The study of liturgy

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From New Testament Times until St Cyprian
K. W. NOAKES

THE NEW TESTAMENT PERIOD


THE EARLY PATRISTIC PERIOD


The letters of St Cyprian are quoted by CSEL numbers, but they can be found in Migne thus: 64 = PL 3.1047ff, 69 = 3.1183ff, 72 = 3.1083ff, 73 = 3.1155ff, 74 = 3.1173ff, Ad Demetrianum = 4.561ff.

The ministry of John the Baptist stands at the beginning of the gospel for all four evangelists. Prefaced in Matthew and Luke by nativity stories, the ministry of John is the immediate precursor of the ministry of Jesus in each Gospel. Behind the figure of the Baptist there lies a long history of the use of water in the religion of Israel; water was used to cleanse from impurity and the prophets looked forward to a sprinkling with pure waters in the Messianic age. Amongst John's contemporaries, the members of the sect at Qumran, lustrations were important; they thought of their lustrations as a means of moral and religious cleansing, when combined with penitence, and they cherished ardent eschatological expectations, conceiving their own task to be that of preparing the Way of the Lord.

John may have had contact with groups such as the Qumran sectarians, but he is best seen as a follower in the tradition of the prophets who would often make use of symbolic actions. His baptism expresses repentance and conversion; it is a baptism of repentance for the remission...
of sins (Mark 1.4). John’s ministry is not self-sufficient but points forward to the One who comes after him and who will administer a baptism in Spirit and fire (Mark 1.7f and parallels). All are to experience the purgative act of Messianic judgement, which will mean destruction for the unrepentant and, for the repentant, a refining prior to participation in the Messianic Kingdom. John’s baptism is a preparation for the Messianic baptism; it is the initiatory rite that brings together the Messianic people.

One of the best attested facts about Jesus is that he was baptized by John in the Jordan. This incident is reported in the synoptics and alluded to in the Fourth Gospel. That the propriety of Jesus' baptism by John was a problem for some in the early Church is shown by Matthew's account (Matt. 3.14f). Luke, on the other hand, emphasizes the Lord's solidarity with the publicans and sinners and all the people (Luke 3.21). For the evangelists, the baptism of the Lord inaugurated his ministry; the descent of the Spirit that closely followed his baptism meant that the new covenant had been entered upon, a new epoch begun.

Although the baptism of Jesus as the inauguration of his Messianic ministry was obviously unique, yet from the time of the resurrection it seems that baptism was the mark of belonging to the Christian community. In particular, the baptism to which Jesus submitted at the hands of John would have had great significance for Christian baptism. The content of Christian baptism was much richer than that of John's baptism: it was not merely a baptism of repentance for remission of sins, but also a means of sharing in Christ, a means of dying with him, of being baptized into him, of becoming a member of his body, of receiving his Spirit.

If we look at the writings of the NT we shall find much about the significance of baptism, but little liturgical detail. The NT writings were not intended to give a comprehensive survey of church life, but were each written for some particular purpose, for a particular group of Christians in a particular situation. Couratin has rightly stated: `It is what the NT writings presuppose that is of greater importance than what they actually describe.'

If we look at the earliest stratum of NT writings, the epistles of Paul, we find that the apostle is always highly conscious of the change effected by Christ in his own life and in the lives of fellow Christians. Thus he frequently contrasts the two modes of life: in the old Adam and in the new (Rom. 5.12ff, cf. 6.12-7.6; τ Cor. 15.20ff cf. 6.9-11), according
to the flesh and according to the Spirit (Gal. 5.16ff). Throughout his letters, Paul assumes that to become a Christian one is baptized; the `once-for-all-ness' of baptism is a basic presupposition of Paul's thought, as of all subsequent thought about baptism. Baptism is the frontier between two worlds, between two entirely different modes of life, or, rather, between death and life. Faith and baptism are inextricably linked; in their baptism believers confess Christ as Saviour (Rom. 10.9).

In a striking phrase Paul speaks of baptism as a burial with Christ: »Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life' (Rom. 6.3f). The old solidarity in sin, which in the previous chapter Paul had spoken of as a solidarity in Adam, has been replaced by a new solidarity in righteousness, solidarity in the new Adam, Christ. 'For if we have been united with him in a death life his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his' (Rom. 6.5 RSV). The believer has put off the old man with his doings and put on Christ (Col. 3.9f; Gal. 3.27).

Alongside his talk of baptism into Christ Jesus (Rom. 6.3; Gal. 3.27), Paul also speaks of baptism in the Holy Spirit (τ Cor. 12.13). The life of the Christian is life in the Spirit, entered upon at baptism (cf. 2 Cor. 1.22). It is the gift of the Spirit that means participation in the new covenant (2 Cor. 3); baptism in the Spirit incorporates a man into the body of Christ.12

In the epistle to the Ephesians, Christians are described as those sealed with the promised Holy Spirit for the day of redemption (1.13; 4.30). Presumably, this `sealing' occurred when a person was initiated into the Christian community. In 5.25-7 the author apparently speaks of baptism in terms of a prenuptial bridal bath (`the washing (loutron) of water with the word') which cleanses and sanctifies. The word loutron recurs in the allusion to initiation as rebirth and renewal in Titus 3.5f; according to his mercy he saved us, `by the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit, which he poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour'.

Among 'the elementary doctrines of Christ', the author of the epistle to the Hebrews includes `the instruction about ablutions (baptismoi)' and `the laying on of hands' (6.2). Presumably this instruction about baptisms in the plural refers to basic teaching wherein Christian baptism was contrasted with other lustrations. Later in the epistle, the author mentions the two complementary aspects of baptism, inward and outward; `let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our

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hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water' (10.22).

Even if one does not accept the view that τ Pet. is a baptismal homily, one cannot deny the wealth of allusion to the quality of Christian life made possible by the redemption achieved by Christ and made effective through baptism; the recipients are addressed as `newborn babes' (2.2), they have been `born anew' (1.3, 23). However, there is only one direct reference to baptism in the epistle, namely in 3.21, where the author draws an analogy between the waters of the flood and the water of baptism; `Baptism, which corresponds to this (i.e. the waters of the flood), now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a clear conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ ...'

As well as a number of possible allusions to baptism, John's Gospel contains the account of the meeting of Jesus and Nicodemus (ch. 3), where baptism is definitely in view. The Lord insists that a man must be born from above if he is to see the Kingdom of God. This birth is of water and the Spirit; except a man be born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God (3.5). Water and the Spirit are co-ordinated here as elsewhere in John's Gospel (7.38f; cf. 4.14); together they are agents of heavenly birth.

In τ John reference is made to the chrisma, the anointing from the Holy One which Christians have received (2.20; 2.27); this anointing, no doubt conferred at initiation, is the Spirit who abides in believers and teaches them. The `water and the blood' of τ John 5.6-12 are often interpreted sacramentally as referring to baptism and Eucharist, and T. W. Manson suggested that the triad of witnesses in verse 8, the Spirit, the water, and the blood, refers to three stages of initiation, i.e. reception of the Spirit, baptism and Eucharist. However, in view of the anti-docetic tone of τ John it seems best to interpret the water and the blood as referring to key events (baptism, death) in the incarnate ministry of Jesus; as such they join with the Spirit in bearing witness to the reality of that earthly ministry.

Although there is a wide spectrum of views on the question of the historical value of Acts, it is certain that this work was never intended to be a liturgical handbook or guide to the practice of the early Church. The aim of Acts is to show how the gospel was spread throughout the Empire from Jerusalem to Rome, and so the author concentrates on the major turning-points in this saga and not on details of church life and organization. However, the initiation of converts, especially when they are representatives of new categories of believers, is an important element in this drama of the widening spread of the mission of the Church. Therefore from Acts we can learn something of the author's
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understanding of initiation and possibly we may learn something of the practice of the apostolic Church with regard to initiation.16

It seems likely that the author of Acts intends the imperative of Peter in 2.38 to establish the pattern and norm for entry into the Church. After his Pentecost sermon the hearers said to Peter and the rest of the apostles `Brethren, what shall we do?' And Peter said to them, 'Repent, and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit'.

There are three important and directly related elements in this process of entry into the Church: repentance, baptism in water, and reception of the Spirit.

When one examines the accounts of initiation in Acts the relation between the gift of the Spirit and baptism in water does not seem to be consistent. Sometimes one finds the sequence of 2.38, as in the case of the Ephesians who were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus, had hands laid upon them and received the Holy Spirit (19.50. Sometimes the sequence is inverted, as in the case of Cornelius, who received the Holy Spirit while Peter was still speaking and was then baptized (10.44-8; cf. perhaps the case of Paul, 9.170. In other instances the reception of the Spirit and baptism in water seem quite unconnected, as in the case of Apollos (18.25; cf. also the account of Pentecost, 2.4).

If there is a consistent point of view underlying these ambiguities, it is that for the author of Acts the one thing that makes a man a Christian is the gift of the Spirit; repentance and baptism in water are necessary, but it is the reception of the gift of the Spirit that is the decisive mark of the Christian. Thus, in the case of the Samaritans (8.4ff), they are not really Christians until the Spirit comes upon them at the laying on of the apostles' hands. Their response to Philip's preaching was a mere parallel to their response to Simon the magician, as the narrative makes clear. Simon himself believed and was baptized and `continued with Philip'; he was in the same situation as the other Samaritans who had gone through the form but had not experienced the reality. Likewise in the story of the twelve Ephesian disciples, these `disciples' only become Christians when they receive the Spirit (19.6). In 19.2 Paul is not asking Christians whether they have received the Spirit, but is asking disciples who profess belief whether they are Christians. The story of Apollos makes an illuminating contrast; he did not need rebaptism because he possessed the Spirit already (18.25).

For the author of Acts, therefore, there are three necessary elements in initiation—repentance, baptism in water and the gift of the Spirit—but the most important of these is the gift of the Spirit.
Having made a brief survey of the main evidence of the NT concerning initiation, we can tentatively explore the content and nature of initiation in the apostolic age.

The initiatory rite consisted in:

1. preparation,
2. dipping in water,
3. possibly anointing and/or, in some churches, laying on of hands.

The candidates would have been adult, although it is possible that children might have been among those baptized when whole households were converted.

With regard to (1), it is difficult to determine how much elementary instruction the candidates would have received before baptism. Perhaps there is some indication of the contents of baptismal instruction in Heb. 6. f, where `the elementary doctrines of Christ' are listed as `a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith towards God, with instruction about ablutions, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgement'. It has been plausibly suggested that the ethical instruction which has a common content and pattern in the various Pauline and non-Pauline epistles derives from baptismal catechesis.18 Whatever the precise content of the preparation, baptism was administered after the gospel had been proclaimed and accepted. Maybe the candidate expressed assent to a question put to him by the minister of baptism about belief in Jesus (hence baptism `in the name of Jesus'; Acts 2.38; 8.16; 10.48; 19.5; Rom. 10.9; Cor. 6.11) or, in some congregations, a threefold question about belief in Father, Son and Holy Spirit (cf. Matt. 28.19). It is certain that if any form of words was used it would be of the kind, `Do you believe in...?' rather than the baptismal formula familiar to us, `I baptize you in the name of...'19 Perhaps one should see an allusion to the baptismal confession in answer to interrogation in Rom. 10.9 and an explicit mention of it in Tim. 2.12 and Heb. 4.14.20 However, von Campenhausen has argued that originally baptisms were `dumb' with no special forms of words.21

Baptism would have been performed in a river or pool or in a domestic bath-house. There can be no certainty in the matter of whether baptism in the NT period was by immersion or by affusion. Nor have we much evidence of the identity of the minister of baptism. In Acts the missionary apostles are presented as baptizing their converts. However, in Cor. 1.12-17, Paul, while by no means disparaging baptism, expresses gladness that he had baptized only a few Corinthians, since this would have led to even more partisanship, and, besides, his ministry was not that of baptizing but of preaching the gospel.
Whether the most primitive rites of initiation included any element other than mere baptism in water is a much disputed point. Lampe, for instance, has insisted that the initiation-rite originally consisted simply of water-baptism. Other edifying ceremonies, anointing and laying on of hands, may have been added later in some circles but played no essential role in the rite. However, others such as Kavanagh here argued otherwise, reminding us that the baptism of Christians was not Johannine but Christie: it was a baptism not of water but of Holy Spirit. The insistence in NT writings on the Messianic unction of Jesus by the Spirit and on his baptism being with Spirit rather than water leads one to expect that actual anointings might have been part of the total event of baptism. We should remain open to the possibility that is not merely metaphorical; here God is said to have anointed us, sealed us and given us the pledge of the Spirit in our hearts. The other references to sealing (Eph. 3; 4.30), the seal of God on the foreheads of the righteous (Rev. 7.2ff; 9.4, cf. 14.1; 22.4) and anointing (τ John 2.20; 2.27) might also be understood literally.

What about the laying on of hands? The NT evidence strongly suggests that, in some congregations at least, laying on of hands was an important element in baptism and was the means whereby the Spirit was conferred. Thus, in Heb. 6.2, baptism and laying on of hands are very closely linked. The laying on of hands is also presented as an integral part of initiation in Acts 9.5f and 8.14ff; the imposition of hands is portrayed as the climax of a single initiatory process. Lampe has argued that the two incidents of the Samaritans and the Ephesians should be seen not as providing evidence for normal liturgical practice, but as vital turning-points in the spread of the gospel at which an important new category of convert was welcomed into the Church and associated by the laying on of hands with its apostolic, missionary task. This explanation has little plausibility with regard to the Samaritans and it does not fit the case of the Ephesians.

When we pass from the NT to the literature of second-century Christianity we find numerous allusions to initiation and its effects, but only two descriptions of the rite; that in the Didache, (see pp. 84-6), and that of Justin (τ Apol., 61 and 65), who was born in Syria, but wrote in mid-second-century Rome (DBL –2).

Evidence is scanty and no doubt the details of the initiation-rite varied from place to place, but we can note a number of interesting developments from the most primitive rite:

1. Preparation for baptism has become more formally organized. Fast-
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ing, by the candidates, the one who baptizes and the congregation, is enjoined as part of the preparation in both our sources:

But before the baptism let him that baptizes and him that is baptized fast, and any others also who are able; and you shall order him that is baptized to fast a day or two before (Didache).

As many as are persuaded and believe that what we teach and say is true, and undertake to be able to live accordingly, are instructed to pray and to entreat God with fasting for the remission of their sins that are past, we praying and fasting with them (Justin).

In the Didache the instruction on baptism is preceded by `The Two Ways', moral instruction based on a Jewish source (chs 1–6). It has commonly been supposed that the two ways were used in pre-baptismal catechesis in the congregation from which the Didache stems. However, the link between ch. 7 and the preceding material, `having first recited all these things', may be a secondary addition to the original text, as Audet has argued.26

(2) The threefold form of baptismal interrogation has become the norm; as the candidate assents to each question he is dipped in the water. Presumably Justin alludes to the actual form of the interrogations when he speaks of baptism `in the name of God the Father and Lord of the universe', `and in the name of Jesus Christ who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and in the name of the Holy Spirit who through the prophets foretold all things about Jesus'.

There would have been no special church buildings, the Eucharist being celebrated in private houses, and, as in the NT period, baptism would often be performed outdoors at a natural source of water. Justin simply writes, `Then they are brought by us where there is water', but the Didache gives more precise directions, `... baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit in living [.i.e. running] water. But if you have not living water, then baptize in other water, and if you are not able in cold, then in warm. But if you have neither, then pour water on the head thrice in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit'.27

(3) Baptism leads into the Eucharist. In the NT writings it is implied throughout that baptism means entry into the body of Christ and hence baptism conveys the right to participate in the Eucharist. This link between baptism and Eucharist, which can perhaps be observed in the Didache, 9.5 and 10.6 (but see p. 211 for further discussion), is made explicit in the initiation-rite described by Justin, where initiation leads
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directly to the Eucharist; after the baptismal dipping the candidate is introduced into the congregation, common prayers are said for Christians everywhere and especially for the newly baptized, the kiss of peace is given and the Eucharist begins.

In neither the Didache nor Justin are we told who is the minister of baptism. However, it is certain that, as the second century progressed, initiation became increasingly the prerogative of the local bishop, as is already stated early in the century by Ignatius, who writes that everything must be under the bishop's control; "it is not lawful apart from the bishop either to baptize or to hold an agape' (ad Smyrn., 8).

Did the initiatory rites of the second century include either an unction or imposition of hands for imparting the Holy Spirit? The Didache makes no mention of unction or imposition of hands. 28 Justin's account is problematic in that he fails to mention the gift of the Spirit at initiation and he does not seem to mention any action within the rite other than dipping in water. This apparent silence is not, however, conclusive proof that Justin knew nothing of the gift of the Spirit mediated either through hand-laying, or unction, or both. It has been argued that Justin may have left his account deliberately incomplete; it was not his purpose to go into great detail in matters of liturgy since he was writing to stress primarily the harmlessness of Christian rites. E. C. Ratcliff has proposed that prayer for the descent of the Holy Spirit on the candidate at the laying on of hands may be referred to amongst the petitions for the newly baptized ('enlightened') before the Eucharist in 1 A 65.29

We have much more evidence of the use of anointing in heterodox circles than in orthodox. For example, we learn of the use of anointing in Marcionite initiation 30 (Tertullian, adv. Marc. 1.14; 1.28; 3.22), among the Marcosians (Irenaeus, AH 3.9.3; Theophilus, ad Autol. 1.12) that may not be merely metaphorical, but may refer to a ceremony within initiation.

Lampe has suggested that anointing was a subsidiary ceremony in initiation first developed among Gnostics and only after the end of the second century borrowed by orthodox Christians. However, Winkler has argued that although the origin of anointing is to be found in Gnostic circles, where the baptism of Jesus was seen as the moment when Christ descended upon Jesus or Jesus became Christ, it is by no means a subsidiary element in early initiation rites. In the oldest Syriac documents of the third or fourth centuries (Acts of Thomas, Acts of John, Didascalia,
there is an anointing before baptism. Since such Syriac documents betray a Jewish heritage, this pre-baptismal anointing reflects an early Christian understanding of baptism as a means whereby the candidate is anointed with the Messiah, the anointed One, who was himself baptized with the Spirit of holiness in the Jordan. Others, such as Kavanagh, see anointing not as a feature borrowed from Gnostic sources, but as rooted in the baptismal practice of NT communities.

There has been considerable controversy over the meaning of `seal' and `sealing' in the early patristic literature. On examination of the second-century evidence Dix concluded that the seal means the consignation of the forehead with chrism at baptism for the bestowal of the Holy Spirit, whereas Lampe decided that the seal means the seal of the Spirit conveyed by baptism in water with no further ceremonies. It should be noted, however, that the seal in this period does not always bear the same meaning and often has no evident association with the Holy Spirit; frequently it is best interpreted as referring to the signing of the baptized with the cross during initiation.

For the rite of initiation in the West in the early third century there are two important sources: Tertullian's works, especially his *de Baptismo*, and the *Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus of Rome (DBL 2-10). The *de Baptismo* (c.200) is not intended to provide a balanced survey of the rite of initiation in north Africa in Tertullian's day, but is a polemical work written in defence of baptism against the pestilential views of a Gnostic sect led by a `certain female viper' (*de Bapt.*, 1). However, from the *de Baptismo* and from references to initiation in his other works, we can reconstruct with fair accuracy the rite known to Tertullian. For the *Apostolic Tradition*, see pp. 87-9.

Before we look at the pattern of initiation in the time of Hippolytus and Tertullian, there are four important general observations to be made. First, baptism is normally to take place at Easter. Tertullian writes that although every time is suitable for baptism, nevertheless Easter is the most fitting time and, after that, Pentecost (*de Bapt.*, 19). It must be remembered that before the fourth century the great celebration of redemption was not split into Good Friday and Easter Day, but instead on the eve of Easter there was a celebration of the Christian Pasch, a re-presentation of the whole drama of salvation. Secondly, it is made explicit that the normal minister of baptism is the bishop, although his function can be delegated to presbyters, deacons, and even laymen according to Tertullian (*de Bapt.*, 17). In the *Ap. Trail.* it is laid down that a presbyter performs the anointing, before and immediately after baptism, and the baptism itself, while to the bishop is reserved the
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imposition of hands. Thirdly, although adult baptism is still normal, the
baptism of infants is also practised. In the *Ap. Trail* it is stated that
children are to be baptized first (21.4); Tertullian knows of the practice
of infant baptism but is opposed to it (*de Bapt.*, 8). Fourthly, the
catechumenate had a much more developed form. The *Ap. Trad.* gives a
considerable amount of information about this matter. There was to be
an initial inquiry into the character and mode of life of potential candi-
dates; there is a long list of professions forbidden to Christians. After
three years of instruction there was a further examination before entry
upon the final preparation for baptism which consisted of exorcisms and
fasting (*Ap. Trad.*, 20). From *de Bapt.*, 20, we learn that candidates are
`to pray with repeated prayers, fasts and bendings of the knee and night
vigils'; they are to confess their past sins.

The pattern of initiation indicated by Hippolytus and Tertullian is as
follows:

1. Catechumenate and immediate preparation for baptism.
3. Threefold renunciation of the devil (of the devil, his pomp, and
his angels/works) (Tertullian, *de Corona*, 3; *de Spectaculis*, 4; *Ap.
Trad.*, 21.9). Hippolytus alone refers to an anointing for exorcism
at this point.
4. Threefold dipping at threefold interrogation (Tertullian, *adv.
replies `Credo' to each of the three questions. Tertullian's words in
*de Corona*, 3, `Then we are three times immersed, making a
somewhat fuller reply than the Lord laid down in the gospel', are
best understood as referring to the fact that the officiant's ques-
tions were now fuller and longer than the simple formulae implied
in Matt. 28.19.
5. Anointing (*de Bapt.*, 7; *Ap. Trad.*, 21.19), probably of the whole
body, since in *de Corona*, 3, it is stated that the newly baptized
refrain from the daily bath for seven days.
6. Laying on of the bishop's hand accompanied by prayer for the
descent of the Spirit (*de Bapt.*, 8; *Ap. Trad.*, 22.1). The `laying on
of the hand' means that the bishop stretched out his hand over
the candidate during the prayer (cf. Tertullian, *de Res. earn.*, 8,
`the flesh is overshadowed by the imposition of the hand'). Hippo-
lytus alone adds a final unction by the bishop (*Ap. Trad.*, 22.2).
7. Signing with the cross; this occurs before the laying on of hands
8. Paschal Eucharist. Tertullian refers to the drinking of milk and
honey before the Eucharist (*de Corona*, 3), while Hippolytus refers to the bringing of milk and honey at the offertory in the Eucharist (*Ap. Trad.*, 23.2).35

This initiatory rite is a unity, although we can see clearly within it the elements that will in time become `confirmation' (anointing, laying on of hands, signing with cross). According to Tertullian the Holy Spirit is active throughout the whole rite; baptism in water by the operation of the Holy Spirit gives cleansing and remission of sins, while the ensuing hand-laying imparts the gift of the Spirit (*de Bapt.*, chs 3, 4, 6, and 8; *de Res. earn.*, 8).

In the rite described by Hippolytus, the text of the prayer said at the imposition of the bishop's hand is problematic. The Latin version contains no explicit mention of the giving of the Spirit, while other versions have a slightly longer prayer with a petition that the Holy Spirit be given. It has been argued that a line has dropped out of the Latin text at this point; the parallel with Tertullian's rite certainly suggests that the longer text should be preferred.

The post-baptismal anointing (by a presbyter with oil of thanksgiving consecrated by the bishop at the start of proceedings, according to *Ap. Trad.*, 21.19) was held to confer membership in Christ, the anointed one (*de Bapt.*, 7; the unction is `in the name of Jesus Christ', *Ap. Trad.*, 21.19).

Writing in the middle of the third century, Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, dealt with a number of controversial questions concerning initiation, although he did not describe the rite in full (*DBL* 10-12). His letters reflect his involvement in debates about the timing of infant baptism, about clinical baptism (baptism at the sick-bed; from *kliné*, bed) and about heretical baptism.

Unlike Tertullian, Cyprian was a supporter of infant baptism, which was becoming increasingly common. In north Africa there was debate whether baptism should take place as soon as possible or be performed, like circumcision, on the eighth day after birth. A certain Fidus had taken the latter view, but Cyprian in his reply (*Ep.* 64) tells him that `our council thought very differently'; baptism, which confers remission of original sin, should not be delayed.

A controversy had arisen between the north African Church and Rome over the treatment of those who had been baptized by heretics but who now wanted to join the Catholic Church. Unfortunately the letters of Stephen, Bishop of Rome, on this subject are no longer extant, but it is apparent that the Roman practice was to receive schismatics and heretics into communion by hand-laying alone, whereas Cyprian followed the
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established north African tradition (cf. Tertullian, *de Bap.* τ 5) of requiring that heretics and schismatics should be initiated fully. The north Africans regarded heretical and schismatic baptism as invalid on the ground that the Holy Spirit is not to be found outside the Catholic Church; the heretical minister of baptism cannot convey what he does not possess, the Holy Spirit.

In his comments on this subject, Cyprian makes it clear that the Holy Spirit is conferred at hand-laying in initiation. Heretics and schismatics ought to be baptized because `it is not enough that the hand should be laid on them for the receiving of the Holy Spirit without receiving also the Church's baptism' (*Ep.* 72.1). Cyprian obviously regarded the Roman hand-laying on heretics as equivalent to the hand-laying in initiation, although it is probable that for the Romans themselves the hand-laying was regarded not as initiatory but as reconciliatory, `for penitence' (*Ep.* 74.1).

The initiatory rite that Cyprian knew was an integral whole, consisting of baptism in water, anointing, hand-laying, consignation and Eucharist. However, as Tertullian tended to distinguish the effects of baptism in water and imposition of hands, so Cyprian speaks of baptism in water as conferring remission of sins (*Ep.* 73.6), causing renewal and spiritual birth (*Ep.* 74.5 and 7), and as preparing a temple ready for occupation by the Holy Spirit (*Ep.* 74.5), while the gift of the Spirit is conferred by the immediately ensuing laying on of hands (*Ep.* 73.6; 69.11, 74.5 and 7). He refers to the Samaritan episode in Acts 8 as a pattern for contemporary practice: `Because they [i.e. the Samaritans baptized by Philip] had obtained the legitimate baptism of the Church, it was not fitting that they should be baptized again; but only what was lacking was done by Peter and John, namely, that prayer being made for them, with laying on of hands, the Holy Spirit should be invoked and poured upon them. Which now also is done among us, those baptized in the Church being brought to the bishops of the Church and by our prayer and laying on of hands they receive the Holy Spirit and are perfected with the seal of the Lord' (*Ep.* 73.8). However, it would be wrong to suppose that in Cyprian's view the Spirit is active only in the latter part of the rite; he is active throughout since water cannot cleanse without the Holy Spirit (*Ep.* 73.7). Like Tertullian, Cyprian believed that the baptismal rite is imbued with the Holy Spirit, but in reply to a question about clinical baptism he opposed a crude, quantitative view of the Spirit's presence which would make aspersion, the method used at the sick bed, less effective than the normal baptism by dipping (*Ep.* 69.13f).
Numerous references in Lev., e.g. 15.5; 16.24, 26; 17.15. For the Jewish antecedents of baptism, see pp. 73–4.
2 E.g. Ezek. 36.25; Zech. 13.1; Isa. 4.4.
5 The thoroughly eschatological character of John's baptism makes it unlikely that it derived from Jewish proselyte baptism; besides, direct evidence of proselyte baptism is lacking before the latter part of the first century AD. (However, for a different view, see pp. 73–4.) On the question of proselyte baptism, see G. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament*, pp. 18-31, and H. H. Rowley, *Jewish Proselyte Baptism and the Baptism of John* in *From Moses to Qumran* (London, Lutterworth 1961; New York, Association Press 1963).
6 Mark 1.9-11 and parallels; John 1.32ff.
7 In John's Gospel alone is there mention of Jesus or the disciples baptizing during the Lord's ministry (3.22f; 4.1-3).
8 In Matt. 28.16-20 the risen Lord directs the eleven to evangelize all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit; cf. Mark 16.15f, part of the later, additional, ending of that Gospel.
9 'Jesus' own baptism is undoubtedly the source of Christian baptism yet different from it as well', A. Kavanagh, *The Shape of Baptism*, p. 3.
11 In 1 Cor 6.11 Paul juxtaposes the name of the Lord Jesus and the Spirit of our God as agents of the deliverance effected through baptism.
13 E.g. in the discourse at the well of Jacob (ch. 4), at the healing of the paralytic (ch. 5) and of the man born blind (ch. 9), in the water (and the blood) from the side of the Crucified (19.34). Scholars differ widely in their estimation of the extent of sacramental allusions in John's Gospel; thus O. Cullmann, (ET) *Early Christian Worship* (SCM 1953), sees a wealth of sacramental references, whereas Bultmann regards them as later interpolations. There is a useful survey, 'The Sacramentals of John', on pp. cxi-cxiv of R. E. Brown's *Anchor Bible Commentary on John* (New York, Doubleday 1966-70; London, Chapman 1971).
19 The Western text of the story of the Ethiopian eunuch presents us in Acts 8.37 with a declaration of faith on the part of the baptized, ‘I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God’, but all the Western liturgies until the fourth century require assent to a question, not a declaration of faith.


21 H. Von Campenhausen, ‘Taufen auf den Namen Jesu?’, VC 25 (1971), pp. i-16; cf. A. Kavanagh, The Shape of Baptism, p. 22: ‘... after a lengthy and vigorous apostolic proclamation of the gospel, sometimes concluding with an overt outpouring of the Spirit, the act of immersion in water either in the apostle's witnessing presence or at his very hands spoke for itself. Thus when one reads of baptism in the name of Jesus or in the name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit (cf. Matt. 28.20), these phrases are probably less liturgical formulae than they are theological declarations in a Judaic idiom on the binding nature of one's adherence to Christ in baptism.’


23 A. Kavanagh, The Shape of Baptism, pp. 26f; see also L. L. Mitchell, Baptismal Anointing, pp. 15-29.

24 J. D. G. Dunn, Baptism in the Holy Spirit, p. 207, writes on Heb. 6.2, As to the relation between baptism and laying on of hands the very unusual use of τε (instead of kai) suggests that what is envisaged is a single ceremony like that in


28 At the end of 10.7, the Coptic version of the Didache, followed by Ap. Coast., inserts an instruction about blessing oil at the Eucharist. This is almost certainly a secondary addition to the text. Any way, there is no necessary connection between this blessing of oil and its use at baptism. See J.-P. Audet, La Didachè, pp. 67-70.


30 From Tertullian, ado. Marcionem 1.1.4, it appears that Marcionite initiation consisted of baptism in water, anointing, signing with the cross, giving of milk and honey, and Eucharist.


The Early Syrian Rites

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In contrast to the early Western evolution of the liturgy of initiation outlined in the previous section, quite different developments were taking place in the Syriac-speaking and Armenian churches. We have two valuable sources that date from the third century: the Didascalia and the Acts of Judas Thomas.

The *Didascalia* (see above, pp. 90, 120-0) contains a baptismal rite which consists of the following elements: (τ) a pre-baptismal anointing of the head by the bishop involving an imposition of the hand, which is explained by analogy with the anointing of priests and kings in the OT, and by reference to the Messianic Ps. 2.6: `You are my son, today I have begotten you’; (2) an anointing of the whole body—in the case of women, performed for modesty's sake by deaconesses; followed by (3) baptism performed by bishop, presbyter or deacon (Connelly translation, ch. 6, *DBL* 12-13). No anointing or hand-laying is administered after baptism—a fact that, until recently, sent scholars on a wild goose-chase in search of the equivalent of confirmation in the early Syrian rite. The bishop's
action is said to involve the gift of the Holy Spirit (Connolly, ch. 9, *DBL* 2); but it seems that the author sees the whole rite of baptism, and not just the episcopal anointing and hand-laying, as the vehicle of the Spirit (Connelly, ch. 26, pp. 242, 246).

The *Acts of Judas Thomas* is an account of the missionary work of the apostle Thomas in eastern Syria. The work is extant in both Syriac and Greek, but it is generally believed that the original language was Syriac. The versions in the two languages represent different stages in the evolution of the text, the original of which probably goes back to the third century. Although the *Acts* contain much legendary material and show Gnostic influence, the five descriptions of baptisms that it includes probably reflect contemporary liturgical practice. In its simplest form this seems to consist of the pouring of oil over the candidate's head, preceded and accompanied by a form of epiclesis, and followed by baptism. There is no post-baptismal anointing. Neither here nor in the *Didascalia* is there any suggestion that the bishop traces the sign of the cross on the candidate's forehead with the oil. The process is called the conferring of a `mark' or `sign' (Brock and Winkler insist that the Syriac word used here, *rushma*, though translated in Greek as *sphragis*, does not mean `seal'); it seems at this stage the term refers to the whole rite rather than the anointing alone. Although it is the oil that is immediately associated with the giving of the Spirit, no distinction is made between the effects of the oil and the water, and in one instance the epiclesis is said to refer to `baptism', a term that the context shows includes both anointing and immersion (ch. 131-2; *DBL* 15, ι8). Some of the ceremonies described in the *Acts* agree with the *Didascalia* in including an anointing of the whole body (by a deaconess in the case of women) (ch. 21, *DBL* 5). However, the rites with the single anointing of the head seem the most primitive; they contain an explicit invocation of the `name' or `power' of the Messiah.3

Winkler concludes that at this stage Christian baptism was modelled on Christ's baptism in the Jordan: just as Jesus received the Spirit to become the Anointed One (the Messiah), so the Christian receives the Spirit through anointing, so entering into the `eschatological kingship of the Messiah' (p. 36). This theory has much to commend it, but one point needs explaining. If the Christian's baptism was shaped after Christ's, why was the anointing placed before baptism and not after it, since the Spirit descended on Christ after his baptism? The problem is less acute if it is granted that the gift of the Spirit is linked with the whole rite in both the *Didascalia* and the *Acts*. Brock proposed a somewhat different thesis which avoids this difficulty: he finds the model for the Christian rite in Jewish proselyte baptism (see above, pp. 73-74, 25), `with the
circumcision replaced by an anointing, the rushma, and the baptism having as its model Christ's own baptism in the Jordan' (‘The Transition’, p. 219).

Already in this period the gradual elaboration of the anointing seems to have been linked with a changing understanding of the rite. Brock suggests that the change was the result of the progressive neglect of the Jewish origins of anointing, namely circumcision and the anointing of kings, priests and prophets (‘The Transition’, p. 220). The new pre-baptismal anointing of the whole body came to be associated with the renunciation of the devil, and interpreted as a rite conferring spiritual healing or strength for the conflict against evil, while the power of conferring the Spirit became assigned to the water or to a post-baptismal anointing (cf. G. Winkler, ‘The Original Meaning of the Prebaptismal Anointing and its Implications’, pp. 37-8).

3 Ch. 2, 13; DBL 14, τ 5. See G. Winkler, ‘The Original Meaning of the Prebaptismal Anointing and its Implications’, pp. 30-1.

3 The Fourth and Fifth Centuries

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When we reach the fourth century we are presented with a great wealth of evidence concerning the sacraments of initiation. It is striking that, although (as we shall see later) great changes were made in the rites of initiation during the fourth century, the ceremonies all over the Christian world continued to have many features in common. The individual ceremonies that made up the rites of initiation were put together in different orders in different localities, and these individual ceremonies were performed in different ways with different interpretations; nevertheless many of these individual ceremonies remained recognizably the same everywhere. The ceremonies of initiation took place generally in three stages:

A Admission to cat-echumenate;
B Enrolment as a candidate and preparation for baptism;
C The rites of initiation.

**A ADMISSION TO THE CATECHUMENATE**

The regular baptism of children is attested by Origen, Tertullian, the *Apostolic Tradition*, and Cyprian in the third century, and by Asterius about 340, although the evidence does not show whether this practice was universal or whether Christian parents could without censure postpone the baptism of their children to maturer years. Towards the middle of the fourth century, however, the baptism of children, apart from emergency baptisms, seems to have become the exception. (See above, p. 125, n. 17.) Towards the end of the fourth century there begins to be a return to the practice of child-baptism: Gregory of Nazianzus recommends child-baptism (but not infant-baptism), and St Augustine, in the early fifth century, proposes a theological justification of the baptism of those who are too young to have faith. Tertullian gives reasons for the postponement of baptism: the child's sponsors are held responsible if it fails to fulfil the obligations of Christianity when it grows up; and, besides, little children are sinless, and do not require the forgiveness of sins that baptism confers. (Cf. Gregory of Nazianzus, Or. 40 on Baptism, 28 (PG 36.400); Augustine, *Ep.* 98; Tertullian, *de Bapt.*, 18, DBL 9; J.

The motives for the postponement, however, were not always so innocent: St Augustine refers to the common belief that it is best to prolong the period before baptism, so that a person may sin with the assurance that he will receive forgiveness at baptism: `let him alone, let him do as he pleases; he is not yet baptized' (*Conf.*, 1.18. Cf. Tertullian, *de Paen.*, 6; J. Jeremias, *Infant Baptism*, pp. 87-9). The less cynical would say that it was better to wait until the individual was prepared for a total conversion of life; the passionate years of youth, or a position of civic authority which might involve the taking of life, were good reasons for postponing the sacrament. The list of saints who were themselves children of good Christian parents, but were not baptized until late in life, is impressive: e.g. Ambrose, Augustine, Chrysostom, Gregory of Nazianzus (the son of a bishop), Jerome, Paulinus of Nola.

Consequently, since baptism was put off until later in life, the need was felt for an earlier ceremony that would establish a person in some looser and less privileged association with the Church. To meet this need a new significance came to be read into the ceremony of admission to the catechumenate. The word `catechumenate' is a modern one, derived from the term `hearers' (of instruction, or of the word of God) (*katéchοumenοι, audientes, auditores*), by which people who had taken this first step towards Christian membership were described (cf. T. Finn, *The Liturgy of Baptism*, p. 31). In the second half of the fourth century, as baptism was deferred, admission to the catechumenate was advanced, and seems sometimes to have been regarded less as a first preparation for baptism than as admission to a second-class membership of the Church. In some churches the ceremony seems to have had four elements: the sign of the cross traced on the candidate's forehead, salt placed on the tongue (to signify healing, preservation, and the seasoning of wisdom), the laying on of hands and an exorcism. The first two parts of the rite were often repeated: St Augustine says, `I began to receive the sign of his cross and the seasoning of his salt straight from my mother's womb' (*Conf.*, 1.18); the salt seems to have been a substitute for the Eucharist. The catechumens were entitled to attend the eucharistic assembly and hear the sermon, but they were dismissed after the prayer offered for them during the Prayer of the Faithful, and so were not present at the eucharistic rites themselves. (Cf. *A p. Cont.*, ed. Funk, 8.6.14; and on all this section AIR 4-7; DBL 99-100.)

Little is known about the instruction given in the catechumenate. The length of three years is attested by the *Apostolic Tradition* and other sources. Dujarier contends that the increasing complexity of the
immediate preparations for baptism in the fourth century was matched by a decline in the importance of earlier parts of the catechumenate.2

B ENROLMENT AS A CANDIDATE AND PREPARATION FOR BAPTISM

As early as Tertullian's time, it was considered appropriate to confer baptism at the feasts of Easter or Pentecost, although the sacrament could also be administered with less solemnity on other days; one such in Cappadocia was the Epiphany. However the baptismal catecheses of Cyril, Ambrose, Chrysostom and Theodore (see pp. 91-5) assume no date other than Easter. The following process can be reconstructed, mainly from their writings:

(τ) Those who wished to be baptized had to give in their names at least forty days in advance. Those who wished to be baptized at Easter had to do this at the beginning of Lent (see pp. 465–6), and it was to such newly enrolled that Cyril of Jerusalem addressed his Procatechesis; when people were baptized at Pentecost a similar forty-day period seems to have been required (cf. Siricius, Letter to Himerius, PL 13.1134-5). The ceremony was called `enrolment' (onomatographia), and the phrase te enrol' (onoma dounai, nomen dare) gained a specific meaning in reference to it (cf. Cyril, Procat., 1, DBL 24; Ambrose, de Sac., 3.12, AIR 126). In Jerusalem, and probably in other churches too, this enrolment took place in two stages. Egeria (45, DBL 41-2) recounts how the candidates give their names to the presbyter before Lent; they then have to appear at the beginning of Lent with their sponsors (i.e. godparents, a godfather for a man, a godmother for a woman) before the bishop, who takes evidence of the candidates' behaviour and, if he is satisfied, registers their names. (On Egeria, see pp. 95-6.) The enrolled (apographentes) were now called `applicants' (competentes), `chosen' (electi or `destined for illumination' (phótizomenoi)

(2) The candidate underwent repeated exorcisms.3 The details of this dramatic ceremony probably varied in different churches, but at least some of the following actions would be performed: the candidate stood barefoot on sackcloth of goat's hair, then knelt, with face veiled, head bowed, hands outstretched, and outer garment removed; one of the ministers breathed on the candidates, to fill them with a purifying fear and to drive away the devil; they heard the words by which they were freed from Satan's power. The exorcism, which had first taken place when they were admitted to the cat-echumenate, was repeated several
times after the scrutinies, daily, in fact, according to the *Ap. Trad.*, 20.3 (*DBL* 4; cf. *Egeria*, 46.1; *AIR* 8–11, *DBL* 42).

(3) When the series of exorcisms was well advanced, the candidates were subjected to scrutinies—`scrutinized by exorcisms', in the words of Leo the Great. The meaning of this frequently mentioned rite is obscure, but is probably given by Hippolytus, who required the bishop himself to perform the last exorcism in order to `be certain that [the candidate] is purified'; if he observes that any candidates are not purified, because `the strange spirit has remained' with them, their baptism is to be postponed (*Ap. Trad.* 20.3, *DBL* 4). Augustine congratulates the candidates whom he has `ascertained' to be free from unclean spirits (Sermon 216, *DBL* 02). In Rome at the beginning of the fifth century the scrutiny seems to have been performed three times (*Canones ad Gallus*, 8; *DBL* 229).

(4) Throughout Lent the candidates were expected to attend daily instructions. For the first part of Lent (the first five weeks, according to Egeria) the instruction dealt with Scripture, the resurrection and faith; in Milan, according to Ambrose, moral questions were discussed on the basis of OT readings. The extant eighteen catecheses of Cyril do not include the expositions of Scripture; perhaps the other twenty-two or so needed to make up the Lenten number of about forty were less formal and consequently were not preserved.

( ) In the second part of Lent the instruction focused on the creed and in some places the Lord's Prayer. In some Western churches the creed was taught in three stages, called the handing-over, explanation and repetition of the creed (*traditio, explanatio, redditio symboli*). The first of these ceremonies took place one Sunday towards the middle of Lent: the catechumens, who up till now had not been allowed to hear the creed, now had to repeat it phrase by phrase after the bishop or catechist or sponsor; they were not allowed to have it in writing. In Rome this ceremony took place on the third Sunday, in Egeria's account on the fifth; on at least one occasion St Ambrose performed it as late as the Sunday before Easter (cf. *Egeria*, 46.3, *DBL* 42-3; Ambrose, Ep. 20.4).

The handing over of the creed was followed by the explanation of its clauses. Sometimes this was done in the same sermon in which the candidates were taught to recite the creed, as in Ambrose's sermon entitled *Explanatio Symboli*; Cyril, however, spread the instruction on the creed over thirteen sermons (*Cat.*, 6–18).

Ambrose tells his candidates that they will have to repeat (*reddere*) the creed, but he does not add any details about the ceremony of repetition

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(Ex. Symb., 9). Egeria describes this ceremony as it took place on the seventh Sunday (46.5). Cyril and others speak of the candidate's need to learn the creed by heart, without saying anything of a reditio (Cat., 5.12, DBL 27). St Augustine, in a sermon, fills in details of the ceremony of reditio; he may also be referring to it in his description of the convert Victorinus making his profession of faith "on a rostrum, in the sight of the faithful people".

Augustine (de Symboło τ) speaks of a similar handing over of the Lord's Prayer the Sunday after the traditio symboλi (this prayer, like the creed, was also kept secret), with a reditio the following Sunday; Theodore (Hom. Cat., 19) speaks of the traditio without mentioning the reditio: both teachers provide an explanatio of the prayer. Cyril and Ambrose, however, make their explanation of the prayer part of their exposition after baptism of the ceremonies of the Eucharist, in which the Lord's Prayer is included; they seem to have had no formal traditio of the prayer.

(6) The candidates had to observe the fast of forty days; in some places the fast applied not only to food, but also to the legitimate use of marriage. The pleasure of the bath was also renounced, but the candidates were allowed a bath on Maundy Thursday to make themselves decent for baptism (cf. Augustine, de Fide et Operibus, 8; Ep. 54.10; Ambrose, de Eli. et lei., 79; Ap. Trad., 20.5, DBL 4).

C THE FINAL RITES OF INITIATION

These rites comprised many ceremonies, but no church performed them all, and the order varied. One can, however, distinguish between preparatory rites, centred on the renunciation of the devil, and baptism itself with its accompanying ceremonies. At Easter (much less is known of the rites at other times) the celebration took place in the context of the Easter vigil, which was kept by all the faithful, and not only by the candidates for baptism. Most sources indicate that the rites took place in the night between Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday, though Chrý sostom seems to be speaking of preparatory rites that take place on the Friday (cf. AIR 167, II. 34). In the Ap. Trad. (21.1; AIR 265, DBL 4) the ceremonies begin at cockcrow.

(τ) The rites begin in an outside room of the baptistery. The subsequent entry into the baptistery thus becomes itself a rite (cf. Cyril, Myst. Cat., 1.2, II; 2.2; Ambrose, de Sac., 1.4, t0; AIR 68, 73-4, 101, 103; DBL 27-9, 128-9).

(2) The Opening (apertio) was a ceremony known only in the West. The
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bishops touch the candidate's nostrils and ears, repeating the words of Mark 7.34 in Aramaic and Latin: "Effeta, that is, be opened": the purpose of the rite was to confer understanding of the baptismal ceremonies and a share in the "good odour of Christ" (Ambrose, de Sac., 1.2 quoting 2 Cor. 2.15; AIR 100; DBL 128).

(3) Stripping, which was a practical necessity for the total anointing and the immersion, was made a ceremony in its own right, recalling Christ's naked entry into life and departure from it, the discarding of the old man, and a return to the innocence of paradise (cf. Cyril, Myst. Cat., 2.2; AIR 74; DBL 29; Ambrose, in Ps. 61, 32). In the Syrian rites, as early as the third century deaconesses attended to the women for the sake of decency (cf. Didascalia, 16, Connolly, p. 146; DBL 13).

(4) A pre-baptismal anointing of the whole body with olive oil. In the Ap. Trad. (21.10; AIR 266; DBL 5) this anointing constitutes an exorcism; indeed the oil is called "oil of exorcism". In later rites the connection with exorcism remains, even though it is less explicit. Ambrose, for example (de Sac., AIR 101; DBL 128), recalls the anointing of an athlete, and sees the rite as a preparation for the struggle against the devil. Cyril (Myst. Cat., 2.3; AIR 75; DBL 29), while recalling the power of the anointing to drive away the devil and remove traces of sin, adds that it also signifies a share in Christ, the true olive. In Chrysostom and Theodore, however, this anointing occurs after the anointing of the head.

(5) Renunciation of the devil. The basic form of this ceremony is the renunciation of Satan, his followers, and everything connected with him. Like the foregoing anointing, therefore, it provides the negative condition necessary for the receiving of the new life of Christ in baptism. These preliminary rites emphasize the negative aspect of baptism, the death to sin, and the struggle against it.

The basic form of the renunciation is elaborated in various ways:

(a) The list of the devil's following is variously expressed. The simplest form is that given by Tertullian (de Spectaculis, 4) "the devil and his following (pompae) and his angels". (DBL wrongly reads "works" instead of "angels".) There are, however, more elaborate forms, such as that of Theodore: "Satan, all his angels, all his works, all his service, all his vanity and all his worldly enticements" (How. Cat., 13, synopsis; AIR 176; DBL 47 gives a shorter form).

(b) In the East the candidate addresses Satan ("I renounce you, Satan ..."), with the exception of the formula given by Theodore of Mopsuestia, in which there is the plain statement, "I renounce Satan, all his angels ..." In the West the renunciation takes the form of question
and answer: `Do you renounce Satan [or the devil]?' `I do renounce him',

(c) In some Eastern rites the candidate faced west in order to address Satan, the Lord of darkness. It is sometimes said that the westward-facing position and the subsequent turn to the east were not adopted in the Latin Church; however, it is implied in Ambrose’s description of the candidate turning to the east for the following ceremony of the contract with Christ.'

(6) Contract with Christ (`adhesion'). In many rites, after the renunciation the candidate turns to the east and pledges his loyalty to Christ. Sometimes this pledge takes the form of a direct declaration: `I enter into your service, O Christ' (cf. Chrysostom, Bapt. Inst., Harkins 2.21; AIR 166; DBL 40); the verb is suntattomai (noun suntaxis), in contrast with the verb `I renounce' (apotattomai, noun apotaxis). In other places the pledge consists of a Trinitarian act of faith (cf. Cyril, Mist. Cat., 1.9; Theo. Mops., Hom. Cat., 13, synopsis; AIR 73, 176; DBL 28). This act of faith, even though it does not involve the use of the verb suntattomai, can still be described as a suntaxis (cf. Cyril, Myst. Cat. 1.8; AIR 72; DBL 28).

(7) Blessing of the baptismal water. Although in an emergency ordinary water could presumably be used, proper practice required that the water should be consecrated; indeed it was commonly held that `not all waters have a curative power; only that water has it which has the grace of Christ' (Ambrose, de Sac., τ. τ 5; AIR τ 05). The rite of consecration could have three parts:

(a) An exorcism of the water, which was necessary because, in element to ruin men' (de Rapt., 5; cf. Ambrose, de Sac., 1.15, 18; AIR 105-6; DBL 129).

(b) An epiclesis, by which the power of God is called down upon the water. More is said elsewhere in this book about the eucharistic epiclesis (see pp. 215—16) baptismal epiclesis, the prayer to God (the Father) that the Spirit may descend on the water occurs as early as Tertullian (de Rapt., 4; DBL 7). According to Cyril, `ordinary water, having received the invocation of the Holy Spirit and of Christ and of the Father, acquires the power of holiness' (Cat. 3.3). Sarapion, however, gives his characteristic epiclesis not of the Spirit but of the Word (see p. 239); the Father is asked that the Word may descend on the water and fill it with the Holy Spirit, so that the baptized may become spiritual (Euchologium, 19(7); DBL 83). In the Ap. Const., the epiclesis, like those over the oil and ointment (myron), is set in a prayer of thanksgiving (7.43-4; cf. 7.27; DBL 33-4).
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setting of the epiclesis became most common in the Eucharist and the ordination service.

(c) *A sign of the cross* is associated with the water; perhaps the bishop traced the sign in the water with his hand or dipped his cross into it (cf. *AIR* 24), or poured oil into it crosswise (cf. the Armenian rite in *DBL* 64).

(8) *Immersion.* In the fourth and fifth centuries the fonts were like baths let into the floor of the baptisteries: a few steps led down into the water. Frequently the water was constantly running into and out of the font. Many fonts were too shallow and confined to permit of easy total immersion. Contemporary representations of the baptism of Christ point to the same conclusion, for they normally show the water reaching below the waist, sometimes scarcely covering Christ's ankles (see plate 5). Theodore of Mopsuestia describes how the bishop placed his hand on the candidates' heads and pushed them under the water (*Hom. Cat.*, 4, synopsis; *AIR* 89; *DBL* 49); but the iconographical and archaeological evidence suggests that in some places the bishop poured water over the candidate standing in the water of the font, or made water from the inlet pipe run over their head (cf. J. G. Davies, *Architectural Setting*, pp. 25-6).

The font of Dura-Europos (see p. 52 and plate 4) was rectangular, and this seems to have been the earliest shape, once the practice was abandoned of baptizing in streams in the open air. Cruciform fonts of various shapes have also survived. By the fifth century, eight-sided fonts set within baptisteries of the same shape became common; the shape was taken to symbolize the eighth day (after the seven days of creation), namely the day of the resurrection. The later of the two fourth-century octagonal fonts in Milan (see above, p. 95) has claims to have been built by St Ambrose in the first octagonal baptistery, but there are reasons for thinking it may be later.10

It seems to have been the universal practice to immerse or infuse the candidate in water three times, in conjunction with the naming of the three Persons of the Trinity. The Antiochene Church in the fourth century used the formula: 'N. is baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit'. In the West, however, the words took the form of a profession of faith by means of question and answer: 'Do you believe in God the Father almighty? 'I believe'. This exchange was followed by the first immersion; the process was repeated for the Son and the Holy Spirit. The questions were sometimes elaborated into a rudimentary creed. This is the third point in the ceremonies at which an act of faith could be made; the other two were the repetition of the creed and the contract with Christ.11
(9) An anointing of the head with myron (the symbolism of myron will be discussed later). As Ambrose (*de Sac.*, 3.1; *AIR* 120; *DBL* 130) described the rite, the oil is poured over the head after the old Syrian fashion. Chrysostom and Theodore speak instead of the tracing of the seal (the sign of the cross) on the forehead, but are traditional enough to place the rite before baptism, even before the anointing of the body. The rite is said to symbolize priesthood (Ambrose, *de Myst.*, 30; *DBL* 132), or eternal life (Ambrose, *de Sac.*, 2.24; *AIR* 119; *DBL* 130), or membership of Christ’s flock or army (Theo. Mops., *Hom. Cat.*, 13.17–20; *AIR* 186–8; *DBL* 47–8) (presumably because of the mark traced on the forehead); some preachers attribute to this rite also the power of warding off the devil.

(10) The mashing of the feet. In many churches in both East and West, when the candidates had come up from the font, their feet were washed by the bishop, assisted by the clergy. The reading of John 13 linked this ceremony with the Washing of the Feet at the Last Supper. In most places the purpose seems to have been to remind the neophytes to perform works of humble charity; but Ambrose insisted that the rite had a sacramental effect, namely to protect the new Christian from the tendency to sin inherited from Adam (*de Sac.*, 3.7; *AIR* 123–4; *de Myst.*, 32; *DBL* 132).

(11) After the immersion and the washing, the candidate was dressed in a white garment, as a sign of innocence, and a symbol of the wedding-garment. Ambrose suggests a connection with the transfigured Christ's white robe (*de Myst.* 34); J. Daniélou sees the baptismal garment as an eschatological symbol and as a priestly vestment (*Bible and Liturgy*, pp. 51-2). The neophytes wore their robes for the whole of Easter week (‘the shining week’), changing back into their ordinary clothes on Low Sunday (*in depositis albis*).

(12) The gift of the Spirit, which later evolved into the Western rite of confirmation, took place under many different forms (see pp. 149–50). According to Tertullian, the rite for the conferring of this gift took the form of a laying on of hands and a blessing; in Ap. *Trad.*, the bishop also pours consecrated oil, lays his hand again on the neophytes' heads, seals them on the forehead and gives them the kiss of peace. Cyprian speaks of a laying on of hands and a sealing. Ambrose simply speaks of a ‘spiritual sealing’ through which the Holy Spirit is received with his seven gifts, though from another passage it appears that the sealing involves the tracing of the sign of the cross, and that an anointing also is involved (*de Sac.*, 3.8–10; 6.6–7; *AIR* 124–5; 151; *DBL* 132).
In the Eastern church, however, the rite for the gift of the Spirit is not so consistently located, nor indeed always easy to identify. An account has been given above of the early Syrian rite, in which there was no post-baptismal anointing, and the giving of the Spirit seems to have been linked with the rite as a whole (pp. 127–9). There is, however, a second understanding to be found in some Syrian sources, to the effect that it is the pre-baptismal anointing that confers the Spirit. This is true of the Ap. Const. (7.22; cf. 3.16; 7.42; DBL 30-3; see above p. 90), where it is this anointing, performed with ordinary oil, not the immersion or the post-baptismal sealing with myron, which gives a `share of the Spirit’ (though `if there be neither oil nor myron, the water is sufficient’). The fifth-century east Syrian Narsai describes the oil, which like a circumcision-knife is used to mark the seal on the forehead, as the `drug of the Spirit’; it is followed by an anointing of the whole body to protect the candidate against the demons and the passions, but there is no anointing after baptism (Homily 22; DBL 52-54).

There is also a third Syrian understanding of the rite, which is apparent in the sermons of Chrysostom (Bapt. Inst., Harkins 2.22-6: AIR 166-9; DBL 40–1). His rite contains both a sealing with myron and an anointing of the whole body with oil before baptism, but neither of these ceremonies is connected with the gift of the Spirit, except that the oil is called `spiritual'. There is no anointing or sealing after baptism; it is in baptism itself that `by words of the bishop and by his hand the presence of the Holy Spirit flies down upon you'. It seems that this laying-on of hands is none other than the bishop's action in pushing the candidate down under the water. Proclus of Constantinople gives a rite which follows the same pattern as Chrysostom's, and he too associates the Spirit with the immersion: `... how you lay aside your corruption in the font, which is a tomb; how, made new, you rise again to life in the Spirit' (AT: Wenger, p. τ τ; Harkins, p. 228).

A fourth Syrian version of the rite appears in Theodore of Mopsuestia. He comments, like Chrysostom, on the pre-baptismal sealing of the forehead and total anointing without linking them especially with the Holy Spirit, except to say that, after the sealing, `You may receive the rest of the sacraments and so acquire the full armour of the Spirit' (Hom. Cat., 13.20; cf. 13.17-19; 14.8; AIR 186-8, 194; DBL 48). Theodore seems to connect the gift of the Spirit with a sealing with oil after baptism (Hom. Cat., 14.27; AIR 207-9; DBL 49-50); but this ceremony is not said to confer the Holy Spirit, but to be a sign that the Holy Spirit came upon the candidate at the moment of immersion (DBL’s quotation ends before these words). I have presented arguments elsewhere (AIR 208-9, n. 65) for this view, which contradicts those suggested by L. L.
Mitchell (who maintains that the whole of this section in Theodore is a later interpolation, perhaps by the sixth-century Syriac translator) and G. W. H. Lampe (who thinks that there is no ceremony of sealing here, and that Theodore is speaking of anointing and sealing in a metaphorical sense). 19

The rite of Cyril of Jerusalem (where Syriac was one of the languages) provides a fifth Syrian type. It is true that the rite he knew when he wrote the *Cats.* in the middle of the fourth century seems to have been like that of Chrysostom, in which the Holy Spirit is imparted in the water rather than in a post-baptismal rite (`the water cleanses the body, and the Spirit seals the soul': *Cat.* 3.4; cf. 3.14). But by the end of his episcopate in 387 he had adopted a more elaborate form of the Western pattern; he describes a post-baptismal anointing with *myron* for the giving of the Spirit not only on the forehead, but also on the ears, nostrils and breast (Myst. Cat. 3.4; *AIR* 81-2; *DBL* 30).

There is no unanimity among the Fathers about the effect of the gift of the Spirit. Some link the gift with strength for the fight against the devil and purification from sin (cf. Cyril, Myst. Cat., 3.4; *AIR* 82); some stress the sevenfold gifts of the Spirit (cf. Ambrose, *de Sac.*, 3.8; *AIR* 124-5; *DBL* 131); some treat it eschatologically, seeing it as an anticipation of heaven (cf. Theo. Mops., *Hom. Cat.*, 14.27; *AIR* 209); some regard it as a `completion' or `perfecting' of baptism (cf. Ambrose, *de Sac.*, 3.8; Theo. Mops., *Hom. Cat.*, 14.19; *AIR* 124, 202). But until confirmation became separated from baptism there was little need to define exactly the nature of the new grace which was added by the gift of the Spirit (see pp. 149-50).

As has been seen, in some churches the Spirit was given in a rite of sealing with a scented unguent called *myron* or chrism. In connection with the pre-baptismal sealing, Chrysostom explains its symbolism as follows: `The chrism is a mixture of olive oil and *myron*; the *myron* is for the bride, the oil for the athlete' (*Rapt. Inst.*, Harkins 11.27: AT; *DBL* 37). Irenaeus is the first to mention an anointing with *myron* or balsam in describing a Gnostic rite: `Then they anoint (myrizousi) the initiate with balsam juice, for they maintain that this *myron* is a sign of the universal good odour' (*AH* 1.21.3; see above p. 120). There is no unambiguous evidence of its use in orthodox circles until the time of Cat. 5) and the *Ap. Const.* (7.27, 44; *DBL* 34).

In both East and West the rite associated with the gift of the Holy Spirit could be performed only by the bishop. Innocent I traced this belief back to Acts 8:
Concerning the signing of children, it is clear that this may not be performed by anyone except the bishop. This is evident, not only from the Church's practice, but also from the passage in the Acts of the Apostles which states that Peter and John were sent to confer the Holy Spirit on those who were already baptized.

(13) From the second century baptism was in some areas called 'illumination'. It was appropriate therefore that the neophyte should be given a lighted candle or lamp to carry. The custom is described by Proclus of Constantinople in the first half of the fifth century. Pseudo-Ambrose also refers to the ceremony, and there seem to be allusions to it in earlier writers.

(14) Initiation was now completed by the entry into the church of the neophytes, dressed in white and carrying their candles. They now for the first time attended the whole of the Eucharist, during which they made their first communion. In some churches in the West, after receiving the eucharistic bread and wine, the neophytes also received a drink of milk and honey. This was said to symbolize the promised land, baby-food and the sweetness of Christ's word.

In Milan, however, there was one privilege of the faithful in which the neophyte was not allowed to share until Low Sunday, namely, taking part in the procession of people bringing their offerings to the altar (Ambrose, in Ps. τ 8, Prologue 2).

A striking feature of the celebration of the initiation-sacraments of the fourth and early fifth centuries was the practice of shrouding in secrecy the facts concerning baptism, the Eucharist, the creed, and the Lord's Prayer. Scholars were to give to this practice the name of disciplina arcani. Although its roots may consist of such NT texts as 'Do not give dogs what is holy; and do not throw your pearls before swine' (Matt. 7.6, RSV), there is not much evidence for its systematic observance until the middle of the fourth century. Then examples occur with great frequency, which show that the practice was observed all over the Church, in some places almost ostentatiously. A preacher will hint at a secret topic, and then break off with such words as 'Those who have been initiated will know what I mean' (cf. AIR 50-4).

The disciplina arcani was closely linked with the custom of withholding instruction on certain matters until a catechumen had given in his name for baptism and become a competens; in some places, as we have seen, instruction on baptism itself and the Eucharist was not given until these sacraments had already been received. The catechumen had to leave the assembly after the Liturgy of the Word, before the Eucharist proper began.
Initiation

(seep. 228). Candidates for baptism were frequently reminded of the need to observe the secrecy very strictly (cf. Cyril, Procat. 12; DBL 26). Some people were extremely scrupulous in their observance of it; for example, Epiphanius of Salamis feels it necessary to describe the Last Supper in these cryptic terms: `he stood up at the Supper, took these things and gave thanks, saying: "This is my this"' (Ancoratus, 57; PG 43.117).

Besides reverence, the desire to arouse the catechumen's curiosity seems to have been a motive. It is also possible that there was the wish to imitate the secrecy of the Greek and Roman mystery-religions (see above, pp. 83–4). It is certain that at this time there appears in baptismal sermons an emphasis on the awe (an emotion typical of mystery-religions) which the Christian mysteries of baptism and the Eucharist aroused;23 and it was not long since Constantine had provided the Church with Christian mystery-sites at Jerusalem, the place where the Christian God (like Persephone at Eleusis) died and rose again. Jerusalem indeed was the source from which several liturgical innovations seem to have spread (cf. Dix, Shape, pp. 350–3).

Obviously the disciplina arcani could flourish only at a time when infant baptism was not normally practised. If children were let in on the secret, it could not remain a secret for long. Consequently from the middle of the fifth century, as infant baptism became normal, the practice of mystagogic catechesis and the disciplina arcani became redundant and lapsed, even for adult converts.

\[\text{\textsuperscript{1}See above, p. 122. P. F. Bradshaw, Essays in Early Initiation (AC/G 1988), pp. 10–2.}\]

\[\text{2 History of the Catechumenate, pp. 94–7.}\]

\[\text{3 On the exorcisms, scrutinies and renunciation of the devil, see H. A. Kelly, The Devil at Baptism.}\]

\[\text{4 Egeria, Pereg., 46.2: `During the forty days he goes through the whole Bible, beginning with Genesis, and first relating the literal meaning of each passage, then interpreting its spiritual meaning. He also teaches them at this time all about the resurrection and the faith' (trans. J. Wilkinson, Egeria's Travels, p. 144; cf. Ambrose, de Myst., 1). But the fifth-century Old Armenian Lectionary, which prescribes almost exactly the same readings for the pre- and post-baptismal catechesis as Cyril, with one exception gives no readings for these twenty-two pre-baptismal catecheses that are missing from Cyril's collection. This suggests that in Jerusalem the instruction on these other days did not take the form of a systematic exposition of the faith based on a reading (cf. J. Wilkinson, Egeria's Travels, pp. 253–77). Examples of Lenten catechesis are Ambrose, de Elsa et Ieiunio and de Abraha, and Augustine, Serm., 212–6. On church orders and baptismal catechesis, see pp. 89–92.}\]

\[\text{5 De Symbolo, Miscellanea Agostiniana, cd. Morin, 1.449–50; Conf., 8.5. See other quotations from St Augustine in DBL 103. A. Wenger, Jean Chrysostome:}\]
Huit Catéchèses Baptismales (SC 50), p. 94, suggests that Chrysostom alludes to a repetition of the creed on Maundy Thursday (which would be consistent with the fact that Ambrose taught the creed on the previous Sunday); cf. Chrysostom, *Bapt. Inst.*, Harkins, 5 = DBL 36.

6 East: Cyril, *Myst. Cat.*, 1.4; Chrysostom, *Bapt. Inst.*, Harkins, 2.20 (but see 11.19); Theodore, *Hom. Cat.*, 13, synopsis; AIR 69, 166, 176; DBL 28, 39, 47. West: Ambrose, *de Sac.*, 1.5; AIR 101; DBL 128. The *Ap. Trod.* (21.9; AIR z66; DBL 5) in the third century used the vocative form: so did Ambrose in another place (Hexameron, 4), possibly under the influence of an Eastern source. Jerome also gives a formula in which the devil is addressed in the vocative, but this probably represents Palestinian usage (Ep. 130.7, 14).

7 *De Myst.*, 7; DBL 131. For the oriental practice of facing west to make the renunciation, cf. Cyril, *Myst. Cat.*, 1.4; AIR 69; DBL 28.


Fonts; these words could be a description of a rectangular font, which resembled a sarcophagus or a tomb hollowed out of the stone wall of a catacomb, or else the free-standing circular, hexagonal or octagonal baptister, resembling a mausoleum, in which Western fonts were generally set. In a poem attributed to Ambrose the symbolism of the eight sides is explained; but it is notable that the baptismal creeds: J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds* (3rd edn, Longman 1972), pp. 30-52. Cf. p. 139. In *Ap. Trad.*, 21.19 (DBL 6) the anointing at this point is performed with the `oil of thanksgiving', in contrast with the `oil of exorcism'.


14 For a list of churches in which this rite was practised, cf. AIR 27. For St Augustine's practice, see DBL 104. In some of these places it is possible that John 13 was read without any accompanying ceremony of washing. It has been suggested that the little fonts that have been found beside the main fonts in some churches were for this ceremony (cf. J. G. Davies, *Architectural Setting*, p. 26). But a contrary view is expressed in AIR 28.


τ 7 See above, pp. 122-3. However, if the Latin text of the *Ap. Trad.* is to be trusted, the candidate is already regenerated by the Holy Spirit in the font.
8 For the use of chrism for the sealing, and the refusal to allow anyone but the bishop to seal, cf. Innocent I, Letter to Decentius of Gubbio 3.6 (PL 20.554-5). See L. L. Mitchell, *Baptismal Anointing*, pp. 93-6. Soldiers in the Roman army were sometimes given a seal, which was a cross-shaped tattoo or brand on the forehead (see plate 6).


20 Ep. 25, ad Decentium, 3.6; DBL 229-30. However, this is probably a misinterpretation of Acts; see E. J. Yarnold, ‘Initiation: Sacrament and Experience’, in K. Stevenson, ed., *Liturgy Reshaped* (London, SPCK 1982), pp. 21-5. The newly baptized were called ‘children’ or ‘infants’ because they had been reborn, whatever their age in years.


22 Cf. Ap. Trad. 23.2-3; AIR 269 (there is mention also of another chalice containing water); Tertullian (Adv. Marc., 1.14.3). The rite was still practised in Rome in the sixth century: cf. John the Deacon, *Ad Senarium*, 1 Lövine Sacramentary. Mohlberg, p. 26; Feltoe, p. 25; DBL 153-4. There is a possible reference also in Ambrose, *de Sac. 5*. 5; AIR 147.


4 The West from about AD 500 to the Reformation

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ROMAN


Lietzmann, H., *Das Sacramentarium Gregorianum nach dem Aachener Urexemplar* (commonly called the *Hadrianum*). Münster 1921.
