

5 Hippolytus: The Apostolic Tradition

This work is generally believed to have come down to us in the form of an anonymous, untitled treatise which in the nineteenth century was given the name of *The Egyptian Church Order*. This is extant in Latin, Coptic, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions, and in adaptations such as *The Canons of Hippolytus*, *The Apostolic Constitutions*, and the *Testamentum Domini* (q.v.). Its identification was established independently by E. Schwarz in 1910 and R.H. Connolly in 1916, and implies a date of c. 215. The work professedly reflects "the tradition which has remained until now," and so may be taken as a witness to Roman practice some fifty years earlier. This brings it close to the time of Justin, with whose account it agrees quite closely. Hippolytus gives us the earliest surviving text of a eucharistic prayer, but this should not be regarded as *the* Roman prayer of its time, being an individual specimen rather than an invariable form.

Since the original Greek is largely lost, the translation raises problems. Here chapters 4, 5, 6, and 21 are translated from the Latin; chapter 9, which is lacking from the Latin, from the Sahidic Coptic version. The numbering follows the editions of Botte and Cuming: the equivalent chapters in Dix's edition are 4, 5, 6, 10, 22 and 23.

Like Justin, Hippolytus describes two eucharists, one after an ordination, the other after a baptism. Put together, they produce the following outline:

1. The prayers
2. The kiss of peace
3. The offering (in baptism, with milk and honey, and water)
4. The anaphora (including blessings of produce)
5. Discourse by the bishop, "giving a reason for all these things"
6. The fraction
7. The distribution.

This should be compared with the outline supplied by Justin (pp.25-26).

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From Prayers of the Eucharist: Early and Reformed, 3rd ed. RCD Jasper
or GJ Cuming, eds. + trans. Colledgeville,
MN: Liturgical Press, 1990.

The anaphora falls into six sections:

1. The Sursum corda
2. The preface
3. The Institution Narrative
4. The anamnesis
5. The epiclesis
6. The doxology.

There is a danger of imposing later terminology: the distinction between the sections is not as clear-cut as in later anaphoras; but this analysis shows that most of the normal features of a fourth-century anaphora were present, at any rate in embryo, quite early on. The obvious exceptions are the Sanctus, which only entered the anaphora later, and the intercessions, which in Hippolytus' time were made before the peace (see ch. 21). The pattern of ministry is slightly more complex than in Justin: deacons bring up the offering, and presbyters join in the distribution.

The Sursum corda begins as in Egypt and in the Roman Canon; this is its earliest appearance. The preface almost ignores Creation, saying only "through whom you made all things," despite Justin's emphasis on this theme. It is almost entirely devoted to the life of Christ. The language of this section has many parallels in other writings of Hippolytus, and in his individual theology (see Connolly's article listed in the Bibliography). It also contains echoes of Justin and Irenaeus, both of whom were regarded by Hippolytus as authoritative teachers.

The preface runs on without a break into the Institution Narrative. This is given in a very brief form which may be a survival from very early days, or a deliberate shortening of the gospel text for liturgical use. It is placed at the right point chronologically, following the reference to Jesus' ministry and preceding the "remembrance" of his death and resurrection.

The very brief anamnesis is the only part of the anaphora which reappears in the Roman Canon, as it does also in the version of the latter quoted by Ambrose, and in the *Apostolic Constitutions* (see p. 110). It leads into the offering of the bread and the cup, which is an innovation, since Justin only spoke of sending up

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prayers and thanksgivings. As in Justin, God is thanked for making us worthy to celebrate the eucharist.

The epiclesis section has aroused a good deal of controversy, partly because of the difficulty of translating the Latin, partly because it has been taken to imply a "higher" doctrine of the Holy Spirit than was current c. 215. Various ways of dealing with the first problem have been proposed (see footnote 4 and, in detail, *Essays on Hippolytus* in the Bibliography). The *Testamentum Domini* (see p. 140) has a translation which smoothes over the problem, which led Dix to believe that the translator used a better manuscript than the Latin translator. But the smoothness is more probably due to the translator trying to produce a viable piece of liturgy from a corrupt text.

As to the doctrinal problem, the epiclesis has been thought by some scholars to be a fourth-century interpolation. However, the Spirit is not asked to change the elements (as he surely would have been in the fourth century), but only to come upon them for the benefit of the communicants, which is not at all incongruous with early third-century doctrine. The emphasis on the re-uniting of the Church recalls the *Didache*, as does the description of Christ as "child" or "servant." In chapter 21 Hippolytus used the terminology of "likeness" (of the body and blood) which remains in the liturgical texts as late as Basil and Ambrose.

E. C. Ratcliff argued that Hippolytus' anaphora originally ended with the Sanctus; though his conclusion has not been widely accepted, the article is still well worth reading for its various insights.

The blessings of oil, cheese, and olives may be intended to follow the doxology, or, as in later years, to be inserted immediately before it.

Hippolytus made it quite clear that this prayer is not to be regarded as mandatory, but simply as a model. The bishop may use his own words or a fixed form. Chapter 9 has survived only in Coptic, Arabic, and Ethiopic: the last two translations clearly date from a time when free composition was a thing of the past, since they omit "not at all" and read "It is necessary"!

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An enlarged version of the anaphora has remained in use in Ethiopia under the name of *The Anaphora of the Apostles*. In recent years adaptations have appeared in the Roman rite (prayer 2), the Church of England (prayer 3), and the American Lutheran book (prayer 4).

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CHAPTER 1: PROLOGUE

CHAPTERS 2, 3: ORDINATION OF A BISHOP

CHAPTER 4: THE EUCHARIST

And when he has been made bishop, all shall offer the kiss of peace, greeting him because he has been made worthy.

Then the deacons shall present the offering to him; and he, laying his hands on it with all the presbytery, shall say, giving thanks:

The Lord be with you.¹

And all shall say:

And with your spirit.

Up with your hearts.²

We have (them) with the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord.

It is fitting and right.

1. Coptic adds all.

2. The Latin has no verb.

And then he shall continue thus:

We render thanks to you, O God, through your beloved child³ Jesus Christ, whom in the last times you sent to us as a savior and redeemer and angel of your will; who is your inseparable Word, through whom you made all things, and in whom you were well pleased. You sent him from heaven into a virgin's womb; and conceived in the womb, he was made flesh and was manifested as your Son, being born of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin. Fulfilling your will and gaining for you a holy people, he stretched out his hands when he should suffer, that he might release from suffering those who have believed in you.

And when he was betrayed to voluntary suffering that he might destroy death, and break the bonds of the devil, and tread down hell, and shine upon the righteous, and fix a term, and manifest the resurrection, he took bread and gave thanks to you, saying, "Take, eat; this is my body, which shall be broken for you." Likewise also the cup, saying, "This is my blood, which is shed for you; when you do this, you make my remembrance."

Remembering therefore his death and resurrection, we offer to you the bread and the cup, giving you thanks because you have held us worthy to stand before you and minister to you.

And we ask that you would send your Holy Spirit upon the offering of your holy Church; that, gathering her into one, you would grant to all who receive the holy things (to receive) for the fullness of the Holy Spirit for the strengthening of faith in truth,⁴ that we may praise and glorify you through your child⁵ Jesus Christ; through whom be glory and honor to you, to the Father and the Son, with the Holy Spirit,⁶ in your holy Church, both now and to the ages of ages. Amen.

3. Or servant (cf. *Didache*, p. 23).

4. The Latin is almost untranslatable at this point. Literally translated, "grant" has no object; hence the addition of "to receive." Another possible translation is: grant to all of us who receive the holy things for the fullness . . . in truth, that we may praise and glorify you . . .

5. Cf. note 3.

6. Not in the Ethiopic: "to the Father and the Son, with the Holy Spirit."

CHAPTER 5: THE BLESSING OF OIL

If anyone offers oil, (the bishop) shall render thanks in the same way as for the offering of bread and wine, not saying (it) word for word, but to similar effect, saying:

O God, sanctifier of this oil, as you give health to⁷ those who use⁸ and receive (that) with which you anointed kings, priests, and prophets, so may it give strength to all those who taste it and health to all who use it.

CHAPTER 6: THE BLESSING OF CHEESE AND OLIVES

Likewise, if anyone offers cheese and olives, he shall say thus: Sanctify this milk which has been coagulated, coagulating us also to your love.

Make this fruit of the olive not to depart from your sweetness, which is an example of your richness which you have poured from the tree of life to those who hope in you.

But in every blessing shall be said:

To you be glory, both to the Father and the Son, with the Holy Spirit, in the holy Church, both now and always and to all the ages of ages. (Amen.)

CHAPTERS 7.1-9.2: PRIESTS, DEACONS, AND CONFESSORS

CHAPTER 9.3-5:

And the bishop shall give thanks according to what we said above. It is not at all necessary for him to utter the same words that we said above, as though reciting them from memory, when giving thanks to God; but let each pray according to his ability. If indeed he is able to pray sufficiently and with a solemn prayer, it is good. But if anyone who prays, recites a prayer according to a fixed form, do not prevent him. Only, he must pray what is sound and orthodox.

7. Dix conjectures: sanctify (hagiazō misread as hugiazō?).

8. Ethiopic: are anointed: the Latin translator has misread chrōmenois ("anointed") as chrōmenois ("using").

CHAPTERS 10-14: MINOR ORDERS

CHAPTERS 15-20: CATECHUMENS

CHAPTER 21: BAPTISM (numbering as in Botte and Cumming; Dix, chs. 21-23)

POST-BAPTISMAL PRAYER; ANOINTING; SEALING.

Then (the newly-baptized) shall pray together with all the people; but they do not pray with the faithful until they have carried out all these things.

And when they have prayed, they shall give the kiss of peace.

THE BAPTISMAL EUCHARIST

And then the offering shall be brought up by the deacons to the bishop: and he shall give thanks over the bread for the representation, which the Greeks call "antitype," of the body of Christ; and after the cup mixed with wine for the antitype, which the Greeks call "likeness",⁹ of the blood which was shed for all who believed in him;

(and) over milk and honey mixed together in fulfillment of the promise which was made to the Fathers, in which he said, "a land flowing with milk and honey"; in which also Christ gave his flesh, through which those who believe are nourished like little children, making the bitterness of the heart sweet by the gentleness of his word; and over water, as an offering to signify the washing, that the inner man also, which is the soul, may receive the same thing as the body. And the bishop shall give a reason for all these things to those who receive.

And when he breaks the bread, in distributing fragments to each, he shall say:

The bread of heaven in Christ Jesus.

And he who receives shall answer: Amen.

And if there are not enough presbyters, the deacons also shall hold the cups, and stand by in good order and reverence: first, he who holds the water; second, the milk; third, the wine. And they who receive shall taste of each thrice, he who gives it saying:¹⁰ In God the Father almighty. And he who receives shall say: Amen.

9. Botte conjectures: for the likeness, which the Greeks call *homoïōma*.

10. Or he who gives it saying thrice.

And in the Lord Jesus Christ. *(And he shall say: Amen.)*

And in the Holy Spirit and the holy Church.

And he shall say: Amen.

So shall it be done with each one.

CHAPTERS 22 - 43: OTHER CHURCH OBSERVANCES