

Mid-term Take Home Examination

Question One: *Apostolic Tradition*

According to *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, “the Council also desires that, where necessary, the rites be revised carefully in the light of sound tradition, and that they be given new vigor to meet the circumstances and needs of modern times.¹” With these words, Vatican II ushered in a period of liturgical renewal both within the Roman Catholic Church and in other ecclesial communities. A particular emphasis was placed on the restoration of rites that had either become lost or overgrown with accretions. One such renewal was made manifest in the introduction of three additional anaphoras in the Latin Rite of the Roman Catholic Church. One of the anaphoras, referred to as Eucharistic Prayer II, is based on the document *Apostolic Traditions*, attributed to Hippolytus of Rome. Additionally the revivification of the Rites of Ordination and the Rites of Christian Initiation drew heavily upon this document.

The text of the *Apostolic Tradition* is attributed by most scholars to Hippolytus of Rome and is supposed to have been written circa 215. Given this, *Apostolic Tradition* represents the earliest Church Order that contains “directives about the correct procedure to be adopted in the appointment of ministers, the texts of prayers to be used for ordination and in the celebration of the eucharist, the ritual to be followed in the administration of baptism, and other such matters.²” In short, *Apostolic Tradition* is the first liturgical text and furthermore purports to be the liturgy celebrated in Rome, the seat of the Roman Catholic Church. Many scholars today, however, have called into question the authenticity of the authorship and dating of *Apostolic Tradition*. Paul Bradshaw states that “one ought not automatically

¹ *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, § 4.

² Bradshaw, Paul F. *The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992. pg. 107.

assume that it provides reliable information about the life and liturgical activity of the church in Rome in the early third century.³”

Given the great deal of contemporary liturgical renewal that has made use of *Apostolic Tradition* for such developments as the second Eucharistic Prayer of the Roman Rite, it seems that calling into question the authenticity of *Apostolic Tradition* as a third century Roman document of Hippolytus may undermine the promotion of contemporary liturgical renewal. It must be remembered, however, that liturgical texts “belong to a genre which may be called ‘living literature’... which circulates within a community and forms a part of its heritage and tradition but which is constantly subject to revision and rewriting to reflect changing historical and cultural circumstances.”⁴ This process is not something novel that followed from *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, but rather a process that has been ongoing and will continue to take place so long as liturgical texts are being used.

There are those that call into question the use of the *Apostolic Tradition* as the basis for a Eucharistic Prayer, regardless of whether or not it is a third century Roman document of Hippolytus, stating that *Apostolic Tradition* fell out of use in the Latin West in the fourth century, although it continued to hold some importance in the East. Cardinal Ratzinger and Joseph Fessio, for example, advocate the deletion of Eucharistic Prayer II from the Roman Rite because of the this lack of traditional usage and other reasons, including the its purported distortion of dogma. Cardinal Silvio Oddi stated that those who developed Eucharistic Prayer II were “not particularly concerned about the purity of dogma and ... in the name of a misinterpreted ecumenical concept, they sought to present these aspects in a way that would be pleasing to others.”⁵ For these and other likeminded conservatives, if it were shown that *Apostolic Tradition* was not authored by Hippolytus of Rome in the third century, they would no longer be able to dismiss the document as the work of one whom they indict as an antipope, however, their opposition to using *Apostolic Tradition* as the basis for Eucharistic Prayer II would not lessen.

³ *Ibid.*, pg. 92.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pg. 74.

⁵ Oddi, Cardinal Silvio. September 1991 issue of *30 Days*, cited from “Distorting Hippolytus” by Edward T. Snyder.

Others see Eucharistic Prayer II of the Roman Rite as a powerful ecumenical statement between Roman Catholics, Anglicans, and Lutherans as all three denominations have adopted some variant of a Eucharistic Prayer based off *Apostolic Tradition*. It seems that to call into question the authenticity of *Apostolic Tradition* might serve to undermine the promotion of ecumenism within the liturgical sphere, if it is shown that the text does not represent a common denominator of Christian liturgical celebration. On the other hand, if it is indeed the case that *Apostolic Tradition* is a composite document, drawing its sources from a variety of churches in Early Church history, one could claim that this enhances the catholicity of the document, making it a symbol of the unification of disparate parts of the Church in itself, rather than diminishing its authenticity. For regardless of its exact origins, it is certainly the case that *Apostolic Tradition* represents an ancient Church Order, one from which we can glean information about “the ongoing life of the Church.”⁶ This life of the Church is conveyed in the history of all liturgical texts, unlocking the use of such documents as *Apostolic Tradition* by the Church through the ages and in various situations.

Christianity is a system of symbols – a set of symbols that carry meaning for a variety of sacred elements of human nature. Those who make use of a symbol ascribe to it the manifold meanings that it transmits both between individuals and for a single person, intentional or not. Thus, liturgical texts and the authority that their authors or compilers have are contested symbols for a variety of meanings. Paul Bradshaw claims that in the earliest of the ancient Church Orders the exact authorship of a particular document was not as important as whether or not it was in accord with the teachings of those who genuinely had authority to teach – the Apostles. Later ancient Church Orders, beginning with the *Didascalia*, explicitly make claims regarding the authoritative authorship of texts. This can be seen as a development of the symbolic capital of the Christian community; while at first the teachings themselves were sufficient for belief, now the authority of the author must accompany the text. This is confirmed by the fact that various groups were competing for control of these symbols – namely those who were labeled heretics and those who labeled themselves as orthodox. Even the very label of orthodoxy is a

⁶ Bradshaw, pg. 102.

highly contested symbol. The same holds true for the authenticity of Hippolytus' authorship of *Apostolic Tradition*. For some, such authorship is such that it verifies third century Roman liturgical practice, a practice that should be used to renew current liturgical practices. For others, such ascription of authorship is sufficient to dismiss the text itself, regardless of the content on the basis of the repute of the author. Still for others, the text itself is a symbol of the living Church, an organic Church that grows and accommodates all in the spirit of God.

While calling into question the authenticity of *Apostolic Tradition* as a third century Roman document of Hippolytus may seem to undermine the promotion of contemporary liturgical renewal for some, it does not do so for all. The developing understanding of the authorship of the *Apostolic Tradition*, and all liturgical texts for that matter, will continue to influence the meanings which Christians ascribe to their myriad sacred symbols.

Question Two: Justin Martyr

Justin, an early Christian Martyr from Samaria, writing from Rome around 150 in his *First Apology* provides us with the earliest description of Christian liturgical practices. Despite being removed from Justin and his experiences by more than eighteen centuries, his writings are still a valuable source for liturgical renewal. Justin's *First Apology* not only describes ways in which the current Church can revitalize its liturgical practices, but also offers a unique opportunity to see various elements of the Early Christian community which need not be adopted for the modern Church.

Sections 65-67 discuss three aspects of the Christian liturgical practices: the rituals associated with Initiation, an explanation of the meaning of the Eucharist, and finally an account of the Sunday gathering of the Christians addressing the way in which the Christians live their lives. Looking at each of these areas, Justin offers one who is concerned with contemporary liturgical renewal both positive and negative forms – some worth imitating, others worth discarding.

It is clear that the initiate is baptized apart from the community, as Justin states: “we take him [the newly initiated] to those who are called brethren.”⁷ Given that the ritual washing of baptism in Justin's day was done on nude initiates, it is to be expected that baptism be administered apart from the worshipping community. While baptizing the initiate apart from the community is not the practice used in today's Rites of Initiation, it is still a viable option. It seems that the opportunity for valuable catechesis of others is lost by performing the baptism in private, whereby those who are already baptized might be reminded of their vows and to what they assented. It could also be argued, quite appropriately, that baptism administered privately maintains a mystique for the initiate who experiences the rite for the first time at his or her own initiation, since the sacrament may seem more mystical than if it were routinely administered before the community. I feel, however, that administering the sacrament of baptism before the entire community is not only fruitful for catechesis of both the initiate and community,

⁷ Jasper, R.C.D. and G.J. Cuming. *Prayers of the Eucharist: Early and Reformed*. Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1990. pg. 28.

but also facilitates the incorporation of the initiate into the community through their communal participation in the sacrament.

The language of enlightenment that Justin uses to describe the state that results from “having learned the truth⁸” is something which could be recovered with great effectiveness in a contemporary setting. A great deal of people are seeking to know the truth, to know what is real, and to couch baptism and the living of a Christian life in terms of truth seems very effective for those who are surrounded by so many systems that purport to offer one the truth. Justin himself emerged from a past wherein he had toiled to find the truth, having explored Stoicism, Aristotelian thought, Pythagorean reason and logic, Platonism, and finally Christianity.⁹ While many Christians shy away from the Enlightenment, that period in the eighteenth century that rejected religion in favor of rationality, the use of the term here makes it obvious that baptism into Christianity afforded some sort of sacred knowledge.

“When we have ended the prayers, we greet one another with a kiss.¹⁰” Here Justin indicates that once the baptized had been brought into community and prayers had been offered for the newly initiated and the assembled, that they embrace one another before ever beginning the Eucharistic celebration. This is most certainly a guidepost which contemporary liturgical renewal ought to keep their sights fixed upon – namely, placing the kiss of peace at a time and place which is more appropriate than in the midst of the anaphora where it stands today. While the sharing of scripture is not explicitly referred to in §65, the discussion of the events which take place on a Sunday in §67 indicate that “the records of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read¹¹” before the celebration of the Eucharist. While it may seem logical to place the kiss of peace, an act which seems as much an act of hospitality as anything else, at the beginning of any event, much in the same manner which one greets and hugs their relatives at the door when they arrive for a family dinner. Perhaps the placement of the kiss of peace that Justin describes results from an earlier form where the community celebrated the Eucharistic meal prior to reading the

⁸ *Ibid.*, pg. 28.

⁹ Deiss, Lucien. *Springtime of the Liturgy*. Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1979. pg. 89.

¹⁰ Jasper, pg. 28.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pg. 29.

Scriptures. Regardless of its original placement in the liturgical practices of the early Christians, the kiss of peace ought to be placed either at the beginning of the Mass, or as Justin recounts, following the Prayers of the Faithful and prior to the Eucharistic celebration.

In §66, Justin explains a theology of the Eucharist and indicates that in just the same way that the Word of God became incarnate as Jesus, so to does Jesus become incarnate in the body and blood of the Eucharist. This powerful explanation has two potential lessons for the contemporary liturgist. First, by focusing the Eucharist on the incarnation rather than the sacrifice of the crucifixion, Justin indicates a separation from the language of sacrifice prevalent in the Roman world. It is also very likely that even if the Christian community made use of sacrificial language, that Justin would have chosen to exclude it, for his *Apology*, was addressed to those who though the Christians were cannibals in consuming the flesh of Jesus. Second, Justin conveys an incarnation of the faithful: “from which our flesh and blood are fed by transformation.¹²” This seems to indicate an acknowledgment of the transforming power of receiving the body and blood of Christ, such that the Christians may become that which they eat, namely incarnate in a Christ like manner.

The discussion §67 is substantially the same as that presented in the earlier Eucharistic celebration following baptism, however, the reading of Scriptures is recorded and the whole context is set within a regular Sunday worship. The focus of this section, however, seems to be less on the actual practices of the Christian community and more on their lifestyle as induced by their liturgical practice. In §65 Justin indicated how the Christian community prayed, and in §66 what they believed through an explication on their practices, and now in §67 he turns to how they live (*lex orandi, lex credendi, lex vivendi*). Members of the Christian community help one another, gather together, imitate the lives of Jesus and the Apostles as exhorted by the homily, and give to those who are needy. This manner which Justin uses liturgical practices as a springboard to explain beliefs, then using beliefs to justify lifestyle is one model which liturgical renewal could follow by seeking to renew those practices that align more closely to beliefs of contemporary Christianity which has likewise been renewed.

Thus far, most of what has been drawn from Justin's *First Apology* to guide contemporary liturgical renewal has been a positive affirmation of those practices that Justin describes, save perhaps the practice of private administration of the sacrament of baptism. Much, however, is not known about the practices that Justin describes, despite conjectures about such matters. For example, it is not known whether bread was brought from members of the community, or whether bread was the only mater used for the Eucharistic meal. Of more importance, Justin does not record anything specific of the ritual of initiation, other than it being a cleansing. On those matters, of course, Justin's account is of no help in guiding contemporary liturgical renewal. In fact, it may be that since Justin was writing this *First Apology* for non-Christians, that the account intentionally leaves out important elements of the liturgical practices of the Christian community. It is also probable the Justin did not want to reveal all of the details of the Christian practice to those who were likely to be persecuting the Christians. Lastly, Justin's description, like any liturgical text, may be an account of some idealized worship rather than that which actually took place in the houses of worship. Thus, it may not be possible or useful to use Justin's account of Christian worship as a model for contemporary liturgical renewal, as such practices may not have been as common as one assumes they must have been.

Justin's account does have limitations for its application as a guide for contemporary liturgical reform, but despite these limitations Justin's *First Apology* is useful for those endeavoring to revitalize contemporary liturgical practices.

¹² *Ibid.*, pg. 29.