

The Most Ancient Penitential Text of the Armenian Liturgy

Most of the texts of the eastern liturgies are not well known to western scholars. This is mainly true of the texts of rituals. We are better documented on the eucharistic prayers by the work of many orientalist interested in liturgy, so that we have a fair number of editions and translations on this subject.

The Armenian ritual, or *Maštoc' Book*, is one of the few eastern rituals a liturgist can study quite extensively. F. C. Conybeare published in 1905 an English translation of one of the most ancient manuscripts of the Armenian *Maštoc'*, the MS Venice, Mech. 457 of the IXth century, with complements and variants from a good number of other manuscripts and editions¹. However, this valuable book has not attracted much attention from liturgists. The lack of interest comes perhaps from the general opinion that the Armenian liturgy is a spurious branch of the Syriac tradition influenced by Byzantium and Rome, and from the conviction that the translation of Conybeare is not a reliable basis for a profound treatise on any subject.

For my part I have been devoting my attention for the last few years to the study of Armenian penance. From the beginning it became clear that the texts translated by Conybeare, mainly those of MS no. 457 of Venice, raised so many problems as to their preceding stages of evolution that no understanding of the rites could be sought in the comparison of the canons given: only extensive research covering a large number of manuscripts and their penitential texts could lead to the solution of this rather complex matter. I have studied about two hundred manuscripts and editions from which more than twenty *ordines* can be discriminated. Their different structures and their textual characteristics make it possible to establish, more or less precisely,

¹ F. C. CONYBEARE, *Rituale Armenorum*, Oxford, 1905.

the actual situation of each text along a rather common line of evolution. The text we shall study in this paper is just at the beginning of this line of development: its comparison with the nearest ones can only lead to such a statement.

Quite significantly our text, «John Mandakuni's Call to penance», is no longer to be found in liturgical books: none of the Maštoc'k' which I have studied has it; it was relegated to the canonical collections before the IXth century and replaced in the Maštoc' by much more developed forms.

This text is not known to western liturgists. Conybeare did not include it in his collection as he seems to think that our *ordo* is similar to the penitential canon of MS Paris, B. N., Arm. 55 which he translated². Besides, the Armenian text is certainly not familiar to armenologists; as far as I know, the only edition of the Book of Canons that contains it is Țltčean's one³ which has become quite inaccessible as very few copies are left in Europe.

The critical edition of the «John Mandakuni's Call to penance» which I have prepared for another work on Armenian penance was based on ten manuscripts and the above mentioned edition of Țltčean. Most of the manuscripts are rather recent; they were written between the XVIth and the XVIIIth century. The only exception is a manuscript of A. D. 1098, the cod. no. 131 of the Convent of Our Saviour in Julfa⁴.

The contents of what in our edition comes under the general title of «John Mandakuni's Call to penance» can be divided into three logical parts: 1. Rites of penance; 2. List of sins of lay people; 3. List of sins of priests, with admonitions about the way of receiving penitents.

² *Id.*, *op. cit.*, p. 294.

³ A. ȚLTČEAN, *Kanonagirk' Hayoc'*, Tiflis, 1913, pp. 91-97.

⁴ The other manuscripts are: Vienna, Mech. 256 (XVIth-XVIIth century); Vatican, Borg. Arm. 60 (A. D. 1634); Vienna, Mech. 581 (A. D. 1663); Venice, Mech. 1177 (A. D. 1668); Paris, B. N., Arm. 172 (XVIIth century); Paris, B. N., Arm. 171 (XVIIth century); Venice, Mech. 257 (XVIIth century); Vienna, Mech. 58 (XVIIth-XVIIIth century); Vienna, Mech. 579 (A. D. 1783).

It is worth noting that V. Hakobian has not found in the Matenadaran of Erevan more than two manuscripts of the *Kanonagirk'* between the XIth and the XVIth century for his critical edition of the armenian Book of Canons (Cf. V. HAKOBIAN, *Kanonagirk' Hayoc'*, I, Erevan, 1964, p. LXI). Therefore our edition is not as ill-based as it may appear.

The collation of the MS no. 131 of Julfa was made on a photographic reproduction which exists in the Convent of the Mechitarist Fathers of St. Lazzaro, Venice.

I am much indebted to both Abbot Generals of Vienna and Venice for the facilities of study granted during my researches in their Libraries.

Parts 1 and 2 are united under the same title in all manuscripts. An ordinal number is affixed to the beginning of part 1 but not to the list of sins of lay people. Another ordinal number is attached to the beginning of part 3 with the title: «Confession of a priest».

In this paper we shall study only part 1 even if from the palaeographic point of view we cannot separate it from part 2. This limitation is necessary. As a matter of fact, a proper commentary of parts 2 and 3 would be extremely wearisome as well as little rewarding in theological conclusions. So the purpose of this paper is only to study the first known organization of the penitential rite in the Armenian Church in its general outlines. No exhaustive information on the many critical problems of the Armenian text is to be found here. Some of them will be taken into account however, as far as they may change the liturgical and theological meaning of our *ordo*.

Here is an English translation of the Armenian text as I have established it. The numbers beside the text have been introduced by the editor to facilitate references. Words in parentheses () and brackets [] have been supplemented too, in the first case to render the text clearer, in the second, to give references.

JOHN MANDAKUNI'S CALL TO PENANCE.

1. The priest goes with the sinner to the church door,
2. 1 and he psalmodizes: 2 Unto you, O Lord, have I lifted up [ps. 24]; 3 Have mercy on me, O Lord [ps. 50] and the other psalm.
3. 1 Proclamation and prayer: 2 Lord God, you spoke with your mouth; 3 And: God exalted and glorified.
4. And he places the sinner facing the west and (the sinner) renounces Satan thrice.
5. 1 And he makes him turn to the east and makes him thrice confess his faith in the holy, catholic, apostolic church, in one baptism for repentance, 2 because the first time his faith was confessed by the tongue of others, but this second time it will be confessed by his (own) tongue.

6. 1 Afterwards he places the one who confesses in front of the door 2 and enumerates the names of the sins as they are also written.
7. 1 This is the Lord's door and the just [ps. 117, 20];
2 And: Happy are those to whom remission has been given [ps. 31];
3 Confess the Lord with all your heart [ps. 110 or 137];
4 And: O Lord, hear (my) prayer [ps. 101 or 142].
8. And: The Lord says: to whom you remit it will be remitted [Jn. 20,23].
9. 1 And justified by the grace of Christ he will return home to fast and pray all the days of his life; 2 and with (works of) mercy he will expiate his sins.
10. This is the door of true penance and an occasion of justification.
11. And he will sign him with the holy cross and with the church (*sic*) and with the right hand of the priest.

The list of sins of laymen follows.

This text propounds many questions. Let us analyse the most important of them, mainly liturgical and theological, in the following commentary, paragraph by paragraph.

The author.

Our manuscripts attribute unanimously the authorship of their text to John Mandakuni who was a Catholicos of Armenia between A. D. 478-490. His liturgical works are incidentally mentioned by John of Awjun (717-728) ⁵ and expressly in a list which was intended to be joined to the index of the Maštoc' canons. The origin and the authorship of the rites of the Armenian ritual is clearly stated there. A special paragraph refers to the canons composed by John Mandakuni ⁶. Kirakos of Ganjak, the well known historian

⁵ JOHN OF AWJUN, *Matenagrut'iwnek'*, Venice, 1953 (2nd ed.) p. 39 or HAKOBIAN, *op. cit.*, I, p. 524.

⁶ Cf. MS Vatican, Arm. 3 (A. D. 1287), ff. 302b. The same text can be read in *Maštoc'*, Constantinople, 1807, p. 3.

of the twelfth century reproduces in his *History of Armenia*⁷ practically the same text in the part which refers to the liturgical works of John Mandakuni. But neither of these sources presents the fifth century Catholicos as the author of a penitential text. As far as I know, no historical document confirms the attribution made by our manuscripts. Besides, I cannot think of any satisfactory hypothesis that would account for the fact that our text gives no honorific title to John Mandakuni, at a time when at least the name of archbishop was used by the head bishops of the Armenian Church⁸.

1.

According to this paragraph the «Call to penance» begins at the church door, to which the priest goes, accompanied by the sinner. All the rites prescribed from § 1 to § 6 are supposed to be performed at this very place; the last paragraph is quite explicit on that.

The liturgical and theological meaning of the rite can only be perceived if we bear in mind that, according to ancient canonical organization, public sinners were excommunicated, which means that they were shut out of the church as a visible sign of their not being in communion with the faithful. A large number of canons of councils are quite explicit about this⁹. Therefore it is not surprising that some of the eastern liturgies keep this prescription of executing some part of the penitential rite at the church door¹⁰.

⁷ KIRAKOS OF GANJAK, *Patmut'iwn Hayoc'* (ed. K. A. MELIK'-OHANJANIAN), Erevan, 1961, p. 69.

⁸ Cf. G. GARITTE, *La Narratio de Rebus Armeniae* (C. S. C. O., 132), Louvain, 1967, pp. 56-57 and 100-102. For the title of archbishop given to our author, see the *Demonstration of John Mandakuni*: M. TALLON, *Livre des Lettres*, Beyrouth, 1955, p. 78 and the beginning of the text on p. 105.

⁹ Cf. e. g.: Apostolic Canons, c. 16 (HAKOBIAN, *op. cit.*, I, p. 38); Apostolic Fathers, cc. 22 (Id., *op. cit.*, I, p. 104 and 109). These prescriptions are common in the Armenian versions of canonical legislation, e. g.: Nicaea, cc. 1, 12, 13; Ancyra, Caesarea and Neo-caesarea, *passim* (Id., *op. cit.*, I, p. 114-187); Laodicea, c. 9 (Id., *op. cit.*, I, p. 231). Original Armenian canons insist *passim* on the same discipline, as the Canons of St. Gregory (Id., *op. cit.*, I, p. 245-249) and the Canons of Šahapivan (Id., *op. cit.*, I, p. 423-466). I always quote the Armenian text which sometimes is quite different from the Greek original.

¹⁰ We can mention, for instance, two texts of the penitential rite of the Jacobite Church where the first part of the ceremony is performed at the church door (Cf. H. DENZINGER, *Ritus Orientalium*, I, Würzburg, 1863, p. 441 and 443).

In some rites the church door was changed into the sanctuary door, as in the Nestorian liturgy (Cf. J.-M. VOSTÉ, *Pontificale iuxta ritum Ecclesiae Syrorum orientalium, id est Chaldeorum*, Pars II, Rome, 1938, p. 165). In some versions of this liturgy the original place of the introductory rite was changed and moved to the altar (cf. the «Ordo penitentiae» of Mar Isho'-yabb,

But their tradition is not as uniform and clear as the Armenian where all the texts known, with a single exception, have an initial rite performed at the church door¹¹. So, the Armenian liturgy ritualizes and keeps throughout its history the first canonical prescriptions on the place of penance.

2.

The psalms supposed to be said in this part of the rite are the following: pss. 24, 50 «and the other psalm».

From the critical point of view we may have some doubts regarding the identification of the text of § 2.2 as being the «incipit» of ps. 24, since ps. 122 begins with exactly the same words. Unfortunately our manuscripts give no clue to the problem. The only way of breaking through the difficulty is to find a parallel canon of psalms in another rite. Happily enough we have it in the baptismal rite. Just at the beginning of the ceremony, also at the church door, the canon prescribed is composed of pss. 24, 25 and 50. We can identify these psalms with certainty because each is numbered¹².

We are certainly struck by the fact that the two identified psalms of penance exist in the baptismal rite too. But we notice that ps. 25 of the latter rite has no explicit parallel in the penitential text. However, we have there the expression «and the other psalm» that in its present situation is ambiguous as nobody can tell which psalm it refers to.

A proper solution for all these difficulties could be the following hypothesis: the original psalmic canon said in front of the church was the same in both rites of baptism and penance. By an accident in the transmission of the penitential text, the expression «and the

according to Renaudot, DENZINGER, *op. cit.*, I, p. 467). The same change was made in the Byzantine rite (cf. J. MORIN, *Commentarius historicus de disciplina paenitentiae*, Venice, 1702, p. 616; but cf. P. DE MEESTER, *Studi sui sacramenti amministrati secondo il rito bizantino*, Rome 1947, p. 140, where, according to MS München 498, the sanctuary is mentioned).

¹¹ Cf. the text of MS Venice, Mech. 199 (A. D. 1216) ff. 303b-305b. This is a special case on which I cannot comment here as it deserves. I pass by the penitential texts translated in DENZINGER, *op. cit.*, I, p. 471-474 because they do not belong to the ancient Armenian tradition.

¹² Cf. MS Venice, Mech. 456, ff. 68b (SARGISEAN and SARGSEAN, *Mayr c'uc'ak hayerēn jēṭagrac'...*, III, Venice, 1966, c. 19). In the rite of baptism of the *Maṭoc'*, Constantinople, 1807, pp. 6-7 the last psalm is replaced by ps. 26; its psalmic canon is the following: pss. 24, 25 and 26.

other psalm» which in the archetype followed the «incipit» of ps. 24 was misplaced after the beginning of ps. 50¹³. This postulated original place of the expression can only mean that ps. 25 is the psalm supposed to be said after ps. 24 as in the baptismal rite.

Besides, the expression «and the other psalm» seems to be the remnants of an editing earlier than the one we have in the rite of baptism; and because it means that the two first psalms were said according to the order of the psalter, it may imply that the original date of the editing of this part of the text was the epoch when the psalms were used in the liturgy according to their order in the psalter. We have this arrangement, for instance, in the earliest parts of the Armenian Lectionary¹⁴.

From the theological point of view it is worth noting the relationship between the baptismal and the penitential rites. But the meaning of these parallels is not entirely clear in the present state of our knowledge of the sources of the Maštoc'. To arrive at a correct interpretation of the relationship stated one would have to set forth and solve beforehand the question of the influence of the liturgy of Jerusalem on the baptismal¹⁵ and the penitential rites as related to the ritual significance of St. Cyril's first two catecheses. Obviously it is not the purpose of the present paper to make this research.

3.

The following rite is composed of a proclamation and a prayer. Our text does not mention the persons who are supposed to perform the ceremony but it is probable that the proclamation was made by a deacon, and the prayer by the priest. On the other hand we are almost at a loss for knowing the exact contents of these texts of which the manuscripts give only the «incipit». We have for certain complete texts with the same beginning in MS Vatican,

¹³ The Nestorian liturgy has something near to this canon of psalms. In the rite of reconciliation of an apostate of Mar Isho'-yahb (650-660), the psalms said at the beginning of the rite are the following: pss. 24, 122 and 129 (Cf. Vostř, *op. cit.* p. 166) or pss. 24 and 129 (cf. DENZINGER, *op. cit.*, I, p. 469) depending on the versions. It appears ps. 122 was added by the influence of ps. 24. So, we have ps. 24 at the beginning of the penitential rite both in the Nestorian and the Armenian liturgies. It is possible that they had the same source.

¹⁴ Cf. M. F. LAGES, «Étapes de l'évolution du carême à Jérusalem avant le V^e siècle», *Revue des Études Arméniennes*, N. S. 6 (1969) pp. 81-84 and 98-100.

¹⁵ Cf. *Id.*, *loc. cit.*, p. 100 for some preliminary information on this problem.

Barb. or. 100, fl. 194a-196a. But one cannot be sure that the wording we have in this manuscript of the XIIIth century reproduces the original texts supposed to be contained in the present paragraph. However, the critical study of the texts of the Barberini codex shows that they underwent extensive and substantial rewriting sometime during their transmission. Probably most of this rewriting was already done at the time of the editing of our «Call to penance». Their identical beginning leads to this conclusion. Unfortunately one cannot fix the extent of the similarities between the Barberini texts and ours. However, the prayer of the Barberini manuscript is found in a much simpler form in other penitential texts; this simpler form is attested, in its main traits, in a text of Agathangel¹⁶.

The only thing I retain from the prayer «Lord exalted and glorified» as it can be read in the quoted Vatican codex, is the passage where the priest says: «by your compassion, remit their transgressions [...] so that they may enter into your holy church, healed once again in their spirit». This is a clear reference to the place where the prayer ought to be said and to the meaning of the entrance into the church. This entrance is supposed to be made in the sequence of a healing imparted by God to the wounds of the sinners. Therefore the material church is the sign of the spiritual one and the entry implies the capacity of «lifting up power and glory» to God with all his people, as the prayer says in its sequence.

4 and 5.

Paragraph 5.2 clearly seems to establish the relationship between the renunciation of Satan and the confession of faith in penitential rite with the same ceremonies in the ritual of baptism. The first confession of faith which it refers to is certainly the one made at baptism, as our text asserts clearly that it was made by the mouth of others. This can only be understood if we suppose that our text was composed when the baptism of children was already a common practice.

This conclusion seems to contradict what I said about the psalmodic order, but not entirely. Usually a liturgical canon results

¹⁶ Cf. MS Erevan, Mat. 1001 (IXth-Xth century) fl. 105b and AGAT'ANGELOS, *Patmut'iwu Hayoc'*, ch. 22 (ed. G. TĒR MKRTĈ'EAN and S. KANAYBANC', Tiflis, 1909, § 244, p. 125; ed. Venice, 1930, p. 179).

from a mixture of rites introduced at different epochs, sometimes so perfectly entwined that it is impossible to disentangle one from the other. The apparent contradiction observed can be a rare indication of the composite character of our text.

These two paragraphs are quite simple in their wording. On the other hand we may notice that the position of the penitent, facing the west to renounce Satan, and the east to make the confession of faith, is rather common in the Armenian liturgy, both in baptismal and penitential rites. More ancient sources such as the baptismal rites of the Apostolic Tradition¹⁷ and of Jerusalem¹⁸ have it too.

The presence of these two paragraphs in the penitential rite raises the question of knowing for what kind of sinners our «Call to penance» was intended.

The study made by A. Raes on a similar but much more developed penitential canon as translated by Conybeare from MS Venice, Mech. 457¹⁹ led this author to «believe that this rite of penance was composed first of all for the admission of an apostate to penance and that later on it was extended to other categories of penitents» as happened in the Nestorian Church²⁰. This hypothesis can perhaps be taken into account to explain the absence in our text of the confession of the Trinity. For this purpose it would be better to speak of heretics rather than apostates²¹. As a matter of fact the important thing for receiving heretics into penance is to make them confess the «holy, catholic, apostolic church», as our text implies.

Notwithstanding that, we can think of another hypothesis which copes differently with this anomaly without interfering with the supposed original destination of this or of a similar text, as

¹⁷ According to B. BOTTE, *La Tradition Apostolique de saint Hippolyte*, Münster, 1963, p. 47, n. 4, this rite belonged to the original of the Apostolic Tradition, as we can see in the *Testamentum Domini* and the *Canons of Hippolyte*.

¹⁸ CYRIL OF JERUSALEM, *Catech. Myst.* I, 2, 4, 9 (ed. A. PIÉDAGNEL, SC 126, Paris, 1966, pp. 84, 88, 98).

¹⁹ F. C. CONYBEARE, *op. cit.*, pp. 190-200.

²⁰ A. RAES, «Les rites de la pénitence chez les Arméniens», *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, 13 (1947) pp. 649-650.

²¹ The essential of my arguments below could as well be applied to apostates but they are more perceptible if we consider the case of heretics.

One of the few texts of the Armenian liturgy I know which is destined for apostates begins by these very rites of renouncing Satan and confessing the faith. In this confession of faith mention is made only of the Trinity not of the Church. (Cf. MS Venice, Mech. 1173 (A. D. 1345) f. 112b; SARGISEAN and SARGSEAN, *op. cit.*, III, c. 158).

put forward by A. Raes: the contents of § 5. 1 are a complement of the text of the baptismal rite where, according to one of its most ancient versions, no reference is made to the confession of faith in the Church²². This confession was certainly considered as essential at the time the text was written, from the very fact that the sacrament reintegrates the sinner into the church. The editor of the text considered it was sufficiently clear for the correct execution of the entire ceremony (which perhaps included the confession of the Trinity as well as the confession of the Church) to add here only what was lacking in the baptismal rite. Paragraph 5.2 would imply a directive to the minister. This would indicate that this paragraph is fragmentary.

6.

The confession of sins which follows the confession of faith is the last rite carried out in front of the church. This confession is performed in a particular way: the priest specifies the name of the sins and the penitent says «yes» or «no», as other penitential texts state²³.

The list of sins this paragraph refers to is found, as we have seen, at the end of the liturgical canon we are studying. One cannot be sure, of course, that this long list was written at the same occasion as the liturgical text. It is not the purpose of this research to examine this difficult question, but it seems that, on the whole, this list underwent rather extensive rewriting sometime during its transmission. However, the present script had certainly been written long before the end of the XIth century: our most ancient manuscript transcribes it entirely. This question is nevertheless of little importance for the theological meaning of our text.

I would not say the same about one particularity of the MS Paris, B. N., Arm. 171, copied in the XVIIIth century²⁴. This codex omits all the text of §§ 7 to 11 included. So the list of sins comes just after § 6.2 which was logically shortened by the elimination of the expression «as they are also written»²⁵. This particularity may

²² Cf. MS Venice, Mech. 457, fl. 70a-b, and CYRIL OF JERUSALEM, *Catech. Myst.*, I, 9 (*ed. cit.*, p. 98).

²³ Cf. e. g. MS Paris, B. N., Arm. 55, fl. 199b.

²⁴ Cf. F. MACLER, *Catalogue des manuscrits arméniens et géorgiens de la Bibliothèque Nationale*, Paris, 1908, p. 94.

²⁵ Cf. fl. 46b-47a.

be explained by two hypotheses: 1) §§ 7-11 had always been lacking in the archetype of codex Paris 171; 2) these paragraphs existed in the archetype but they were dropped by a copyist who wanted to present the text in the order in which the rite was performed. So he decided to copy the list of sins at its proper place with the intention of adding the rest of the liturgical text at its end, which he forgot to do.

The second hypothesis seems to be the most obvious critical choice, as this characteristic of the Paris codex is not sustained by any other manuscript known to me. However, the first one merits some attention as our text is entitled «Call to penance» and the program included in this title seems to be entirely fulfilled in the liturgical text the codex Paris 171 presents. This fact would be nevertheless too slight an argument to attract support²⁶.

7.

The second psalmody begins with ps. 117, 20. This verse is very well adapted to the entrance which is made at this moment, and to its symbolic meaning. Ps. 117 is the usual psalm for accompanying the entrance in all the penitential texts known to me²⁷ as well as in the rite of baptism²⁸. It is strange, therefore, that according to our translation this psalm is not supposed to be said in its entirety, only v. 20 being prescribed. Surely v. 20 is here to be regarded as an antiphon. As a matter of fact it is well known that the antiphons of the Armenian Lectionary are regularly taken from the psalms with which they are said as a sort of meaning-giving commentary.

A careful examination of the Armenian text of § 7.3 shows that its present wording is a mixture of the «incipit» of two psalms. The first part belongs to ps. 117 and the second to ps. 110 or ps. 137. It is impossible however to translate the text in a way that makes this intermingling obvious. Besides, the text of § 7.3 as it is now written can only indicate ps. 110 or ps. 137, even if it isn't necessary to consider its wording at the beginning as a variant of their normal «incipit». These anomalies may be interpreted as meaning that

²⁶ Cf. the commentary of §§ 9 and 10 for complements.

²⁷ Exception made for the text of MS Venice, Mech. 199 and the others mentioned in note 11.

²⁸ Cf. SARGISEAN and SARGSEAN, *op. cit.*, III, c. 20.

the original of this paragraph had the beginning of ps. 117 just after § 7.1; ps. 31 and ps. 110 (or 137) have been added in a second edition from which our paragraph derives²⁹. It was the insertion of ps. 31 between § 7.1 and 7.3 that cut out the relationship between these two elements leaving an open door to the correction made on § 7.3. One may presume that this correction was not made on the same occasion as this second edition, but later on.

What seems certain is that both the priest and the penitent entered the church during this psalmody.

8.

The contents of this paragraph are difficult to ascertain: its text is very short and one cannot tell what words followed this memorial of the saying of Christ regarding the remission of sins according to the Gospel of Saint John. No known later liturgical Armenian text has a prayer beginning with these words. But we have this or a similar saying in the middle of a prayer of absolution of the later Armenian tradition. However the texts that have this or a related memorial of the words of Christ are believed to have been influenced by the latin liturgy³⁰.

A similar memorial of Christ's precept exists in a prayer of the Coptic penitential liturgy³¹; this prayer is supposed to be said before the reconciliation. The passage quoted is Mat. 16, 19. In the rite of reconciliation itself there is another memorial of the words of Christ and in this instance the passage quoted is Jn. 20, 23³². The same saying is quoted at the beginning of a prayer of reconciliation of the Nestorian liturgy³³. In the Jacobite liturgy we cannot find a leading idea in the use of these evangelical passages, but they are frequently quoted in its penitential prayers³⁴.

This random series of examples of the utilisation of the words by which Christ gave power to Peter and the Apostles to impart

²⁹ We may also think of a marginal note taken afterwards into the text. Cf. below, pp. 60-61 for a more comprehensive analysis of this question.

³⁰ Cf. DENZINGER, *op. cit.*, I, p. 473 and 474. Original texts in *Maštoc'*, Constantinople, 1807, p. 42 and *Maštoc'*, Venice, 1839, pp. 94-95. The text quoted in these prayers is Mat. 16, 19.

³¹ Cf. DENZINGER, *op. cit.*, I, p. 437.

³² Cf. *Id.*, *op. cit.*, I, p. 438 and 439.

³³ Cf. VOSTÉ, *op. cit.*, p. 170.

³⁴ Cf. DENZINGER, *op. cit.*, I, p. 449: text quoted: Mat. 16, 19. Another prayer (*Id.*, *op. cit.*, I p. 453) quotes Jn. 20, 23. The general prayer of *Id.*, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 463-464 quotes Mat. 16, 19.

remission of sins is certainly not sufficient to conclude that our paragraph had a similar context. Nor can we infer that the presence of the text of Jn. 20, 23 implies that a prayer of reconciliation followed; it would be a methodological error to conclude from the other liturgies to the Armenian. Besides, the evidence of the Armenian tradition is not conclusive. So the hypothesis of the quotation of Jn. 20, 23 being used for introducing a reconciliation prayer needs more extensive research.

9.

This paragraph states three different things: *a)* the effects of the rite given in the preceding paragraph; *b)* the dismissal of the penitent, and *c)* the works the penitent is supposed to do for the expiation of his sins.

a) It is stated clearly that at this moment the penitent is already justified by the grace of Christ. The participle by which this is signified could as well be translated by *having been justified*, which is even more explicit about the meaning of the rite. So even if we do not know from § 8 the exact words the priest ought to say we know for certain their theological signification because this paragraph implies that remission was imparted during the previous rite.

b) Secondly, the text says that the penitent «will return home». This proposition makes clear that the dismissal of the penitent was made at this moment. Consequently, §§ 9, 10 and 11 are not logically arranged. We will discuss below the implications of this finding in relation to the original order of penance. For the moment it is only necessary to add that the dismissal of the penitent is not an incidental observation in this paragraph, for the proposition, «he will return home», is the principal affirmation in the sentence. We can conclude that the editor of the text meant the dismissal to be made at this precise moment.

c) Finally, the paragraph states that the penitent must fast and pray all the days of his life. The last words can mean that the «Call to penance» was written for those penitents who receive communion only at the moment of their death. A confirmation of this hypothesis could be deduced from our text not making any reference to the rite of communion in its sequence. Another interpretation is possible: the sentence is aimed at giving a general

outline of the good works the penitent is counselled to do; it has no compulsory and canonical value.

The first hypothesis suits the facts better if the words have kept here their original meaning as perhaps they have, this text being such an ancient one. As a matter of fact the discipline prescribed in these words is found in quite ancient canons relating to various crimes³⁵; the Armenian Synod of Šahapivan states the same, for instance, for sorcerers and apostates³⁶.

The activities suggested to the penitent are fasting, prayer and alms-giving. But according to the text alms-giving is more directly related to the expiation of sins than the other two. This idea is very ancient. The effect of alms-giving in the expiation of sins is expressed in these same words in Si. 3, 30 and Dan. 4, 24³⁷, repeated in Didache 4, 6 and imperfectly rendered by the Letter of Barn. 19, 10. Besides, it is certainly stated in the II Letter of Clem., 16, 4 where, together with alms-giving, reference is made to fasting and prayer; but alms-giving is above both.

The insistence on these three elements, but mainly on alms-giving, is a constant in the canonical Armenian literature concerning penance³⁸.

We learn from this commentary that this paragraph makes evident the antiquity of its sources and that it was originally written as the conclusion of a penitential rite.

The last statement raises an important question: why have we got after § 9 the two sentences of §§ 10 and 11 which contradict to some extent what § 9 implies?

Before studying this question by itself we must analyse critically §§ 10 and 11 mainly in the light of the problem posed.

³⁵ I have not made a thorough research of all the canons where this discipline of not being admitted to communion before death is found. I can quote the following: Syn. of Caesarea, c. 4, concerning parents who kill their legitimate offspring; Syn. of Neocaesarea, c. 2, where the sin of a woman with two brothers is considered (HAKOBIAN, *op. cit.*, I, p. 170 and 179-180). We may notice that apostates according to the c. 11 of the Council of Nicaea are not under the same rule (*Id.*, *op. cit.*, I, p. 124), but c. 37 of Saint Basil states that those who apostatize must cry and confess their sins all their lives to become worthy of the communion at the time of their death (*Id.*, *op. cit.*, I, p. 352-353).

³⁶ Cf. *Id.*, *op. cit.*, I, p. 440.

³⁷ This text is quoted in the c. 10 of the Synod of Caesarea (*Id.*, *op. cit.*, I, p. 176, 1.4).

³⁸ Cf. e. g., Syn. of Ancyra, cc. 7-11 and 17 (*Id.*, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 157-165) Council of Nicaea, c. 12 (*Id.*, *op. cit.*, I, p. 125) Syn. of Caesarea, cc. 1-5 etc. (*Id.*, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 169-171) and *passim*.

10.

This paragraph can be regarded *a)* as a rubric, not ritual but theological or *b)* as the beginning of an admonition made by the priest to the penitent. No clue is given as to which hypothesis to choose. The question is important: its correct solution will centre our attention on the essential question of the destination of this text. This can be obtained by taking into account the structural implications of its contents.

The paragraph states two things: that the door through which the penitent entered is the door of true penance and that it is an occasion of justification. We could not find a better symbol of the justification given to a penitent than letting him enter through the door of the temple, because the temple is a visible sign of the church of Christ which assembles in it: only the entrance into the material church gives anyone the possibility of participating in the actions of the people of God.

From the structural point of view we may well accept the mention of justification at this moment after § 9. But the reference to the door seems out of place. On the other hand we notice that the assertion of the door being an occasion of justification would be better understood before § 8. The logical place of § 10 is in fact just after the original contents of § 7 which as we have seen was formed only by ps. 117. In this hypothesis § 10 would be a sort of commentary, made perhaps by the priest just after the repetition of the antiphon at the end of the psalm³⁹, in which he would actually state the meaning of the entrance into the church, because § 10 applies to our rite what v. 20 of ps. 117 says: the door of the Lord is opened to the just because penance is the true door of justification for those who repent their sins.

We may conclude that even the concept of «occasion of justification» would be better understood in a text where there was not a formal prayer of reconciliation.

³⁹ There is no evidence of this psalm being said in its entirety. Our text gives no indication on the matter. All the other penitential texts known to me make clear however that ps. 117 is said only until v. 20 before entering the church. Our text presents a different organization: it is the only clearly stated case where v. 20 is supposed to be an antiphon.

11.

This paragraph seems to have been misread during its transmission. Evidence of this assertion is a meaningless word that we must translate by «with the church», and the anacoluthon of the last part of the sentence.

The first difficulty is certainly the most important: no understandable meaning is to be found for «church» in its present context; it must have been corrupted.

A search was made to find the word for which this had been changed. It is hardly probable that the original lesson was the variant «with the gospel», that we have in MS Venice, Mech 257, p. 369, for the simple reason that it is a «lectio facilior». We cannot neglect the fact that to the copyists the word «with the church» was perhaps as obscure as to us. The obvious temptation was to replace it by a more understandable one. The scribe of MS. no. 257 surrendered to it. Besides, in Armenian there is no possibility of palaeographic confusion between «with the church» and «with the gospel».

The only palaeographic similarity I can think of is the instrumental form of the word «oil». The text would then mean: «And he will sign him [...] with the oil» which is quite understandable. From the palaeographic point of view this hypothesis is only possible if we admit an instrumental ending *-eaw* for the word *iwł* in its form *ewł*. But I have not found this instrumental form in any manuscript. This fact does not imply that it does not exist, but it impairs substantially the hypothesis of the corruption of this particular word.

Nevertheless we know from the canonical literature that in some cases an unction of the penitents was prescribed. The classical text is c. 7 of the Synod of Laodicea where it is stated that heretics such as Novatians and Quartodecimans cannot be received into the church as catechumens or as faithful before anathematizing and abjuring all heretics, mainly those whom they know and who taught them. «After this, continues the text, those who are called faithful will learn the mysteries of our faith and will be anointed with the ointment of holiness and will partake in the communion»⁴⁰.

In the Armenian tradition very few liturgical texts are destined for apostates and heretics. In the MS Venice, Mech. 1173, written

Cf. ⁴⁰ *ՈՒՅՈՒՆ*, *op. cit.*, I, p. 230.

in A. D. 1345, fl. 112a-115a we have a long rite concerning apostates⁴¹ but nowhere is a rite of unction to be found.

In a manuscript dated of A. D. 1704-1710, Venice, Mech. 1571, fl. 231a-b, there are two little rites for receiving heretics into the church. Both have only an introductory rubric and a prayer. These are the rubrics: «Prayer of Vardapet Mxit'ar Goš for Arians and other heretics, which is read over them when they repent; and they anoint (them) with the holy oil. [...] But regarding Nestorians and Eutychians, they do not need to make the confession of faith nor anathematize the heretics nor (do they need) an unction, but they say this prayer over them»⁴².

The same unction is prescribed in a letter of the Catholicos Nersēs Šnorhali (1163-1173) about the reception into the church of the heretic followers of the sect known by the name of «Sons of the Sun». He says, after some prescriptions that repeat substantially those of Laodicea: «anoint also their foreheads and their senses with the holy myron saying: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Afterwards join them to the flock of Christ»⁴³.

We have this rite of the unction of penitents in the Nestorian liturgy too. It was performed on those who had renounced their faith willingly; otherwise only a signing with the hand of the priest was made⁴⁴. It is worth noting that the first edition of these texts is attributed to Mar Isho'-yahb, Patriarch of the Nestorian Church in the middle of the VIIIth century.

Even if we do not accept the hypothesis that an unction was originally prescribed in our Armenian penitential text we are certainly struck by the parallelism of the rites, such as the signing with the hand of the priest, which are common to the Armenian and the Nestorian liturgies.

Some differences may be pointed out too: the Armenian text is a «Call to penance» whereas in the Nestorian liturgy we have a rite of reconciliation. Consequently in the Nestorian texts we have a clear reference, which is lacking in the Armenian, to the communion received by the penitent. On the other hand the Nestorian

⁴¹ Cf. SARGISEAN and SARGSEAN, *op. cit.*, III, c. 158-159.

⁴² Cf. SARGISEAN and SARGSEAN, *op. cit.*, III, c. 564-565.

⁴³ NERSĒS ŠNORHALI, *T'ult'k'*, Venice, 1873, p. 247.

⁴⁴ Cf. DENZINGER, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 467-468 and 471, translations by Renaudot and Badger respectively. Cf. also VOSTÉ, *op. cit.*, pp. 168-169, note 2 and p. 172 where a rite for the reconciliation of Jacobites and Melkites is given with an unction of the penitent at the end of the ceremony.

texts are destined for apostates whereas the Armenian liturgy seems to have been written for heretics⁴⁵.

The comparison stated bears out the possibility that the word «with oil» was changed into the present «with the church». The similarities of the Armenian and the Nestorian liturgies are too close to be disregarded as a working hypothesis of this confusion, though the palaeography does not confirm it entirely. However, this is the only hypothesis I can think of for the problem stated.

The analysis of the «Call to penance» we have so far carried out has revealed most of the problems it presents. Some of these have been solved, I believe, e. g. those regarding the original canon of at the beginning of the rite and at the entry (§§ 2 and 7). Besides this, some hypotheses have been proposed which take into account certain characteristics of the text, as in the commentary of §§ 5 and 9 to 11. But the question of the nature of the text has not yet been dealt with on its own. The best way of understanding it is to try to find its original redaction.

In the first part of the text at the entrance of the church (§§ 1-6) we have no indication of an edition earlier than the one we know. The questions which have arisen in § 2 are a result of a mistake in its transmission but they are certainly not a sign of two editions of its text.

In § 7 we have the first hints of the composite nature of our «Call to penance». The hypothesis that pss. 31 and 101(or 142) had been joined to the original psalm of the entrance was formulated at the time, and it was suggested that this had been done on the occasion of a second edition of the text; but no explanation was given of what occasioned it.

The difficulties of interpretation of §§ 8 and 9 in their present context are our best guide, and the hypothesis that would account for all of them would be to consider § 7.2,4 and §§ 8-9 as an independent rite of reconciliation that has mingled with the rite of the original «Call to penance»⁴⁶. Accordingly, the earlier edition of this text had no remission formula as stated in § 8 for the penitent

⁴⁵ This difference is of little practical importance because the concepts of heretic and apostate are very close; one could easily pass from one to the other depending on the circumstances of church life when the final edition of the text was laid down.

⁴⁶ I am much indebted to Fr. A. Raes for the criticism of my earlier interpretation of §§ 8-9 which lead to the present hypothesis. This is however of my entire responsibility.

was only partially united to the people of God, not taking part in the communion⁴⁷. According to this hypothesis the «Call to penance» was strictly a rite of transition from the status of sinner to the status of penitent. The entrance into the church was its most important rite to which all the others, psalmody, prayer, renouncing Satan, confession of faith and confession of sins were but a necessary preparation. The reception of the penitent into the material church was the sign, the *sacramentum* of his acceptance into the spiritual one.

We cannot say that forgiveness of sins was imparted in this rite. Such a concept would misread the theology underlying our text, besides being historical nonsense. But this does not impair the rich symbolism attached to the entrance of which the recitation of ps. 117, with its purposefully chosen antiphon, is the best commentary. The «Call to penance», which reaches its climax with the rite of the entrance, imparted the beginning of justification just as the entrance into the church was an occasion of it⁴⁸.

As we see, the theological ideas underlying the text that we assume to make up part of the first edition of the «Call to penance» were very near to those which are expressed in §§ 8 and 9. So it is not surprising that this sort of intermingling of texts occurred. This was the proper place to introduce the hypothetically independent rite of reconciliation.

This was done probably when the distinction between those penitents outside and those inside the door of the church was no longer ritually observed. We have no certain indication as to precisely when this took place. The evidence we could gather from the canons of Nersēs Šinōł (641-661) is weakened by the fact that their authorship is uncertain. However, they seem to have been edited when there was already in Armenia only one stage of penance⁴⁹.

⁴⁷ This statement supposes that the canonical discipline according to which this text was written had only two stages of penance: without and within the church. Communion was given only after a certain period of penance within the church. This seems to be the most ancient discipline of the canonical texts of the Armenian tradition. See for instance Synod of Ancyra (HAKOBIAN, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 151-167), Synod of Caesarea (*Id.*, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 168-176) Synod of Neocaesarea (*Id.*, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 176-187), Canons of Saint Gregory the Illuminator (*Id.*, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 243-249) etc.

⁴⁸ The armenian word we translate by «occasion» means originally «cause».

⁴⁹ The canons that suppose a two stage discipline are taken from more ancient sources. For the armenian text cf. MSS Julfa, 131, ff. 301a-303a and Venice, Mech. 1177, ff. 270a-272b.

These canons are put by V. HATZOUNI, «Disciplina armena», *Codificazione Canonica Orientale*, Fonti, Fasc. VIII, Vatican, 1932, p. 165, amongst the «uncertain sources». The

Uncertain as this evidence is, we may think that the *terminus ante quem* of this second edition of our «Call to penance» cannot be set much later than the epoch of Nersēs Šinol. In the IXth century we have already in the Maštoc' Book a much more developed penitential text for which it is possible to retrace some previous stages of evolution. This leads us to think that the «Call to penance», in its present redaction, was transferred to the canonical collections long before the IXth century.

In conclusion: the antiquity of the first known text of the Armenian penance is certainly enhanced by the hypothesis of its having been originally written as an order for the acceptance of heretics into penance⁵⁰.

MÁRIO FERREIRA LAGES

original canons (of Nersēs Šinol?) seem to have been only 23 (cf. the index of the MS Julfa 131 or HAKOBIAN, *op. cit.*, I, p. 4). In the body of the manuscripts we have actually 43 or 44 canons.

⁵⁰ I have not made reference to which original text I think § 11 belongs. From the point of view of the structure it is most probable that it pertains to the original rite of the «Call to penance». Nevertheless in the Nestorian liturgy the parallel rite belongs to the rite of reconciliation. The text of Laodicea seems to suggest the same interpretation: but this canon does not say that the communion followed immediately after the unction. On the other hand the texts of the Nestorian liturgy could have undergone a reform similar to the one hypothesized for the Armenian liturgy. I recognize, however, that this interpretation would force the immediate meaning of these parallel texts.

The internal evidence of the «Call» being very slight on this subject I am unable to choose either of the two alternatives.

Resumo**O MAIS ANTIGO TEXTO PENITENCIAL
DA LITURGIA ARMÊNIA**

A tradução portuguesa do mais antigo texto penitencial da liturgia armênia, que apresentamos a seguir, baseia-se numa edição crítica por nós preparada para a qual utilizámos dez manuscritos e uma edição. A divisão em parágrafos e em versículos foi feita pelo autor. As palavras entre parênteses () e [] também se não encontram no texto armênio; no primeiro caso trata-se de explicitações do texto e no segundo, de referências bíblicas.

CHAMADA À PENITÊNCIA DE JOÃO MANDAKUNI

1. O sacerdote vai com o pecador para a porta da igreja,
2. 1 e psalmodia: 2 A ti, Senhor elevei [ps. 24];
3 Tem misericórdia de mim, Senhor [ps. 50] e o outro salmo.
3. 1 Proclamação e oração: 2 Senhor Deus, tu falaste com a tua boca.
3 E: Deus exaltado e glorificado.
4. E coloca o pecador (voltado) para o ocidente e (o pecador) renuncia a Satã três vezes.
5. 1 E fá-lo voltar-se para o oriente e fá-lo confessar três vezes a sua fé na igreja santa, católica, apostólica, num (só) baptismo para a penitência; 2 porque da primeira vez a sua fé foi confessada pela língua de outros, mas desta segunda ela será confessada pela sua língua.
6. 1 Em seguida põe aquele que confessa face à porta 2 e enumera os nomes dos pecados como também estão escritos.
7. 1 Esta é a porta do Senhor e os justos [ps. 117, 20].
2 E: Bem-aventurados aqueles a quem foi dada remissão [ps. 31].
3 Confessai ao Senhor de todo o coração [ps. 110 ou 137].
4 E: Senhor, ouve a (minha) oração [ps. 101 ou 142].
8. E: O Senhor diz: a quem remitirdes será remitido [Jo. 20, 23].
9. 1 E justificado pela graça de Cristo ele voltará para casa para jejuar e orar todos os dias da sua vida; 2 e com (obras de) misericórdia ele expiará os seus pecados.
10. Esta é a porta da verdadeira penitência e ocasião de justificação.
11. E marcá-lo-á (*lit.* imprimir-lhe-á o selo) com a santa cruz e com a igreja (*sic*) e com a mão direita do sacerdote.

Enunciamos os principais problemas de interpretação do texto:

1. Em nenhum outro texto histórico conhecido se encontra confirmação de que João Mandakuni (478-490) compôs um texto litúrgico da penitência.

2. Os salmos prescritos no § 2 são provavelmente os seguintes: 24, 25 e 50.

3. Duas hipóteses podem solucionar o problema da não menção da Trindade na profissão de fé do § 5: a) o texto é destinado à recepção de hereges ou apóstatas à penitência, tendo o redactor reputado essencial mencionar apenas a fé na Igreja; b) o texto é complementar de uma profissão de fé feita no baptismo na qual apenas eram mencionadas as pessoas da Trindade. Esta segunda hipótese parece mais conforme com o texto do parágrafo.

4. A redacção original do § 7 parece ter constado apenas dos vv. 1 e 3. Os vv. 2 e 4 e os §§ 8 e 9 poderiam ter constituído primitivamente um rito de reconciliação que se veio juntar, talvez antes dos fins do século VII, ao texto da «Chamada à penitência».

5. No § 11 poderia ter havido primitivamente referência a um rito de unção. A palavra «com a igreja» seria uma corrupção de «com o óleo». A hipótese não é inteiramente sustentada pela paleografia. A comparação litúrgica feita é mais positiva.

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