

Ecclēzial Sacraments and Sacramentals



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Confirmation

In the Early Church an anointing with Holy Chrism accompanied the rite of Baptism. This was all typically performed by a Bishop. With the expansive growth of the Church Bishops were unable to be in as many places as before. The East kept the tradition of keeping the two combined as one ritual but enacted by a priest, whereas the West kept the anointing reserved for a Bishop but then needed to separate it from Baptism. Over time, this separate sacramental rite developed in usage as a form of adult declaration of faith. This is when the baptized child has an opportunity to claim the Faith for themselves. It has traditionally been seen as a strengthening sacrament.

Ordination

Ordination is the setting apart of particular people to serve God and his Church primarily sacramentally. Ordination gives Priests the grace or "power" (in terms of ability) to "perform" the sacraments. It's scriptural basis is found in the commissioning of the Apostles in John 20:21-23. As Jesus appointed his Apostles, and those Apostles appointed successors who became Bishops, so also Priests and Deacons are ordained in the line of succession. Deacons, however, though ordained sacramentally do not have primarily a sacramental role.

Marriage/Matrimony

The Sacrament in Marriage is coming together of a man and woman who represent the union of Christ and his Church (Eph 5:32). The couple is the physical sign of the spiritual grace. Although all cultures have marriage, Christian marriage is considered a sacrament in that unites to Christians in a special way. Marriage finds itself grounded in creation as an aspect of God joining two sides of his creation into unity. It, in a sense, expresses God himself in unity and diversity by the coming together of male and female into one. Sex is only mentioned positively in the context of marriage and must be seen only within those bounds.

A biblical, systematic Theology of marriage must start with the first family in Genesis chapter one. The first thing to notice is that Marriage and communal kinship is a ideal state. The LORD saw that the sate of aloneness in Adam was "not good" (Gen 2:18) and so he was given a Woman. Several observations can be then made about Marriage from the creation order. First that Marriage is a natural and good state created by God. Second that spouses are a gift from God, and so in a sense are sacramental: being a form of grace, or unmerited gift, given to humanity. Next, there is no Marriage ceremony proper, but God created the Woman and brought her to the Man. (Gen 2:22) There is

also the implication that the Man and Woman become united in a special way, and become “one flesh”. (Gen 2:24) In this idealized state, Marriage is a special union between a Man and a Woman through the gracious provision of God.

In the time of Abraham and the Patriarchs there are examples of different ways of handling Marriage. Even in the way a wife is received, Sometimes wives were bought as in the case of Jacob working for Rachael. (Gen 29:20) Many times it was arranged by the Parents or under their responsibility. Both Abraham for Isaac (Gen 24:1-4) and Hagar for Ishmael (Gen 21:21) the parents, either Father or Mother, took this duty in making sure their progeny had a spouse, however it did not mean that on some level a certain emotional love was not attached, but this seems to be more a modern concept of being needed whereas the ancient world considered love more of a choice. In all cases Marriage is a commitment of a man and a woman, however it was not always the case that only one woman was in view. Polygamy was common and does not seem to be condemned during this age, even in the Law Kings are commanded not to take many wives, but it does not forbid taking of more than one.

The Law in Leviticus gives several guidelines to Marriage and Sex. First, adultery is prohibited, (Ex 20:14) and second incest is forbidden. (Lev 18:6-18) Adultery must itself be defined by Marriage, yet the Law gives no real laws regulating Marriage itself. At this time this was normally by betrothal and thus was more a matter of parental consent than of the two persons. Instead the Law forbids certain kinds of sexual unions and mandates certain conditions whereby Marriage is required. The laws against incest are against sexual relations with any close relatives, and although like the law against adultery only the man’s perspective is mentioned the implication is that it applies for both man and woman. Times where marriage is required are in cases of seduction the man is required to marry a virgin if she was not betrothed to anyone (Ex 22:16) and in cases to protect the woman by requiring a kinsman to marry a woman who has lost her husband. This kinsman marriage idea was done normally by a brother of the deceased husband. (Deut 25:5-10) Notice that in this case it is possible that the OT Law actually would command polygamy in cases where it was required for a man to fulfill his duty as a brother in law. Divorce in the OT was allowed under some conditions, (Deut 24:1-4) and the wife allowed to remarry someone else only. The conditions for divorce are not very stringent and this is one case where the NT actually makes a OT law stricter by Jesus. Where Jewish tradition had made divorce too easy, Jesus declared even the OT Law was not ideal and only a provision for sinful people. (Matt 19:1-9)

In the New Testament, Jesus uses similar concepts in speaking on marriage in Matthew 19; noting that in Marriage the man and woman become one flesh. That Marriage is a great responsibility that not everyone can attain to and, as already cited, condemns the divorce practice of his day. Yet with all of the moral teaching of Jesus, he attended a wedding ceremony (John 2:1-10) and did not critique any aspect of it, making a ceremony itself a culturally relative event. What mattered to Jesus was a commitment

till death between a man and woman whereby they actually became as one person in some sense. Paul, following the tradition of Jesus' teaching, condemns sexual immorality (1 Cor 6:18) and in 1 Corinthians 7 puts tight reigns on divorce and places sex as a vital part of marriage.

Based on the conceptual level of an ideal marriage state as a committed, lifelong relationship between a man and a woman, and based on this survey of scriptural passages we can draw a few universals and some guidelines.

In the case of immorality, it is most likely that the immorality is still being defined by OT standards when used by Jesus and Paul, such that these standards are then a universal norm for all Christians. These standards would forbid incest as defined by the OT and adultery as any sex outside of this union of man and woman.

Divorce is definitely looked down on as a corruption of the ideal, and only in extreme cases, such as marital unfaithfulness, it to be initiated. Due to being an idealized state as the goal of Marriage and adultery being a harmful breach of this commitment it is possible to argue that in other cases such as physical or mental abuse divorce is also an option. This is to appeal to a higher morality of protecting life and quality of life.

Finally, although a ceremony or ritual may not be required to make a marriage valid, it is good and useful for several reasons. First it declares the marriage publicly, and in some sense it is healthy to have the community as part of the accountability of the Marriage. Second it makes sure that everyone in a community, both believers and non-believers know that a man and woman are married so that their sexuality will always be above reproach to the community. Ceremony and ritual are also good things that enable physical people to place physical markers in their lives and many strengthen the commitment of the action the ceremony was taken to signify.

Unction

Unction finds its basis in James 5:14. Over time this rite was seen as only for the deathly ill, and could only be received once. During the Middle Ages this rite was combined with a last Eucharist (called *viaticum*) and a final confession to make what was termed "last rites". It has undergone a bit of a revival and is now seen more as a rite of healing than of dying.

Absolution/Confession/Penance

Penance was the old word for confession. This was due to the vulgate's translation of the Greek for "repent". Jesus gave his Apostles the power to forgive sins in John 20:21-23.

"Sin" and "forgiveness" are more than forensic and covenantal, they are also relational, communal, and ontological. Relational in that we have a relationship with God, so sin for a Christian does not "damn" them, but it does hurt this relationship. Sin is communal in that we really are all connected as the Body of Christ. Sickness in one member effects the others, and sin for a Christian is not just a individual matter against God, but a sin against the entire community. Ontologically, sin is not just a legal breaking of God's law but an actual corruption in the person. This is why not only do we need imputed righteousness, but also righteousness infused into our souls to make us truly righteous, not just as a "legal fiction" but in actuality.

Relationally: the Priest represents God and so provides a sacramental way of confession our sins to God and hearing his forgiveness. In this sense the Anglican tradition has said "all may, none should, and some must". Confession is encouraged and helpful, but not mandated. It is sometimes important to have to confess your sins to a person, so as not to pretend to be confessing them to God but actually only be talking to yourself.

Communally: the Priest also represents the Church, and so when the priest says "I absolve you", then you are pardoned in connection with the Church Body, this is what is left from must of the Early Church's method of discipline for members.

Ontologically: Sin "wounds" the soul, and sacramental absolution brings healing in that area, infusing the soul with grace, and when co-operated with, replaces the habits of vice with habits of virtue.

Sacramentals

General Theology

Sacramentals are those things that in the Western Church are seen as connected to the Sacraments but instead of working *ex opere operato* they work *ex opere operantis Ecclesiae*. In other words they are traditionally seen to work based on the collective prayer of the Church.

There are four general classes of Sacramentals (*Principals of Sacramental Theology*, 615)

- 1- Consecrations of Persons
- 2- Constitutive Blessings (Which render an object or place sacred)
- 3- Ordinary (Invocative) Blessings (Request for Divine Favor but not a change: eg blessing of a new birth)
- 4- Exorcisms

There is one other personal speculative distinction. A difference between “natural” and “artificial” sacramentals. “Natural” sacramentals are those things which seem to function as sacramentals without the intervention of the Church or her blessings. Such examples would be relics, holy water from specific places, or even some sacred places themselves. “Artificial” sacramentals would then be things such as holy water, holy oils, candles, ect. Things that the Church makes.

Blessings

Blessings as a sacramental are ways in which the ontological relationships of creation are restored. There are secondary aspects to blessings, but primarily it is about making something more of what it is supposed “to be”.

Consecrations go one step farther and also dedicate the object to the service of God in a special way.

Holy Water

Holy Water is the most common physical sacramental, and is used to bless most other objects. It can be thought of, colloquially, as “prayer in a bottle”.

Holy Oils

Oil in the Bible

The most common and predominant form of oil in the culture of the Bible was made from olives. Olive Trees were originally native to Asia Minor and Syria before spreading throughout the Mediterranean region.¹ Cultivation of these tree dates to the 4th century BC.² Besides providing food in the olives themselves, the olives could be crushed to produce oil which had a variety of uses in the ancient near east. Olive oil was used for cosmetics, perfumes, food, lamp fuel, healing salves, and religious ritual.

In the ritual of ancient Israel it had multiple usages including fuel for the lamps (Ex 27:20, Lev 42:2) and as part of sacrifice. As a sacrifice oil was more commonly used in the grain offering. (Lev 2:1-8) In extension to this, an offering of bread made with oil was used as part of the first series of offerings in the consecration of the priests. (Ex 29) Sacrificial oil was regular olive oil mixed into or put on the grain/flour/bread offering.

Ritual anointing seems to be an old tradition going back early in Biblical history before the ritual proscriptions of the Torah. (Gen 28:18, 31:13) In this early usage anointing something seemed to be a form of dedication to God, a setting apart of some physical object for religious usage. In this case the oil was a particular type of holy oil only allowed to be used in the context of Temple ritual. The mixing of this oil is described in Exodus 30:22-33. This ritual holy oil was made from mostly olive oil mixed with liquid myrrh, cinnamon, "aromatic cane" (balsam?), and cassia. (vv.23-24) It's usage was restricted to temple ritual purposes only. (vv.32-33) This oil was used in the various ritual consecrations of holy objects such as the tabernacle, Ark of the Covenant, ritual items, and altars. (vv.26-28, 29:21-32, 40:10-15, Lev 8:10-12) It was also used to ordain the priesthood. (v.30)

Along with objects, it was used to anoint priests, kings, and prophets. This form of anointing follows the idea of sacred objects but is applied to people who have been dedicated or set apart for service to God in a special way. The first to be anointed were the Aaron and the priests. (Ex 29:7) Prophets as well would be consecrated through ritual anointing. (1 Ki 19:16) It is kings, however, that took pride of place in being anointed with oil and in fact were often merely referred to as God's anointed. (1 Sam 2:10, 26:23) Saul was the first King, and thus the first "anointed one" of Israel, anointed by the prophet Samuel after the people demanded a King. (1 Sam 10:1) Later David as well would continue this tradition and be anointed King. (1 Chron 11:3, Ps 89:20) Jesus, of course, is the "anointed one" *par excellence*. "Messiah" means "anointed one" and is a reference to Jesus primarily as the heir to David's throne and rightful King. Beyond this, however, there was more to Jesus' anointing. The further concept goes back deeper into the past for anointing in a broader sense of dedication of service to God the Father. (Acts 4:27-28) Jesus was also anointed to proclaim freedom to those in bondage to evil (Luke 4:18) and with power which seems to be connected to healing and exorcism. (Acts

¹ United Bible Societies. *Fauna and Flora of the Bible*, 156

² John Piltch, *The Cultural Dictionary of the Bible*, 55

10:38) Of course also being God, Jesus by his Divine nature had these rights and powers inherently, thus this anointing was given to the one person of Christ but for the sake of the human nature.

Oil had a symbolic value in representing joy and therefore possibly victory. Use of oil is contrasted with mourning and fasting, (2 Sam 14:2, Isa 61:3, Matt 6:17) and is called the “oil of gladness”. (Ps 45:7, cf Heb 1:9) The idea of oil and victory is shown in Psalm 23:5 where the Psalmist connects triumph over his enemies with God anointing him with oil.

Finally, olive oil was also seen as related to healing. Culturally, use of oils on wounds and for healing disease was common. Often oil was just a form of ancient medicine, however Scripture at times goes beyond this to connect anointing with oil as an act of God’s grace in healing. The foundation for this can be found in an OT ritual of purification for leprosy. (Lev 14) This was not a healing rite but a purification after healing. (vv.1-3) However due to its association with disease it demonstrates the association with anointing and healing. Besides the sacrificial use of oil within the rite itself, (v.10-12, 21) it is also used along with blood for the actual purification. (vv.15-18) After the blood purification, the priest is to take the oil and with his right hand and “sprinkle it seven times before the Lord”. Then the priest anoints the right ear lobe, right thumb, and right big toe of the leper. (v.17) Finally the priest pours the rest of the oil on their head, (v.18) after another series of sacrifices the leper is purified and so able to take part again in the Temple rituals. (vv.19-20) In the New Testament anointing with oil is directly connected to healing itself. Jesus sent out his Apostles to heal and cast out demons. The method of healing was done via anointing the people with oil. (Mark 6:13) The context of exorcism and delegated authority from Jesus demonstrate this was not a mere giving of healing salve. The early Church followed this practice as shown in James 5:14. Here James commands that the sick should call for the elders (presbyters/priests) who will anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. Taken in context with Mark 6:13, and perhaps even Leviticus 14, this is not a mere medicinal usage. This is the foundation for the sacrament of unction, a rite of anointing for the sick with blessed oil.

Oil in Christian History

Looking after the New Testament writings to the writings of the early Church oil was used, following the Biblical pattern, for healing and dedication. The later division in oils for healing and exorcism were initially related as both for healing purposes.

The first writer to mention oil was Theophilus of Antioch (d.181) who associates being anointed with oil to being a Christian.³ However, though he is referenced as the first it must be noted that it is unclear if he is being metaphorical. He references Christians as those who have been anointed, but calls this the anointing “with the oil of God”. Considering his analogies to new ships being sent to sea, new houses, and athletes it seems his main purpose was to view anointing as a form of dedication to service. Thus Christians have been “anointed” via their dedication to serve God. Even if

³ Theophilus of Antioch, *Ad Autolyicus* I.xii

real oil is not in view here it is easy to see where the later symbolism would have developed.

Later Tertullian, (d.220) in an apologetic from the faith based on the healing and deliverance done by the Church, refers to a Severus who was anointed with oil by a Christian and cured.⁴ Starting in the 4th century there are more records in reference to Holy Oils, specifically to those used during Baptism.

The 4-5th century Syrian *Apostolic Constitutions* prescribes a specific blessed oil that is to be used during the Baptismal rite. (VII.3.xlii) It is specifically said to bless the oil as preparation for Baptism and to be for the remission of sins, so that the person may be “freed from all ungodliness, and may become worthy of initiation.” The interesting part of this ritual is it associates the benefits normally given to Baptism with this holy oil. The documents also contains one of the few early blessings for this oil. (VII.3.xliv) The prayer asks that the oil itself be “efficacious upon him that is baptized, so that the sweet odor of your Christ may continue upon him.” In fact the text asserts that unless such a prayer with laying on of hands is made then the person only receives the Baptism of the Jews but not the Baptism that cleanses the soul. This is the only oil mentioned in the text and confirms closely to what would later be called Chrism.

St. Serapion was an Egyptian Bishop of the 4th century who left us a prayer book that includes various rites and blessings. There are two blessings for oil, one for oil and water together for the sick and another specifically for oil of the sick. The oil and water is both healing and exorcistic and seems to be intended for blessing foods for use by the sick. They are referred to as “medicine” and though it does include the idea in the prayer that oil may be used for anointing it does not include any instructions for doing so. The second ritual includes both the blessing and anointing. In blessing it is very similar to the pervious and combines the idea of driving out demons as well as sickness, even asking for the remission of sins. More interestingly the anointing prayer is more of an exorcism than anything else. The rite asks God to cast out every satanic energy or demon, along with scourge, pain, and plague to depart at the sign of the cross. The most direct healing only section is towards the end where Christ is described as the one “who took up our sickness and our infirmities.” It is clear that for Serapion healing is both a spiritual and physical malady of which he makes no clear distinction. This holy oil combines some of the ideas of what would become Oil for the Sick as well as the exorcistic components of the Oil of the Catechumens.

The 5th century Syrian document *Testamentum Domini*, which purports to go back to Christ and the Apostles themselves, includes fairly extensive blessings and rubrics for a blessing healing oil and baptismal exorcism with oil. The oil for the sick is blessed so that “it may deliver those who labor and heal those who are sick and sanctify those who return when they approach to thy faith.” (I.24) During baptism the catechumen is given an exorcism and then anointed with oil that seems to receive the same exorcism as a blessing. (II.8) The person is then anointed with the “oil of exorcism” so that they will be delivered from evil spirits. Similarly, later oil is poured on the person with an “I

⁴ Tertullian, *Ad Scapula* IV

anoint you” so that the person may be faithful to Christ. (II.9) This is referred to as sealing them on the forehead, a concept that directly developed into the usage for Holy Chrism. It is unclear, however, if this is the same oil as that used in exorcism earlier. This may perhaps be one of the first references to the now traditional three Holy Oils, or perhaps reflects a time when Chrism and Oil of the Catechumens were the same.

One of the most extensive early theologies of Holy Chrism comes from the *Catechetical Lectures* of St. Cyril of Jerusalem (d.386). Cyril’s theology of the Chrism is parallel to that of the Eucharist, it is no longer the same object but changed to impart grace. (XXI.3) This grace is connected to a typology that connects the Old Testament oil, (XXI.6) Jesus’ anointing, (XXI.2) and the anointing of the Christian. (XXI.1) Though this anointing with oil the person becomes a partaker of the Divine nature, (XXI.2) sanctified by the Holy Spirit, (XXI.3) and worthy to be called a Christian. (XXI.5) It is surprising that Cyril seems to attach most of the grace associated with Baptism not with the water here but with the Chrism. The ritual anointing at Jerusalem had four anointings of the body: head, ears, nostrils, and chest. (XXI.4) Each of these he considered to be a sacramental act on various aspects of the person to prepare them to live the Christian life.

Oil in the Liturgy

There are three traditional Holy Oils of Christendom. Oil can of course also be used for lamps, and were in older churches. However, these oils are more utilitarian unlike the three Holy Oils. All Holy Oils are to be kept in an Ambry. These oils are normally consecrated only once a year at the Chrism Mass on Maundy Thursday. At this mass the Bishop prepares enough oil for the entire Diocese for the coming year. This, at least, is the traditional norm. However it is often necessary to bless or consecrate these oils at other times. In these cases it is still permissible to do so even if preferable at the Chrism Mass. Obviously the Oil for the Sick is the most likely to need this exception. Following this tradition the old oils are supposed to be burned, after acquiring the new ones, in front of the Blessed Sacrament.⁵

Holy Chrism

Sanctum Chrisma (SC)

Consecrated Oil mixed with blessed Balsam, traditionally more closely connected with the Holy Oil from the Old Testament than the other two. Connected to Baptism primarily in the East, and Confirmation in the West. Though it is used in Anglicanism with Baptism as well. (BCP 307-308) It’s connection to Baptism in the early Church was such as the Second Ecumenical Council at Constantinople regulated the situations when heretics would need either just Chrismation or both. (Can. VII) In much of the early Church this chrismation seemed almost more indispensable than Baptism. At the council the anointing with Chrism is referred to both as “anointing” and “sealing”, this last term reflecting Chrism as

⁵ ECR Lamburn *Ritual Notes* 292

the mark of the Holy Spirit. (2 Cor 1:22)⁶ In some traditions Holy Chrism is also actually poured into the Baptismal Font, a practice that may go back to the 5th century as reflected in Pseudo-Dionysus' *Ecclesiastical Hierarchies*. (IV.3.x) Beyond Baptismal usages, Chrism was, until more recently, used in some solemn consecrations of particular liturgical items such as the Chalice and Paten, as well as the priest's hands in traditional Western practice.

Oil of the Sick

Oleum Infirmorum (OI)

Following Mark 6:13 and James 5:14 the Church anoints the sick with oil in the name of Christ for healing. (BCP p.445) This oil has been specifically blessed for healing, asking that God's grace would provide comfort, protection, and healing of body and soul.

Oil of the Catechumens

Oleum Catechumenorum (OC) or *Oleum Sanctum (OS)*

Used more infrequently now, this oil was primarily for anointing the catechumens particularly during baptismal exorcisms of the early Church. In western tradition it was often also used for ordinations as well as for coronations of kings and queens. Although not found in the BCP and this often not even blessed anymore, it still may be used as an addition to the Baptismal rite. If chosen to do so the prayers for the Catechumens found in the *Book of Occasional Services* 118-122 may be used after the final affirmation in the "Presentation and Examination" section,⁷ (BCP 303) or as in the *Anglican Service Book* which places it after the renunciations.⁸ (BCP 302)

⁶ This verse references "sealing" but is unrelated to Chrism.

⁷ Dennis Michno *A Priest's Handbook* 214

⁸ *The Anglican Service Book*, 225