 8.15f, 1 Corinthians 12.3 and 2 Corinthians 1.21f (ibid., 29); see also idem., 'Baptism in the Church', Scottish Journal of Theology, 2 (1949), 391-403; idem., 'The Life of Jesus: A Survey of the Available Material (5) The Fourth Gospel', Bulletin of the John Rylands Library, 30.2 (1947), 326. These texts were also used by Ratcliff who, whilst following the Dixian line of a pneumatic pre-immersion anointing, denied that it was the equivalent of confirmation. Rather, adding to Manson's texts the account of the baptism of Saul in Acts 9 and of Cornelius in Acts 10, he suggested that 'the gift of the Spirit is the beginning of initiation'. (EC Ratcliff, 'The Old Syrian Baptismal Tradition and its Resettlement under the Influence of Jerusalem in the Fourth Century', Studies in Church History, 2 (1965), 26.)

6 HB Green, 'The Significance of the Pre-Baptismal Seal in St John Chrysostom', Studia Patristica, 6 (1962), 90.

7 EC Whitaker, 'Unction in the Syrian Baptismal Rite', Church Quarterly Review, 162 (1961), 167. Even Lampe, who in the contemporary Anglican confirmation debate argued so strongly that the Spirit was given in water, held that the Acts of Judas Thomas and Didascalia 'present us with . . . the common Syrian idea that the bestowal of the Spirit is to be associated with a pre-baptismal unction'. (Lampe, Seal of the Spirit, 188.)
Responding to these issues which have dominated scholarship in this area since the beginning of the century, this study will demonstrate that the frequently-posed question, 'When does the candidate receive the Holy Spirit?', is not one which can readily be answered by the Syrian baptismal tradition. This thesis will show that the Spirit is thought of as active throughout the whole process of initiation, encountered by the candidate from the time he enters the initiatory process and finding liturgical articulation in each of the sacramental elements of oil, water, bread and wine. At the same time, we shall also demonstrate that the symbolic focus for the activity of the Holy Spirit within the Syrian baptismal tradition is the image of the font as womb (Syr opcode or ɔrɔɔ), paralleled with the Spirit's activity in the womb of Mary and of Sheol.

The relevance of this enquiry is not, therefore, limited to academic liturgical study but has practical, pastoral and ecumenical implications for today's Church. In the Church of England, for example, the debate concerning the precise relationship between the theology of baptism and confirmation remains unsettled. The new initiation services, the House of Bishop's report On the Way and, not least, the possibility for Diocesan Bishops to permit children to receive communion before confirmation all point away from the

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8 For further details of this debate, see PF Bradshaw, The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship, (London: SPCK, 1992), 163-174.
9 The title of this thesis, Womb of the Spirit, is taken from the West Syrian ordines of Timothy of Alexandria and Severus of Antioch. In Timothy the priest petitions God to 'send your living Spirit and sanctify this water, and may it become the womb of the Spirit (r6JC t.rob) that gives rebirth anew to mankind' (SP Brock, 'A New Syriac Baptismal Ordo attributed to Timothy of Alexandria', Le Museon, 83 (1970), 385); in Severus the priest gives thanks to God who has 'blessed these waters by the descent of your Holy Spirit that they may become a womb of the Spirit (r6JC t.rob) for the regeneration of the new man from the old order' (Mar Athanasius Yeshue Samuel (ed), The Sacrament of Holy Baptism according to the Ancient Rite of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch, (Hackensack: 1974), 178). The Odes of Solomon also refer to the Spirit opening her womb; see below, 41ff.
Prayer Book understanding of confirmation as an integral part of the initiatory process and the liturgical gateway to Holy Communion. In so doing, the Church of England is slowly moving towards the theological position of many other Provinces of the Anglican Communion who see baptism as 'complete sacramental initiation' which 'leads to participation in the eucharist' and confirmation as a pastoral rite of the renewal of faith which is 'in no way to be seen as a completion of baptism or as necessary for admission to communion'. It is to be regretted, however, that the newly-authorized rites fall uncomfortably between these two positions. Perhaps the conclusions of this study might, from the perspective of another tradition, go some way to providing fresh inspiration for solving this contemporary liturgical conundrum.

1.2 The Development of the Rite
By the end of the 1960s, the debate concerning the location of the bestowal of the Spirit within Syrian initiation rites was attracting less attention from scholars, although the question had by no means been settled. What continued to be discussed, however, were theories concerning the development of the rite and, in particular, the introduction of a post-immersion anointing. Why did the Syrian rite change from what the majority of scholars continue to regard as the original pattern of a single pre-immersionunction,

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14 Reiterating a similar point made by Botte, Brock's important study put an end to much speculation in this area by suggesting that 'the gift of the Spirit is essentially conferred by the rite as a whole'. SP Brock, The Holy Spirit in the Syrian Baptismal Tradition, Syrian Churches Series 9, (Poona, 1979), 37; cf B Botte, 'L'onction postbaptismale dans l'ancien patriarchat d'Antioche', in Miscellanea Liturgica in onore del Cardinale G Lecaro, 2, (Rome: Pontificio Istituto Liturgico, 1967), 804.
followed by immersion and eucharist, first by adding a second pre-immersion anointing of the whole body and then by introducing a post-immersion anointing? This study will demonstrate that textual evidence casts serious doubt upon theories, such as Winkler's, which suggest that the gradual proliferation of anointings was the result of a clearly discernible monolinear liturgical development of an 'original' pattern. Furthermore, developing the work of Bradshaw and with reference to Logan's recent research into Gnostic initiation rites, an objection will argue against any attempt to define an original ritual pattern of anointings and immersion within the Syrian baptismal tradition. Moreover, it will be suggested that texts and liturgies which articulate a pneumatology in which the activity of the Spirit is closely linked to the doctrine of the incarnation require pre- and post-immersion anointings, as well as the baptismal bath itself, to be interpreted through the lens of the incarnational image of the font as womb.

By way of introduction, a brief sketch will be provided of the major hypotheses of two of the most influential scholars working in this area in the last thirty years, Brock and Winkler, together with two older theories of Ratcliff and Botte.

15 Brock, for example, states confidently that 'as is well known, the Syrian rite originally knew only one, pre-baptismal, anointing'. (SP Brock, 'The Syrian Baptismal Ordines (with special reference to the anointings)', Studia Liturgica, 12.4 (1977), 177.) A year later, Winkler suggested that originally the Syrian tradition knew of only one pre-immersion unction, of the head, and that only later was the whole body anointed. (G Winkler, 'The Original Meaning of the Pre-Baptismal Anointing and its Implications', Worship, 52 (1978), 24 & 31.) This theory has remained unchallenged for many years. Varghese states that 'nous soulignons et suivons la conclusion de G. Winkler, à savoir que l'onction de la tête paraît être la tradition la plus ancienne'. (B Varghese, Les onctions baptismales dans la tradition syrienne, (Louvain, 1989), 12.) For an opposing view which, again, identifies an original pattern, albeit in this case the anointing of the whole body rather than the head, see AFJ Klijn, 'An Ancient Syrian Baptismal Liturgy in the Syriac Acts of John', Novum Testamentum, 6 (1963), 227.

Both Brock and Winkler argue that, in its most primitive form, the central themes of the Syrian baptismal tradition are regeneration and the baptism of Jesus. For Winkler, the latter is the model upon which the liturgical rite is based, the pre-immersion anointing representing the descent of the Spirit upon Jesus:

As Jesus had received the anointing through the divine presence in the appearance of a dove, and was invested as the Messiah, so in Christian baptism every candidate is anointed and, in connection with this anointing, the gift of the Spirit is conferred.\(^{18}\)

For Brock, the Syrian order of anointing followed by immersion is derived from the Jewish rite of circumcision followed by proselyte baptism.\(^{19}\) He traces a shift after the conversion of the Roman Empire, from the influence of a Semitic biblical tradition to that of a hellenized Christian culture:

As far as Baptism was concerned, this meant that the original conceptual basis for the Syrian rite (circumcision-baptism) lost its former significance and faded into the background, while oil imagery which belonged primarily to the Greco-Roman world gradually predominated at the expense of the older more biblical symbolism.\(^{20}\)

\(^{17}\) In particular, 'Post-Baptismal Chrismation in Syria', (see above, fn 1) and 'The Mystery of the Five Seals: Gnostic Initiation Reconsidered', *Vigiliae Christianae*, 51.2 (1997), 188-206.

\(^{18}\) Winkler, 'The Original Meaning', 36.

\(^{19}\) Brock attempts to hold together both Winkler’s Jordan model for immersion and his own based on Jewish proselyte baptism for the rite as a whole: 'The original Antiochene pattern of *rushma* followed by baptism is definitely modelled on the Jewish initiation rite of circumcision followed by baptism. . . For baptism proper it is Christ’s own baptism, with its public proclamation of Sonship, that provided the dominant model from the beginning’. (Brock, *The Holy Spirit*, 83; see also *idem.*, 'The Transition to a Post-Baptismal Anointing in the Antiochene Rite', in (ed) BD Spinks, *The Sacrifice of Praise*, (Rome: CLV Edizioni liturgiche, 1981), 219.) It is strange that Brock makes no mention of the work of Manson who, over thirty years earlier, speaks of ‘an interesting parallelism between early Christian baptismal practice and the Jewish initiation of proselytes’ and the correspondence of the latter with the reception of the Spirit, baptism and admission to the congregation and the Lord’s Table. (Manson, 'Entry into Membership', 30.)

\(^{20}\) Brock, 'Transition to a Post-Baptismal Anointing', 220.
Both Brock and Winkler note the emergence, by the end of the fourth century, of the Pauline notion of baptism as a participation in the death and resurrection of Christ.\textsuperscript{21} They also remark the growing importance of purificatory elements within the baptismal ritual at this time.\textsuperscript{22} As a consequence of these developments, the font becomes associated more with the tomb than the womb, with the result that, in order to maintain the chronology of the theology associated with this new baptismal imagery, it becomes necessary for the conferral of the pneumatic gift to take place after the immersion: the logic being that it is only after the neophyte has died and been raised with Christ that he is ready to receive the gift of the Spirit. Thus, a post-immersion pneumatic unction is introduced with the effect that the pre-immersion anointing loses its original charismatic character and becomes a cathartic, exorcistic and apotropaic ritual, as in the West. In the words of Winkler:

Once baptism moved away from its original essence, being the \textit{mimesis} of the event of the Jordan, and shifted at the same time toward a cathartic principle, it was inevitable that all rites that preceded baptism proper became subordinated to a process of thorough cleansing.\textsuperscript{23}

This study will demonstrate that the Syrian baptismal tradition did not experience such a clearly identifiable shift from Johannine to Pauline baptismal imagery at the end of the fourth century, but that elements from both theologies co-existed, to a greater or lesser extent, from the second century onwards. This is not to deny that at different times and in different geographical locations particular elements and images within the rite were emphasized more than others; but, rather, to suggest that there are several references in

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item Romas 6.3-4 and Colossians 2.12 are the two Pauline texts which refer explicitly to dying and rising with Christ in baptism.
\item Winkler, 'The Original Meaning', 44; Brock, 'Transition to a Post-Baptismal Anointing', 222.
\item Winkler, 'The Original Meaning', 42. Brock maintains that the Jordan event replaces Jewish proselyte baptism as the conceptual model for the Syrian baptismal rite, 'and attention is now paid
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
the early literature which link the Christian rite of initiation with the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus and, furthermore, that both the West and East Syrian baptismal ordines provide clear evidence for the survival of Johannine theology alongside Romans 6. To say, therefore, that a shift took place from one model to another is misleading, since it suggests that one set of images replaced another.24

Winkler's analysis of the unction-immersion pattern of the primitive baptismal liturgy as a mimesis of the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan will also be called into question and, whilst in no way disregarding the important contribution which Winkler has made in highlighting the centrality of the Jordan event within the Syrian baptismal tradition, it will be argued that, rather than the Jordan, the incarnation is, in fact, the theological driving-force which animates the theologians of East and West Syria and that it is upon an incarnational model, reflected in their use of womb imagery, that the baptismal rites are based. Furthermore, it is from the perspective of an incarnational baptismal theology that the activity of the Spirit within the tradition should be interpreted.

Two older theories regarding the development of the rite and, in particular, the introduction of a post-immersion anointing will conclude this section on the history of scholarship. A paper delivered by Ratcliff in 1963 indicates that Winkler was not the first to describe the Christian's baptism as a mimesis of Christ's.25 He presents the attractive thesis that the post-immersion anointing was introduced as a result of the influence of the

to the fact that the Holy Spirit only appeared after Christ had gone up from the water'. Brock, 'Transition to a Post-Baptismal Anointing', 220f.
24 Indeed, Winkler herself acknowledges 'the designation of the baptismal font as "Jordan" (or "womb" according to John 3) in the Syriac writers and in their baptismal ordines'. Winkler, 'The Orginal Meaning', 37.
25 'What was done at the Jordan is done again, mutatis mutandis, in the water of the font'. (Ratcliff, 'The Old Syrian Baptismal Liturgy', 28.) It is surprising that Winkler makes no reference to this.
baptismal liturgy in Jerusalem. Here the topography of the liturgical space led to the emergence of the theology of Romans 6 in the catechetical lectures of Cyril of Jerusalem. Therefore, since the liturgy was performed on the very sites of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection, these events naturally exerted not a little influence upon the theology of the rite performed there. However, this approach calls into question the primitive interpretation of the pre-immersion unction as the bestowal of the Holy Spirit. Cyril's solution to this problem is, according to Ratcliff, to break with the tradition which understood Jesus' baptism, the descent of the Spirit and the heavenly voice as constituting one 'moment' and, instead, to distinguish between the immersion and what followed it. In this way:

The post-baptismal anointing completes the liturgical representation of the scene at Jordan... Cyril's distinction and its liturgical application were useful. They enabled him to preserve, by linking it with the post-baptismal anointing, most of what the old Eastern tradition had attached to the pre-baptismal anointing and the ceremony in water. In so doing, they saved Cyril from the most awkward consequences of adopting the doctrine of Romans vi.26

Finally, Botte has suggested that the introduction of the post-immersion anointing was influenced by the reconciliation of heretics to orthodoxy by anointing. These heretics had been baptized and, therefore, did not require baptism but, because of their ecclesiological position, they had not received the Holy Spirit. According to Botte, this was remedied through an anointing of reconciliation which conveyed the pneumatic gift and which, in the course of time, was itself incorporated into the rite of initiation as a post-immersion anointing. Referring to the first canonical reference to a post-immersion anointing in

26 Ibid., 31f. Winkler's summary of Ratcliff's thesis, that 'since the liturgy of Jerusalem began to follow the sequence of the economy of salvation, an anointing after baptism... was introduced', does not seem to correspond with the argument presented here which, to a degree, considers the introduction of Romans 6 theology and the post-immersion unction as two separate occurrences. Winkler, 'The Original Meaning', 42.
Canon 48 of the Council of Laodicea,\textsuperscript{27} which states that the baptismal candidate must be anointed with 'heavenly chrism' after immersion, Botte suggests that:

it is remarkable that the first document which prescribes the postbaptismal anointing also bears witness to a preoccupation with the subject of accepting heretics into the Church. Is it a coincidence?\textsuperscript{28}

1.3 Outline of the Thesis
The history of scholarship and associated theological and liturgical issues, outlined above, have a direct bearing upon the primary material to be considered in this thesis. Subsequent chapters will use various writings and writers from East and West Syria to examine the imagery and theologies of the activity of the Spirit within the process of initiation whilst, at the same time, assessing the influence of both upon the liturgical development of the rite. Thus, in outline, the next chapter will be concerned with the \textit{Odes of Solomon}, the \textit{Didascalia Apostolorum} and the \textit{Acts of Judas Thomas}. The third will concentrate on the \textit{Demonstrations} of Aphrahat, the extensive writings of Ephrem the Syrian and Narsai. In the fourth chapter a study will be made of baptismal references in Jacob of Serugh, Philoxenus and Severus of Antioch. Chapter five will consider some baptismal \textit{ordines} from the East Syrian, Syrian Orthodox and Maronite Churches before providing a conclusion to the whole thesis.

PRIMARY MATERIAL

2.1.1 \textit{Odes of Solomon}
Our knowledge of the text of the forty-two \textit{Odes}, almost all of which survive in Syriac,\textsuperscript{29} comes from four sources, the \textit{Pistis Sophia} (C), Manuscript H, Manuscript N and the

\textsuperscript{27} JD Mansi (ed & trans), \textit{Sacrorum Conciliorum}, 2, (Florence, 1759), 571f. The exact date of this Council is unknown, and scholars have been unable to be more precise than a time between 380 and 450; see, Botte, 'L'onction postbaptismale', 66.
\textsuperscript{28} Ibid., 68.
Bodmer Papyrus (G). Pistis Sophia is a Coptic manuscript, bought by the British Museum in 1785. Containing five pieces attributed to Solomon, four appear in the principal Syriac manuscript, H, discovered by Harris in 1909. This is a much later manuscript than Pistis Sophia which has been dated variously between the second and fourth centuries, whereas, for palaeographical reasons, H cannot have been written before the fifteenth century. In 1912 Burkitt discovered manuscript N in the British Museum. Believed to date from no earlier than the tenth century this manuscript, containing Ode 17.17b-end, had gone unnoticed since 1843 when it was brought to England from the monastic library of St Maria Deipara, sixty miles west of Cairo. The most recent manuscript to have been discovered is the Bodmer Papyrus XI (G), a Greek work acquired by Bodmer in 1955-6 which contains only the 11th Ode. Thought, perhaps, to be a third century recension of Syriac texts by a Sahidic Copt in Thebes, it contains seven verses of Ode 11 which do not appear in H.

Before Rendel’s momentous discovery, scholars knew of three literary references to the existence of the Odes apart from Pistis Sophia: the sixth century Synopsis Sanctorum Scripturae, the ninth century Psalmai kai Odai Solomontos, and a quotation by Lactantius.

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29 No consensus has been reached on the original language of the Odes. For a convincing argument in favour of Syriac, see JA Emerton, 'Some problems of text and language in the Odes of Solomon', Journal of Theological Studies, ns, 18 (1967), 372-406; see also, P Cameron, 'The Crux in Ode of Solomon 19:6: A New Solution', Journal of Theological Studies, ns, 42 (1991), 588-596.
31 Ibid., 2.
32 Ibid., 7f.
33 Ibid., 9f.
In Harris' first edition of the *Odes and Psalms of Solomon*, published in 1909, he states that the Odist is a Jewish Christian writing in Greek at the end of the first century and that, for the most part, he is responsible for the composition of the *Odes* in their entirety.\(^{35}\) This conclusion is reiterated by Harris and Mingana in 1920 when strong argument is made for the *Odes* being Antiochene.\(^{36}\) Against Harris and Menzies, who believe the *Odes* to be completely Jewish,\(^{37}\) Bernard sees them as Christian writings and holds 'that the numerous allusions which they contain to baptismal doctrine and to the Eastern ritual of baptism, indicate that they are Hymns of the Baptised, comparable to the Hymns of Ephraim Syrus'.\(^{38}\) This interpretation, rejected by Harris and Mingana,\(^{39}\) has remained a lively topic of debate amongst scholars.

For Bernard, the *Odes* were most likely composed towards the end of the second century. Since their baptismal imagery always refers to liturgical practice in the East, he affirms that they must be of Syrian or Palestinian origin.\(^{40}\) He rejects any trace of Gnostic influence except in the Coptic *Pistis Sophia*.\(^{41}\)

Of modern commentators, the work of Charlesworth, whose edition of the *Odes* with translation and notes was published in 1977, has probably been most influential.\(^{42}\) With Bernard, he identifies the *Odes* as a Christian work, but believes the number of parallels between these and the Dead Sea Scrolls suggest that he himself was an Essene before he

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35 JR Harris (ed & trans), *The Odes and Psalms of Solomon*, (Cambridge: CUP, 1909). For a summary of his introductory remarks, see ibid., 87f; also 15, 35-43 & 46-53 on the original language of the *Odes*.
38 JH Bernard, *The Odes of Solomon*, (Cambridge: CUP, 1912), 3
40 Bernard, *Odes*, 42.
converted to Christianity, or that he had a close association with that community and its ideology.43 Like Bernard, Charlesworth rejects any suggestion that the Odes are heretical, believing that to call the poems 'Gnostic' is an anachronism. Rather, he sees the collection as a Jewish-Christian hymnbook written in the first century.44

2.1.2 Didascalia Apostolorum
This West Syrian Church Order was originally written in Greek. Although only tiny fragments remain, the complete text has survived in Syriac. Alongside this, an ancient Latin witness to the text exists in a collection of Church Orders containing the Apostolic Church Order and Hippolytus' Apostolic Tradition together with the 'Teaching of the Twelve Apostles'. According to Connolly, whose translation of the Syriac text into English with notes has probably been the most influential English edition of the text this century, there are four principal manuscripts of the Syriac version.45

As for dating, Vööbus notes that a list of consuls mentioned in the oldest part of the Latin text suggests a date before 486. As to when the original text was composed, the

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42 See above, fn 30.
45 RH Connolly (trans), Didascalia Apostolorum, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1929), xi-xviii. The Codex Sangermanensis (S) is thought to date from the eighth or ninth century, preserving the original in a pure form which has not been subject to editorial manipulation. The Codex Harrisianus (H) was discovered by Harris in 1899 in Mesopotamia. A much later manuscript than (S), Connolly describes it as an edition of the former, dating from 1036, with deliberate alterations to suit the aims of the canonist. Later still and dating from no earlier than the thirteenth century, the Codex Borgianus (B) would appear to be a close copy of (S), although Connolly points out that in a few places it agrees with (H) against (S). Finally, the Codex Cantabrigiensis, again from the thirteenth century, agrees predominantly with (S) and (B) but only contains extracts from the first twenty chapters of the work.
evidence is less clear-cut; general consensus suggests a century earlier.\textsuperscript{46} It is also widely accepted that the Syriac version antedates the Latin and, if the aforementioned date is correct, the Syriac translation must have been made before the end of the fourth century. Connolly has attempted to be more precise on the basis that there are certain similarities between Aphrahat and the \textit{Didascalia}. Thus, he suggests that Aphrahat knew the Syriac \textit{Didascalia} and that the latter was composed between 300 and 330.\textsuperscript{47} Although both Connolly and Vööbus acknowledge the primitive nature of the Syriac translation and the archaic vocabulary used, Vööbus does not believe the evidence to be strong enough to support such a conclusion.\textsuperscript{48} We are left, then, with a probable date in the first half of the fourth century.

Brock maintains that the Greek original was most likely written in Syria in the first half of the third century.\textsuperscript{49} Vööbus and Connolly concur\textsuperscript{50} although Connolly and Burkitt believe it more likely to have been written before the Decian persecution.\textsuperscript{51}

Connolly sees the \textit{Didascalia}, traditionally identified as a Church Order and standing third in the line of antiquity after the \textit{Didache} and \textit{Apostolic Tradition}, rather as an 'elementary treatise on Pastoral Theology'.\textsuperscript{52} Bartlett describes it as a 'Christian prophetic manifesto'\textsuperscript{53} written in a style similar to that of the Letter of James. As a prophetic address, he sees it as being 'directed with earnest and passionate solicitude to the people of God, as

\textsuperscript{47} Connolly, \textit{Didascalia Apostolorum}, xvii.
\textsuperscript{48} Vööbus, \textit{Didascalia Apostolorum}, SS 176, 27*.
\textsuperscript{49} SP Brock & M Vasey (eds), \textit{The Liturgical Portions of the Didascalia}, (Nottingham: Grove Books, 1982), 5.
\textsuperscript{50} Vööbus, \textit{Didascalia Apostolorum}, SS 176, 23*.
\textsuperscript{52} Connolly, \textit{Didascalia Apostolorum}, xxvii.
reconstituted and raised to a fresh power of spiritual life through Christ, the Saviour, the Son of God Almighty, God manifest in the flesh'.

In addition to these stylistic points, the literary fiction which is the context for the composition of this work is also important. The Didascalia Apostolorum purports to have been written by the Apostles after the Council of Jerusalem. Taking this into consideration, the intention of the author would probably have been to refer to early practices, whether they were known to him or not, and use them to speak to his own community and give authoritative instruction on matters which concerned them. Despite this fictional Sitz im Leben, Vööbus believes this document to have great value, not only because of the wide range of historical information given on a large number of subjects, but also because it contains 'echoes in the domain of liturgy which come from very ancient sources'. In enthusiastic tones, he speaks of the Didascalia as a priceless source of information, thanks to which '. . the curtain is lifted and we are allowed to see before us a Christian community whose tenets, life, ecclesiastical practices, cult, discipline and ethos in the geographical area of Syria were destined to play an important role in the history of Eastern Christianity'.

2.1.3 Acts of Judas Thomas
This is an apocryphal work thought to date from the beginning of the third century, the most important versions of the text being Syriac and Greek recensions of a lost Syriac original. According to Klijn, there are five extant Syriac manuscripts. The oldest, Sinai 30,

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53 JV Bartlett, Church Life and Church Order, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1943), 78.
54 Ibid., 88.
55 It has traditionally been assumed that the author was a bishop and, possibly, a medical man. Brock & Vasey, Liturgical Portions, 4; Burkitt, 'The Didascalia', 261.
56 A Vööbus, The Didascalia Apostolorum in Syriac, Chapters I-X, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium 401, Scriptores Syri 175, (Louvain, 1979), 5.*.
dates from the fifth or sixth century and was first translated into English by Smith Lewis at the beginning of this century. Although now generally agreed that the Acts were originally written in Syriac, Varghese believes that they must have been translated into Greek at a very early stage since, in some places, the Greek text is a more ancient witness than manuscript Sinai 30.

In the next chapter it will prove necessary to compare the Syriac text of the Acts with the Greek, since it is in the description of the performance of the baptismal rite that there are some significant differences between the texts. Other editions of the text of less importance for the present study appear in Arabic, Armenian, Coptic and Ethiopic.

2.2.1 Aphrahat
Historically, there has been some confusion as to the identification of the author of the Demonstrations of Aphrahat. According to Murray, this arose from a tradition transmitted in BL Or. 1 017 which, in the title of Demonstration 23, ascribed the work to a writer named Jacob. This man, it was assumed, was Jacob of Nisibis and, as Duncan points out, for more than fourteen hundred years these writings were ascribed to him. Indeed, it was not until 1868 that William Wright, whilst cataloguing the manuscripts of the British Museum, attributed the Demonstrations to Aphrahat.

57 Ibid., 6*.
58 Varghese, Onctions baptismales, 3.
60 Varghese, Onctions baptismales, 3.
63 EJ Duncan, Baptism in the Demonstrations of Aphraates the Persian Sage, (Washington: Catholic University of America, 1945), 1.
The above-mentioned manuscript says in a marginal note that 'the Sage is Jacob, the Bishop of Mar Mattai'.

Other similar notes refer to him both as the Persian Sage and as Mar Jacob. How is it, then, that the Persian Sage became identified with Aphrahat? According to Duncan, George, Bishop of the Arabians, writing at the beginning of the eighth century, discusses the Persian Sage in the first three chapters of an epistle. Whilst admitting that he knows neither his name, rank, nor place of residence, he describes him as 'very learned, judicious and unusually well versed in priestly writings'. In later literature there are several direct references which link Aphrahat and the Persian Sage. For example, the Syrian lexicographer Bar Bahlul (963) states that, 'Aphraates, (mentioned) in the book of Paradise, is the Persian Sage, as we are told'.

As for his dates, there is some useful evidence in the Demonstrations themselves which suggests that he may have been born as early as 270 (Murray) and died as late as 360 (Finn). The text also points to further details concerning the life of the Sage, suggesting that he may have been born a Pagan, converted to Christianity and later become a religious or, in the language of the Demonstrations, a 'Covenantor' or 'Son of the Covenant', the majority of scholars agreeing that he is a member of this group of ascetics.

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64 Mar Mattai is the mountain monastery east of Mosul.
65 Duncan, Baptism in the Demonstrations, 3.
66 Ibid.
67 Murray, Church and Kingdom, 29. Duncan suggests his date of birth to have been 280, (Duncan, Baptism in the Demonstrations, 8) whilst Finn believes 275 to be more likely. The latter also suggests that he died fifteen years later than Murray has suggested, in 360. (TM Finn, Early Christian Baptism and the Catechumenate: West and East Syria, (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1992), 111.)
68 Demonstration 16.7
There are twenty-three Demonstrations, numbered according to the twenty-two letters of the Syriac alphabet with *alaph* being used for first and last. Aphrahat composed these writings in response to a letter written by a friend seeking guidance on matters of faith. Duncan shows how internal evidence from the texts themselves enable a fairly precise date of composition to be established. Demonstration 22 indicates that the first twenty-two Demonstrations can be divided almost equally into two chronological groups, the first ten being written in the year 648 of the Alexandrian era (336-337 CE) and numbers eleven to twenty-two seven years later. As for the final Demonstration, the beginning of the text suggests that this was written in response to a further request from the same friend and as far as the date is concerned, the year 656 of the Greek era (345 CE) is mentioned.\textsuperscript{70}

Two manuscripts provide a complete edition of the text. *BL add. 17 182* is in two sections with approximately thirty-five years standing between them. According to Pierre, who labels them B and B respectively, the former can be dated to 474 and the latter to 510. A later manuscript, *BL add. 14 619*, designated A by Pierre, is thought to come from the sixth century. Both of these texts, discovered by Cureton in Nitiria in Egypt between 1838 and 1851, are written in estrangela script and housed in the British Library. A more recent text, *BL Or. 1 017*, contains Demonstration 23. According to Pierre, this Codex, designated C, is written in serta script and is closer to A than B.\textsuperscript{71}

The most important ancient version of the Syriac is a late fifth century translation into Armenian attributed to Jacob of Nisibis. Of lesser significance, Demonstrations 5 and 8 appear in Ethiopic under the same name and Demonstration 6 in Georgian under

\textsuperscript{70} J Parisot (ed), *Aphraatis Sapientis Persae. Demonstrationes, Patrologia Syriaca*, 2 (1907), 1 & 149.

\textsuperscript{71} Pierre, *Les Exposés*, 1, 42f.
Hippolytus. Finally, there are fragments of Demonstrations 2, 3, 4, 9 and 6 in Arabic attributed to Ephrem.\(^{72}\)

### 2.2.2 Ephrem

Although the exact date of his birth is unknown, Ephrem the Syrian was born of Christian parents in Nisibis, or in that area of Mesopotamia, around 306. Whether or not he was a Covenanter as Finn suggests,\(^ {73}\) it is known that he was baptized as a young man, ordained deacon and spent most of his life working as a catechetical lecturer for Bishop Jacob of Nisibis and his three successors until the city fell under Persian occupation in 363. Fleeing from his home, he settled in Edessa (Urfa, in the south eastern corner of modern Turkey) where he continued his teaching and writing under Bishop Barsai of Edessa. He died on 9 June 373.

Ephrem's extant works encompass several literary genres, consisting of controversial treatises, letters and biblical commentaries as well as his more widely known poetry, subdivided into metrical homilies (\(\text{ῥηματικά}\)) and doctrinal hymns (\(\text{προφθαλματικά}\)).\(^ {74}\) As to their authenticity, Murray suggests that the authentic works are those which have been preserved in Syriac or Armenian, thus excluding a large number of Greek works which have traditionally been attributed to him. However, several scholars have questioned the authenticity of the Epiphany hymns, preserved in Syriac, many of which contain important allusions to baptism. Although the details of this particular debate fall outside the parameters of this thesis, these writings will not be excluded, since their portrayal of

\(^{72}\) Ibid., 45f.

\(^{73}\) Finn, *Early Christian Baptism*, 150.

\(^{74}\) Three useful introductions to Ephrem's life, writings and theology are contained in SP Brock (trans), *The Harp of the Spirit: Twelve Poems of St Ephrem*, (London: Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius, 1975), 6-17; KE McVey (trans), *Ephrem the Syrian: Hymns*, (New York: Paulist Press,
baptism, whether they come from the pen of Ephrem or not, is of importance for any study of the East Syrian Church in the fourth century and, as such, cannot be ignored.\textsuperscript{75}

'Blessed are those who have not tasted the venom of the wisdom of the Greeks\textsuperscript{76} serves as a telling introduction to the Doctor's theological method. He is no systematician. He deplores any attempt to try to contain God within precise theological definitions. Rather, he employs symbols from the Bible as well as the natural world, weaving them into a rich tapestry of paradoxical and symbolic language through which the reader catches glimpses of the divine, which themselves defy definition, reason and intellectual debate. He does not seek to engage with the logic of the Greeks or Western theological discourse but, as Saber remarks, 'l'expression chez lui ne démontre pas, mais elle évoque, suggère et donne des visions panoramiques sur une vérité de foi qu'il ambitionne de faire sentir et de communiquer'.\textsuperscript{77}

In \textit{De Fide} 1 Ephrem articulates his position with regard to those who, like the Arians, seek to comprehend the mystery of the Godhead:

\begin{quote}
If, then, our knowledge cannot even achieve a knowledge of itself, how does it dare investigate the birth of him who knows all things? How can the servant, who dares not properly know himself, pry into the nature of his Maker?\textsuperscript{78}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{75} Although in 1956 Beck complained that scholars such as Eirainer and Ricciotti had used the \textit{Epiphany Hymns} as their principal source for Ephrem's theology, in his most recent work he includes a lengthy and detailed analysis of these 'späten liturgischen Handschriften'. E Beck, \textit{Dörea und Charis. Die Taufe: Zwei Beiträge zur Theologie Ephräms des Syrers}, (Louvain, 1984), 125; cf E Beck, 'Le baptême chez Saint Ephrem', \textit{L'Orient Syrien}, 1 (1956), 111.

\textsuperscript{76} \textit{De Fide}, 2.24.

\textsuperscript{77} G Saber, 'La typologie sacramentaire et baptismale de Saint Ephrem', \textit{Parole de l'Orient}, 4 (1973), 78.

\textsuperscript{78} \textit{De Fide}, 1.16; Brock, \textit{Harp of the Spirit}, 7.
In one of his hymns *Contra Haereses* he describes his own method and the important role of the joint witness of scripture and the natural world:

> Look and see how Nature and Scripture are yoked together for the Husbandman:  
> Nature abhors adulterers,  
> practisers of magic and murderers;  
> Scripture abhors them too.  
> Once Nature and Scripture had cleaned the land,  
> they sowed in it new commandments  
> - in the land of the heart, so that it might bear fruit:  
> praise for the Lord of Nature,  
> glory for the Lord of Scripture.\(^79\)

With such an approach, it is unsurprising that the images employed by Ephrem to describe baptism are many and varied. No single tightly defined baptismal theology falls from the pages of his writings, nor is there a detailed description of the performance or contents of the baptismal rite with which he would have been familiar. However, the rich variety of imagery with numerous baptismal allusions which embellishes many of the verses of his poetry leaves one with no doubt as to the its importance for the writer and his community and a general perception of its administration.

### 2.2.3 Narsai

Born around the turn of the fifth century, Barhadbšabba of 'Arbaïa recounts that Narsai went to school at an early age and that at seven was able to recite the whole of the Psalter.\(^80\) Himself a pupil of Theodore of Mopsuestia, Narsai is remembered as one of the great priest theologians of the influential East Syrian school of Edessa where he taught for approximately twenty years, succeeding Rabbula as professor in 437. Here he came into contact with the future Bishop of Nisibis, Barsauma, who spent some time studying at

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80 F Nau (ed & trans), 'La seconde partie de l'histoire de Barhadbešabba 'Arbaïa, et contreversie de Théodore de Mopsueste avec les Macédoniens', *Patrologia Orientalis*, 9.5 (1913), 594.
Edessa before returning to Nisibis.\textsuperscript{81} Narsai's success and popularity came to an abrupt end, however, when the anti-Chalcedonian Qoura was made Bishop of the city. A vehement opponent of Narsai's teaching, Qoura accused him of being a heretic follower of Theodore of Mopsuestia and Nestorius and threatened to have him burnt if he did not conform to his own christological beliefs.\textsuperscript{82} Around 457 Narsai was forced to flee from Edessa from where he travelled to a monastery outside Nisibis. Here Bishop Barsauma persuaded him to carry on his work and to set up a school like that which he had left. Thus the famous school of Nisibis was founded from which, according to McLeod, 'flowed the ecclesiastics, scholars and theological doctrines that shaped the so-called "Nestorian" or East Syrian Church'.\textsuperscript{83} Narsai died in 502 or 503.

Like Ephrem, Narsai was described by his contemporaries as a 'harp of the Spirit\textsuperscript{84} and was a prolific writer. Although tradition ascribes over three hundred memre to his name, only eighty appear to have survived. Of particular interest to the present study are his Liturgical Homilies first published by Mingana in 1905,\textsuperscript{85} appearing in English four years later in an edition by RH Connolly,\textsuperscript{86} and two lesser-known homilies on the Nativity and Epiphany.\textsuperscript{87}

2.3.1 Jacob of Serugh

Born around 449 at Curtam on the Euphrates, Jacob was a pupil of Narsai at the school of Edessa and ordained priest. Rejecting the christological stance of his teacher, Jacob was

\textsuperscript{81} Ibid., 597ff.
\textsuperscript{82} Ibid., 602.
\textsuperscript{83} FG McLeod (ed & trans), Narsai's Metrical Homilies on the Nativity, Epiphany, Passion, Resurrection and Ascension, Patrologia Orientalis, 40.1 (1979), 7.
\textsuperscript{84} A Scher (ed & trans), 'Histoire Nestorienne (Chronique de Séert)', Patrologia Orientalis, 7 (1911), 114.
\textsuperscript{85} A Mingana (ed), Narsai Doctoris Syri Homilae et Carmina, 2 vols, (Mossoul: 1905).
\textsuperscript{86} RH Connolly (trans), The Liturgical Homilies of Narsai, (Cambridge: CUP, 1909).
\textsuperscript{87} These two homilies are published by McLeod in the edition cited above, fn 83.
concerned to avoid the controversy which sprang from Chalcedon. He was consecrated Bishop of Haura in 502 and translated to Batnan, the principal town in the region of Serugh, in 518. He died in November 521.

Jacob, like Ephrem, was a prolific writer and is recognized as one of the great masters of Syriac hymnography. He is credited with 763 metrical homilies of which just over three hundred have been identified. Of these, 212 were published without translation at the beginning of this century by Bedjan. Besides these, 43 letters, 8 festal homilies, 2 lives of the saints, one eucharistic liturgy and one baptismal *Ordo* also bear his name.

### 2.3.2 Philoxenus

A contemporary of Jacob, Philoxenus was born of Christian Aramaic parents in Tahal near Beth Garmai in Persia around 440 and died in 523. His baptismal name being unknown, he is often referred to as *Xενοικος* or *Akseenayo*, the Syriac form of the Greek noun *ξενοικος*. An influential theologian and writer in the West Syrian tradition whose work became known outside the boundaries of his own Church, he joined an ascetic movement and became a hermit at an early age and was consecrated Bishop of Mabbug (Hierapolis) by Peter the Fuller in 485, a post he held until Justin became emperor in 519, when he was expelled and taken into exile. According to Budge, the fact that his writings contain biblical quotations taken from the Peshitta suggests that much of his work originates from the period before 508 when Polycarp composed his Syriac version of the New Testament for Philoxenus.\(^88\) Thus, we can assume that his writings span the end of the fifth and the beginning of the sixth centuries.

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\(^{88}\) EAW Budge, *The Discourses of Philoxenus Bishop of Mabbâgh*, 2, (London, 1894), xvii-1xxiii.
Our knowledge both of Philoxenus' baptismal theology and the rite which he would have celebrated can be located in five principal collections of his literary work: the monastic Discourses of Philoxenus Bishop of Mabbug, which were published with an English translation by Budge in 1894;99 a memra written by Philoxenus on the indwelling of the Holy Spirit;100 his commentary on the Johannine Prologue;101 the fragments collected from his gospel commentary on Matthew and Luke;102 and a short passage from his Three Tractates on the Trinity and the Incarnation in which he gives a fairly detailed outline of the baptismal rite.103

2.3.3 Severus
Zacharias Rhetor indicates that Severus was born in Sozopolis in Pisidia about 465.104 His parents were well-respected Christians, allowing him and his two brothers to receive a good education in grammar and rhetoric at Alexandria. Finishing school in Egypt, Severus desired to pursue a career in law and, with that intent, went to Beirut to continue his studies. According to Brière, it was during his time in Beirut that, with the guidance of his future biographer Zacharias, he had the opportunity to get a taste for the works of Athanasius, Basil, Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa, John Chrysostom and Cyril of Alexandria.105 At about the age of twenty-three he was baptised in Tripoli and, once he

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99 Ibid.
100 A Tanghe (ed & trans), 'Memra de Philoxène de Mabbouq sur l'Inhabitation du Saint-Esprit', Le Muséon, 73 (1960), 39-71
103 A Vaschalde (ed & trans), Philoxeni Mabbugensis tractatus tres de Trinitate et Incarnatione, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium 9, Scriptores Syri 2.27, (Louvain, 1907).
104 Zacharias' account of Severus' life can be found in MA Kugener (ed & trans), 'Vie de Sévere', Patrologia Orientalis, 2 (1907), 10.
had finished his training in Beirut, became a monk in the Monastery of Theodore, situated between Gaza and Maiuma.

It is from his time in the monastery that he appears to have become involved in the anti-Chalcedonian movement. With the support of the Emperor Anastasius, Severus became Patriarch of Antioch on 6 November 512. However, once Justin succeeded Anastasius in 518, Severus was deposed from his see and sent into exile in Egypt. Thirteen years later, Severus was recalled to Constantinople by the new Emperor Justinian and his wife Theodora. His return was, however, short-lived, and in 536 he was condemned and sent back to Egypt where he died on 8 February 538.

Severus wrote his 125 Cathedral Homilies together with his hymns, letters and other writings in Greek. What survives, however, is a complete Syriac translation of his work since the Greek originals were anathematised along with their author at the Council of Constantinople in 536 and subsequently destroyed.

In stark contrast to earlier writers, during the six years of his Patriarchate Severus gave only one catechetical homily per year on the Wednesday of Holy Week. These are often

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96 Although often labelled a 'Monophysite' (see, for example, R Chesnut, *Three Monophysite Christologies: Severus of Antioch, Philoxenus of Mabbug and Jacob of Sarug*, (Oxford: OUP, 1976)), this term is misleading and one regarded with disfavour by those to whom it is applied today. The christology of Severus might be accounted fully orthodox, were it not for his rejection of Chalcedon.
97 Although Varghese and Brière agree on the date of Severus' death, Chesnut is less certain and places it between 538 and 542.
98 The surviving translation of the Greek into Syriac was made at the beginning of the sixth century by Paul, Bishop of Callinice, a friend of Severus who, after his exile, spent time working on the texts in Ephesus. This edition was later revised by James, Bishop of Edessa, at the beginning of the eighth century; see Brière, 'Introduction générale', 16.
99 The Emperor Justinian ordered their destruction on 6 August 536; Kugener, 'Vie de Sévère', 360.
extremely lengthy works and dwell, more often than not, on christological rather than baptismal teaching. Rather more useful, however, are the five homilies given on the evening of the First Sunday of Lent, when it was the custom of the Church in Antioch to seal the baptistery in order to prevent anyone from entering until the catechumens had been baptised during the paschal celebrations. In addition to these, there is one homily concerning the newly baptised and two homilies given on the feast of the Epiphany.

2.4.1 The East Syrian Ordo
This baptismal Ordo is traditionally ascribed to the seventh century Patriarch Isho'yahb III (650-659), thought to be responsible for the revision of several of his Church's liturgies during his nine year Patriarchate. Whether or not this rite of Christian initiation, intended for infants rather than adults, is the work of Isho'yahb is disputed. Brock affirms that it is the result of a reform by the seventh century Patriarch. Webb makes the same point, noting also that in 630 Isho'yahb travelled in the West on a mission for the Emperor Heraclius (575-641), suggesting the possibility that his baptismal reforms could have been influenced by what he observed on his travels. De Vries comments that Isho'yahb removed everything which, according to the Nestorians, had no meaning in a baptismal liturgy for children, such as the exorcisms and renunciation of Satan:

Da die Nestorianer die Kinder als sündenlos ansahen, änderten sie die Taufriten, die im Taufeling die Sünde voraussetzen, als die Kindertaufe bei

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100 Graffin calculates that they are, on average, twice as long as his Sunday homilies. F Graffin, 'La Catéchèse de Sévère d'Antioche', L'Orient Syrien, 5 (1960), 49.
101 Homilies 21, 42, 70, 90, 109 & 123.
102 Homilies 40, 69, 88, 106 & 121. For a useful account of the origins of this practice, see IH Dalmais, 'Source baptismale et mystère pascal d'après les homélies de Sévère d'Antioche sur la «préparation quadragésimale de l'entrée au baptême»', Parole de l'Orient, 6-7 (1975-6), 349-56.
103 Homily 43
104 Homilies 10 & 85
105 Brock, 'Baptismal Ordines', 177.
ihnen üblich wurde. Diese Änderung wird, wie oben schon erwähnt, allgemein Isho'yahb III. (647-658) zugeschrieben.\textsuperscript{107}

The present study will not engage with this particular debate, save to emphasize what has already been said: that the rite preserved in the various extant manuscripts, which date from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries and all of which claim the Patriarch as their author, describe the baptism of infants as opposed to adults.\textsuperscript{108} Bearing in mind the complete lack of early manuscripts, it is necessary to acknowledge the possibility that the rite which extant sources describe may have been influenced by later liturgical developments in the middle ages, carried out by Elias III (1176-1190) and Yahballaha III (1281-1317).

However, this discussion is further complicated when the evidence of baptismal commentaries is considered. An anonymous ninth century writing, traditionally ascribed to George of Arbela, contains a detailed description of a baptismal rite which the writer claims was revised by Isho'yahb III.\textsuperscript{109} Emmanuel bar Shahhare (d. 980) composed a \textit{Treatise on Baptism} which, according to Webb, may well describe a rite which stands 'entre la réforme de Isho'yahb et son état actuel'.\textsuperscript{110} What is significant about these two and later commentaries is that they describe the baptism of adults and, as Spinks points


\textsuperscript{108} The manuscripts held in Great Britain which contain the rite include two housed in the University Library in Cambridge: ADD 1984 (1707) & ADD 2045 (1686) together with Syriac 19 (1604) in the John Rylands Library, Manchester. Other manuscripts are housed in the Vatican and Berlin.


out, 'hint of more formal ceremonies to do with the renunciation of sin'. According to De Vries, this raises two important questions: first, whether Isho’yahb’s rite had survived or, indeed, was still in use at the time when these later commentators were written and, second, whether evidence for the practice of adult baptism after the death of Isho’yahb suggests that the Patriarch cannot be the author of the East Syrian baptismal Ordo.

Comparing the treatise of Emmanuel bar Shahhare and the text of the baptismal Ordo, De Vries notes that, leaving aside the fact that one is for adults and the other for children, the only real difference between the two is that the former contains a renunciation of Satan and an affirmation of faith whereas, as Spinks points out, the latter contains ‘sparse reference to sin, evil and the devil’. Emmanuel also agrees with some manuscripts of the Ordo in his inclusion of a post-immersion signing as opposed to an anointing. In short, De Vries concludes that Emmanuel is describing a version of the East Syrian baptismal liturgy which is older than both the anonymous ninth century writing and the extant text of the Ordo. Moreover, what Emmanuel is commenting on is a rite which is no longer practised as the normal pattern of Christian initiation (i.e. catechumenate followed by adult baptism) in the East Syrian Church. At the end of his article, however, he does finally admit that Isho’yahb III may well have been the reformer who brought infant baptism into the East Syrian Church and, unlike Webb, suggests that what Emmanuel describes may well have preceded the reform.

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111 Spinks, 'The Rise and Decline of Sin', 68.
112 De Vries, 'Zur Liturgie der Erwachsentäufe', 461.
113 Spinks, 'The Rise and Decline of Sin', 67.
114 De Vries, 'Zur Liturgie der Erwachsentäufe', 468.
115 Ibid., 473.
Though no firm conclusions can be drawn in this brief outline of the debate, it will become evident in the chapter which examines the ordines that there are elements of the rite which are more suited to the baptism of adults than of infants: a factor which would certainly point to the infant rite having evolved from the more ancient adult liturgy. That Isho'yahb III did bring about this reform is more likely than the existing manuscripts of the Ordo being an undeveloped form of his original work, though, as far as the latter is concerned, his pedigree as a liturgical reformer, and, not least, the universal attestation of the various manuscripts to his authorship, cannot be ignored. Nonetheless, it is important to recognize that the baptism of infants was certainly practised in the East Syrian Church from as early as the sixth century since Cyrus of Edessa, in his Explanation of the Pasch, states that children who are unable to fast are baptized and receive communion on the same day.\textsuperscript{116}

As far as editions and translations of this Ordo are concerned, the first Syriac text with Latin translation was published by Assemani in his Codex Liturgicus of 1725.\textsuperscript{117} More recently, a Syriac text was produced in 1890 by the Archbishop of Canterbury's mission at Urmiah, with an English translation of the same appearing three years later.\textsuperscript{118} Another

\textsuperscript{116} WF Macomber (ed & trans), Six Explanations of the Liturgical Feasts by Cyrus of Edessa, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium 355, Scriptores Syri 155, (Louvain, 1974), 51.

\textsuperscript{117} This text has been republished in (ed & trans) JA Assemani, Codex Liturgicus ecclesiae universae, 1, (Farnborough: Greg International, 1968), 174-201.

\textsuperscript{118} This text will form the basis of the study in the final chapter. Liturgia sanctorum apostolorum Adaei et Maris, (London: SPCK, 1890); The Liturgy of the Holy Apostles Adai and Mari, (London: SPCK, 1893), 63-82. According to Madey, the disadvantage of this text is its incompleteness. (Madey, "Die Riten der „Initiatio christiană“, 101.) His preferred edition is that of Kelaita, published in 1907 and translated into English sixty years later. KA Paul & G Mookan, The Liturgy of the Holy Apostles Adai and Mari, together with the Liturgies of Mar Theodorus and Mar Nestorius and the Order of Baptism, (Kerala: 1967). Neither Kelaita's edition nor the English translation were available to the author at the time of writing.
English translation by Badger published in 1852 has also made a significant contribution to research into this text.119

2.4.2 The West Syrian Ordines
The two West Syrian ordines to be considered are attributed to Severus of Antioch and Jacob of Serugh. The first is the standard baptismal service of the Syrian Orthodox Church.120 Any student of this particular rite is immediately confronted with the complexity of the relationship between extant manuscripts, editions and translations. Brock’s research in this area is an invaluable aid for appreciating the diversity and fluidity which exist between different texts.121 As for dating, Brock suggests that the earliest fragment can be dated back as far as the eighth century, two centuries before the first surviving complete text which was already being used during the ninth century.

120 Brock notes that not all manuscripts are attributed to Severus. Some bear the names of Jacob of Edessa, Paul of Tella or Bar Hebraeus. (Brock, The Holy Spirit, 20.) Secondary literature seldom discusses the question of authorship, perhaps assuming that the rite is the work of Severus. The several close theological and liturgical links between Severus’ own writings and the Ordo support such a conclusion.
121 SP Brock, ‘Studies in the Early History of the Syrian Orthodox Baptismal Liturgy’, Journal of Theological Studies, ns, 23.1 (1972), 16-64. To summarize the history of printed editions, the service was first published in Antwerp in 1572. Together with other manuscripts attributed to Severus, this was reproduced, together with a Latin translation, in various volumes of Assemani’s Codex Liturgicus (see above, fn 117), the Latin translation being reprinted in the first volume of H Denzinger’s Ritus Orientalium (1863). Coming into the present century, a Syrian Orthodox edition was published at Homs in 1950 by Mar Ignatius Ephrem Barsaum. It is this Syriac text which forms the basis of the 1974 edition of Mar Athanasius Yeshue Samuel, which also includes an English translation. Again in this century, a Syrian Catholic edition of the Ordo was produced by Mar Ignatius Ephrem Rahmani in 1922 and translated into French by G Khouri-Sarkis in 1956. Full bibliographical details of these texts can be found in Brock, The Holy Spirit, 20. Three other English translations are also of significance. In the middle of the last century, J Hough made an English translation of the Syrian Orthodox baptism rite he encountered in India. This was published in his The History of Christianity in India from the Commencement of the Christian Era, 4, (1845), 645-650. Pampakuda, another Indian edition in English whose various versions are given by Brock as 1900, 1936 and 1950 is reproduced in a 1964 edition in M Elenjikal, Baptism in the Malankara Church, (Bangalore: 1974). Finally, the most recent Mar Thoma rite appears in Mar Thoma Syrian Church, Order of Services. Baptism, Matrimony, Prayer of the Sick, House Dedication and Funeral, (Trivandrum: 1988).
As well as this principal *Ordo* of Severus, there is evidence of four other rites of initiation within the Syrian Orthodox tradition: one attributed to Timothy Aelurus of Alexandria, one for use in emergencies which bears the name of Philoxenus, an early manuscript (BL Add 14518) which differs significantly from the normal pattern of the Syrian Orthodox rite and shows closer affinity with the Maronite liturgy and another shorter service, also attributed to Severus.\footnote{122}

The baptismal *Ordo* attributed to Jacob of Serugh is the principal liturgy of the Maronite Antiochene Church.\footnote{123} A detailed commentary and translation of extant manuscripts has been carried out by Mouhanna,\footnote{124} the earliest of which (Vat Syr 313) dates back to the fifteenth or sixteenth centuries. Alongside this text, Mouhanna comments on six slightly later manuscripts, which he divides according to structure into two groups, and the printed *Ordo*.\footnote{125} Significant differences between the groups will be noted during the course of this chapter which, for the most part, will make use of the English translation of Jacob’s *Ordo* published by the Maronite Antiochene Church in the American Diocese of St Maron.\footnote{126}

\footnote{122} Full details of these are provided by Brock in 'Studies', 16ff.  
\footnote{123} The Maronite Church also uses a shorter form attributed to Basil.  
\footnote{125} Group A: Paris, National Library, Syr 116 (16th Century)  
Paris, National Library, Syr 118 (16th Century)  
Rome, Vatican Library, Syr 312 (1745 AD)  
Group B: Paris, National Library, Syr 117 (1512 AD)  
Paris, National Library, Syr 119 (1539 AD)  
Rome, Vatican Library, Syr 477 (16th-17th century)  
\footnote{126} Maronite Antiochene Church, *Mysteries of Initiation: Baptism, Confirmation, Communion*, (Washington DC: Diocese of St Maron, 1987). I am indebted to the Revd Phillip Tovey for furnishing me with a copy of this edition which is translated from the Church’s official text, written in Syriac and Arabic/Karshouni, published in the *Book of Rituals for the Service of the Holy Mysteries*, (Bkerke: 1942), 5-71.  

32
2 Odes of Solomon, Didascalia Apostolorum, and Acts of Judas Thomas

2.1 Odes of Solomon

The debate concerning the liturgical character of these early Christian poetic texts together with Bernard's confident assertion that the Odes originated as 'baptismal hymns intended for use in public worship, either for catechumens or for those who have recently been baptised'¹ have been presented above.² Whilst the majority of scholars has not emphasized the baptismal context to the same degree as Bernard, most are in agreement with his general conclusion.³

2.1.1 The Baptism of Jesus and the Economy of Salvation

Ode 24 describes a dove hovering over the head of the Messiah. In order to clarify whether this image should be understood as a reference to Jesus' baptism, it is necessary to decide whether, as in the Jordan event, the dove represents the Spirit:

1 The dove fluttered over the head of our Lord Messiah,
   Because he was her head.
2 And she cooed over him,
   And her voice was heard.
3 Then the inhabitants were afraid
   And the foreigners were disturbed.
4 The bird began to fly,

¹ Bernard, Odes, 42.
² See above, 13f.
³ Lampe believes Bernard's interpretation to have a high degree of probability, 'since he, alone among their editors, seems to find it possible to elucidate these extraordinary poems intelligibly and coherently'. (Lampe, Seal of the Spirit, 111.) Brock describes Bernard's work as in many ways the best commentary, noting that he was the first to recognize the baptismal character of many of the Odes. (Brock, The Holy Spirit, 27.) This is picked up by McDonnell who describes the Odes as 'much preoccupied with baptism and the Eucharist'. (The Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan: the Trinitarian and Cosmic Order of Salvation, (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1996), 150.) Pierce, commenting on the 'forthright baptismal quality' of the Odes, criticizes Bernard for his 'frequent identification of an early baptismal image . . . with a later ritual development'. (M Pierce, 'Themes in the Odes of Solomon and other early Christian writings and their Baptismal Character', Ephemerides Liturgicae, 98.1 (1984), 36.)
And every reptile died in its hole.4

It is unsurprising that Bernard identifies the Ode with the Gospel accounts of the baptism of Jesus.5 Harris & Mingana also believe the first verses to describe the Spirit’s descent upon Christ at his baptism.6 Charlesworth is more reserved, referring rather to ‘a remote allusion to Jesus’ baptism in the Jordan as recorded in the Gospels’.7 Adopting a different line, Gero argues that Ode 24 exhibits evidence of a pre-Markan tradition of the dove as a revelatory election motif, parallel to the Near Eastern legendary and folkloric tradition of the descent of a bird upon a chosen person.8 Brock holds together both positions, stating that, although there is no question that the Ode refers to Jesus’ baptism, ‘It is not clear whether the dove is used as a symbol of the Holy Spirit, or whether the author did not yet know the Gospel accounts and was simply using the dove as a recognition motif’.9 Sceptical of Gero’s hypothesis, Pierce maintains that it would be most unusual for this motif to be used without any reference to the Spirit, for elsewhere the Spirit is identified with a dove.10 Although this does not necessarily dictate the interpretation of Ode 24, the numerous baptismal allusions which will soon become evident make it difficult to ignore the strong probability that the Odist uses the dove to describe the descent of the Spirit upon Jesus at his baptism.

4 Charlesworth, Odes, 98. Throughout this study English translations are referenced in a footnote alongside Syriac editions. In every case their accuracy has been checked against the Syriac and, where necessary, alternative translations have been substituted in italics. Where no reference is given, the writer’s own translation is used. All translations are rendered in modern English.
5 Bernard, Odes, 102f.
6 Harris & Mingana, Odes, 2, 344.
7 Charlesworth, Odes, 99.
8 S Gero, ‘The Spirit as a Dove at the Baptism of Jesus’, Novum Testamentum, 18 (1976), 18f.
10 Ode 28.1
The use of the verb אָרַי together with the preposition אֶל is very reminiscent of the Spirit hovering over the face of the waters in Genesis 1.2 and of the eagle hovering over its young in Deuteronomy 32.11. In both cases the same preposition is used in the Peshitta and the Hebrew Bible whereas the verb, containing the same three radicals, is אָרַי.

Verse two describes the dove singing over the Messiah and her voice being heard. Whereas in the Synoptic accounts the voice comes from heaven, the Odist describes the sound as the singing of the dove, the voice of the Holy Spirit. There is no mention of what is being sung and there can be no simple identification of this song with the 'voice from heaven'. The result of the singing is clear; using parallelism, the Odist describes the sound striking fear in the hearts of inhabitants and foreigners alike. Then, in verse four, the flight of the bird results in the death of reptiles. Pierce, emphasizing the baptismal context of the Ode, sees the 'uproar in nature' as a direct result of 'the revelation of the Messiah at his baptism'. McDonnell goes further: 'Ode 24 makes specific reference to Jesus' baptism in the Jordan, linking it to the descent of the risen Christ into hell.' However this is interpreted, there is no doubt that the Odist juxtaposes the baptism of Jesus with the harrowing of hell:

11 Mark 1.10 and parallels.
12 Pierce, Odes, 44.
13 McDonnell, *Baptism of Jesus*, 151. Moreover, he also interprets Ode 42.11: 'Sheol saw me and was shattered, And death ejected me and many with me' as possibly referring to baptism. (Ibid., 164.) However, whilst this is undoubtedly a description of Jesus' descent into hell, there is no explicit reference to the baptism of Jesus in this Ode.
5 And the chasms were opened and closed;  
And they were seeking the Lord as those  
who are about to give birth.
6 But he was not given to them for nourishment,  
Because he did not belong to them.
7 But the chasms were swallowed up\footnote{Syr: סָבַג} in the \textit{immersion}  
of the Lord,\footnote{Syr: יָסַב}  
And they perished in \textit{the thought which was theirs}  
from the beginning.\footnote{Ode 24.5-8; Charlesworth, \textit{Odes}, 98.}
8 For they travailed from the beginning,  
And the end of their travail was life.\footnote{A similar interpretation is found in Bertrand, \textit{Le baptême de Jésus}, 24f.}

The link between the baptism of Jesus and his descent into Sheol is a characteristic feature of Syrian theology which will be encountered repeatedly in the course of this dissertation, not least in connection with the baptismal image of the womb. Whilst it is not possible to read the more developed imagery of Jesus' baptism as his descent into the wombs of Mary, Jordan and Sheol from the stanzas of these early Christian hymns, nevertheless, in verse five the Odist describes the spirits of the underworld seeking Jesus 'as those who are about to give birth'. Waiting expectantly, the dwellers of the underworld give voice to their expectation in the cries of a woman in labour whose pregnancy began \textit{כֵּכָל} (v8); they await their freedom from the prison of Sheol, their liberation from the bonds of death, and their rebirth to a new existence in Christ, which is the result of his baptism in the Jordan: 'For they travailed from the beginning, And the end of their travail was life'.\footnote{Bernard and others have taken the Genesis flood as the theological context of this passage, this verse indicating that in Jesus' baptism the life-giving waters of the Jordan overcome the destructive waters of the flood (Bernard, \textit{Odes}, 103), a concept which has biblical roots in 1 Peter 3.19-21.} Thus, by synchronising the baptism of Jesus and his
descent into Sheol, a baptismal theology of death and new life is present in the earliest stratum of the Syrian baptismal tradition, expressed through the language of rebirth.\textsuperscript{20}

Here the Odist has a very clear understanding of the role of baptism within the whole economy of redemption and, through poetry, is able to describe the activity of the Holy Spirit in both.\textsuperscript{21} In this early text we see the first signs of what we will come to recognize as an important and distinctive element of Syrian baptismal theology, in which Jesus is anointed with the Spirit at his baptism in order to carry out his redemptive work as the minister of salvation.

It connection with this, the \textit{Odes} make reference to the Spirit as life-giving, an image which, in Ode 28, is developed in the context of resurrection life. Verses two to six outline the close relationship between the Odist and God which lead into two verses describing the result of such an intimate relationship:

\begin{verbatim}
7 And immortal life embraced me,
    And kissed me.
8 And from that (life) is the Spirit which is within me.
    And it cannot die because it is life.\textsuperscript{22}
\end{verbatim}

\textsuperscript{20} Romans 8.22f relates a similar period of waiting which is characterized by the cries of a woman in labour; Colossians 1.18 describes Christ as the 'firstborn' from the dead (και υιος του πνεουμενου); and 2 Esdras 4.42f compares the chambers of the souls in Hades to the womb: 'Quemadmodum enim festinavit quae parit effugere necessitatem partus, sic et haec festinat reddere ea quae commendata sunt ab initio'.

\textsuperscript{21} Congar refers to the Syrian tradition linking baptism and salvation together through the unifying action of the Holy Spirit. Commenting on the 'pentecostal' spirituality of Syrian liturgies, albeit much later than the \textit{Odes}, he states that, 'what the Holy Spirit has done for Christ in his conception, baptism and resurrection, he causes to function in the Church and the lives of Christians'. YMJ Congar (trans D Smith), \textit{I believe in the Holy Spirit}, 3, (London: Chapman, 1983), 42.

\textsuperscript{22} Charlesworth, \textit{Odes}, 109.
Parallel in intimacy to the alliance between God and the Odist is the relationship between the Spirit who dwells in the believer and the immortal life which has embraced him. As to the nature of this embrace, two possibilities present themselves: first, that the believer, aligning himself with God in the manner expressed in the previous verses, has become open to the embrace of salvation; second, that the embrace of immortal life given in baptism results in the believer being filled with the life-giving Spirit of God. Pierce interprets this language within a baptismal context and, with resonances of John 3.4, as describing a new creation brought about through the activity of the Spirit. The central point is that the Spirit which animates the Odist has its origin in the resurrection life which has seized him.

2.1.2 Baptismal Circumcision
The depiction of circumcision by the Holy Spirit in Ode 11 has very strong associations with Syrian baptismal theology:

1  
My heart was circumcised and its flower appeared  
And grace sprang up in it,  
And it produced fruits for the Lord.

2  
For the Most High circumcised me with his Holy Spirit,  
And revealed my heart towards him,  
And filled me from his love.

3  
And his circumcising became my salvation,  
And I ran in the Way, in his peace,  
In the way of truth.24

Here we find a wonderfully subtle word play on the Syriac verb ــ، translated by Charlesworth as 'pruned' in verse one, where the result of the action is the appearance of a flower, and as 'circumcised' in the following verse. It is arguable that the skill of

23 Pierce, Odes, 47.
24 Charlesworth, Odes, 52.
the Odist might better have been expressed if Charlesworth had also used 'circumcised' in the first verse, not least because of the clear resonances with Deuteronomy 10.16 and 30.6 which he himself identifies. To these may be added Jeremiah 4.4 as well as Logia 53 from the apocryphal Gospel of Thomas.

Bernard equates spiritual circumcision with baptism. Quoting Cyril of Jerusalem's reference to the activity of the 'Holy Spirit through the washing of circumcision', he contends that this is exactly the sentiment expressed by verse two, save for the fact that λουτρόν has been suppressed by the Odist, 'after his cryptic fashion'. Since it is almost impossible that Cyril's work was known to the Odist, there is no evidence to suggest that the poet would have suppressed this liturgical term. Moreover, its inclusion is unnecessary for determining a baptismal context.

For Brock, Ode 11 supports his thesis that the early Syrian baptism rites were based on Jewish proselyte baptism and that, consequently, the anointing was often described in terms of a spiritual circumcision, 'because of the connection between the Holy Spirit and the idea of cutting'. However, the Odes provide very little evidence to support such a conclusion. Indeed, in order to establish a link between circumcision and

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25 Charlesworth, Odes, 54. Whereas in Deuteronomy 30 the Lord circumcises the heart in order that the circumcised might direct his love towards him, in the Ode the believer is circumcised by the Spirit in order that he might be filled with the love of the Lord.
26 'His disciples said to Him: Is circumcision profitable or not? He said to them: If it were profitable, their father would beget them circumcised from their mother. But the true circumcision in the Spirit has become profitable in every way'. A Guillaumont, The Gospel according to Thomas, (Leiden: Brill, 1959), 31.
27 Catechetical Lectures, v.6.
28 Bernard, Odes, 73.
anointing, Brock cites passages from Ephrem's hymns as well as the East Syrian *Ordo* and Narsai where the link between the two ritual acts is articulated more clearly.\(^{31}\) However, when considering the *Odes*, one must be aware of the danger of reading later liturgical imagery into a more primitive text.\(^{32}\) Suffice it to note the Odist's reference to circumcision by the Spirit. This material will be of interest when the next chapter considers Aphrahat's use of the same imagery.

Further evidence of the practice of baptismal anointing could perhaps be drawn from the Odist's use of similar language in Ode 25:

\[
\begin{align*}
8 \quad & \text{And I was covered with the covering of your Spirit,} \\
& \text{And I removed from me my garments of skin.}\(^{33}\)
\end{align*}
\]

Bernard, following the interpretation of Origen, Gregory of Nyssa and Ephrem, interprets the garments of skin as those in Genesis 3.21 which represent the liability to death which humanity incurred at the Fall, and the 'covering' of the Spirit as baptism.\(^{34}\) Is it not possible, however, that in a ritual context it could also allude to a liturgical anointing and stripping?\(^{35}\)

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\(^{31}\) For example, *De Epiphania* 3.4: He separated out the Jewish nation from the gentile nations by the former mark (☞\text{\u03a9σταρες}) of circumcision, with the mark of anointing he separated out the nation from the nation'. Brock, *The Holy Spirit*, 98.

\(^{32}\) It is interesting to observe the way in which verse two is split up into three clearly divisible stages: the circumcision, the uncovering and the filling. Though the identification of the imagery is rather tenuous and the order of events inaccurate, could this possibly be a reference to anointing, stripping and baptism?

\(^{33}\) Charlesworth, *Odes*, 102.

\(^{34}\) Bernard, *Odes*, 107.

\(^{35}\) Ode 11.10-11 refer to stripping and clothing with a garment which may be interpreted as baptismal ceremonies: 'And I rejected the folly cast upon the earth, And stripped it off and cast it from me. And the Lord renewed me with his garment, And possessed me by his light'. Charlesworth, *Odes*, 52.
Returning to Ode 11, what can be discerned with certainty is the result of the Spirit's circumcision, whatever ritual act it denotes. In the third verse, the Odist states that it was through circumcision that he was saved and which resulted in him leading a Christian life. He expresses this in characteristically Johannine language: 'and I ran in the Way, in his peace, in the way of truth'. Here again there is evidence for the Odist's understanding of a fairly close relationship connecting the Spirit's activity in baptism and in the work of salvation.

2.1.3 Ode 19 and the Feminine Spirit
This section will consider the feminine nature of the Spirit in the Odes, in terms of its grammatical gender and associated imagery, as background for a consideration of the baptismal image of the womb in later literature.

In Syriac as well as other Semitic languages, the noun 'spirit' (rG..a;) is grammatically feminine. Naturally, this has affected the use of language to describe the third person of the Trinity. The questions which this raises for the present study are, first, what is the effect of this grammatical characteristic upon the Odist's understanding of the Spirit and, second, how is this understanding expressed in terms of the descriptive language employed? These two questions will be considered with particular reference to Ode 19.

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36 Ibid.
37 See above, 37f.
38 Brock divides the chronological development of the gender of rG..a; into three periods. In the first, which he dates to as late as 400 CE, the Holy Spirit is almost always feminine in gender. In the second, from the beginning of the fifth century, some writers treat the same noun as grammatically masculine whenever it refers to the Holy Spirit. In the third, from the sixth century onwards, it becomes the norm to treat the Holy Spirit as masculine, although there are notable exceptions in poetical and liturgical writings. It is sometimes difficult for English-speakers to think in terms of nouns having genders. Thus, Brock makes the useful, yet basic,
Described by Harris & Mingana as 'altogether grotesque, and out of harmony with the general lofty strain of the rest of the collection' Ode 19 is one of the most complex of the forty-two Odes:

1. A cup of milk was offered to me  
   And I drank it with the sweetness of the Lord’s kindness.
2. The Son is the cup,  
   And he who was milked is the Father;  
   And she who milked him is the Holy Spirit;  
3. Because his breasts were full,  
   And it was undesirable that his milk should be spilled without purpose,
4. The Holy Spirit opened her womb  
   And mixed the milk of the two breasts of the Father,  
   And gave the mixture to the world without their knowing,  
   And those who take (it) are in the perfection of the right Hand.
5. The womb of the Virgin caught (it)  
   And she received conception and gave birth.
6. And the Virgin became a mother through great mercy.
7. And she laboured and bore a Son without suffering pain,  
   Because it did not happen without purpose.
8. And she did not require a midwife  
   Because he delivered her.
9. As a man she bore by will,  
   And she bore according to the manifestation,  
   And acquired (her Son) with great power.
10. And she loved (him) with redemption,  
    And guarded (him) with kindness,  
    And showed (him) with greatness.  
    Alleluia.

Point that the surprise generated by hearing the Holy Spirit referred to as 'she' would not necessarily be the same for an English-speaker as it would for one in whose language 'spirit' is grammatically feminine. (SP Brock, 'The Holy Spirit as Feminine in Early Syriac Literature', in (ed) JM Soskice, After Eve, (London: Marshall Pickering, 1990), 74.) Brock also notes that, although the Odes fit chronologically into the first period, does not conform exactly to the uniform pattern of femininity since in four instances (6.7, 11.2, 14.8 & 23.22) the masculine form of the adjective 'holy' is used with the feminine noun. (Ibid., 77.)

39 Harris & Mingana, Odes, 2, 304.
40 Syr:  
41 Syr:  
42 Syr:  
43 Charlesworth, Odes, 84.
An initial reading of the text reveals that it is not just the Holy Spirit who attracts feminine attributes, but also the Father, who possesses breasts full of milk. Drijvers sees the opening verse as a celebration of salvation, of the grace which has been granted to the believer, described here in terms of a cup of milk. Verse two is Trinitarian in structure and identifies the Father as the source of grace, the Son as the cup in which the grace is offered to the world and the Spirit as the agent, the milking maid, who communicates the grace of the Father to the Son. The following verse describes God's breasts as overflowing with grace and needing to be emptied for a particular purpose. Charlesworth points out that in the *Gospel of Thomas* there is a reference to the Father unbosoming himself. The language of the Odist is clearly similar, but here it is the Spirit who unbosoms the Father.

The κοιλιά of the Spirit is often translated 'bosom'. Whilst this is not out of keeping with the imagery which the Ode has already established, Drijvers' translation 'womb' is surely to be preferred since it allows for the image to develop in terms of the milk / grace of the Father being mixed in the womb of the Spirit who gives birth to the 'mixture' which is communicated to Mary in order that she might conceive. Vigne emphasizes the coherence of the theology which lies behind such bizarre imagery:


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46 cf Ode 8.16. There is, of course, a biological link between breast and womb through postnatal contractions brought about from oxytocin released in the initial stages of breast feeding.
nous est communiqué, par l’Esprit Saint, le salut qui vient du Père. La mission propre de l’Esprit est matricielle et allaitante: celle d’une Mère.47

Drijvers puts forward an interesting hypothesis for understanding some of the imagery at the beginning of this Ode by referring to the Old Syriac version of the Prologue to the Fourth Gospel. His argument is based on differences between the *Vetus Syra* and the Curetonian version of verses 14 to 18. The former reads:

14 And the Word became a body . . .
   . . . the only begotten of the Father,
   as he was full of grace and truth
17 . . . and grace and truth came by Jesus Christ . . .
18 the only-begotten Son, which is from the womb of his Father, he told
   (about him).48

Fundamental to his argument is the idea that, as distinct from the other versions of the Syriac Bible,49 Christ is here portrayed as full of grace and truth, who came to the world from the womb of the Father:

The female element of the Father which gives birth to the Son is represented by the (female) Holy Spirit who functions as the womb of the Father, from where His grace and truth, the milk of His two breasts, His only begotten Son, are born. Father, Holy Spirit, and Son are three divine hypostases, who function in a sexually coloured interacting process to express the idea that God’s grace and truth are given to the world as His only begotten Son, who is from the womb of His Father.50

49 The Peshitta, for example, reads:  כָּלָהּ כָּלָהּ.
50 Drijvers, ‘19th Ode’, 343f.
Considering, for a moment, the role of the Spirit within this Trinitarian process, in Ode 36 as well as Ode 19, the Spirit is involved, amongst other things, in the act of giving birth. This thesis will demonstrate that the image of a feminine Spirit is further developed within the corpus of baptismal literature as a mother giving birth to children in the womb of the font. Those who seek to identify the biblical origins of such imagery look first to John 3. In addition, the early use of similar imagery in the Odes of Solomon will also require attention, as will the dual meaning of the Syriac noun ܐܬܬܐ, its relationship to ܠܒ and the way in which they relate both to the Johannine prologue and the discourse with Nicodemus.

2.2 Didascalia Apostolorum

Setting apart and separation from the world are prominent themes in the baptismal passages of the Didascalia Apostolorum. In chapter twenty-six a comparison is made between possession of the Holy Spirit and an unclean spirit. Here the author maintains that the Spirit indwells a person through the separation affected by baptism: 'He therefore who has departed and abides afar and has departed from the unclean spirit by baptism, he is filled with the Holy Spirit'. The idea that it is through the rite of baptism that the gift of the Spirit is imparted is articulated again and again in the chapters of the Didascalia. For example, in chapter nine, when talking about the position of bishops in

51 Ode 36.3 is particularly striking, since it refers to the Spirit giving birth to Christ before the face of the God: ܐܬܐ ܐܘܠܐ ܐܠܗܐ ܐܠܗܐ ܠܐ ܐܬܐ ܐܬܐ ܐܬܐ. Charlesworth's translation 'brought me forth' does not carry the full force of the Syriac. Charlesworth, Odes, 126f.


the Church, the author writes: 'But honour the bishops, those who have loosed you from sins, those who by the water have begotten you anew, those who filled you with the Holy Spirit.'

Of further importance is the author's understanding of the permanency of the pneumatic gift. He makes it quite clear that the Spirit may not be removed because of ritual impurity. In chapter twenty-six he addresses the subject of whether women should stay away from worship during their menstrual period: 'For through baptism they receive the Holy Spirit who is always with those who work righteousness and does not depart from them by reason of natural fluxes and the intercourse of marriage, but always preserves those who possess him, and keeps them'. Clearly, the abiding gift is manifested in works of righteousness. Turning, next, to the specific case of women keeping themselves from the eucharist:

For if you think, O woman, that in the seven days of your flux you are void of the Holy Spirit, if you die in those days, you will depart empty handed and without hope. But if the Holy Spirit is always in you, without (any real) hindrance you keep yourself from prayer and from the eucharist. Indeed, think and see that prayer is also heard through the Holy Spirit, and the eucharist is accepted and sanctified through the Holy Spirit. And the Scriptures are the utterances of the Holy Spirit, and are holy.

2.2.1 Women Deacons and the Structure of the Rite
Probably the most valuable insight into the Didascalia's understanding of baptism comes from chapter sixteen, 'Concerning Deacons and Deaconesses'. It is clear from the outset that women deacons are appointed in order to minister to other women:

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54 Idem., Didascalia Apostolorum, SS 175/176, 109/104.
55 Idem., Didascalia Apostolorum, SS 179/180, 255/238.
56 Ibid., 256/239.
Therefore, O bishop, appoint yourself workers of righteousness, helpers who cooperate with you unto life. Those that please you out of all the people, you shall choose and appoint as deacons: on the one hand, a man for the administration of the many things that are required, on the other hand a woman for the ministry of women.\textsuperscript{57}

There then follows the section which concerns the role of women deacons in baptism:

...when women go down into the water, it is required that those who go down into the water shall be anointed by deaconesses with the oil of anointing.\textsuperscript{58} And where there is no woman present, and especially no deaconess, it is not right that women should be seen by men, but with the laying on of hand anoint the head only. As of old time the priests and kings in Israel were anointed, so in like manner, with the laying on of hand\textsuperscript{59} anoint the head of those who receive baptism, whether of men or of women. And afterwards, whether you yourself baptize or you command the deacons or presbyters to baptize - let a woman deacon, as we have said before, anoint the women. But let a man recite over them the invocation of the divine names in the water. And when she who is being baptized has come up from the water, let the deaconesses receive her, and teach and bring her up in order that the unbreakable seal of baptism shall be (kept) in chastity and holiness. On this account, we say that the ministry of a woman deacon is especially required and urgent.\textsuperscript{60}

From this brief account there emerges a clear picture of the structure of the rite. The first stage in the ceremony is an anointing of the head by the bishop. The reference to anointing kings and priests in Israel implies that this action involved the bishop pouring oil over the crown of the head rather than anointing the forehead.\textsuperscript{61} This action is the

\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., 173/156.
\textsuperscript{58} Syr: ἀναύωσον ἑαυτὸν ἢ αὐτήν
\textsuperscript{59} Vööbus translation of this passage is inaccurate since it omits the second reference to 'with the laying on of hand' (Syr: ἐπὶ τὴν κεφαλὴν ἐποίησεν· ἀναύωσεν· ἐποίησεν· ἐποίησεν·).\textsuperscript{60} Vööbus, Didascalia Apostolorum, SS 179/180, 173/156f.
\textsuperscript{61} This would suggest that Chalassery is mistaken when he refers to 'the anointing on the forehead by the bishop'. (J Chalassery, The Holy Spirit and Christian Initiation in the East Syrian Tradition, (Rome: Mar Thoma Yogam, 1995), 18.) However, this passage could also be interpreted as indicating that the bishop would anoint the head with oil from his hand. These two interpretations are not mutually exclusive. The oil could well be released onto the head of the candidate from the cupped hands of the bishop, before he wiped the remaining oil from his hands onto the candidate's head.
first of a two-staged rite of anointing, performed for men and women alike. In the second stage the women deacons are also involved. Because the anointing of the whole body would require the bishop to look at and touch a naked female candidate, this ceremony is performed by a woman deacon. The fact that the text states 'And where there is no woman present' would seem to indicate that, at that time at least, it would be possible for a woman who was not a deacon to perform the anointing of the whole body.

As the text stands, confusion could arise from what is meant by 'afterwards', since it is not clear what the anointing by the women deacons should follow. One possible interpretation would see this as a post-immersion anointing. However, the very fact that the pre-immersion anointing, begun by the bishop, has already been described, not to mention the reference in the following sentence to the baptismal formula, would seem to point to the anointing by the women deacons taking place after the anointing of the head by the bishop and not after the immersion.62

The passage is unambiguous, however, when it states that a man must recite the 'invocation of the divine names' which is, surely, a reference to the Trinitarian baptismal formula common in the Syrian Church.63 As to the immersion itself, the text not only indicates that this must be performed by a man, but also that it must be carried out by the bishop himself, or a presbyter or deacon. Thus, whilst the bishop undoubtedly presides over the whole rite, giving liturgical expression to his presidency by beginning

62 Whitaker supports this interpretation: 'the impression which we have from the Didascalia is that the whole unction, both of head and body, was understood as one action . . .'. Whitaker, 'Unction in the Syrian Baptismal Rite', 181.
the anointing of every candidate, other parts of the service may be delegated to others. Part of the rationale behind this text must be to designate which of the liturgical personnel may carry out particular baptismal ceremonies.

Chapter fifteen reinforces the instruction that only a man should pronounce the baptismal formula:

About this, however, that a woman should baptize, or that one should be baptized by a woman we do not counsel, for it is a transgression of the commandment and a great peril to her who baptizes and to him who is baptized. Indeed, if it were lawful to be baptized by a woman, our Lord and teacher himself would have been baptized by Mary his mother. Now he was baptized by John, like others also of the people. Therefore do not bring danger upon yourselves, brethren and sisters, by acting beyond the law of the Gospel. 

Although it is not possible to look at this issue in detail, it is worth noting Methuen's conclusion that, in all his teaching, the author of the Didascalia is 'adamant that widows should be aware of the limits of their activities'. These instructions are obviously not being written in a vacuum, but within the context of bad experience about the behaviour of widows as well as the common practice of these women baptising. For it would not be necessary for the writer to mention this issue, were it not occurring in his community and causing problems. Methuen identifies part of the reason for this prohibition as an attempt by the widows to usurp the power of the bishop. She therefore sees this teaching as 'a polemic against widows who do indeed baptise and teach and who in so

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63 It is misleading for Vööbus to refer to this as the 'epiclesis' which, as a liturgical technical term, clearly has other connotations. Vööbus, Didascalia Apostolorum, SS 180, 157.
64 Idem., Didascalia Apostolorum, SS 179/180, 166/151.
doing assume a function and authority which the author regards as the exclusive province of the bishop.  

However, although it may be true that there was some sort of power struggle taking place in this Syrian community, and that this situation has, to a certain extent, led to these regulations, could it not also be the case that there was perceived to be an important theological and ecclesiological point at stake here? Could it not be that it was because of the high regard in which the office of bishop was held, so clearly set forth in chapter nine and, not least, in passages where the bishop was seen to have the authority of an Apostle, that he was believed to be the only one through whom people could be filled with the Holy Spirit?

Vööbus quotes a later Syriac recension of chapter sixteen which places a stricter prohibition on anyone other than a woman deacon carrying out the anointing: 'When women go down to the water it is necessary that they be anointed by a deaconess and it is not lawful that the anointing oil should be given to a woman to touch but rather (only) to the deaconess'. Two reasons are given for this alteration. First, that the revision was made at a time when it had become standard practice that only a deaconess should perform this ritual act and, second, that the development reflected the 'evolving reverential awe towards the consecrated sacramental elements'. Although these arguments are both plausible, is it not more likely that the reservation of

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66 Ibid., 200.
67 One example appears at the end of chapter five: 'For to you bishops it is said in the Gospel: "Something that you shall bind on earth, it shall be bound in heaven"'. Vööbus, Didascalia Apostolorum, SS 175/176, 62/52.
68 See above, 46.
69 Vööbus, Didascalia Apostolorum, SS 176, 59*.
70 Ibid., 60*. 

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this part of the rite to the deaconess was, in fact, still being abused and, therefore, a stricter instruction needed to be given? Would it really have been necessary to tighten the restriction were the current practice not infringing it?

In chapter nine, whilst commenting on the ministry of bishops, presbyters and deacons, the Didascalia states that, 'the deacon stands in the place of Christ, and you should love him. The deaconess, however, shall be honoured by you in the place of the Holy Spirit'.\footnote{Idem., SS 175/176, 104/100.} This identification of deaconesses with the Holy Spirit has an obvious connection with the femininity of the Holy Spirit in the Syrian tradition.\footnote{See above, 41ff.} According to Methuen, it also emphasizes the importance that deaconesses are given in the Didascalia and demonstrates that they 'are to be ranked alongside deacons and bishops in the hierarchy of the Church'.\footnote{Methuen, 'Widows, Bishops and the Struggle for Authority', 202.} Is it not more likely, however, that despite giving women a liturgical role within the life of the Church, their association with the (inferior) Holy Spirit implies their inferiority?

2.2.2 Anointing, Laying on of Hands and the Spirit
The Didascalia appears to lack any post-immersion ceremonies. The previous chapter made reference to the influence exerted upon research into Syrian initiation rites by the Anglican debate regarding the nature of episcopal confirmation and its relation to baptism. Rejecting Dix's identification of the pre-immersion unction with pneumatic confirmation, Whitaker emphasizes the unity of the two anointings: 'if the unction of the forehead is to be understood as confirmation, the remaining unction of the whole body
is left without explanation or interpretation'. Furthermore, he understands the reference to the anointing in the manner of priests and kings in Israel as a description of how the ritual action should be performed and not as a model for interpreting its effect:

the writer of the Didascalia is saying to the bishop that in the baptism of women he must limit the unction which he personally gives to the head only, and then continues by way of illustration to point out that the anointing of kings and priests was also made upon the head only: but he is not necessarily saying anything about the purpose or meaning of the rite.75

The significance of this reference to the practice of anointing in Israel will be investigated in greater depth when the descriptions of baptism in the Acts of Judas Thomas are considered. Suffice it, however, to note that other commentators have adopted an opposing position. Varghese sees this Old Testament imagery as having a direct bearing upon the interpretation of the unction: 'selon la Didascalie, l'onction pré-baptismale n'est rien d'autre que l'onction royale-sacerdotale, qui n'était qu'un antitype'.76 Quoting an earlier passage from chapter nine which connects Christian baptism with the baptism of Jesus, he suggests that in the Syrian tradition, the Jordan event was 'le principe, le modèle et l'institution du baptême chrétien. Puisque le Christ reçut le baptême dans et par l'Esprit Saint, le chrétien aussi reçoit le baptême dans et

74 Whitaker, 'Unction in the Syrian Baptismal Rite', 181. Meyers also describes this as 'a single anointing in which oil is poured upon the head and then rubbed over the entire body'. Moreover, she notes that 'an explicit mention of the second action occurs ... only when a woman performs the second action'. (Meyers, 'The Structure of the Syrian Baptismal Rite', 41.) Such an observation does not suggest that the bodies of male candidates were not anointed but is, rather, an indication that is was with regard to the performance of this element of the baptismal ritual for women candidates that further direction was required.

75 Whitaker, 'Unction in the Syrian Baptismal Rite', 181.

par l'Esprit Saint'. Such an identification leads him to suggest that, with reference to the *Acts of Judas Thomas*, the pre-immersion anointing is a participation in the same anointing which Jesus received in the Jordan.

Winkler considers the same evidence but reaches a less hesitant conclusion, referring to the same passage in chapter nine which connects Christian baptism with the baptism of Jesus within the context of a discussion of the role of the bishop:

> through whom the Lord gave you the Holy Spirit . . . through whom you were sealed, and through whom you became sons of light, and through whom the Lord in baptism, by the laying on of the hand of the bishop, bore witness to each one of you, and caused His holy voice to be heard that said: 'You are my Son. This day have I begotten you'.

Winkler interprets the quotation of the Lukan variant (3.22) as a liturgical formula said by the bishop 'while he laid his hand upon the head of the baptizandus'. Although

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78 Ibid., 32f.
79 Syr: ὠρθοομεν
81 This variant, a quotation from Psalm 2.7, is found in *Codex Bezae Cantabrigiensis*, seven Old Latin texts (*Vercellensis*, *Veronensis*, *Colbertinus*, *Bezae Cantabrigiensis*, *Corbelaensis II*, *Rehdigeranus* & *Usserianus I*) and the following Patristic writers: Diognetus, *Gospel of the Ebionites*, Justin, (Clement), Origen, *Didascalia*, Methodius, Juvenecus, (Ambolesiaster), Hilary, *Apostolic Constitutions*, Faustinus, (Tyconius) and Augustine. (Brackets indicate support for the reading with minor textual deviation). For a useful discussion on whether this variant is the original Lukan reading, see McDonnell, *Baptism of Jesus*, 85ff. He, himself, suggests that 'it is possible that the variant was actually the original text and was suppressed for dogmatic reasons, namely, the early rise of Adoptionism'. (Ibid., 87.) Vigne goes further and, seeing the suppression of the variant as a reaction against the *Gospel of the Ebionites*, confidently asserts that "today I have begotten you" is the original text. (Vigne, *Christ au Jourdain*, 106-132.) It is surprising that in Chalassery's commentary on this passage, he does not refer to the Lukan variant but, rather, suggests that 'this quotation from Ps 2.7 evokes the baptism of Jesus at the Jordan'. (Chalassery, *The Holy Spirit*, 18.)
82 Winkler, 'The Original Meaning', 35f. The *Acts of John*, which probably originate from the end of the fourth century, also refer to the heavenly voice, but this time in connection with the blessing of the water: 'Yea, Lord, sanctify this water with your voice, which resounded over the Jordan and pointed out our Lord Jesus (as) with a finger (saying): "This is my beloved Son, in
there is no evidence in this chapter to indicate when this ceremony would have taken place, Winkler uses the above-quoted passage from chapter sixteen to associate it with the pre-immersion anointing of the head.

Therefore, whereas the reference to the laying on of the hand in chapter sixteen has an obvious purpose as a practical instruction on how to perform the anointing, the similar reference in chapter nine with what would, indeed, appear to be a liturgical formula cannot be equated with the former and, moreover, is not so easily pinned down to one particular moment. Furthermore, whereas Winkler is surely right to link this formula with womb imagery which is so central to the theology of the Syrian baptismal tradition and John 3.5, the passage which, in chapter nine, immediately follows this clearly associates baptismal regeneration with the font rather than any other baptismal ceremony. Here, with no reference to the laying on of hands, the Didascalia encourages its readers to 'honour the bishops . . . who by the water have begotten you anew'.

Again, at the beginning of the same chapter, we read that the bishop is one who has 'begotten you through the water'. Taking these two texts into consideration, we may ask whether it is likely that the baptismal liturgy to which the compiler of the Didascalia alludes would have declared, 'You are my Son. This day have I begotten you' before whom I am well pleased, listen to him". You are here who was on the Jordan'. Klijn, 'An Ancient Syriac Baptismal Liturgy', 220.

83 Ratcliff, like Winkler, believes that: 'The hand-laying to which the Didascaliast's passage refers is presumably that performed before the pouring of the oil upon the head'. Ratcliff, 'The Old Syrian Baptismal Tradition', 24.

84 See above, 45f. It is, surely, no accident that echoes of the Peshitta of John 3.3 & 7 are found in the Syriac of this passage: ܐܘ ܐܠܗܐ ܐܒܐ ܕܓܒܐ ܕܓܒܐ ܕܓܒܐ. (Vööbus, Didascalia Apostolorum, SS 175, 109.) We should note that the Peshitta reading, ܐܘ ܐܠܗܐ ܐܒܐ, precludes the reading 'from above' which the Greek ἅγνοθεν allows and is reflected in some modern English translations; see J Payne Smith (ed), A Compendious Syriac Dictionary, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1903), 540.

85 Syr: ܐܘ ܐܠܗܐ ܐܒܐ. Vööbus, Didascalia Apostolorum, SS 175/176, 103/100.
the immersion in which the candidate is begotten anew? Indeed, if, as Winkler claims, this quotation of the Lukan variant is evidence of the extent to which the 'Syrians shaped their baptismal liturgy after Jesus' descent into the Jordan', is it not more likely that, following the order of events in the Synoptic accounts of Jesus' baptism, in which the heavenly voice is heard after Jesus comes out of the Jordan, the bishop would have pronounced the formula after the candidates had emerged from the water and not before? In this way, the imposition of the hand and the formula become, together, a declaration of the status of the newly-begotten neophytes and are not part of the pre-immersion anointing. Further support for this thesis comes from the passage which links the Lukan variant to the exhortation to honour the bishops 'who by the water have begotten you anew'. Here we read: 'On this account, O man, know your bishops, those through whom you became a son of God, and through the right hand, (they became) your mother'.

Such an interpretation flies in the face of scholarship which, until very recently, has presented a very clear picture of the early Syrian pattern of Christian initiation, rejecting any possibility of a post-immersion ceremony. That said, does not this conclusion

86 Winkler, 'The Original Meaning', 35; see also, idem., 'Zur frühchristlichen Tauftradition', 283.
87 Syr: ܐܠܗܐ ܕܐܝܠܐ ܠܒܐ. ܐܠܗܐ ܕܐܝܠܐ ܠܒܐ. Vööbus, Didascalia Apostolorum, SS 175/176, 109/104. The second half of this sentence is obscure. Vööbus renders it: 'and the right hand, your mother'. The context, however, enables a more illuminating translation. The following sentence goes on to describe the bishop as one who has become, 'after God, your father and your mother'. It is, therefore, most probable that, in the previous sentence, 'your mother' is a reference to the bishop, not least since it refers to him as the minister of baptism through whom the candidate becomes a son. As for the 'right hand', this surely alludes to the laying on of the bishop's hand.
88 The fact that, for the most part, the discussion has centred around the anointings does not make the point any less valid. Botte, for example, states unambiguously that: 'Il n'y a pas de place dans ce rite complémentaire d'imposition des mains ou d'ontion post-baptismale'. (B Botte, 'Le baptême dans l'église syrienne', L'Orient Syrien, 1 (1956), 138.) Mitchell, on the other hand, seems to imply that post-immersion ceremonies had previously
make best sense of the limited evidence which the Didascalia provides? Moreover, it is further supported by the research of Logan and Spinks who, building on Bradshaw's work, oppose Winkler's thesis of a 'monolinear regional development' of the Syrian baptismal rite and, in its place, suggest that 'different practices could well have existed within a region' and that liturgical development should be understood in terms of 'an original diversity which later became uniform'.

2.2.3 The Spirit and the Baptism of Jesus

One further implication of Winkler's thesis relates directly to the activity of the Spirit.

Already quoted in chapter one, she states that:

As Jesus had received the anointing through the divine presence in the appearance of a dove, and was invested as the Messiah, so in Christian baptism every candidate is anointed and, in connection with this anointing, the gift of the Spirit is conferred.

Although this argument has received general scholarly acceptance, it contains one major weakness which must be challenged. For, just as Winkler's argument for identifying the laying on of the bishop's hand and the quotation of the Lukan variant with the pre-

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89 Logan, 'Post-Baptismal Chrismation in Syria', 93.
90 BD Spinks, 'Sarapion of Thmuis and Baptismal Practice in Early Christian Egypt: The Need for a Judicious Reassessment', Worship, 72.3 (1998), 259. Bradshaw makes a similar point about 'the simultaneous coexistence of a variety of baptismal practices within the Syrian region'. (Bradshaw, Origins of Christian Worship, 169.) Spinks' suggestion that Bradshaw might enlarge his thesis of regional diversity to encompass different practices existing within one region (Spinks, 'Sarapion of Thmuis', 259) reflects Bradshaw's earlier work on the Egyptian tradition which implies monolinear development by not expressing the possibility that the Canons of Hippolytus and Sarapion might suggest a variety of practice in Egypt. (Bradshaw, 'Baptismal Practice in the Alexandrian Tradition, Eastern or Western?', in (ed) idem., Essays in Early Eastern Initiation, 12ff.) Johnson, responding to Spinks' article (op cit), concedes that the conclusions of Winkler 'may ultimately turn out to be in need of some revision and nuance'. (M Johnson, 'The Baptismal Rite and Anaphora in the Prayers of Sarapion of Thmuis: An Assessment of a Recent Judicious Reassessment', Worship, 73.2 (1999), 143.)
immersion anointing may be criticized for being unfaithful to the model of the Jordan event to which she claims to adhere, so, too, the identification of the descent of the Spirit with the pre-immersion anointing may be dismissed in similar fashion. Put simply, it is clear from the Synoptic accounts of the Jordan event that the Spirit descends in the form of a dove after Jesus emerges from the water and not before.\textsuperscript{93} Without such an association, there is no justification for using the Gospel accounts of the baptism of Jesus to suggest that through the pre-immersion unctions the candidate 'becomes assimilated to the messianic priesthood and kingship of Christ'\textsuperscript{94} and 'the gift of the Spirit is conferred'.\textsuperscript{95}

Varghese, adopting Winkler's position, claims that in the Syrian tradition the Spirit came upon Jesus at the moment of baptism itself and not afterwards. He quotes Ephrem and one of the \textit{Odes} in support of this thesis and claims that this tradition is continued in the writings Cyril of Jerusalem, John Chrysostom and Theodore of Mopsuestia. However, having made a good case for this first point, his argument for it eventually preceding the baptism is less convincing:

Pourrions-nous en conclure que dans le processus de ritualisation de l'Église syrienne, l'ontion de la tête, qui était le geste visible de la descente de l'Esprit Saint, se faisait juste avant l'immersion, et que par voie de conséquence elle serait devenue antérieure à l'immersion?\textsuperscript{96}

Surely this is not the beginning of a sound argument, since it is based on pure conjecture with no firm evidence. The New Testament evidence of the baptism of

\textsuperscript{92} Winkler, 'The Original Meaning', 36.
\textsuperscript{93} Logan makes a similar observation; Logan, 'The Mystery of the Five Seals', fn 60.
\textsuperscript{94} Winkler, 'The Original Meaning', 32.
\textsuperscript{95} \textit{Ibid.}, 36.
\textsuperscript{96} Varghese, \textit{Ontions baptismales}, 29.
Cornelius is insufficient precedent. He later refers to the practice of Jewish proselyte baptism as a pattern for early Syrian initiation rites. In itself this is no bad model and, indeed, has the support of Brock. However, this is a separate model from Jesus' baptism and should not be confused with it.

Chapter one has already indicated that Winkler was not the first to argue that the Spirit is conferred in oil before the immersion. Ratcliff maintains that 'the Christian's baptism is a mimesis of Christ's. What was done at Jordan is done again, mutatis mutandis, in the water of the font'; referring to Didascalia 16, he suggests that its readers were expected to have in mind the 'spiritual effect' of the anointing, as it is described in the Old Testament. Thus, 'the liturgical anointing . . . is . . . an Inception; the giving of the Spirit is the beginning of initiation'. More recently, a similar position has been expressed by Munier who has also taken this reference to the anointing of priests and kings to mean that, as the Spirit of the Lord came down upon those who were anointed, so too the pre-immersion anointing imparts the pneumatic gift upon those about to be baptized.

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97 Ibid., 31.
98 Brock, 'Transition to a Post-Baptismal Anointing', 219.
99 See above, 2f.
100 Ratcliff, 'The Old Syrian Baptismal Tradition', 28. Winkler, too, refers to the original essence of the Syrian baptismal rite being 'the mimesis of the event at the Jordan'. Winkler, 'The Original Meaning', 42.
102 C Munier, 'Rites d'onction, baptême chrétien et baptême de Jésus', Revue des Sciences Religieuses, 64.3-4 (1990), 221-225. Although not mentioned in his bibliography, Chalassery follows Munier when he states unequivocally that 'through the laying on of the bishop's hand and the anointing with oil, the Spirit of holiness is conveyed to the individual before he goes down into the baptismal water. . . . the giving of the Spirit is the beginning of the rites of Christian Initiation'. (Chalassery, The Holy Spirit, 19.)
2.2.4 Water and the Spirit
Whitaker argues that, whereas the imparting of the pneumatic gift cannot be located in the pre-immersion unctions, it can be found in the immersion itself. It is the intention of this study to demonstrate that, in the Didascalia, the Spirit is conferred in the rite of baptism as a whole, without attempting to tie down this particular effect of the sacramental act to a single moment within the rite. Whitaker goes further and, with a quotation from chapter ten, argues that 'the Spirit is imparted through the baptismal washing':

And so as you baptize a heathen and receive him, so also you lay the hand upon this man while everyone is praying for him, and then bring him in and let him communicate with the church. Indeed, the laying on of the hand shall be to him instead of baptism - indeed, whether by the laying on of the hand, or by baptism, that they receive the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.\(^{103}\)

Whilst in agreement with Whitaker's warning that there should be no confusion between the pneumatic laying on of hands for the reconciliation of penitents and a pre-immersion anointing and imposition of hands,\(^{104}\) his argument that 'baptism' refers specifically to immersion and not to the sacrament in its totality is less convincing. Indeed, the fact that a gloss of the Apostolic Constitutions (for which no reference is provided) uses the Greek noun λαοσμα is hardly sufficient evidence to make such a statement.\(^{105}\)

To summarize, although Whitaker is justified in making a strong case against the identification of the pre-immersion unctions with a sacramental bestowal of the Spirit, there is little evidence to suggest that such a bestowal is associated exclusively with the

\(^{103}\) Vööbus, Didascalia Apostolorum, SS 175/176, 120/114.
\(^{104}\) Such as is found in Chalassery, The Holy Spirit, 19.
\(^{105}\) Nor is his next quotation concerning demoniac possession from chapter six enough even to suggest the possibility that the pre-immersion unction may be an exorcism. Whitaker, 'Unction in the Syrian Baptismal Rite', 183f.
font and, furthermore, that the anointing functions as an exorcism. Both conclusions
seem to be motivated more by a determination not to find a rite of confirmation lurking
within the lines of the text rather than a critical evaluation of the evidence itself.

In conclusion, the Didascalia maintains quite clearly that the gift of the Holy Spirit is
communicated to the candidate through the rite of baptism over which the bishop
presides. The textual evidence does not permit a more specific conclusion. Thus, for
the compiler of the Didascalia, Christian initiation conveys the forgiveness of sins, baptismal regeneration and, not least, the imparting of the gift of the Spirit, which is the
characteristic possession of all the elect.107

2.3 Acts of Judas Thomas
To consider the issues which relate to the action of the Holy Spirit within the baptismal
accounts of the Acts of Judas Thomas, it will prove useful, initially, to set out the five
texts which deal with baptism, commenting briefly on the structure of the rite described
and noting any significant differences between the Greek and Syriac texts.

The account in chapters 26 and 27108 deals with the baptism of king Gundaphorus and
his brother:

[26] And they begged of him that they might receive the sign,109 and said to him: "Our souls are turned to God to receive the sign for we have

106 The forgiveness of sins is referred to in chapter 20: '

107 See above, 45f.

108 For ease of identification, Klijn's chapter references will be given alongside each translation.
heard that all the sheep of that God whom you preach are known to him by the sign." Judas said to them: "I too rejoice, and ask of you to partake of the Eucharist and the blessing of this Messiah whom I preach"... [27] And when they had entered into the bath-house, Judas went in before them. And our Lord appeared unto them, and said to them: "Peace be with you, my brethren". And they heard the voice only, but the form they did not see, whose it was, for till now they had not been baptised. And Judas went up and stood upon the edge of the cistern, and poured oil upon their heads, and said. "Come, holy name of the Messiah; come power of grace, which art from on high; come perfect mercy; come, exalted gift; come sharer of the blessing; come, revealer of the hidden mysteries; come, mother of seven houses, whose rest was in the eighth house; come, messenger of reconciliation; and communicate with the minds of these youths; come, Spirit of holiness, and purify their reins and hearts". And he baptised them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit of holiness. And when they had come up out of the water, a youth appeared to them, and he was holding a lighted taper; and the light of the lamps became pale through its light. And when they had gone forth, he became invisible to them; and the Apostles said: "We were not even able to bear your light, because it is too great for our vision". And when it dawned and was morning, he broke the Eucharist and let them partake of the table of the Messiah and they were glad and rejoicing.111

The structure of this first description of the celebration of baptism is very similar to the Didascalia: an anointing of the head, immersion with the Trinitarian formula followed by the eucharist. Raes provides a synthesis of the patterns of initiation in the Acts which will usefully act as a benchmark against which the accounts can be measured. He states that Christian Initiation:

comprend d'une manière constante les éléments suivants: Une invocation sur l'huile, faite le plus souvent au Seigneur; une onction de la tête et du corps, avec une formule variable; ensuite, l'immersion dans l'eau avec l'invocation, invariable celle-ci, des trois Personnes de la Sainte Trinité; enfin,

109 Syr: ρεαση
110 Syr: κτητ.
Although the account of Gundaphorus' baptism fits quite comfortably into Raes' pattern, there is no anointing of the body mentioned in this account, which, with the exception of women being baptized when no other women are present, is found in the Didascalia; furthermore, the epicletic prayer, which accompanies the anointing and does not precede it, is not addressed exclusively to the Son. Indeed, Varghese remarks that, compared with other similar formulae, the prayer in this account is the only one to allude to the Holy Spirit. Noting that this prayer is addressed both to the 'Name of the Messiah' and the Holy Spirit, he suggests that:

le parallélisme entre le Nom du Messie et l'Esprit Saint est conforme à la «christologie pneumatique» de l'ancienne tradition syrienne qui voyait l'Esprit Saint à la fois comme «l'Esprit du Christ»... et comme la forme du Christ préexistant.113

It is clear that the 'sign' which is communicated in the rite is the mark which symbolizes membership of God's flock, the characteristic identifying feature of the Christian. God knows his people as his own possession by the sign. However, whether this 'sign' should be identified with any one part of the rite is unclear from this particular text and will require further consideration.114

113 Varghese, Onctions baptismales, 25.
114 Varghese provides a useful summary of terms associated with the consignations (the first without oil, the other three with oil or myron) which appear in the Syrian baptismal tradition. Although these are by no means universally adopted, Varghese suggests that in the majority of cases, the following terms designate the four consignations: ܡܫܠܐ, ܡܫܫܐ, ܡܫܐ, ܡܫܬܐ. Ibid., 12f.
The second passage is much briefer than the first and concerns the baptism of a woman:

[49] And the woman begged of him and said to him: "Apostle of the Most High, give me the sign of my Lord, that the enemy may not again come back upon me". And he went to a river which was close by there, and baptised her in the name of the Father and the Son and the Spirit of holiness; and many were baptised with her. And the Apostle ordered his deacon to make ready the Eucharist.\textsuperscript{115}

The structure of the rite in the Syriac text consists of a request for the sign followed by baptism in the river and shows no evidence of a pre-immersion anointing although, as Varghese points out, it might be indicated by \textit{rouchmo}, depending on its interpretation.\textsuperscript{116}

Siman puts the case more strongly:

Certes, le mot \textit{Onction} semble manquer dans le deuxième récit que l'Auteur des \textit{Actes} donne du baptême. Mais en réalité il est désigné par le terme syriaque 'rouchmo' qui veut dire: consignation, sceau, et qui est employé pour désigner toute l'initiation baptismale.\textsuperscript{117}

In the Greek, however, the structure is quite different. After the woman's request, 'he caused her to come near to him, and laid his hands upon her and sealed her in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost; and many others were sealed with

\textsuperscript{115}Wright, \textit{Apocryphal Acts}, 161 - 164, 188; Klijn, \textit{Acts of Thomas}, 90. In this passage \textit{rouchmo}, rendered correctly as 'sign' in the previous example, is translated 'seal' by Wright and Klijn. Varghese amends this in his translation of the passage (Varghese, \textit{Onctions baptismales}, 6) as does Winkler who also comments on Klijn's adoption of Wright's 'inexakte Übersetzung'. (Winkler, \textit{Das Armenische Initiationsrituale}, 136f.) Although this may appear a small point of detail, it does have repercussions for the interpretation of the rite, both because of the use of 'seal' as a technical term in later literature and, not least, because \( \tau \hbar \upsilon \sigma \phi \rho \alpha \gamma \iota \delta \alpha \) appears in the Greek version of this passage.

\textsuperscript{116}\textit{rouchmo} does not necessarily need to refer exclusively to anointing for this to be the case. If it were seen to describe the whole rite then the Syrian pattern of anointing followed by immersion would be maintained in this account. Winkler also sees 'der Terminus \textit{rušmi ("signum")}' im ersten Taufbericht . . . als Bezeichnung für die gesamte Taufe . . .' Winkler, \textit{Das Armenische Initiationsrituale}, 143.
The laying on of hands could refer to the manual action required to anoint the woman's head or, alternatively, to immerse her in the water. Varghese believes that 'the seal' could equally refer to the baptism rite in its totality presumably with anointing as well as to the immersion. Thus, he concludes that the Greek text is not without a baptismal immersion and, in support of this, quotes a passage from the *Shepherd of Hermes* where άφηγος is linked to immersion.

The third account of baptism also involves a woman. At the beginning of chapter 120, Mygdonia requests baptism and then wakens her nurse, Narkia, to assist her in making the preparations:

[120] Mygdonia said to him (Judas): "Give me the sign of Jesus the Messiah, and let me receive his gift from your hands...

[121] . . . Mygdonia uncovered her head, and was standing before the holy Apostle. And he took the oil, and poured (it) on her head, and said: "Holy oil, which was given to us for unction, and hidden mystery of the Cross, which is seen through it - you, the straightener of crooked limbs, you our Lord Jesus, life and health and remission of sins, - let your power come and abide upon this oil, and let your holiness dwell in it". And he poured (it) upon the head of Mygdonia and said: "Heal her of her old wounds, and wash away from her her sores, and strengthen her weakness". And when he had poured the oil on her head, he told her nurse to anoint her, and to put a cloth round her loins; and he fetched the basin of their conduit. And Judas went up (and) stood over it, and baptised Mygdonia in the name of the Father and the Son and of the Spirit of holiness. And when she had come out and put on her clothes, he fetched and brake the Eucharist and (filled) the cup, and let Mygdonia partake of the table of the Messiah and of the cup of the Son of God. And he said to her: "Now then you have received the

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119 There is striking similarity between this and chapter 16 of the *Didascalia*; see above, 47.
121 Syr: ῥασατ.
sign, and gained for yourself your life for ever and ever". And a voice was heard from heaven, which said: "Yea, Amen and Amen".

Comparing the structure of this description with the synthesis of Raes, this would appear to have all the elements which he identifies: a christocentric invocatory prayer over the oil, anointing of the head and body, immersion with a Trinitarian formula and participation in the eucharist. The anointing of the body by the nurse has its parallel in the Didascalia, although there is no mention of the need for a woman deacon.

In the Greek ψαλτής is again rendered 'seal': Δός μοι τὴν σφραγίδα Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. The epiclesis has some textual variations, not least that the candidate is addressed rather not the oil: 'Let your power come, let it be established upon your servant Mygdonia'. What is lacking in the Greek text, however, is the anointing of the whole body by the nurse.

At the end of both Greek and Syriac versions reference is made to the 'sign' / 'seal'. Varghese believes that its position here lends weight to his theory that ψαλτής refers to the whole of the baptismal rite and not just one part of it.

For Whitaker, who is concerned that no antecedent of confirmation should be found in the text, the epicletic petitions connected with anointing 'do not seem to contain any

122 Syr: ψαλτής.
123 Following the chronology of the baptism of Jesus, the heavenly voice is heard after Mygdonia has come out of the water. This mirrors the position suggested for the liturgical formula and laying on of hands based on the Lukan variant in Didascalia 9; see above, 53ff.
125 Varghese, Onctions baptismales, 7.
suggestion that the effect will be the bestowal of the gift of the Spirit in confirmation'.\textsuperscript{128} He makes use of 'straightener of crooked limbs' and 'heal her of her wounds' to argue that 'all these passages support the view that the unction was credited with a therapeutic power'.\textsuperscript{129} With reference to the description of the oil as 'hidden mystery of the cross, which is seen through it', he also tries to demonstrate that the unction was made on the forehead in the sign of the cross.\textsuperscript{130} There is, however, no textual evidence to support this. The Syriac describes the Apostle pouring\textsuperscript{131} the oil upon the head of Mygdonia. How can Whitaker's interpretation be reconciled with such a clear description of the ritual act mirrored in the other accounts?

Winkler interprets the anointing within the context of Jesus' own anointing with the Spirit at his baptism in the Jordan, the anointing which gave expression to a kingship which reached its completion and fulfilment on the cross. With reference to the 'epiclesis', she says:

\begin{quote}
Dieses Gebet in Form einer an Christus gerichteten Epiklese beinhaltet die Bitte, daß die Macht des Gesalbten (Messiah), bzw. dessen Salbung zum König sich am Kreuz vollendet, in dem Öl wohnen möge. Hier wird das Motiv des Gesalbten, d.h. Christus als der zum König Gesalbte, und die Vollendung dieses Ereignisses am Kreuz, mit dem Motiv des Ölbaums und Kreuzes als Lebensbaum zu einem Ganzen zusammengeschlossen.\textsuperscript{132}
\end{quote}

Further coverage of Winkler's thesis will be given after the final two baptism narratives have been considered.

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{127} Varghese, \textit{Onctions baptismales}, 7, 12-14.
\bibitem{128} Whitaker, "Unction in the Syrian Baptismal Rite', 179.
\bibitem{129} \textit{Ibid.}
\bibitem{130} Lampe also believes that the anointing with oil consists of a 'signing with the Cross'. Lampe, \textit{Seal of the Spirit}, 188.
\bibitem{131} Syr: \textit{cρωτο
\bibitem{132} Winkler, \textit{Das Armenische Initiationsrituale}, 145.
\end{thebibliography}
The fourth passage, from chapters 131-2, concerns the baptism of General Sifur, his wife and daughter:

[131] And Sifur the general said to him [Judas]: "I and my daughter and my wife will henceforth live purely, in one mind and in one love; and we beg that we may receive the sign from your hands, and may become true servants unto our Lord, and may be reckoned among the number of his flock and his sheep"...

[132] And he (Judas) . . . said: "This is the baptism of the remission of sins; this is the bringer forth of new man; this is the restorer of understandings, and the mingler of soul and body, and the establisher of the new man in the Trinity, and which becomes a participation in the remission of sins. Glory to you, hidden power of baptism! Glory to you, hidden power, that communicates with us in baptism! Glory to you, power that is visible in baptism! Glory to you, new creatures, who are renewed through baptism, who draw nigh to it in love!" And when he had said these things he poured oil upon their heads and said: "Glory to you, beloved fruit! Glory to you, name of the Messiah! Glory to you, hidden power that dwells in the Messiah!" And he spoke, and they brought a large vat, and he baptised them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Spirit of holiness.

There are many similarities between this passage and the baptism of king Gundaphorus to the extent that several relevant points have been raised already. The structure of the two rites is identical: request for the 'sign' (with the same reference to the fact that it is through the sign that the sheep are identified as members of God's flock), a prayer over the oil (which, as Winkler points out, is more an acclamation of praise than an epicletic prayer), the anointing of the head only and the baptismal immersion with Trinitarian formula. As far as the Syriac text is concerned, Winkler suggests that 'Glory to you, hidden power that dwells in the Messiah' should read, 'in the oil'

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133 Syr: סֵאָהַ.  
134 Syr: סֵאָה הָּאָרֹן הָּלִּכְּ.  
136 Winkler, Das Armenische Initiationsrituale, 138.
and that the writer is employing a deliberate play on words which is not evident in other languages.\textsuperscript{137}

The other major point of interest lies in the theological analysis of baptism which precedes the anointing. It is noteworthy that the remission of sins is mentioned first, bearing in mind the emphasis placed on this in the \textit{Didascalia}.\textsuperscript{138} Although most of the terminology in this section is obscure, it is important to note the clear reference to baptismal regeneration, a motif already encountered in the \textit{Odes} and \textit{Didascalia}.\textsuperscript{139}

The last description of baptism in the \textit{Acts} involves a prince named Vizan and some women:

[157] He (Judas) said to Mygdonia: "My daughter, strip your sisters". . . . And Judas took oil, and glorified (God) over it, and said: "Fair fruit, that is worthy to be glowing with the word of holiness, that men may put you on and conquer through you their enemies, when they have been cleansed from their former works - yea, Lord, come abide upon this oil, as you abide upon the tree, and they who were crucified with you were not able to bear your word. Let your gift come, which you breathed upon your enemies and they went backward and fell upon their faces, and let it abide upon this oil, over which we name your name". And he cast it upon the head of Vizan, and then upon the heads of these (others), and said: "In your name, Jesus the Messiah, let it be to these persons for the remission of offences and sins, and for the destruction of the enemy, and for the healing of their souls and bodies". And he commanded Mygdonia to anoint them and he himself anointed Vizan. And after he had anointed them, he made them go down into the water in the name of the Father and the Son and the Spirit of holiness.\textsuperscript{140}

\textsuperscript{137} \textit{Ibid.} This thesis is supported by Varghese. Varghese, \textit{Onctions baptismales}, 8.
\textsuperscript{138} See above, fn 106.
\textsuperscript{139} See above, 36f & 54ff.
\textsuperscript{140} Wright, \textit{Apocryphal Acts}, 289; Klijn, \textit{Acts of Thomas}, 148f.
Whereas, in the previous example, there existed similarities with the account of Gundaphorus, in this case there are striking parallels with the baptism of Mygdonia. There is an invocation over the oil with reference to the crucifixion and an anointing of the head as well as the whole body. The latter is performed by Judas himself in the case of Vizan, but by Mygdonia for the other women. This is followed by baptismal immersion with the Trinitarian formula and a celebration of the eucharist.

We have already seen how, in the baptism of Mygdonia, Whitaker believes the anointing to be purely 'therapeutic'. He argues that the same is true for the present example and for the same reasons. Thus he concludes that these two accounts present a clear and consistent story, that 'the pre-baptismal unction in their view was an exorcism, and they leave no room for the opinion that any sacramental bestowal of the Spirit was intended'. It is undoubtedly true that this text does describe the pre-immersion anointing as a protective coating to arm the candidate for battle, 'that they may conquer through you their enemies', and this theme will be revisited together with the Old Testament imagery of the anointing of kings and priests.

As for the reference to the crucifixion, this prayer asks that Christ, the Anointed One, might be present in the oil as he was present on the cross. Commenting on both, Winkler states 'Beide Gebete gehen auf den Zusammenhang zwischen Olivenbaum, von dem das Salböl gewonnen wird, und dem Lebensbaum - dem Kreuz - ein'. She also makes the point that most of the descriptions of the effects of the oil relate to

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141 See above, 65f.
142 Whitaker, 'Unction in the Syrian Baptismal Rite', 180.
143 Winkler, Das Armenische Initiationsrituale, 141.
purification and healing. It is noticeable again that, during the anointing of the head, his first prayer is for the 'remission of sins and offences'.

Having looked at each of the descriptions of baptism in some detail, the final sections of this chapter will attempt to tie together some of the loose ends and present a number of theories which have been put forward to explain the differences between the five and, also, how they relate to each other and to the Didascalia.

2.3.1 The Sign of Baptism
One of the most important issues to be faced is the meaning of ρανατ and the way it relates to the pre-immersion anointing. It is uncertain whether ρανατ relates to the anointing or to the whole of the rite. On the one hand, Brock and Winkler are in no doubt that ρανατ is the technical term for the original single anointing of the forehead,¹⁴⁴ such as is found in the baptism of Gundaphorus and Sifur. Varghese, on the other hand, points out that ἀνατ is never used in connection with the act of anointing, the verbs ἀνασφάλεω and ἀνατ being preferred.¹⁴⁵ That said, in four of the five descriptions of baptism, the candidates ask for the 'sign' and, in response, are anointed. Therefore, to say that there is no connection between the two is to ignore the evidence of the accounts themselves. Brock identifies ρανατ as a mark of ownership, a sign of protection, a participation in the royal priesthood of Christ and the conferring of

¹⁴⁴ Brock, 'Transition to a Post-Baptismal Anointing', 216; see also idem., 'Baptismal Ordines', 180f; Winkler, 'The Original Meaning', 27. In chapter 49, where there is no explicit mention of anointing, Winkler suggests that: 'Es könnte also sein, daß rušma hier indirekt andeutet wie sehr in syrischen Kreisen unter Taufe eigentlich die Salbung verstanden wurde. Mit anderen Worten: die Immersion ist rituel der präbaptismalen Salbung untergeordnet, und dies ist typisch für die Taufgräuthe innerhalb Syriens'. Idem, Das Armenische Initiationsrituale, 143.
¹⁴⁵ Varghese, Onctions baptismales, 13.
purification and healing. It is noticeable again that, during the anointing of the head, his first prayer is for the 'remission of sins and offences'.

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144 Brock, 'Transition to a Post-Baptismal Anointing', 216; see also idem., 'Baptismal Ordines', 180f; Winkler, 'The Original Meaning', 27. In chapter 49, where there is no explicit mention of anointing, Winkler suggests that: 'Es könnte also sein, daß rušma hier indirekt andeutet wie sehr in syrischen Kreisen unter Taufe eigentlich die Salbung verstanden wurde. Mit anderen Worten: die Immersion ist rituel der präbaptismalen Salbung untergeordnet, und dies ist typisch für die Taufgebräuche innerhalb Syriens'. Idem, Das Armenische Initiationsrituale, 143.
145 Varghese, Octions baptismales, 13.
Although the last two refer more directly to later texts, the other features are present in the *Acts*. For example, it is clear from the baptism of Gundaphorus that initiation conveys the mark by which God recognizes his flock. Furthermore, the protective nature of the 'sign' is expressed, in connection with anointing, in the baptisms of both Mygdonia and Vizan.

The solution suggested by Varghese seems to resolve this tension. Incorporating the insights of Brock, he believes that:

\[\text{. . le mot rūsmō ou sphragis a été utilisé chez les plus anciens Pères pour désigner le baptême dans sa totalité. Cela est vrai dans les baptêmes des Actes de Thomas, où rūsmō signifie toujours l'ensemble des rites baptismaux, avec tous ses effets, que ce soit la marque de la brebis ou la protection contre l'ennemi.}\]  

This notion of the 'sign' representing the whole of the rite impinges upon any understanding of how both anointing(s) and immersion are interpreted. It is not uncommon for those who comment on early Syrian initiation rites to suggest that, because of the apparent concentration of theological language around the anointing, the significance of the baptismal immersion is severely lessened. Indeed, Klijn goes as far as to say that 'nothing of importance is said about it . . . This is in accordance with the Syriac liturgy in which baptism with water plays a subordinate part only.'  

Varghese picks up the same theme and, whilst wanting to see the rite as a whole, nevertheless claims that, 'Dans les Actes de Thomas, l'onction aurait beaucoup plus d'importance que

\[\text{146 Brock, 'Transition to a Post-Baptismal Anointing', 217f.}\]
\[\text{147 Varghese, *Onctions baptismales*, 14.}\]
I'immersion. Tous les symbolismes du baptême sont concentrés sur l'huile et l'onnement. L'auteur n'attache aucun symbolisme à l'immersion, ni à l'eau. 149

Such a position fits comfortably into Winkler's theory that early Syrian initiation rites are based on the Jordan event, the descent of the Spirit in form of a dove being the central act. However, if ραξον is identified with the whole of the liturgy and membership of the flock is brought about through oil and water, then the anointing and immersion may be understood as two elements wedded together in a unified rite rather than two ritual acts standing alongside one another and conferring different graces.

In the Didascalia, it is the case that the bishop's presidency over the rite is defined by the initial anointing of the head. 150 Nevertheless, the fact that much of the theological language is centred around the anointing does not mean that everything that is said refers exclusively to that ritual action and is conferred at that one moment. 151 For example, the water image used in chapter twenty-four of the Didascalia for the remission of sins in baptism 152 is hardly likely to refer to the anointing in preference to the baptismal washing.

149 Varghese, Onctions baptismales, 14f. A similar point is made by Winkler. (Winkler, 'The Original Meaning', 37.) Mitchell goes further and, identifying the Acts as laying 'great stress upon a pre-baptismal unction' suggests that it is 'identified in some sense to the gift of the Spirit'. (Mitchell, Baptismal Anointing, 34.)

150 See above, 48f.

151 Botte attempts to hold anointing and immersion together by saying that: 'the prebaptismal anointing signified the intention of conferring, at the same time as the baptism, the gift of the Spirit. It is not a separate rite, rather the two effects are produced conjointly by the same rite'. Botte, 'Postbaptismal Anointing', 68; cf EJ Lengeling, 'Vom Sinn der präbaptismalen Salbung', in Mélanges Liturgiques Offerts Au R.P. Dom Bernard Botte O.S.B., (Louvain: Abbaye du Mont César, 1972), 347.

152 See above, fn 106.
There is, therefore, a danger in over-emphasising the significance of the anointing, and thereby placing pressure upon the integrity of the unified rite of anointing, baptism and eucharist through which the χρίσις is conferred and the neophytes become 'true servants unto our Lord . . . reckoned among the number of his flock and his sheep'.

2.3.2 The Development of the Liturgy of Initiation
A further strand of Winkler’s thesis argues that the Acts contain two levels of tradition, the more ancient containing an anointing of the head alone and the later employing the anointing of the whole body: ‘Scholars were slow to accept the fact that the Syrian rite originally knew only one prebaptismal anointing, namely, the pouring of oil over the head, and that only in later history was the whole body anointed’. Although this is an attractive theory and allows the baptismal passages of the Acts to be divided up neatly into three groups (first, the baptism of the woman in chapter 49; second, Gundaphorus and Sifur; and, third, Mygdonia and Vizan) there appears to be one major problem with this hypothesis. In the Didascalia, a work whose Greek origins are roughly contemporaneous with the Acts, the anointing of the whole body is a commonly recognized practice and not an innovation. Indeed, the very fact that women other than deaconesses had been used to anointing, thus provoking tighter regulation, points to

154 Winkler, ‘The Original Meaning’, 24; cf idem., Das Armenische Initiationsrituale, 144.
Winkler’s theory is supported by Brock and Varghese. Brock, ‘Transition to a Post-Baptismal Anointing’, 216; Varghese, Onctions baptismales, 12. Klijn adopts an opposing view, stating confidently that: ‘We may be sure that originally the whole body was anointed’. Klijn, ‘An Ancient Syriac Baptismal Liturgy’, 227.
155 For Winkler, ‘Zu den ältesten syrischen Taufbräuchen . . . zählt sicherlich die Praxis, die eigentliche Taufe der Salbung, die die zentrale Stellung des Rituale einnimmt, unterzuordnen. Den Mittelpunkt bildet hier die präbaptismale Salbung des Hauptes . . .’ (Winkler, Das Armenische Initiationsrituale, 170.) Since what Winkler considers to be the most primitive baptismal account contains no explicit mention of anointing, is this a firm enough foundation on which to build a thesis which emphasizes the anointing as the central act of the early Syrian pattern? In chapter
this being no innovation. The question which this raises is simple. Does it necessarily follow that a variation in accounts, which we have here, witnesses to a development from one practice to another? Is it not possible that the two practices co-existed until, in the course of time, only one pattern survived?\(^{156}\)

In support of her development theory, Winkler identifies other elements in the accounts as being of greater or lesser antiquity. First, there is no blessing of oil in the first group. Second, and more importantly, she identifies a shift in *Leitmotiv* between the two groups. In the first, the anointing is associated with Jesus' messianic anointing in the Jordan, whereas the second emphasizes its healing properties. This shift reflects the movement towards an understanding of the pre-immersion anointing as therapeutic and exorcistic.\(^{157}\)

The connection which Winkler makes between the pre-immersion baptismal anointing and the Messianic anointing of Jesus at his baptism is based upon her interpretation of early Syrian baptismal liturgy as the *mimesis* of Jesus' descent into the Jordan.\(^{158}\) Thus Christian baptism becomes a participation in the baptism of Jesus: 'In der Frühform der

\(^{49}\) such an interpretation would leave no room for *ròuía* meaning anything other than a term which denotes anointing. (See above, fn 116.)

\(^{156}\) Spinks supports this position, claiming that: 'There is no sound reason for arranging the accounts of baptism in the *Acts of Thomas* in some chronological order of development. A more natural reading is that they witness to a variety of practices'. Spinks, *Sarapion of Thmuis*, 262.

\(^{157}\) Winkler, *The Original Meaning*, 29ff. For a fuller account of the characteristic features of the two groups, see *idem.*, *Das Armenische Initiationsrituale*, 169.

\(^{158}\) *Idem.*, *The Original Meaning*, 35; see above, fn 100. As further evidence of the link between the Jordan event and Christian baptism, Winkler draws attention to the fact that in chapter 49 the woman is baptized in a river: 'So scheint hier noch ein sehr altes Brauchtum angeknüpft worden zu sein, nämlich die Taufe als Mimesis der Taufe Jesu im Jordanfluß aufzufassen'. (*Idem.*, *Das Armenische Initiationsrituale*, 170ff.) However, in the more primitive *Didache* 7, which also mentions baptism in 'running water', there is no mention of an anointing or any

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A good deal has already been said about the reference in Didascalia 16 to anointing in the manner of priests and kings in Israel as well as Winkler's interpretation that 'the prophet instructs the newly appointed king before his anointing . . . ; the prophet anoints the head of the king; in connection with the anointing, the Spirit descends upon the king'.

Having established this association, Winkler goes on to infer from the quotation of Psalm 2.7 in Didascalia 9 that the Jordan is the primary model for the liturgy of initiation in the early Syrian tradition. As far as the pre-immersion anointing is concerned, this means that there is:

eine innere Kongruenz zwischen Geistbegabung und der alttestamentlichen Königssalbung, die sich in der Taufe Jesu, des Gesalbten schlechthin, von neuem erfüllt und in der präbaptismalen Salbung der Täuflinge fortlebt: die Neugesalbten werden durch die Geistausgießung in das eschatologische Königttum aufgenommen.

To summarize, from this position Winkler posits three explanations of early Syrian baptismal practice. First, that originally there is only one pre-immersion anointing of the head because oil was poured over the head of the priest-king in Israel. Second, that the Spirit is conferred in the pre-immersion anointing because the Spirit of the Lord came...
upon the priest-king of Israel at his anointing. Third, that the Jordan event is dramatically reinvoked in these Syrian rites.

These arguments are used by Winkler to explain why the anointing is so important in the early Syrian baptismal tradition; namely, because 'it was the anointing that became, in Syria, the first and only visible gesture for the central event at Christ's baptism: his revelation as the Messiah-King through the descent of the Spirit'. Thus, in the two texts which have an anointing of the body, the anointing of the head has already lost its original impact.

Winkler's hypothesis presents two further problems. First, there is no explanation of how the two-stage anointing should be interpreted in the Acts of Judas Thomas or in the Didascalia since, measured against Winkler's thesis, these appear to stand in a liturgical 'nomansland' between the original model of the baptismal liturgy as a mimesis of the Jordan event and the later pattern in which the pre-immersion anointing is exorcistic and associated with the apotaxis. Second, is it not strange that one of the main tenets of Winkler's thesis, the anointing of the priest-kings of Israel as a prototype of Christ's baptism, is taken from a text which lays a strong emphasis on the double pre-immersion anointing and the liturgical role which women deacons have to play in that process?

163 Winkler, 'The Original Meaning', 36; cf idem., Das Armenische Initiationsrituale, 436. Chalassery mirrors this position: 'When we examine the prayers in the context of the anointing we see that the bestowal of the Spirit and his gift is associated with this pre-baptismal anointing. Therefore this anointing forms the central part of the Christian Initiation according to the Acts of Thomas'. (Chalassery, The Holy Spirit, 29f.) The same association of oil and Spirit is suggested by Lampe: the Acts 'present us with another example of the common Syrian idea that the bestowal of the Spirit is to be associated with a pre-baptismal unction, such as we have already encountered in the Didascalia'. (Lampe, Seal of the Spirit, 188.)
2.4 Summary

This chapter has provided sufficient evidence to demonstrate that there is no one uniform early Syrian baptismal tradition. Examples of variation both in theology and rite have been highlighted again and again and theories which have attempted to understand difference as the fruit of chronological development from an original pattern have been found lacking. It is, therefore, not possible to interpret a pre-immersion anointing with messianic overtones (such as the baptism of Gundaphorus) as representing a more primitive level of the tradition than one associated with healing and exorcism (such as the baptism of Mygdonia). Neither is it possible to identify the theological language associated with oil in the baptism of Gundaphorus as exclusively messianic, since it contains references to themes which Winkler associates with the second layer which cannot be ignored: 'come, perfect mercy . . . come, messenger of reconciliation . . . come spirit of holiness, and purify their reins and hearts'.

Furthermore, we should note that, in this account, the Spirit is invoked to purify the believer, not to anoint him with the messianic anointing which Jesus received in the Jordan.

Both the Acts of Judas Thomas and the Didascalia have shown how baptism conveys the gift of the Spirit as well as baptismal regeneration and the forgiveness of sins. However, despite the attempts of Winkler and Varghese to exalt the anointing to the moment in

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164 Winkler does admit that 'the cleansing aspect of the anointing is clearly stated' in this chapter, but makes no further reference to this, moving rather to 'the compiler's emphasis on associating the oil with the Messiah'. (Winkler, 'The Original Meaning', 30.) However, quoting the same passage, Ratcliff states that: 'The Spirit of holiness is the agent of cleansing from sins, and the Spirit's operation in this respect is an essential preparation for the baptismal act'. (Ratcliff, 'The Old Syrian Baptismal Tradition', 26.)

165 Suggesting that Winkler's theory is in need of modification, Spinks states that: 'there is no rule apart from Winkler's own invention which says that only one association of oil must be used in a
the rite when the pneumatic gift is conveyed, although its activity is certainly expressed in a very dynamic way through the use of the messianic terminology, its bestowal is surely connected most securely to the χαιρέτις, understood as the celebration of the rite in its totality, and not to one particular moment within it.

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prayer for it to be early, nor another which says several ideas juxtaposed must be the result of later transition'. Spinks, 'Sarapion of Thmuis', 262f.
3.1 Aphrahat
Although no one Demonstration deals explicitly with Christian initiation, baptism is referred to repeatedly throughout Aphrahat's work allowing, according to Varghese, some reconstruction of both baptismal practice and theology.¹

3.1.1 Demonstration 6.14 and Pneumatic Regeneration
'From baptism we receive the Spirit of Christ.'² This is the central message of Demonstration 6.14:

Therefore beloved, we also receive the Spirit of Christ, and Christ dwells in us, for it is written that the Spirit said through the mouth of the prophet: 'I will dwell with them, and I will walk among them' ... From baptism we receive the Spirit of Christ;³ for at the very hour the priests call on the Spirit heaven opens, and she descends, broods upon the waters,⁴ and those who are baptized put her on. For the Spirit is absent from all born from the body, until they come to birth from the waters;⁵ then they receive the Holy Spirit. For in the first birth they were born, endowed with the animal Spirit created in man; nor will it ever die, as it is written, 'I made man into a living spirit'. But in the second birth, namely, baptism, they receive the Holy Spirit from a portion of the divine.⁶ When, therefore, people die, the animal spirit is hidden, with the body sensation taken away. However, the heavenly Spirit, whom they receive according to her nature, returns to Christ.⁷

¹ Varghese, Onctions baptismales, 34.
³ Syr: ܦܹܪܬ ܘܡܐ ܐܬܘܽܒܵܬ ܡܹܢ ܫܹܒܵܬ ܫܹܒܵܬ a
⁴ Syr: ܫܹܒܵܬ ܐܬܘܽܒܵܬ
⁵ Syr: ܫܹܒܵܬ ܬܹܒܵܬ ܢܹܒܵܬ ܐܬܘܽܒܵܬ
⁶ Syr: ܫܹܒܵܬ ܘܡܐ ܐܬܘܽܒܵܬ
⁷ Parisot, Aphraatis Demonstrationes, 1, 292f; Finn, Early Christian Baptism, 137.
Here Aphrahat points to a pneumatology in which, because the Spirit is of Christ, Christ dwells in the newly-baptized Christian who, in the waters of baptism, puts on Christ as a garment.

Despite the enthusiasm of Varghese and Chalassery for ritual reconstruction, very little liturgical detail can be gained from the Demonstrations. However, the above clearly refers to an invocation of the Spirit of Christ upon the waters in the baptismal liturgy in language which, unsurprisingly, is modelled upon Jesus' own baptism in the Jordan. It is unfortunate that Finn has removed the preposition found in Gwynn's translation of 'moves upon the waters', changing it to the rather ambiguous 'moves the waters', since the former bears closer resemblance to Genesis 1.2 to which there is obviously strong allusion. Indeed, Parisot's 'aquis incubat' would seem to have captured best the sense of the Syriac ܐܘܛ ܐܝܢܘܛ, used in the Peshitta for this verse, which Payne Smith renders as 'to brood' or 'to hover over'. This maternal bird imagery, reflecting the descent of the dove upon Jesus in the Jordan, mirrors the use of the same verb in Ode 24.

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8 Chalassery, The Holy Spirit, 36. As evidence, Chalassery refers to Demonstration 12.13. For a discussion of this text, see below, 99ff.
10 Parisot, Aphraatis Demonstrationes, 1, 294.
11 Payne Smith, Compendious Syriac Dictionary, 538.
12 See above, 33f.
The juxtaposition of Spirit and mother, of which we have a hint here, is more clearly articulated later in the same Demonstration, where Aphrahat speaks of 'our Lord who was born from the Spirit'.  

\[\text{13} \text{ Demonstration 6.17. Syr: Ἰησοῦς Υἱὸς ἀνθρώπων} \text{; Parisot, Aphraatis Demonstrationes, 1, 301.}\]

\[\text{14} \text{ Ibid., 840. In Book 4 of Jerome's Commentary on Isaiah a quotation from the Gospel of the Hebrews provides another reference to the image of the Spirit as mother at the Jordan: 'Factum est autem cum ascendisset Dominus de aqua, descendit omnis Spiritus sancti, et requieuit super eum, et dixit illi: Filii mi, in omnibus prophetis exspectabam te, ut unires, et requiescerem in te. Tu es enim requies mea, tu es filius meus primogenitus, qui regnas in sempiternum.' (S Hieronymi Presbyteri, 'Commentariorum in Esalam Libri - XI', Corpus Christianorum Series Latina 73, (Turnhout, 1963), 148.) Here the heavenly voice originates from the Spirit and not from the Father; cf Ode 24.2, where the bird hovering over the Messiah begins to sing; (see above, 35). Cramer concludes that: 'Diese Texte sprechen für sich und bezeugen, daß die Vorstellung vom Heiligen Geist als Mutter Jesu in der frühen semitisch geprägten Kirche ganz geläufig war. Besonders Aphrahat, der für den frühchristlichen Raum spricht, ist ein Beleg dafür, daß solche Meinungen nicht nur vom vielleicht phantasievollen Volk vertreten wurden'. (Cramer, Der Geist Gottes und des Menschen in frühchristlicher Theologie, (Münster: Ascendorff, 1979), 29.)}\n
\[\text{15} \text{ There is no obvious reason why Finn should associate this with 2 Corinthians 5.8. 1 Corinthians 15.45 is surely more appropriate here. Finn, Early Christian Baptism, 137.}\]
'Le vêtement de gloire perdu lors du péché et retrouvé à la seconde naissance du baptême, c'est l'Esprit saint qui sauve de la malheureuse nudité'.

The comparison of the first birth and the first Adam with the second birth and the second Adam resembles very closely that made by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15.45. Quoting Genesis 2.7 in the context of a discussion on the resurrection of the spiritual body, paralleled itself in Aphrahat's argument, Paul states: 'Thus also it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit'. This verse is quoted by Aphrahat later in Demonstration 6 together with verse 49: 'As we have put on the image of the Adam from the earth, so we shall put on the image of that Adam from heaven'. The same imagery is expressed by Paul in Galatians 3.27 and leads Duncan to suppose that this was the inspiration for Aphrahat's usage. It is, therefore, within this theological context that Aphrahat's phrase 'those who are baptized put him on' should be read.

The explicit use of the language of birth in this Demonstration, echoing John 3, ties in with the principal argument of this dissertation, that regeneration lies at the heart of the baptismal theologies of the Syrian tradition. From Demonstration 6.14, we may surmise that it is as a result of the Spirit's movement upon the waters that those who are immersed 'come to birth', thereby receiving the Holy Spirit. In line with the baptismal

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16 Pierre, Les Exposés, SC 349, 400. John 3.6 is another source for the imagery of baptismal regeneration which resonates with Aphrahat's theology.
17 Demonstration 6.18; Parisot, Aphraatis Demonstrationes, 1, 308.
18 Duncan, Baptism in the Demonstrations, 44.
19 In connection with baptism, Demonstration 6.14 speaks of the 'the man who receives the Spirit from the water'; Syr: καὶ ὁ ἤρθεν ἀπὸ τοῦ νεκροῦ τεταμένος; Parisot, Aphraatis Demonstrationes, 1, 296.
imagery of Ephrem, this implies that the water of the font has become a womb through which the candidates are born again to new life in the Spirit.

But what of the rather puzzling רנפנ רנפנ רנפנ, rendered by Finn as 'they receive the Holy Spirit immortal from divinity himself'? This difficult phrase is translated by Gwynn as 'they received the Holy Spirit from a particle of the Godhead',20 and by Pierre as 'Ils reçoivent l'Esprit saint, prélèvement de la divinité, qui est aussi immortel'.21 The Syriac verb רנפ has been taken by the latter as 'to take away', hence 'prélèvement'. However, Gwynn's version is substantiated by Payne Smith, who indicates that the noun רנפ refers to something which has been taken away from the whole (which in this case is the divinity) and therefore renders it as a little or small portion or a particle.22

However it is translated, רנפ indicates that the baptized do not receive the whole of deity. Using language which does not conform to later doctrinal orthodoxy, the Sage describes the Spirit as a 'portion of the godhead'. In Demonstration 6.14 alone there has been mention of the spirit, the Holy Spirit, the spirit of Christ and the animal spirit. Here it is clear that the spirit referred to is the divine Spirit, that is the Spirit of Christ, which comes from God and which is invoked by the priests. At this point it should be noted that it is not at all certain whether 'Spirit of Christ' can be distinguished from Christ himself. Mention has already been made of Aphrahat's use of Pauline language. However, whereas Paul writes consistently of putting on Christ, Aphrahat refers to

putting on the Spirit of Christ. According to Duncan, the Sage was writing at a time too early in the history of the formulation of Trinitarian doctrine to make a firm distinction between the two and that, 'when baptism was conceived of as a clothing or garbing with the Spirit of Christ, nothing other was meant than the Pauline putting on Christ'.

Furthermore, Cramer believes the Sage's particular use of the Spirit of Christ to rest on a weak biblical foundation, for πνεῦμα Χριστοῦ is seldom mentioned in scripture. Rather, he sees it as a characteristic peculiarity of Aphrahat and that, 'der Geist Gottes nicht anders als der Geist Christi ist'. Further evidence may be found in Demonstration 6.12 where, in the course of a passage which makes use of Joel 3.1-2, Aphrahat maintains that, even in his day, it is the same spirit of the Messiah which is poured out on all flesh.

Is it remarkable, therefore, that it is the Spirit of Christ that is invoked to hover upon the waters and not the Holy Spirit? Surely not. First, there is a danger in seeing this epiclesis as, in the words of Finn, the 'consecration of the baptismal font'. This use of language reflects a later idea of the blessing of the baptismal water which is not present in the tradition described by the Sage. The epiclesis described by Aphrahat is a calling down of the Spirit of Christ with a clear purpose: that those who are washed in the waters of baptism and thereby come to new birth might be clothed with the same Spirit of Christ of which Spirit they become a temple. It is, therefore, not surprising that the priests should invoke the Spirit of Christ upon the waters.

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23 Duncan, *Baptism in the Demonstrations*, 44.
Second, there is a precedent for this type of epiclesis in the *Euchologion* of Sarapion, with a not dissimilar effect:

... And as your only begotten Word coming down upon the waters of the Jordan rendered them holy, so now also may he descend on these and make them holy and spiritual, to the end that those being baptized may be no longer flesh and blood, but spiritual and able to worship you the uncreated Father through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit... 27

An important element of Aphrahat's pneumatology is what Cramer describes as his anthropological-soteriological understanding of the Spirit. The foundation of this thesis is that 'spirit' is the possession of every person: 'Nach Aphrahat hat »hat« der Mensch einen Geist, entweder den heiligen Gottesgeist oder einen bösen Geist'.28 This understanding is based upon the Genesis text which is used by Aphrahat to demonstrate that every person is born with an 'animal spirit'. In baptism, which is the second birth, the candidate receives spirit again, thus intimately linking initiation and creation. This time, however, it is not an animal spirit, but the Spirit of Christ which is imparted through the waters of rebirth. Thus, Aphrahat expounds a tripartite anthropology of body, soul and spirit, the latter being that which is given in the second birth. To cite Cramer again, 'Er lehrt also deutlich eine Dreiteilung des wahren Menschen aus Leib, Seele und Geist. Göttlich ist von diesen den wahren Menschen konstituierenden Elementen nur der Geist'.29

Later in Demonstration 6.14 the Sage embarks upon an extended discourse on the relationship between spirit and resurrection. Quoting 2 Corinthians 5.8 Aphrahat states, 'And the Spirit, according to her nature, returns to Christ, for the apostle again says:

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27 Whitaker, *Documents of the Baptismal Liturgy*, 83.
When we have left the body, we will be with the Lord. Thus, as the argument develops, it becomes clear that it is through the gift of the Spirit of Christ in baptism that the body will be resurrected after death.

The Spirit of Christ, whom the spiritual receive, returns to the Lord; and the animal spirit, however, is buried in its own nature, and sense is taken away from it. When someone has preserved the Spirit of Christ in purity, the Spirit of Christ returns to him to say to him: 'The body to which I came and which I put on through the waters of baptism has served me in holiness.' The Holy Spirit will urge Christ that the body which preserved her according to right measure rise; the Spirit makes the case that she be joined again to it and that his body rise with praise.

The image here is of the Spirit of Christ, imparted by God through the waters of baptism, returning to Christ at death and interceding on behalf of the deceased that the body which has preserved the Spirit should rise. For the Spirit of Christ, there is no death or burial as is the case for the animal spirit, but an immediate return to the Christ through whom she came. The Spirit pleads the case of the one who bore her, that she might be allowed to be joined once again to the same body that it might be resurrected. Resurrection means the resurrection of the body, whose agent is the Spirit of Christ with which it has been clothed from the waters of baptism and which acts as advocate after death.

As for those not resurrected, the Sage indicates that this is because the Spirit will have left them before death because they will have 'grieved' her:

29 Ibid., 75.
30 Syr: ἀπεστάλησε πρὸς ἀποκάλεσαν ἡμᾶς Ἰς
31 Parisot, Aphraatis Demonstrationes, 1, 288; Finn, Early Christian Baptism, 138.
32 Thus, although there may be some difficulty in distinguishing between Christ and Spirit, in the ritual of resurrection both have different and, indeed, clearly defined roles to fulfil. Though intimately related in the process, the two are acting independently.
Let us, therefore, prepare our temples for the Spirit of Christ, nor ought we to grieve her lest she depart from us. Remember the word of the Apostle, warning us: 'Do not grieve the Holy Spirit, in whom you have been sealed for the day of redemption'.

Quoting Ephesians 4.30, Aphrahat emphasizes that one of the chief purposes for receiving the Spirit of Christ is resurrection on the day of redemption. Referring again to the Spirit departing from one who has been baptised, he states in the same Demonstration that:

... as for the man who receives the Spirit from the waters and grieves her, she has already departed from him before he dies; going according to her nature to Christ, she accuses the man by whom she was grieved.

Thus, there is no resurrection for those who have grieved the Spirit through sin, because the spirit has departed from the body before death.

For Aphrahat, the Spirit of Christ, received in baptism, must be kept safe by the Christian throughout life, so that at death, that which has clothed him may become the garment of immortality. At the sound of the trumpet of the last judgement, it is the Spirit who, having interceded with the Son:

... will quickly throw open the tombs, raise up the bodies buried in them, and vest them with the very glory that she brought with her. The Spirit herself will dwell within, so that the body may be raised up... The animal spirit, which belongs to the body, will be absorbed by glory and the body by the Spirit. Seized by the Spirit, the person will fly to a meeting with the King, who will receive him with joy.

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33 Syr: סיר מכהוילבכיניו.
34 Parisot, Aphraatis Demonstrationes, 1, 292; Finn, Early Christian Baptism, 137.
35 Ibid. 296; 138.
36 Ibid.
3.1.2 Demonstration 11 and the Baptism of Jesus

As the priest's invocation over the water in Demonstration 6 is based on Jesus' own baptism so, too, Demonstration 11, *On Circumcision*, reveals further parallels with the Jordan event:

Our God is true, and his covenants are very trustworthy, and each covenant in its time was true and trustworthy. They find life who are circumcised in their hearts and who circumcise themselves a second time on the true Jordan, the baptism of the forgiveness of sins.\(^{37}\)

In this section, the Sage has been outlining the various Old Testament covenants which God made with his people. Special prominence is given to the covenant proclaimed by Jeremiah\(^{38}\) which is described as being as true and as faithful as the circumcision given to Abraham: "The circumcision in which he was pleased to give the covenant is that concerning which Jeremiah spoke, "Circumcise the foreskin of your hearts"."\(^{39}\) Thus, the second circumcision was foreshadowed in the prophecy of Jeremiah. As one engaged in conflict with Judaism, the role of circumcision in both Jewish and Christian communities was as important an issue for the Sage as it was for the Church of the first century. Aphrahat is clear that, for Christians, baptism is the true circumcision of the heart. As Duncan points out:

Thus, while convincing the Jews of the passing of the Old Covenant with its institution of carnal circumcision, Aphraates points to the sacrament of baptism as the new spiritual circumcision and as the fulfilment of its Old Testament figure.\(^{40}\)

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\(^{38}\) Jeremiah 4.4.


\(^{40}\) Duncan, *Baptism in the Demonstrations*, 35.
In Demonstration 11.12, the writer provides a list of comparisons between Joshua and Jesus ('Joshua our redeemer'). The first two illustrate well Aphrahat’s understanding of the relationship between Jewish circumcision and Christian baptism:

Joshua the son of Nun circumcised the people a second time with knives of stone when he and his people crossed the Jordan. Joshua our redeemer a second time circumcised the peoples who believed in him with the circumcision of the heart, and they were baptised *with the baptism* and circumcised with "the knife which is sharper than a two-edged sword". Joshua the Son of Nun led the people across to the Land of Promise; and Joshua our redeemer promised the land of the living to whoever passed through the true Jordan, believed, and circumcised the foreskin of his heart.

Thus, just as Joshua circumcised the people of Israel a second time at Gilgal once they had crossed the Jordan, so Jesus circumcises those who believe in him through the waters of baptism. Therefore, the Jordan is twice identified with the second circumcision, both for Joshua son of Nun and for Joshua our redeemer. In the case of the former, physical circumcision followed the crossing for the Jordan; but, for the latter, the second circumcision is itself ‘the baptism of the forgiveness of sins’.

Circumcision and the crossing of the Jordan are both presented as Old Testament figures of the rite of baptism, the passing through the 'true Jordan' to the promised land which is eternal life with Christ. Duncan believes that the tradition concerning Christ’s

41 The consonants of both names are identical in Syriac as they are in Hebrew and Aramaic and therefore lend themselves to the characteristic Semitic word-play.
42 Syr: ይካይታም የታለይ በታለይ
44 Joshua 5.1-9
45 Demonstration 11.11. That baptism conveys the forgiveness of sins is further supported in Demonstration 4.19. Describing the blood of the Messiah which marks the Jews, the Sage states that: 'They can only be cleansed by washing in the water of baptism, and partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ . . Sins are washed away in water . .'. Parisot, *Aphraatis Demonstrationes*, 1,
own baptism is relevant here and should be taken into consideration in interpreting the rite, since 'as Jesus descended into the Jordan and sanctified it, so likewise He descended into the water of the baptismal font, sanctifying it and making of it, as it were, another Jordan'. Such language reflects the evidence outlined in the previous chapter which, whilst not falling into line with Winkler's thesis that Christian initiation is the *mimesis* of the baptism of Jesus, does, nevertheless, highlight the relationship between the Jordan event and baptism in the Syrian tradition.

Returning to circumcision, the use of this language in connection with baptism has already been discussed with reference to the *Odes of Solomon* and Old Testament texts, including Deuteronomy 30.6. In addition, Paul refers to the imagery of circumcision in connection with baptism and resurrection in Colossians 2.11f.

It is striking that in each of the texts which have been considered, in Aphrahat, in Ode 11, in Colossians 2.11 and Deuteronomy 30.6, the result of circumcision is the same - life. This ties in with Sage's emphasis on rebirth. In his conclusion to the Demonstration *On Circumcision*, Aphrahat skilfully joins together the three themes of covenant, rebirth and circumcision within the context of Christian initiation:

Blessed are those whose hearts are circumcised from the foreskin and who are born through water, the second circumcision, for they are inheritors with Abraham, the head of the believers and the father of all peoples, whose faith was reckoned for him as righteousness.

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46 Duncan, *Baptism in the Demonstrations*, 60.

47 See above, 38ff.

48 Syr: "<br>

3.1.3 Baptism for all?

'In Aphraates, Baptism is not the common seal of every Christian's faith, but a privilege reserved for celibates'. 50 This view, put forward by Burkitt at the beginning of this century, has been one of the most controversial issues to be discussed in almost every study into the place of initiation in the Demonstrations. 51 The question raised is simple: was baptism administered only to the men and women 'of the Covenant' in Aphrahat's community? Without entering too deeply into this complex debate, it would appear that there was a group within Aphrahat's Church whom he refers to as 'sons of the Covenant'. 52 In Demonstration 7 he states that:

All these things I have written to you, beloved, because in our age there are those who themselves choose to become solitaries, sons of a covenant, and holy. 53

This, on its own, does not prove Burkitt's thesis. Nor is any further information given in Demonstration 6, On Ascetics. 54 All that can be surmised is that the term does not refer to the whole Church, since this group is obviously set apart in ascetic observance and in sexual abstinence. To quote Demonstration 6.4:

Therefore, my brethren, if any Son of the Covenant, or anyone who has professed continence, shall embrace the solitary life, and shall wish a woman who is a Daughter of the Covenant, 55 bound even as he is, to live with him, it would be much better for him to take a wife openly, lest he be seduced by lust. 56

50 FC Burkitt, Early Eastern Christianity, (London: John Murray, 1904), 125.
51 For an opposing view, see RH Connolly, 'Aphraates and Monasticism', Journal of Theological Studies, 6 (1905), 522-539.
54 See above, 79ff.
55 Syr: ἀπὸ τῶν ἁγνῶν κατὰ τὸν αὐτὸν
56 Parisot, Aphraatis Demonstrationes, 1, 250; Duncan, Baptism in the Demonstrations, 96.
Pierre believes 'Son of the Covenant' may have undergone a shift in meaning from being first used for the whole community to becoming a specialist term for the women and men who had consecrated their lives to the ascetic ideal.\textsuperscript{57} Certainly, this interpretation would clarify some of the confusion relating to the rite of baptism as the exclusive property of this group. It would also point to the fact that though they bear the title children of the covenant, if baptism were open to all, then these ascetics would not be the sole inheritors of its promises. Indeed, Aphrahat states clearly in his discussion on the second circumcision, 'Blessed are those who . . . are born through water . . . for they are inheritors with Abraham'.\textsuperscript{58}

What, though, of the textual evidence (Demonstration 7) used by Burkitt to support his argument? Aphrahat interprets the story of Gideon and God's instructions concerning the selection of his troops to fight the Midianites in Judges 7.1-8\textsuperscript{59} as a foreshadowing of baptism: 'Hear then, beloved, this mystery which Gideon foresaw and showed figuratively'.\textsuperscript{60} Having described the method by which the troops were chosen, the Sage concludes: 'This is a great mystery, my friend, which Gideon prefigured, revealing the type of baptism,\textsuperscript{61} the symbol of the contest and the likeness of the single ones'.\textsuperscript{62}

Clearly there would appear to be some link between baptism and the selection of those whom God calls to be a Son or a Daughter of the Covenant and to fight in the contest

\textsuperscript{57} Pierre, \emph{Les Exposés, SC}349, 100.
\textsuperscript{58} Demonstration 11.12; see above, 90.
\textsuperscript{59} According to Murray this is itself a Midrash on Deuteronomy 20.1-9. R Murray, 'The Exhortation to Candidates for Ascetical Vows at Baptism in the Ancient Syriac Church', \emph{New Testament Studies}, 21 (1975), 60.
\textsuperscript{60} Demonstration 7.19; Hallock, 'Aphraates on Penitents', 51.
\textsuperscript{61} Syr: \text{	extit{\text_it\text{	ext{\textchar37}}}}\text{	extchar37} \text{	extit{\text{\textchar37}}\text{	extchar37}} \text{	extit{\text{	extchar37}}}
like the men who lapped at the water like dogs. As for the nature of this contest, Aphrahat draws a parallel between the behaviour of dogs and the Sons and Daughters of the Covenant:

... from every living creature which has been created there is not one which loves his master and keeps watch over him by day and by night as does a dog ... So are those strong who have been put to the test by the water; they follow their Master as the dogs, and they deliver themselves over to death for him, and carry on his struggle valiantly, and keep watch over him by day and by night, and they roar like the dogs while they meditate upon the law day and night, and they love the Lord, and they lick his wounds when they receive his Body, and they set him before their eyes, and they lick him with their tongues as a dog licks his master.63

Having established a link between baptism and the selection of those who will fight the contest, does it necessarily follow that the latter are the only recipients of baptism? Surely not. Looking at baptismal rites today, they are littered with any number of Pauline and Johannine references which are open to several interpretations. The question of who should receive the sacraments of Christian initiation remains a widely contested issued at the end of the twentieth century, not least with regard to infant baptism. Such variation of interpretation would appear to lie behind the surface of the Demonstrations of Aphrahat. As Pierre points out, the context for the Sage's discussion in Demonstration 7 is war, with baptism described as a rite of recruitment for battle.64

Aphraate ne répond pas directement à la question de savoir si le baptême est donné à tous. En donnant aux solitaires un modèle scripturaire, il exhorte à la vaillance et au discernement ceux qui ont choisi de se vouer.65
This, also, is the basis for Duncan's conclusion that the celebration of the rite of baptism would be the occasion when some would commit themselves to becoming Sons and Daughters of the Covenant. He suggests that this division may have resulted in the two groups being baptised separately, or at least the higher order first. Furthermore, it should not be forgotten that it was after Jesus' baptism in the Jordan that he went off alone into the wilderness to live an ascetic life, akin to that associated with the Baptist. Indeed, Cramer highlights three texts in the Demonstrations which tie in with this and refer to the Spirit of God / the Lord. He remarks that John the Baptist received the Spirit of the Lord who led him into the desert (6.13); at the baptism of Jesus the Spirit rested upon the Saviour after John laid his hands upon him (6.13); and when the Spirit dwells in a person they belong to God (23.47); thus bringing together the themes of baptism, Spirit and commitment.

Furthermore, there is no evidence from the Demonstrations that Aphrahat considered marriage to be an unsuitable way of life, save for the fact that those who were married or who wished to be would be unable to commit themselves completely to the contest as a child of the Covenant. Indeed, as Duncan points out, the Sage's attitude to marriage is anything but unfavourable and takes it for granted that there are Church members who are married. In Demonstration 18.18, On Virginity and Holiness, he states, 'Far be it from us, however, to debase marriage, constituted in the world by God

66 Duncan, Baptism in the Demonstrations, 101. Finn, too, commenting that ascetics were at the heart of the Syriac speaking Church, suggests that, 'They were baptised before the ordinary people (at least in Aphrahat's time), and the sacrament was their special moment of commitment'. (Finn, Early Christian Baptism, 113). Chalassery adopts a similar line: 'Those who wished to volunteer to live this life, might make a quasi-sacramental promise to follow the celibate life at the time of their baptism'. (Chalassery, The Holy Spirit, 37f). Although baptism and the Sons of the Covenant are closely associated in Aphrahat's thought, his Demonstrations do not provide any explicit evidence of a hierarchical order of baptism.
himself. Nor should it be forgotten that it has been argued that Aphrahat himself was a Son of the Covenant. If this were the case, would it not be natural for the Sage to interpret the rite from the perspective of his own personal situation?

All things considered, it is hard to get away from the conclusion that Christian baptism, although most likely the occasion when a commitment was made to live an ascetic life as Sons and Daughters of the Covenant, was nevertheless open to all, married or celibate, after a period of catechesis. Pierre summarises the situation succinctly:

Le baptême... est l'entrée dans l'alliance nouvelle, le pacte qui fait les «solitaires» devenus étrangers aux soucis de ce monde, un avec le Christ. Les voués le vivent de manière totale et prophétique; les humbles gens ne sont pas condamnés s'ils restent un peu en deçà de l'idéal ascétique des membres de l'Ordre. Il y a des degrés dans le bon, et une étoile est plus brillante qu'une autre étoile.

3.1.4 Demonstration 12 and the Paschal Mystery
Another important element in Aphrahat's baptismal theology is his interpretation of initiation within the context of Christ's passion and death. The appearance of such language at a relatively early stage in the development of the tradition is significant and does not conform with Winkler's thesis that the theology of initiation underwent a shift from Johannine to Pauline models, so that during the course of the fourth century:

the baptismal font, once seen as a womb and also referred to as Jordan, changes now in West Syria and Palestine into sepulcher and grave; the immersion becomes the imitation of Christ's burial and resurrection.

67 Cramer, Der Geist Gottes, 64.
68 Parisot, Aphraatis Demonstrationes, 1, 835; Duncan, Baptism in the Demonstrations, 90.
69 See above, 22f; Murray, Church and Kingdom, 29.
70 Pierre, Les Exposés, SC349, 110f.
71 Winkler, 'The Original Meaning', 44.
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67 Cramer, Der Geist Gottes, 64.
68 Parisot, Aphraatis Demonstraciones, 1, 835; Duncan, Baptism in the Demonstrations, 90.
69 See above, 22f; Murray, Church and Kingdom, 29.
70 Pierre, Les Exposés, SC 349, 110f.
71 Winkler, ‘The Original Meaning’, 44.
Where does the Persian Sage fit into Winkler's pattern? This study has already drawn attention to the importance which Aphrahat places on baptismal regeneration. Our consideration of Demonstration 12 will also show that baptism has a significant role to play within his theology of the paschal mystery.\(^\text{72}\) Thus, rather than showing signs of moving from a more primitive to a later baptismal theology, the genius of Aphrahat integrates both and expresses them in a rite which shows no signs of attracting a post-immersion anointing which, for Winkler, is the liturgical indicator of the shift to the Pauline model.

In Demonstration 12.10, *On the Paschal Sacrifice*, the Sage writes:

> Israel was baptised in the midst of the sea on that night of the *Passover*,\(^\text{73}\) on the day of redemption. Our redeemer washed the feet of his disciples on the night of the *Passover*, the mystery of baptism.\(^\text{74}\) You should know, my beloved, it was on that night that our redeemer gave the true baptism, for so long as he was wandering with his disciples, they were baptised with the baptism of the law of the priests, the baptism of which John spoke, 'Repent from your sins'. On that night he showed them the mystery of the baptism of the passion of his death, as the apostle said, 'You were buried with him in baptism unto death, and you rose with him by the power of God'. So know, my beloved, that the baptism of John does not effect the forgiveness of sins but only penitence... Also our redeemer testified to this (the true baptism) when he said to his disciples, 'John baptised with water, but you will be baptised in the Holy Spirit'.\(^\text{75}\)

For Aphrahat, it was on the night of the Last Supper, when the Jewish community celebrated the saving event of Moses leading the children of Israel out of captivity to

\(^\text{72}\) Indeed, Williams notes that 'despite Winkler's claim that Aphrahat shows no sign of a Pauline death-and-resurrection theology in his accounts of baptism, we do in fact find clear reference to just such an association... In other words, the paschal reading of baptism is widespread in the East before the middle of the fourth century'. R Williams, 'Baptism and the Arian Controversy', in (eds) MR Barnes & DH Williams, *Arianism after Arius*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), 179.

\(^\text{73}\) Syr: ἐν τῇ ἑλευθερίᾳ τῆς θάνατον

\(^\text{74}\) Syr: ἐν τῇ ἑλευθερίᾳ τῆς μεταμόρφωσις

\(^\text{75}\) Parisot, *Aphraatis Demonstrationes*, 1, 528f; Neusner, *Aphrahat and Judaism*, 38.
freedom through the waters of the Red Sea, and not at his own baptism in the Jordan,\textsuperscript{76} that Christ instituted Christian baptism by 'washing the feet of his disciples on the night of the paschal sacrifice'. According to the Sage, water baptism is clearly not foreign to the disciples, since the account of the 'institution' is followed by a discourse on the relationship between the baptism which Jesus gives as an example to his disciples, symbolized by the washing of their feet, and that of John which, paradoxically, resembles more closely the Christian liturgy than any of the events which surround the Last Supper.

By linking baptism with this particular day, Aphrahat is not so much describing the liturgical performance of the rite (there would seem to be no evidence to suggest that foot washing played a part in the celebration of initiation in the Syrian tradition) but, by placing it at the beginning of the Passion narrative, is pointing to a particular theological interpretation.

Aphrahat's characteristic device of viewing a Christian person, rite or event as the fulfilment of an Old Testament counterpart\textsuperscript{78} is seen in Israel's crossing of the Red Sea and the crossing of the Jordan into the promised land.\textsuperscript{79} The former, often associated

\textsuperscript{76} However, the Sage does not deny the connection between the Jordan event and Christian baptism; see above, 90; for further evidence, see also Demonstration 4.6 where Aphrahat describes Jesus as the great prophet who alone opened up baptism and was himself baptized; Parisot, \textit{Aphraatis Demonstrationes}, 1, 149.

\textsuperscript{77} For a fuller discussion of Aphrahat and the institution of baptism, see McDonnell, \textit{Baptism of Jesus}, 191ff.

\textsuperscript{78} As has been demonstrated concerning the new circumcision and covenant; see above, 88ff.

\textsuperscript{79} Mention of this has already been made with reference to the comparison between Joshua and 'Joshua our redeemer' in Demonstration 11; see above, 89f.
with the celebration of Christ's death and resurrection, is fulfilled in Christian baptism, baptism 'in the Holy Spirit', which is true liberation from slavery into freedom, a passing over from death to life.

The Sage goes so far as to describe true baptism as 'the mystery of the passion of our redeemer', leading Finn to conclude that, for Aphrahat's community, baptism enacted the passion of Christ in the context of their celebration of his death and resurrection. This, surely, seems credible, especially if one considers the Jewish understanding of a dynamic recalling and remembering of the Exodus in the celebration of the Passover. Although the Jews celebrated Passover on the fourteenth of Nisan, Aphrahat indicates that his community celebrated the true Passover on the fifteenth.

This linking together of baptism and Christ's passion can be further understood in the light of Aphrahat's juxtaposition of the 'mystery of the baptism of the passion of his death' with the language of Pauline baptismal theology, of being baptised into Christ's death and resurrection. In addition, Duncan points out that, according to the same Demonstration, Aphrahat considered Christ dead from the moment he 'gave his flesh to eat and his blood to drink', just after he had washed the feet of his disciples.

80 Duncan quotes Ephrem's *De Epiphania* 1 as well as part of Cyril of Jerusalem's first *Mystagogical Catechesis*. Duncan, *Baptism in the Demonstrations*, 53.
82 Demonstration 12.8 states unambiguously that 'the day of the solemn passion is celebrated on Friday, namely, the fifteenth day - a full night and day'. *Ibid.*, 146.
83 Romans 6.3f; Colossians 2.12; Parisot, *Aphraatis Demonstrationes*, 1, 517.
84 Demonstration 12.6f; Duncan, *Baptism in the Demonstrations*, 80. In *De Tridui Spatio* Gregory of Nyssa pinpoints Christ's sacrifice at the moment he gives his body and blood to his disciples. For a discussion on the relationship between the theologies of Gregory and Aphrahat and their effect upon the calculation of the length of time between Christ's death and resurrection, see H Drobner, 'Three Days and Three Nights in the Heart of the Earth: The Calculation of the *Triduum Mortis* according to Gregory of Nyssa', in (eds) A Spira (et al), *The Easter Sermons of Gregory of Nyssa*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1981), 269ff. Ephrem also speaks
However, Duncan weakens his thesis by arguing that in the Church of Aphrahat, 'the annual Paschal celebration . . . was a commemoration of the passion and death of our Lord, with no observance of the Resurrection'. For, from the Sage's description of the liturgy in Demonstration 12, ' . . . in its time from year to year, fasting in purity, praying firmly, praising diligently, saying psalms as is appropriate, giving the sign and the baptism as is right', it would seem that the administration of baptism came at the end of the rite and, therefore, most likely, at daybreak on the sixteenth. Furthermore, how can any liturgy which uses imagery of the Exodus as freedom from the slavery of sin and the crossing of the Jordan to the promised land as entry into a new life with Christ not be a celebration of his resurrection? Such an hypothesis is supported by Varghese, who comments that, as part of the Easter festivities, 'notre baptême est la participation au mystère pascal'.

3.1.5 Baptismal Anointing?
One final element in this Demonstration must now be considered: the reference to 'giving the sign' in 12.13. The Syriac 有一定 has variously been translated as 'transmission du signe' by Varghese, 'traditio signi' by Parisot and 'de donner l'onction of Christ's death at the Last Supper; see, De Azymis 2.7; E Beck (ed), 'Des Heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Paschahymnen', Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium 248, Scriptores Syri 106, (Louvain, 1964), 14.

Ibid., 80f.
Demonstration 12.13; Parisot, Aphraatis Demonstrationes, 1, 537; Neusner, Aphrahat and Judaism, 40.
It is very difficult to understand how Duncan can reach the conclusion that he does concerning the chronology of the Paschal celebration: 'We may conclude that in the Church of Aphraates, baptism was solemnly administered on the evening of the 14th Nisan'. Duncan, Baptism in the Demonstrations, 107.

Varghese, Onctions baptismales, 34; cf Chalassery, The Holy Spirit, 44.
Ibid., 37.
Parisot, Aphraatis Demonstrationes, 1, 538.
et le baptême comme il faut' by Pierre;\textsuperscript{91} it has been the cause of much disagreement amongst scholars and, according to Duncan, has been interpreted by Parisot and others as referring to the rite of confirmation,\textsuperscript{92} by Bert as the giving of the Creed (\textit{traditio symboli}) to the catechumens, while others have designated it a pre-immersion anointing.\textsuperscript{93}

Duncan himself makes much of the fact that the conjunction 'and' is used between \textit{AB} and \textit{ER}, concluding that the former is unlikely to refer to the whole rite, but rather 'a signing or sealing in the form of a cross' given to candidates before baptism.\textsuperscript{94} According to Varghese, it is difficult at first to affirm that this is a pre-immersion anointing, since this Demonstration lacks any mention of oil.\textsuperscript{95} However, of the four texts in the \textit{Demonstrations} where \textit{AB} is used in connection with baptism, there is, in Demonstration 23.3, a reference to baptismal anointing:

\begin{quote}
When the door was opened to ask for peace, the darkness fled from the minds of many and there arose the light of intelligence and the fruitfulness of the shining olive in which is the sign of the mystery of life\textsuperscript{96} and by which Christians and priests and kings and prophets were made perfect.\textsuperscript{97}
\end{quote}

The mere fact that the fruits of the olive are linked here with Christians, priests, kings and prophets, all of whom have anointing associated with them, points to, in the case of 'the Christians', anointing and baptism being connected. This being the case, Varghese suggests that it might be permissible to interpret the 'giving the sign' in Demonstration

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{91} Pierre, \textit{Les Exposés}, SC \textit{349}, 587.
\item \textsuperscript{92} Parisot, \textit{Aphraatis Demonstrationes}, 1, iv.
\item \textsuperscript{93} Duncan, \textit{Baptism in the Demonstrations}, 108.
\item \textsuperscript{94} \textit{Ibid.}, 110.
\item \textsuperscript{95} Varghese, \textit{Onctions baptismales}, 37.
\item \textsuperscript{96} Syr: ...\textit{AB}...\textit{AB}...\textit{AB}...
\item \textsuperscript{97}
\end{itemize}
12 as a pre-immersion anointing.98 Chalassery is far less hesitant in reaching the same conclusion: identifying an anointing as beginning the rite of initiation, he notes that by using goin to denote this pre-immersion unction, Aphrahat's terminology corresponds with that found in the Acts of Judas Thomas and Ephrem's De Virginitate 7.6.99 However, as the discussion in the previous chapter has indicated, in the case of the Acts, a simple identification of a pre-immersion anointing with goin is not possible; instead, the evidence would seem to suggest that, in some cases, the goin describes the whole of the baptismal rite, including the pre-immersion anointing.100

As for the theological and liturgical meaning of a pre-immersion anointing, Varghese refers again to the last Demonstration and suggests, following Didascalia 16,101 a participation in the anointing of priests, prophets and kings so that, as David was anointed king, so Jesus was anointed priest at his baptism in the Jordan at the hands of John.102 From this assumption Varghese suggests that, since the Sage states that Saul and David received the Spirit when they were anointed,103 so too the Christian, by participating in the same anointing of prophet, priest and king, also receives the gift of

97 Parisot, Aphraatis Demonstrationes, 2, 9.
98 Varghese, Onections baptismales, 39.
100 For a discussion on the meaning of goin in the Acts of Judas Thomas, see above, 70ff.
Furthermore, in the case of the use of goin in Demonstration 23.63, Duncan suggests that it probably refers to the baptismal rite as a whole. (Duncan, Baptism in the Demonstrations, 115.) What Chalassery has to say about the term appears rather confused for, in the space of a few sentences he states both that goin denotes the pre-immersion anointing and that the same term is used 'to denote the whole baptismal rite itself'. (Chalassery, The Holy Spirit, 39f.)
101 See above, 47.
103 Demonstration 6.16.
the Spirit through the pre-immersion anointing. Thus, he is led to ask whether, for Aphrahat, 'le leitmotiv de l'onnement baptismale serait le don de l'Esprit?'

However, since the occurrence of a pre-immersion anointing in the rite of initiation known to Aphrahat's Church is itself hypothesis and since the Sage himself does not refer to any connection between anointing and the gift of the Spirit with respect to baptism but, rather, that it is through immersion in the waters of new Jordan that one is clothed with the Spirit, Varghese's argument is not convincing. Indeed, it would appear that he is attempting to bring the Demonstrations into line with what is usually considered to be the more common Syrian practice.

3.1.6 Summary
Baptism is a new birth and second circumcision in which the candidate flees from the armies of sin by following Moses through the Red Sea and crosses the Jordan with Joshua to reach God's promised land of eternal life. It is a rite open to all, administered during the paschal celebrations through which the candidate is baptized into Christ's death on the cross for the forgiveness of sins. It is, however, above all, the moment when the candidate is clothed with the Spirit of Christ, that element of the divine which, unless driven away by sin, will remain with the candidate throughout life and which, at death, will return to the Son to plead for the resurrection of the body.

3.2 Ephrem the Syrian
Of all the Syrian Fathers, the poetry and prose of Ephrem are, without doubt, the most significant for this thesis. Many of the theological and liturgical threads which have been

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104 Varghese, Onctions baptismales, 42.
encountered thus far are woven together into a tapestry which displays the activity of
the Spirit and the celebration of the baptismal ritual as intimately intertwined.

3.2.1 Anointing and the Second Adam
De Virginitate 7 provides an excellent starting point for any consideration of Ephrem's
baptismal theology:

2 October gives rest to the weary after the dust and dirt of the summer,
its rain washes, its dew anoints the trees and their fruit.
April gives rest to the fasters, it anoints, baptizes and clothes in white;
it cleanses off the dirt of sin from our souls.
October presses out the oil for us, April multiplies mercies for us;
In October fruit is gathered, in April sins are forgiven.

5 A royal portrait is painted with visible colours,
and with oil that all can see is the hidden portrait of our hidden King
portrayed on those who have been signed: on them baptism,
that is in travail with them in its womb, depicts the new portrait, to replace the image of the former Adam
who was corrupted; it gives birth to them with triple pangs,
accompanied by the three glorious names, of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

6 This oil is the dear friend of the Holy Spirit, it serves her,
following her like a disciple.
With it she signs priests; for with the oil the Holy Spirit imprints her mark on her sheep.
Like a signet ring whose impression is left on wax,
so the hidden seal of the Spirit is imprinted by oil on the bodies
of those who are anointed in baptism; thus are they marked
in the baptismal mystery.

7 With the distinctive oil bodies are anointed for forgiveness,
odies that were filled with stains are made white without effort:
they go down sordid with sin, they go up pure like children,
for baptism is a second womb for them.

105 Syr: rxk
106 Syr: mno
107 Syr: dxx
108 Beck adds 'and anoints kings' which is the reading of Br. Mus. Add 17245. E Beck (ed), Des
109 Syr: rehwr rxk

103
Rebirth in the font rejuvenates the old, as the river rejuvenated Naaman. O womb\(^{110}\) that gives birth without pangs to the children of the kingdom!

8 The priesthood ministers to this womb as it gives birth; anointing precedes it, the Holy Spirit hovers over its streams,\(^{111}\) a crown of Levites surrounds it, the chief priest is its minister, the angels rejoice at the lost who in it are found. Once this womb has given birth, the altar suckles and nurtures them: her children eat straight away, not milk, but perfect bread!

9 Oil, the beneficial fountain, accompanies the body, that fount of ills; for oil wipes out sins, just as the flood wiped out the unclean; for the flood, acting in justice, wiped out the wicked: those who had not subdued their lusts drowned, having brought on the flood through these lusts; but oil, acting in goodness, wipes out sins in baptism, for sin is drowned in the water and cannot live with all its desires.

10 Oil, in its love accompanies the baptized in his need, when, despising his life, he descends and buries himself in the water; oil by nature does not sink, but it accompanies the body it has sunk its mark into. Once baptized it raises up from the deep a wealth of riches. Christ by nature cannot die, yet He clothed himself with a mortal body, He was baptized, and so raised up from the water a treasure of life for the race of Adam.

14 The face that gazes on a vessel filled with oil sees a reflection there, and he who gazes hard sets his spiritual gaze thereon and sees in its symbols Christ. And as the beauty of Christ is manifold, so the olive's symbols are manifold. Christ has many facets, and the oil acts as a mirror to them all: from whatever angle I look at the oil, Christ looks out at me from it.\(^{112}\)

Verse 2 shows that it was in the month of Nisan (April) and, no doubt, at the paschal celebrations, that Ephrem's church celebrated the rites of Christian initiation. In

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\(^{110}\) Syr: \(\text{ra\text{\`o}}\)

\(^{111}\) Syr: \(\text{m\text{\`ax\`a la re\text{\`a}\text{\`a\text{\`o}t ro\text{\`a}\text{\`a\text{\`o}t}}}}\)

\(^{112}\) Beck, *Hymnen de Virginitate*, 24-28. This English translation is based on Brock, *Harp of the Spirit*, 48ff. Although Brock uses masculine pronouns to refer to the Holy Spirit, as in Aphrahat the Syriac employs the feminine noun \(\text{\`a\text{\`a\text{\`o}t}}\) with feminine pronouns and verb forms. Richardson is critical of the translations of Brock, Drijvers and Murray. She protests that, although they 'draw attention to the feminine gender of the Spirit, they do not generally express the femininity in their translations'. JE Richardson, 'Feminine Imagery of the Holy Spirit in the Hymns of St Ephrem the Syrian', (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis: University of Edinburgh, 1990), 228.
common with the Persian Sage, baptism was preceded by a period of fasting and the rite itself consisted of three ritual actions: anointing, immersion and clothing in white.\(^{113}\) The remainder of the verse gives a clear indication that one of the primary effects of baptism was the forgiveness of sins. Verse 8 suggests that the eucharist was also celebrated as the culmination of the rite, a sequence which is further substantiated in *De Epiphania* 8.22.

Verse 5 introduces two central tenets of Ephrem's baptismal theology: first, the theological significance of anointing and, second, the imagery of new birth within the context of the Second Adam, parallel to the Adam typology already encountered in Aphrahat's Demonstration 6.\(^{114}\) Both of these appear again and again in the Doctor's writings, albeit sometimes with slightly different connotations, and are vital to a proper understanding of his theology and the relationship between anointing and immersion. Using the image of an artist painting with oil colours, Ephrem describes how an image of 'our hidden King', the Anointed One, is painted with oil upon the candidate.\(^{115}\) Although there is no explicit reference to this act as a pre-immersion anointing, there can be little doubt that this is what is being alluded to, since the verse describes baptism as travail in the womb by those 'who have been signed'.

The anointing is performed in order to 'replace the image of the former Adam'. In so doing the image of God, in which Adam was created in Genesis 1.27, is restored to the

\(^{113}\) In his comparison of Ephrem with the baptismal theologies of Theodore of Mopsuestia and Cyril of Jerusalem, Beck notes that the former also speaks of a 'shining white garment' in his Baptismal Homilies 3.26. According to Thedore, the newly-baptized is clothed with this garment in the water. Beck, *Dörea und Charis*, 63; see also below, 120.

\(^{114}\) See above, 81f.

\(^{115}\) The Syriac verb used here is ܡܐܒܐܕܐ. 105
baptizand through anointing by the application of the image of the second Adam who himself came to the Jordan to be baptized.\textsuperscript{116}

**3.2.2 The Spirit and New Birth**

In each of the texts investigated thus far, the central significance of the theology of regeneration and its associated imagery within the Syrian baptismal tradition has been noted. Both are further developed by Ephrem and beat at the heart of his baptismal theology. Baptism is described in terms of a pregnant woman giving birth to a baby, her labour pains being articulated through the cry of a Trinitarian baptismal formula.\textsuperscript{117}

There can be little doubt that this imagery is connected to Nicodemus' question: 'Can a man enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?'.\textsuperscript{118} It will become evident through this investigation that the questioner's incomprehension is the starting point for much of what Ephrem has to say concerning baptism and the Spirit.\textsuperscript{119}

In addition to this text from the Fourth Gospel, mention must again be made of the Lukan variant: 'You are my beloved Son; today I have begotten you'.\textsuperscript{120} This reading

\textsuperscript{116} The imagery used by Ephrem to describe this restoration to a pre-Fall state is not associated exclusively with the pre-immersion anointing: the robe of glory or light which clothed Adam from creation and which was lost at the Fall, is also restored through baptism; see below, 120ff.

\textsuperscript{117} Other references to a trinitarian theology in Ephrem's writings include De Fide 51.7: 'And there (in the Jordan) where you also were baptized, three mysteries baptized your humanity: the Father by his voice, the Son by his virtue and the Spirit by her hovering (Syr: \textit{~a},,)', E Beck (ed), \textit{Des Heiligen Ephraem des Syrers. Hymnen de Fide, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium} 154, \textit{Scriptores Syri} 73, (Louvain, 1955), 159; for a more detailed discussion of the 'hovering' of the Spirit, see below 110f.

\textsuperscript{118} John 3.4b; Peshitta: \textit{~a},,.

\textsuperscript{119} See, for example, \textit{De Domino Nostro} 1, which draws heavily on the language and theology of John 1 & 3: 'For he, since he was spiritual, until he came to the corporeal birth, could not be corporeal; in the like manner also the corporeal, unless they are born in another birth, cannot be spiritual'. E Beck (ed), \textit{Des Heiligen Ephraem des Syrers. Sermo de Domino Nostrd, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium} 270, \textit{Scriptores Syri} 116, (Louvain, 1966), 1; Gwynn, \textit{Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers}, 13, 305.

\textsuperscript{120} See above, 53, fn 81.
places a birth image at the heart of Jesus' baptism by John and, according to McDonnell, may well lie behind Ephrem's description of the Jordan event as a 'second birth'. Taking together Justin's quotation of the Lukan variant, the fact that Tatian was Justin's student in Rome, and Ephrem's *Commentary on the Diatessaron* being the most valuable witness to Tatian's gospel harmony, McDonnell suggests that 'Justin, Tatian and Ephrem share the same manuscript tradition, with Justin handing on the Lukan text to Tatian, who in turn passed it on to Ephrem in the *Diatessaron*'.

As for the origin of birth imagery within the liturgy, whether or not credence is given to McDonnell's speculative hypothesis, the imagery which Ephrem uses to such effect does not require the influence of the Lukan variant to justify its existence. The origin of this image which is so characteristic of the Syrian baptismal tradition, is more likely to be located in Jesus' dialogue with Nicodemus than in a variant of the Lukan text, not least since the Syriac noun *τέμν* which is of fundamental importance to the linking together of birth and water, appears in John 3.4 but not in Luke's description of the baptism of Jesus.

Moreover, the use of the feminine gender with the noun *τέμν* together with its natural propensity for female imagery, among which by no means the least important is that of birth and womb, will have had a not inconsiderable effect upon the tradition's understanding both of the action of the Spirit in baptism and, consequently, upon the

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121 McDonnell, *Baptism of Jesus*, 93.
122 Since the Syrian Church celebrated both the birth and the baptism of Jesus on 6 January, it is likely, as Winkler suggests, that the understanding of the baptism of Jesus as a birth event has its origin in Syrian Christianity. G Winkler, 'Zur frühchristlichen Tauftradition', 299; see also the
nature of baptism itself, not only for Ephrem, and for later theologians who were so influenced by his writings but, also for the baptismal ordines. In a passage where Ephrem juxtaposes the image of the womb with the forgiveness of sins, baptism itself is described as a mother:

Baptism is a mother who gives birth daily to spiritual ones and solemnly raises new children for God. . . Inside the womb\textsuperscript{123} of baptism is the inner debt repaid, mercies wipe away the large bill of Adam in the water and oil of baptism, and it is torn to pieces.\textsuperscript{124}

The imagery of new birth by the Spirit, already encountered in Ode 19, is no less present in the teachings of other fourth century Syrian writers who articulate the operation of the Spirit in the birth process. In addition to Aphrahat,\textsuperscript{125} Theodore of Mopsuestia, in his third Baptismal Homily, discusses Jesus' discourse with Nicodemus. He believes the second birth of which Jesus spoke referred to the resurrection, a concept too difficult for the Pharisee to understand. 'Instead he tells him about the symbolical birth that takes place at baptism, and which believers must undergo in order to pass by means of the signs to the enjoyment of the reality'. Later in the same section of the homily Theodore states that Jesus 'speaks of the Spirit because this birth is due to the Spirit's operation'.\textsuperscript{126}

discussion above, 44f, concerning the use of \textsuperscript{123}Syr: \textemdash\textsuperscript{2} in the Old Syriac version of the Johannine prologue and its connection with the \textit{Odes}.
\textsuperscript{125} See above, 81.
\textsuperscript{126} \textit{Baptismal Homily} 3.3; A Mingana, \textit{Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Lord's Prayer and on the Sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist}, (Cambridge: W Heffer & Sons, 1933), 182. For a modern English translation, see E Yarnold, \textit{The Awe-Inspiring Rites of Initiation}, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark 1994\textsuperscript{2}), 182.
Returning to *De Virginitate* 7, having introduced the themes of anointing, new birth and the relationship between oil and the Spirit, in verse 7 Ephrem goes on to speak in unambiguous terms of baptism as a second womb. The reference to oil which, as in verse 5, precedes the imagery of birth is this time linked to the forgiveness of sins and not, as before, to a messianic anointing. The Syriac does not say that bodies are anointed and simultaneously forgiven, but that they are anointed ṭon, where the preposition lamad is not instrumental but has more of the sense of towards, indicating that the anointing is a necessary stage in a process which in its totality will lead to forgiveness. 127

Moreover, although in the next line it would appear that it is through the anointing that 'bodies filled with stains are made white without effort', 128 the succeeding clause clearly refers to the effects of baptismal immersion, washing away sin in the waters of the font: 'they go down sordid with sin, they go up pure like children', finally returning to the imagery of birth, 'for baptism is a second womb for them'. Thus, on emerging from the waters of baptism the newly-baptized Christian is as free from the stain of sin as he was when he emerged from the waters of his mother's womb.

Reference has already been made to the fact that in both verses 5 and 7 anointing is dealt with before immersion. This reflects the order of the rite as presented in verse 2 and is further reflected in verse 8 where giving birth in the womb is linked to immersion which itself is preceded by anointing.

128 The distinction between the oil and water is maintained in verse 9: oil 'wipes out' sins in baptism, whereas sins are 'drowned' in the water.
3.2.3 The Spirit and the Dove
In terms reminiscent of Ode 24 and Aphrahat's Demonstration 6.14, De Virginitate 7.8 describes the activity of the Spirit as a bird hovering over the streams of baptism. Here, again, the Syriac verb ܐܒܪܝܐ reflects Genesis 1.2, Deuteronomy 32.11\(^{129}\) and, not least, the Gospel accounts of the Spirit descending upon Jesus like a dove as he comes out of the Jordan.

Both Old Testament images are employed by Ephrem in connection with the Spirit: in the case of Deuteronomy, the gift of the Spirit claiming those upon whom it is conferred as the adopted children of God;\(^ {130}\) in Genesis 1.2, the parallel activity of the Spirit hovering over the waters of new birth.\(^ {131}\) *De Epiphania* 6.1 explains the purpose of the latter:

> The Spirit descended from the heights and sanctified the water as *she* hovered.\(^ {132}\) When John baptized *him* it left all others and settled on one, but now it has come down and settled upon all who are reborn *from the waters.*\(^ {133}\)

The Spirit hovered at the Jordan in order to sanctify the waters before settling on the Anointed One. This took place in order that the Spirit might be present at every

\(^{129}\) See above, 34f & 80; see also, R Murray, 'A Hymn of St Ephrem to Christ on the Incarnation, the Holy Spirit and the Sacraments', *Eastern Churches Review*, 3 (1970), 148f.

\(^{130}\) De Virginitate 7.6 states that 'with the oil the Holy Spirit imprints her mark on her sheep'; in this context, the oil symbolizes the candidates' belonging to God in Christ through the activity of the Spirit.

\(^{131}\) cf *De Epiphania* 8.15: 'In the beginning the Spirit that brooded, brooded upon the waters; they conceived and gave birth to serpents and fishes and birds. The Holy Spirit has brooded in Baptism and, in the mystery, has given birth to young eagles'. Beck, *De Nativitate*, 172.

\(^{132}\) Syr: ܐܒܪܝܐ


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celebration of baptism and be conferred upon all who are reborn in the womb of the font. Siman sums up much of what has already been said as he attempts to answer how it is possible for the water to become the maternal womb of new birth for man:

A cette question les syriens répondent que c'est le Souffle divin qui, par son "obumbraction" et sa descente sur l'eau lui donne une force génératrice pour faire naître les enfants adoptifs de Dieu.\textsuperscript{134}

According to Varghese, who believes that the Doctor uses the Jordan event as proof of Christ's humanity against the Marcionites, Ephrem follows the Syrian tradition which attests that the Spirit descends upon Jesus during his baptism and not afterwards as in the Gospels:\textsuperscript{135} 'As he was baptized, the Spirit descended upon him in form of a dove, to show for certain that he would baptize with fire'.\textsuperscript{136} Whilst much of Ephrem's poetry describes the descent of the Spirit \textit{during} Jesus' baptism (which in itself is not surprising if one takes into consideration the precise relationship between baptismal immersion and the Spirit), it is not true to say that this is always the case nor, as the evidence of other Syrian baptismal writings demonstrates,\textsuperscript{137} that it represents \textit{the} Syrian tradition, for there is no evidence for uniformity in this area. In one important baptismal hymn, it is clear that it is the Gospel sequence of events which is expressed as opposed to Varghese's 'Syrian tradition':

\begin{quote}
Of all those that John baptized
the Spirit dwelt on one alone,
but now she has flown down
to dwell upon many.
Running to meet the first who went up from the Jordan
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{134}Siman, \textit{L'Expérience de l'Esprit}, 215.
\textsuperscript{135}Varghese, \textit{Onctions baptismales}, 44; see above, 57.
\textsuperscript{136}De Fide 7.8; Beck, \textit{De Fide}, 34.
\textsuperscript{137}Narsai, for example, in his \textit{Homily on the Epiphany of the Lord}, demonstrates unambiguously that he understands the Jordan event in terms of the Spirit descending upon Jesus \textit{after} he emerges from the water; see below, 150, where Narsai also makes use of womb imagery.
she embraced and dwelt upon him.138

To continue with the dove, Brock maintains that many Syriac writers witness a significant shift away from the dove being a symbol of the Holy Spirit (which is, perhaps, implicit in the above), to a symbol of Mary.139 He cites two texts from Ephrem's poetry to substantiate the point. In *De Fide* 49.4, Noah's dove is portrayed as a type of the Holy Spirit in baptism:

The ark marked out by its course the sign of its preserver, the cross of its steersman, and the wood of its sailor who has come to fashion for us a church in the water of baptism: with the three-fold name he rescues those who live in her; in the place of the dove, the Spirit ministers her anointing and the mystery of her salvation. Praises to her Saviour.140

The ark / church typology is common to many baptismal liturgies and is a popular image among Patristic writers in both East and West as well as early Christian art. Just as the ark contained those whom God had saved from the flood, so too the priest's pronouncement of the Trinitarian formula at the font, already described as the cry of the mother during birth,141 will rescue from the waters those who will become God's people as members of the church. The dove which brought to the ark the olive leaf is replaced by the anointing of the Holy Spirit which communicates to the candidates the mystery of their salvation.142

138 *De Epiphania* 6.2; Beck, *De Nativitate*, 160.
140 Beck, *De Fide*, 155; Brock, *The Holy Spirit*, 16
141 See above, 106.
142 In *De Virginitate* 7.9 the story of the flood is likewise associated with baptism and, in particular, with baptismal anointing. However, in this case the Doctor draws the parallel between the flood drowning the wicked and the baptismal anointing wiping out sin, drowning it in the waters of baptism.
In the extract from the second of the poems cited by Brock, *De Virginitate* 6.7, there is some confusion as to which Mary Ephrem is referring to, since, in the context of her anointing Jesus' feet (John 12.3-5), he makes mention of Mary, the sister of Martha, as well as Mary, the Mother of Jesus:

The dove gave comfort to Noah in the flood, and related to the dove is Mary: instead of a leaf, she depicted symbolically the death of the Son by means of fine oil; in the alabaster vase that she poured over him, she emptied out on him a treasury of types: at that moment the symbols of oil found their home in Christ, and oil, the treasurer of symbols, handed over the symbols to the Lord of symbols. Creation conceived the symbols of him, but Mary conceived his actual limbs.\(^1\)

Murray gives a useful analysis of the Doctor's treatment of the two Marys, including the latter's substitution of the Virgin for Mary Magdalen in the garden of the resurrection.\(^2\)

With this in mind, is it possible that the same substitution is reflected in the above and that the dove imagery refers to a single Mary, the Mother of Jesus, who both 'depicted symbolically the death of the Son by means of fine oil' and 'conceived his actual limbs'? Although this would appear reasonable, of greater importance is the fact that the womb which gave birth to the Christ is linked typologically with the dove whose hovering over both the Jordan and the font transforms their waters into a womb for the birth of God's adopted children who, having received the gift of the Spirit, are able to cry out 'Abba Father'.

\(^1\) Beck, *De Virginitate*, 22f; Brock, *The Holy Spirit*, 16.

\(^2\) Murray, *Church and Kingdom*, 146-148 & 329-335.
Both Mary and the Spirit fulfil a similar function, connected both with birth and the communication of the Christ to the world. Is it so surprising, therefore, that the same image is sometimes used for both?

One further point of interest connected to this is raised by De Virginitate 4. In this poem, Christ’s forgiveness of the woman who anointed his feet is linked to the pardon which sinners receive through baptismal anointing, a point already discussed in relation to De Virginitate 7.9. As Varghese points out, ‘Notre Seigneur pardonna la pécheuresse qui avait oint ses pieds. De la même façon, “grâce à l’huile les pécheurs acquièrent le pardon de leurs péchés”’.

3.2.4 The Spirit and the Womb
This study has already demonstrated that it is the Holy Spirit who unites the birthing process in the wombs of Mary and the Jordan. As Beck points out,

L’Esprit Saint, feu purifiant de la divinité, a créé en Marie le sein maternel qui pouvait concevoir et enfanter le Saint. D’une manière analogue, d’après Ephrem, l’action du Saint Esprit s’exerce dans le Jourdain, dans l’eau baptismale, second sein maternel de l’homme Jésus, sein maternel de tous les chrétiens.

This point is developed in more depth in De Ecclesia 36:

When it is associated with a source of light
an eye becomes clear,
it shines in its armour,
it gleams with its brightness,
it becomes glorious with its splendour,
adorned with its beauty.

145 Quotation from De Virginitate 4.11; Varghese, Onctions baptismales, 51.
146 Beck, ‘Le Baptême chez Saint Éphrem’, 118.
147 Syr: ܐܠܢܐ ܕܐܡܝܐ; the Syriac here is obscure, perhaps the image is of light reflecting in armour.
Refrain: Blessed is the Creator of light.

As though on an eye
the Light settled on Mary,
It polished her mind,
made bright her thought
and pure her understanding,
causing her virginity to shine.
The river in which he was baptized
conceived him again mystically,\(^\text{148}\)
the moist womb\(^\text{149}\) of the water
conceived him in purity,
gave birth to him in chastity,
made him ascend in glory.

In the pure womb of the river
you should recognize the daughter of man,
who conceived knowing no man,
who gave birth without intercourse,
who brought up, through a gift,
the Lord of that gift.

As the Daystar in the river,
the Bright One in the tomb,
held shone forth on the mountain top
and gave brightness too in the womb,\(^\text{150}\)
held he dazzled as he went up from the river,
gave illumination at his ascension.

The brightness which Moses put on
was wrapped on him from without,
whereas the river in which Christ was baptized
put on Light from within,
and so did Mary's body, in which he resided,
gleam from within.\(^\text{151}\)

\(^{148}\) Syr: κύριος, meaning literally 'in the mystery'.

\(^{149}\) Syr: μήτηρ.

\(^{150}\) Syr: γεννήσας. It is noteworthy that both μήτηρ and γεννήσας are used for 'womb' in this hymn,
without any particular significance being attached to either.

\(^{151}\) E Beck (ed), Des Heiligen Ephraem des Syrers. Hymnen de Ecclesia, Corpus Scriptorum
Christianorum Orientalium 198, Scriptores Syri 84, (Louvain, 1960), 90ff; SP Brock, 'St Ephrem on
Christ as Light in Mary and in the Jordan: Hymni De Ecclesia 36', Eastern Churches Review, 7
(1975), 137f.
The first two verses compare the interaction between light and an eye with that between the Light and Mary. In the following verses the parallelism shifts to the Jordan and Mary as the loci of two births. In verse 3, Christ's conception, birth and ascension, events both past and future from the perspective of his baptism, come together and are focussed upon the Jordan event. According to Brock, the whole of Christ's incarnate life is gathered up together at his baptism.\textsuperscript{152} This corresponds with the Eastern Orthodox distinction between sacred time and ordinary time (\(\kappa\alpha\iota\rho\omicron\varsigma\) and \(\chi\rho\omicron\nu\omicron\varsigma\)). Behind the former is the understanding that the significant staging-posts in Christ's incarnate life may be present in sacred time at one moment. Thus, it is possible to speak of Christ's baptism as the 'fountainhead' of Christian baptism even though in historical time it takes place before his crucifixion and resurrection, since all three events are present at one moment in sacred time and may, therefore, be experienced together at Christian baptism.\textsuperscript{153} As a corollary of this, Christ coming to the waters of the Jordan and sanctifying them by his presence was seen by the Syrian Church as 'proleptically sanctifying all baptismal water, and the consecration of the water at each baptism was seen as a re-enactment, effected this time by the Spirit of Christ of Christ's own descent into, and consecration of, the Jordan waters'.\textsuperscript{154}

3.2.5 Water and the Spirit
That it is Jesus' presence in the Jordan and not the operation of the Spirit which sanctified the water at his baptism is brought out in the prose homily \textit{De Domino Nostro} 55:

\textsuperscript{152} \textit{Ibid}, 140.
\textsuperscript{153} Brock, \textit{The Luminous Eye}, 29.
\textsuperscript{154} Brock, 'Christ as Light', 140.
. . . the Lord of the stewardship came to him (John) to receive from him the keys of the house of reconciliation. For John used to wash away in common water the blemishes of sin; that bodies might become meet for the garment of the Spirit, given by our Lord. Therefore, because the Spirit was with the Son, he came to John to receive from him baptism, that he might mingle with the visible waters the invisible Spirit; that they whose bodies should feel the moistening of the water, their souls should feel the gift of the Spirit; that even as the bodies outwardly feel the pouring of the water upon them, so the souls inwardly may feel the pouring of the Spirit upon them.

John's stewardship of the rite of baptism is not only temporary but also the rite itself, until it is handed over to the 'Lord of the stewardship', is incomplete. This handing over takes place at the Jordan. Here Ephrem understands John's baptism to lack the power to impart the gift of the Spirit. Not only that, but the text does not use the language of forgiveness with respect to John's baptism but, in weaker terms, talks of ordinary water washing away 'the blemishes of sin'. The thought lying behind this phrase is not dissimilar from that which was described above concerning the pre-immersion anointing in De Virginitate 7.7. In this case it is clearly spelt out that the process of which John's baptism is a part leads to the candidate receiving the gift of the Spirit in Christian baptism; the baptism of John can be seen, therefore, as a preparatory or preliminary rite which is perfected in Christ's baptism.

According to this passage, the Holy Spirit is already 'with' Jesus before he comes to the Jordan. Indeed, the purpose of his baptism is to mingle (Syr: ܕܵܡܳܐ) the invisible Spirit with the visible waters. Christ's sanctification of the Jordan water sanctifies baptismal

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155 Syr: ܚܳܒܳܠܐ ܚܳܕܳܐ ܚܳܠܳܒܳܐ
waters for all time so that, when the priest invokes the Spirit upon the waters of the font, they become another Jordan, another womb.¹⁵⁷

That Jesus already bears the Spirit should not seem surprising, taking into account the number of allusions to the activity of the Spirit in his conception and birth. Indeed, Siman notes that the parallel activity of the Spirit is seen at work not only in Christian baptism, but also in Jesus' baptism and in his conception in the womb of the Virgin:

... dans la conception du Verbe dans le sein de la Vierge, l'Esprit, qui en est le principe actif et fécondateur, effectue la Filiation divine dans l'Homme-Jésus qu'il façonne et forme dans le sein de la Vierge. Puis dans le baptême au Jourdain, il s'agit de cette même conception et de cette même naissance, mais manifestées publiquement. L'Esprit dévoile l'œuvre prodigieuse et divine qu'il a effectuée le jour de l'Incarnation. Par sa descente en forme de colombe sur l'Homme-Jésus, l'Esprit montre la Filiation divine qu'il a réalisée en celui-ci. Enfin, dans le baptême chrétien, l'Esprit opère cette même réalité, cette même filiation, mais sur le plan de l'adoption. Nous sommes les fils adoptifs de Dieu, et l'Esprit que nous recevons par le baptême nous donne l'assurance et la franchise d'appeler Dieu: "Père".¹⁵⁸

Finally, with respect to De Domino Nostro 55, no reader can be left in any doubt that, wherever else the candidate encounters the activity of the Spirit, it is when he comes into contact with the water that the gift of the Spirit, that which clearly differentiates Christian baptism from that of the Baptist, is conferred.

De Ecclesia 36.4 expresses a clear link between the womb of the Jordan and the womb of Mary, 'the daughter of man'. De Nativitate 16.11 describes how Christ's presence in Mary's womb effects her own baptism:

The Son of the Most High came and dwelt in me,

¹⁵⁷ This same idea is present in the later Baptismal Homilies of Theodore, 3.9.
¹⁵⁸ Siman, L'Expérience de l'Esprit, 86.
and I became his mother. As I gave birth to him
- his second birth, so too he gave birth to me
a second time. He put on his mother’s robe
- his body; I put on his glory.159

This highlights once again the pivotal importance of the Jordan event in conditioning
Ephrem’s belief not only in Christian baptism but also in the incarnation and the role of
Mary. Brock makes the point well:

The link between these two sets of double births is Christ’s own baptism in
the womb of the Jordan, for this symbolically looks back to his ’second’ birth
in Mary’s womb and effectively points forward to the spiritual rebirth of all
Christians in baptism, in Mary’s case, anticipated in time.160

In the last two lines of *De Ecclesia* 36.4, Ephrem states that Mary ’brought up, through a
gift, the Lord of that gift’. The question here is what ’gift’ refers to. Brock is confident
that it refers to the milk which, according to Ephrem, miraculously flowed from Mary’s
breasts as if she were a normal mother.161 But could this ’gift’ not also be a reference to
the work of the Spirit? Indeed, although not mentioned explicitly in lines 3 and 4, it is
undoubtedly implicit in what is written since it is only through the operation of the Spirit
that Mary was able to conceive ’knowing no man’ and to give birth ’without intercourse’.
Moreover, the Deacon’s designation of Jesus as the ’Lord of that gift’ is consistent with
his argument in *De Domino Nostro* about the Spirit being ’with’ Christ.

159 Beck, *De Nativitate*, 85; Brock, ’Christ as Light’, 141.
160 Brock, ’Christ as Light’, 141.
161 See also, *De Nativitate* 11.4.
3.2.6 The Baptismal Garment
Reference has already been made to the baptizand putting on a garment in the waters of baptism.\textsuperscript{162} Behind this ritual is an important Adam / Christ typology, similar to that in De Virginitate 7. According to Brock, three elements combine to produce this: first, the first and second Adam typology articulated by Paul; second, Paul's use of the phrase 'putting on Christ' in the context of baptism,\textsuperscript{163} and third, Jewish speculation about the nature of Adam and Eve's clothing both before and after the Fall.\textsuperscript{164} Without going into the last of these in any detail, Ephrem adopts the line taken by the Targumim interpretation of Genesis 3.21, that Adam and Eve were clothed in garments of glory or light before the Fall and that, as a consequence of their sin, were left naked. In his commentary on the book of Genesis the Doctor states:

Because of that glory with which they were wrapped they felt no shame; but when this was taken away from them after the transgression of the commandment, they felt shame because they had been stripped.\textsuperscript{165}

For Ephrem, the purpose of the incarnation is that humanity might regain that garment of glory that was once theirs. So God is born on earth as a man so that at his baptism in the Jordan, Jesus might leave behind in the river that robe of glory, once worn by Adam and Eve.\textsuperscript{166} This takes place in order that at Christian baptism, when the candidate goes down into the water and enters his own Jordan, the womb of rebirth, he

\textsuperscript{162} De Epiphania 5.1 describes the action of 'putting on'; in this case it is the Holy Spirit: 'Go down, my brothers, and put on the Holy Spirit from the waters of baptism'. Beck, De Nativitate, 158.

\textsuperscript{163} Eg Galatians 3.27.


\textsuperscript{165} Commentary on Genesis 2.14; RM Tonneau (ed), Sancti Ephraem Syri in Genesim et in Exodum Commentarii, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium 152, Scriptores Syri 71, (Louvain, 1955), 33; Brock, 'Clothing Metaphors', 23.
might put on the garment which Jesus left there. Thus, the garment of glory of which Adam and Eve were stripped in Eden becomes the swaddling cloth of the new-born Christian as he emerges from the font.

This imagery does not only look back to a recovery of the pre-Fall clothing enjoyed by Adam and Eve. Simultaneously, it looks forward to the general resurrection at the end of time. For, as Brock points out, the robe of glory is not only Adam and Eve's clothing, 'it is also the clothing of angels and of the just; it is furthermore a royal and priestly robe, and at the same time the "wedding garment" for the eschatological banquet (Mt 22.12'). 167 These three dimensions of sacred time, past, present and future, into which the candidate is immersed in the waters of rebirth, are described most succinctly in De Nativitate 23.13:

All these changes did the Merciful One make, stripping off (glory) and putting on (a body); for he had devised a way to reclothe Adam in that glory which Adam had stripped off. He was wrapped with swaddling clothes, corresponding to Adam's leaves, he put on clothes instead of Adam's skins; he was baptized for Adam's sin, he was embalmed for Adam's death, he rose and raised up Adam in his glory. Blessed is he who descended, put him on and ascended. 168

Is the candidate's 'putting on' equivalent to Paul's understanding of 'putting on Christ' or is it the Holy Spirit as the above-quoted section from De Epiphania would seem to suggest? It is clear from De Virginitate 7 that, as is common in the Syrian baptismal tradition, the candidate is clothed in a white garment after he emerges from the waters of the font. Thus the putting on of the garment of glory does not remain a theological

166 Although more explicitly expressed by Jacob of Serugh, this idea is implicit in Ephrem's writings. De Virginitate 16.9 describes the lost Adam being sought out by Christ in order that he might be returned to Eden in the garment of light; cf De Nativitate 22.39.
167 Brock, 'Clothing Metaphors', 23.
concept only to be articulated in the language of poetry, but is given ritual expression within the liturgy. Brock demonstrates that 'putting on' is used with many different objects - Christ, the Spirit, the robe of the Spirit, the robe of light or the robe of glory. However, he does maintain that when the last two terms are employed 'it denotes entry into a new mode of being, and at the same time it draws attention to a number of different aspects of what baptism confers', namely a return to paradise, a garment of righteousness at the resurrection and the wedding garment of Matthew 22.12.\textsuperscript{169} Mansour also notes that it is often difficult to distinguish between the two persons of the Trinity to discover whether the candidate is being clothed with the Spirit or with Christ. He concludes that Ephrem does not want to separate the activity of the two persons, but sees than as harmonious, complementary and not conflicting.\textsuperscript{170}

This 'new mode of being' to which Brock refers may also be understood terms of an exchange of divine and human properties. This notion is put most clearly by Ephrem himself when he says: 'Our body became your garment, your Spirit became our robe'.\textsuperscript{171} Here is the kernel of Ephrem's doctrine of salvation, in which the recovery of the lost robe has a pivotal role to play.

That the 'robe of glory' introduces a strong eschatological dimension into Ephrem's theology of baptism is significant, since it demonstrates that the Syrian baptismal tradition does not concentrate on new birth, important though this element is, to the

\textsuperscript{168} Beck, \textit{De Nativitate}, 120; Brock, 'Clothing Metaphors', 23.

\textsuperscript{169} Brock, 'Clothing Metaphors', 18-20.

\textsuperscript{170} PTB Mansour, \textit{La Pensée Symbolique de Saint Ephrem le Syrien}, (Kaslik, Lebanon: Bibliothèque de l'Université Saint-Esprit, 1988), 365. This point corresponds with Cramer's conclusion concerning Aphrahat's peneumatology; see above, 84.

\textsuperscript{171} \textit{De Nativitate} 22.39; Beck, \textit{De Nativitate}, 116.
exclusion of the resurrection. Varghese picks up this point, stating that the paschal mystery is by no means absent from Ephrem’s theology. For the Doctor, participation in the baptism of Christ also signifies a participation in his death and resurrection:

His birth flowed on and was joined to his baptism; - and his baptism again flowed on even to his death; - his death led and reached to his resurrection, - a fourfold bridge unto his kingdom; and lo! his sheep pass over in his footsteps. 173

These three events of birth, baptism and death / resurrection are also described by Ephrem as three wombs, linked together in sacred time. *Carmina Nisibis* 37.4 attaches womb imagery to Mary and Sheol:

Behold the virgin brought him forth, and Sheol the barren brought him forth; two wombs that contrary to nature have been changed by him; the virgin and Sheol both of them. The virgin in her bringing forth he made glad; but Sheol he grieved and made sad by his resurrection. 174

As Brock points out, in Ephrem we are presented with 'descents of the Divinity into successive wombs, the womb of Mary, the womb of the Jordan, and the womb of Sheol'. 175 However, if this is the case why do Beck, 176 Brock, 177 Winkler 178 and others insist on maintaining a sharp dichotomy between Ephrem and other early Syrian Fathers for whom baptism is understood almost exclusively in terms of a Johannine theology of new birth, and later writers who express the baptismal theology of dying and rising with

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172 Varghese, *Onctions baptismales*, 46
174 *Carmina Nisibis* 37.4; E Beck (ed), *Sancti Ephraem Carmina Nisibis*, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientallum* 240*, *Scriptores Syri* 102, (Louvain, 1963), 16; Richardson, 'Feminine Imagery of the Holy Spirit', 189.
175 Brock, 'Clothing Metaphors', 12.
176 Beck, 'Dōrea und Charis', 184.
177 Brock, *Luminous Eye*, 38 (though Brock does not push the point as strongly as Beck).
178 See above, 95f.
Christ most commonly associated with Romans 6? For, as several of the passages already quoted have shown, it is not the case that the latter is absent from Ephrem's writings (or, for that matter, Aphrahat's) regardless of the fact that there is a much stronger emphasis on birth imagery.

The link between Christ's birth and death is unambiguously expressed in De Domino Nostro 2, where Ephrem maintains that Christ's 'death on the cross witnesses to his birth from the woman' and, later, that 'his conception in the womb is bound up with his death on the cross'. The same homily also mentions both events as two links in a chain of four births:

- The Father gave birth to him and through him created the creatures;
- Flesh gave birth to him and through him killed lusts;
- Baptism gave birth to him, that through him it might wash away stains;
- Sheol gave birth to him, that through him its treasures might be emptied out.

Thus the whole economy of salvation, from creation to redemption, is expressed in terms of a series of births of Christ which bring about the redemption of humanity, united and brought to fruition by the activity of the Spirit.

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179 Beck, Sermo de Domino Nostro, 2.
180 Although the three births most commonly articulated are from Mary, the Jordan and Sheol, this passage makes reference to the Son's birth from the Father and his agency in the work of creation. A further chain, from the Godhead, from humanity and from baptism, is also expressed at the beginning of this homily. Ibid.
181 Syr: נ. The same verb is used in each phrase.
182 Beck, Sermo de Domino Nostro, 2.
183 See above, 108.
3.2.7 The Doctrine of the Spirit

What does Ephrem understand by 'Holy Spirit' and how does (s)he relate to the Father and the Son? According to Saber, Ephrem shows evidence of a Trinitarian theology in which the Spirit is equal to the other two persons. For example, in *De Fide* 77.20-22:

The names of the Father and the Son and the Spirit are equal and united in the hovering\(^{184}\) of baptism. United names, equal course and one will, like those carrying a single yoke, they come. And as they are equal in the hovering of baptism, so are they also equal in unity.\(^{185}\)

The Doctor understands the Spirit as one person of a three-person Godhead. Indeed, Saber goes as far as to say that for Ephrem, 'La troisième personne de la S. Trinité, égal au Père et égal au fils, ne peut être dit ni inférieur ni subordonné à eux'.\(^{186}\) However, is not such a statement trying to impose the later precise definitions of Trinitarian orthodoxy upon a man who did not believe that such an endeavour was possible?\(^{187}\) As Beck suggests, the foundation of Ephrem's Trinitarian beliefs lies in the baptismal formula and its roots in scripture.\(^{188}\) That the Spirit takes second place to the Son in *De Fide* is illustrated by one of the Doctor's favourite images of the Godhead, that of the sun, light and warmth. In *De Fide* 74 the warmth of the Spirit is portrayed as warming the nakedness of fallen Adam, tying in with what has been said above\(^{189}\) about the

\(^{184}\) Syr: ἡ πτήσις κατά τόν βαπτιστήριον.

\(^{185}\) Beck, *De Fide*, 236.


\(^{187}\) See above, 21ff.


\(^{189}\) See above, 120ff.
baptismal candidate retrieving Adam's lost robe of glory in the waters of rebirth: 'By her is nakedness warmed, as she is put on - like Adam, he who was laid bare'.

Is it necessarily the case, though, that this presents the Spirit as subordinate to the Son? As Beck points out, Ephrem never makes a direct reference to the divinity of the Spirit, whereas there are clear statements concerning the divinity of the Son. That said, since Ephrem does not distinguish between the action of the Spirit and that of the Son, nor between the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ, the mutual harmony of the actions of the second and third Persons, reflected in the image of sun, light and warmth, renders talk of 'subordination' or 'inferiority' superfluous.

That the Holy Spirit was active throughout Christ's life as well as in the life of the Church is an important theme for Ephrem. De Fide 10.17 makes the connection clear:

See, Fire and Spirit in the womb that gave birth to you!
See, Fire and Spirit in the river where you were baptized!
Fire and Spirit in our Baptism;
in the Bread and the Cup, Fire and Holy Spirit.

The association of the Spirit with fire not only goes back to the account of Pentecost in Acts 2 but also to the tradition whose origins can be traced back at least as far as Justin

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190 De Fide 74.6; Beck, De Fide, 226.
191 Beck, 'Die Theologie', 84.
192 As evidence of this mutual harmony, Saber rightly understands the passage which refers to Christ coming to the water to sanctify it by his presence in De Domino Nostro as an indication of the Spirit being, for Ephrem, the Spirit of Christ and, furthermore, that Christ possessed the Spirit in all its fullness. Saber, La théologie baptismale, 92.
193 Syr: կարճ
194 Beck, De Fide, 51; Murray, 'A Hymn of St Ephrem to Christ', 144.
Martyr's description of Jesus' baptism, in which fire appears at the Jordan. Beck sees in this important verse the articulation of the close association between the humanity of Christ and the Holy Spirit, which demonstrates that the Holy Spirit was active in every event of Christ's earthly life, from which the incarnation and baptism are highlighted:


From this it becomes clear that, in Ephrem's pneumatology, the Spirit which has been active throughout the life of Christ remains so after his ascension when, through the celebration of the mysteries, it is present in the life of the Church.

In addition to verse 17, De Fide 10.9 is also important for its reference to baptism effecting a 'new creation', as well as to Christ mingling fire and spirit:

When the Lord came down to earth, to mortals,
a new creation he created them, like to Watchers.
He mingled fire and spirit in them,
to make them fire and spirit within.

The use of the verb (to mingle) has already been mentioned in connection with De Domino Nostro 55. Although the images are not quite identical, one referring to fire, the other to water, the result of the process of mingling is the same: 'that they

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195 Justin states that when Jesus entered the water 'a fire was kindled in the Jordan' (Dialogue with Trypho the Jew, 88). In Tatian's Diatessaron, which Peterson has shown to be heavily influenced by Justin, it is not fire, but a great light which appears as Jesus is baptized. (WL Petersen, Tatian's Diatessaron: Its Creation, Dissemination, Significance, and History in Scholarship, Supplement to Vigiliae Christianae 25, (Leiden-New York: Brill, 1994), 14.)
196 Beck, Die Theologie des heiligen Ephraem, 91.
197 According to Murray, 'watchers' (Syr: ) is the regular word for angels in both Syriac and Jewish Aramaic; Murray, 'A Hymn of St Ephrem to Christ', 146.
198 Beck, De Fide, 50; Murray, 'A Hymn of St Ephrem to Christ', 143.
should feel the gift of the Spirit' or 'to make them fire and spirit within'. It is, therefore, the communication of the pneumatic gift through baptism which is the purpose not only of Jesus coming to the Jordan but also, in the light of De Fide 10, of the incarnation: that man might become a spirit-filled being; a transformation which can be equated with recovering the lost garment of glory. Thus, as Saber argues, the Spirit's role in the initiatory process is of the utmost importance. It is 'cette chaleur divine qui purifie, réchauffe, sanctifie les âmes de l'Église et produit en elles la vie divine'.

3.2.8 Summary
In conclusion, four points will be outlined which demonstrate various ways in which Ephrem's imagery of birth can shed new light on the question of the relationship between anointing and immersion as well as that between the Jordan event and Christian baptism.

First, De Virginitate 7, De Epiphania 1 and other texts demonstrate that it is through the 'hovering' of the Holy Spirit over both the Jordan and the baptismal water that they become wombs of new birth. These texts have also indicated that it is necessary for the candidate to be anointed before, to use the language of the Fourth Gospel, 'entering the womb a second time'. Furthermore, it has been shown that John the Baptist's baptism functioned as a preparatory or preliminary rite which had to be followed, completed and perfected by Christian baptism. Is it not possible, therefore, to conclude that one of the functions of the pre-immersion anointing in Ephrem's understanding of baptism is to represent and, indeed, to replace John's baptism? Both are insufficient when they stand alone and require completion through entry into the womb of the Jordan. When

199 See above, 117f.
divorced from the immersion, the pre-immersion anointing has no ritual or theological meaning and cannot be said to communicate the forgiveness of sins, baptismal regeneration or the pneumatic gift.

Second, is not a further function of the pre-immersion anointing to confer upon the candidate the necessary characteristics and properties so that, on entering the waters of new birth, the womb might become impregnated? There is no doubt that it is the Holy Spirit who transforms the font into a womb. Is it not also the Holy Spirit whose agency will transform the candidate into the seed which, on entering the womb, will conceive the new-born child of God? This is not to identify the pre-immersion anointing with a particular moment when the candidate receives the Holy Spirit.²⁰¹ Ephrem's writings do not support such a model. Moreover, although it is clear that the Spirit is at work throughout the rite, De Domino Nostro indicates that the reception of the gift is particularly focussed upon the baptismal waters.²⁰² In De Epiphania 6.7 Ephrem points out that it is through baptismal regeneration that men become spiritual:

Angels and Watchers rejoice
at the birth effected by Spirit and water:
beings of fire and spirit rejoice
since those in the body have now become spiritual.²⁰³

Rather, it is only after the candidate has been made fit for baptismal regeneration through the action of the Holy Spirit in the anointing with oil, 'the dear friend of the Holy Spirit',²⁰⁴ that it is possible for him to be born again in Jordan's womb. The Spirit, acting

²⁰⁰ Saber, La théologie baptismale, 92.
²⁰¹ For an opposing view see Winkler, 'The Original Meaning', 36.
²⁰² See above, 118.
²⁰³ Beck, De Nativitate, 182; Finn, Early Christian Baptism, 167.
²⁰⁴ De Virginitate 7.6.
through the baptismal anointing, effects the transition from sinful Adam to the seed which will be born again in the water:

Like a signet ring whose impression is left on wax, so the hidden seal of the Spirit is imprinted by oil on the bodies of those who are anointed in baptism; thus are they marked in the baptismal mystery.\[^{205}\]

Leaping forward a millennium, it is striking that the East Syrian Patriarch Timothy II (1318-1332), commenting on why the oil is consecrated before the water in the baptismal liturgy, argues that 'this is to preserve the order of things in the natural birth'. Although a late witness to a primitive practice, what Timothy says is, nonetheless, of some importance to the present study, since it provides evidence for the survival and, indeed, development of the Johannine-based theology of baptismal regeneration which is so fundamental for a proper understanding of the work of the Spirit within the baptismal writings of Ephrem and of the whole Syrian tradition:

For our natural generation is brought about first by the emission, namely of the male seed, and secondly, by way of completion by that of the women. Similarly with regard to the things by which our sacramental generation is brought to pass, it has been arranged that their consecration should likewise occur separately, first indeed the consecration of the oil which is the symbol of the male seed, then (the consecration) of the water, which is the image of the maternal womb. Accordingly, the oil which resembles the paternal seed is consecrated first, the water which resembles the maternal (counterpart).\[^{206}\]


\[^{206}\] PB Kadicheeni (ed & trans), *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), 17. Whilst this passage gives expression to much of the imagery which is found in the writings of Ephrem, there is a slight difference in detail between the imagery used to describe the process of regeneration in Ephrem and that employed by Timothy II. For the latter, it is clear that the oil represents the male seed. For the former, it is the candidate who becomes the male seed, a transformation which is effected by the Holy Spirit through the pre-immersion anointing. Thus the oil prepares the candidate to enter the womb of the font in order to be born as a child of God.
Returning to the main argument, by linking together both of the above ideas (that the anointing replaces John's baptism and that it prepares the candidate for regeneration) a third and related function of the pre-immersion anointing becomes apparent: that is, to begin the process which will lead to the forgiveness of sins. In *De Virginitate* 7.7 & 9 Ephrem remarks that, 'With the distinctive oil bodies are anointed for forgiveness' and that, '... oil wipes out sins, just as the flood wiped out the unclean'. Here Ephrem is saying is that if the oil did not wipe out the sin of the candidate before immersion, then the waters of the Jordan would act like the flood in Genesis, which 'acting in justice, wiped out the wicked'.\(^{207}\) The oil, therefore, is for the candidate what breathing apparatus and a wet suit are for the modern deep sea diver.\(^{208}\) It covers the body to protect it from the potentially harmful effects of the water and accompanies it when it dives down into the Jordan and, since 'oil by nature does not sink'\(^{209}\) prevents the baptizand from drowning unprotected from his sin. *De Virginitate* 7.12 expresses well Ephrem's understanding of the function of the oil (Syr: ܬܘܬܼ) by comparing its saving activity to that of its etymological bed-fellow Christ (Syr: ܓܫܬܼ):

Oil in its love, like Christ, pays debts that are not its own.  
The treasure that of its own accord turned up for the debtors in the pottery vessel is like the Treasure that also turned up for the gentiles in a body made from earth.  
The oil became a slave for a time to free the freeborn,  
but Christ became a slave for a time to free those enslaved to sin.  
In both name and deed does the oil depict Christ.\(^{210}\)

Thus, the pre-immersion anointing is both christological and pneumatological.\(^{211}\) This is affirmed by Mansour who states that it is the Spirit which gives utterance to the

\(^{207}\) *De Virginitate* 7.9.  
\(^{208}\) cf *De Fide* 82.10 where the baptismal candidate is compared to a diver; see below, 133f.  
\(^{209}\) *De Virginitate* 7.10.  

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prophets to dispel darkness just as oil intensifies the light of a lampstand in order to dispel the darkness (*De Virginitate* 5.2), it is the Spirit which anoints priests and kings (*De Virginitate* 7.6) and it is oil which, in the same verse, is described as the dear friend and servant of the Holy Spirit. However, it is also through anointing with oil that Christ heals (*De Virginitate* 4.5-7), forgives sins (*De Virginitate* 4.11) and is compared to light (*De Virginitate* 5.1, 3-4). Furthermore, Russell highlights Zizioulas' statement that Eastern Orthodox christology is 'pneumatologically conditioned' adding that the economy of the Son is not to be sharply distinguished from that of the Spirit. 'Christ is the one whom the Spirit foreruns, fashions, indwells and rests upon. Yet it is Christ who pours forth the Spirit.' This 'pneumatologically conditioned' christology is articulated by Saber as he describes the interrelated roles of both Christ and the Spirit within the economy of salvation:

C'est par l'Esprit que Christ accomplit son oeuvre salvatrice et c'est grâce à lui qu'il s'est incarné dans le sein virginal de Marie, qu'il s'est révélé Fils de Dieu et Sauveur dans le Jourdain et qu'il continue de se rendre toujours présent dans les sacrements de l'Église.

Once in the womb, the candidate is able to put on the lost robe of glory, at one time worn by Adam and Eve in the garden, deposited in the Jordan by the Second Adam at his baptism by John, and thereby be invested with the status which they enjoyed before the Fall as the new-born adopted children of God. However, as Brock points out, their

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211 Varghese, however, sees the anointing purely in terms of a pneumatic ritual; Varghese, *Onctions baptismales*, 53.
212 Mansour, *La Pensée Symbolique*, 349.
re-entry into paradise is only anticipated by this action and is not fully achieved until the
general resurrection at the end of time: 'This is not a cyclical process, but a linear one.
The final stage of mankind will be far more glorious than the first - for God will finally
grant the divinity which Adam and Eve had tried to snatch'.\footnote{216} It is, therefore, only in
the eschaton that Ephrem's doctrine of divine exchange, articulated most concisely in *De
Nativitate* 22.39, will be fully realized in the life of all the baptized: 'Our body became
your garment, your Spirit became our robe'.

With this in mind, a fourth and final point may be made about the pre-immersion
anointing which ties in both with what has been said about the relationship between oil
and Christ as well as the baptizand and the Second Adam. We have already seen how
an anointing before immersion provides the necessary preparation of the candidate in
order for the womb to give birth; how the oil wipes away sin so that the waters of
rebirth do not drown the sinner, as did Noah's flood, but rather cover them after the
manner of Christ. In the same way, it is necessary for Adam, coming to the Jordan to
retrieve his lost robe of glory, to have 'the hidden portrait of our hidden King' painted on
his body in oil in order to 'replace the image of the former Adam who was corrupted'.\footnote{217}
Through this ritual action, the candidate does not enter the womb of rebirth as Adam,
but as the Second Adam. In *De Fide* 82.10 Ephrem makes it clear that it is Christ who is
symbolically 'put on' in the anointing:

> In symbol and in truth Leviathan is trodden down
> by mortals: the baptized, like divers, strip
> and put on oil, as a symbol of Christ.\footnote{218}

\footnote{216}{Brock, 'Clothing Metaphors', 13.}
\footnote{217}{De Virgil7ltate 7.5.}

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The same point is further emphasized in the *De Virginitate* 7.14: 'from whatever angle I look at the oil, Christ looks out at me from it'.

The divine image of pre-Fall Adam is thus restored to the candidate as he is painted with an icon of Christ, that through the waters of rebirth he might enter with the Anointed One as an anointed one into the mystery of redemption, focused upon the womb of the Virgin, the womb of the Jordan and, not least, the womb of Sheol, being born and reborn and born again with Christ to recover the lost garment of paradise which is the pledge of future glory.

3.3 Narsai of Nisibis

The structure of the rite with which Narsai would have been familiar follows that presented in the *Baptismal Homilies* of his teacher, Theodore of Mopsuestia, with the important exception that there is no evidence of a post-immersion anointing in Narsai. In brief, the apotaxis and syntaxis are followed, as in Theodore, by the candidate kneeling naked on sackcloth. After being presented by a sponsor his name is recorded in the book of the baptized. The priest blesses oil and the candidate is anointed on the forehead in the name of the Trinity before the whole body is anointed. The immersion with Trinitarian formula follows, the candidate is welcomed by the community and clothed and the rite concludes with a celebration of the Eucharist.

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219 Two of the three *Liturgical Homilies* published by Connolly, *On the Mysteries of the Church and of Baptism* (Homily 21) and *On Baptism* (Homily 22), describe the performance of the baptismal rite. These were numbered by Mingana who believed that *On Baptism* should follow *On the Mysteries of the Church and of Baptism* since the former includes an anointing which he believed would have followed the immersion as in the Western tradition. Connolly rejected this
What is most striking about Narsai’s description of baptism is that, although a pupil of Theodore and one whose theology shows the significant influence of his teacher, this fifth century writing still maintains what most scholars identify as the more primitive Syrian pattern of anointing before immersion. Such evidence goes against the development theories of Finn, Winkler and Brock who see a gradual progression to a pneumatic post-immersion anointing beginning in the late fourth and early fifth centuries, since the man who, more than any other, would have been expected to adopt the newly-emerging structure of the baptismal rite articulated by Theodore does not.

Finn asserts:

Theodore . . . clearly associates the [post-baptismal] anointing with the descent of the Holy Spirit, even if it is not certain whether its significance is clearly sacramental. Thus it would seem that between Chrysostom and Theodore the later fourth century witnessed a development in Syrian baptismal liturgy and theology. The direction was towards a clearer and more explicit liturgical signification of the action of the Holy Spirit in Christian initiation.

3.3.1 Baptism in Fire

One of Narsai’s most striking images to describe baptism is the furnace (Syr: ḫrāṣ). Reference has already been made to the Syrian association of fire with the baptism of

and printed 22 before 21, stating that the two homilies are complementary. Connolly, Liturgical Homilies, xlvi.

McDonnell fails to acknowledge the dissimilarity between Narsai and his teacher when he states that Narsai ‘was a faithful purveyor of the thought of Theodore of Mopsuestia’. (McDonnell, The Baptism of Jesus, 215.) A more radical form of this argument is expounded by Mitchell who, comparing Narsai with his teacher, states that: ‘the similarity is so great . . . that the lack of a post-baptismal consignation in Narsai itself suggests that there was none in Theodore’s original text’. (LL Mitchell, ‘Four Fathers on Baptism’, in Vellian, Studies on Syrian Baptismal Rites, 53.) Such an argument arises more from the expectation to observe a simple monolinear development of the Syrian baptismal rite than from the evidence of similarity. Other writers have expressed doubt concerning the genuineness of the post-immersion unction in Theodore; for a brief outline of the debate, see Varghese, Octions baptismales, 98f. See above, 6ff.

It is, perhaps, no accident that the writings of Narsai receive no detailed consideration by Varghese.
Jesus, given expression in Justin’s *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*. Fire is a recurring image in the Syrian baptismal tradition and has a particular connection with the Spirit. According to Brock, this represents two related features of the Spirit's action: to destroy what is impure and evil and to consecrate. We have already encountered the Syrian tradition which saw Jesus’ immersion in the Jordan to consecrate baptismal water for all time, an action in which the liturgy participates when the priest invokes the Spirit upon the font. If the Jordan waters are thus consecrated, then it is appropriate for them to flame, a sign both of the water's power to destroy evil and forgive sins and of the activity of the Spirit which is represented symbolically by fire. Moreover, within the context of birth imagery, if one considers also that male seed was perceived as hot in the Roman world and that the womb nurtured the hot male seed in order to produce children, then fire at the Jordan would also designate a divine birthplace with which the Spirit would have a natural symbolic affinity.

Added to this, the influence of Theodore's use of furnace imagery must also be taken into consideration: 'So the water you enter is like a furnace in which you are reshaped to a higher nature: you lay aside your old mortality and assume a higher nature that is complete immortal and incorruptible.' Such language is the foundation of Narsai's

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224 See above, 127, fn 195.
225 See above, 126f.
226 This pairing can be seen to have biblical roots in Matthew 3.11 (Luke 3.16) and Acts 2.3.
228 cf Ephrem, *De Epiphania* 3.10.
230 Etymologically the two nouns and are very close with shared radicals.

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own baptismal imagery and theology, as illustrated in a passage from *On Baptism*, where Narsai envisages the font functioning as a furnace:

The furnace of the waters\(^{232}\) his purpose prepared mystically; and instead of fire he has heated it with the Spirit of the power of his will. His own handiwork he made a steward over his creation, that it should re-cast itself in the furnace of the waters and the heat of the Spirit. Come, mortals, see a marvel wrought in mortal man, who dies and lives again by the mediation of its working. Come, let us examine the mystery of our dying in the midst of the waters; and let us look upon the wonder that is mystically achieved in us. Come, let us draw nigh to the treasurers of the Church's treasures, and let us hear from them how they give life by the water. Let us enter with them the mystical holy of holies, and let us learn from them the explanation of the mysteries of death and life. Death and life is the mystery of baptism;\(^{233}\) and two things in one are performed therein by the hand of the priesthood.\(^{234}\)

This passage resonates with the Baptist's words, 'He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire'.\(^{235}\) Indeed, it could be argued that Narsai is attempting to demonstrate how, in fulfilment of John's prediction, a person can be baptized with Spirit and fire. Here it is made clear that, in effect, Spirit and fire are synonymous. The Spirit heats the waters of the furnace, in order that God's own creation might be recreated in the 'furnace of the waters and the heat of the Spirit'. The furnace is employed by Narsai to express a theology of death and resurrection often associated with the more characteristically Pauline notion of dying and rising with Christ.\(^{236}\) Narsai, who himself was threatened with being burnt as a heretic, plays on the natural assumption that for a human being to enter a fiery furnace the result would be certain death. However, the miracle of the baptismal furnace is akin to that of the survival of Shadrach, Meshach,

\(^{232}\) Syr: קַעְתָּן קַעְתָּן

\(^{233}\) Syr: סְדַדְאַס סְדַדְאַס סְדַדְאַס סְדַדְאַס סְדַדְאַס סְדַדְאַס סְדַדְאַס סְדַדְאַס סְדַדְאַס סְדַדְאַס סְדַדְאַס


\(^{235}\) Matthew 3.11, Luke 3.16.

\(^{236}\) See below, 143ff.
and Abednego in the book of Daniel.\(^{237}\) Thus, the image emphasizes that 'Death and life is the mystery of baptism'.

Narsai also uses the image of God as painter in connection with the furnace. Such symbolism has already been encountered in Ephrem's *De Virginitate* 7.5 where the painting is clearly associated with anointing. Narsai, however, talks for the most part of God painting the recreated image 'upon the tablet of the waters'. At the very beginning of *On Baptism* he states that:

\[
\text{As in a furnace he re-cast our image in baptism; and instead of clay he has made us spiritual gold. Spiritually, without colours, was he pleased to depict us; that the beauty of our image might not again be corrupted by death. O painter, that paints an image upon the tablet of the waters, nor is his art hindered by opposition! O artist, that breathes the Spirit without hands, and sows life immortal in mortality.}^{238}
\]

Again, the result of this act of recreation is a new immortal state. This same theme is developed a few lines later where Narsai states more explicitly that it is the activity of the Spirit which wipes away sin:

\[
\text{He created a second time the creation which he had created in the beginning; and he purged out from it the old things of mortality. The rust of iniquity he willed to wipe away from mortals; and his purpose put the sponge of the Spirit into the hand of our body.}^{239}
\]

\(^{237}\) Daniel 3; Brock notes that in Ephrem's *De Epiphania* 8.6 the womb of flame is compared with the fiery furnace of Daniel. Brock, *The Holy Spirit*, 86.

\(^{238}\) Mingana, *Narsai Homilae*, a.x; Connolly, *Liturgical Homilies*, 33. The same image appears at the end of his *Homily on the Epiphany*: 'He (the King) gave his word and promised a renewal of the body and redemption of the soul, and he wrote these out on the two tablets of water and the Spirit'. McLeod, *Metrical Homilies*, 102f.

The notion of the furnace as a vehicle for purification from sin is repeated in his homily *On the Mysteries of the Church and on Baptism*. In the passage below Narsai describes the action of the priests as they perform the rite and gives further support to the notion that the eradication of sin is directly linked to the action of the Spirit, whose heat burns away sin as fire burns rust from metal:

As in a furnace he (the priest) re-casts bodies in baptism; and as in a fire he consumes the weeds of mortality. The *medicine* of the Spirit he casts into the water, as into a furnace; and he purifies the image of men from uncleanness. By the heat of the Spirit he purges the rust of body and soul; and instead of clay they acquire the hue of heavenly beings.

What does Narsai mean when he says that the Spirit, likened to medicine, is cast into the water? Is it possible that this refers to oil being poured into the water by the priest as part of the blessing, as in later rites? Although this particular interpretation has not found favour with scholars, does not the fact that Narsai compares the Spirit with a liquid and, furthermore, that oil has just been blessed for the anointing of forehead and body, make this reading possible? Other references to the mixing of oil and water and to painting oil on the water would support such a conclusion; among which, in his homily *On Baptism*, 'A spiritual art he taught them (the priests), that they should be tracing the image of life on the tablet of the waters. Ah, corporeal beings, painters of the Spirit, without hands.'

Having suggested this possibility, the text also suggests that it may be through the priests' words of blessing that they are 'painters of the Spirit without hands'. If this is

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240 Syr:  
242 Ibid., 34; see also, ibid., 46.
what Narsai means, it links well with the communication of the Spirit through breath, an idea which goes back to the creation of Adam and of the Spirit brooding over the face of the waters in creation. In *On Baptism* Narsai proclaims, 'O artist, that breathes the Spirit without hands'.

It is surely not impossible for both interpretations to be correct and for oil to be poured into the water during the prayer of consecration. However, if the consecration of the baptismal font is effected by the priests' invocation of the Spirit, then the symbolism of 'tracing the image of life on the tablet of the waters' is fertile ground for a subsequent ritual development of the rite.

### 3.3.2 Baptism and the Second Adam

The image of the furnace is not restricted to Narsai's *Liturical Homilies*. In his *Homily on our Lord's Birth from the Holy Virgin* he writes: 'His (Adam's) corrupted image he willed to renew under the name of a birth, because he again moulds it in the *furnace* of the Spirit and renews it'. In his *Homily on the Epiphany of our Lord* the same imagery is closely linked to that of the womb: 'In a womb of water he was promising to beget them and, as in a *furnace*, to renew them by (their) repentance'. Again in the same homily, the idea of being remoulded in the furnace of the font is linked to the creation of Adam in Genesis. Jesus, the Second Adam, is 'entirely like that First (Adam) which the earth bore' since he 'came forth from the womb as from the earth'. Therefore, the Second Adam descends into the Jordan in order that it might become the furnace.

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244 Syr: ʀɜɜɜɜ ʀɜɜɜɜ; McLeod, *Metrical Homilies*, 36f.
245 Syr: ʀɜɜɜɜ ʀɜɜɜɜ
246 McLeod, *Metrical Homilies*, 78f.
whereby the divine image which the First Adam bore and which was disfigured at the
Fall might be remoulded. At his baptism Jesus proclaims:

The comely image of our bodily structure has been tarnished and worn away.
I will descend to scour away the filth of iniquity from its features.
In a furnace of water, I will mould our supreme image;
and instead of fire, I will breathe in it a spirit of life.

The same divine action is also expressed in terms of the work of the Father who first created Adam from the dust: 'The nature of Adam's clay the Creator took and fashioned it in water and heated it in the Spirit; and it acquired beauty'.

3.3.3 Forgiveness, New Birth and the Spirit
Elsewhere in the same homily both the forgiveness of sins and the womb of new birth are linked to the baptismal furnace. John the Baptist proclaims:

By water only he commanded me to give forgiveness for iniquity until he himself comes and gives the Spirit with forgiveness. With fire and the Spirit, he will destroy the growth of mortality and bring forth the spiritual seed of life for the dead. In the furnace of the Spirit, he will mould the image that iniquity has rendered odious, and impart the beauty of heavenly beings to earthly ones. In a womb of water, he will give birth to men spiritually, as they are enrolled with a new name as first-born of the Spirit. He will free the body from the slavery of mortality and redeem the soul from the enticements of desires. He will forgive iniquity and give the Spirit as a pledge, so that his co-heirs may not doubt concerning his promises.

247 Ibid., 74f.
248 Syr: ἀπὸ τοῦ νεκρού
249 McLeod, Metrical Homilies, 86f.
250 Ibid., 92f.
251 Syr: ἕξω ἐκ τοῦ νεκρού
252 Syr: ἐκ τοῦ νεκρού
This passage describes the Spirit's activity in every stage of the baptismal process. It is the Spirit which is God's agent for the removal of sin; it is within the furnace and womb of the Spirit, presented in parallel and, to an extent, synonymously, that the candidate will be remoulded and, freed from sin, born again; finally, it is the gift of the Spirit which is the pledge of the promised resurrection. This notion of a pledge would appear to be a more developed form of Aphrahat's pneumatology outlined above. Both Aphrahat and Narsai can be seen to be developing the language of Ephesians 1.13f which talks of the seal of the Spirit as a pledge of future inheritance.

Similar imagery is found in Theodore. His strongly eschatological baptismal theology speaks of baptism as a womb of new birth, but emphasizes the rite as a sign of hope for the future, a type of the true second birth which will take place at the resurrection. His third Baptismal Homily states that:

Baptism contains the signs of the new birth which will be manifested in reality when you rise from the dead and recover all that death has stolen from you . . . You will gain this new birth by rising from the dead to a second existence, just as when you were born of a woman you entered upon the existence that death takes away from you. You will gain this in reality when the time comes for you to rise again to your new birth; but now you have faith in Christ the Lord, and while you are waiting for the resurrection you must be content with receiving symbols and signs of it in this awesome sacrament which affords you certainty of sharing in the blessings to come.

253 McLeod, Metrical Homilies, 78f.
254 Having outlined the continued activity of the Spirit within the baptismal ritual, it should not be forgotten that the Spirit also nourishes the baptized through the eucharistic mystery. In his homily On the Mysteries of the Church and of Baptism, Narsai states that the baptized 'suck the Spirit after the birth of baptism; and according to the birth is also the nourishment that is high and exalted'. Mingana, Narsai Homilae, 5; Connolly, Liturgical Homilies, 55.
255 See above, 85ff.
256 Peshitta: the same word used by Narsai in his Homily on the Epiphany of the Lord; see above, 141.
257 Baptismal Homily 3.2; Mingana, Commentary of Theodore, 181; Yarnold, Awe-Inspiring Rites, 181.
The same point is made even more clearly by Theodore later in the same homily: 'This second birth is the work of the Holy Spirit, whom you receive in the sacrament as a kind of guarantee.'

3.3.4 Death, Resurrection and Regeneration

Narsai's image of burning the growth of mortality and sowing a seed which will grow into eternal life echoes both the Parable of the Sower and, more importantly, Paul's discourse on the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15.37f.

Again, the baptismal mystery is expressed in terms of death and life. In his homily On the Mysteries of the Church and of Baptism the candidate is described as a corpse entering a tomb, dying, being buried and then being raised to life again. Thus Narsai juxtaposes the two images of tomb and womb, both used by Theodore. As a tomb, entry into the font is a participation in Christ's death and resurrection:

> The evil one and death are undone by baptism; and the resurrection of the body and the redemption of the soul are preached therein. In it, as in a tomb, body and soul are buried, and they died and live with a type of the resurrection that is to be at the end. Mystically, it fills for men the office of the grave; and the voice of the priesthood as the voice of the trump in the latter end.

As Ephrem describes the womb of birth from an earthly mother, the womb of rebirth from a spiritual mother, and the womb of birth to eternal life which takes place at

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259 Baptismal Homily, 3.6; Mingana, Commentary of Theodore, 184; Yarnold, Awe-Inspiring Rites, 184.
260 Matthew 13.1-9
261 Mingana, Narsai Homilae, m=1; Connolly, Liturgical Homilies, 50f. Later in the same homily Narsai emphasizes again that it is Christ's death and life which are depicted in baptism; 'after they have died with him they have been resuscitated mystically'. Ibid., 54.
262 In his homily On the Mysteries of the Church and on Baptism Narsai refers to God casting his word like a seed into the womb of the waters (Syr: نَارْسَان يَأْمُرُ) that they might bring the
death so, too, these three are inseparably linked and woven together by Narsai to articulate the two principal themes of death and resurrection and regeneration which dominate his baptismal theology:

Mystically he dies and is raised and adorned; mystically he imitates the life immortal. His birth (in baptism) is a symbol of that birth which is to be at the end, and the conduct of his life of that conversation which is to be in the kingdom on high.

We notice here a striking similarity between Narsai's theology of baptism as a sign of what will come to reality at the resurrection and that of Theodore quoted above. Commenting on Theodore, Riley states that such an eschatological understanding of the baptism permits both a looking back and a looking forward from the perspective of the font, creating a 'dynamic tension'. The candidate looks back at and participates in the death and resurrection of Christ, 'Mystically he died and is raised and adorned'; but he receives the Spirit as a pledge that at death he will be a full partaker of Christ's resurrection in 'that birth which is to be at the end' and of which the baptismal birth is a symbolic participation. In Narsai, womb and tomb are both employed to illustrate the link between the font and the final resurrection. Rebirth in the waters of the font and

candidate to new birth. (Ibid., 50.) It is unfortunate that in several places Connolly has rendered χωρίον 'bosom'. For similar language, see above, 130. Such imagery is not restricted to the Syrian Church. Pacian, a Latin writer of the fourth century, employs the same in a sermon on baptism: 'the seed of Christ, that is the Spirit of God, quickens the new man in the mother's womb, brings him to birth in the font, and brings him forth by the hands of the sacred minister, though faith is the bridesmaid'. GP Jeanes, 'Paschal Baptism and Rebirth: A Clash of Images?', *Studia Patristica*, 26 (1993), 42.

263 'And he depicted by his baptism death and life and the renewal of all'. McLeod, *Metrical Homilies*, 94f.
266 cf Finn, *The Baptismal Instructions of St John Chrysostom*, 83.
'that birth which is to be at the end' are parallel to death, burial and resurrection in the tomb of baptism and the final resurrection at the end of time. For in baptism, 'as in a tomb, body and soul are buried, that they die and live with a type of the resurrection that is to be at the end'.

3.3.5 Anointing and Immersion
Narsai believes that the celebration of the rites of Christian initiation confers the gift of the Spirit upon the candidate. Moreover, his writings present a high notion of priesthood as 'the ministers of the mysteries, to whom is committed the treasury of the Spirit to dispense'. What, however, of the important question of the relationship between the pre-immersion anointings and immersion, and the activity of the Spirit in both?

It is clear from On Baptism that the Spirit is invoked at the consecration of the oil. Narsai writes, 'Lo, the king of the height reaches out to him the hand of the Spirit, and places in his hand the signet of his name, that he may seal his sheep'. The sealing of the sheep is an obvious reference to the anointing, the image of a sheep becoming a member of the flock recurring in his homilies. Once the name of the candidate has been entered in the book, the anointing begins:

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267 Connolly, Liturgical Homilies, 50f.
268 Ibid., 38.
269 On Baptism provides evidence that Narsai performed an anointing of the whole body as well as the forehead. In places it is clear that Narsai refers specifically to the consignation; elsewhere he speaks more generally of the anointing and can be taken to refer to the double unction. Brock and Chalassery appear to ignore the evidence of the anointing of the body; see below, 206, fn 27.
270 Syr: ; the English translation does not show that in Syriac the same root is used for both the noun 'signet' and the verb 'to seal'; Mingana, Narsai Homilae, 103; Connolly, Liturgical Homilies, 35.
He (the priest) makes him to stand as a sheep in the door of the sheep-fold; and he signs his body and lets him mix with the flock. The sign of the oil he holds in his hand, before the beholders; and with manifest things he proclaims the power of things hidden. And as by a symbol he shows to the eyes of the bodily senses the secret power that is hidden in the visible sign. O dust-born, who signs the flock with the sign of its Lord, and seals upon it his hidden name by the outward mark.²⁷³

This sheep imagery presents the anointing with oil as conferring a mark of identity which singles out the anointed as belonging to Christ; it functions as a mark of ownership, as a sign of incorporation into and membership of his flock and, most importantly, as the badge of an anointed one. For the 'hidden Name' and the 'outward mark' are surely references to the name Messiah, revealed at the Jordan, and the descent of the Spirit which manifested his true status. The themes of identity and ownership appear earlier in the same homily: 'Lo, the sheep are gathered together, and the lambs and the ewes; and he sets upon them the seal of life of the word of his Lord.'²⁷⁴ This seal is identified in the same section as tracing 'the image of the divinity upon his forehead²⁷⁵ and later as: 'The seal of his name they lay upon his flock continually; and with the Trinity men are signing²⁷⁶ men'.²⁷⁷ Finally, at the end of the homily On Baptism the purpose of the seal is given. It is a protective seal to confuse evil powers and enable the newly-born Christian to engage in spiritual warfare. Having affirmed that, as in the immersion, a Trinitarian formula is used for the anointing, Narsai goes on to explain the significance of the latter:

²⁷² Syr: χατ
²⁷³ Mingana, Narsai Homilae, αμά - αμά; Connolly, Liturgical Homilies, 40.
²⁷⁴ Syr: αμαα δσα ιαμα ιαμα; Mingana, Narsai Homilae, αμά; Connolly, Liturgical Homilies, 36.
²⁷⁵ Ibid.
²⁷⁶ Syr: σαματ
²⁷⁷ Mingana, Narsai Homilae, αμά; Connolly, Liturgical Homilies, 41.
The three names he traces upon his face as a shield; that the tyrant may see the image of the divinity on the head of a man. The cause of the signing on the forehead is for the confusion of devils; that when they discern it on the head of a man they may be overcome by it. On account of these (the devils) are performed the mysteries of the oil and water, that they may be an armour against their warfare and attacks. An armour is the oil with which the earth-born are anointed, that they may not be captured by the spirits in the hidden warfare. It is the great sea of the king of kings with which they are stamped, that they may serve in the spiritual contest. On their forehead they receive the spiritual seal, that it may be bright before angels and men.

This anointing may be further understood within the context of the Fall as the tracing of the image of the divine upon the forehead, reversing that which befell Adam and Eve as a consequence of their sin: 'Sin effaced the name of life of the royal image and marked on his name corruption, and death upon his limbs.'

Narsai's understanding of the function of the anointing reflects much of Ephrem's thought; not least, as far as the Spirit is concerned, that although Narsai describes the seal as driving out iniquity and giving the Spirit, the textual evidence does not point to Arickappallil's conclusion which ties down the candidate's reception of the Spirit to this one ritual act. That is not to say that this anointing is not pneumatic; more than once Narsai suggests that it is the Spirit who gives power to the oil both for protection against Satan and to mark the candidate with the divine name which, in this context, may be

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278 Syr: ḫατ ḫατ ḫατ
279 Syr: ḫατ ḫατ ḫαт
280 Mingana, Narsai Homilae, Connolly, Liturgical Homilies, 43.
281 McLeod, Metrical Homilies, 72f.
282 Connolly, Liturgical Homilies, 44.
interpreted to mean Messiah, the Anointed One.284 This, however, is different from claiming that Narsai's baptismal rite associated the conferral of the pneumatic gift with one isolated moment within the liturgy. Such an interpretation arouses the suspicion that an equivalent to the Western unction of confirmation is being sought in this fifth century East Syrian text. Rather, as Chalassery points out, the anointing 'signifies the reality that the person is set apart from the profane and the unbelievers of the world and is joined to the body of Christ in which he shares the very life of the Trinity by the action of the Holy Spirit'.285

3.3.6 Christian Baptism and the Jordan

Through the action of the Spirit, baptism in the womb of the font and baptism in the womb of the Jordan are one event in liturgical time. Thus, whatever is said about the events of Jesus' own baptism is significant for understanding of the Christian rite. The question commonly raised by those who consider the Jordan event is why it was necessary for Jesus to be baptized at all? Narsai's own christological viewpoint argues that it was vital for Jesus' humanity to receive baptism, as 'a son of our race'286 in order to open 'the way to renewal for the sons of his race'.287 Narsai explains that Jesus' body is empowered by the anointing of the Spirit288 so that 'he has fulfilled and perfected his poverty'289 and has made the sons of his race share in the riches290 of the Spirit.291

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284 See Connolly, Liturgical Homilies, 42ff.
285 Chalassery, The Holy Spirit and Christian Initiation, 73. It is unfortunate, however, that in the conclusion to the same chapter Chalassery maintains that 'the beginning of the rites of Initiation is the invocation and the giving of the Holy Spirit . . . the Spirit of holiness is conveyed to the individual through the nişmā'. (Ibid., 89.) Thus, he attributes the conferral of the Spirit to the anointing and participation in the death and resurrection of Christ to the immersion.
286 Syr: ܡܐܠܕܐ, to
287 McLeod, Metrical Homilies, 96f.
288 Ibid., 90f.
289 Syr: ܡܐܠܕܐ.
290 Syr: ܡܐܠܕܐ.
complete identification of the humanity of Jesus with the human race is crucial for Narsai's soteriology. Behind his 'dyophysite' baptismal theology, maintaining a clear distinction between the divine Logos and the human Jesus, is a radical response to Monophysitism, which he believed to have completely submerged Christ's humanity into his divinity. McLeod sums up Narsai's argument in this way: 'For Christ's humanity is the bond uniting all creation to its Creator. To submerge the human nature of Christ is to destroy the way to salvation'.

With such a theological background, emphasising so powerfully the unity of the humanity of Jesus and the human race, it is hardly surprising that Narsai's baptismal theology presents such a strong identification between the Jordan event and Christian baptism. His *Homily on the Epiphany of our Lord* parallels the events of Jesus' own baptism with their effects made present in the baptismal liturgy:

He (Jesus) drew near to baptism, *the* great sea which washes sinners; and he opened the gates that were closed before men. The high priest descended into the *waters* and bathed and sanctified *them* and conferred upon them the power of the Spirit to give life. The holy one drew near to the weak and inanimate element and made it a womb which begets men spiritually. He descended and was plunged into the womb of water as in a grave; and he rose and was raised and raised Adam in mystery.

Again, it is the divine Christ who confers the power of the Spirit upon the waters, transforming the Jordan into a womb to give birth to the new Adam. Yet, according
to Narsai’s christology, it is as one who shares Christ’s humanity that the candidate descends into the waters which have been changed for all time into a womb of rebirth and a grave of new life through the descent of the divine into the Jordan. The homily continues:

He ascended from the womb of a new mother that is not one by nature; and the Spirit descended and anointed him with divine power. With the Spirit he anointed him - not with the oil that was lawful the chosen oil far superior to all others. Under the figure of a dove the Spirit had descended and remained with him; and by this open appearance, he signified concerning his hidden nature. By the dove, he showed that he has received all the riches of the Spirit; and he remains with him without departing according to the order of his indwelling.297

Without trying to systematise Narsai’s theology, it would appear that the Spirit’s role in this account is to reveal the divine nature of Christ: ‘He signified concerning his hidden nature’. Elsewhere in the same homily the writer states: ‘He (Jesus) was a man in body and soul, save for iniquity; and he anointed him with the Spirit; and he became in power the God-man’.298 Although the last quotation might be seen to err towards full-blown Adoptionism, Narsai is clear that Jesus possesses both human and divine natures (or ‘visible’ and ‘hidden’ states) from the time of his conception in the womb of his mother. His Homily on our Lord’s Birth from the Holy Virgin expresses his christology very concisely:

It was not his (the Word’s) nature that changed and became lowly flesh; but he took flesh from ours and honoured it with his. According to his own (nature), his nature remained in its glory without alteration; and ours, which he took, he made to be one with him in honour.

297 McLeod, Metrical Homilies, 88f.
298 Syr: τε Μακάρη; McLeod, Metrical Homilies, 98f.
It was not to an existence of flesh that the one hidden from the universe [came to; flesh he \textit{made} so that he might thereby signify concerning his hiddeness. By the power of the Spirit, he \textit{made} a man from a woman, so that in his visible state men might see the one hidden from all. Without the pigments of human seed, he depicted him in a womb, so that he might exalt his conception above the order established for his [fellow men. In the Spirit, he fashioned him; and the Spirit, the power of his good pleasure, filled him, so that from his fullness he might give life and vivify the universe.\textsuperscript{299}

The two natures are distinct and yet function as a unity. The purpose of the human nature is to reveal that which is hidden, the divine nature, God. Moreover, 'all the riches of the Spirit' have been conferred in the womb of Mary, and it is to this that the dove bears witness at the Jordan. The agent which fashions the man Jesus in the womb is the Spirit, just as it is the Spirit who heats the waters of the Jordan furnace and brings to birth the baptized Christian from the womb of the font. The womb of Mary, the womb of the Jordan and the womb of the font are united by the activity of the same Spirit. Through the power of the Spirit the divine and human natures of Christ are united in the womb of the Virgin, bringing to birth the Son of God. In the womb of the Jordan the human nature, exalted by the anointing of the Spirit,\textsuperscript{300} reveals the divine in the visible man, manifesting publicly what was achieved by the Spirit in the womb of Mary, the Father's voice completing the Trinitarian confirmation of his Son's identity:

The voice of the Father was exalting him to an honour greater than anyone's by testifying: "This is my beloved, and he fulfils my will"! The Father cries out and the Son is baptized and the Spirit descends: three witnesses who have subscribed to the authority of the king.\textsuperscript{301}

\textsuperscript{299} McLeod, \textit{metrical Homilies}, 48f.

\textsuperscript{300} 'And if the Holy Spirit has anointed the only-begotten and filled him with the Spirit, then the majestic rank of glory he has received of late'. McLeod, \textit{metrical Homilies}, 90f.

\textsuperscript{301} \textit{Ibid.}, 96f.
Brock, aware of its importance in the Syrian baptismal tradition, claims that 'it is remarkable that Narsai has no mention of "sonship" in his two homilies'. Whilst at one level this is true, it is not an accurate analysis of the *Homily on the Epiphany of Our Lord* nor does it take account of the importance which Narsai attaches to baptismal regeneration and the identification of Christian baptism with Jesus' own. The question to what we are born again can only be answered in one way by Narsai, the same for the baptizand as it was for Jesus: 'At the annunciation of his conception, he promised him the name of sonship; and he brought it to pass in mystery by means of a spiritual birth'. Jesus' birth in the spiritual womb of the Jordan reveals him in power as the Son of God, the same revelation which is repeated at the resurrection when he is born again by the power of the Spirit from the womb of death to eternal life.

### 3.3.7 Summary

Just as there is evidence of similarities between Narsai and Theodore, equally striking parallels exist between Narsai and Ephrem, particularly in terms of anointing as the necessary preparation for the candidate to enter the font, their use of womb imagery and the adoption of the Pauline language to describe Christ as the Second Adam, sent by the Father to restore to humanity the divine image which it enjoyed before the Fall, reconciling it to God for eternity.

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303 McLeod, *Metrical Homilies* 96f.
304 For Ephrem, it was suggested that the anointing conferred upon the candidate the necessary characteristics so that the womb might become impregnated. The same idea may be reflected in Narsai's comment in his homily *On the Mysteries of the Church and on Baptism* that the process of regeneration is divided between conception and birth: 'It is altogether a new thing ... that within an hour should be accomplished the period of conception and birth'. Mingana, *Narsai Homilae*, 30a - 30a; Connolly, *Liturgical Homilies*, 46.
For Narsai as for Ephrem, the divine image of pre-Fall Adam is restored to the candidate as he receives the mark of ownership through anointing, that he might enter the waters of rebirth both with the Anointed One and as one belonging to the Anointed One. In his baptism in the font the candidate is united with Christ in his birth and in his death, for the water is both womb and tomb. As one whose anointing designates him a member of Christ's flock, and whose entry into the waters of the font brings rebirth and resurrection with Christ, the candidate receives the gift of the Spirit in the baptismal mystery for the forgiveness of sins, as a pledge of future glory and as the means of revelation as a child of God.

Narsai's baptismal writings lend further weight to our thesis that, in the Syrian baptismal tradition, there is an important link between the image of the womb and the work of the Spirit. Again and again the womb is presented as the primary symbolic focus of the activity of the Spirit. This is not to say that the Spirit is not active in other ways or, indeed, in other parts of the rite. For example, there is no doubt that the blessing of oil and the anointing are pneumatic ritual acts. However, it is the womb which is presented as the main sphere of the Spirit's activity, the theology and imagery of the womb of the font interpreted in and through the wombs of the Virgin and of Sheol. Despite the introduction of the language and imagery of Romans 6, the womb is still the primary baptismal image for Narsai.

Narsai's own words, from the end of his *Homily on the Epiphany of Our Lord*, provide the best summary of his baptismal theology. Here the baptismal process is described as a road which Jesus has already trodden and which leads to spiritual birth. The waters of
the open womb, which is the goal of this pilgrimage towards initiation, bury mortality and confer the Spirit as a pledge of the eternal life to be enjoyed by those who are born again:

He (the King) gave his word and promised a renewal of the body and redemption of the soul, and he wrote these out on the two tablets of water and the Spirit.

... In water he fixed the new goal of spiritual birth, because everyone who willingly does likewise receives freedom. Behold the promise of the King on high which cannot be broken! Come! Let us strive to receive gratis the wealth of the Spirit!

... This (is) the road that the King has traversed for us in his own person. Come! Let us travel on it to the end as long as there is light. Behold! There is opened the womb which begets men spiritually. Bury mortality in baptism and acquire life!\(^{305}\)

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\(^{305}\) McLeod, *Metrical Homilies*, 102ff.
4.1 Jacob of Serugh
Unlike Narsai, Jacob of Serugh does not provide a detailed commentary on the baptismal liturgy which he would have performed. Among his homilies there are, however, three which concern baptism, published by Bedjan in 1905 in the first of his five volumes of Jacob's homilies;¹ the second of these concerns Jesus' own baptism in the Jordan. Unlike previous writers, Jacob's homilies do not demand detailed consideration in this dissertation, since they have received thorough treatment in an important study by Brock.² It will suffice, however, to comment on the most important themes which run through his writings and, in particular, those which concern the action of the Spirit: rebirth, fire and the pre-immersion anointing.

There would appear to be very little evidence to suggest that Jacob's rite differed greatly from that of his teacher, Narsai. There is nothing to suggest the performance of a post-immersion anointing and the only obvious addition is the Lord's Prayer after the immersion. Moreover, Varghese points out that in his homily on the baptism of the Emperor Constantine, the order described is anointing, immersion and eucharist.³

4.1.1 Dwelling in the wombs of Mary, the Jordan and Sheol
Finn attempts a concise definition of the principal elements of Jacob's baptismal theology:

the Jordan is centre stage; baptism’s power flows from the pierced side of Christ; the sacrament is a mystical marriage; the Spirit and adoptive sonship are its principal gifts; the radiance of transformation is its primary effect; and baptism is a return to paradise.4

Whilst this is a fair summary of the most important strands of Jacob’s thought, most of which have been encountered already, what Finn fails to mention is Jacob’s use of the image of a dwelling-place (Syr: ⲛ捃 ​‘<Jaar<’),5 closely related to the womb, which stands out as one of the most important images in describing the process of baptismal regeneration and its participation in the incarnation and resurrection. The imaginative use of the three wombs of Mary, the Jordan and Sheol has been discussed at length in the previous chapter. It is clear from Jacob’s writings that he, too, is an inheritor of this tradition. Brock describes Jacob’s series of staging posts as presenting ‘three focal points in the incarnation’6 and gives a clear example of this from Jacob’s exhortation to baptism:

In three dwelling-places he completed his whole course:

2 SP Brock, ‘Baptismal Themes in the Writings of Jacob of Serugh’; Oriantia Christiana Analecta, 205 (1978), 325-347.
3 Varghese, Onctions baptismales, 141.
4 Finn, Early Christian Baptism, 189.
5 ⲛ捃 translates μονή, meaning a stopping-place in John 14.2, and is consistently translated by Brock as ‘staging post’; ‘dwelling-place’ or ‘lodging’ are equally acceptable translations of the Syriac (Payne Smith, Compendious Syriac Dictionary, 5) and are, perhaps, more suited to Jacob’s language of residing in the Virgin, being received by baptism and descending into Sheol. In places Brock seems to treat κατά or χάθα and ⲛ捃 as synonyms. This is misleading, since Jacob does employ womb imagery closely related to that of the ‘dwelling-place’. Nevertheless, it is important not to allow the prominence of this image in other writings to cloud an accurate translation and interpretation of Jacob’s thought. Jacob does speak of the womb of Mary as well as the baptismal womb, but when talking of a simultaneous entry into Mary, the Jordan and Sheol, he prefers the language of indwelling.
he *dwelt* in the virgin and came to birth, though he was God; again baptism received him, and yet he was God; and he descended to Sheol, and the world recognized that he was God.\(^6\)

By identifying these three events in this way, Jacob presents a theology in which 'the total effects of the incarnation can be localized in any of these "wombs"\(^9\) which produces a parallelism between the role of Mary and that of the Jordan or font. With this as background, he concludes with Finn and Varghese that for Jacob, 'Christian baptism has its origin in two quite different moments in the course of the Incarnation - Christ's baptism in the Jordan, and the piercing of his side on the cross'. Making the distinction between liturgical and secular time, he states that:

The effect of these two events, separate in historical time, is identical in "sacred time", and so their sum total, as it were, can equally be located at Christ's baptism in the Jordan, or at the piercing of his side after his death on the cross.\(^10\)

Having identified the two sources of Christian baptism, Brock goes on to examine their treatment by Jacob in greater detail. However, it is puzzling why, having retained two of the dwelling-places of the Jordan and death, albeit in connection with an event associated with Christ's death on the cross rather than Sheol itself, reference to the womb of Mary has disappeared from Brock's argument. Does not the incarnation of the divine Logos provide the theological context for all womb imagery, be it of Mary, the Jordan or Sheol and thus, by association, for the string of dwelling-places? If so, then the womb of Mary is of primary importance for a proper understanding of the theology of baptism and, whilst in terms of the chronology of liturgical time it is of no higher

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\(^7\) Syr: ~\(\text{κότρων}\)

\(^8\) Bedjan, *Homiliae Selectae*, 3, 593; Brock, *Baptismal Themes*, 326.

\(^9\) Brock, *Baptismal Themes*, 326.
priority than the other two dwelling-places, in terms of the image's origin and, more importantly, of its strong connection with the theology of regeneration which is at the heart of Jacob's writings, it cannot be ignored. In the Syrian tradition, a womb connects the Jordan and Jesus' death within the framework of a strongly incarnational baptismal theology. This, in itself, suggests that Jesus' birth occupies a significant place within the rite of initiation. Moreover, this primary dwelling-place has to be recognized as part of the total picture before the Christian can be born in baptism as a son of God. Such an understanding supports the suggestion made elsewhere, that behind the writings of many Syrian baptismal commentators lies Nicodemus' question, 'Can a man enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?'

Jacob articulates very clearly the link between Jesus' own birth and baptism. In his homily, *On the Baptism of the Law, the Baptism of John and the Baptism Our Lord gave the Apostles*, Jesus says to the Baptist:

> The way of birth has put me in a position to come to baptism, since I have been born, I shall now be baptized. Be quiet and baptize me.

In the same homily, Jacob describes how baptism itself may be seen as a mother giving birth and, elsewhere, he refers to the font as both mother and womb:

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11 See below, 159.
12 See above, 106.
13 Syr: ἐκ τούτου ἐκείνη ἔδωκεν ἐπάνω κεφάλας κοιλιός
15 Brock usefully lists Jacob's references to the baptismal water as a 'Virgin mother', 'mother', 'second mother', 'mother of life' and 'mother of sanctification'. This is derived from Jacob's use of the Genesis account of the story of Adam and Eve, in which Eve's birth from Adam's side is seen as an example of the virgin birth of Christ and the birth of the mysteries of the Church from his side as he hung on the cross, which is itself regarded by Jacob as a parallel to Adam's sleep. It should further be noted that God's breathing of life into Adam, the culmination of the creation of
The Son of God gave his apostles his own baptism in which there is Fire and Holy Spirit for those who go down to it; in it there is a power and it gives birth to spiritual children, and after being born by it they may call upon our heavenly Father. This baptism which the Son of God opened up, it gives birth to new immortal children of the Father; it burns with Fire and the Spirit, giving birth in divine fashion, so that as a result of it men may become sons of God.\textsuperscript{16}

In spite of the evidence of the texts themselves, both Varghese and Finn\textsuperscript{17} have followed Brock's assertion that, in the words of Varghese, 'Selon Jacques de Saroug, le baptême du Christ et le côté percé du Christ sur la croix sont les deux moments qui marquent l'origine du baptême chrétien\textsuperscript{18} and have omitted any mention of the birth from Mary's womb.

4.1.2 The witness of the Spirit

The Bishop of Serugh is clear that the Spirit does not descend upon the water in order to consecrate it. Like Ephrem and Narsai before him, he believes that it is the descent of Christ into the water which sanctifies baptismal water for all time.\textsuperscript{19} In the homily on the three baptisms Jacob states: 'The Spirit did not come down to sanctify the water so that the holy Son might be baptized, for it was from the Son that sanctification

the first man, is paralleled by the imparting of the gift of the Spirit in the womb of the water. Jacob's exhortation to baptism illustrates a number of these typologies:

- The virgin earth gave birth to Adam in holy fashion, so as to indicate clearly Mary's giving birth.
- Adam in turn slept, and his side was pierced; from it came forth Eve to be mother for the whole world, serving as an image of that sleep of death on the cross and that side which gave birth to baptism.
- Adam slept and gave the whole world a mother; the Saviour died, and there flows from him baptismal water. If the side gave birth to Eve, as is written, then a virgin too gave birth to the Son, as is indicated.


\textsuperscript{17} See above, 156.

\textsuperscript{18} Varghese, \textit{Onctions baptismales}, 138.
proceeded'. In the same homily he describes the function of the descent of the Spirit after Jesus emerged from the Jordan: 'It was after Christ had washed and gone up from the water that the Spirit descended, to show who he was, and not to sanctify . . .' Thus, the function of the Spirit is to act as a witness, to reveal the divine nature of the Son, a concept already encountered in Narsai, though without what might be described as his Adoptionist tendencies. In one of his letters Jacob writes of three witnesses at the baptism of Christ: the Father, the Spirit and John the Baptist:

_And he (Christ) sanctified baptismal water at his bathing, and he had three witnesses, and no more, that he was the true Son: that is to say, the Father and the Spirit, along with the virgin John - the Father with his voice, the Spirit with his descent, and John with his preaching._

Whilst 'witness' is used by Narsai to describe the voice of the Father and the descent of the dove, we have seen that his christological approach leads him to affirm that the anointing of the Spirit achieves the double function of exalting Jesus' human nature as well as revealing the divine in the visible man, whereas Jacob of Serugh's monistic christology cannot divorce the human and divine natures and may, therefore, only go as far as to reflect Narsai's: 'The Father cries out and the Son is baptized and the Spirit descends: three witnesses who have subscribed to the authority of the King'.

A further mirroring of Narsai may be seen in Jacob's association of fire with the Jordan. Here the imagery is somewhat confusing since, on the one hand, the Spirit descends

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19 See above, 117f & 135f.
20 Bedjan, _Homiliae Selectae_, 1,159; Finn, _Early Christian Baptism_, 193.
21 Ibid.
22 G Olinder (ed), _Iacobi Sarugensis. Epistulae quotquot supersunt_, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, Scriptres Syri 2.45, (Louvain, 1937), 47; Brock, _Baptismal Themes_, 328.
23 See above, 148ff.
after Jesus emerges from the waters but, on the other hand, Jacob talks of the Spirit preceding Christ and heating the waters, in the same way that Narsai describes the Spirit heating the waters of the furnace. Jacob writes:

There went forth from him the Holy Spirit, who stood over the water:  
the heat of his might made the waters hot,  
and his fire was kindled in the streams before (Christ) descended.\textsuperscript{25}

However, just as Jesus is seen to have set the Jordan on fire as he approached its waters, so too Christian baptism is performed in fire and Spirit\textsuperscript{26} since, through the priest's invocation of the Holy Spirit, the baptismal water becomes identical to that of the Jordan. Thus, as Brock points out, Jacob can talk of the font, and indeed Mary's womb, as furnace as well as womb.

As far as the gifts conferred in baptism are concerned, Brock refers to the Spirit and sonship, remarking that it is the gift of the Spirit in baptism which, following Paul's argument in Romans 8.15 and Galatians 4.6, allows the newly-baptized to call God Father and to become Christ's brother. Thus, it is the birth in the womb of the font which sets up a new relationship between the baptized and the Trinity: 'the Father sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, and in the Spirit we address the Father as "our Father" in truth'.\textsuperscript{27} Similarly, it is because the candidate has entered the womb of the font and, at the same time, Mary's womb, that he becomes a brother of Christ and, with Jesus, a son of God. Here, once more, the womb is presented as the primary focus for the activity of the Spirit. Certainly for Jacob, it is because baptism 'burns with Fire and

\textsuperscript{24} McLeod, \textit{Metrical Homilies}, 96f.
\textsuperscript{25} Bedjan, \textit{Homiliae Selectae}, 1, 174; Brock, \textit{Baptismal Themes}, 334.
\textsuperscript{26} \textit{Ibid.}, 160; 334.
\textsuperscript{27} \textit{Ibid.}, 203; 335.
the Spirit' that it is able to give birth 'in divine fashion, so that as a result of it men may become sons of God'.

4.1.3 Baptismal Anointing
According to Brock, the pre-immersion anointing (Syr: \\textit{\v c\textcolor{red}{\textipa{\textordmasculine a}t}}) is connected with the themes of ownership, protection and the gift of sonship which he describes as being 'traditionally linked with the pre-baptismal anointing in early Syrian catechesis'. Taking these in turn, the ideas of ownership and belonging have been identified in the writings of many other commentators on the baptismal anointing, not least Narsai. This is often seen as corresponding to circumcision and is linked in this way by Jacob in the second of his \textit{Homilies Against the Jews}:

God marked\textsuperscript{30} the nations with oil, but the Hebrews with blood, in order to paint the image of the cross by his fingers.\textsuperscript{31}

Thus, it is one who has already been claimed for Christ and who belongs to him and who, to use Jacob’s imagery, bears his stamp as a coin bears the stamp of a monarch (which, from the above evidence, would appear to be the sign of the cross rather than a pouring of oil over the head and / or the body), who descends into the womb of the font to receive the gift of rebirth and the Holy Spirit.\textsuperscript{32}

As for protection, Brock's article does not clearly express its relationship to the pre-immersion anointing. Jacob talks of Jesus forging armour in the furnace of the Jordan

\textsuperscript{28} See above, 159.
\textsuperscript{29} Brock, \textit{Baptismal Themes}, 339.
\textsuperscript{30} Syr: \textit{\v c\textcolor{red}{\textipa{\textordmasculine a}t}}
at his own baptism. This, together with the robe of light which Adam and Eve lost at the Fall, is left in the water for the candidate to put on at his baptism. Where, for example in the poetry of Ephrem, there has been a sense of the anointing protecting the candidate, this has been set within the context of the story of Noah and the flood with the covering of oil preventing the candidate from being drowned in the water as the wicked were in Genesis.\textsuperscript{33} This is not, however, what the Bishop of Serugh is referring to. Rather, we are dealing here with armour to engage in battle with Satan:

\begin{quote}
I am making the baptismal water as it were into an armoury, and unless a man enter it and put on armour he cannot fight.\textsuperscript{34}
\end{quote}

Thus, the armour is put on in the water, where it was left by Christ, and not at the anointing. The more ancient idea, which may be traced as far back as the \textit{Acts of Judas Thomas}, of the cross of Christ marked in oil on the candidate's head to ward off the Devil does, according to Brock, appear once in Jacob's writings, where the mark of Jesus is described as both a sign of belonging and of protection.\textsuperscript{35}

Moving to Brock's third theme, it is equally difficult to see how the gift of sonship is conveyed by the anointing rather than through immersion in the waters of the font. To begin with, it is those who have received the gift of the Spirit who are qualified to address God as Father. For Jacob, there is no question that the action of the Spirit is focused upon the womb: 'it burns with Fire and the Spirit, giving birth in divine

\textsuperscript{32} cf Varghese, \textit{Onctions baptismales}, 142.
\textsuperscript{33} See above, 131.
\textsuperscript{34} Bedjan, \textit{Homiliae Selectae}, 1, 180; Brock, \textit{Baptismal Themes}, 337.
\textsuperscript{35} Brock, \textit{Baptismal Themes}, 339.
fashion. Varghese, commenting on the relationship between the anointing and the Spirit, remarks that:

Il (Jacob) n'associe pas l'huile avec le don de l'Esprit. Selon Jacques, on reçoit le Saint Esprit grâce à l'immersion.

Furthermore, it is when John the Baptist is in the womb of his mother Elizabeth that he receives his baptism at the visitation of Mary:

With the Holy Spirit did he (Christ) anoint the embryo John, in his mother's womb, giving him baptism in the womb before he was born . . .

Moreover, a passage from the homily on the three baptisms also speaks of the baptism of the Son of God giving 'birth to the "first born", providing sons to be brothers of the Only-Begotten.

The passage which leads Brock to conclude that sonship is linked with the baptismal anointing comes from Jacob's exhortation to baptism: 'the sign of life has made you into a brother to the Only-Begotten; ... because you are a son, you are now permitted to

36 See above, 159.
37 Varghese, Onctions baptismales, 145.
38 Syr: Ράη.
39 P Bedjan (ed), S. Martyrii, qui et Sahcona, quae supersunt omnia, (Paris-Leipzig, 1902), 646f; Brock, Baptismal Themes, 344.
40 Syr: Ρηάτ.
41 Bedjan, Homiliae Selectae, 1, 161; Finn, Early Christian Baptism, 194.
42 Syr: Ρηάτ.
Brock's argument is based on his identification of ἀγάπη with the pre-immersion anointing. The use of this term has already been discussed and it has been noted that in some cases the term is more likely to refer to the complete rite of initiation, anointing and immersion, than to the first ritual act alone. This interpretation is supported by Varghese who, whilst arguing that anointing is an integral part of Jacob's rite, states that:

Bien qu'il (Jacob) parle de l'onction pré-baptismale comme ῥύσμο, ce mot ne signifierait pas toujours cette onction. Le mot ῥύσμο peut aussi signifier le baptême dans son ensemble.

If one adds to this the connection between sonship and the Spirit as well as the imagery of the font as a womb of rebirth, the evidence appears to be heavily in favour of sonship being conferred by the whole of the rite and not the pre-immersion anointing in isolation.

4.1.4 Summary
In this section, an attempt has been made to comment on Brock's important work, to incorporate the insights of Varghese and to highlight those particular elements of Jacob's theology which relate specifically to the doctrine of the Spirit and its liturgical implications. It is clear that, despite their christological differences, both Jacob and his teacher Narsai, with the former writing well into the sixth century, maintain the pattern of anointing, immersion and eucharist as well as the emphasis on regeneration, given liturgical expression through the imagery of the font as womb, as the basis for their strongly incarnational baptismal theologies. Alongside this, Jacob's writings suggest

43 Bedjan, Homiliae Selectae, vol 3, 656; Brock, Baptismal Themes, 336.
44 See above, 70ff.
that, interpreted in isolation, the anointing does not convey any of the most characteristic graces of initiation.

4.2 Philoxenus of Mabbug
Unlike Jacob, Philoxenus refers to a post-immersion anointing in his description of initiation. The context of his account is an explanation of what Christians should tell pagans or Jews if they witness a celebration of baptism. Far from keeping its meaning secret, the Bishop encourages his people to give an account of what takes place. The pattern which emerges is unsurprising with the exception of the final anointing: exorcism (involving the priest breathing on the candidates), apotaxis with signing of the cross on the forehead,\(^46\) anointing with holy oil, triple immersion with Trinitarian formula,\(^47\) sealing with myron and clothing in a white garment.\(^48\)

4.2.1 Baptism and the Word made Flesh
An investigation into the characteristic features of Philoxenus' baptismal theology may usefully begin with a passage from the fifth fragment of his *Commentary on the Gospels of Matthew and Luke* which deals with Luke's account of the baptism of Jesus. It is immediately obvious that this text has a distinctly liturgical feel to it, including one section which takes the form of an epicletic prayer placed on the lips of Jesus directly after his baptism:

Thus he prayed: I indeed, O Father, according to your will have become man, and from when I was born from the virgin until now I have completed these things of human nature and kept, indeed fulfilled, the commandments,

\(^{45}\) Varghese, *Onctions baptismales*, 145.

\(^{46}\) The Syriac here is *nunun", although there is no mention of oil.

\(^{47}\) Although the text does not refer to a profession of faith in the text, it is most unlikely that this would have been omitted from Philoxenus' rite. It may be assumed, therefore, that it would have taken place before the immersion.

\(^{48}\) Vlaschalde, *Tractatus tres de Trinitate et Incarnatione*, 124.
mysteries and types of the law. And now I have been baptised and have prepared baptism that it may become the spiritual womb\textsuperscript{49} which gives birth to men anew. And as John was the last of the legal priests, so I have appeared the first of the evangelical priests. But you, O Father, through my prayer, open heaven and send your Holy Spirit upon this new womb of baptism! And as he dwelt in the womb of the virgin and embodied me from her, so may he dwell in this womb of baptism and sanctify it, and form men, and cause them to be born of it new sons, and make them your sons, my brothers and inheritors of the kingdom. And that which the priests of the law from Aaron to John could not effect, may the priests of the new covenant be able to do, these to whom I have become first-fruits and first by this prayer. And whenever they baptize and pray to you and ask, send the Holy Spirit upon the baptism by which they are baptized\textsuperscript{50}

Here is a prayer constructed upon the theological foundation that, according to the Father's will, the Word became flesh in Jesus Christ. The importance which Philoxenus places upon the doctrine of the incarnation within his theology of baptism speaks for itself. De Halleux remarks:

\begin{quote}
Le devenir du Verbe désigne d'abord et avant tout l'événement inaugural de l'économie, par lequel le Verbe devient homme; aussi notre auteur développe-t-il volontiers l'idée du 'devin échange' lorsqu'il met l'incarnation en parallèle avec le baptême.\textsuperscript{51}
\end{quote}

Jesus' own baptism is portrayed as the climax of the first stage of his earthly life, during which he fulfilled the works of the Law. In his \textit{Commentary on the Johannine Prologue} Philoxenus states that the Word of God was 'under the Law until baptism\textsuperscript{52} and in the eighth of his \textit{Discourses} that, 'Jesus kept everything of the old law, that he might pay that debt on account of which all our race had become subject unto the bondage of sin, and of the law, and of death'.\textsuperscript{53}

\textsuperscript{49} Syr: \textsuperscript{50} Watt, \textit{Fragments}, SS 171/2, 69/ 59.
\textsuperscript{52} De Halleux, \textit{Commentaire du prologue johannique}, SS 165, 3.
\textsuperscript{53} Budge, \textit{Discourses}, 244/234. (In each case, references to both volumes are given.)
4.2.2 Baptism, Spiritual Birth and the Holy Spirit

Beginning with this reference to the incarnation, the prayer goes on to describe the spiritual birth which, as a result of Jesus' own descent into the Jordan, will now be effected through baptism. For humankind, this will be a second birth in which they will be born anew. Here we encounter another resonance with John 3.3. Jesus himself is born again in order that his followers might also become sons of God with Jesus through their participation in his second birth. This central theme of Philoxenus' teaching is expressed most clearly with reference to the Prologue of the Fourth Gospel in his commentary on Luke 3.23:

And they may receive the Holy Spirit and become the sons of God because the Word became flesh. And he received a soul, and rightly with him so the matter was appointed, because flesh needs a soul and both (need) the Holy Spirit. And as flesh when it receives a soul becomes a man, so a man when he receives the Holy Spirit is known as a son of God. And whereas flesh receives a soul within the womb, in baptism the Holy Spirit is given to a man, which first, as the first-fruits, (Christ) received . . . 54

It is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, given in baptism, which makes the Christian a son of God. 55 The connection between this text and John 3 cannot be overemphasized. The latter is so clearly interpreted by Philoxenus within the context both of the Jordan event and Christian baptism, that certain phrases from Philoxenus could easily be inserted into the dialogue as answers to the Pharisee's question. As in Ephrem, Narsai and Jacob, Nicodemus' questions are answered unequivocally in the Bishop's baptismal theology. In each case it is the relationship between Jesus' incarnation and baptism which holds the key to regeneration. In the words of Philoxenus: 'And now I have been baptised

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54 Watt, Fragments, SS 171/2, 83/71.
55 One further example of Philoxenus' association of the womb of baptism with divine sonship can be found in his Commentary on the Johannine Prologue: 'Each one of us becomes in power a son of God in the womb of baptism'. De Halleux, Commentaire du prologue johannique, SS 165, 16.
and have prepared baptism that it may become the spiritual womb which gives birth to men anew'.

Alongside this, the writings of the Bishop of Mabbug also present the event of Jesus' baptism as a significant stage in Jesus' own earthly existence, a new birth through which the incarnate Logos enters the second stage of his human life which reaches completion on the cross. Thus, after his baptism, Philoxenus describes Jesus as 'first-born and the new man'. Referring to fragments nine and eleven from the Bishop's *Commentary on Matthew and Luke*, Grillmeier speaks of the centrality of the Jordan event for Philoxenus' economy of salvation, describing the former as a new beginning:

Vor ihr (die Taufe) steht der ewige "Urbeginn" Jesu im Schoß des Vaters als Sohn; ein neuer Beginn ist die Existenz des Logos als Embryo in der Jungfrau, sein Eintritt in die Welt als Mensch: ein Abschnitt, der zunächst bis zur Taufe im Jordan dauert. Er ist gekennzeichnet als Stehen unter dem Gesetz, was besonders durch die "Beschneidung" offenbar wird. Mit der Taufe aber kommt ein Neues: Jesus wird offenbart als "Erstgeborener" . . . und als "neuer Mensch".

56 See above, 167.
57 cf Jacob of Serugh's succession of dwelling places; see above, 155ff.
58 'And from this (baptism) until the cross, he showed the behaviour of the new man'. De Halleux, *Commentaire du prologue johannique*, SS 165, 3.
59 Watt, *Fragments*, 171/2, 6/5. The use of the term 'first-born' (Syr: ܪܒܘܬܐ) is interesting. A biblical term most often associated with Pauline writings on the resurrection where Christ is described as 'first-born from the dead' (Colossians 1.18, Romans 8.29), in this passage Philoxenus uses it with respect to the birth which Jesus has received through his baptism, the birth which all the baptized will receive, but which Christ is the first to experience. He is the first-born of the womb of the Jordan, of the womb of baptism. It is striking that in the Syriac Gospels of Matthew and Luke (Matthew 1.25, Luke 2.7) the same noun is found in the birth narrative: 'And he (Joseph) did not know her (Mary) until she gave birth to her first-born (ܪܒܘܬܐ) son'. Thus the three wombs of Mary, the Jordan and Sheol are linked together by the same Syriac noun. Christ is the ܪܒܘܬܐ of all three in order that humankind might follow him and experience birth in each of these wombs through the waters of rebirth. For the use of the same noun by Jacob of Serugh, see above, 164.
Considering further Philoxenus' use of birth imagery, in the course of an argument in which he states how necessary it was for the Word to become flesh in order for the Church to be united with God, the Bishop states:

Now it is first necessary for the Word to become flesh as it is written; and because of this he was also born according to the flesh; and after this birth, spiritually from baptism.61

Philoxenus' writings reveal three births which Jesus undergoes: his birth from the essence of the Father in eternity, his birth from the Virgin in time and his new birth which takes place in the Jordan. The excerpt cited above makes reference to the second and third of these. The first two are mentioned in chapter fourteen of his Commentary on the Johannine Prologue. Dominated by a discussion on how the divine Logos can retain his divinity after the incarnation, Philoxenus talks of the two wombs through which the Christian passes, 'the two wombs of woman and of baptism', and then goes on to compare these with the two births of the Logos, the births.62 In a not too dissimilar way from Philoxenus, we have already shown how the primitive imagery of Ode 19 describes a chain of birth and rebirth from the Father through to Mary in which the uniting agent is the Spirit.63

Returning to the prayer it is clear that, although the Jordan event is for Philoxenus Jesus' third birth, the primary motivation for this episode, as has already been shown with reference to John 3, is that Jesus might 'prepare baptism that it may become the spiritual womb which gives birth to men anew'. Indeed, this action performed by John,

61 De Halleux, Commentaire du prologue johannique, SS 165, 215.
62 Ibid., 35.
63 See above, 41ff.
which is both the preparation for and the institution of Christian baptism, is defined more clearly as the prayer progresses. It is significant that it is Jesus who, after his immersion in the Jordan, calls upon the Father to send the Spirit to dwell in the womb of baptism just as the Spirit dwelt in the womb of Mary, thus setting the waters apart for a particular purpose. Philoxenus prefers this interpretation to that of the Father sending the Spirit upon Jesus after his baptism, as recorded in the Gospels or, as is found in Ephrem, Narsai and Jacob, the waters of the Jordan being consecrated by Jesus' descent into them.  

What the Bishop describes is a Trinitarian action in which the Son invokes the Father to send the Spirit, the role of the Son being mirrored by that of the priest in the Christian rite: 'And whenever they baptize and pray to you and ask, send the Holy Spirit upon the baptism by which they are baptized!'  

Having petitioned the Father to send the Spirit, the next sentence expresses very concisely the incarnational heart of Philoxenus' theology of initiation. The pneumatic process by which the divine Logos became flesh in the womb of Mary and was born as Jesus, the Son of God, is replicated in the womb of baptism: by the power of the same Spirit the candidate is 'formed' in the water in order to emerge as a son of God, a brother of Christ and an inheritor of the kingdom. Varghese expresses the point well:

Cette «naissance spirituelle» du Christ est la raison d’être de notre régénération dans l’eau et dans l’Esprit Saint. Ainsi, grâce à la participation

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64 Syr: ρηπέθηκα
65 See above, 116f, 135f & 159f.
66 See above, 167.
67 Syr: ἐκτός
au baptème du Fils de Dieu, nous aussi, nous deviendrons «les fils de Dieu».
L'Esprit Saint qui forma le Fils au sein de la Vierge nous fait «les fils» dans le
«sein maternel du baptême».

The Bishop's phrase 'inheritors of the kingdom' encapsulates the idea expressed
elsewhere as the pneumatic gift's being a pledge of future glory. There is also a
similarity between Philoxenus' description of the baptismal process 'forming' the
candidate in the water and Narsai's use of the image of the font as a furnace in which
the candidate is moulded: 'As in a furnace he re-cast our image in Baptism; and instead
of clay he has made us spiritual gold'.

It is also the case that the same verb, ἐμάγει, is used for 'to paint' in Narsai and for 'to
form' or 'to fashion' in Philoxenus, reflecting the fact that the motivation which underlies
the forming in the womb, the moulding in the furnace and the painting with the Spirit is
the same. Whichever image a writer chooses to employ, the same point is expressed:
that the new-born Christian who emerges from the waters of baptism has, by the
working of the Holy Spirit, experienced transformation in the womb. The preference
for this kind of symbolism adds further weight to our thesis that the womb should be
understood as the symbolic focus for the activity of the Spirit in the Syrian baptismal
tradition.

68 Varghese, Onctions baptismales, 165.
69 See above, 144f.
70 See above, 138.
71 cf Ephrem's use of the image of the portrait in De Virginitate 7.5
72 This process is similar to that of the creator of a statue that is to be made beautiful in Plotinus' On Beauty (1.6.9), for 'no eye ever saw the sun without becoming sun-like, nor can a soul see beauty without becoming beautiful. You must first become all godlike and all beautiful if you intend to see God and beauty'. AH Armstrong (trans), Plotinus, 1, (London: William Heinemann, 1966), 261. For Narsai's concept of beauty, see above, 141.
4.2.3 The Baptism of Jesus and the role of the Spirit

As for what it might mean to say that Jesus received the gift of the Spirit at his baptism,

Philoxenus is quite clear that the Anointed One does not receive it for himself, but rather for humanity. He is anointed because he has become man. In his Letter to the Monasteries he claims that his opponents believe that:

God the Word did not need to be anointed, for what did he lack which he would have received from anointing? Truly, he did not need to receive the essence of his nature, because he is complete and perfect, in the likeness of the Father and the Spirit. But because he took a body and became man, and (because) he was called first-born although he is unique, and (because) he was counted with the many, he received the anointing like us because he had become like us.73

Alongside this, the purpose of Jesus' immersion by John is to prepare Christian baptism, a point which the Bishop makes forcibly in his gospel commentary, in the thirteenth fragment on Matthew 3.1:

He (Jesus) was baptised of our baptism, because he was going to give it to us, because it is a type of his death and of his resurrection. And just as he died and rose and became for us the first-fruits from the dead, so he was baptised sacredly for our baptism, and immediately he gave it to us.74

This passage is of particular interest, since it not only confirms the purpose of Jesus' baptism, but also expresses a theology of salvation in which Christ is the pioneer who opens up the possibility of resurrection for those who follow after,75 the harvest of the dead of which he is the first-fruits. In terms of a liturgical chronology, reference to Christ as first-born and first-fruits points to the candidate's dying and rising after not with Christ, thus emphasizing how it was necessary for Christ to die and be raised from

73 A De Halleux, «La deuxième lettre de Philoxène aux monastères du Belz Gaugal», Le Muséon, 96 (1983), 60.
74 Watt, Fragments, SS 171/2, 19/16f.
the dead before the Christian could rise again. Philoxenus uses this example to demonstrate that, in the same way, it was necessary for Christ to be baptized and born again in the womb of the Jordan in order for the Christian to enter the second womb and, by the working of the Spirit, be reborn.76

4.2.4 First-born: baptism and resurrection
Remaining with the same imagery, a slightly different link between baptism, death and resurrection is expressed by Philoxenus in his Commentary on the Johannine Prologue in which the idea of Christ as first-born reappears:

And after his resurrection he became the head and the first-born77 from the dead and the first in the life after death in which there will also be those who have been admitted to partake in the likeness of his death, which is baptism.78

This text expresses the notion of baptism as a participation in the death and resurrection of Christ and supports the conclusion of Grillmeier that:

Jeder Christ stirbt mit Christus und steht mit ihm auf und wird in der Auferstehung Christus dem "Erstling" der Erlösten ins ewige Reich des Vaters folgen.79

Therefore, against the development theory of Winkler, Philoxenus demonstrates that baptismal regeneration and the Pauline imagery of Romans 6 are both held together within the baptismal theology of one writing at the beginning of the sixth century.80

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76 See above, 154, where Narsai describes the baptismal process as a road along which the Christian follows the path which Jesus has already trodden.
76 There is a similarity between Christ as 'first fruits' from the dead in 1 Corinthians 15.20 and Christ as the 'first-born'; see above, 169, fn 59.
77 Syr: ἱδρυμα
79 Grillmeier, Die Taufe Christi, 146.
4.2.5  **The Spirit and the Body of Christ**

Much has been said about the gift of divine sonship conferred through the womb of baptism by the working of the Spirit. It must also be remembered, however, that in the fifth fragment of Philoxenus' gospel commentary, quoted at length at the beginning of this study, Jesus also calls the newly baptized 'my brothers' and, in so doing, introduces an ecclesiological dimension into his baptismal theology: to be baptized is to become a spiritual member of the Body of Christ. In his ninth Discourse, he says to the baptized that Christ 'has mingled you in the life of the Spirit by baptism'\(^81\) . . . and he has made you a spiritual limb by baptism\(^82\).

Furthermore, in another of the fragments from his gospel commentary, he discusses the relationship between the births which Christ undergoes and those experienced by humanity:

> And like him (Christ) are also those who become members of him, in that first they are born men from the womb, and then sons of God from baptism. And he from the womb of nature being God was born man, and we being by nature men have become by this (womb) of baptism sons of God . . . . . . they who are born from it do not perish, but remain without end spiritual members in the body which they have joined . . .\(^83\)

The notion of permanent membership of the Body of Christ is defined in terms of the permanent indwelling of the Spirit in a *memra* ascribed to the Bishop. Here, in the literary style of a letter, Philoxenus responds to the question whether the Spirit will ever leave the soul of a sinful person. His response is clear and differs sharply from the

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\(^80\) Winkler, 'The Original Meaning', 76f; see above, 95f.

\(^81\) Syr: ἐγένετο πρός ὑμᾶς θεός καὶ ἐμφάνισε ἀποκάλυψιν ἐν τῇ λήμνῳ.

\(^82\) Budge, *Discourses*, 324/310.

\(^83\) Watt, *Fragments*, SS 171/2, 80/68f.
position of Aphrahat. 84 According to Philoxenus, the Spirit never leaves the soul of 
anyone who has received the gift of the Spirit in baptism, except in cases of apostasy or 
communication with demons:

For the Holy Spirit who, in the kindness of God, thus far from our baptism, 
we have received from the waters of baptism, we have not received so that 
at one time he remains with us and at another time departs from us, but we 
are for him a temple, in which he continually dwells . . . 85

In Aphrahat, the sin committed by the baptized Christian may cause the Holy Spirit to 
leave his body. In contrast, Philoxenus questions how there can be any penitence for 
sins committed without the action of the Spirit who indwells the baptized. He is 
convinced that, 'all the gifts which lead us to penitence, occur in us by the working of 
the Holy Spirit'. 86

The role of the Spirit in bringing about the Father - Son relationship between God and 
the baptized within the womb of baptism is used by Philoxenus to support his argument 
for the permanency of the pneumatic gift. Referring to the parable of the prodigal son, 
he maintains that, just as in human relationships, however much the son sins against 
the Father he does not cease to be his son, in the same way, however much the 
Christian sins against God, in word or deed, he will never lose his status as a son, nor 
will God disinherit him. 87

Behind this lies the assertion that since the filial relationship, inaugurated in baptism, 
remains intact whatever sins are committed after initiation, it must follow that the gift

84 See above, 86f.
85 This paragraph concludes with a quotation from 1 Cor 3.16 & 6.19f. Tanghe, 'Memra', 43.
86 Ibid., 49.
which brings about this relationship is also intact. As Philoxenus says, 'This shows that
the grace of the Spirit, which gave him the power to call God Father, did not leave
him'.

4.2.6 The activity of the Spirit in anointing and immersion
In this section we shall consider how the pre-immersion anointing, immersion and post-
immersion anointing relate to each other and which baptismal graces are conferred by
each within the process of initiation.

As Varghese notes, Philoxenus rarely mentions oil and water separately, but rather talks
of the baptism of oil and water or, indeed, of water and oil. This indicates that an
investigation into whether the Holy Spirit is conferred through immersion or anointing
or, indeed, whether the Spirit is given through the first or second anointing is a fruitless
enterprise. As he states in his memra on the indwelling of the Spirit:

... but the Holy Spirit, who by the oil and the water has been mingled with our souls and our bodies, stays with us in this life and after death, because it is our true baptism.

Here the reader is left in no doubt that the Holy Spirit is conferred by both oil and water.
Unfortunately, this passage gives no real indication as to whether the anointing refers to
a ritual action performed before or after the immersion. Moreover, just before this
section, Philoxenus refers to water before oil. Indeed, Brock uses this above-quoted

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87 Ibid., 43f.
88 Ibid., 43.
89 Varghese, Onctions baptisma/es, 165.
90 Syr: стало
91 Tanghe, 'Memra', 46.
text in the course of an argument against trying to associate the Spirit with either anointing or immersion.\textsuperscript{92}

However, there are passages which could be cited in support of an opposed hypothesis: that the anointings and the immersion confer different graces within the rite. Two short quotations from chapter fourteen of Philoxenus' \textit{Commentary on the Johannine Prologue} are good examples of such a division. Included in a passage on the incarnation, the Bishop of Mabbug identifies the baptismal elements of water and oil as examples of things which are changed or transformed during the celebration of baptism and yet, despite this transformation, do not cease to be oil and water:

\begin{quote}
For the waters become the baptism and the second womb which gives birth to men like sons of God; for also the oil becomes holy and sanctifying. Each one of these elements is believed to be what it has become without being considered to have lost its first nature. . \textsuperscript{93}
\end{quote}

Later within the same argument this division between the oil of sanctification and the baptismal womb is made even clearer:

\begin{quote}
Again, therefore, these elements of water and oil, from which and through which we become again new men, appear also to be the thing which each one of them is according to nature. And it is not to be denied that one of them has become the power of Christ and the other the spiritual womb.\textsuperscript{94}
\end{quote}

What does Philoxenus mean by describing the oil as 'hol\textsuperscript{92}y and sanctifying' and the 'power of Christ'? Varghese's explanation of these terms is unsatisfactory. By the first he suggests that the oil 'assume le r\textsuperscript{o}l\textsuperscript{2}e de la sanctification' and by the second that 'la

\textsuperscript{92}Brock, \textit{The Holy Spirit}, 23.
\textsuperscript{93}De Halleux, \textit{Commentaire du prologue johannique}, SS 165, 34.
\textsuperscript{94}Ibid., 34f.
puissance du Christ. est un don que le baptisé reçoit grâce à l'ionction. Unfortunately, this provides no further explanation than is offered by Philoxenus himself. Moreover, having stated that the pre-immersion and post-immersion unctions are described by two different Syriac terms, ṭōr and ṭārō, in his Three Tractates on the Trinity and the Incarnation, he then remarks that this is the only place where 'myron' can be found in Philoxenus' writings and, therefore, concludes that when the Bishop talks about ṭērē he could be referring to the pre- or post-immersion unctions; a theory which he believes is strengthened by Philoxenus' interchangeable use of 'oil and water' and 'water and oil'.

Whilst this hypothesis is not without textual support, does it not appear surprising that, if Philoxenus is aware of the association of 'myron' with the post-immersion unctioning, as he obviously is, he uses it only once and in all other writings uses the all-embracing ṭērē to refer to both unctions? Furthermore, if Varghese is correct in assuming that the Bishop accords 'la même signification aux deux types d'huile et en conséquence le même sens aux deux unctions' what reason can there be for repeating after the immersion an unction which is performed beforehand?

As far as Philoxenus' interchangeable use of oil and water is concerned, is it not possible that, if Varghese is justified in assuming that 'baptism of water and oil' and 'born of

95 Varghese, Onctions baptismales, 166.
96 Vaschalde, Tractatus tres de Trinitate et Incarnatione, 124.
97 Varghese, Onctions baptismales, 169.
98 This would also appear to be the only place where the verb ṭērē appears in conjunction with unctioning.
99 Varghese, Onctions baptismales, 169.
water and the Spirit’ are synonymous,\(^{100}\) as would seem reasonable, these variations in word order reflect not so much the sequence of the ritual acts, but rather a conscious resonance with Jesus’ words to Nicodemus in John 3.5. Moreover, if the act of immersion is so central to the Bishop’s understanding of baptismal regeneration, then would it not follow that water, being the element associated with this action, would often be named before oil in any reference to the whole rite?\(^{101}\)

Putting this issue aside, let us consider what meaning Philoxenus’ description of the oil as ‘holy and sanctifying’ and ‘the power of Christ’ might have if it refers explicitly to the pre-immersion anointing. The notion of the Spirit acting through the unction to sanctify the baptismal candidate, to set him apart, has already been encountered, not least in the writings of Ephrem. In the previous chapter it has been suggested that, for Ephrem, the anointing is a preliminary rite which prepares the candidate to enter the womb of the font to be reborn as a son of God. In *De Virginitate* 7.5 & 14 the anointing, though not divorced from the work of the Spirit, is described in relation to Christ.\(^{102}\)

Could it be the case that, without banishing the activity of the Spirit from the pre-immersion unction, Philoxenus’ emphasis on the anointing as conferring the ‘power of Christ’ points in a similar direction to Ephrem? In his *Commentary on the Johannine Prologue* the former states that ‘the Spirit and the oil (become) the single sanctifying power of Christ’.\(^{103}\)

\(^{100}\) *Ibid.*, 165.
\(^{101}\) It is also important not to lose sight of the likelihood that oil may have been poured into the baptismal font, as in later rites.
\(^{102}\) See above, 132.
4.2.7 Summary

If it is the case that Philoxenus' references to anointing with μαίνεσθαι refer only to the pre-immersion anointing, it does not follow that the Bishop only knew of one anointing. The description of the rite in the Tractates does not support such a conclusion. Moreover, if the above hypothesis is justified, this does not mean that the immersion is the only sphere in which the Spirit is active, to the exclusion of the pre-immersion or, indeed, post-immersion anointings.

Philoxenus' pre-immersion anointing stands within the tradition of Ephrem, Narsai and Jacob of Serugh. By this is meant that it is both fully part of the rite of initiation and, at the same time, may be understood to be a preliminary rite which prepares the candidate for rebirth. For Jacob, as for the writer of the Acts of Judas Thomas and other Syrian theologians, this is expressed in terms of the anointing acting as a mark of ownership, a concept which is often associated with circumcision. If, then, the unction proclaims the candidate's identity as one who belongs to Christ, is this not very close to Philoxenus' notion of the baptismal candidate receiving the 'sanctifying power of Christ' in the anointing?

Where, then, does this leave the post-immersion anointing, about which Philoxenus writes so little. Might it be justifiable to suggest that the Bishop's life spans a period in which this ritual act was introduced into the process of initiation and that, although he adopts it into his baptismal ritual, he is not himself fully aware of its doctrinal significance within the liturgy?

103 De Halleux, Commentaire du prologue johannique, SS 165, 191.
104 For the use of this imagery in Jacob of Serugh, see above, 162.
Philoxenus stands out as one who holds in tension both the 'traditional' Syrian theology of baptismal regeneration and a form of the Pauline dying and rising with Christ. We have already seen how Winkler considers the latter to be a significant factor in the introduction of a post-immersion anointing. Where this happens, she believes the pre-immersion anointing to have become a 'cathartic and apotropaic ritual'. There is no evidence of this in Philoxenus. Moreover, as McDonnell and Montague point out, Philoxenus, unlike Jacob of Serugh and earlier Syrian theologians, is writing in a period which is experiencing a certain amount of hellenization of Syriac culture. Thus they believe the Bishop of Mabbug 'to be in the process of making a distinctive synthesis, using both Greek and Syriac sources'. His introduction of a post-baptismal anointing may, therefore, be an example of this.

For Philoxenus, the newly-baptized Christian, having been born again in the womb of baptism, immediately enters another womb, that of the world. He has moved from what McDonnell and Montague describe as the 'non-sensing' to the 'sensing' of God. But this is not the end of the story. The Christian must now move from the 'sensing' to the 'experience' of God. His ascetic background leads the Bishop to develop a theology in which it is through ascetic discipline, which is the Christian's response to baptism, that he is born a third time from the womb of the world into the spiritual world. McDonnell and Montague describe the three births which the Christian strives to experience in this way:

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105 Winkler, *The Original Meaning*, 75.
107 His exposure to the writings of Theodore of Mopsuestia, translated by Hiba, may also be important in this respect; see McDonnell & Montague, *Christian Initiation*, 270.
The first birth is the natural birth, when the foetus emerges from the womb of its mother. The second birth takes place at sacramental baptism, when the infant becomes a child of God. The third birth occurs "when someone is born of their own will out of the bodily way of life into the spiritual, where self-emptying of everything is the womb that gives birth".  

A detailed discussion of this third birth lies outside the parameters of the present discussion since, although it is without doubt connected to baptism, it only concerns those Christians who embrace the ascetic way of life and is, therefore, a development of Philoxenus' baptismal theology rather than an integral part of it.

In conclusion, the writings of Philoxenus of Mabbug witness to a shift both in the theology and in the liturgical performance of the Syrian baptismal rite. The foundation of his theology is, however, a strong anti-Chalcedonian defence of the incarnation, as expressed in his *Commentary on the Johannine Prologue*. With this at the heart of his writings, he both assimilates new Greek influences such as the post-immersion anointing and the theology of Romans 6 and, at the same time, holds on to some of the most ancient images of the Syrian baptismal tradition, notably the incarnational symbol of the womb, which he employs to express the divine sonship and gift of the Spirit conferred by Christian baptism.

4.3 **Severus of Antioch**

Whilst Severus' writings do not include any detailed descriptions of his baptismal liturgy there is, nonetheless, a large amount of primary material concerning the role of the apotaxis and syntaxis, the activity of the Spirit within his Trinitarian theology, the importance of the baptismal immersion and its association with the baptism of Jesus in

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the Jordan, the relationship between baptismal regeneration and the Pauline notion of 'dying and rising with Christ' and the baptismal anointing.

4.3.1 Apotaxis and Syntaxis
Beginning with the six catechetical homilies, these contain virtually the only textual information to shed light on the performance of the baptismal ritual, most notably the apotaxis and syntaxis. Analysing these homilies, Graffin identifies a basic structure which is repeated in each. After a long introduction, there is an explanation of part of the Creed (usually concerning the doctrine of the Trinity or incarnation) followed by a refutation of heretical teaching counterbalanced by, what Graffin describes as, a 'monophysite' profession. The homily concludes with a brief description of part of the baptism rite and a few words of exhortation.110 Graffin usefully describes the Patriarch's homiletic style as:

une méthode traditionelle, fondée sur une méditation personnelle de la Bible et l'explication simple des termes, ni sèche, ni pédante, mais vivante, lumineuse, éclairée par les scènes les plus parlantes de l'Écriture, où chacun a encore son rôle a jouer de nouveau.111

Two examples of Severus' description of the apotaxis and syntaxis will suffice to give an idea of what this particular ritual might have involved. In his catechetical homily (42) delivered on Holy Wednesday 514, he instructs the catechumens to:

Look and turn towards the setting of the sun, and thus renounce Satan . . . Having done that, turn towards the East and set out these covenants with Christ.112

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110 Graffin, 'La Catéchèse', 50.
111 Ibid., 54.
Unlike Philoxenus, it is not possible to extract much detail of the performance of this part of the rite. Here, a refutation of Satan and his demonic cohorts is made as the candidates face West, and then, turning their back on Satan and facing East, they proclaim their allegiance to Christ. This act would have been followed by the immersion, about which mention is made elsewhere. As to whether an anointing would have taken place before the immersion, the textual evidence is inconclusive. Varghese notes a reference to the Old Testament anointing of lepers and of the High Priest which Severus places between the apotaxis and syntaxis in his third catechetical homily (70).\textsuperscript{113} The details of Varghese’s argument need not detain us here, save to say that he concludes that this is not, in fact, a reference to a pre-immersion anointing but, rather, is used by Severus ‘pour illustrer le rite de l’apotaxis qui signifie la fin de la servitude à Satan et le vœu de le combattre’.\textsuperscript{114}

To complicate matters further, where Severus does mention the use of oil, it is invariably in connection with a post-immersion anointing. For example, Varghese notes that, in his fourth catechetical homily,\textsuperscript{115} Severus refers to the Old Testament rites for the purification of lepers (washing, anointing and sacrifice) as prefiguring the rite of Christian initiation,\textsuperscript{116} a model in which, when interpreted in Christian terms, the anointing follows the immersion.

Further discussion of the post-immersion anointing will appear at the end of this chapter. Whilst not dismissing the lack of liturgical detail provided by Severus, we

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{113} Brière (ed & trans), Patrologia Orientalis, 12.1 (1919), 48f.  
\textsuperscript{114} Varghese, Onctions baptismales, 176.  
\textsuperscript{115} Brière (ed & trans), Patrologia Orientalis, 23.1 (1932), 162.  
\textsuperscript{116} Varghese, Onctions baptismales, 176.}
should consider whether it is even likely that his baptismal liturgy did not contain a pre-immersion anointing; not least since, in many other respects, Severus is faithful to the Syrian tradition which places such importance upon the pre-immersion unction.

As far as the structure of the rite is concerned, Gribomont has suggested that the emphasis placed on apotaxis and syntaxis rather than immersion points to the disintegration of the rite in Severus' church:

... elle s'attache au double geste de renonciation à Satan et d'adhésion au Christ, avec une orientation d'abord vers le couchant, puis vers l'est, plus qu'à l'immersion elle-même souvent évoquée par une allusion au Jourdain, mais de façon un peu distant. J Mateos était déjà arrivé à conclure que renonciation et adhésion avaient conquis une place croissante dans le système symbolique de la liturgie syrienne, aux dépens de l'unité foncière du rite. Pourtant, dans notre cas, un facteur particulier pourrait intervenir: on a l'impression que l'homélie prépare immédiatement à l'acte de renonciation et d'adhésion, tandis que l'immersion est réservée pour la nuit pascale.117

It is surprising that such a suggestion is not mentioned by Varghese, whose only comment on the unity of the rite is that '. . . chez Sévère, nous n'avons aucun indice que l'ontonction soit un rite séparé de l'immersion',118 since if the apotaxis and syntaxis did take place directly after the homily on Holy Wednesday as a preparatory rite to the baptismal liturgy which was celebrated as part of the Easter liturgy, then this may go some way to explaining the lack of any reference to a pre-immersion anointing within the descriptions of apotaxis and syntaxis. It could be argued, however, that Gribomont underestimates the importance which Severus places on the immersion itself and on its relationship to the Jordan. For it is puzzling that Gribomont describes allusions to the

117 J Gribomont, 'La Catéchese de Sévère d'Antioche et le Credo, Parole de l'Orient, 6-7 (1975-6), 128.
118 Varghese, Oantions baptismales, 178.
Jordan, such as, 'For look, when you enter the sanctuary and see the fearful and powerful spring of the Jordan',\(^{119}\) as being 'de façon un peu distant'.

4.3.2 God the Holy Spirit
Severus' catechetical homilies provide illuminating statements of christology and, to a lesser extent, pneumatology, within the context of a Trinitarian theology. Again and again Severus emphasizes the procession of the divine Spirit from the Father. Two short passages from his catechetical homily (70) delivered on Holy Wednesday 515 demonstrate this. Following a detailed argument on the relationship between the Father and the Son, Severus turns his attention to the Spirit:

The Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father, was in the beginning. For as in the way that with our word, breath goes out at the same time, as if it were at the same time attached to it, so also, without separation or division, the procession of the Spirit is accompanied by and joined to the generation of the Word.\(^{120}\)

Later, in a defence of the divinity of the three persons of the Godhead, he remarks that:

For the Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Spirit is God; but there are not three separate gods, because the Son and the Spirit go back to the Father . . . for it is from him that the Son and the Spirit have their existence, although they are not after him, for they are equal in eternity.\(^{121}\)

From these two passages, Severus' lucid articulation of Trinitarian theology stands out in sharp contrast to those Fathers of the Syrian Church (West and East) whose work has been considered so far.\(^{122}\) The contrast in style between these homilies and, for example, Ephrem's poetry could not be greater. Throughout Severus' writings, there is


\(^{120}\) Brière, *Patrologia Orientalis*, 12.1, 15f.

a strong sense of a very clear understanding of the individual characteristics of the persons of the Trinity. For example, in the second of his catechetical homilies (42):

... for the Father, it is the non-generation\textsuperscript{123} and that he is not from anything else; for the Son it is the generation from the Father; for the Spirit it is the procession.\textsuperscript{124}

That Severus believes in the divinity of the Spirit and in his eternal procession from the Father is shown by these few brief extracts to be beyond doubt. That the Spirit is consubstantial with the Father and the Son as well as being uncreated, Severus demonstrates in the same homily. The following extract contains a good illustration of the Patriarch's use of scripture,\textsuperscript{125} in this case quoting John 15.26 to support his argument:

That is why we say that the Holy Spirit is equally consubstantial with the Father and the Son; for he is not created, and, at the same time, he is not counted with that which is made. For he is the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father.\textsuperscript{126}

It is true to say that many more examples of this sort of material can be found in Severus' catechetical homilies, confirming the Patriarch's desire to promote the credal formulae as defined at the Council of Ephesus (431) and to refute all those, including the Chalcedonians, whom he believed to have deviated from that doctrinal orthodoxy.\textsuperscript{127}

\textsuperscript{122} In this respect his theology is, as Chesnut suggests, 'all Greek'. Chesnut, \textit{Three Monophysite Christologies}, 2.
\textsuperscript{123} Syr: ἀπόγενσις
\textsuperscript{124} Brière & Graffin, \textit{Patrologia Orientalis}, 36.1, 44.
\textsuperscript{125} A further example of his use of Scripture can be found in Homily 70 where he takes the use of the plural in Genesis 1.26, 'Let us make man in our image' to be a reference to the work of the Trinity in creation. Brière, \textit{Patrologia Orientalis}, 12.1, 22f.
\textsuperscript{126} Brière & Graffin, \textit{Patrologia Orientalis}, 36.1, 40.
\textsuperscript{127} When reading the catechetical homilies it is soon clear that far more space is taken up with the more controversial question of the relationship between the Father and the Son than with the Spirit, though it is the latter which is relevant here.
4.3.3 Christian Baptism and the Jordan

Severus establishes a strong link between the baptism of Jesus and Christian baptism, a well-established characteristic of the Syrian baptismal tradition. The belief, repeatedly expressed in this thesis, that by going down into the Jordan to be baptised, Christ sanctifies baptismal water for all time, is expressed in Severus' second catechetical homily:

For look, when you enter the sanctuary and see the fearful and powerful spring of the Jordan; for all the waters which are consecrated in the name of Jesus are the Jordan - he who first placed the origin of divine baptism in the Jordan. Thus we also pray that the grace of the Jordan be given to the waters.

This is of interest, not only because it points to Jesus instituting Christian baptism when he was plunged into the Jordan, but also because it alludes to a prayer over the baptismal font, asking that these waters might be filled with the grace of the Jordan. Severus goes on to describe the water being filled with divine fire and able to purify. A quotation from Matthew 3.11 in the next sentence supports the identification of the fire with the Spirit as well as pointing to purification as one of the results of the baptismal immersion. Indeed, it is not only in connection with the Jordan that fire imagery has been encountered. It has also been found to be a recurring theme in other elements of the Syrian baptismal tradition and to have a particular association with the Spirit.

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128 Syr:_tabs
129 Brière & Graffin, Patrologia Orientalis, 36.1, 66.
130 Syr:_tabs
131 See above, 137f.
This claim is further strengthened in a passage from the fourth of Severus' catechetical homilies:

Then you go to the source of the Jordan, full of the Holy Spirit, and of purification and of divine fire, in which you will be buried with Christ at the same time as you are burying the old man in the waters. For because of that, by the triple immersion we also understand the three day burial and the resurrection from this world.¹³²

Severus then goes on to quote Romans 6.4-6. This text, of importance to the baptismal theology of the Western Church, has seldom found expression within the Syrian baptismal tradition. It is therefore significant that it is given such prominence by Severus. Notice, too, that the Jordan is described as 'full of the Holy Spirit', indicating the importance of the Spirit in the baptismal process and, perhaps also, the activity of the Spirit in the candidate's dying and rising with Christ, parallel to the work of the Spirit in baptismal regeneration.

One final quotation from Severus' fifth catechetical homily highlights well what has already been said in this section, the mixing together of Spirit and water in baptism as well as the purification from sin, which is this time described in terms of the washing away of invisible stains:

Run towards the divine baptism, towards the water, towards the Spirit, by whom you will be made ready to be purified from all impurity as you are delivered from every spot. The waters pass over the soul, because they are mixed¹³³ with the divine Spirit. They wash that which is invisible; they touch that which is hidden.¹³⁴

¹³² Brière, Patrologia Orientalis, 23.1, 160.
¹³³ Syr: אב
4.3.4 Why was Jesus baptized?
Two homilies on the Epiphany (10 & 85), in which Severus provides teaching on the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan, are of particular importance to the present study since, whilst further developing the imagery of dying and rising with Christ, they juxtapose the concept of baptismal regeneration with the question of why Jesus needed to be baptised at all.

As far as the latter is concerned, two separate arguments may be discerned: first, the Patriarch makes it perfectly clear in the second of his homilies on the Epiphany (85) that Jesus himself received nothing from his baptism:

He (Jesus) did not receive something more when he was baptized . . . But for us he gave the waters power to heal and to save.\textsuperscript{135}

From Severus' well-defined christological position, it was important to make clear that Jesus did not become 'Son of God' at his baptism in the Jordan. Those who heard the Patriarch preach this homily would have been left in no doubt that Jesus was baptised for the sake of humanity, infecting the waters of the Jordan with his power to heal and to save.

On a related issue, in his first homily on the Epiphany (38) Severus attempts to answer the question why Jesus was baptized at the age of thirty, and remarks that it was in order to show that the new spiritual birth gave rebirth to those who, like Jesus, were already adults.\textsuperscript{136}

\textsuperscript{135} Brière, \textit{Patrologia Orientalis}, 23.1, 26.
\textsuperscript{136} Brière & Graffin (ed & trans), \textit{Patrologia Orientalis}, 36.3 (1972), 496.
The second argument used by Severus to defend Jesus' baptism is that it was an act of revelation, a revelation of the Trinity to humanity. McDonnell highlights Homily 24, in which Severus describes a vision of the Jordan:

With the eyes of the mind I (seem to) see the river Jordan being lifted upwards in floods not of water but of light, pouring the knowledge of the Holy Trinity into our souls.137

A similar point is made in Homily 10, this time using the image of light. Here Severus states that the three lights of the three hypostases of the Trinity produce only one light, since the latter derives from one essence.138 Again, in relation to the above-mentioned question, in a letter to John the Soldier Severus uses the fact that Jesus was baptised having lived for three decades to provide a Trinitarian interpretation of the event:

... by means of the three periods, consisting of the three decades that complete the thirty years, he was indicating the symbolic meaning of what was revealed at the Jordan, how, in three complete hypostases, a single godhead is to be recognised, by which baptism in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit was to be completed.139

From these two texts, it is not difficult to see why McDonnell concludes that, for Severus and others 'the Jordan is the locus of the trinitarian knowledge of God'.140

4.3.5 New Birth from the Jordan
In Homily 85 Severus adopts the Johannine language of rebirth,141 stating that the children of death who were drowned by the flood have been made perfect by the living

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139 SP Brock (ed & trans), 'Severos' Letter to John the Soldier', *Göttinger Orientforschungen*, 1.17 (1978), 61; 70.
141 Homily 38, with its reference to the birth of adults, also echoes the language of John 3; see above, 191f.
waters of the Jordan, becoming 'the sons of God, in the rebirth of the Spirit'. Here Severus is quite explicit that baptismal immersion results in rebirth by water and the Spirit, so that the candidates are born again as children of God.

References to baptismal regeneration are also used by Severus in connection with the image of the river Jordan being a mother to the new-born Christians. Using John 1.14 to describe those who through the baptismal womb have been born 'not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God', Severus invites the baptised to venerate their 'spiritual mother':

... come let us set forth and go to the mysterious cleansing fountain of Jordan, and in faith worship the new spiritual mother; who from her womb gave birth to the holy people of the Christians; and, marvelling at the fruitfulness of his divine birth, let us cry with a voice of wonder . . .

The imagery of this wonderful hymn of praise to the regenerating powers of the mother Jordan is completely in keeping with the baptismal theologies presented thus far and again adds weight to the thesis that the womb is the principal focus of the activity of the Spirit within the tradition, even at the time of Severus. The appearance of is particularly striking. Brooks' translation, 'God-bearer', is misleading since the Syriac adjective qualifies the noun . Such a rendering allows the whole phrase to be interpreted in terms of the mother Jordan bearing and giving birth to

142 Syr: Brière, Patrologia Orientalis, 23.1, 27.
143 Syr: Brière, Patrologia Orientalis, 23.1, 93.
144 EW Brooks (ed & trans), Hymns of Severus of Antioch, Patrologia Orientalis, 6.1 (1911), 131.
145 Note that in Homily 88, Brière translates as 'enfancements divins'. Brière, Patrologia Orientalis, 23.1, 93.
men and women who, on emerging from the womb of baptism, are divine because they have been born 'of God', to return to Severus' earlier reference to the Johannine prologue.

From this passage, it would appear that Severus, like Jacob of Serugh, is able to call the Jordan both womb and mother.\textsuperscript{148} Such a description is found again in the second of the Patriarch's homilies (88) \textit{On Entering the Baptistery}. Here, he describes the 'source of the Jordan' as a spiritual mother who, on the evening of the First Sunday of Lent, begins to prepare for the feast of the resurrection. In order to make the necessary preparations the baptistery is closed and the mother sends her children away to work in the vineyard during the Lenten fast.\textsuperscript{149} The homily goes on to praise the work of a mother in giving birth to children, an act to which nothing can compare, and then, exhorting the baptized to remember who they have become rather than who they formerly were, it describes the several stages of baptismal regeneration, from conception to birth, which take place not over period of nine months but within the space of the celebration of the rite of Christian initiation:

\begin{quote}
When the spiritual mother received you, in that day she conceived you, was in travail and gave birth.\textsuperscript{150}
\end{quote}

The homily continues with a more detailed description of the process of spiritual birth in which Severus introduces a reference to the role of the Spirit in baptismal regeneration, quoting not John 3.4 but the words of the Paul in Titus 3.3-7. The most significant portion of the Titus text, which differs slightly from that of the Peshitta, reads: 'He saved

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{148} See above, 158f.  \\
\textsuperscript{149} Brière, \textit{Patrologia Orientalis}, 23.1, 92.  \\
\textsuperscript{150} Ibid., 93.
\end{flushright}
us through the washing of rebirth and the renewal of the Holy Spirit.\textsuperscript{151} By using this passage, Severus clearly associates the activity of the Spirit with the saving birth of baptism. In the same homily this theme is developed as Severus declares that it is the role of the Jordan, as womb and mother, to cause her waters, invisibly mixed with the Spirit,\textsuperscript{152} to gush forth at Easter:

\begin{quote}
... on the day of the resurrection, you will see that the mother, source of the new Jordan, will gush forth the mixed waters which cannot be seen.\textsuperscript{153}
\end{quote}

The dominant image here is of the sense of joy which results from the breaking of the pregnant mother's waters, giving birth to those who, in the waters of her womb, have been clothed with Christ and filled with the gift of the Holy Spirit.\textsuperscript{154} In one of the \textit{Hymns on Persons Baptised}, he writes that: 'They who were destitute of God are now made a dwelling-place of the Spirit' and again, 'You that have been clad in the garment of salvation and the raiment of spiritual gladness by holy baptism, and have been adorned like a bride with the decoration and adornment of the Holy Spirit ...'.\textsuperscript{155}

Taking into consideration the texts quoted so far, there can surely be no doubt in Severus' mind that the gift of the Spirit is primarily associated with the baptismal immersion.

Before leaving this womb imagery, one other passage is of interest, this time from the first of Severus' catechetical homilies. Here Severus refers to Jesus going down into the

\begin{footnotes}
\item[151]\textsuperscript{151} cf Ode 19 where the Holy Spirit who opens her womb and mixes the milk from the breasts of the Father before transferring it to the womb of the Virgin; see above, 42.
\item[152]\textsuperscript{152} Brière, \textit{Patrologia Orientalis}, 23.1, 98.
\item[153]\textsuperscript{153} Earlier in Homily 88, he describes the baptised as those who have put on Christ and who possess his Spirit which makes and perfects all. \textit{Ibid.}, 95.
\item[154]\textsuperscript{154} Brooks, \textit{Patrologia Orientalis}, 6.1, 135.
\end{footnotes}
Jordan and impregnating it with the seed of holy baptism: 'the Jordan, in which the seed of holy baptism was thrown'. There are obvious connections here both with what has already said about the purpose of Jesus' own baptism and with the institution of the Christian rite in the Jordan event.

4.3.6 Dying and Rising with Christ
The strong emphasis on baptismal regeneration in Severus' writings is no surprise and challenges Chesnut's claim that Severus is 'all Greek'. However, reference has already been made to the Pauline theology of Romans 6 within the baptismal imagery of Severus, thus demonstrating that Severus is able to articulate a logical and coherent theology in which both baptismal images coexist. Varghese comments that:

C'est Sévère qui a contribué à établir un équilibre entre les deux mystères dans la théologie baptismale syrienne, une théologie qui jusqu'alors se penchait sur le mystère du Jourdain.

However, whilst Severus is certainly one of the most prominent theologians within the tradition to make use of the language of Romans 6, he is not, as Varghese suggests, alone in linking the paschal mystery with the Jordan event. Indeed, we have already seen how Philoxenus, who is certainly less influenced by the Western Church than his friend, articulates a very similar link between baptism, death and resurrection in his Commentary on the Johannine Prologue.

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156 Brière & Graffin, Patrologia Orientalis, 37.1, 84f. Another catechetical lecture, in a rather peculiar passage which alludes to an abnormality in the birthing process, refers to baptism as a spiritual uterus, the noun being used instead of the more usual or . Brière, Patrologia Orientalis, 23.1, 122.

157 See also above, 130.

158 See above, 188, fn 122.

159 See above, 190.

160 Varghese, Onctions baptismales, 174.

161 See above, 174.
This improves the case against Winkler's theory. For Philoxenus and Severus are two men who, at the beginning of the sixth century, articulate baptismal theologies which encompass both Johannine and Pauline imagery. These are by no means identical, but suggest that, within the same chronological period, there took place a parallel development of two similar theologies, which may be characterised by their juxtaposition of the Jordan and Easter mysteries. What is significant, however, is that both approaches are grounded in a strongly incarnational baptismal theology which is reflected, not least, in their use of womb imagery.

Returning to the writings of Severus, in one of the Patriarch's hymns sung at dawn on Sunday whilst entering the baptistery, both images are again placed side by side:

> Come speedily, you peoples, let us go to the spiritual Jordan or the temple of the baptistery in order to honour the God-befitting mystery of the holy resurrection, and let us all in it worship the life-giving death of God who became incarnate and suffered on our behalf in the flesh; which also caused a fountain of life and of resurrection to spring forth for us. For all of us who have been admitted to be baptised in Christ have been baptised in his death, having been planted together with him in the likeness of his death and of his resurrection, as the God-inspired Paul bears witness. And accordingly let us with faith say to him who through water and the Spirit and blood renewed afresh our race which had grown old in sin and made and rendered us the children of the flesh children of light, "Praise to you!".

Here the waters of the Jordan are described as a fountain of life and of resurrection. The reference to 'water and spirit and blood' is interesting, since it would appear that Severus is attempting to assimilate the piercing of Jesus' side at the crucifixion with the two elements of Spirit and water, more commonly associated with

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the process of baptismal regeneration.\textsuperscript{163} It is noteworthy that this detail from the life of Jesus is adopted by Jacob of Serugh and, together with the Jordan event, presented as the twin sources for the institution of Christian baptism.

To give one final example, in another of Severus' homilies on preparing to enter the baptistery (40), the Patriarch talks of the purpose of the Lenten fast and articulates the same Pauline theology of dying and rising with Christ in baptism, but this time with reference to 1 Corinthians 7.23 and 2 Corinthians 5.15.\textsuperscript{164} Whereas in other passages, Severus states clearly that it is the water of the font which washes away the stain of sin, here it is implied that this is performed by the blood of Christ. It may also be assumed from information given at the end of this passage that the Church in Antioch commemorated both the death and the resurrection of Christ at one continuous liturgical celebration during which the rite of Christian initiation was performed.

Considering these texts together, it can be seen that there is much evidence to support Dalmais' statement that:

\[\ldots \text{nos homélieux sur le baptistère considèrent la régénération baptismale dans la perspective pascale et plus précisément \ldots avec la crucifixion et le sang répandu en même temps qu'avec la résurrection.}\textsuperscript{165}\]

McDonnell reaches a similar conclusion and suggests that Severus 'fuses Jordan, Calvary, and resurrection. The baptism of Jesus is, indeed, a preparation for death and

\textsuperscript{163} The likelihood that this passage refers to the piercing of Jesus' side is further strengthened by a reference to the same event in Homily 69 in which both 'blood and the water of life' pour forth from the pierced side of Christ. Brière (ed & trans), \textit{Patrologia Orientalis}, 8.2 (1912), 390.

\textsuperscript{164} Brière & Graffin, \textit{Patrologia Orientalis}, 36.1, 11.

\textsuperscript{165} Dalmais, 'Source Baptismale', 353.
resurrection'. Such an interpretation of the Jordan event may well have been conditioned by his prior understanding of Christian baptism as a participation in the death and resurrection of Christ. That said, the possibility of the event and the rite influencing each other is certainly more complex than Varghese’s suggestion that:

Les homélies baptismales et les homélies sur le baptistère attestent que les catéchumens étaient baptisés au cours de la nuit pascale. Ainsi il est normal que le baptême soit vu comme participation à la mort et à la résurrection du Christ.  

4.3.7 Anointing & Summary
The final section of this chapter must revisit the question of the role of the baptismal anointing within Severus’ theology. What is most striking is that the Patriarch makes very little mention of the anointing within his writings. This subject need not detain us here, since most references to oil and anointing have been given a thorough examination by Varghese. Suffice it to suggest the likelihood that Severus knew of both a pre-immersion and post-immersion anointing. The fact that there is very little textual evidence to support the performance of either of these is probably more of an indication of the importance which the Patriarch placed upon the immersion as the central act of Christian initiation, a ritual action which reflected his theological emphasis on birth, the Jordan and Easter, rather than their not being performed at all.

Homily 85 contains a reference to an anointing (most likely a post-immersion anointing) which is linked to the Spirit. Describing the Spirit which led Christ away from the Jordan

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166 McDonnell, The Baptism of Jesus, 229.
167 Varghese, Onctions baptismales, 171.
168 Ibid., 170-180.
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166 McDonnell, The Baptism of Jesus, 229.
167 Varghese, Onctions baptismales, 171.
168 Ibid., 170-180.
into the desert, Severus comments that the baptised are 'anointed with the valiant and very brave anointing of the Spirit' like athletes anointed with the 'oil of grace'.

Despite the fact that this text makes clear that this anointing is 'of the Holy Spirit', this should not be seen to detract from Severus' central teaching that the Spirit is principally active in the immersion. Varghese rightly points out that this association is derived from the descent of the Spirit upon Jesus as he emerged from the Jordan. He makes the point well:

Puisque le baptême du Christ est la source du baptême chrétien, le même Esprit Saint est présent dans tous les deux. Selon le patriarche d'Antioche, la descente de l'Esprit Saint sur le Christ est la raison d'être de son opération dans notre baptême. L'Esprit Saint qui appartenait au Fils de Dieu a été communiqué aux eaux baptismales, grâce au baptême du Christ.

However, as far as the post-immersion anointing is concerned, there is one important text which Varghese fails to incorporate fully into his argument. In his letter to John the Soldier, Severus clearly refers to a post-immersion anointing with myron:

Now concerning the imprint of myron with which those baptised are imprinted after the baptism of regeneration, the holy bishop Proclus made a very fine reply that is not far removed from the truth; for he said that 'this is the giver of spiritual gifts'. I would simply say that it is the completer of the gifts, for the Holy Spirit possesses many categories of gifts, just as the apostle said.

Thus, then, we imprint with the imprint of the myron those who have been spiritually reborn after the divine washing of rebirth as well, (doing this) to show by gradual increase the fulfilment of the multiple and immeasurable gifts of God, and (to show that) through the coming of the Paraclete the light of the knowledge of the Holy Trinity has been fully marked up...
By means of all these things that have been examined by everyone, it is clear that this imprint is the perfecter of sonship and grace and of all the other things which (are to be found) in holy baptism.\textsuperscript{173}

This text provides a good summary of many of the points which have been made in the final section of this chapter. Here there is no question but that Severus sees the post-immersion anointing as 'completing' and 'perfecting' that which has been carried out in the baptismal immersion. There is no sense of this ritual act performing anything which does not have its foundation in the water of the font. Again the immersion is presented as 'the divine washing of rebirth' and, in its implicit association with the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan, as an event in which 'the light and knowledge of the Holy Trinity' is revealed. These two elements, together with participation in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, are skilfully held together in Severus' baptismal writings.

\textsuperscript{173} Brock, 'Letter to John the Soldier', 62f; 71f.
5
Baptismal Ordines

5.1 East Syrian Ordo
The introductory rites of the East Syrian baptismal Ordo provide little reference to the activity of the Spirit. The Urmiah text moves from a Trinitarian ascription through a threefold 'Glory to God in the highest' and the Lord's Prayer1 to an opening prayer in which the priest asks that he might be worthy to administer 'the holy mysteries of absolving baptism'.2 Psalm 84 is recited antiphonally between priest and deacon before the priest prays in preparation for the imposition of hands3 and first signing with olive oil, described as the 'oil of anointing',4 accompanied by the formula: 'N. is signed5 with the oil of anointing in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit for ever'.6

The only major textual variant is an alternative prayer during the imposition of hands7 in which, according to Chalassery, the priest prays that, 'By the Holy Spirit we are born

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1 According to Webb, most East Syrian liturgies have begun with the Lord's Prayer since the time of Isho'yahb III, who is thought to have introduced this practice. D Webb, 'The Mimra on the Interpretation of the Mysteries by Rabban Johannan Bar Zo'bi, and its Symbolism', Le Muséon, 88.3-4 (1975), 306. In Badger, the Trinitarian ascription is omitted. Badger, Nestorians and their Rituals, 2, 215.

2 Syr: ܡܠܐ ܡܠܐ ܡܠܐ ܡܠܐ ܡܠܐ ܡܠܐ ܡܠܐ ܡܠܐ ܡܠܐ ܡܠܐ ܡܠܐ ܡܠܐ ܡܠܐ ܡܠܐ ܡܠܐ ܡܠܐ ܡܠܐ ܡܠܐ ܡܠܐ ܡ$liturgy Adaei et Mari, 63.

3 According to Kozhimala, the prayer which accompanies the imposition of hands is said once by the priest over all the candidates with his right hand outstretched and is concluded with the sign of the cross made in the air. CP Kozhimala, 'Die katechetische Bedeutung der symbolischen Zeichen und Handlungen im ostsyrischen Tauf- und Firmungsritus', Kyríos, 12 (1972), 147.

4 Webb notes that, in the East Syrian tradition, this oil is blessed by the bishop at the same time as the consecration of the Church, and is kept in the baptistery in a horn. Webb, 'Le Christ dans la liturgie', 312.

5 Syr: ܡܠܐ ܡܠܐ ܡܠܐ ܡܠܐ ܡܠܐ ܡܠܐ ܡܠܐ ܡܠܐ ܡܠܐ ܡܠܐ ܡܠܐ ܡܠܐ ܡܠܐ ܡܠܐ ܡܠܐ ܡ$liturgy Adaei et Mari, 64.

6 According to Chalassery, only the Kelaita edition records two prayers at this point. That which is missing from Assemani, Urmiah and Badger is 'a long prayer composed by Theodore of Mopsuestia'. Chalassery, The Holy Spirit, 97.
again and we are counted as Christ's brothers from the womb of baptism. Similarly, the prayer in Badger and Urmiah edition asks that the infant candidates 'might be born with a new and spiritual birth to the increase of their faith'. The final chapter of this thesis will demonstrate that the same Johannine birth imagery which has appeared again and again from as far back as the *Odes of Solomon* does not become marginalized by other baptismal images but sits happily alongside them and finds full expression as the tradition articulates its mature baptismal theology in the *Ordo*.

5.1.1 Sin and Forgiveness
An adjective used twice to describe baptism within these opening rites is 'absolving', appearing in the priest's preparatory prayer as well as in the better-attested of the prayers for the imposition of hands: 'Your grace has caught them in the life-giving net and has laid them in the holy vessel of absolving baptism'. Spinks' point that there is little evidence of the ritualization of the renunciation of sin and the devil in the *Ordo* highlights a striking contrast between the *Ordo* and the description of baptism as found, for example, in Narsai. However, despite the lack of exorcisms and a renunciation of Satan, it is clear from the rite that the forgiveness of sins is one of the primary effects of regeneration in the baptismal womb. The formula used as the oil is mixed with the water articulates well the link between forgiveness and new birth:

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9 *Liturgia Adaei et Maris,* 64.
11 See above, 29.
12 Spinks questions the validity of Narsai's evidence on account of uncertainty regarding authorship and the influence of his mentor, Theodore of Mopsuestia: 'It is difficult to know just how far Narsai is clothing these ceremonies with his own rhetoric. It is also difficult to know how far in his use of Theodore, Narsai may be projecting Theodore's Antiochene rite onto the East Syrian rite. (Spinks, 'Rise and Decline of Sin', 72.) Without denying the importance of the relationship between Theodore and his pupil, are not other elements of Narsai's description of
These waters are signed and consecrated and mingled\textsuperscript{13} with holy oil, that they may become a new womb giving birth spiritually in absolving baptism. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit for ever.\textsuperscript{14}

The East Syrian association between forgiveness and rebirth is articulated in the prayer before the first signing, which asks that, as a result of their spiritual birth in absolving baptism, 'their bodies being unspotted with the pollution of sin, they may receive a cleansing that changes not'.\textsuperscript{15} The Holy Spirit's activity in both processes is articulated in the hymn which accompanies the entry to the baptistery: 'The gates of the spiritual bride-chamber are opened for the absolution of the children of men; and now by the gift of the Spirit from heaven, mercies and compassion are given to every man'.\textsuperscript{16} Later in the rite, the deacon prays that the newly-baptized might 'keep the gift of overflowing mercies which they receive through the Holy Spirit\textsuperscript{17} and in the prayer after the Gospel the priest asks God to 'pour forth through us your gift, and may the mercies and compassion of your Godhead be for the pardon of the trespasses of your people and for the remission of sins to all the sheep of your pasture'.\textsuperscript{18}

In the first prayer following the second Karazutha, the work of the Spirit in baptism is compared to a sponge wiping away a stain:

Glory to you, who, by the oil and water which you have poured on our wounds, have healed the infirmities of our bodies, and by the Spirit have

\textsuperscript{13} Syr: אַעְשֵׁה

\textsuperscript{14} Liturgia Adaei et Mari, א; Liturgy of Adai and Mari, 76.

\textsuperscript{15} Syr: אַעְשֵׁה אֵלַי כִּי אַשְׁחֵר; Ibid., א; 64.

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., א; 64f.

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., א; 68.

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., א; 71.
cleansed as with a sponge the taint of sin from our souls, that you might
make us pure temples to your honour, O Lord of all, Father and Son and
Holy Spirit for ever. 19

Narsai uses the same image in his Homily on Baptism, the sponge of the Spirit wiping
away the rust of iniquity. 20 In the same way, the Spirit protects the baptismal candidate
from the powers of Satan and evil. The second Karazutha 21 speaks of Satan being
condemned by the armour of the Spirit which the candidate puts on in baptism:

With our knees bent in prayer, let us confess him who stooped to be
baptized by John, the voice that called to repentance, not because his purity
and stainlessness needed baptism in water, but that for us, defiled and
spotted with sin, he might sanctify water by his holy baptism, that by the
hidden might and armour of the Spirit, wherewith those are clothed who are
therein baptized in faith, Satan our enemy might be condemned. 22

The hidden armour being put on in the baptismal waters has already been encountered
in the writings of Narsai's pupil, Jacob of Serugh, who talks of Jesus forging armour in
the furnace of the Jordan. This, together with the robe of light which Adam and Eve
lost at the Fall, is left in the water for the candidate to put on at his baptism. The
purpose of the armour is to allow the newly-baptized to engage in battle with Satan. 23
Narsai himself describes the pre-immersion anointing as armour to protect the candidate
from the devil. 24

19 Ibid., r<n; 67.
20 See above, 138.
21 The second Karazutha is more penitential than the first. Whereas in the first the people stand
to pray, in the second they kneel.
22 Liturgia Adaei et Maris, r<n; Liturgy of Adai and Mari, 67f.
23 See above, 162f.
24 See above, 146f.
5.1.2 The First Anointing

Following the prayer with imposition of hands, the priest anoints the candidate with a cross on the forehead. Scholars disagree on the meaning of this consignation; indeed, it is unfortunate that Chalassery has relied heavily upon the writings of later writers, like the fourteenth century Patriarch, Timothy II, to interpret the meaning of this ritual.²⁵ However, Chalassery also refers to Narsai who describes the pre-immersion anointing bringing about the 'confusion of the devils' as well as being 'the great seal of the King of kings with which they (the candidates) are stamped, that they may serve in the spiritual contest'.²⁶

In the *Ordo*, this signing is the first of two anointings performed before the immersion, separated by other preliminary rites and the liturgy of the word. In Narsai, the double anointing²⁷ of the forehead and the body immediately precedes the immersion. Is it not likely, therefore, that this signing performs a different liturgical function from the pre-immersion anointings described by Narsai²⁸ Mitchell believes that the initial anointing

²⁶ See above, 147.
²⁷ It is misleading for Chalassery to describe Narsai's anointing of the forehead as 'the only anointing (rūšmā) of which Narsai and the Syriac writers of the 4th and 5th centuries speak'. (Chalassery, *The Holy Spirit*, 100.) Narsai's image of the armour of the Spirit is surely more likely to refer to an anointing which covers the whole body with oil than a signing of the forehead. Whilst Narsai's anointings do not have separate, independent identities, it is surprising that Brock claims that 'Narsai knows only a single pre-baptismal anointing' (Brock, 'Baptismal Ordines', 179), since Homily 22 contains several references to the anointing of the whole body. See above, 145ff.
²⁸ Brock suggests that the *Ordos* first anointing is the equivalent of the pre-immersion anointing of the head in the descriptions of earlier writings, and that the second unction of the breast and the body is parallel to the anointing of the whole body. (Brock, 'Baptismal Ordines', 178 & 181.) Since neither of the two principal themes of protection and ownership, associated with the pre-immersion anointings in the fourth and fifth centuries, is reflected in the language which describes the *Ordos* first pre-immersion anointing, this would seem unlikely. That the candidates do not yet belong to God after they have received the first anointing is made clear in the prayer on entering the baptistery: 'Gather us to you, and bring us into your fold, and make us firm in your sign'. At this stage the children have yet to be marked with the brand of Christ's flock. (*Liturgia Adaei et Maris*, 64.) Furthermore, whereas the Syrian
may be a surviving element of a pre-immersion rite from a time when there were still adult catechumens.\textsuperscript{29} However, as Webb points out, this does not explain why it appears in Isho'yahb's rite for children.\textsuperscript{30} Yet, if the Patriarch's rite grew from an adult liturgy, it is perhaps not surprising that some characteristic features of the more ancient liturgy have been preserved.

To complicate matters further, pseudo-George of Arbela attributes the recording of the names of the baptismal candidates and a prayer with imposition of hands, rites more commonly associated with the catechumenate, to Isho'yahb.\textsuperscript{31} However, within the context of liturgical development, it is also plausible that as the number of ritual acts, such as anointings, multiply, those ancient elements which no longer fulfil an obvious liturgical function are preserved within the rite.\textsuperscript{32}

As the rite stands today, there is a good case for not explaining away what some regard as the awkward presence of two pre-immersion anointings with explanations of a remnant from earlier liturgical strata or, indeed, of a splitting of the more primitive anointing of the forehead and body before immersion. Interpreted in its present context, the first anointing may be understood to claim for the candidate the promises of the mystery of baptism as they are articulated in the prayer which precedes it. By signing the candidates at this point in the rite, the priest affirms with a visible symbol that God's grace has, indeed, 'caught them in the life-giving net' and 'laid them in the

\textsuperscript{29} Mitchell, \textit{Baptismal Anointing}, 71.
\textsuperscript{30} Webb, 'Le Christ dans la liturgie', 313.
\textsuperscript{31} Connolly, \textit{Anonymi auctoris}, 88ff.
holy vessel of absolving baptism', promising at the same time that through the imminent celebration of baptism and eucharist, they will 'be born with a new and spiritual birth . . receive a cleansing that changes not, and be members of Christ and nurtured at the table of his mysteries'.

The theme of divine initiative, justifying the baptism of infants, runs through the opening rites. God is the good shepherd who 'went out to seek us and found us who were lost' and who has given his children the 'type' of the power of the world to come 'without their asking' and 'has opened to them your door without their calling'. Thus, the first anointing may be seen as the ritual culmination of the process by which the grace of God has sought out and caught his children in his 'life-giving net' and has brought them to the brink of baptism where they 'wait to receive the gift of your grace', a reference, surely, to the Holy Spirit.

5.1.3 From the Entry into the Baptistery to the Liturgy of the Word
A procession is formed to enter the baptistery with cross, candles, incense and gospel book. An initial prayer, hymn and Psalm 45 are said before the deacon makes his first Karazutha. Traditionally attributed to Theodore of Mopsuestia, this is interpreted by

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32 Against pseudo-George, we should recall that Narsai also refers to the recording of the names of the baptismal candidates before the anointing. Connolly, Liturgical Homilies, 40.
33 Liturgia Adaei et Maris, or; Liturgy of Adai and Mari, 64.
34 Ibid., n. - or; Chalassery believes that 'it is clear that the words, Thy gift and Thy grace imply the Holy Spirit'. (Chalassery, The Holy Spirit, 98.) This argument is not convincing. For, whereas the former is certainly a reference to the Spirit both here and throughout the Ordo, the latter is not. Admittedly, it is not easy to define the meaning of 'grace' within the context of this rite, but its use in these opening prayers suggests that it is more likely to refer to God's freely-given favour towards humankind than the Spirit. Phrases such as 'the mercies of your grace' in the opening prayer and, not least, the 'gift of your grace' in the prayer before the imposition of hands, are strong arguments against 'gift' and 'grace' being synonymous with the Spirit.
35 See above, 204f.
Chalassery as a 'description of salvation history'. It may, however, more accurately be
interpreted as a liturgical juxtaposition of creation and resurrection (understood as re-
creation) with the Jordan event prefiguring the true resurrection and final birth at the
end of time: 'and as in an image he fashioned and showed to us in his holy baptism the
ture resurrection and renewal which is in very deed given to us at the end of this
world'. Yet, whereas Chalassery talks of Christian baptism in terms of Romans 6 and
of participation in the death and resurrection of Jesus, the Ordo, quoting Colossians
1.18, speaks rather of resurrection being achieved through becoming one with Jesus
who is 'the head of the Church, the First-born from the dead' and 'the first-fruits of the
resurrection of life'. A striking parallel to this passage, again using Colossians 1.18,
comes in Philoxenus' Commentary on the Johannine Prologue.

Returning to the Karazutha, through the regeneration of baptism, Jesus has 'renewed
our frame, has pardoned our sin and has raised up our fall' – themes which are closely
linked in the East Syrian tradition. This proclamation ends with two explicit references
to the work of the Spirit, the first in relation to the candidates' fruitful reception of
baptism and the second concerning the coming of the Spirit upon the elements of oil
and water. The deacon exhorts the congregation to pray on behalf of the candidates,
that God will send on them:

the gift of the Spirit who girds up the feebleness of their nature, that they be
not doubtful of the visible mysteries, whereby they receive the good things

38 SYR: ملحمت ملهمت ملهمت
40 See above, 174f.
to come which pass not away; who pours forth the power of his gift also upon the oil and water, that therein may be fulfilled the type of the death and resurrection, with the pledge of the kingdom of heaven by the grace of Christ. 42

For the candidates, the Spirit's role is to reassure lest they doubt the power of the mystery and, for the elements, transformation, that through the celebration of the mysteries of oil and water, the candidates might participate in the death and resurrection of Christ and therein receive the pledge of future glory. It is at this stage in the prayer that the Ordo articulates a theology more akin to Romans 6. According to Webb, it is pseudo-George of Arbel who, in his ninth century writings, states that although Christ was baptised at Epiphany, the Patriarch Isho'yahb III:

instituta que le bapteme fut conféré en la vigile de la Résurrection . . ., ce qui lui permet d'expliquer un aspect de la théologie du baptême chrétien en usage dans l'enseignement de l'Eglise depuis St Paul, bien que les formes antérieures des rites syriaques orientaux ne l'aient pas particulièrement souligné. 43

Webb believes that the Pauline theology of dying and rising with Christ passes into the East Syrian tradition through the writings of Theodore of Mopsuestia, 44 who quotes Romans 6.3-5 in his Baptismal Homily 3.5, clearly stating that the candidate for baptism participates in the death and resurrection of Christ:

So when I am baptized and put my head under the water, I wish to receive the death and burial of Christ our Lord, and I solemnly profess my faith in his resurrection; when I come up out of the water, this is a sign that I believe I am already risen. 45

42 Ibid. The use of 'grace' and 'gift' in this passage gives further support to the argument outlined in fn 34.
43 Webb, 'Le Christ dans la liturgie', 308.
44 We have already noted that, in the West Syrian tradition, Romans 6 theology is more prominent at an earlier stage; see above, 190.
However, bearing in mind the obvious influence of Narsai, is it not also possible that this tradition would have filtered down via the priest theologian of Edessa who, himself, is sufficiently influenced by his teacher, Theodore, to be able to preach that the candidate is buried in baptism, as in a tomb, and that through the baptismal mystery he dies and lives again.46

This first Karazutha is followed by a prayer which uses another pastoral image of God the shepherd 'who finds us when we are lost and gathers us when we are scattered and when we are far off brings us into your household . . .'.47 Psalm 110 follows and acts as a bridge between the two proclamations. Verse 3 has particular significance for baptismal regeneration and the importance which the tradition places on birth imagery: 'Princely state has been yours from the day of your birth, in the beauty of holiness have I begotten you, like dew from the womb of the morning'.48

The second Karazutha is longer than the first and more penitential and intercessory. Whereas the first talked of creation and resurrection, the second concentrates on the mission of the Son to save the world from darkness and error: who 'by the light of his revelation saved us from the error of darkness wherein we stumbled through the agency of Satan our captor'.49 Within this context prayer is made 'with tears of repentance' to the physician of our souls.

45 Mingana, Commentary of Theodore, 184; Yarnold, Awe-Inspiring Rites, 183.
46 See above, 144f; see also De Vries, Sakramententheologie bei den Nestorianern, 176.
47 Liturgia Adaei et Marii, 65f; Liturgy of Adai and Mari, 65f.
48 Ibid.
49 Ibid., 67.
The purpose of Jesus' own baptism is, as well as to sanctify baptismal water, to condemn Satan and to deposit the armour of the Spirit in the water,\textsuperscript{50} so that the candidates, 'denying Satan and all his works\textsuperscript{61} might be clothed in the 'hidden might of the armour of the Spirit'\textsuperscript{52} in order to engage in spiritual warfare with Satan. In the first text it was clear that the rite of baptism conferred the pledge of future glory. In this passage it is the new man who, having been washed, receives 'from the altar the Body and Blood of Christ, a \textit{pledge}\textsuperscript{53} of the resurrection life'.\textsuperscript{54}

The first prayer after this \textit{Karazutha}, with its image of the Spirit, has already been discussed. The second is similar to that after the first proclamation and, employing pastoral imagery, describes God as the 'good shepherd, who went forth to seek us, and found us who were lost'.\textsuperscript{55} The same idea is reflected in Psalm 131\textsuperscript{56} which follows the priest's prayer, verse 10 being particularly appropriate to a baptismal context: 'Because of David your servant, do not turn away the face of your anointed'.\textsuperscript{57}

At the end of the psalm the preparation of the font begins with the hymn \textit{Laku-Mara}, followed by a priestly prayer and the Trisagion. This structure, leading up to the celebration of the liturgy of the word, mirrors that in the Holy Qurbana. During the

\textsuperscript{50} See above, 205.
\textsuperscript{51} \textit{Liturgia Adaei et Maris}, \textit{p.}\textsuperscript{68}; \textit{Liturgy of Adai and Mari}, 68.
\textsuperscript{52} \textit{Ibid.}, \textit{p.}\textsuperscript{67}.
\textsuperscript{53} \textit{Syr.}\textsuperscript{68}.
\textsuperscript{54} \textit{Liturgia Adaei et Maris}, \textit{p.}\textsuperscript{67f}; \textit{Liturgy of Adai and Mari}, 67f.
\textsuperscript{55} \textit{Ibid.}, \textit{p.}\textsuperscript{68}.
\textsuperscript{56} Following the numbering of the Peshitta.
\textsuperscript{57} \textit{Liturgia Adaei et Maris}, \textit{p.}\textsuperscript{68}; \textit{Liturgy of Adai and Mari}, 68.
hymn, water is poured into the font so that it 'rises above the head of him who is to be baptized' and the font is covered with the cross and gospel book over a veil.

5.1.4 Liturgy of the Word
The liturgy of the word consists of a preparatory prayer, a reading from 1 Corinthians 10.1-13, the Madrasha or anthem, a reading from John 2.23-3.8, the ’Onita or prayer after the gospel and the Karazutha litany.

The Madrasha, which describes Jesus as 'the living mystery of baptism', refers to the Jordan event:

John beheld a great wonder: in the river Jordan when he was baptizing; cherubin chanting Hallelujah and seraphin crying Holy: and the Holy Spirit descending on the Son receiving baptism: and the Father crying and saying: This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.

In this Ordo the Jordan event is juxtaposed with Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus. The three pillars upon which the Syrian baptismal tradition stand, womb, Spirit and Jordan, are drawn together and articulated within the context of the liturgy of the word in preparation for the celebration of baptism and eucharist. Indeed, the Madrasha and Gospel are a foretaste of what is to come; for the vision of angels, the cry of 'holy' and the Father's voice all reappear at the consecration of the oil which, in turn, is used to consecrate the water of the font: 'that it may become a new womb giving birth spiritually in absolving baptism'.

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58 Ibid., 70. This rubric surely refers to an adult candidate rather than a child.
59 Ibid., 70.
60 Ibid., 71.
5.1.5 Consecration of the Oil

Oil is poured into a flagon, placed on the altar of the baptistery and covered with a veil. An assisting priest or one of the deacons stands at the celebrant's right, holding in his hand the horn of oil which was used to anoint the candidates at the beginning of the rite. While the oil is being prepared the anthem of the mysteries is sung; a hymn which, echoing the Madrasha, contains a reference to Jesus' baptism in the Jordan:

In the river Jordan John baptized the lamb of God, and when he was ascending from the water the Holy Spirit of truth, in the bodily form of a dove, descended and abode on the head of our Saviour after he was baptized.62

Chapter two highlighted the vexed question of when the Syrians believed the Holy Spirit to have descended upon Jesus at his baptism and how this relates to the descriptions of the evangelists63 and explained how Varghese64 and Brock65 argue that in early accounts the Spirit is portrayed as descending while Jesus is in the water, and that it is only in later writings, such as this Ordo, that explicit mention is made of the Spirit descending after Jesus' baptism, thus reflecting the order of events in the gospel narratives. This is an important point, for it concerns not only the interpretation of the Jordan event but also how the same came to be ritualized in the Syrian Church's baptismal liturgy.

We have also observed how, according to Winkler, the shift which took place in interpreting the order of events at Jesus' baptism together with the influence which the theology of Romans 6 exerts upon the rite from the fourth century results in the introduction of a post-immersion charismatic / pneumatic anointing, to which some of

61 See above, 204.
62 Syr:เซรีจวิลิคิ; Liturgia Adaei et Maris, 72; Liturgy of Adai and Mari, 72.
63 See above, 56f.
the main themes, originally associated with the pre-immersion anointing, are transferred.

In addition to what has already been said against these theories, a further weakness is evident; namely, that they suppose that it is at the very time when the tradition is embracing the Pauline theology of Romans 6 and moving away from a more primitive baptismal theology, where the Jordan occupies a central position and the pre-immersion anointing is modelled on the descent of the Spirit upon Jesus, that a post-immersion anointing is introduced into the liturgy. The rationale behind this innovation, they argue, is that more attention is now being paid to the order of events at the Jordan as they are recorded by the evangelists; i.e. that the Spirit descends in the form of a dove after Jesus comes out of the water. Such a theory is not convincing, however, for it assumes that the East Syrian baptismal Ordo is simultaneously moving away from and drawing closer to the banks of the Jordan.

After the hymn, the creed is said and the priest approaches the altar to consecrate the oil with three Ghantas and Qanonas. The first is a prayer in which the priest acknowledges his own unworthiness to administer the sacrament and is followed by a prefatory dialogue (as in the celebration of the Holy Qurbana). The second is a petition to the Father that, by his will and that of the Son, the Holy Spirit might come upon the oil:

that by your will, O God the Father, and by the will of your only-begotten Son our Lord Jesus Christ, there may come grace from the gift of the Holy

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64 Varghese, Onctions baptismales, 28ff.
65 Brock, 'Baptismal Ordines', 182.
Spirit, who is of you in his perfect person and is partaker of your being and of your creatorship. May he mingle in this oil and grant to all those who are anointed with it the pledge of the resurrection of the dead, given unto the perfecting of adoption and unto deliverance from sinful passions and unto the fruition of heavenly rest.

This passage expresses two frequently recurring themes. First, the Spirit is described not only as a participant in the divine being but also as active in the divine act of creation. It is common for the Syrian tradition to link the Spirit at the Jordan and the font with its hovering over the face of the waters of chaos in the first chapter of Genesis. Second, that the Spirit may grant those who are anointed the 'pledge of the resurrection of the dead' has been met already in association with both oil and water at the end of the first Karazutha.

Returning to the second G’hanta, in the second half of this prayer reference is made to the priests’ use of oil in the Old Testament. This fits unhappily into Winkler’s development thesis, since at the very time when the tradition should have moved away from this more primitive understanding of a pre-immersion anointing linked to Israelite usage, the East Syrian baptismal Ordo states that:

the holy oil which you gave to the ancients for a sign and permission of the temporal priesthood and of the transitory kingdom, you have now committed to the priests of the Church that it may be for a token and for a parable of those who depart from earthly to heavenly things in an immortal body and unchangeable soul, being circumcised with the circumcision not of hands in the putting off of sinful flesh by the circumcision of Christ.

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66 Syr: סֵרְאֵלָה סִיוְרְאַרְאָן

67 Liturgia Adaei et Mari, 73f.; Liturgy of Adai and Mari, 73f.

68 For an example from the Odes of Solomon, see above, 33f.

69 See above, 209f.

70 Syr: סֵרְאֵלָה סִיוְרְאַרְאָן

71 Liturgia Adaei et Mari, 74.; Liturgy of Adai and Mari, 74.
Not only that, but this passage also includes another ancient image which dates back at least as far as the *Odes of Solomon*, namely, baptism as spiritual circumcision.\(^{72}\)

The third *G’hanta* is preceded by the Sanctus and Benedictus which echo the reference in the *Madrasha* before the Gospel to 'cherubin chanting Hallelujah and seraphin crying Holy' at the baptism of Jesus. This third section of the consecration of the oil contains another petition that the grace of the gift of the Spirit might come upon the oil 'and bless it and consecrate it and seal it'\(^{73}\) in the name of the Trinity and goes on to describe baptism as being 'perfected and fulfilled in the type of the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ'.\(^{74}\) As for the effect of the pre-immersion anointing, this is described as a 'life-giving sign\(^{75}\) which gives 'full and true holiness and the exalted communion of the kingdom of heaven' to those who are anointed.\(^{76}\) The priest makes the sign of the cross over the oil and then takes oil from the horn and mixes some with the oil in the cruse. This part of the rite concludes with the Lord's Prayer.

Chalassery raises the question why the oil is consecrated before the water and refers to the passage from Timothy II, quoted in chapter 3, which explains that 'this is to preserve the order of things in the natural birth'.\(^{77}\)

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\(^{72}\) See above, 38f.
\(^{73}\) *Liturgia Adaei et Maris,* Liturgy of Adai and Mari, 74.
\(^{74}\) Ibid.
\(^{75}\) *Liturgia Adaei et Maris,* Liturgy of Adai and Mari, 74.
\(^{76}\) Chalassery, *The Holy Spirit,* 111; see above, 130.
5.1.6 Consecration of the Baptismal Water

The consecration of the water consists of a fourth *G'hanta* which includes an epiclesis and the pouring of oil from the horn into the water. The priest's *G'hanta* presents the Jordan event as signifying both the resurrection from the dead and new birth:

For you in your unsearchable knowledge caused us to enter at the beginning this corruptible world, and in the time that pleased you you gave us the good news of our renewal and restoration through our Lord Jesus Christ, who by the type of his baptism signified the resurrection from the dead and commanded us that in the mystery of his baptism we should make a new and spiritual birth for those that believe. For the Holy Spirit, who is of the glorious being of your Trinity, by means of visible water, renews according to his will our ancient form, and by his grace pours into us the *pledge* of incorruptibility; who also descended and abode on our Saviour when he fashioned the type of this holy Baptism.

In the process of rebirth, it is the Holy Spirit who, through the water of the font, renews 'our ancient form' and imparts the pledge of incorruptibility. This prayer also makes explicit the link between the descent of the Spirit at the Jordan and its descent upon the font at Christian baptism. This is further emphasized in the epiclesis which follows:

May there come, O my Lord, the same Spirit on this water also, so that it may receive might for the help and salvation of those who are baptized therein.

The formula which accompanies the pouring of the oil from the horn into the water has already been quoted. Here let us emphasize again that, more than any other, it is the image of the font as womb and the theology of regeneration which springs from its waters which dominates this *Ordo*; this further supports our thesis of the womb as the symbolic focus for the activity of the Spirit within the Syrian baptismal tradition: the

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78 *Liturgia Adaei et Maris, s.* Liturgy of Adai and Mari, 75f.
79 See above, 210.
80 *Liturgia Adaei et Maris, s.* Liturgy of Adai and Mari, 76.
Spirit who, through the pre-immersion anointing prepares the candidate for rebirth; the Spirit who, through the invocation of the priest, transforms the waters of the font into the womb of rebirth and another Jordan; and the Spirit who, through the immersion, effects baptismal regeneration and gives birth to a child of God who has received the gift of the Spirit for the forgiveness of sins and as a pledge of resurrection glory.

5.1.7 Anointing and Immersion
The priest stands by the cruse of newly-consecrated oil while the children to be baptized are brought to him by the deacons, who first strip them and remove any jewellery. The priest anoints the candidates on the breast, making the sign of the cross with three fingers with a simple Trinitarian formula: 'N is signed in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit for ever' and, in so doing, 'imprints the knowledge of the Trinity in his heart and that it is given from above'. Apart from any adults being baptized, this anointing of the breast is completed by an anointing of the whole body by the deacons. Following this, the priest immerses the candidates three times in the font, using the normal Syrian passive formula, the people answering 'Amen' after each immersion. The children are then dried and clothed in white during which time the ministers move from the font to the sanctuary.

5.1.8 Post-Immersion Anointing?
Chalassery describes the signing which takes place after the immersion as a 'post-baptismal anointing'. This is misleading, for in two editions, the commentary of Emmanuel bar Sahhare and the Cambridge manuscripts, there is no mention of the use of oil at this point in the rite. Although he acknowledges that in Urmiah as well as in

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81 See above, 204.
82 Liturgia Adaei et Maris, 77; Liturgy of Adai and Mari, 77.
Badger the 'anointing is without the oil',\textsuperscript{84} this is still confusing, for an anointing without oil is not an anointing! He also attempts to identify a rite within the Syrian baptismal tradition which corresponds to Western confirmation:

In the Western tradition, the post-baptismal rite is known as Confirmation, and in the medieval period it was separated from the rite of baptism. In early Syrian tradition, this sacrament was administered along with baptism, by the laying on of hand only, without oil. This may be the reason for the absence of any allusion to the use of oil after the immersion in early Syriac accounts of the baptismal rite.\textsuperscript{85}

It seems incredible that, even in the last decade of the second millennium, liturgists still try to find an equivalent to confirmation in the Syrian baptismal tradition!\textsuperscript{86} The fruitless search for the seventh sacrament will not be helped by interpreting Syrian texts through the lens of Western sacramental theology. Statements such as, 'having put on Christ through baptism, the baptized person, together with the community comes before the altar to receive the Holy Spirit, the very Spirit of Christ\textsuperscript{87} prevent a deeper understanding of the theology of the rite and owe more to the writer's desire to see his own liturgical tradition within the primitive rites of another than to a critical interpretation of the primary sources, an observation which is supported by his several quotations from the documents of the Second Vatican Council.\textsuperscript{88}

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\textsuperscript{83} De Vries, 'Zur Liturgie der Erwachsenenteufel', 469.
\textsuperscript{84} Chalassery, \textit{The Holy Spirit}, 119.
\textsuperscript{85} \textit{Ibid.}, 116.
\textsuperscript{86} It is less surprising to find a footnote in the 1895 Urmiah edition which says that: 'Confirmation is administered at the same time as Baptism, by the laying on of hands only, without oil. \textit{Liturgy of Adai and Mari}, 79.
\textsuperscript{87} Chalassery, \textit{The Holy Spirit}, 116.
\textsuperscript{88} \textit{Ibid.}, 123.
\end{flushright}
What, then, can be said of these ceremonies which follow the immersion? An introductory prayer is followed by Psalm 95 whose image of God's people as the sheep of his hand is picked up again in the prayer which follows the psalm. Here the priest asks that God may accept, in his mercy, 'these sheep and the lambs of this flock who have been signed with this holy sign'.

Two prayers are provided for the imposition of hands. That the newly-baptized have already received the gift of the Spirit is made clear in the first of these which refers to 'the grace of the Holy Spirit which is received from the holy mysteries of spiritual baptism' as well as to those who 'have drawn near and have put on this your gift', the result of which is forgiveness of sins and incorporation into the body of Christ. Having passed his hands over the heads of all the candidates during the first prayer, in the second prayer (which Badger calls a 'prayer of Confirmation') the priest goes on to list the gifts which the candidates have received in baptism:

May the pledge of the Holy Spirit which you have received, and the mysteries of Christ which you have taken, and his living sign which you have accepted, and the new life which you have gained, and the armour of righteousness which you have put on, keep you from the Evil one and his hosts; and sanctify your members in chastity. May this signing which you have accepted, be to you unto the blessings to come that pass not away, at the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ; and in the new world may he set you at his right hand, and may you lift up glory and confession and adoration to

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89 Webb helpfully outlines the various hypotheses which have been put forward. Webb, 'Paroles et gestes', 350ff.
90 Liturgia Adaei et Maris, 78; Liturgy of Adai and Mari, 78.
91 Ibid., 79.
92 It is interesting to note that, having said that the Spirit is given to the candidates after the immersion, in commenting on this passage Chalassery notes that the grace of the Holy Spirit is received in baptism. Whether this refers to the immersion or to the full rite is unclear. Chalassery, The Holy Spirit, 117.
93 There is a certain amount of confusion as to what is meant by laying on of hands in this context; see Webb, 'Le Christ dans la liturgie', 327.
the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and always and for ever and ever.95

If this is in any way to be understood as a confirmation, then it is a confirmation of what has already been received in baptism. In the words of De Vries:

Hier ist nur die Rede von Gaben, die bereits empfangen sind, es wird nicht die Gnade jetzt verliehen. Die bei den Nestorianern vorhandenen Riten lassen sich nicht mit Sicherheit als Sakrament der Firmung deuten.96

Chalassery's suggestion, following Yousif, that it would be more 'logical and ancient' if this prayer were to follow the third 'anointing', (which he describes as 'confirmation according to Western teaching') rather than precede it (as in the Chaldean text and Mar Esaya Hudra) seems to have little merit, save that it might strengthen the argument that something new is conferred in the third signing which, according to Chalassery, 'symbolizes that the baptized person has united with the Holy Spirit who descended upon Christ like a dove when he went up from the water after baptism'.98 It is interesting to note how Chalassery decides to emphasize the order of events at the Jordan at this point in his commentary.

As for the formula used to accompany the signing / anointing of the forehead, the priest simply states: 'N is baptized and complete, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit for ever'.99 Taking into consideration the prayers which have preceded it, is it not the case that these post-immersion ceremonies are nothing more than rites

95 *Liturgia Adaei et Maris*, Liturgy of Adai and Mari, 79.
96 De Vries, *Sakramententheologie bei den Nestorianern*, 188.
98 *Ibid*.
of explanation or completion, bringing together several of the theological strands which have been expressed during the performance of the mystery and, through the signing the candidate, giving ritual expression to the fact that for the children who have emerged from the font this part of the initiatory rite is complete? Can this signing not be understood in some way as a mirror of the first pre-immersion anointing through which the priest claims for the children who are anointed the promises of baptism which they will soon enjoy? Here, the signing affirms that the promises have been received and that, apart from the celebration of the eucharist, the rite is complete.100

Crowns are placed on the heads of the newly-baptized before they return to the baptistery with the ministers. Oil from the cruse is poured into the horn and the remainder tipped into the font. There follows a number of prayers, one of which refers to 'the new sons whom you have begotten in your holy baptism, from a spiritual womb,101 worship you'.102 The rite closes with prayers and ceremonies for the deconsecration of the baptismal water, suggesting that a transformation has taken place which needs to be reversed.

5.1.9 Summary
Three points may be made to summarize this consideration of the East Syrian Ordo. First, leaving aside questions of authorship and date of composition, this rite has made extensive use of much of the baptismal imagery which it has inherited from earlier rites

100 Webb points out that commentators on the rite, such as pseudo-George, Emmanuel and Timothy II do interpret this signing as the coming of the Spirit upon the candidates. For pseudo-George it is linked to Pentecost; for Emmanuel and Timothy it is connected to the descent of the Spirit after Jesus' baptism in the Jordan. (Webb, 'Le Christ dans la liturgie', 328.) This raises the question of how far commentaries such as these should be relied upon for interpreting the text of the Ordo?
101 Syr: ἡμᾶς ὑπέκαμψαν Ἓτοι
without removing baptismal regeneration and Jesus' baptism in the Jordan from their central position. Second, as far as the Spirit is concerned, although active throughout the rite, it is certainly focussed in particular upon the consecration of the oil and water, the second pre-immersion anointing (of breast and of body) and, not least, upon the immersion itself. Third, that the available evidence does not allow any firm conclusions to be drawn concerning the post-immersion rites. Whether the priest signed the candidates with oil is uncertain, as is the relationship between the Spirit and this final stage of the liturgy. Although later commentaries emphasized the association of this ritual act with the descent of the Spirit upon Jesus at the Jordan, the text of the Ordo does not support such a conclusion.

5.2 The West Syrian Baptismal Ordines of Severus of Antioch and Jacob of Serugh

The Ordo of Severus is divided into two parts. The Service of the Catechumens' comprises opening prayers, the liturgy of the word, a pre-immersion consignation, exorcisms, apotaxis and syntaxis. As in the East Syrian rite, an initial Trinitarian invocation is followed by the priest's petition for worthiness 'that in purity and holiness, we may approach the glorious and divine mysteries of immortal adoption'. After Psalm 51, a sequence of hymns and prayers leads up to the epistle and gospel.

The 'Service of the ones to be Baptized' includes the anointing of the forehead, the consecration of the water with the pouring of myron into the font, the anointing of the whole body, the baptismal immersion, an anointing of the body with myron, the clothing in white, the crowning and, finally, the administration of Holy Communion.

102 Liturgia Adaei et Mari, 80.
103 Syr: ܐܘܒܪܐ ܐܡܠܝܐ; ܐܘܪܢ ܠܒܪܐ; ܣܵܪܵܵܐ ܐܡܵܵܐ ܐܡܵܵܐ; Sacrament of Holy Baptism, 14ff.
104 Romans 6.1-8 or, for a girl, Galatians 3.23-29.
The structure of the Maronite Ordo is very similar to its Syrian Orthodox sister, though divided into four parts in the modern edition of the liturgy. The 'Preparatory Rites for the Mysteries of Initiation' consist of a 'Service of the Word', whose opening structure is identical to that described above. The 'Rite for the Catechumens' includes exorcisms, apotaxis and syntaxis. The 'Anaphora for the Consecration of the Baptismal Water' contains, as in Severus, the pouring of myron into the font. The 'Mysteries of Initiation' begin with an anointing of the forehead with the oil of catechumens, followed immediately by the baptismal immersion, clothing with the white garment, anointing of the forehead with myron, 'crowning' with a headband, reception of Holy Communion and concludes with a procession inside the Church.

5.2.1 The Use and Abuse of the Jordan Event as a Model for Christian Initiation

It comes as no surprise that the Ordo of Severus makes repeated reference to the baptism of Jesus. It is mentioned in the first hymn of praise: 'You, by your baptism

105 John 3.1-8 or, for a girl, John 3.22-27.

106 In the printed Maronite Ordo, Paris Syr 119 & Vatican Syr 477 the epistle comes from Titus 3; in Paris Syr 116, 117 & 118 Ephesians 4 is read. For the gospel, although the printed Ordo, Paris Syr 119 & Vatican Syr 477 use John 3, in Vatican Syr 313 & Paris Syr 116, Mark 1 is appointed; in Paris Syr 118 & 312, Luke 3.15-22 is read; and in Paris Syr 117, Matthew 3.1-17. Thus, as far as the Maronite Liturgy of the Word is concerned, there is much more fluidity than in the Syrian Orthodox rite.

107 According to Mouhanna, there is a signing before the exorcisms in Vatican Syr 313 & Paris Syr 118, the same position as the consignation without oil in the Severan rite. Vatican Syr 312 & 313 and Paris Syr 118 & 119 also contain an anointing of the forehead with oil before the consecration of the baptismal waters, again mirroring the Ordo of Severus. However, support for the pattern presented in the printed Maronite Ordo is found in Vatican Syr 477 & Paris Syr 117, where there is only one anointing, albeit of forehead and body, before the baptismal immersion.

108 The rubric for this anointing in Vatican Syr 313 states that the priest anoints the head of the candidate with oil and the deacon anoints the whole body. (Mouhanna, Rites de l'Initiation, 60.) Does this pattern, which in the West Syrian tradition may be traced back to the Didascalia Apostolorum, suggest an earlier form of the rite which was later simplified into a simple anointing of the forehead?

109 Vatican Syr 313 makes no reference to a post-immersion unction with myron. However, Mouhanna notes that a later hand has written a note at the end of the rite, indicating an anointing of various parts of the body with myron. Mouhanna, Rites de l'Initiation, 64.
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have sanctified for us the baptism which purifies us from the viciousness of sin\textsuperscript{110} and alluded to in Psalm 29.3 in the Quqal'yon which follows the hymn. Answering the question why Jesus needed to be baptized, the first hymn makes clear that the Jordan event instituted Christian baptism and sanctified the baptismal waters. We have already seen how Severus himself maintains that Jesus received nothing from his baptism in the Jordan which he did not possess beforehand.\textsuperscript{111} The same point is articulated in the Sedro whose text is common to both ordines. The Syrian Orthodox prayer reads:

\begin{quote}
\centering
(God) had no need, but came to baptism that he might sanctify the waters of the Jordan by his holy baptism; the Son of Majesty who bent his head under the hand of the Baptist, as the Father called out from heaven: 'This is my beloved Son'; and the Holy Spirit appeared, in the likeness of the body of a dove. \textsuperscript{112}
\end{quote}

In the second part of the Ordo of Severus, the hymn before the consecration of the baptismal water juxtaposes Psalm 29.3 with a description of Jesus' baptism.\textsuperscript{113} This same text is used in the Maronite baptismal liturgy as a Qolo during the procession after Holy Communion. Both texts speak of cosmic upheaval resulting from Jesus' baptism.\textsuperscript{114} The response of the sun and the stars suggests that such imagery may be linked to the not dissimilar tradition of a revelation of fire or light at the Jordan which has been traced back to Justin Martyr and the Diatessaron.\textsuperscript{115} In the first verse of the Maronite text the priest sings:

\begin{quote}
\centering
\end{quote}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{110} Sacrament of Holy Baptism, 16f.
\textsuperscript{111} See above, 191.
\textsuperscript{112} Sacrament of Holy Baptism, 20f; cf Mysteries of Initiation, 14.
\textsuperscript{113} Sacrament of Holy Baptism, 54f; the same psalm is quoted as the priest makes the sign of the cross with myron over the baptismal waters. \textit{Ibid.}, 64f.
\textsuperscript{114} The idea that the baptism of Jesus results in some form of dramatic cosmic change is present in Ode 24; see above, 35.
\textsuperscript{115} See above, 127, fn 194; cf Mouhanna, \textit{Rites de L'Initiation}, 209.
\end{flushright}
The Lord reigns: He is clothed in majesty. Alleluia! John mixed the waters of baptism and Christ sanctified and entered them. The heights and depths paid him honour when he came out of the waters. The sun lowered its rays and the stars bent down in adoration to the Sanctifier of all rivers and sources of water.116

When it comes to the consecration of the baptismal water, the fourth section of the Severan prayer asks God to grant to the water 'the blessings of the Jordan'.117 We have already seen that a similar petition appears in Severus' second catechetical homily.118 Similarly, we have observed that for Jacob, Narsai and Ephrem, the Spirit does not descend upon the water in order to consecrate it; rather, it is the descent of Christ which, for all time, turns the font into another Jordan.119 As in Narsai, the function of the Spirit, like the divine voice, acts as a witness who reveals the divine nature of the Son.120

A similar theology of the Jordan is also articulated in the Maronite Ordo. The Median Diaconal Proclamation in Paris Syr 118 describes the Spirit as a witness to the Jordan event. At the end of a description of the various orders of the heavenly hosts, the Deacon proclaims that these angelic beings have a part to play in mixing fire121 with the Jordan water:

116 Mysteries of Initiation, 50; cf Sacrament of Holy Baptism, 54f
117 Sacrament of Holy Baptism, 60f; cf Brock's translation of the same prayer from BM Add. 17218: 'Look upon this your creation, upon this water, and grant it the grace of your salvation, the blessing of the river Jordan, the holiness of the spirit'. Brock, 'The Consecration of the Water in the oldest manuscripts of the Syrian Orthodox Baptismal Liturgy', Orientalia Christiana Periodica, 37 (1971), 327.
118 See above, 189.
119 See above, 117f, 135f & 159f.
120 See above, 151f.
121 In the present context, the mixing of fire and water for the forgiveness of sins may well refer to the image of the baptismal furnace, encountered in Narsai; see below 240.
... born of fire and established in fire, they mix the fire in these waters for the forgiveness of the sons of the earthly Adam; bearing veils of fire and holding them above the River Jordan to receive the Son of God coming to be baptised completely. For the Holy Spirit, from the exalted heights, descends upon him, not to sanctify him, but to bear witness concerning him.

In the Maronite proclamation which begins the 'Rite for the Catechumens' the deacon says, 'O Christ our God, through your holy baptism, you sanctify the waters of the Jordan and all waters.' In the priest's prayer after the creed, the celebrant prays: 'You received baptism from John in the river Jordan, and through it you sanctified the baptismal waters for us' and, again, just before the exsufflation in the consecration of the waters, 'Though he had no need, he received baptism in the river Jordan and sanctified for us this font of baptism, a salvific and fruitful womb.'

Much of what has been said is usefully summed up by Mouhanna in a comment on the Sedro quoted above:

Le baptême de Jésus révèle en outre la nature du baptême chrétien et en constitue le type. D'abord, c'est un baptême dans et par l'Esprit-Saint; cet Esprit qui, descendu sur le Jourdain, a témoigné de la filiation divine de Jésus, est le même désormais qui descend à chaque baptême et fait naître le nouvel homme comme fils de Dieu. Jésus, le Fils de Dieu par nature, a été déclaré tel par le témoignage qu'il reçut du Père, lors de son baptême. Ainsi, moyennant le baptême, il a ouvert devant l'homme la possibilité de devenir le fils du Père.

The Severan Ordo does not believe the Jordan waters to be sanctified through Christ's descent without reference to the work of the Spirit. In a later part of the lengthy

122 Syr: Δ.Χ.Δ.Χ.
123 Paris Syr 118, ff 44v-45v; Mouhanna, Rites de L'Initiation, Plate XVI.
124 Mysteries of Initiation, 21.
125 Ibid., 26
126 Ibid., 33

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consecration rite, the Jordan event and Christian initiation are again related; this time, however, not with reference to Christ's descent into the Jordan, but by associating the descent of the Spirit which sanctified the 'rushing streams of the Jordan' with the coming of the Spirit upon the baptismal candidates. Unlike previous passages, this invocation suggests that it was the Spirit who, by his descent, consecrated the Jordan water. Taking into consideration the polemical nature of the literature produced by some West Syrian theologians of the period, is this evidence of an attempt to give some rationale for the Spirit's activity at the Jordan?

And you sent your Holy Spirit in the likeness of a dove and sanctified the rushing streams of the River Jordan. Even now, O Lord, be pleased to send your Holy Spirit to descend upon this your servant (these your servants). Prove him (them) to belong to your Christ as you cleanse him (them) in the holy and redeeming laver.

Within the Syrian tradition, there is a strong belief in the priest invoking the Spirit upon the elements or asking God / Christ to send the Spirit upon them, be they bread, wine or water, in order that they might become one with the same elements which Christ himself encountered on the night before his death and at his baptism in the Jordan. In the Severan Ordo, while the veil is waved above the baptismal water, the third verse of the hymn proclaims:

It is a great wonder when the priest stretches out his hands and opens baptism . . . And he calls the Spirit to descend from above. His effort and his desire are suddenly fulfilled when he sanctifies baptism for the remission of sins, Halleluiah, Halleluiah.

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127 Mouhanna, Les Rites de l'Initiation, 19.
128 Syr: ἔλθει δύο ὁ Κήπης ἐνίοτε
129 Sacrament of Holy Baptism, 64ff.
130 Ibid., 56f
Again, before the Lord’s Prayer, the priest gives thanks to God who has ‘blessed these waters by the descent of your Holy Spirit that they may become a womb of the Spirit’ for the regeneration of the new man from the old order.

Is it the case, therefore, that the Ordo of Severus articulates two similar and, yet, distinct traditions? Brock suggests that:

... where the prime interest is in Christ’s baptism, not his death, the sanctifier of the water will originally have been Christ himself, not the Holy Spirit - it will be recalled that in the Gospels the Holy Spirit appears after Christ’s ascent from the Jordan. Once an epiklesis of the Holy Spirit over the baptismal water had become established practice, however, there arose a certain amount of speculation about the precise role of the Holy Spirit at Christ’s baptism, and on occasion in order to provide an exact parallelism between Christ’s baptism and Christian baptism, it is stated that it was the Holy Spirit, not Christ, who sanctified the Jordan waters.

The attempt to mirror the ritual sequence of Christian baptism with the order of events at the Jordan exposes a major weakness in this thesis. To develop the argument made above, by noting that, ‘at this point attention is now paid to the fact that the Holy Spirit appeared after Christ’s baptism’, Brock uses Jesus’ baptism in the Jordan as a paradigm from which the Christian liturgy is modelled. There is, however, a tension

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131 Syr: οὔτε ἡγήτη
to

132 Sacrament of Holy Baptism, 78f. Similarly, in the Maronite prayer of the priest as he washes his hands at the end of the rite: ‘... we have called upon the Holy Spirit to sanctify these waters, in which your servant has been washed’. Mysteries of Initiation, 53.

133 Even Ephrem is not consistent in this matter. De Epiphania 6 states that: ‘The Spirit descended from the heights and sanctified the water as it hovered’. Although there is some doubt over the authorship of the Hymns on the Epiphany, this would suggest that the double tradition concerning the activity of the Spirit at the Jordan was known and accepted by Ephrem. Furthermore, in the short Ordo attributed to Severus for use in extremis, a prayer before the invocation of the Spirit suggests that it was by Christ’s baptism and by the activity of the Spirit that the Jordan was consecrated: ‘O merciful and compassionate Lord, by your baptism and by the descent of your Holy Spirit, you did sanctify the waters of Jordan’. Sacrament of Holy Baptism, 86f
here. In the period before the end of the fourth century he argues that the sequence of events at Jesus' baptism is of importance for the Syrian baptismal tradition, preventing an association between the descent of the Spirit and the consecration of the Jordan water. In the later period he claims that the desire to be faithful to the order of events at the Jordan justifies the introduction of a post-immersion pneumatic anointing. Moreover, he sees the identification of the Spirit, rather than Christ, as the agent of consecration at the Jordan as providing an 'exact parallelism' between gospel narrative and liturgical rite. But this cannot be so. The descent of the Spirit occurs after baptism, the epiclesis over the waters of the font before immersion. Thus, the liturgy's association of the descent of the Spirit with the epiclesis cannot be based upon an exact parallelism of the order of events.

In summary, the relationship between the descent of the Spirit and Jesus' immersion in the Jordan does not provide a model for the performance of the liturgical rite in any of the descriptions considered in this study: there is no evidence to support the descent of the Spirit upon Jesus having an exact parallel or *mimesis* in either pre-immersion anointing or epiclesis.

Re-examining the textual evidence for both traditions, (that Christ sanctifies the waters by his descent and that the Holy Spirit is the sanctifier of the Jordan), one possible way forward presents itself if, rather than assuming that there are two distinct traditions, both are, in effect, two expressions of a single tradition.

What happened at the Jordan is central to a proper understanding of the pneumatology of the Syrian baptismal tradition but, as has been demonstrated, this can rarely be pushed to the extent of a ritual mirroring of the sequence of events as presented in the gospel accounts of Jesus' baptism. As a consequence, it is not possible to restrict the activity of the Holy Spirit, either in the Jordan or in the font, to what happens after immersion.136

Taking the texts which articulate Brock's primitive theology of the consecration of the Jordan by the divine descent, if it is 'from the Son that sanctification proceeded',137 as Jacob and others suggest, then how is it that Jesus sanctifies the water? In De Domino Nostro Ephrem states that, 'because the Spirit was with the Son, he came to John to receive from him baptism, that he might mingle with the visible waters the invisible Spirit'.138 Jacob of Serugh, writing over a century later than the Deacon of Nisibis, suggests that before Jesus entered the water he sent out his Spirit to hover over the Jordan in order to heat the waters. Does not this activity of the Spirit, sent by the one who has possessed the Spirit from the time of his conception in the womb of Mary, begin the process of the sanctification of the Jordan waters which reaches its completion when he himself enters the river to be baptized? The image of both Jordan and font as furnace is familiar from Narsai and is also employed, to a lesser extent, by Jacob.139

135 Brock, 'Baptismal Ordines', 182.
136 Indeed, with reference to the rite, Varghese maintains that: '... dans le baptême syrien le moment exact de l'intervention de l'Esprit sur le baptisé n'est pas précisé'. Varghese, Onctions baptismales, 305.
137 See above, 159f.
138 See above, 116f.
139 See above, 161.
In both of these examples, it is Christ who sends his Spirit or who mixes the Spirit with the water. Such an interpretation is an important counterbalance to Brock and McDonnell who claim that, according to Jacob, 'the Spirit did not appear at the Jordan to sanctify Jesus or the water but merely to bear witness'.\textsuperscript{140} True, the Spirit does not sanctify Jesus; rather, he proceeds from him. It is evident, therefore, that if the action of the Spirit at the river Jordan is confined to his descent in the form of a dove after Jesus' baptism, then this precludes his activity at any earlier stage. According to Ephrem and Jacob, this is manifestly not the case, for Jesus possesses the Spirit when he comes to be baptized. Hence, Jacob is able to say that sanctification proceeds from him.\textsuperscript{141}

Such a theory does not seek to remove or explain all the inconsistencies which the rites present. Rather, it suggests that alongside those texts which maintain that it is the descent of the Spirit in the form of a dove which sanctifies the Jordan, the more widely-attested tradition of the descent of Jesus consecrating the water still identifies consecration as being effected through the power of the Holy Spirit. This time, however, the Spirit is portrayed as coming to the Jordan with Jesus, rather than descending as a dove. Thus, although the action of the Spirit is described in two different ways, in both cases it is the Spirit who sanctifies, and what appears on the

\textsuperscript{140} McDonnell, \textit{The Baptism of Jesus}, 41.
\textsuperscript{141} In the Maronite manuscripts Paris Syr 118 it is not Jesus who mixes the fire and water, but the spiritual beings who have been born of fire and who hold up a flaming veil over the river Jordan. According to this prayer, it is the angelic hosts of heaven who mix the fire with the water for the forgiveness of sins; see above, 227f.
surface to be a consecration through Messianic presence can only be so interpreted in
so far as the consecrator is possessed of the pneumatic gift. 142

5.2.2 The Holy Spirit and the Baptismal Womb
The Syrian theology of baptismal regeneration has at its centre the image of the
womb. 143 The use of this image requires that, during the liturgy, the water of the font
be transformed into a womb of new birth. Generally speaking, this is brought about
through the operation of the Holy Spirit. For example, in the Ordo of Severus, the
second part of the liturgy opens with a prayer for the font 'be mixed with the power and
operation of your Holy Spirit, that it may become a spiritual womb' 144 and a furnace 145
which pours forth incorruptibility'. 146 That it is the activity of the Holy Spirit upon the
waters which effects the transformation to womb and furnace is again articulated in the
passage cited above from the prayer before the Our Father: You, O God, 'have blessed
these waters by the descent of your Holy Spirit that they may become a womb of the
Spirit for the regeneration of the new man from the old order'. 147

142 Support for this theory may be found in the two shorter West Syrian ordines in which the
epiclesis for the consecration of the water is not addressed to the Father, but to the Son.
According to Brock, this 'readily becomes understandable in the light of the tradition that Christ
sanctified all baptismal water at his baptism'. The further parallelism which Brock fails to draw
out is that, according to some Syrian Fathers, this process of sanctification involved the
Son sending out his Spirit to heat the water, just as the Son is asked to send out his Spirit to
consecrate the waters of the font in the ordines of Philoxenus and the shorter Severus. Brock,
'The Epiklesis', 197.
143 The formula which comes at the end of the lengthy rite of consecration of the water in the
Ordo of Severus resonates very clearly with John 3: 'May this water be blessed and sanctified so
as to become the divine washing of new birth'; Syr: ܢܲܠܐ ܓܲܫܲܒܲܐ ܩܲܫܲܐ ܐܲܫܲܒܲܐ. Sacrament of Holy
Baptism, 66f.
144 Syr: ܝܘܼܐ; it is regrettable that Samuel has ignored this important image, rendering the noun
'fountain'.
145 Syr: ܐܲܪܲܒܲܐ.
146 Sacrament of Holy Baptism, 46f.
147 Ibid., 78f; see above, 230.

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The same is used to great effect in the prayer of invocation of the Spirit in the Maronite Ordo. A familiar parallelism is set up between Eve and the font as well as the Spirit's hovering over the waters of creation and baptism:

As the womb of our mother, Eve, gave birth to mortal and corruptible children, so may the womb of this baptismal font give birth to heavenly and incorruptible children. And as the Holy Spirit hovered over the waters at the work of creation, and gave birth to living creatures and animals of all kinds, may he hover over this baptismal font which is a spiritual womb. May he dwell in it and sanctify it. Instead of an earthly Adam, may it give birth to a heavenly Adam. May those who enter it to be baptized be permanently changed and receive a spiritual nature, instead of a corporal one, a participation in the invisible reality, instead of the visible one, and instead of the weakness of their spirit, may the Holy Spirit abide in them.

A link with Genesis 1 is also made by a later writer, Moses Bar Kepha [c819-903 AD], who, in his commentary on the baptismal liturgy, explains the purpose of the effusion of myron into the font:

... the 'myron' which is poured upon the water here typifies the Holy Spirit. For as the Spirit of God brooded upon the waters in the beginning of creation, so that it might impart to them generative and fertilising power, so also here the Holy Spirit "broods" upon the waters of baptism, through the pouring out of the myron upon them, that it may impart to them power to bring forth spiritual sons of a heavenly Father. For holy Mar Severus ... says in one of his writings  that "myron" typifies the Holy Spirit.

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148 See above, 159.
149 Mysteries of Initiation, 34.
150 The work to which Bar Kepha refers is Severus’ letter to John the Soldier; see above, 200f.
151 Moses Bar Kepha, Explanation of the Mysteries of Baptism, chapter 13. The English translation quoted here is provided by Baby Varghese in his Baptism and Chrismation in the Syriac Tradition, SEERI Correspondence Course 8, (Kottayam), 46 [this publication is not dated, though works cited in the bibliography suggest that it was written after 1988].
Returning to the Severan prayer for the consecration of the water, in one paragraph\textsuperscript{152} God himself is described as having a womb, from which he is asked to send the Spirit:

\begin{quote}
    \emph{Have mercy on us, O God the Father almighty, and send upon us and upon this water that is being consecrated, from your dwelling that is prepared, from your infinite womb, the Paraclete, your Holy Spirit...} \textsuperscript{153}
\end{quote}

Here God sends the Spirit from his womb down to the water of baptism, to transform it into another womb and to abide there, 'so that it might bring forth spiritual sons'. That the Spirit dwells in the womb of God strengthens our theory that the womb is the symbolic focus for the activity of the Spirit and is reminiscent of the imagery of divine wombs in the \textit{Odes of Solomon}.\textsuperscript{154}

It is interesting to compare this imagery with John 1.18. The Greek \textit{κόλπος} is rendered \textit{καρα} in the Peshitta, a Syriac word with a broader semantic range than the Greek and which, according to Payne Smith, can be translated by the English nouns bosom, lap, womb and matrix.\textsuperscript{155} Such a range of meaning has important implications for a pneumatology grounded in a strong incarnational theology. It allows the Johannine Prologue to portray the divine Logos dwelling in the womb of the Father; an idea which is almost identical to that presented in the Severan prayer cited above.

This is not the only explanation given for the transformation of the waters into a womb. In the Maronite \textit{Ordo}, after the myron has been poured into the font, the same

\textsuperscript{152} This paragraph, labelled by Brock as \textit{i}, is not particularly well supported in the manuscripts and editions. (Brock, 'The consecration of the water', 329f.) It does not appear in the modern edition of Samuel, nor in the French translation of Khouri-Sarkis.

\textsuperscript{153} \textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{154} See above, 42f.

\textsuperscript{155} Payne Smith, \textit{Compendious Syriac Dictionary}, 403.
transformation is attributed not to the Spirit, nor to the descent of the Son but, rather,
to the 'power of the glorious Trinity':

Blessed are you, O Lord God,
for you purified and sanctified these waters
by the power of the glorious Trinity,
and they became a new womb,
giving birth to spiritual children.
To you be glory, for ever.156

Furthermore, the symbolic depiction of baptismal regeneration is not always restricted to
the womb. There are also occasions when baptism is described as a mother. In the
Maronite Diaconal Proclamation following the Liturgy of the Word, the Deacon
announces:

O Christ our God,
you came into this world
and made baptism to be like
a mother who brings forth spiritual children unto life eternal.157

In the same Ordo, other feminine imagery is used to describe baptism. The Qolo
following the proclamation describes baptism as a princess, 'the daughter of the King',
and the Church as the 'faithful queen'.158 Both Syrian Orthodox and Maronite ordines
describe the font and the Church as two sisters united in the mystery of baptism. In the
Ordo of Severus, the reference appears in the Quqoyo before the consecration of the
font:

Who has ever seen two noble sisters such as the pure baptism and the Holy
Church; the one gives birth to the new and spiritual children and the other

156 Mysteries of Initiation, 37.
157 Ibid., 21
158 Ibid., 22
nurtures them; whomsoever baptism bears from the water, the Holy Church receives and presents to the altar, Hallelujah, Hallelujah. 159

Both ordines also articulate the close link between the womb of Mary and the womb of the Jordan / font. In the Maronite Ordo, the Sedro begins with a reference to the incarnation. God is praised for becoming flesh and being born of the Virgin Mary 'without human seed'. 160 It refers to God 'fashioning children in their mother's wombs' and then goes on to describe the process of renewal through the 'holy and spiritual fire of the baptismal furnace'. Later in the prayer, listed amongst the gifts of baptism, the priest thanks God for calling the baptized to be 'spiritual children in the second birth of holy and forgiving baptism'. 161 Mouhanna provides a succinct summary of the theology presented here:

La piscine baptismale apparaît comme un élément fécond, où a lieu la nouvelle naissance. L'élevation de l'homme à la sphère de l'Esprit apparaît comme le fruit de cette naissance. En résumé, cette prière considère le baptême en rapport avec l'Incarnation du Fils et son baptême. D'une part, le baptême apparaît comme le moyen pour réaliser l'adoption de l'homme, but de l'incarnation . . . d'autre part, il n'est comme tel que parce qu'il a été inauguré par Jésus qui, à son baptême, a reçu du Père et de l'Esprit le témoignage de sa filiation divine. Le texte établit implicitement un parallèle entre la piscine baptismale et la Viêrge Marie: celle-ci, par action de l'Esprit-Saint, <sans semence humaine>, a enfanté le Christ; celle-là, enflammé par le <Feu>, c'est-à-dire, enfante l'homme rénové. 162

In the course of the prayer for the consecration of the waters, the Maronite Ordo again uses womb imagery. This time, however, it is not just the womb of the Virgin and that of the font which are juxtaposed, but also the womb of Sheol:

159 Sacrament of Holy Baptism, 54f.
160 This reference to the conception of Christ without human seed appears in Vat Syr 313: 16⁷, but not in the modern American edition of the text. Mouhanna, Rites de l'Initiation, Plate II.
161 Mysteries of Initiation, 14f.
162 Mouhanna, Rites de l'Initiation, 20f.
When he (Jesus) left the dwelling place of your hiddeness, he descended and abided in the virginal womb, in order to be born from flesh. He remained entirely with you, yet he entirely dwelt with us. Though he had no need, he received baptism in the river Jordan and sanctified for us this font of baptism, a salvific and fruitful womb. By your will, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, he abided in the world in three places: in a womb of flesh, in the womb of baptism, and in the dark mansions of Sheol. 163

This is a classic example of the baptismal theology expounded by Ephrem and, more importantly, by Jacob of Serugh. Mouhanna believes that the Jordan event constitutes the third womb from which Christ has been born. 'Ainsi, le texte nous présente une triple naissance du Christ: naissance divine, corporelle et baptismale. Ce thème est à rattacher à une conception éphrémienn e.' 164 Such a theory adds further weight to my thesis that some writers within the Syrian tradition understood John 1.18 in terms of Christ residing in the womb of the Father, from which he would receive his first birth, his 'naissance divine'. 165

This study of the relationship between the Spirit and the womb may usefully be concluded with a brief summary of some of the effects of rebirth which the above-cited texts have brought to light. First, it is through rebirth in the womb of the font that the newly baptized becomes 'spiritual', a spiritual being whom the Holy Spirit indwells. Second, through his second birth the new-born Christian becomes not only a spiritual being, but a spiritual son: a son whose Father is God and whose brother is Christ.

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163 Mysteries of Initiation, 33
164 Mouhanna, Rites de l'Initiation, 52.
Third, baptismal regeneration is the gateway to participation in eternal life. It is a womb which 'pours forth incorruptibility' and a mother who 'brings forth children unto life eternal'. Without mentioning baptismal regeneration, part of the Severan prayer of the consecration of the water links together resurrection and the Spirit with reference to the death of Christ and a probable allusion to Romans 6:

That those who are worthy of planting in the resemblance of the death of your Christ, through baptism, may also become partakers of the resurrection, and, preserving the gift of the Holy Spirit and increasing the deposit of grace, they may receive crowns of the victory of the calling from on high, and be numbered together with the firstborn (whose names) are written in heaven ...

5.2.3 The Holy Spirit, Sin and Forgiveness
The Maronite Sedro speaks of 'holy baptism which justifies sinners'. In the Eqbo at the beginning of the Severan rite, the priest states that: 'From the dirt of sin brought upon us by the devil, from this day we are purified by the laver of water and the Spirit'. Reference has already been made to the image of the font as furnace and to the role of the Spirit in heating the furnace, an image more commonly associated with Narsai. The result of entry into the furnace is forgiveness. To quote the Sedro again, the Severan text speaks of the image of Adam which 'had grown old and worn out by sin' being cleansed and purified in the 'furnace of holy baptism'.

165 See above, 236 & 45.
166 Brock, 'The consecration of the water', 331.
167 Syr: ـُ~; Vat Syr 313, 17; Mouhanna, Rites de l'Initiation, Plate IV.
168 Sacrament of Holy Baptism, 18f.
169 See above, 227, fn 121.
170 Sacrament of Holy Baptism, 20f.
The Median Diaconal Proclamation in the Maronite Ordo is also concerned with sin and 'the baptism of forgiveness'. Both ordines make use of Psalm 51 at the beginning of the rite and this is echoed when the deacon implores 'the purifying hyssop to remove and strip from us the old man . . . and clothe us with the new one . . . sanctified by the baptism of forgiveness'. He goes on to make explicit the link between the Spirit and forgiveness within the context of baptismal regeneration:

Let us pray now,
as the Holy Spirit descends from on high,and, through the fervour of his over-shadowing,grants us the pardon of our faults.May the waters assembled in this fontbe for us a second birth.May those who receive baptism in themhave the remission of their sinsand the pardon of their faults.\textsuperscript{171}

Mouhanna recognizes the link between the Spirit and forgiveness: 'A la descente de l’Esprit est attribué le pardon de notre iniquité, à l’eau et à l’Esprit, mis implicitement en relation, la <deuxième naissance> et le rémission des dettes et des péchés de ceux qui se font baptiser'.\textsuperscript{172} A similar passage appears in the Ordo of Severus, at the beginning of the prayer of consecration. Here the connection is made not only between the Spirit and forgiveness, but also between the passion of Christ and 'purification of every sin':

You have given us the fountain of true purification which purifies from every sin, (namely) this water which is consecrated through the invocation of you,\textsuperscript{173} by means of which we receive the purification which is given to us through the Holy Spirit.\textsuperscript{174} Grant, Lord, strength in this baptismal water, you

\textsuperscript{171} Mysteries of Initiation, 28. The concluding prayer in the Maronite Ordo also refers to forgiveness for those who are 'born by baptism, through water and Spirit' and to a new birth being bestowed on those who are 'corrupted by sin'. Ibid., 52
\textsuperscript{172} Mouhanna, Rites de l’Initiation, 40.
\textsuperscript{173} Assemani and Khouri-Sarks read 'thy Spirit'. See Brock, 'The consecration of the water', 326.
\textsuperscript{174} Brock notes three variant readings which replace 'the Holy Spirit' with 'the holy blood (of thy Christ)', 'the holy baptism of thy Christ' and 'the blood and the Spirit'. Ibid.
who through the passion of your Christ did grant purification of every sin, in preparation for the reception of your Holy Spirit.  

Here the Holy Spirit, active throughout the rite of Christian initiation, and through whom the candidate receives the forgiveness of sins in the font, is also the goal of the purificatory process, that the neophyte might be made ready 'for the reception of your Holy Spirit'.

5.2.4 Anointing, Immersion and the Holy Spirit

Any search of secondary literature on East and West Syrian baptismal *ordines* soon discovers that many commentators are so concerned with the positions of the various anointings within the liturgy and their interpretation that other equally important issues, such as those outlined above, are at times completely ignored. This can be understood, in part, as a result of the futile struggle of theologians whose sacramental life is influenced by the Western tradition, to identify an equivalent to the rite of confirmation within the Syrian liturgy of initiation\(^\text{176}\) which explains at what point the pneumatic gift is conferred.

As far as the number of anointings is concerned, all manuscripts and editions of Severus describe a post-immersion anointing with myron. As for pre-immersion anointings, there is a variety of practice. Some texts contain one anointing of the forehead at the beginning of the second half of the liturgy, after the *apotaxis* and *syntaxis* and before

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\(^{175}\) *Ibid.*

\(^{176}\) Whitaker, writing over twenty years ago, was reacting against the same liturgical hermeneutic. Referring to Ratcliff's work on the Syrian baptismal tradition, he states that 'It has therefore been claimed that the pre-baptismalunction of the Syrian rite fulfilled the same purpose as the post-baptismal rites of the western Church, that is to say, that it conveyed the gift of the Holy Spirit'. EC Whitaker, 'The Prayer *Pater Sancte* in the Syrian Orthodox Baptismal Liturgy', *Journal of Theological Studies*, ns, 28 (1977), 525.
the consecration of the water; other texts contain two, one in the position described above, the other, an anointing of the whole body before the immersion.

The modern Maronite Ordo contains one pre-immersion anointing of the forehead described as an 'anointing with the oil of catechumens' which takes place in the second position, after the blessing of the font. After the immersion and vesting with a white garment, there is an anointing of the forehead with myron before the coronation. The evidence of the manuscripts presents a variety of practice with the majority containing two pre-immersion anointings as in Severus. Vatican Syr 313, the earliest extant manuscript and the one used by Mouhanna as the basis for his study, does not describe an anointing with myron within the body of the text. Rather, there is a marginal note which, according to Mouhanna, is the work of a later hand, which directs that the newly-baptized should be anointed with myron on the forehead, chest, ears, temples, palms and feet. However, this manuscript does contain two pre-immersion anointings, which is not the case with Vatican Syr 312, Vatican Syr 477 and Paris Syr 117 which suppress the first.

The first pre-immersion anointing of the forehead is often understood as a pneumatic anointing:

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177 As for evidence for this in other West Syrian rites there is, according to Brock, a short liturgy contained in a 11th/12th century manuscript which does not contain a post-immersion anointing. It is surprising that Brock makes no mention of Vatican Syr 313 when he says that the Melkite text is 'the only extant liturgical manuscript which preserves the early Syriac state of affairs, with no post-baptismal anointing'. Brock, 'Baptismal Ordines', 179.
178 Mouhanna, Rites de l'Initiation, 64.
N is signed¹⁷⁹ with the oil of gladness that he might accuse all the activity of him who opposes and be engrafted into the good olive tree in the holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.¹⁸⁰

Brock identifies a more primitive formula to which four of the seven manuscripts antedating the twelfth century witness: 'N is signed with the oil of gladness, that he made be made worthy of the adoption of rebirth'¹⁸¹ Such a formula fits in well with our theory that the pre-immersion anointing(s) should be interpreted as a preparatory rite, preparing the candidates for rebirth in the womb of the font. Thus far, there does not appear to be any evidence for an obvious connection between this unction and the Holy Spirit. Most commentators, including Brock and Varghese, who support such an interpretation, refer to an important prayer which precedes the anointing, known as Pater Sancte.¹⁸²

Holy Father, who through the holy apostles gave your Holy Spirit to those who are baptized, do now also, using the shadow of my hands, send your Holy Spirit upon these who are about to be baptized, so that, being filled with it and with its divine gifts, they may produce fruit thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold.¹⁸³

¹⁷⁹ Syr: μαθητη
¹⁸⁰ Sacrament of Holy Baptism, 50f.
¹⁸² The prayer is absent from Add 14518 which, according to Brock, is the remarkable Syrian baptismal Ordo which contains several elements absent from other editions of Severus but which are present in Jacob of Serugh. This manuscript also contains the more primitive formula for the pre-immersion anointing with its reference to being made worthy of adoption by rebirth. (SP Brock, 'A Remarkable Syriac Baptismal Ordo (BM Add. 14518)', Parole de l'Orient, 2 (1971), 365-378.) It is interesting that in this instance, the formula in the above manuscript is not related to that in the Maronite Ordo: 'N is anointed as a member of the flock of Christ, with the living oil of the divine anointing. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit'. (Mysteries of Initiation, 45.)
The question which this prayer raises is whether it does refer to the anointing of the forehead which follows or, if not, to some other ritual act. For Brock, the interpretation is straightforward:

From this prayer it would appear quite clearly that the old Antiochene tradition of a pre-baptismal anointing connected with the gift of the Spirit has still be preserved in S, even after the addition of the post-baptismal anointing.184

However, previous studies have demonstrated that it is not possible to talk about 'the old Antiochene tradition'. It is certainly the case that some writers within the tradition associate a pre-immersion anointing with the gift of the Spirit, but this is by no means a universal association.185 Moreover, to say that the Spirit is linked to one part of the rite does not preclude its activity in another and, indeed, it has been demonstrated that the tradition understands the Spirit to be active throughout the rite, thus making it very difficult to associate particular elements with 'the gift of the Spirit'.

Brock is not the only scholar to make such a statement. Varghese, writing seventeen years later, repeats Brock's theory that this anointing is 'une onction sacramentelle de l'Esprit Saint. Bien que l'onction post-baptismale soit introduite, l'onction pré-baptismale garde sa significance pneumatologique'.186

The most obvious weakness with this theory is that the prayer Pater Sancte does not refer to an anointing, but rather to the conferring of the Spirit through the laying on of hands. As Mateos rightly observes: '... on demande le don baptismal de l'Esprit Saint.'

184 Ibid.
185 John Chrysostom's second Baptismal Homily states quite clearly that the gift of the Spirit is conferred in the water. For an English translation see Yarnold, Awe-Inspiring Rites, 161.
... elle ne parle ni d'onction ni de consignation, mais seulement d'imposition des mains.\textsuperscript{187} Whitaker points out that Pseudo Dionysius' treatise \textit{On the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy} is the first text to mention the laying on of hands before baptism. Here it follows the \textit{apotaxis} and \textit{syntaxis}, bringing the first part of the rite to a close.\textsuperscript{188} He finds further witnesses to this practice in the Barberini Euchologion and the baptismal \textit{Ordo} of Basil. In the latter, the laying on of hands again comes after the \textit{apotaxis} and \textit{syntaxis} and is accompanied by the following prayer which bears striking resemblance to \textit{Pater Sancte}:

\begin{quote}
(God), by the laying on of the hand of your holy apostles you gave your Holy Spirit to those who had been illuminated with the light of your holy baptism: Now, Lord, I presume to use the laying on of my hands; Send your lively and Holy Spirit on those who are to be enlightened with the grace of your holy baptism that, filled with your Holy Spirit, they may give fruit to your kingdom, thirty-fold...\textsuperscript{189}
\end{quote}

Having considered the evidence of these other witnesses, Whitaker concludes that 'it seems more reasonable to associate the prayer \textit{Pater Sancte} with the \textit{apotaxis} and \textit{syntaxis} which precede it rather than with the anointing which follows: and to regard it as a simple blessing rather than invest it with any sacramental significance'.\textsuperscript{190} Such an interpretation, ignored by Varghese, appears entirely reasonable.

Mateos approaches the problem in a slightly different way and, instead of associating the prayer with a ritual act which has been lost from the text, searches for an imposition

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{186} Varghese, \textit{Onctions Baptismales}, 289.
\item \textsuperscript{187} J Mateos, 'Théologie du baptême dans le formulaire de Sévère d'Antioche', \textit{Orientalia Christiana Analecta}, 197 (1974), 141.
\item \textsuperscript{188} H Denzinger, \textit{Ritus Orientalium, Coptorum, Syrorum et Armenorum in administrandis Sacramentis}, 1, (Würzburg, 1863), 273.
\item \textsuperscript{189} Whitaker, 'Pater Sancte', 527.
\item \textsuperscript{190} Ibid., 528
\end{itemize}
of hands within the rite itself, concluding that: ‘L'imposition des mains dont parle le texte ne peut donc être que celle que l'évêque faisait pour submerger trois fois dans l'eau celui qui était baptisé’. Thus, as it appears in the ordines, the prayer is in the wrong place:

Nous pouvons maintenant conclure qu'elle n'appartient pas à cet endroit, mais se réfère au bapteme lui-même, dans lequel, selon les témoignages étudiés, on conférait l'Esprit par l'imposition de la main sur la tête de l'intéressé, au moment où on le submergeait dans l'eau.

Mateos falls into the trap of making the prior decision that it is necessary to associate the conferring of the pneumatic gift with one particular part of the rite which, in this case, is the immersion. In so doing, it becomes as problematic as identifying the pre-immersion anointing with the gift of the Spirit. That is not to say that the Spirit is not conferred in the waters of the font. Indeed, if the womb is the principal focus for the Spirit's activity within the Syrian tradition, then it would be very strange if this were not the case. However, this being so does not preclude his activity in other parts of the rite which, if Whitaker's theory is correct, would include a pneumatically-articulated ritual response to the apotaxis and syntaxis. Mouhanna, commenting on the Maronite manuscripts, comes to a similar conclusion, although he, too, tends towards an almost exclusive association of the Spirit with the immersion. The first pre-immersion anointing is:

*l'acceptation*, de la part du Christ, de l'acte de foi posé par les candidats au bapteme, et la promesse de l'Esprit-Saint qui leur sera donné au bapteme, comme achèvement de tout le processus d'initiation . . . Cette onction ne signifie donc pas le don de l'Esprit-Saint; elle en est le symbole anticipé. De la sorte, elle annonce le don de l'Esprit qui aura lieu à l'immersion, comme

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191 Mateos, *Théologie du baptême*, 144.
192 Ibid., 148f
une réponse de Dieu en retour à la réponse des individus, c'est-à-dire, de leur rupture avec le mal et de leur adhésion au Christ.\textsuperscript{193}

What can be said about the almost universally attested post-immersion unction with myron? Going back to what has already been said about the tendency to identify this ritual act with confirmation, several writers employ Western terminology to describe this unction and, at the same time, try to emphasize that the post-immersion anointing has a distinct liturgical identity. So, for example, De Vries states that: 'Taufe und Firmung sind also bei den Syrern sehr wohl unterschieden'.\textsuperscript{194} In another article, written over twenty years later, which he concludes with the incredible statement that 'la théologie sacramentaire des Syriens concorde ... avec la théologie catholique',\textsuperscript{195} he emphasizes the fact that 'baptême et confirmation ne sont donc pas une seule et même chose'.\textsuperscript{196}

Whilst not wanting to argue that the effects of the two ritual acts are identical, De Vries' use of western liturgical terms drives an unnecessary theological wedge between the effects of water and myron. He, himself, does not want to argue that the Spirit is not active in the immersion. However, he does go on to emphasize the special nature of the pneumatic conferral in 'confirmation':

Le Saint-Esprit, communiqué, il est vrai, de manière toute spéciale par la confirmation, est déjà l'un des dons du baptême.\textsuperscript{197}

What, then, of the post-immersion anointing? The Maronite formula for the unction talks of the myron being the 'sweet fragrance of the true faith' and 'the seal and fullness

\textsuperscript{193} Mouhanna, \textit{Rites de l'Initiation}, 256.


\textsuperscript{195} W De Vries, 'La théologie des sacrements chez les Syriens monophysites', \textit{L'Orient Syrien}, 8 (1963), 288.

\textsuperscript{196} \textit{Ibid.}, 278

\textsuperscript{197} \textit{Ibid.}, 277
of the grace of the Holy Spirit'. In the Syrian Orthodox rite, the prayer before the anointing (which, betraying western influence, is entitled 'Chrismation (Confirmation)'), also talks of the candidate receiving a seal that he might be worthy to become 'the son of light'. The anointing with myron begins with a consignation of the forehead accompanied by a formula which is similar to the Maronite:

By the holy myron which is Christ's sweet fragrance, the seal of the true faith, and the perfection of the Holy Spirit's gifts, N is sealed.

The priest then anoints the whole body with myron while the deacon exhorts the people to pray for the candidate 'who is now being presented for the sign of the second birth'. It is somewhat puzzling that this post-immersion unction should be described as an anointing of the second birth, since the second birth has taken place in the font. It is possible, however, that means no more than the anointing is associated with the rite of baptism, the second birth. Moreover, it is not easy to identify a logical order of events within the baptismal liturgy. For example, the prayer following the post-immersion anointing asks God to make the candidate 'worthy to be reborn by the water and the Spirit'. It goes on to pray that he may be forgiven his sins and filled with the grace of the Spirit. Taken out of context, it might well be assumed that this prayer would fit more easily into the rite at a point before the immersion. However, as it stands at the moment, it merely emphasizes the fact that to seek to identify and

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198 'With the myron of Christ our God, sweet fragrance of the true faith, seal and fullness of the grace of the heavenly Spirit. N., the servant of God, is sealed in the name of the * Father, and of the * Son, and of the * Holy Spirit'. Mysteries of Initiation, 48.
199 Syr: ܢܐܒܐ ܢܙܐܢܐ ܢܬܐ ܢܐ ܢܬܐ ܢܐ ܢܐ ܢܐ ܢܐ ܢܐ ܢܐ ܢܐ ܢܐ ܢܐ ܢܐ ܢܐ ܢܐ ܢܐ ܢܐ ܢܐ ܢܐ ܢܐ ܢܐ ܢܐ ܢܐ ܢܐ ܢܐ ܢܐ ܢܐ ܢܐ ܢܐ ܢܐ ܢܐ ܢܐ ܢܐ ܢܐ ܢܐ ܢܐ ܢܐ ܢܐ ܢܐ ܢܐ ܢܐ ܢܐ ܢܐ ܢܐ ܢܐ ܢܐ ܢܐ ܢܐ ܢܐ ܢܐ ܢܐ ܢܐ ܢܐ ܢܐ ܢܐ ܢܐ ܢܢ ܢܢ ܢ
200 Sacrament of Holy Baptism, 72f
201 Ibid., 74f
202 Syr: ܢܐܒܐ ܢܙܐܢܐ ܢܬܐ ܢܐ ܢܐ ܢܐ ܢܐ ܢܐ ܢܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ  أنحاء . Ibid.
isolate particular moments within the rite, both for rebirth and for the conferring of the pneumatic gift, is a fruitless task and that both are achieved by means of a process which embraces both immersion and anointing and which reaches its climax in Holy Communion.

Commenting on the gift of the Spirit and its relationship to water and oil, Varghese comments:

... dans le baptême syrien le moment exact de l'intervention de l'Esprit sur le baptisé n'est pas précisé. L'intervention de l'Esprit ne peut pas être soumise à un ordre chronologique. Le don de l'Esprit n'est pas simplement post-baptismal.\(^{204}\)

Siman describes the anointing with myron in terms of a 'new Pentecost' in which the candidate is marked with the 'seal of the true faith', a ritual which integrates the candidate into the spiritual flock of Christ.\(^{205}\) Verghese talks of baptism and chrismation being 'as inseparable as the Body of Christ and the Holy Spirit are inseparable'\(^{206}\) and the latter signifying (not conferring) the 'permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the member of the Body.'\(^{207}\)

Taking these points into consideration, it seems obvious that a proper interpretation of the post-immersion anointing can only be made in the light of the baptismal immersion. To analyse one without the other is to do an injustice to the integrity of the rite. Let us conclude this section with Varghese's helpful summary of the situation:

\(^{203}\) Ibid., 76f

\(^{204}\) Varghese, Onctions baptismales, 305f.

\(^{205}\) Siman, L'Expérience de l'Esprit, 100. This also reflects the Maronite formula.

\(^{206}\) P Verghese, 'The Relation between Baptism, 'Confirmation' and the Eucharist in the Syrian Orthodox Church', Studia Liturgica, 4.1 (1965), 91.
Ainsi «le sceau et la marque» dont il est question dans la chrismation se rattachent à la notion du baptême lui-même en tant que sceau. Puisque la chrismation post-baptismale est inséparablement liée à l’immersion, son symbolisme est aussi indissociable du mystère baptismal. La chrismation - rite indispensable dans le baptême syrien - est un sceau, puisque cette notion inclut le baptême dans sa totalité.

5.2.5 Summary
Two points will be summarized here before proceeding to a conclusion of the thesis.

First, as with the East Syrian Ordo, it is clear that these rites have made use of much of the baptismal imagery which they have inherited from earlier writers. Second, as far as the Spirit is concerned, this chapter has identified the importance which the rite places on maintaining the continuity of his activity throughout the whole of the liturgy and beyond. There is a danger that those who react to Western interpretations of Syrian liturgies focus the activity of the Spirit on the water to the exclusion of any other ritual element. If it is the case that the womb is the primary symbolic focus for the activity of the Spirit, then it is as indefensible to say that he stops being active after the immersion as it is to say that his activity does not begin until the candidate enters the waters. For, surely it is the Spirit who has led the candidate to baptism in the first place. Thus, it is possible to talk about the activity of the Spirit in the post-immersion anointing as a seal, a ritual statement and proclamation of the new spiritual life which was born in the Jordan. In the same way, the pre-immersion anointings effect the necessary preparation for the candidate’s rebirth in the womb of the font.

207 Ibid., 84
208 Varghese, Onctions Baptismales, 309.
5.3 Conclusion
What, then, are the liturgical implications of this study of the doctrine of the Spirit for the Syrian baptismal tradition? Each section of this dissertation has concluded with a summary of our principal findings. Here we will attempt to draw these together to provide a statement of our thesis.

5.3.1 Original Pattern and Monolinear Development
Our investigation into the accounts of initiation in the Acts of Judas Thomas and the evidence of the Didascalia has demonstrated that it is not possible to talk of an original Syrian baptismal sequence of single pre-immersion anointing, immersion and eucharist. These texts point to the co-existence of a variety of practices at an early stage in the history of the rite. In the case of the Didascalia, it has even been proposed that the laying on of hands accompanied by the Lukan variant may refer to a post-immersion ceremony, in the Acts, there is no proof that any accounts reflect a subsequent development of an original pattern. Furthermore, there is no evidence to suggest that, in the early Syrian tradition, the rite was a ritual modelling or mimesis of Jesus' baptism. Of course, the Jordan event occupies a prominent position in Syrian baptismal theology and imagery, from Ode 24 to the ordines, but where scholars have argued for a ritual mirroring of the elements of the Christian rite with the events at the Jordan, their attempts have often failed to recognize that there is no evidence to indicate that the Spirit descends upon Jesus before his immersion nor that the pre-immersion anointings are moments within the rite when the pneumatic gift is conferred.

209 See above, 208.
210 See above, 53ff.
211 See above, 73ff.
212 See above, 56ff.
This variety of liturgical practice goes hand in hand with the tradition’s articulation of a variety of baptismal theologies. It is not possible, therefore, to highlight a simple development from Johannine to Pauline imagery. Whilst it is undoubtedly the case that, for whatever reason, the language of Romans 6 attracts a higher profile as the tradition develops, an association between the paschal mystery and baptism is clearly present as early as Aphrahat\(^{213}\) and Ephrem\(^{214}\) so that, in the work of these as well as later writers and the *ordines*, both sets of images (as well as others) are held together in a creative and dynamic way.

**5.3.2 Syrian Baptismal Theology and the Womb of the Spirit**

Again and again it has been demonstrated that the one image which, more than any other, characterizes the Syrian baptismal tradition, in all its variety, is the womb. This has two significant theological and liturgical implications.

First, behind the image of the womb is the doctrine of the incarnation. To be born again in the womb of the font is to experience new birth with the First-born who, himself, experienced the same from his mother, in the Jordan and from the dead;\(^{215}\) it is to share in the fullness of Christ’s humanity in order to be born again into the fullness of his divinity: ‘Our body became your garment, your Spirit became our robe’\(^{216}\).

Second, just as the Holy Spirit of God overshadowed the Virgin, hovered over the Jordan and raised Christ from the dead so also, in Christian baptism, the same Spirit, whose grammatical gender suggests an intimate relationship with the images of motherhood,

\(^{213}\) See above, 95ff.
\(^{214}\) See above, 124.
\(^{215}\) The *Odes* and Ephrem also speak of Christ’s birth from his Father; see above, 41ff & 124.
birth and the womb, is the means by which the Christian is born into the whole economy of redemption and is the pledge of new birth to eternity on the Last Day. Thus is the image of the womb the principal focus for the activity of the Spirit in the Syrian baptismal tradition.

Ratcliff observed that 'the gift of the Spirit is the beginning of initiation'. At one level this is true, but does not paint the whole picture; for the Spirit is the beginning, the continuation and the end of Christian initiation, parallel to the chronologically separate events of birth, baptism and resurrection in the life of Christ. It is not possible to talk of a moment, equivalent to the Latin understanding of confirmation, when the gift of the Spirit is conferred upon the neophyte. Rather, the Spirit is encountered throughout the process, in oil, water, bread, wine and beyond, as it is by the power of the Spirit that the Christian repents of post-baptismal sin and it is the Spirit who is the pledge of future glory. If the womb is its principal focus, then through the pre-immersion anointings, the Spirit prepares the candidate for rebirth by water and the Spirit. It is not possible to give one definition of the meaning of these anointings; but, at the risk of over-simplification, we may identify them as the means by which the candidate is marked out; marked as one who belongs to Christ, marked out for protection against the power of evil, and marked out for the forgiveness and washing away of sins.

216 De Nativitate 22.39.
217 See above, 3.
218 cf De Fide 10.17.
219 See above, 176.
5.3.3 Womb of the Spirit: Contemporary Liturgical Implications
In the introduction, it was suggested that this thesis might suggest a way forward for
denominations, like the Church of England, which continue to be haunted by the spectre
of the unresolved debate concerning the precise relationship between baptism and
confirmation.

There is no merit in suggesting that the practices of one tradition, even one which lacks
an equivalent to confirmation, should be imposed upon another. However, what the
Syrian tradition offers the modern Church is a picture of liturgical diversity held together
and identifiable as part of one ecclesial family by strong symbolic imagery and
associated theological language. In the period under consideration, the image of the
womb as focus for the Spirit's activity leaves no room for an equivalent of sacramental
confirmation nor does it require one ritual element to confer the pneumatic gift. The
solution to the confirmation conundrum might well be found by not seeking a rationale
for the latter, but by paying more attention to the imagery, ritual and language used by
non-Western traditions to celebrate the activity of the Spirit in the rite of Christian
initiation.

220 For Ephrem, see above, 128ff; for the East Syrian Ordo, see above 206ff.
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