

## ***Introduction***

While much has been published concerning the peace witness of the early church during the past fifty years, little of this scholarship has focused on early Christian liturgies. This has been an unfortunate gap in the scholarship, especially given the likelihood that Christian formation would have been far more influenced by regular participation in the liturgical life of the church than by the more infrequent writings and teachings of a few leaders commonly known as “church fathers.”

A few scholars have moved in this direction and have begun to close the gap somewhat. Eleanor Kreider has proposed that the kiss of peace might be seen as the tip of an iceberg that indicates that the idea of peace as a whole, especially interpersonal peace, was a central moving force within the liturgical life of the early church.<sup>1</sup> L. Edward Phillips work on the liturgical materials indicates that the ritual kiss had a number of different functions in the early liturgies, some more and some less related to peace.<sup>2</sup> Emmanuel Lanne’s 1977 article in *Irénikon* draws a distinction between Eastern and Western traditions of intercession in eucharistic prayers, showing how the differing eucharistic theology informs different understandings of the locus of peace for the church and the world.<sup>3</sup> While the traditions he cites are for the most part later than our period, the insight that differences in eucharistic theology create differences in the understanding of the meaning and teaching of peace is critical for our study.

This study will be more comprehensive in scope. We will examine six major liturgical texts from at least three different cultural backgrounds in the first four centuries: Didache (first or second century Syria), Apology I of Justin Martyr (mid

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<sup>1</sup>Eleanor Kreider, “Let the Faithful Greet Each Other: the Kiss of Peace” (*Conrad Grebel Review* 5:25-29), Winter 1986.

<sup>2</sup>L. Edward Phillips, “The Ritual Kiss in Early Christian Worship” (Ph. D. Dissertation: The University of Notre Dame), 1992.

<sup>3</sup>Emmanuel Lanne, “Église Une dans la Prière Eucharistique...” (*Irénikon* 50, no. 3:326-344), 1977

second century Rome, with possible reflection on Palestine and/or Asia Minor), Apostolic Tradition (early third century Rome), Didascalia (third century Syria), The Prayer Book of Sarapion (mid fourth century Lower Egypt), and Apostolic Constitutions (late fourth century Syria). Since secondary materials are largely lacking on this topic, and in some cases on the texts themselves, these texts will be used as primary sources for discerning what and how ordinary Christians may have been teaching and learning about peace in their regular worship life.

This study employs critical editions of the liturgical texts in Greek, Latin, French and English, usually offering fresh translations of Greek and Latin texts. Staying close to the texts, this study proposes to be descriptive and historical rather than normative or ideological. For this reason, no prior definition of peace is offered.

Instead, we will highlight such institutions as “the kiss of peace” and the “bishop’s court,” and review the theology and practice of baptism, catechesis, ordination, and other peacemaking procedures the various texts may describe. In the case of The Prayer Book of Sarapion, which nowhere mentions the word peace and seems to have little interest in any but the vertical divine-human relationship, we will seek to understand instead what its baptismal and eucharistic liturgies are teaching about peace with God. Finally, what is offered and what is expected to be received or accomplished through the eucharistic sacrifice, whether it is a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving (as in earlier texts) or of propitiation or some combination thereof (as in later texts), will be given special attention in each text in order to discern what this central rite of weekly Christian worship was teaching about peace.

The liturgical teaching of peace between and even within given texts is not necessarily univocal. Nearly every text reflects some tension between various views and practices of Christian peace and their relationship to pagan cult and culture. That tension exists probably reveals the enduring importance of the teaching of peace in some form

over time in different missional settings, and should not be viewed necessarily as a compromise of a witness to peace.

This study comprises seven chapters, one for each of the liturgical documents under consideration and a final chapter offering some normative reflections, based on the witness of the early liturgical materials, on the teaching of peace in contemporary Christian liturgy.

A few words need to be said about the limits of the value of this study. At present, liturgical scholars and social historians have done little to link the liturgical texts to their immediate or proximate socio-political contexts. Liturgical scholarship has only recently completed enough of the basic textual work (which is still underway) to begin creating literary analysis, much less concrete socio-rhetorical studies. The sort of socio-political interpretation this study sometimes offers is an attempt to begin to make some of the linkages between liturgical scholarship and social history that very few scholars in either group have attempted. Such interpretations here are tentative at best, with the hope that much more, and much better work will be done in this area by others. A fuller understanding of the concrete social realities in which these and other liturgical texts were forged and used can enhance not only our understanding of the teaching of peace by early Christians, but also, and more significantly, their construction of worship and missiology in a world that appears more and more like the missional setting of the contemporary Church in the Anglo-Euro world.

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## ***The Teaching of Peace in Didache***

Didache is an anonymous collection of ethical and liturgical instruction which appears to reflect a first or early second century Syrian background<sup>4</sup>. During this period, Christianity had ceased to function as a sect within Judaism, but retained strong Jewish roots.<sup>5</sup> Didache reflects a missional and ecclesial situation still characterized by house fellowships and fairly informal patterns of leadership.

The two major sections of Didache, ethics and liturgical practice, are fairly distinct, yet seem to reflect shared concerns about the quality of the life of the Christian community. The opening six chapters, often called “The Two Ways,” appear to be the basis for if not the substance of pre-baptismal catechetical instruction.<sup>6</sup> The liturgical instruction which follows covers baptism (VII), fasting and the Lord’s prayer (VIII), the eucharist/agape meal (IX-X, XIV), hospitality to visiting prophets, teachers, and Christians (XI-XIII), and recommendations about church leadership (XV). The final chapter is an exhortation to faithfulness in the face of the coming of the Lord.

One of the shared concerns of the two sections of Didache is the teaching of peace. The common Greek word for peace (εἰρηνῆ and its cognate verb εἰρηθεύω) appears once in each section (at IV.3 and XV.3), and the verb “be reconciled” (διαλλάξωσιν) also appears in the instruction about preparation of the community for eucharist (XIV.2). In this essay we will explore the use of each of these words in context to seek to discern Didache’s overall teaching about peace. Since chapter XV appears to be

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<sup>4</sup>About the only contemporary dissent from this view is found in Arthur Vööbus, *Liturgical Traditions in the Didache* (Stockholm: ETSE, 1968), 12-13. Vööbus believes Didache is more Egyptian than Syrian because of the number of manuscripts of Didache that have appeared in Egypt and references to parts of Didache in a number of Egyptian liturgical texts.

<sup>5</sup>A number of scholars have commented on Jewish origins of both the catechetical instruction and the prayers, including eucharistic prayers, in Didache. See, for example, Willy Rordorf, “La Didaché, *L’Eucharistie des Premiers Chrétiens* (Paris:Éditions Beauchesne, 1976), 7-28; Roger T. Beckwith, “The Daily and Weekly Worship of the Primitive Church in Relation to its Jewish Antecedents, Part I” *Evangelical Quarterly* (56:65-80) April 1984; Thomas Talley, “From Berakah to Eucharistia: A Re-opening Question” *Worship* (50:115-137) March 1976.

<sup>6</sup> Vööbus, 18.

disciplinary instruction, and is perhaps a later addition to Didache, we will discuss its provisions as an appendix to the main argument of this chapter.

### ***Peace and the Way of Life***

You shall not make schism, but you shall pacify the ones who are fighting. You shall judge justly. You shall not be a respecter of persons when you bring an accusation about faults. You shall not be of two minds whether [your ruling] shall be [carried out] or not.<sup>7</sup>

This instruction appears in the middle of what we might call Didache's *Haustafel*. In the same chapter we find instruction on how to treat teachers of the faith (verse 1), fellow Christians (vs. 2), needy Christians (vss. 5-8), children (vs. 9) and slaves (vss. 10-11). The implication of this context for the teaching about "pacifying those who are fighting" might be that how Christians treated persons who were in conflict was at least as important as how they treated their own children and teachers of the faith. The fact that this instruction is, with the instruction about needy Christians, the longest, may elevate its value and seriousness for the Christian community.

If we are supposing that each person baptized into the community has received this instruction and is personally expected to keep it,<sup>8</sup> then this instruction might operate as something like an agenda for peacemaking. Four words are crucial in our interpretation of the agenda: schism (σχισμα), pacify (ειρηνευσεις), judge (κρισεις), and bring an accusation (ελεξιαι). Willy Rordorf is probably right to suggest that schism here does not imply a split in the church where one faction leaves to start a new congregation.<sup>9</sup> Instead, it appears to refer to a sharp break in interpersonal relationships within the congregation.

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<sup>7</sup>Willy Rordorf and André Tuilier, eds., *La Doctrine des Douze Apôtres* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1978) 158 (IV.3-4). Translation mine from the Greek text.

<sup>8</sup>It is not certain, of course, that the instructional chapters were the catechesis, nor that, if they were, how tightly persons were held actually accountable to them. My interpretation is assuming a fairly high level of accountability, close to a literal obedience to commands.

<sup>9</sup>Willy Rordorf, "La Rémission des Péchés selon la Didaché," in A. Pistoia and A.M. and C.M. Triacca, eds. *Liturgie et Rémission des Péchés* (Rome: Edizione Liturgische, 1975) 234. Rordorf also insists that schism in this context is not related to doctrinal matters.

The first item on the agenda for peacemaking by each person would appear to be to insure that one's personal actions are not causing schism in the fellowship to occur.

Once schism is underway, the next duty of the Christian is to "pacify those who are fighting." It is not clear exactly what the domain of "pacify" is. It could mean simply to try to calm persons down, or seek to bring them back into more friendly relationship to each other. In this context, however, the content of "pacify" could refer to the more or less judicial process which follows.<sup>10</sup> Whatever the specific practice intended here may have been, the underlying intent is that a Christian witnessing a conflict must take personal responsibility to intervene and try to set things right.

The third step, or an extension of the second step, is a process of judgment and bringing accusation. Both words imply a judicial process. The Christian witnessing the conflict and seeking to resolve it is expected to act as a judge. The Christian peacemaker as judge hears the case, tries to discern the situation impartially ("you shall not be a respecter of persons), and finds and names a charge of wrongdoing ("bring an accusation about faults") against one or both of the parties.

The phrase which follows, literally "You shall not be of two minds whether it shall be or not," could be an admonition to individual Christians not to question whether they are to bring charges of fault in cases they may have to "try." It may also suggest, as my first translation has indicated, that the Christian is also expected to establish and hold the parties accountable for enacting a ruling about what is to be done because of the wrongdoing. In either event, the message appears to be that fighting between Christians is a serious offense, requiring a serious judgment, and that the Christian peacemaker must enter into the fray with a clear determination and discipline to follow the prescribed

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<sup>10</sup>This would seem to fit with the processes for interpersonal peacemaking described later by Didascalia (II.47) and Apostolic Constitutions (II.47), where before the bishop's "verdict" in a case is given, attempts are made either by the bishop (Didascalia) or by presbyters and deacons (Apostolic Constitutions) to bring the parties to friendship.

process and bring a resolution.

If indeed this level of peacemaking expertise was expected of every Christian in the Didache's community, this would indicate that interpersonal peace and instruction in the techniques of making it would have to be widely held values and practical habits of the community as a whole. Didache is the only liturgical document we will survey that requires this level of expectation and gives this level of authority to every individual Christian to make peace. Probably by the late second century, and certainly by the third, this role was assumed primarily by church leadership.

***Peace and a Pure Sacrifice: Preparation for Eucharist***

Each Lord's day of the Lord, once you are gathered together, break bread and do the eucharist, having first confessed your faults, so that your sacrifice may be pure. And any having a quarrel with another, let that one not gather with you until they are reconciled so that your sacrifice may not be defiled. For this is the word spoken by the Lord: "In every place and time, offer to me a pure sacrifice. For I am a great King, says the Lord, and my name shall be astounding among the nations."<sup>11</sup>

This short chapter reveals a lot about the worship life of the Didache community, and more specifically, about the high value it placed on the teaching and enacting of peace. Their gatherings for the eucharist, their sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving and a sharing in a common meal, were "every Lord's day of the Lord." Their sacrifice had to be pure; the quote from Malachi 1:11 and 14b is a strong admonition that anything but a pure sacrifice would be unworthy of and unacceptable to the Lord, the great King.

But before they could offer this pure sacrifice, as the book of Malachi itself argues, they had to assure that they, as the community offering it, were pure. In this text, the community achieves that purity through two actions: a general confession of faults,

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<sup>11</sup>Rordorf and Tuilier, 330 (XIV.1-3). Translation mine.



and the exclusion of anyone who was in the midst of a conflict with another person in the community. Each of these actions deserves some special comment.

The confession of faults described here does not occur as such in any other liturgical text we will survey. Willy Rordorf suggests, in part on the basis of evidence from Clement, that indeed this is a corporate confession of sin in the congregation.<sup>12</sup> However, it is not clear whether this is a “vertical” confession directed to God or is rather a “horizontal” sharing of confessions in the community, as one finds in James 5:16. It may also be that this confession did not occur at the assembly at all, but rather was handled individually by Christians before they arrived. Whatever the form of this practice, however, it does seem to be about establishing the purity, and probably the “vertical” purity, of the community that has gathered so that it is capable of offering a pure sacrifice.

Formal rites of exclusion or dismissal of those who are in conflict are not described at this point in Didache. What is described looks much more like those persons were simply not permitted to gather with the community at all, a practice which is consistent with the description of the ban to which we shall shortly come. The critical insight here, though, is that confession of faults or sins in the community, however that is accomplished, is not sufficient to allow that community to offer a pure sacrifice. The community that offered had to be not only forgiven, but whole, in *shalom*. Persons involved in quarrels that had not been reconciled were not whole, but blemished, and their presence with the gathered community would blemish the sacrifice the community offered. Being at actual interpersonal peace was thus an non-negotiable requirement for

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<sup>12</sup>Rordorf, 227. His translation of Clement’s statement is, “Dans l’assemblée, tu confesseras tes fautes, et tu n’iras prier avec mauvaise conscience” (In the assembly, you shall confess your faults, and you shall not go to prayer with a bad conscience). This could suggest that both private and corporate confessions of faults were taking place in Clement’s community-- private confession as preparation before going to prayers, and communal confession in the assembly. Still, though, the confession in the assembly is of faults, not sins per se, and it is not clearly directed to God.

participation in the eucharistic sacrifice, which was the heart of the community's worship and commonlife.

Reconciliation of broken relationships is thus again emphasized as an essential practice of this community. The form of reconciliation envisioned here may be connected to the same sort of process we have already seen in chapter IV. Arthur Vööbus has suggested that the word for reconciliation used here (διαλλαγωσιν) may clarify this process a bit further. The verb here literally means "to take in exchange." It describes a process of give and take, and possibly of actual restitution made for actual wrongs done.<sup>13</sup> If there are connections between this and the peacemaking instruction of chapter IV, then the role of the Christian peacemaker as judge might be to set what the terms of restitution would be and supervise them to their completion. A system of penance appears to be in place, not to cover sins toward God (which may have been taken care of by the corporate prayer of confession, and, possibly (in IV. 6)<sup>14</sup>, by giving to the needy), but for sins against one another in the Christian community.<sup>15</sup>

### ***Celebrating the Peace of the Great King: The Eucharist***

Participation in the eucharist in the Didache requires serious acts of preparation to enable peace with God and each other in the community of faith. The eucharist itself, then, is not the imparter of this peace, but rather the celebration, through a pure sacrifice of praise over wine and bread, by those who already are at peace. Chapter IX gives what appears to be the text of the eucharistic prayer.

We give you thanks, our Father,  
over the holy vine of David your servant,  
which you have made known to us through Jesus your  
servant.

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<sup>13</sup>Vööbus, 109, note 44.

<sup>14</sup>This text reads, "If you have something through the [work] of your hands, you shall give it as a ransom for your sins" (translation mine from Rordorf and Tuilier, 160).

<sup>15</sup>That a system of penance is in view here is Rordorf's conclusion in "La Rémission des Péchés" (p. 230) as well. He goes so far as to translate the benediction at the conclusion to the eucharist at X.6 as "If anyone is holy, let that one come; if not, let that one do penance."

To you be the glory for ever.

We give you thanks, our Father,  
over the life and knowledge  
which you have made known to us through Jesus your  
servant.

To you be the glory for ever.

Just as this broken bread, scattered over the mountains and  
gathered together,  
has become one,  
so also may your church be gathered together  
from the corners of the earth

into your kingdom.  
For yours is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ  
for ever.<sup>16</sup>

To be sure, this is a minimalistic eucharistic prayer at best.<sup>17</sup> To press these words into service to discern with certainty or detail any particular teaching of the Didache community would be to say too much. But perhaps a few general observations may be made. The immediate reasons stated for the two thanksgivings over the cup appear to be about something other than Jesus, the “holy vine of David” and “life and knowledge” which he is pictured to have revealed. The imagery is of something growing, perhaps producing fruit, having some connection to kingship, and imparting life and knowledge. Though it is not stated at this point, it would appear reasonable to suggest that the thanksgiving over the cup is for the growing, life-giving activity of the kingdom of God in the world.

If that interpretation is viable, it would seem to complement the petition over the bread, which is focused on the gathering activity of the kingdom of God. More specifically the petition is that the kingdom of God continue to completion its work of gathering the church into one from all places in the world. If indeed the church is being

<sup>16</sup>Rordorf and Tuilier, 324 (IX.2-3). Translation and formatting mine.

<sup>17</sup>Indeed, Rordorf believes that chapters IX and X of Didache do not represent a eucharistic liturgy at all, but simply prayers that would be “pronounced at table... preceding the eucharist itself.” (Rordorf, 13; translation mine).

gathered from every corner of the earth, and if to offer the eucharistic sacrifice the gathered church must be at peace with God and each other, God's answer to the bread petition would imply that within the church, international peace embodied as peace between persons of any and every nation, must also be the norm. In other words, the vision of the Didache community appears to be that in the church that celebrates the eucharist, the rule of peace from the activity of God's kingdom relativizes all other claims of the kingdoms of this world. Whether the Didache community was successful in living this way is not possible to evaluate. But the peace of God's kingdom embodied in the interpersonal peacemaking of the church does appear to be the central message of its central worship rite.

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***Appendix: Peace, Reproof and Silence***

And reprove each other not in wrath, but in peace as you have [it] in the gospel. And to everyone offending against a neighbor let no one speak, neither let that one hear from you, until when that one should repent.<sup>18</sup>

Two more pieces of instruction concerning conflict resolution *may* be offered in this short extract from chapter XV, but how to interpret them is not an easy matter at all. If chapter XV as we now have it reflects the same stratum of the tradition as the earlier instruction in chapter IV and XIV, then these two lines could be understood as giving further insight into the process of interpersonal peacemaking. If chapter XV is a later addition, as John Paul Audet believes, it would be more difficult to evaluate what connection this instruction has with the peacemaking and eucharistic practice of the Didache community.<sup>19</sup> With that proviso, we will proceed under the assumption that chapter XV may bear some connection to the instruction we have already reviewed.

The first instruction, "Reprove each other not in wrath, but in peace" could point in several

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<sup>18</sup>Rordorf and Tuilier, 194 (XV.3).

<sup>19</sup>Jean Paul Audet, *La Didaché: Instructions des Apôtres* (Paris: Libraire Lecoffre, J. Gabalda et Cie., 1958), 104 ff. Audet believes chapter 15 belongs to the second of three stages of development, while the chapters we have reviewed belong to the original stage. He dates the collection as a whole between 50 and 70 AD.

directions. These could be general advice that one who needs to correct anyone in the community for any reason, not just because a fight has occurred or because a personal injury has been suffered, should do so without anger, and with a motive to restore peace. Or, if the intended audience is someone in a position to make peace between parties in conflict, it could mean that the process of intervening, hearing the case, judging and ascribing fault should be handled in a calm rather than an angry manner. The additional words “as you have it in the gospel” are not clear enough in context to determine their precise meaning. They may again simply mean that the gospel was thought to teach that reproof, for any reason, was to be done calmly. Or, there may be a link to something like Jesus’ instruction on peacemaking in the church in Matthew 18, though this appears to be a stretch.

The second instruction, “And to everyone offending against a neighbor let no one speak, neither let that one hear from you, until when that one should repent,” would seem to indicate that one of the penalties a Christian peacemaker could give to a party who has wronged another would be a “ban” until the repentance occurred or the assigned acts of restitution were complete. How one would evaluate when to place such a hard penalty on another is not described here, nor do we know how often this sort of penalty might be used. What we may observe is that exclusion of persons from any contact with the community until their repentance is complete is not inconsistent with the exclusion from participation in the eucharist of persons who have conflicts with others in the community.

### ***The Teaching of Peace in Justin Martyr's First Apology***

*"We are helpers to you, co-fighters for peace more than all people."*<sup>20</sup>

Around 150 A.D., Justin Martyr addressed his First Apology to Antoninus Pius, Emperor of Rome. It was a literary defense speech to defend Christians, who were accused as a group, among other things, of atheism and impiety, primarily because they would not and did not participate in the sacrificial cults of the Roman empire. Since those sacrificial cults were viewed as essential and foundational for the life of the empire itself, as Gordon Lathrop and Stanley Stowers have pointed out<sup>21</sup>, non-participation by Christians could be understood as amounting to both atheism and threatening the very foundations of the *pax Romana*. Justin's agenda, in part, is to show that Christian worship, far from destroying the bond of peace among peoples could actually create it more effectively than the Roman rites ever could.

Justin's interpretation of the liturgical practices of Christians, then, comes with a definite polemic objective, one that colors and shapes the language he uses to describe the Christian practices of baptism, prayer and eucharist. For this reason, it is not wise to consider that the rites he described necessarily happened exactly the way he describes them, nor even necessarily had the meaning he ascribes among Christian congregations of the time. The most we may responsibly say is that one *could* interpret the worship of Christians as Justin did, and that perhaps, if Justin so interpreted it, other Christians *may* have held similar understandings of the worship they offered. With these provisos in

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<sup>20</sup>André Wartelle, ed. and trans., *Saint Justin: Apologies* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1987), 110. This is from Chapter XII, verse 1, translation mine.

<sup>21</sup>Gordon Lathrop, *Holy Things: A Liturgical Theology* (Minnesota: Fortress Press, 1993), 143-144. Stanley K. Stowers, "Greeks Who Sacrifice and Those Who Do Not: Toward an Anthropology of Greek Religion" in Michael L. White, ed. *The Social Worlds of the First Christians* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 308. Lathrop finds René Girard's theories of sacrifice helpful in discerning the difference between pagan propitiatory sacrifice and Christian eucharistical sacrifice. Stowers is critical of the ideological approach of Girard from a social-historical perspective. On this point, however, the indispensability of animal sacrifice to Greek and Roman culture and the corresponding threat that non-sacrificing communities would pose to the established system, both scholars are agreed.

mind, we turn to the liturgical practices he describes.

***Baptism: Peace with God through Human Justice and Divine Mercy***

Chapter LXI of the First Apology has been a *locus classicus* for early Christian understandings of baptism. Here Justin describes a community in solidarity of prayer and fasting with the baptismal candidate, praying for release from all past sins. After the catechumens have agreed to live by Christian teachings as truth, he writes, they “are taught to pray and, while fasting, to ask from God forgiveness of their past faults, while we are praying and fasting with them.”<sup>22</sup> Whether this pictures a physical gathering by the community for a “vigil” of prayer and fasting or simply a practice each Christian would have carried out privately on behalf of those preparing for baptism cannot be determined. In either case, however, the unity of the baptized with and on behalf of those about to be baptized is strongly affirmed.

Justin turns immediately from describing the community’s preparation for baptism to the baptismal rite itself.

Then they are led by us where water is, and, being regenerated the way we ourselves were regenerated, they are regenerated. For upon the name of the Father of the universe and the master God, and of our Savior Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, they are bathed in the water.<sup>23</sup>

Justin then explains to his pagan interlocutor how this water-rite cleanses and regenerates persons. He does so quoting Isaiah 1:16-20 in the following form:

Wash, get clean, release the wickedness from your soul. Learn to do good. Judge on behalf of the orphan, and do justice to the widow, and then we will have a dialog, says the Lord. Even though your sins are like Phoenician dye, I will whiten you as snow. And if they be as scarlet, I will whiten them as wool. But if you do not listen to me, you will be devoured by the sword. For the mouth of the Lord has

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<sup>22</sup> Wartelle, 182 (LXI.1). Translation mine.

<sup>23</sup>Wartelle, 182 (LXI.2). Translation mine.

spoken these things.<sup>24</sup>

The text Justin has chosen appears to be intentionally provocative. The text itself makes the case that God, not blood sacrifices, cleanses from sin, and that ethical behavior toward the poor, not participation in or reception of blood sacrifices, is the required preparation for cleansing and rebirth. Justin uses this interpretation of Christian baptism from the Isaiah text to show the emperor that Christians have biblical, religious grounds for their refusal to participate in the Roman cults.<sup>25</sup> In the process he is also making a case that peace with God depends on human justice that makes peace with the poor and that divine mercy is the response to *this* activity. The peace of God, as taught and enacted in the Christian rite of baptism, thus operates on very different principles than the *pax Romana*, which is sustained in part by the killing of animals to obtain propitiation.<sup>26</sup>

### ***The Prayers of the People and the Welcoming Kiss***

Upon their admission to the eucharistic part of the Sunday liturgy, the first experience of newly baptized Christians would have been participation in the common prayers of the “enlightened.” Apology LXVI begins:

But after we have thus washed one who has been convinced and has assented to our teaching, we lead that one to the place where the ones called “brothers and sisters” are assembled, making common prayers on behalf of ourselves and the enlightened, and for all others in every place, that we may be made worthy, having learned the truth, and by our good works may be found as good citizens and followers of the commandments, so that we may be saved

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<sup>24</sup> Wartelle, 182 (LXI.7). Translation mine.

<sup>25</sup> Justin has in fact already introduced this text in Ch. 44 of the apology, where he expounds on the meaning of the sword as “fire, of which they who choose to do wickedly become the fuel;” in Ch.. 37 he uses another anti-blood sacrifice, pro social justice quote from Isaiah 58 (“your hands are full of blood; and if ye bring fine flour, incense, it is abomination unto Me: the fat of lambs and the blood of bulls I do not desire...But loose every bond of wickedness, tear asunder the tight knots of violent contracts, cover the houseless and naked deal thy bread to the hungry) to help his pagan interlocutor understand that the teachings of the prophets, which Christians follow in their life and worship, are the basis both for their own actions toward the poor and their refusal to participate in the pagan sacrificial rites.

<sup>26</sup> Lathrop, 144.



with eternal salvation.<sup>27</sup>

Justin does not tell us at this point what the content of the “common prayer” is. He has suggested here that they may include an eyebrow-raising petition that Christians “may be found as good citizens.” In context, this is most likely another rhetorical jab against the Empire. The kingdom in which Christians were seeking to be good citizens, even by the Empire’s definition, was not the Empire, but the kingdom of God.<sup>28</sup> In chapter XVII, however, he presents a picture of Christian prayer for the Empire which appreciates its value in the world. Though Christians would bow the knee only to their God, “concerning the rest, to you [Roman state] we joyously serve as underlings, confessing you as kings and rulers of people, and praying that with your kingly power you might be found to have sound reason.”<sup>29</sup>

Justin may have offered further clues about the content of the intercessions in chapter XIII.

And we have been instructed [that],... being grateful, we  
should lead processions through word and hymns:  
for having come into being,  
for the strength of every pathway,  
for the unique qualities of the different types of  
things,  
for the changing of the seasons,  
and to offer supplications  
that we might be again in incorruption through faith  
in him.<sup>30</sup>

These prayer-words are also not without polemic punch. Gordon Lathrop has shown that the phrase “leading processions” (πεμπειν πομπας) has a specific reference to the processions involved in the Greco-Roman sacrificial rites. The more wealthy or

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<sup>27</sup>Wartelle, 188 (LXV.1-2). Translation mine.

<sup>28</sup>Indeed, Justin had already said as much in chapter XI, where he argues that the kingdom Christians were looking for was the kingdom of God, not any human kingdom, and that they were gladly willing to die at the hands of human kingdoms to continue seeking God’s kingdom.

<sup>29</sup>Wartelle, 122 (XVII.3).

<sup>30</sup>Wartelle, 112 (XIII.2). Translation and formatting mine on the basis that the Greek text prefaces these prayers with “υπερ,” a preposition often used in bidding prayers.

powerful could afford more lavish processions to the sacrificial rite, and in any procession usually took the seats of honor. Indeed, Lathrop argues, in some of the literature from the period, the processions were so important that the sacrificial rites themselves were referred to as processions. When Justin uses the word “processions” to describe prayers and hymns, without animal blood sacrifices, he appears to be doing it to make a contrast between the bloody rites of the so-called “religious” and the non-violent, peace-affirming prayers and hymns of the so-called “atheist” Christians.<sup>31</sup>

One other line in the prayer seems to support Justin’s statement in chapter XII, “we are helpers to you, co-fighters for peace more than all people.” The prayer of thanksgiving “on behalf of the unique qualities of the different types of things” is a positive affirmation which holds together the very diverse patchwork of peoples and things in the imperial world in one loving regard. That prayer of thanksgiving, Justin goes on to show in chapter XIV, was actually being answered by a real transformation toward love for all kinds of different people in the Christian community:

formerly hating each other and even killing each other, and not sharing the hearth with those not of the same race according to their tribe, now, since the appearing of Christ, [we are] at one with others, and pray on behalf of our enemies, and try to persuade the ones who unjustly hate us, how they, living according to the good precepts of Christ, might find from the God who rules the world a joyful hope of these things with us.<sup>32</sup>

In short, the Christian community knew, taught, and proclaimed in its prayers a peace with others that the Empire’s so-called peace, founded in its official cults, had never

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<sup>31</sup>Lathrop, 143-145. Indeed, Justin makes just this point in XIII.1: “...we are not atheists, but we worship the Maker of all things, who has no need for bleeding things and libations and incense...[Instead, we’ve been taught to praise God] by the word of prayer and thanksgiving upon all things which we had had set before us, praising with as much power as we have. [For we] have received that this honor alone is worthy of Him, that we ought not consume with fire the things which have come from him for food, but rather ought to set it before ourselves and before those who are needy.” (Wartelle, 112. Translation mine.)

<sup>32</sup>Wartelle, 114 (XIV.2).

given.

Some brief mention needs to be made of the rite that followed immediately upon the prayers of the faithful. “Stopping the prayers, we welcome one another with a kiss.” Based on Justin’s description, this does not appear to be a “kiss of peace” as biblical writers and some other liturgical traditions have it. The word peace is nowhere associated with it, and one might have expected Justin to make that association if it were present. Here, the function appears to be a greeting of fellowship after prayers, a rite and sign of good-will and affection in the Christian community. The value it teaches appears to be love more than peace.<sup>33</sup>

### ***The Common Meal and the Common Purse: The Eucharist and the Collection***

Before we may describe the teaching of peace in Justin’s accounts of the eucharist, we need first to establish what the eucharistic looks like from Justin’s angle. At first, this is nothing less than confusing. I would like to propose the following scenario. Chapter LXV introduces the eucharist from the perspective of a newly baptized Christian entering eucharistic worship for the first time. Chapter LXVI breaks away from a discussion of how the worship was conducted to explain its symbolism. The institution narrative offered here simply explains why Christians offer worship in which giving thanks and breaking and eating bread and drinking wine is the central activity; it does not appear to be a part of the eucharistic prayers proper. Chapter LXVII begins with what happens after the meal, a discussion or exhortation of the meaning of this meal, perhaps connected to the institution narrative, followed by a distribution of the eucharistic elements to the sick and absent and of money or other resources to the needy, and then re-summarizes the whole of Sunday worship.

Along these lines, then, I propose we understand the eucharistic liturgy Justin

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<sup>33</sup>Wartelle, 112 (XIII.2).

describes as looking something like the following:

Gathering of Christians from town and countryside in one place  
Readings from Gospels, Epistles, or Prophets by Lector  
Instruction and Exhortation by Presider based on the readings  
Rise for common prayers by the people  
The Welcoming Kiss  
Offering of bread and wine/water  
Prayers and Thanksgiving by Presider  
Amen by People  
Distribution by Deacons  
After-meal discussion  
Offering deposited with Presider for care of the needy  
Deacons take communion elements to the absent  
Presider distributes funds to needy-- including widows, orphans, sick,  
prisoners, foreigners/refugees sojourning with the community

Absent from this order is a formal rite of interpersonal peacemaking, unless one considers the “welcoming kiss” to have this function. What Justin does describe appears to be an enacted process of multi-cultural peacemaking through the coming together of diverse persons in the unity of eucharistic Christian worship. “And on the day called the day of the Sun, all those dwelling in the cities or the fields form a gathering in the same place.”<sup>34</sup>

At first glance, these words appear quite unremarkable. From a social-historical perspective, however, they might be quite revolutionary for Roman culture, and that may be Justin’s rhetorical intent. Pedar Foss’s work on Roman meal practices would seem to indicate that the coming together of city-dwellers and rural persons for a common meal at a common table would be very unusual given Roman social divisions. City-dwellers were normally somewhat affluent and had slaves to do their work for them, but would never dine at the same table with them. Rural dwellers might enjoy more social equality among themselves, but would be near the status of slaves in an urban setting among the

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<sup>34</sup>Wartelle, 192 (LXVII.3). Translation mine.

well-off urban elites.<sup>35</sup> Stanley Stowers indicates that about the only time multiple social orders would gather in one place would be for sacrificial rites. But even there, as Stowers has shown, the divisions of wealth and power meant that the different social classes shared meat only within that class, and the classes were physically separated with some space between them.<sup>36</sup>

What Justin may be setting up, then, with this simple sentence, is a description of the celebration of the eucharist as a combination of sacrifice of praise and common meal in which social divisions accepted and endorsed by the rites of the *pax Romana* are actually overcome. Indeed, this is exactly what he proceeds to do. There is wide participation in the worship by the entire congregation, with a lector offering readings, and the people “sending up prayers” in common. Deacons distribute the meal both to those present and those absent, embodying the community’s inclusion even of those who could not attend. The presider, who represents the community as its teacher and leading intercessor, embodies the outreach of the community to persons normally ostracized by the rest of society: the needy, the sick, the widow, the orphans, the prisoners, and refugees and other foreigners. And it is precisely the well-off, those who receive the most benefits in the Roman sacrifices, that here in the Christian sacrifice give the most benefits to the poor and needy in the community.<sup>37</sup> Christian worship thus enacts and makes present a new social order which embodies real historical peace, the peace of God.

### ***Conclusion: Toward Evaluating a Polemical Liturgy***

Given that Justin’s description of Christian worship is designed to show that Christian worship helps to establish a more comprehensive peace than that available

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<sup>35</sup> Pedar Foss, “Age, Gender, and Status Divisions at Mealtimes in the Roman House: A Synopsis of the Literary Evidence” (Ph.D. Dissertation: University of Michigan), available via internet at <http://www-personal.umich.edu/~pfoss/hgender.html>.

<sup>36</sup> Stowers, 326.

<sup>37</sup> Wartelle, 192 (LXVII).

through the rites or practices of the *pax Romana*, how might we fairly evaluate the contents of the liturgical materials he describes in order to discern what they may have “actually” taught about peace to those who may have used them? In short, we cannot, at least not responsibly.

But neither should we feel the need to do so. Justin Martyr’s First Apology is a work of polemic literature first, not liturgical history. What is more appropriate to seek to evaluate is how persuasive his vision of Christian worship actually was in later liturgical development. For our concerns, the relevant questions would be whether or how future generations of Christian liturgical materials would understand, as Justin did, that those who participate in Christian worship are participating in a life in which the divisions and threats to peace implicit in the *pax Romana* were actually being overcome.

### ***The Teaching of Peace in the Apostolic Tradition***

To attempt to speak concretely about anything the Apostolic Tradition teaches as a liturgy is to run head-on into a serious problem: what does a reliable complete text look like? There are significant fragments and/or versions in Latin, Sahidic, Bohairic, Ethiopic and Arabic, but no real scholarly agreement on how to assess clearly what “belongs” and what represents a very different liturgical or ecclesial tradition. The next critical edition due to come out, from a team led by Dr. Paul Bradshaw, may for some time actually multiply this difficulty, though it will, for the first time, present *all* the textual traditions in English translations in a parallel format for easier comparative study.

The approach I will take for my purposes, though quite assailable, will be a “canonical” rather than a “critical” view of the text, using Bernard Botte’s edition (in a Latin translation) as a more or less complete “*textus receptus*.” This is not to shy away from the critical work that might be done, but rather to suggest that there is probably good reason to believe that the text as we currently have it in Botte is not too far off the mark of representing how the early third century Apostolic Tradition, usually ascribed to Hippolytus in Rome and dated around 215 C.E., was understood both in its own time and in the two or three centuries following.

### ***Peace and Preparation for Christian Initiation***

While Didache offers what appears to be a fairly extensive behavioral catechism for baptismal preparation, and Justin describes a rite of baptism with some precision, the Sahidic version of Apostolic Tradition is the first liturgical document we have that gives a thorough description of the entire process of Christian initiation from inquiry to catechesis to baptism to post-baptismal eucharist and reception into the community of faith. As such, it is a very valuable resource for understanding early Christian initiation, and, for our purposes, how these processes were teaching peace to those who undertook them.

The process begins by attempting to be admitted to what appears to be either the

Sunday service of the Word (*synaxis*; catechumens would be dismissed before the celebration of the eucharist, which was only for the baptized), or perhaps a special instructional service held at another time.<sup>38</sup> No one could be admitted to this service without a personal recommendation from another church member. If the newcomer were a slave, and that slave's master were a church member, the master would have to give a positive recommendation to the teachers of the church before the slave could be admitted; if the recommendation were negative, though, the slave would be "cast out." Slaves of pagan members who were admitted to the service were to be especially taught to obey their masters. Married persons attending it were expected to be faithful to each other and not divorce, and single persons were expected either to be celibate or to be married by the civil authorities. A "demoniac" could not be admitted until the demons were cast out.<sup>39</sup>

If we try reading this code sociologically, we come out with something like this. Even to attend Christian instruction one had to be connected to someone in the community, willing to remain in one's own social status, sexually pure, and mentally/spiritually stable.<sup>40</sup> Strangers, the socially discontented, the morally questionable, and the mentally ill could find no place even at the door to the outer court.

Chapter 16 of Apostolic Tradition lists twenty-four occupations and five sexual behaviors that would further bar persons from entrance into the catechumenate. Of the forbidden occupations, six related to the gladiator games, and two related to civil authority. Soldiers who were under authority could remain as soldiers so long as they

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<sup>38</sup>Bernard Botte, trans., ed. *La Tradition Apostolique d'après les Anciennes Versions* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1984), 124 ff. It appears to me that this *could* go either way. The Sahidic version does later refer to early morning instruction in conjunction with or simultaneous with morning prayer. The pattern of instruction-prayers-dismissal of catechumens also fits later models of both daily prayer and the *synaxis* of the Sunday service. It appears possible that catechumens could have experienced the entire round of Christian instruction for three years without having once entered or seen Sunday worship. It is just as possible, and usually thought more likely, that they were attending the Sunday *synaxis* and daily prayer and instruction for that time.

<sup>39</sup>Botte, 68, 70 (ch.. 15).

<sup>40</sup>In Sarapion's Prayer Book, mental stability was not a prerequisite for attendance at worship--though it was for participation in the eucharist. Even some baptized persons appear to have been demon-possessed.



would pledge not to follow any orders to kill and refused to take oaths (*sacramenta* in Latin). Persons who had the “power of the sword” (i.e., the direct authority to kill or order others to kill), including civil officials “who wear purple” were not admissible. And any catechumens or baptized who chose to become soldiers would be dismissed from participation in the church altogether “because they show contempt for God.” Forbidden sexual behaviors included being “flamboyant” males, persons who mutilated themselves, persons involved in “unspeakable” behaviors, female concubines (unless they were slaves, had a child, and stayed with the father of the child), and having a concubine (unless the man married her under civil law).<sup>41</sup> Actors, playwrights, artists and sculptors (unless they agreed not to make idols), pimps, prostitutes, magicians, sorcerers, soothsayers, astrologers, interpreters of dreams, “crowd-turners,” amulet makers, and “teachers of boys” (philosophers?) were likewise forbidden.<sup>42</sup> The motto for all of these: *vel cessent vel reiciantur*, “Let them either cease or be thrown out.”

The catechumenate itself would normally last at least three years. During all this time, catechumens were to attend daily morning prayers and instruction with the faithful, and perhaps the synaxis of the Sunday service. They could watch as, at the conclusion of their prayers after their instruction, the “faithful” would exchange the peace, apparently in the form of a kiss, men with men and women with women, each sitting separately, and the faithful sitting separately from the catechumens. But the catechumens could not themselves exchange this peace, “because their kiss is not yet holy.”<sup>43</sup>

This practice of permitting catechumens to witness the giving of a kiss of peace following prayers by the faithful but not to participate in it is powerful instruction in itself. The explicit agenda is that peace is something they are believed to lack in their lives as catechumens, and something they can neither receive nor share with another until

<sup>41</sup> Botte, 74 (ch. 16). Translation mine.

<sup>42</sup> An interesting note. Teachers of boys could be admitted IF they would learn a trade (i.e. get a “real” job) and teach that! The could be a critique of philosophy as a discipline or of the common practice of pederasty by adult male teachers on young male students.

<sup>43</sup> Botte, 74, 76 (ch.18). Translation mine.

something decisive has happened in baptism (to which we shall turn shortly).

Implicitly, though, there may be two other learnings. First, the peace of Christ is shared only in a segregated way, not crossing the boundary of male and female. This practice may have arisen among the communities connected with Apostolic Tradition, as L. Edward Phillips has suggested, to combat accusations of promiscuity,<sup>44</sup> but one still has to wonder whether the political message being sent by this answer to a possible accusation was in some ways undermining the message the kiss of peace was intended to convey. Second, this peace can only be shared from one baptized Christian to another baptized Christian; it is an utterly sectarian peace, not expressible beyond the strict social boundaries of the church. It is the church, or more properly the Holy Spirit in the church, that establishes what peace is, and only full participation in the life of the church can allow participation in the peace the church alone knows and shares.

That peace, up to this point, seems to refer to an utterly vertical, pneumatic phenomenon, even though it is shared horizontally, as it were, in the exchange of the kiss. But the examinations of the catechumens in the final days before their baptisms suggests that this peace may have at least some horizontal prerequisites and probably ongoing implications for Christian life in the world. In Chapter 20, those who are to receive baptism are asked four questions:

- Did they live in honesty while they were catechumens?
- Did they honor widows?
- Did they visit the sick?
- Did they do every good thing?<sup>45</sup>

In order to proceed to baptism, then, one had already to be demonstrating not only personal integrity and zeal toward good works, but also a peculiar social integrity in placing at the center of their concern persons who would, in the “*pax Romana*,” have

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<sup>44</sup>L. Edward Phillips, “The Ritual Kiss in Early Christian Worship” (Ph.D. Dissertation: University of Notre Dame, 1992), 133.

<sup>45</sup>Botte, 78 (ch.. 20).

been placed at the periphery of the social order: widows and the sick. It would seem reasonable to assume that these practices expected before baptism would be continued and deepened after baptism.

The final days of preparation before baptism involved daily rites of cleansing (ablutions) and exorcism by the bishop. Women on their menstrual cycle would be delayed until a later time<sup>46</sup>. Not until the bishop was satisfied that every trace of demonic influence was thoroughly cleansed from a person could that person receive the final exorcism which led to baptism. At that final exorcism, “every alien spirit” would be exorcised, expected to return no more. Then the bishop would breathe on the person’s face (probably a sign of the protection, though not yet the impartation, of the Holy Spirit), and seal (with oil?) the forehead, ears, and nostrils against the possible return of demons. That sabbath night before their baptisms the next morning the bishop would hold vigil with them all night long, reading to them and instructing them, filling their souls fully cleansed from demonic influence with the words of God.<sup>47</sup>

What does this intensive period of complete exorcism teach about peace? It is probably teaching as much about spiritual warfare as anything else. The spiritual warfare between God and demonic powers is real and takes time and repeated effort, but there can be victory if the preparation and the battle are waged aright. There can be no peace between God and the influences of demonic presence; the latter must be cleansed, cleaned out, removed first before God is able to bring regeneration through water and the Spirit. The old life must die first, and completely, for new life to be raised in the waters

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<sup>46</sup>One has to wonder why menstrual blood could be a basis for delay of baptism, when for men the only delay is the presence of demonic influence. Was menstrual blood somehow seen as a parallel to demonic impurity? There is no mention of such delays in any of the other texts we are surveying. Indeed, Didascalia goes out of its way in the final chapters to note that some women were excommunicating themselves when they were on their cycle, and that this was not a Christian practice, but a pagan one that should be abandoned. Of course, not to overlook the obvious, it is also possible that women would find it unduly embarrassing to be baptized naked while menstruating, and so this could represent a kind of practical pastoral advice not portending real theological significance.

<sup>47</sup>Botte, 80 (ch.. 20). This also appears to be a parallel to the practice of the community praying and fasting with those about to be baptized Justin describes in chapter LXI of the First Apology.

of baptism.

### ***Peace and Baptism***

According to Apostolic Tradition chapter 21, in the morning, “as soon as the rooster sings,” the ceremony of baptism begins. The bishop offers prayers over the water and two containers of oil-- the oil of thanksgiving (ευχαριστια) and the oil of exorcism (held by a deacon). Those to be baptized are brought forward to the water by a presbyter in the following order: children (*parvuli*, “little ones,” male and female, not all of whom are yet able to speak), men, and then women (hair “loosened” and no jewelry permitted). The presbyter commands the candidate pronounce a renunciation of Satan, Satan’s “bonds” and Satan’s “works.” Then the presbyter anoints the candidate with the oil of exorcism, saying “Let every spirit draw away from you.” The presbyter then conducts the exorcised candidate to the water itself where the bishop or another presbyter will do the baptism proper.<sup>48</sup>

From even a cursory view of the events recorded above, it is apparent that we are seeing at least two different traditions in chapters 20 and 21. The “final exorcism” is supposed already to have been done the night before by the bishop, and yet what looks like a “final exorcism” is done again here, by a lesser officer, a presbyter. While it is certainly possible that both rites were done, it seems more likely that they have independent origins.

The baptismal liturgy proper in Botte is patched together from several different sources. In its broad outlines a deacon leads the candidate into the water, and either that deacon (in one tradition) or the presbyter who will do the baptizing asks the candidate to confess the faith of the church in three articles (Father, Son, Spirit), immersing or dousing the candidate after each affirmation.<sup>49</sup> After the final affirmation and the final

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<sup>48</sup>Botte, 82, 84 (ch.. 21).

<sup>49</sup>The Latin/*Testamentum Domini* traditions present something that looks much like the Apostle’s Creed; the Sahidic tradition follows a similar outline but presents a much more elaborated creed which, in the second article, seems to follow or have relationship some of the material from the anaphora of the eucharist in the service for ordaining bishops. The second article reads: “Do you

immersion/dousing, the presbyter anoints the baptized person with the oil of thanksgiving in the name of Jesus Christ. After the anointing, each one wipes the oil clean, dresses, and goes for the first time to the prayers of the faithful at Sunday worship.<sup>50</sup>

Upon their arrival, the bishop prays for them with thanksgiving for the remission of their sins (Bohairic adds “in the age to come”), and then prays they might receive “grace” to serve God (Latin) or “refilling of the Holy Spirit and grace” (Bohairic). He then anoints them again with the oil of thanksgiving, this time using a trinitarian formula. He then signs them on their foreheads (Bohairic, “seals”) and either “offers them a kiss” (Latin) or says “The Lord be with you” (Bohairic). Then, after the prayers, for the first time, the newly baptized can offer “the peace from their mouth” (Latin) or “say peace with the mouth” (Bohairic).<sup>51</sup> If the tradition in question is continuous with the use of a holy kiss of peace after the prayers, now is the first time they can offer that kiss. Their kiss is now holy. It is not baptism alone, not the confession of faith, exorcism, or preparation that allows peace to be given and received in Apostolic Tradition. As all the texts have it, “all of these things,” including the final prayers and anointings and (apparently) imparting of the Spirit through the hands and mouth of the bishop that makes both prayer with the faithful and the exchange of the peace possible. The church and the Spirit have much work to do of many kinds-- instruction, good works, social reorientation, cleansing, renunciation, confession, anointings, prayers, and the reception of the Holy Spirit-- before peace can be a reality in the lives of those seeking to become

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believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God the Father, who was made man for us through a miracle in the incomprehensible unity of the Holy Spirit in the body of the holy Virgin Mary without the semen of a man, and who was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, who was dead voluntarily for us, resurrected the third day, delivered those who were bound in chains, sits at the right hand of the good Father in the highest, and shall come to judge again the living and the dead according to his revelation and his kingdom?” Botte, 84, 86 (ch.. 21). Translation mine. The Ethiopic version of the eucharistic prayer in chapter 2 has a somewhat compatible understanding of the conception of Jesus: there God sent the Word “into the breeding place (*matricem*, not quite womb) of a virgin, who was made flesh and carried in the womb” (p. 48). Both the Latin and the Ethiopic texts describe the betrayal of Jesus as one he endured voluntarily; both have him “breaking the chains/bonds of the devil.”

<sup>50</sup>Botte, 86 (ch.. 21).

<sup>51</sup>Botte, 88 (ch.. 22).

“faithful.” That peace is, finally, the result of an impartation and filling of the Holy Spirit, a spiritual gift to the church, but it cannot be received except by those who have been thoroughly reformed into the image of Christ through the entire process of catechesis, preparation, baptism, and episcopal blessing.

### ***The Eucharist and Peace***

Though there are two rather different eucharistic liturgies in the Apostolic Tradition, in both of them what is received is a nourishing meal of strength from the very life of God through the body and blood of Jesus in the Spirit, and what is offered is thanksgiving over elements including bread and wine. It is a celebration of peace with God and peace in the church already achieved (signified in the holy kiss), and a bidding for the life of the individual and the church to be made even more holy.

Nowhere are these themes clearer than in the anamnesis of the death of Jesus and the epiclesis in the episcopal eucharistic prayer. These read (following the Ethiopic version, whose grammar reads more like the probably Greek original):

In order that he might fulfill your will and make for you a people, he extended his hands when he suffered, that he might deliver the suffering ones who hoped in him; who was betrayed to suffering in his own will, that he might destroy death, and break the chains of the devil, and trample hell, and direct the saints, and fix the boundary, and manifest resurrection....

Therefore, mindful of his death and resurrection, we offer you this bread and chalice, giving thanks to you that you have considered us worthy to stand before you and to exercise priesthood for you. And we pray that you might send your holy Spirit upon the oblation of the holy church. Joining (us) together, give to all who receive the holiness a refilling of the Holy Spirit for a confirmation of the faith in truth, so that they might glorify and praise you through your son, Jesus Christ.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>52</sup>Botte, 48, 50, 52 (ch.. 4). Translations mine.

The remembrance of the death of Jesus is a remembrance of an obedient and victorious deliverer who rescues humankind from the powers of death, devil and hell, who led the saints out of hell, slammed shut its gates and limited its domain, and displayed the power of resurrection, even in the midst of his execution. It is precisely this power, this holy boldness that is both celebrated and sought by the “worthy” priest (bishop) for the assembled people, in a “refilling of the Spirit.” The people expect to leave the feast filled with the Spirit, filled with confidence in the truth, with a deeper faith, and a more profound Alleluia to their God for answering their prayers.

The teaching of peace here is the passionate engagement by the Victim (Jesus) in voluntarily embracing the violence of the world directed toward all victims in order that, in solidarity with all those who suffer, all the violent, spiritual machinery which exposes them to suffering might be undone. It is resurrection manifest from a Roman crucifix. And it gives hope, life, and power to those who suffer *with* the suffering ones. It is an exceptionally kingdom-centered, martyr-conscious reading and application of the death of Jesus and his living embodiment in the church that feeds on him by faith and gives thanks.

That what is received is a nourishing meal is even clearer in the baptismal eucharistic liturgy of chapter 22. In this liturgy bread and three chalices are offered and received: milk and honey, water, and wine.<sup>53</sup> The chalice of milk and honey represents the promised land as an antitype of the “flesh of Christ which he gave for us that they who believe in him might be nourished from it even as little ones, and that he might destroy bitterness of heart by the sweetness of his word.”<sup>54</sup> It is highly appropriate that the newly baptized, just now able to give the kiss of peace in the fellowship of the

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<sup>53</sup>Different traditions place the order and the contents of the chalices differently. Latin has water, then milk and honey, then wine. Sahidic has wine (mixed with water?) then milk, then honey. Ethiopic, like the Latin, has milk and honey in a single chalice, and wine and water in separate chalices.

<sup>54</sup>Sahidic version in Botte, 92 (ch.. 23). The Latin version means about the same but is put more awkwardly.

faithful, should receive this chalice first, the chalice that would seem to nurse the infant Christians and destroy any bitterness they may have in their new relationships. The chalice of water is for an interior (“soulish,” psychic) baptism, following upon the baptism by water on the body and the filling of the Spirit in the spirit.<sup>55</sup> No further explanation than “this is the blood of Christ” is given concerning the chalice of wine.<sup>56</sup> The bread is given in the Latin version with the words, “Bread of heavenlies in Jesus Christ.”<sup>57</sup>

In all three versions-- Latin, Ethiopic, and Sahidic-- two themes are clear. First, the baptismal eucharist is the nourishment for a newborn Christian. It is food given with the imagery of a mother nursing her newborn. Second, it is intended to be an effective ethical and spiritual nourishment. The conclusion of the explanation of the baptismal liturgy reads, in the longer Sahidic version:

When these things are done, each one shall apply oneself to good works, and to please God, and to conduct oneself aright, being zealous for the church, doing what one has learned, and going forward (becoming proficient) in piety.<sup>58</sup>

In short, everything that it took to obtain the ability to offer a holy kiss of peace is in the eucharist nourished and advanced so that the peace begun may be a peace that grows throughout the life of the individual, the church, and the world.

### ***The Apostolic Tradition: Institutional Peace***

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<sup>55</sup>Again, we may be looking at traditions not quite in harmony here. The Latin version has the water as an indicator of the bath (*lavacri*, baptism?), while the Ethiopic has bread (*panis*). Would Roman Christian anthropology understand that the filling of the Holy Spirit was not reaching the soul, but only the spirit (if indeed these were understood as separate entities at that time and place), and so even more water entering the body was necessary before the blood of Jesus could be received?

<sup>56</sup>Botte, 92 (ch.. 23). Sahidic version.

<sup>57</sup>Other versions simply have no description of the giving of the bread at all, though presumably this would have been done as well, unless, indeed, the Ethiopic text's indicators of the water referring to the bread mean that in that tradition water was used for “newborn” Christians instead of bread. The Sahidic text may be pointing to chalice of honey (?) as the liquid equivalent for bread.

<sup>58</sup>Botte, 92 (ch.. 23). Translation mine.



In the Apostolic Tradition, for the first time in our survey thus far we have encountered a description of the Church not so much as movement but as institution. Offices and officers are much more clearly defined, and the powers and authorities given to each are delineated with care. There is great concern for right belief and right liturgical practice, which the author/compiler believes to be knowable and to have been passed down reliably by the Apostles and their representatives, the bishops, more or less in the form he presents them. In the face of some kind of “falling away,” the author/compiler has provided this document because “the Holy Spirit grants perfect grace to those who believe rightly, so that they might know how they must pass on and guard those things which are of first importance to the church.”<sup>59</sup>

The office ultimately given spiritual responsibility and power for passing on and guarding the tradition of the church is the office of the bishop, and it is with the rites for the consecration of a new bishop that the Apostolic Tradition begins. In the prayer of consecration offered by a presiding bishop on behalf of the gathering of bishops, presbyters, deacons, and laity at this consecration, the presiding bishop prays:

Now again pour out the strength, that comes from you, of  
the Sovereign Spirit which you gave to Jesus who gave it to  
the holy apostles who established the church in every place  
as your sanctuary...<sup>60</sup>

This is apostolic succession understood as a spiritual gift from the Father to Jesus, from Jesus to the apostles, and through their appointed leaders (bishops) by the Spirit’s direct, immediate intervention to new bishops being made. The role of the bishop is as lieutenant apostle, to found and establish churches in every place as the true sanctuaries to God.

The language of “establishment” of “the church” is a language of a very different

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<sup>59</sup>Botte, 40. Translation mine from the Latin version. The Ethiopic version at this point reads “that they may know *for a fact* (verb in the Latin translation of the Ethiopic is a form of *scio*, instead of *cognosco*, as in the Latin version) how they must pass on and guard all those things by which the church stands.”

<sup>60</sup>Botte, 44 (ch.. 3).

set of power arrangements than any we have seen so far. There is no sense here of the near-egalitarianism of Didache, nor of the leadership by direct servitude we saw in the Presider in Justin. This is leadership by a highly set-apart person given a measure of spiritual authority not given to anyone else in the congregation. The wholeness of the church, its institutional shalom, inheres in the person of the bishop. And it does so in a way that appears close to authoritarian.

But a closer look at the prayer of consecration reveals a rather different picture of what the bishop's authority (ἐξουσία, *potestatem* in Latin) is about relative to his power (δύμωις, *virtus* in Latin).

Grant, O Father, knower of hearts, upon this your servant  
whom you have elected into the episcopacy  
(1) to lead your holy flock to pasture, and  
(2) to exercise chief priesthood before you without  
reproach, serving you night and day and unceasingly  
pleasing your will, and  
(3) to offer before you the holy gifts of your church;  
and, by the Spirit given to chief priests, to have the  
*authority*  
(1) to release sins according to your commandment,  
(2) to assign [presbyterial?] roles [charges?] according to  
your order,  
(3) to release every bond according to the *authority* which  
you have given to the apostles...<sup>61</sup>

The *job* (power) of the bishop is to lead the people as a shepherd leads a flock, to please God in every action, and to be the presiding celebrant at the eucharist, offering praise, bread, wine, and all other gifts of the people to God on behalf of the people. The *authority* of the bishop, an authority given by the Holy Spirit to no one else in the church, is to forgive sins, assign roles to clergy, and release people from bondage. Put in other terms, it is the authority to make peace, order the ministry, and break injustice.

Apostolic Tradition appears to place a high value on the peacemaking ministry by

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<sup>61</sup>Botte, 44, 46 (ch.. 3). From the Latin version. Emphasis and formatting mine to highlight the literary structure of the prayer.

assigning that ministry exclusively to the highest possible office with the greatest amount of power in the church. But the specifics of how this ministry of forgiving sins and reconciling sinners to God and each other is carried out, with the exception of the forgiveness of sins at baptism and participation in the impartation of the “holy kiss,” is not spelled out anywhere in the document. In like manner, the content of the bishop’s authority to “release every bond” is also left vague.<sup>62</sup>

In contrast to the peacemaking and justice authorities of the bishop, his role as the presider and ruler of the clergy (presbyters and deacons) is very clear at all points. In the ordination service, the bishops alone say the prayers and lay on hands, while presbyters, deacons, and elders stand by and watch, adding their “Amen” at appropriate moments. The bishop, duly consecrated, is the presider at the ordination of presbyters. For them he prays for “a spirit of grace and counsel of the presbyterium, that he might help and govern your people with a pure heart.” This “government” though is immediately described in terms of the relationship of Moses (parallel to the bishop) and the “elders” of Israel (the “presbyters here”) as assistants to Moses. Like Moses, the bishop sets the agenda, and the presbyters, like Moses’ elders, are to carry it out. And the prayer continues (in the more intelligible Ethiopic version here):

And now, Lord, establish for this your servant that he might  
remain loyal to us, (by) the spirit of your grace, and make

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<sup>62</sup>The closest we may come to some sort of concrete application of this authority in Apostolic Tradition is in a specific assignment to the bishop of a duty to make sure that cemeteries do not over-charge persons for burial plots and labor, and even to pay cemetery managers and gravediggers out of his own pocket, if need be, to make sure all persons are fairly accommodated, especially the poor. (Botte, 122 (ch. 40)). There is a vision of justice for the poor here, and of the bishop more or less in the position of a king of Israel as a personal defender of the cause of the poor. This is not quite the vision in Justin of Presider as personally distributing the collection for the poor (deacons do this in Apostolic Tradition), but seems to be a institutional embodiment of a similar sort of ethos.

This chapter appears only in the Sahidic/Arabic/Ethiopic version, whereas the prayer of consecration of a bishop, with its discussion of episcopal authority, is in the Latin version and the (possibly original?) Greek of the *Epitome*. While it is possible then, that this example from the SAE version represents a concrete application of the “authority to loose bonds” in the Latin version, it is just as likely simply to represent another tradition entirely.

us worthy, filling us with your Spirit, to serve you in  
simplicity of heart<sup>63</sup>

The words about personal loyalty and the use of the “royal *we*” are striking and significant. The implications for the meaning of peace in the church are implicit, but clear. Peace in the church happens when the rest of the clergy are loyal to their master, the bishop, and when the deacons and people, by extension, are loyal and obedient to their “governors,” the bishop and elders.

How might we assess the significance of the fact that the bishop’s authority to forgive and release bonds is not specified, while his authority to assign roles to the clergy is specified with detail? Any argument here is an argument from silence, but there may be at least three possibilities. Perhaps the churches represented in Apostolic Tradition simply had not experienced serious difficulty in allowing their leadership free reign in forgiving sins and releasing bonds,<sup>64</sup> while there may have been significant conflict over the various roles of the clergy and laity which might lead to a need to specify these more concretely. Or perhaps there is here a move in the Roman and possibly North African Church toward less emphasis on the bishop’s role in interpersonal peacemaking and a greater emphasis on his role as chief priest and administrative ruler.<sup>65</sup> A third option is that the chief referents for the authority to forgive sins and release bonds are precisely to the bishop’s presiding role in baptism (forgiveness) and eucharist (release), so that perhaps in addition to other sorts of shifts in power, there is also here the beginning of a shift toward understanding forgiveness and release *primarily* in vertical, liturgical terms rather than also in horizontal, relational terms.

### ***Summary and Conclusion***

There is not one, systematic, consistent teaching of peace in the Apostolic

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<sup>63</sup>Botte, 56 (ch. 7). Translation mine.

<sup>64</sup>With the mid-third century persecutions under Decius and Valerian

<sup>65</sup>As we will see in the chapters on Didascalia and Apostolic Constitutions, the Syrian Church does not appear to have moved in this direction.

Tradition. What we see, not only in the various textual traditions, but within them, is a very mixed array of messages sometimes at odds with each other. Peace means playing by the rules laid down by the authority of the bishop. Peace is only knowable or exchangeable within the thoroughly catechized, exorcized, baptized and chrismated/pneumatized. The qualifications even to receive formal Christian instruction toward baptism were very high, excluding persons whose jobs involved warfare or the taking of human life. Yet even the physical act of exchange of this peace, indeed some of the physical acts involved in receiving the ability to exchange it (especially for women) do not seem to overcome some basic barriers between male and female. Widows, the sick, and the poor-- often the victims of societal ostracism-- are at the center of Christian concern and embraced in the peace of the Christian fold. A delivering solidarity with the suffering is celebrated as a normative ethic, indeed the Way to be followed. And a shared meal, filled with the Spirit's presence and power, strengthens the people to live out that ethic and offer their lives more fully in praise to God.

### ***The Teaching of Peace in Didascalia***

The third-century Syrian church order, *Didascalia*, is a handbook for ecclesial practice that is even more “institutional” than the Apostolic Tradition. Most likely composed by an Arian-leaning Syrian bishop in the third century<sup>66</sup>, it reflects episcopal thinking with a strong orientation toward the centrality of the bishop to the ministries of the church and highly detailed delineations of all church offices, including several chapters of instruction for members of the order of widows.

*Didascalia* does not contain any “sample liturgies,” as we find in all the other texts we will examine in this study. While this might make a precise interpretation of the liturgical practice it commends difficult, it does appear that by the third century one can speak with some confidence about the existence of a basic pattern of worship that was fairly universal throughout the churches: instruction, prayers for and dismissals of various classes of non-communicants, an exchange of peace or a kiss among the faithful, the eucharist, and almsgiving.<sup>67</sup> By this point it appears that catechumens and others not qualified to receive communion were certainly in attendance for the “liturgy of the word,” perhaps as part of their catechetical requirements, and possibly as “seekers.” Prayers would be offered on their behalf, and either blessings or simple dismissals would be announced by the deacons in an orderly fashion so that they would not remain when the eucharistic rites began.

### ***Judicial Peace***

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<sup>66</sup>Scholars are agreed on a third century dating and Syrian location for *Didascalia*. Marcel Metzger thinks it is the work of one bishop in the early third century. (See his article, “La *Didascalie* et Les *Constitutiones Apostolorum*” in Rordorf, Willy et al., *L’Eucharistie des Premiers Chrétiens* (Paris: Éditions Beauchesne, 1976), 188. Sebastian Brock and Michael Vasey (see footnote 2, below) agree with the dating scheme. Others, though, have posited a date as late as 280.

<sup>67</sup>So one finds in Cyprian, Tertullian, and all the major 4th century liturgical texts. So also one finds in the “full” liturgical texts of Apostolic Constitutions, including its revised edition of *Didascalia*.

We begin with an instruction for prayer in Book II of *Didascalía*.

For this reason, O bishops, in order that your offerings and your prayers may be acceptable, when you stand in the church to pray, let the deacons say in a loud voice: "Is there anyone who holds a grudge against his companion?;" so that, if there should turn out to be present any people who have a lawsuit or quarrel with one another, you can entreat and make peace between them.<sup>68</sup>

This instruction appears to fit into the "prayers and dismissals" section of liturgy, and may have been the first of the dismissals. Much as we saw in *Didache* from two centuries earlier, the first disqualification for participation in the eucharist was a failure to be at peace with sisters or brothers in the church.

This rubric of invitation to settle a dispute would seem unlikely to be invitation for the bishop to try to reconcile persons involved in active conflicts in the midst of the gathering about to pray. It would seem more likely, given its location in the liturgy, to have carried out one or two other functions. It may have announced a requirement for those in conflict to leave the church and enter the dispute resolution process, the bishop's court. It may also have been an invitation for those who had participated in the bishop's court and had done the assigned penance to re-enter the church through a public act of reconciliation which might be administered by the bishop on the spot. In this way, by this simple announcement by the deacon, the church's whole existence would be judged, shaken, and re-established around the criterion of interpersonal peace. Being able to be at peace with one's sister or brother turns out here, as in *Didache*, to be the pivot point on which participation in the eucharist ultimately turns.

That is probably why the bishop's court, intended both for notorious sinners and for those who are in conflict, gets significant attention in this section of *Didascalía*.

Persons required to enter the court process are apparently removed from worship by a

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<sup>68</sup>Sebastian Brock and Michael Vasey, eds., *The Liturgical Portions of the Didascalía* (Grove Liturgical Studies No. 29, Bramcote Notts: Grove Books, 1982), 15. This appears in Chapter 11 of their text, which is Book II, verse/paragraph 54 (II.54) in the numbering adopted by Funk.

deacon on Sunday and instructed to appear at the bishop's court the next morning. The bishop, together with the presbyters and deacons, listens to the dispute, trying to hear all sides fairly. The bishop's first job is to see whether it is possible for the parties to renew their ties of friendship so that no further action would need to take place.<sup>69</sup> If matters could be settled in this way, it would appear that the parties in conflict could then re-enter the church the following Sunday, be publicly reconciled by the bishop at the appropriate place in the liturgy, and participate in the eucharist.

But if it is clear that the parties remain on hostile terms toward each other, the bishop acts as a judge and gives a "verdict" in the matter. This bishop does this precisely in connection with his authority to bind and loose, and to forgive sins.<sup>70</sup> That the bishop has to speak to the matter, then, is an acknowledgment of the sinful state of one or more of the parties in conflict. The situation is more than a misunderstanding that could be rectified; it is a state of sin which must be judged, confronted, and corrected. Thus the "verdict" appears to include the assigning of responsibility or blame, requirements for penance or restitution, and could, for some persons (notably those who are "hard, insolent, overreaching, and blasphemous") mean their removal even from the liturgy of the word for a specified period of time.<sup>71</sup> The verdict issued on Monday is not necessarily a final decision, however. It would apparently be possible to revisit matters throughout the week if the assigned processes of penance and restitution were not working out. The aim is, by all means possible, to restore all the parties as soon as possible to peace with each other so that all can participate fully in the Sunday eucharist.<sup>72</sup>

The seriousness of this matter to the life of the church, and to the bishop personally, is highlighted at the beginning of the quote listed above: "For this reason,

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<sup>69</sup>Brock and Vasey, 14 (II.47).

<sup>70</sup>"And so sit in the church and teach as one having authority to judge, on behalf of God Almighty, those who sin. For to you, bishops, it is said in the Gospel, "Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven" (II.11, p. 9 in Brock and Vasey).

<sup>71</sup>Brock and Vasey, 14.

<sup>72</sup>Brock and Vasey, 13 (II.47).



then, O bishops, in order that your offerings and your prayers may be acceptable....” The essential acts of this bishop’s priestly ministry, his ability to pray for the people and offer the eucharist acceptably on their behalf, would be called into question if he did not make sure at this point in this Sunday service, before the eucharistic prayers have begun, that he was upholding the discipline of establishing and re-establishing the interpersonal peace of the church. He either does this here, or his ministry and the church’s worship effectively come to an end.

Further, the bishop must carry out his role as judge with both justice and mercy. If the bishop should have turned out to have been unfair and partial in his judgments, he is promised a fate no less than being “cast out [by God] from the catholic church of God.”<sup>73</sup> Likewise, should he refuse to receive a person who has gone through the process and is truly repentant, he would, by being “without mercy, sin against the Lord God.”<sup>74</sup> He has to give just judgment, and, with only one exception, he has to offer personal and public forgiveness to those who truly repent.

Exactly what sort of verdict or penance might be assigned for a specific situation appears to be left to the bishop’s discretion. However, we do have a few clues about what sorts of “sentences” may have been applied. At the very least, temporary excommunication (dismissal at the end of the liturgy of the word) and assignments of fasting might be involved either as acts of penance or until the dispute was settled. These appear to be the typical forms of penance for all sorts of sins.<sup>75</sup> We have already mentioned that in the case of the “hard, insolent, overreaching and blasphemous,” removal from any participation in the Sunday liturgy was considered essential, “as a matter of discipline.”<sup>76</sup> There is also some indication that shunning could be involved. In the instruction to widows we read: “Now whoever prays or communicates with someone

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<sup>73</sup>Brock and Vasey, 14 (II.48).

<sup>74</sup>Brock and Vasey, 9 (II.24).

<sup>75</sup>Brock and Vasey, 9 (II.16).

<sup>76</sup>Brock and Vasey, 14 (II.46).

who has been expelled from the church must rightly be reckoned along with him.”<sup>77</sup>

Finally, there was the most serious possibility of permanent removal from the church. This was considered an exceptional case, something that went against the grain of the general and oft-repeated instruction to bishops to “receive the person who repents without the slightest hesitation.”<sup>78</sup> If a person has been a false accuser and general troublemaker in the church, the bishop is to “admonish him and punish him severely,” but then, if that one should follow the bishop’s discipline and truly repent, that one is to be received back into the church. If, however, the person should resume the practice of falsely accusing church members and breaking the peace of the church, the bishop is ordered to “cast him out; do not again let him destroy and stir up the church.”

The language describing such persons and the bishop’s proper remedy is striking. They are compared to “superfluous members” of the body which must be removed “by a surgeon.” The finality and positive results of this operation are clear: “For when twice such a one has been cast out of the church, such a one is rightly cut off. And by this means, the church is now more adorned in its status, because in it peace arises.” Nothing in the metaphors nor in the rest of the language of this paragraph suggests that a person “cut off” for this reason has or should have any hope of being readmitted.<sup>79</sup> Indeed, it would appear that such a one would be permanently shunned.

This act of “ultimate” removal of a troublemaker, a breaker of the peace, sends a very clear message about the value of interpersonal peace and reconciliation in the congregation. Interpersonal peace and reconciliation are so important that only those bent on breaking the peace by actions intentionally designed to cause dissension could be

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<sup>77</sup>Brock and Vasey, 21 (III.8). The issue here appears to be that only the bishop is supposed to have conversations with such persons; this authority is not conferred on the order of widows or any other order in the church.

<sup>78</sup>Brock and Vasey, 9 (II.13).

<sup>79</sup>F.X. Funk, editor, *Didascalia et Constitutiones Apostolorum*, Vol. 1 (Paderborn: In Libreria Fernandi Shoeningh, 1905), 135-136. Translations mine from Funk’s Latin text of *Didascalia* II.ii.43. The longer quote in Latin (II.ii.43.4) reads: “Cum enim bis ex ecclesia egressus fuerit, recte abscissus est eoque magis ecclesia nunc ornata in statu suo, quia pax in ea oritur” (Funk, 136, lines 23-25).

completely removed from the church once they had been admitted via catechesis and baptism. No sin but malicious discord could get one utterly cast out, and, in witness to the injunction to offer forgiveness and reconciliation to one who repents, even that sin was forgivable once.

### ***Legislating the Means of Peace with God***

Book II of Didascalia begins with a description of the requirements for being bishop. The first four chapters are devoted entirely to matters of personal morality and character. He must be blameless morally and sexually. As far as his character, inquiry is to be made of his household whether he was able effectively to lead and bring his house in subjection to him without them rebelling. Socially, he must show himself a lover of the widows and the poor and be beyond any partiality toward persons on the basis of income or social status. Character counts in a leader who is expected to preside, judge, and keep peace in the church.<sup>80</sup>

Finally, in the fifth chapter of this section, the doctrinal requirements for the bishop are laid out.

Let him compare the Law and the Prophets with the Gospel, so that the utterance of the Law and the Prophets may accord with the Gospel. But above all, let him be diligent in discerning between the Law and the Second Legislation, so that he can discern and demonstrate what is the Law of the believers, and what are the fetters of those who do not believe,-- lest anyone under your authority take hold of the fetters as though they were the Law, thus laying upon himself heavy burdens and becoming a son of perdition.<sup>81</sup>

The doctrinal priorities are clear. The Gospel is to be the basis for interpreting Law and Prophets; Christian revelation determines how Jewish revelation is to be applied. And more specifically, the *crux interpretandi* is to discern what is Law (νομος)

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<sup>80</sup>Summary of II.1-4, Brock and Vasey pp. 7-9.

<sup>81</sup>Brock and Vasey, 9 (II.5).

from what is Second Legislation (δευτερονομος), sometimes called “additions.”

Didascalia explains the distinction in the following way.

The Law consists of the Ten commandments and the Judgments, which God spoke before the people had made the calf and had served idols.... in which there is no burden, or distinction of foods, or censings, or offerings of sacrifices and burnt offerings... [Because of the people’s disobedience with the golden calf,] from that time there were sacrifices and offerings and tables; and from that time were burnt offerings and oblations and shew-bread, and the offering up of sacrifices, and firstlings, and redemptions, and he-goats for sins, and vows... customs which are not to be spoken of.<sup>82</sup>

Didascalia teaches that the Second Legislation and the propitiatory sacrificial system of worship that it introduced were solely punishment by God because of the idolatry of Israel, forms of fetters to keep a disobedient people in check. They were by no means to be used as patterns for Christian worship or life.

But you, through baptism, have been set free from idolatry, and you have been released from the Second Legislation which was imposed on account of idols... For indeed it was to this end [Christ] came, that he might affirm the Law and abolish the Second Legislation, and fulfill the power of human free will, and show forth the resurrection of the dead.<sup>83</sup>

This is why, earlier in Didascalia (II.25), there is a thorough reinterpretation of the Jewish sacrificial worship in different terms: “...instead of the former sacrifices, offer up now prayers, petitions, and thanksgivings.<sup>84</sup> The only sacrifice is the people’s sacrifice of praise, prayer and thanksgiving. Christ’s coming and the manner of his life abolished the need for any other form of sacrifice. Didascalia is adamant about this. “He destroyed the second legislation... He did not offer sacrifices or burnt offerings or anything written in

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<sup>82</sup>Brock and Vasey, 31 (VI.16).

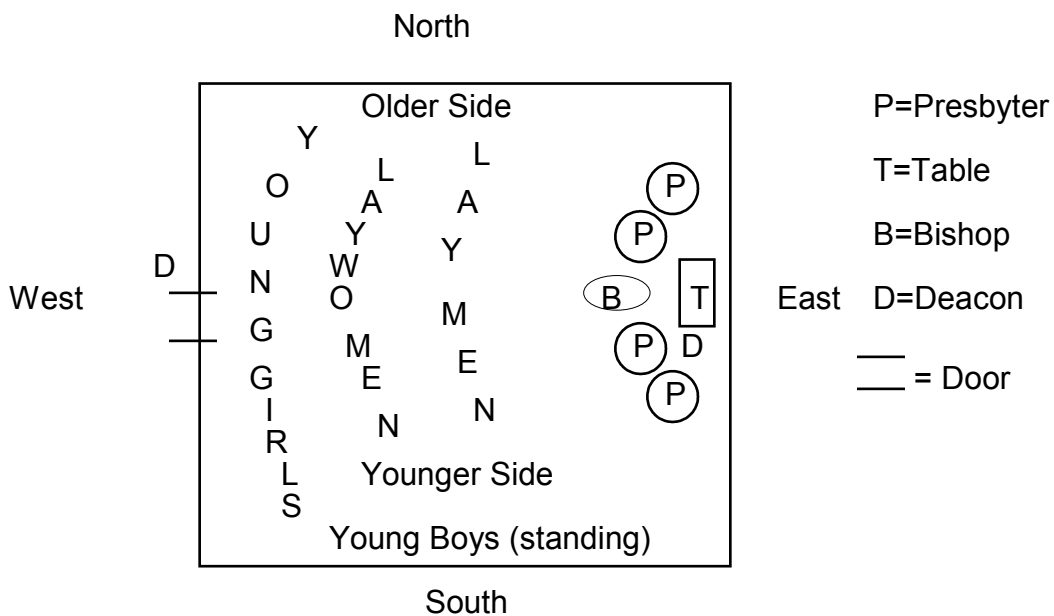
<sup>83</sup>Brock and Vasey, 31 (VI.17).

<sup>84</sup>Brock and Vasey, 11.

the second legislation.<sup>85</sup> His coming and his life, which ended in death because of his integrity and was raised by the power of God, made peace with God and set believers free. In the eucharist, then, peace with God is celebrated, and possibly sought, simply through the offerings of praise and prayer.

***The Limits of the Peace: Assembled Unity and Parallels to Pagan Segregation***

Both the enactment of peace liturgically and judicially and the teaching about the second legislation in the sermons of the bishop would have left an indelible impression that the churches of Didascalia were dedicated to interpersonal peace and worship that offered praise and prayer instead of blood sacrifices. But words and actions are not the only elements of ritual that can teach. The arrangement of the worship space, including the seating arrangement, teach much as well. Didascalia describes the appropriate arrangement for seating in the sanctuary with great detail. Rather than reproduce the entire section of Didascalia, I offer here a figure which illustrates what it describes in II.57.



<sup>85</sup>Funk, 356 (VI, xxii, 5).

Laity and clergy, women and men, young and old, were all segregated into their specific places, with young girls getting the “worst” seats (if there were any seats back there) in the house. Not on the diagram is a further segregation between young married women with children and widows.

Only three of these divisions might be crossed during the service. First, the deacon at the door would take up a station at the table at eucharist after all the non-communicants had been dismissed. This represents less of a crossing of a line than the performance of a duty. Second, an elderly person could displace a younger person if there were not enough seats, and the deacon at the door would come forward to locate the younger person in a standing position. Finally, if a poor person arrived, and there were no seats, the bishop would have to leave his seat and give it to the poor person. Wealthy or famous persons would not be given similar treatment.<sup>86</sup> Any congregation arranged with the bishop as the center of all attention, as this one is, would be sure to get the message of God’s preferential option for the poor and the corresponding implications and obligations of living in God’s peace.

But the other segregations remained, and their message was just as clear. Clergy were preferred over laity, men over women, the elderly over the young, and children were marginalized, literally. These segregations were also followed, it appears, in the distribution of the eucharist, if we take the following passage (as does the revision in *Apostolic Constitutions* II.57) to refer to eucharistic eating: “For as we can observe the dumb animals... lie down and sit up, feed and chew the cud by species, with none of them separating itself from its own kind: so too in the church, those who are young ought to sit separately....”<sup>87</sup>

What is interesting about this process of separating people into specific orders is its parallel with the orders created at sacrifices in pagan Greek sacrificial rites. In those

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<sup>86</sup>Brock and Vasey, 15-17 (II.57).

<sup>87</sup>Brock and Vasey, 15 (II.57).

rites, as in the Christian eucharist, as Stanley Stowers has argued, what is essential is not the killing of the animal, but the eating of the meat. The meat from the dismembered and roasted animal would be distributed by rank, with the most valuable members of the group near the center and receiving the most prized pieces of the meat, and the other less valuable orders receiving their pieces according to their rank. Gender separation was a hallmark of this practice, and it was a gender separation that placed the male at the center and the female and children at the periphery. Eating in this segregated way established the order (peace) not only of the assembly, but of all society, in Greek culture.<sup>88</sup> One wonders whether the community described in Didascalia, as dedicated to interpersonal peacemaking as it was, would have been aware of this parallel with pagan practice.

### ***Conclusion: Integral Peace***

In the church or churches represented by Didascalia, one can discern at least four institutions at work: liturgy, charity, catechesis, and court. All four of these institutions are linked in the Sunday liturgy, and, significantly, the linkage of the four is concerned with the teaching of peace. While the form of the assembly may teach other lessons, the requirement that a poor person sit in the seat of a bishop if no other seats were available and that the young make place for the old identifies peace and ministry with the poor, elderly, and weak as central to the life of the church. The deacon's cry for reconciliation and the requirement for the bishop to attend to this matter before all others (it appears) in the establishment of who may participate in the eucharist bring a robust interpersonal peace institution, the court, directly to bear on the ability of any to celebrate. And since

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<sup>88</sup>Stanley K. Stowers, "Greeks Who Sacrifice and Those Who Do Not: Toward an Anthropology of Greek Religion" in Michael L. White, ed. *The Social Worlds of the First Christians* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 296-327.

the central doctrinal criterion for the making of a bishop is that he be able to discern the Law from the Second Legislation, it is clear that the form of peace he must teach with his instruction and in his presidency at eucharist is built on no sacrifices but the praise and prayers of God's people gathered as one people in peace in the house, if not at the table, of the Lord.



### ***The Teaching of Peace in the Prayer Book of Bishop Sarapion***

The *Euchologion*, or Prayer Book, attributed to Bishop Sarapion of Thmuis, Lower Egypt, appears to have been composed or compiled by the bishop himself from a variety of known and unknown sources, around 356 C.E. Sarapion was known as a friend and defender of Athanasius during the Arian controversy in Alexandria, and a staunch opponent of Manichaeism which was spreading widely in Egypt and Northern Africa in the fourth century. Thmuis at that time was probably one of the four major cities of Egypt (along with Memphis, Athribis and Oxyrynchos), but was not at the level of ecclesiastical importance of Athanasius's Alexandria, which was already a "patriarchate."<sup>89</sup> In Western terms, it would be a diocese, but not an archdiocese. The *Euchologion* represents one of the earliest "Orthodox" liturgical collections that can be attested with some certainty to be original to the mid-fourth century.

For our purposes, Sarapion's prayer book represents a departure from nearly everything we have surveyed to this point. Its orientation is Egyptian, rather than Syrian or Western. There is almost no hint of anything other than vertical relationships between the people and God, and possibly theopolitical relationships between the people of God and the powers; interpersonal relationships are absent from its purview. Dismissals in this text are only of catechumens and energumens, not of penitents or persons in conflict with each other. No separate "rite of peace" is present. Most importantly, the word peace (εἰρηνη) never appears in the collection.

What does appear as a major theme throughout the prayers, however, is the idea of establishing communion with God, and, in the eucharistic prayers, the word "reconciliation" (καταλλαγῶσις, and cognates). In the Prayer Book, reconciliation

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<sup>89</sup>Maxwell Johnson, "The Prayers of Sarapion of Thmuis" (Ph.D. Dissertation: University of Notre Dame, 1992), 1-4. Johnson's thesis represents the most comprehensive study of Sarapion's Prayer Book to date, and so will be used extensively in this study both as the basis for the Greek text and for matters of interpretation. Johnson has since published the thesis in book form in *The Prayers of Sarapion of Thmuis: A Literary, Liturgical, and Theological Analysis*, *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 249 (Roma: Istituto Orientale, 1995).

always refers to the God-human relationship. An exploration of how Sarapion's prayers describe the process of establishing, maintaining, and renewing communion with God may reveal what he intended to teach about peace with God.

Generally speaking, we will proceed from the assumption that there are several layers of tradition represented in the "final form" we have in the Prayer Book, and seek to offer an interpretation that begins by seeking points of continuity rather than discontinuity. We will begin with baptism, move to a discussion of ordained ministry, and conclude with the eucharist.

### ***Baptism and Peace with God***

In the prayers concerning baptism (7-11, 15-16), there is a strong emphasis on establishing full communion with God through cleansing from sin, regeneration, and overcoming the power of sin through the Spirit. Prayer 15, "Prayer for the Oil of the Ones Being Baptized," appears to provide a summary of the entire process and its theological meaning.

Master, lover of humankind and lover of souls,  
compassionate and merciful, God of Truth, we call on you,  
following after (you) and being obedient to the promises of  
your only-begotten who said, "If you release the sins of  
any, they are released." And we anoint with this oil those  
drawing near or having drawn near to this divine rebirth,  
beseeching that our Lord Christ Jesus would work in it  
healing and strength-making power and that, on the one  
hand, he might through this oil reveal and heal from their  
soul, body, spirit every sign of sin and lawlessness or  
satanic fault, and, on the other hand, by his grace he might  
furnish them the release, so that, having no part in sin they  
will live in righteousness. And having been re-formed  
through this anointing and purified through the bath and  
made new again by the Spirit, that will be strong to conquer  
against the rest of the assaulting energies coming against  
them...<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>90</sup>Translation mine from Johnson's Greek text, p. 68. Johnson's own English translation (p. 69) translates ἀφεσις as "forgiveness." Given the power language of the context, I have chosen to use the more basic term "release" here. The issue here seems to involve a more active grant of "release" from the power of sin than simply forgiveness of sins.

If this pre-baptismal anointing prayer was used regularly, it seems to make clear that the order of the baptismal rite was first anointing with oil, then “washing” in water, and then another anointing. The first anointing was for “the release” from sin, which also amounted to a “re-forming” of the person being anointed. The washing, the baptism itself, was for cleansing. And the second anointing (the first post-baptismal anointing rite we know in the development of fourth-century Egyptian liturgy)<sup>91</sup> was for a renewing impartation of the Holy Spirit.

The language describing the pre-baptismal anointing is dramatic and physical. “Our Lord Christ Jesus” is called upon to act in the anointing with “healing and strength-producing power.” Here the healing is for “every sign of sin and lawlessness or satanic fault” to be removed from “soul, body, spirit.” The outcome of the anointing is described in two ways, release and “re-plasmation.” The release appears to be simply another way of referring to the healing already mentioned. “Re-plasmation” may be an echo of texts such as Psalm 139:13-16, a kind of “re-forming” of the “uncompleted being” in the mother’s womb.<sup>92</sup>

“The Prayer of the Sanctification of the Waters” (prayer 7) describes way is the baptism itself understood as a cleansing.

And as your only-begotten Word, having descended upon the waters of the Jordan, rendered them holy, so also now let him descend among these (waters), and let him make them holy and spiritual, to the end that the ones being baptized may no longer be flesh and blood, but spiritual and capable of worshipping you, the ungenerated Father through Jesus Christ in holy spirit...<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>91</sup>Johnson, 370.

<sup>92</sup>The word in Greek is αναπλασθεντες, “having been formed again.” Johnson translates it as “remolded.” The LXX of Psalm 139:16 (138:16) uses the verb πλασθησονται, referring to “the days that were formed for me,” rather than to the “forming” of the “substance” (υποστασις in v. 15) of the person. So the link to Psalm 139 here, if any, appears to be more associational than directly verbal. However, in the NT the verb πλασσω does appear twice (1 Timothy 2:13 and Romans 9:20) in both cases with the sense of physically forming/creating a person.

<sup>93</sup>Johnson, 56. Translation mine.

The cleansing in question, then, is ontological, a cleansing from the fleshly being, a bath in the waters of the Word which transforms the “re-plasmated” flesh and blood into a spiritual being capable of direct fellowship with the Father in the worshipping community. Baptismal water is able to be a channel of this ontological change because Jesus’ own baptism, through his incarnation, makes baptismal water a channel of this salvation to all who may receive it, allowing them to participate in the same spiritual nature he himself has as incarnate Word.

Before entering the water, however, the baptismal candidate must still offer a personal renunciation of “the mischievous and wicked one” and confess God’s “only-begotten word” as the sole guide for the rest of life.<sup>94</sup> After renunciation of the evil one and embrace of the only-begotten Word, a rite of welcoming would take place, though what that rite entails is unknown.<sup>95</sup> The prayer connected with that rite asks for God’s presence and empowerment “to scare off and cast away every temptation.”<sup>96</sup> It is a prayer that anticipates the empowerment in the Spirit that would be given in the post-baptismal anointing.

The empowerment given in the that anointing involves the promise of victory in ongoing spiritual warfare.

O God of powers, helper of every soul turning to you and being under the ruling hand of your only-begotten, we call upon you, that through your divine and unspeakable power of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, divine and heavenly energy might work in this chrism, [for] the ones baptized and (now) chrismated in it with the impression of the sign of the salvation-giving cross of the only-begotten, through which cross Satan and every opposing power was overturned and triumphed over; so let the ones reborn and renewed through the bath of regeneration also become sharers in the gift of the Holy Spirit, and, having been sealed in this seal, let them thoroughly remain steadfast and

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<sup>94</sup> Johnson, 58, translations mine.

<sup>95</sup> Johnson (p. 175) suggests this may refer to the candidate having moved from the “outer court” of the baptismal font to immediate periphery of the font itself.

<sup>96</sup> Johnson, 60. Translation mine.

immovable, unharmed and safe from violence, not spitefully treated and free from being plotted against, being a citizen in the faith and knowledge of the truth until the end, awaiting the heavenly hopes of life and the eternal promises of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ...<sup>97</sup>

The sign of the cross, which is the form by which post-baptismal anointing in the Holy Spirit is imparted, is the sign of Jesus' victory over "the opposing powers." The final bidding of the anointing is almost a commissioning speech to a citizen-soldier of the heavenly realm, who, having received his training and initiation, is now being sent forth by the "God of powers" into the fray with the best hopes for complete defeat of the enemy, and the best wishes for no harm, either spiritual or physical, to come to that soldier in the process.<sup>98</sup>

The newly anointed-baptized-chrismated Christian thus stands poised for a life of successful spiritual warfare. Participation in the life of God through Christian initiation, places the Christian in a new polis that is at war with the "opposing powers." The establishment of peace with God empowers the Christian for war with the powers of the world. What we do not know is the form this warfare may have taken. Did it involve Christians in pro-actively engaging the evil powers in their culture? Or was it more a defensive war of overcoming the temptations that culture would afford in their own lives? And what would Christians in mid-fourth century Thmuis label as temptations or Satanic influences to be overcome?<sup>99</sup> Could violence by Christians, including military violence,

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<sup>97</sup>Johnson, 70, 72. Translation mine. Johnson notes serious translational problems in the section referring to the sign of the cross. My translation has taken Johnson's translation into account.

<sup>98</sup>It would be interesting to see actual commissioning speeches to military officers in Thmuis in this period to see whether some of the language in this post-baptismal anointing prayer is not derived from or similar to such a military context. There does not appear to be any precedent for such language in near-contemporary post-baptismal anointing prayers, such as the Ethiopic version of Apostolic Tradition (cited by Johnson on p. 185).

<sup>99</sup>Though there does not yet exist a social history of Thmuis, Victor Saxer's classic *Vie Liturgique et Quotidienne à Carthage vers le Milieu du IIIe Siècle* (Vatican City: Pontifical Institute for Christian Archaeology, 1969) might provide some clues. Saxer indicates that for Cyprian's church in Carthage in the mid-third century, there was indeed a spiritual warfare going on. That sense of warfare was heightened by the two persecutions the church endured in the third century (Decius in 250 and Valerian in 258). Its main form was in separation/segregation from "pagan" culture, including a total separation from the religious life of Carthage, a rejection of pagan-Christian

be seen as compatible with this spiritual warfare? Until answers to such questions as these are forthcoming, there is little more we may responsibly say about the initiatory rites' teaching of peace.

### ***Ministry and the Peace of God***

There does appear, however, to be somewhat more we may responsibly say about the role of ordained ministry in sustaining peace with God. Four prayers in the Prayer Book are especially instructive in this regard: Prayers 12-14 (at the laying on of hands for the appointment of deacons, presbyters, and bishops, respectively) and Prayer 25 (for the Bishop and the Church).

We begin with the deacon. As we have seen in other liturgical traditions, the deacon as an officer of the church has been involved primarily in four kinds of functions: distributing to the poor and sick (Justin, Apostolic Tradition, Didascalia), functioning as gatekeeper/bouncer at the Sunday worship (Didascalia), assisting elders and bishop baptism and eucharist (Apostolic Tradition, Didascalia), and being involved in the process of interpersonal peacemaking (Didascalia). In the Prayer Book, however, the function of the deacon is specifically defined only as a liturgical office. Prayer 12 ("Laying on of Hands for the Appointment of Deacons") recalls the election of the original seven deacons to whom was given "holy Spirit," and then goes on to bid:

Establish also this (man) as a deacon of your catholic church, and give in him a spirit of knowledge and discernment, so that he can serve as a deacon purely and blamelessly in the midst of your people in this liturgy.<sup>100</sup>

Prayer 25 specifies the liturgical role of the deacon even further.

And make holy also (the) deacons, so that they may be pure in heart and body and be able in a pure conscience to serve

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marriages, and separate burial places. In daily life, Christians were forbidden to go to the forum, to spectacles, to the baths, and many "normal" social, professional, and family functions (Saxer, 335-336).

<sup>100</sup>Johnson, 62. Translation mine. Johnson renders the words "this liturgy" as "this service." The word in Greek, though, is λειτουργία. Though Prayer 25 clearly represents a different historical tradition than some of these prayers, it likewise mentions only a liturgical role for the deacon.

(in the liturgy) and stand alongside the holy body and the holy blood.<sup>101</sup>

Already we have seen in Didascalia at least one deacon who would take up at station at the table to assist at the eucharist. The role of the deacon here is clothed in the language of purity, blamelessness, and holiness, the sort of language one readily associates with those who are to participate as an offerer or assistant at sacrifices. The “knowledge and discernment” sought in Prayer 12 seems to refer here to an understanding of the meaning of these “holy mysteries” and his precise liturgical role in attending to them.

The role of the presbyter appears to be that of ruler, teacher and, reconciler of the people to God. Prayer 13 bids:

We extend our hands, Master, God of the heavens, Father of the only-begotten, upon this man and pray that the spirit of truth might dwell upon him. Gift him with understanding and knowledge and a good heart. Let divine Spirit come in him so that he might be able to rule this your people, and to be an ambassador of your divine words and to reconcile your people to you, uncreated God. You who have given holy Spirit through the spirit of Moses to your elect ones, divide also to this (man) holy Spirit from the spirit of the only-begotten for the grace-gift of wisdom and knowledge and right faith, so that he might be able to serve you in a pure conscience...<sup>102</sup>

The service of the presbyter is teaching and leadership in the church. He is pictured as an authorized intermediary of the words of God to the people of God. It is possible from this prayer that the form of reconciliation between God and people that the presbyter carries out is precisely that of teaching them what God’s words are so they can fulfill them.

Prayer 25 seems to move in a similar vein, though no specific mention of the reconciling role of the presbyter appears.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Johnson, 90. Translation mine.

<sup>102</sup> Johnson, 64. Translation mine.

<sup>103</sup> “And we beseech you also on behalf of the co-presbyters, make them holy, give them wisdom and knowledge and right teaching. Make them ambassadors on behalf of your holy teachings rightly and blamelessly.” Johnson, 90. Translation mine.

Finally we come to the bishop, who almost without doubt was the primary presider at eucharist, and thus would have occupied an explicitly priestly role as the chief offerer of the eucharistic sacrifice. That priestly role, however, is nowhere specifically described either in the Prayer 14 or Prayer 25. Instead, the bishop is connected to the apostles. Prayer 14 asks that he be “a living bishop, a holy bishop of the succession of the holy apostles.”<sup>104</sup> The prayer continues:

... and give to him grace and divine Spirit, which you gifted to all your genuine servants and prophets and patriarchs. Make him to be worthy to shepherd your flock, and let him yet continue both blamelessly and without stumbling in the episcopate.

The bishop here looks much more like “holy man” than priest, more guide than ruler. Prayer 25 seems to confirm the “holy man” image in its petition, “Make this bishop holy, and preserve him from every temptation, and give him wisdom and knowledge; prosper him in your disciplines.”<sup>105</sup> Exactly what “your disciplines” are is left unspecified. These may refer to his priestly skills, or possibly to special spiritual disciplines he may be expected to undertake as bishop. His intended role in sustaining peace with God, then, appears to be as a representative of the Spirit-sent ministry of apostles, patriarchs and prophets, in both in the holiness of his life and in his shepherding ministry, perhaps including his specifically priestly ministry, before the people.

These three offices thus represent and sustain the peace of God in three different, but complementary, ways. The bishop represents the presence and mission of the Spirit in his own life and in his liturgical intercession on behalf of the community to draw them closer to God. The presbyters represent the teaching ministry by which Christians can know the decrees of God and fulfill them. And the deacon functions perhaps as the representative of the people assisting at the central reconciling rite of the community’s

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<sup>104</sup> Johnson, 66. Translation mine.

<sup>105</sup> Johnson, 90. Translation mine.



worship, the eucharist.

### ***Eucharist and Reconciliation with God***

An historical-critical reading of the eucharistic prayers in the Prayer Book would leave one in a state of confusion about reconciliation with God. Maxwell Johnson sees in the eucharistic prayer at least very two different understandings of the eucharist corresponding to different layers of tradition the Prayer Book preserves. In the older tradition, corresponding with the theology of the baptismal prayers, the eucharist is a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to God for having reconciled God's people and seeks God's power through the participation in the body and blood to re-equip God's people for their spiritual warfare. In the more recent layer, embodied in the central section of the prayer, the eucharist is a material propitiatory sacrifice of bread and wine, offered as a re-presentation of the death of Jesus, in order to obtain reconciliation with God again.<sup>106</sup> Ultimately the two traditions represent two theologies that, in the structure and wording of the prayers themselves, often sound incompatible with each other.

For our concerns, then, an historical-critical approach to the text can only leave us in aporia. Instead, we will follow a more canonical approach which takes for granted that the intended dominant metaphor of the Prayer Book's eucharistic sacrifice is reconciliation by means of a propitiatory sacrifice, but that the benefits of the older, more purely eucharological tradition are sought and expected as well.

The prayer begins as a pure sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving:

It is worthy and just to praise, to hymn, to glorify you,  
uncreated Father of the only-begotten Jesus Christ. We  
praise you, uncreated God, unattainable, inexpressible,  
unknowable to every created substance...<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>106</sup>Johnson, 272. On 272-273, Johnson also makes the argument that within the propitiatory model, the word for "likeness" *ομοιωμα*, reflects two different and not altogether compatible usages as well, "one (perhaps more primitive) which refers to the entire eucharistic action as 'making' the image or likeness of the death of Christ; and a second which is more concerned with the precise sacramental relationship between the eucharistic elements and Christ's presence in them" (273).

<sup>107</sup>Johnson, 42. Translation mine.

And the praise goes on for several more lines, before starting anew with a different form of address:

Lover of humanity and love of the poor, you who are reconciled to all and are drawing in all things to yourself through the coming of your beloved son to dwell [among us]. We pray, make us a living people; give to us spirit of Light, so we may know you the true [God] and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. Give us holy Spirit, so we may be able to speak out and describe your unspeakable mysteries. Let the Lord Jesus speak in us, and holy Spirit also hymn you through us.<sup>108</sup>

What is sought here is the ability to worship God truly and fully by a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit and a prophetic presence of Jesus to enliven the people and fill their praise to the One who has reconciled them. And that appears to be exactly what proceeds to take place. The bishop continues in the prayer to describe the heavenly court of God with its “thousand thousand and myriad myriads of angels, archangels, thrones, lordships, rulers, authorities” standing around the throne of God, along with the seraphim and cherubim, and joins the people’s prayers with the heavenly *Αγιος Αγιος Αγιος* to the Lord. Then he adds, “Full is the heaven, full is the earth of the great magnificence of your glory, Lord of powers.”<sup>109</sup>

At this high point of communion and insight through praise, the bishop adds a new petition. “Also fill this sacrifice full of your power and of your participation, for to you we have offered this living sacrifice, the unbloody offering.”<sup>110</sup> “This sacrifice” is not the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving that has just been offered. It is a different sacrifice, further described as follows.

We have offered to you this bread, the likeness of the body of the only-begotten. This bread is a likeness of the holy body, that the Lord Jesus, on the night in which he was

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<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>109</sup> Johnson, 44. Translation mine.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

handed over, took bread and broke and gave to his disciples, saying, “Take and eat; this is my body which is broken on your behalf for the forgiveness of sins.” For this reason also we, making the likeness of the death, have offered the bread, and we beseech you through this sacrifice to be reconciled to all of us and propitiate us, God of truth.<sup>111</sup>

Read from an historical-critical, or even from a literary perspective, the introduction of this propitiatory sacrifice might be understood as something of a seismic fault line between clashing theologies of the eucharist. If we read this canonically, however, the teaching of reconciliation with God may operate somewhat as follows. In and through the initiatory rites of anointings and baptism, God’s people have been made new creatures, empowered and equipped for battle with the evil one, and enabled to enter the very presence of God in the heavenly court in their praise. They are new creatures, but not yet sinless. As new creatures they can enter the heavenly courts. As new creatures who have sinned, they still need the coal upon their lips to cleanse them so they can go forth to fulfill their mission.

The words over the cup and the epiclesis of the Logos, which put language from the earlier euchological part of the eucharistic prayer into a propitiatory framework, seem to support this kind of “canonical” reading.

And also we have offered the cup, the likeness of the blood, which Lord Jesus Christ, having taken the cup after dining said to his disciples, “Take. Drink. This is the new covenant, which is my blood poured out on your behalf for the forgiveness of sins. For this [purpose] we have offered also the cup, bringing forth the likeness of blood. Let come to dwell, O God of truth, your holy Word upon this bread, so that the bread may become body of the word, and upon this cup, so that the cup may become blood of truth.<sup>112</sup>

“Let come to dwell” appears to borrow from the lines of praise we have already seen earlier in the eucharistic prayer: “Lover of humanity and love of the poor, you who

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<sup>111</sup>Johnson, 46. Translation mine.

<sup>112</sup>Johnson, 46. Translation mine.

are reconciled to all and are drawing in all things to yourself through the *coming of your beloved son to dwell* [among us].”<sup>113</sup> Here, though, what the One to come, now called “Holy Word,” is intended to dwell in is not first of all the people, but the material elements of the people’s sacrifice offered by their bishop. The immediate intended effect of drinking the cup is that which Jesus himself spoke: the forgiveness of sins, peace with God.

That stated, the final words of the prayer seek additional empowerment for service through the meal. “And make all those communing to receive a medicine of life for the healing of every sickness and for the empowerment of every advancement and virtue, not for condemnation... Let angels be dispatched to be present with the people for the destruction of the wicked [one] and the firm grounding of the church.”<sup>114</sup> The church, a recreated people with a battle to wage, having been healed from the wounds they have received on the field because of their own sins, are nourished to be sent out to shore up their defenses and wage war against the wicked one with and on behalf of the “uncreated Father of the only-begotten Jesus Christ.”

### ***Conclusion: A Militant Peace***

Those who may have participated in the liturgical life displayed in Sarapion’s prayer book would have been trained in spiritual warfare in each of the three major institutions of that life. In baptism, they were re-created, cleansed, empowered, and commissioned as citizens of God’s kingdom to defeat the wicked one. In eucharist, their cleansing was renewed, their power restored and advanced, and their commission re-issued every Lord’s Day. And in the ordained ministry, they witnessed and experienced the weapons with which God would equip them to fight: worship, instruction in the truth, and holy living in the power of the Holy Spirit. Perhaps this is why the word “peace” never appears in the liturgy. For here the chief effect of peace with God is effective war

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<sup>113</sup>Johnson, 42. Translation mine.

<sup>114</sup>Johnson, 48. Translation mine.

with the powers of the world.

### ***The Teaching of Peace in the Apostolic Constitutions***

The *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles*, or Apostolic Constitutions, is a late fourth century Syrian document, usually dated around 380. The editor/compiler of the Apostolic Constitutions has brought together a number of earlier church orders and liturgical documents, and probably some more recent compositions, in a new edition reflecting the theological perspective of at least a semi-Arian church. The revised documents include an expanded Greek Didascalia (Books I-VI), sections from Didache (VII:1-32), a set of “constitutions” apparently based at times on Apostolic Tradition (VIII:3-45), and a collection entitled “The 85 Apostolic Canons,” a selection of canons from church councils, including Nicaea, Antioch, Laodicea, Ancyrus, and Neocaesarea.<sup>115</sup>

With so many documents brought together and revised over time, to assume that any of the liturgical texts in Apostolic Constitutions would have been used “as is” is probably to assume too much. Our approach here, then, will be fairly modest. We will compare the Apostolic Constitutions’ edition of Didascalia with Didascalia itself on two points, as it is likely that the revision of Didascalia, by far the largest and one of the later documents in the collection, may have been more recent and more intentionally undertaken. We will then turn to the so-called “Clementine Liturgy” of Book VIII, which appears to be distinctive to Apostolic Constitutions, for a consideration of what that liturgy may teach about peace.

#### ***Judicial Peace and the Liturgy***

Apostolic Constitutions’ version of Didascalia describes almost the same judicial process for handling sin and serious conflict in the church as Didascalia itself. Apostolic Constitutions, though, supplies more precise directions about where in the liturgy the call by the deacon to be at peace occurs. In the parallel text in Apostolic Constitutions to Didascalia II.57, the call occurs after the dismissal of catechumens and the prayers of the

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<sup>115</sup>Marcel Metzger, *Les Constitutions Apostoliques*, Sources Chrétiennes No. 320 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1985), pp. 20-30. Hereafter No. 320 will be referred to as vol. 1, No. 329 as vol. 2 and No. 339 as vol. 3.

faithful, and immediately before a kiss of peace is exchanged (Didascalia makes no mention of a kiss of peace). In Apostolic Constitutions, the words of the deacon standing at the right hand of the “high priest” are “Let no one have anything against another; let no one be in hypocrisy.”<sup>116</sup> The difference here, and it is a significant one, is that this rubric functions more as an exhortation to those about to exchange a kiss of peace than an invitation to reconciliation for those who need to reconcile or perhaps even be dismissed to enter the reconciliation process of the bishop’s court.

The proceedings of the court are described with a slightly more sophisticated structure in Apostolic Constitutions than in Didascalia.

Let your judicatures be held on the second of sabbath, so that, if there should be a controversy about your sentence, having an interval till the Sabbath, you may be able correct the controversy, and pacify those who are at odds with each other by the Lord's day. Let also the deacons and presbyters be present at the judicature, judging without respect of persons, as men of God, with righteousness. So, when, both the parties have come, just as the Law says, “Each of those who have the controversy shall stand in the middle of the court.” And when you have heard them, cast your voting-stones holily, working diligently to make them both friends before the sentence of the bishop, so that a judgment against the sinner may not go abroad into the world...<sup>117</sup>

“Cast your voting stones holily” is the “new” element here relative to Didascalia. That the address is plural and that the presbyters and deacons are here given some role in judging, in addition to the bishop, may indicate that a different sort of two-stage judging process was in effect. Perhaps the presbyters and deacons would vote to determine who is at fault and what must be done, in penance or restitution, to repair the relationship. If their actions appeared to be able to handle the matter, perhaps it need not be referred to the bishop who would offer a public sentence. Otherwise, the bishop’s role in assigning a verdict and appropriate penance appears identical to the model in the original Didascalia.

<sup>116</sup>Metzger, (vol. 1) 316, 318(II.lvii.16). Translation mine from Metzger’s Greek text (II.lvii.16).

<sup>117</sup>Metzger (vol. 1), 288 (II.xlvii.1-2).

However the process actually worked, the fact that Apostolic Constitutions has added material to the description of the bishop's court process probably means that the court was still in use for interpersonal peacemaking at the end of the fourth century, and that attempts were being made to strengthen, rather than compromise, the efficacy of the process. What is now less clear (Book II) is how and when persons would be identified to enter the bishop's court process, and how and when they would re-enter the community when their penance was complete. The Sunday liturgy here no longer seems to provide a clear means of entry into the court system or re-entry into the community by those who had worked through it.<sup>118</sup>

### ***Propitiatory Sacrifice as a Way to Peace***

We have earlier noted Didascalia's statement about the relationship of Jesus to the second legislation. "He destroyed the second legislation... He did not offer sacrifices or burnt offerings or anything written in the second legislation."<sup>119</sup> Apostolic Constitutions, in the same place, has the following:

He stopped them [additions of second legislation] through first fulfilling them; for he was also circumcised, he was sprinkled for purification, he offered both sacrifices and whole burnt offerings, and of other customs he made use; and the law-giver became the fulfillment of the law, not annulling the physical law, but having stopped the additions through the second [legislation], even if not all [of these.]<sup>120</sup>

This represents a significant shift from the teaching of Didascalia about the relationship of Jesus to the second legislation. The death of Jesus is now seen as the sacrifice to end

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<sup>118</sup>The implications of this could be several. Perhaps the court itself had become better at pro-actively identifying and recruiting potential "clients" and so the need for a connection with the Sunday liturgy would be reduced. Or perhaps either the court had become overcrowded when it was connected to the liturgy, or the liturgy was becoming too disrupted by also providing a liaison role to the court. Or perhaps the court was now handling mostly cases of notorious sinners or only very serious conflicts which would be obvious to all and so not need to be made a part of the Sunday liturgy. It would not be responsible to speculate which of the above, if any, would account for this shift; it is enough to note that a shift had happened.

<sup>119</sup>Funk, 356 (VI.xxii.5). Translation mine.

<sup>120</sup>Metzger (vol. 2) 368 (VI.xxii.5). Translation mine.



sacrifices by fulfilling the true purpose of all sacrifices.

The way in which the death of Jesus fulfills the second legislation, with its sacrifices, also points directly to a shift in eucharistic theology relative to Didascalia. “Instead of sacrifices with blood, [there is now] the reasonable and unbloody and mystical [sacrifice], which is carried out for the death of the Lord by the grace of symbols of the body and the blood.”<sup>121</sup> Indeed, through the offering of the eucharistic sacrifice, “the symbols of the body and the blood,” peace with God, perhaps only partly accomplished through the former sacrifices, can now be fully accomplished.

### ***Liturgical Peace: The “Clementine” Eucharist***

The so-called “Clementine Liturgy” of Book VIII of the Apostolic Constitutions (VIII.v-xv) is presented as the liturgy that would be used as the first service of a new bishop after his ordination. Whether it would ever have been used exactly as it appears is somewhat doubtful, if only because the preface of the eucharistic prayer is extremely long.<sup>122</sup> But it is valuable as a witness to late fourth century eucharistic theology and practice<sup>123</sup>, and so perhaps a more accurate reflection of the eucharistic theology of the compiler of the Apostolic Constitutions than the more roughly-sketched liturgical materials added to Book II or the legislative sketch added to Book VI of the revision of Didascalia. For our purposes, three moments in the liturgy are significant: the dismissals, a “divided” peace rite, and the petitions at the eucharistic prayers.

Before the prayers of the faithful, the catechumens, energumens (demon-possessed), illuminands (those having been approved for but still awaiting baptism) and penitents are dismissed with an exhortation and prayer from a deacon and a blessing by

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<sup>121</sup>Metzger, (vol. 2)370 (VI, xxiii, 5). Translation mine.

<sup>122</sup>1842 words from the beginning of the prayer up to the Sanctus in James Donaldson’s English translation in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 7.

<sup>123</sup>W.E. Pitt notes that the structure of the eucharistic prayer in the “Clementine Liturgy” represents a conflation of two previous major structural types-- Apostolic Tradition from the early third century and Cyril of Jerusalem from the mid-fourth century. This may establish the dating for the liturgy as it appears in Apostolic Constitutions as at least mid to late fourth century. See his article, “Anamnesis and Institution Narrative in Apostolic Constitutions Book VIII,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* (47, April 1958:334-335).

the bishop. First, the catechumens are dismissed to go in peace. The exhortation from the deacon for the catechumens is, “Rise up, catechumens! Ask the peace of God through his Christ, that your day and all your life may be peaceful and sinless, that your end may be Christian, that God may be merciful and propitious, a release from sins....”<sup>124</sup> For the catechumens, it appears the prayer for peace was a prayer for them to be sustained until their baptisms, when they could actually participate in the peace of God. Perhaps the teaching here is that God preserves catechumens with a special peace.

No similar gift of peace is promised to the other three groups. Both the energumens and the illuminands are simply told to “go forth,” while the penitents are told to “go away.” The bishop’s prayer for the penitents before they are told to leave is, “Re-establish them in your holy church in their former worthiness and honor through Christ, our God and Savior.”<sup>125</sup> Through their sinful actions, whatever they were, they had become “disestablished” from the church. Through fulfilling their assigned penance they could be re-established in the church at the rank or honor they had before their punishment. The penitents were at least present for the liturgy of the word, so some fellowship remained for them among the faithful. They were the last group dismissed, as having been among the faithful, but with the harshest dismissal of all, a reminder to all the faithful that serious sin would require serious work by the sinner before participation in the eucharist could be possible and peace with God could be restored. Their dismissal also strongly suggests that the purpose of the eucharist is not primarily to offer or enact forgiveness for all sins, but perhaps only those which it is not possible to work out, through penance or other interpersonal means, within the Christian community itself.

Immediately after the dismissal of the penitents, the deacon begins the bidding prayer for the faithful with this petition: “For the peace and well-being of the world and of the holy churches; that the God of the whole world might grant us His peace, everlasting

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<sup>124</sup>Metzger (vol. 3) 154 (VIII.vi.7). Translation mine.

<sup>125</sup>Metzger (vol.3) 130 (VIII.ix.4). Translation mine.

and impossible to be taken away.”<sup>126</sup> Though the bishop’s prayer that follows this prayer makes no reference to peace, the bishop’s very next act is to initiate the exchange of the peace through the holy kiss. Here, as in the reception of the eucharist in Didascalia, the peace is exchanged only within the established orders: clergy with clergy, men with men, women with women. It is not clear that children would have participated.<sup>127</sup>

The rite of peace here, however, is actually divided from its predecessor in the revision of Didascalia in Book II. In the earlier version we have reviewed, the kiss of peace was preceded by the exhortation from a deacon: “Let no one have anything against another; let no one be in hypocrisy.”<sup>128</sup> In the Clementine liturgy, this rubric of exhortation has been moved to a later position, immediately before the presentation of the eucharistic gifts on the altar and the beginning of the eucharistic prayer, and immediately after a final expulsion (without further blessing or comment) of any others who were supposed to have been dismissed earlier but had not yet departed.<sup>129</sup> The function in the new setting is no longer an exhortation to offer a sign of interpersonal peace, but an exhortation to be in interpersonal peace as a prerequisite to participation in the eucharist.<sup>130</sup> Since the kiss of peace has already been exchanged, this seems to serve as a reminder for the people to keep the spirit of that peace firmly in their hearts.

After this exhortation and all other necessary preparations are complete, including the bringing forward of the bread and wine, the eucharistic prayer itself begins. The preface up to the Sanctus is an extended recounting of God’s activities as Creator of all

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<sup>126</sup>Metzger (vol.3) 166 (VIII.x.3). Translation mine.

<sup>127</sup>Metzger (vol.3) 174 (VIII.xi). It appears that the deacons were instructed to keep the children under close watch and standing near the reading desk during this rite.

<sup>128</sup>Metzger (vol. 1) 316, 318. Translation mine from Metzger’s Greek text (II.lvii.16).

<sup>129</sup>The same words are used at VIII.xii.2, along with other exhortations.

<sup>130</sup>L. Edward Phillips (pp. 186-187) believes this “divided” peace rubric occurred in the fourth century at a time when intercessions were being introduced into eucharistic prayers proper. Formerly, he argues, the kiss of peace was the proper conclusion to the prayers of the faithful (as we have already seen it here). With the introduction of additional intercessions at eucharist, parts of the peace rite formerly attached to pre-eucharistic intercessions now get attached to eucharistic intercessions and so are relocated. He seems to be reading this as a shift in placement more than meaning.

things and provider and warrior on behalf of God's people to deliver them from their enemies (Egypt) and establish them in the promised land (Canaan). After the Sanctus, the prayer praises God for the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus in imagery of Jesus as obedient servant and deliverer from the due wrath of God and the powers of evil. The praise concerning his death and burial is:

and He that is the giver of life was buried, that he might  
loose the suffering ones and grab them out from death, and  
that he might break the chains of the devil and rescue  
humankind from his deceit.<sup>131</sup>

This description would seem to indicate that the death of Jesus was not understood to function as a propitiation in the usual sacrificial way. Rather, his death brings people the possibility of an enduring and growing peace and communion with God because it provided an avenue for Jesus to do battle with the devil on the devil's own turf (death) and be victorious. What was propitiatory in the more usual sense, that which averted God's wrath toward humankind, was the faithful life he lived.

But after the law of nature, after the lawful exhortations, after the prophetic charges and the authorities of the angels, when both the established [law] and the natural law had been defiled and the memory of the flood, the burnings, the plagues of the Egyptians, and the slaughters of the Palestinians had been cast out of their memory, and they were just about to perish entirely as never before, He was well-pleased by your will, as Maker of humankind to become human; as Lawgiver to be under the laws; as High Priest to be victim; as Shepherd to be a sheep. And He propitiated you, His God and Father, and reconciled [you] to the world, and freed all from the impending wrath, being born of a virgin ... He lived as a citizen holily, he gave instruction lawfully... He fulfilled your will. He finished the work which you gave him<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>131</sup>Metzger (vol.3) 196 (VIII.xii.33-34).

<sup>132</sup>Metzger (vol.3) 194 (VIII.xii.30-32). Translation mine.

That it was his life and ministry, and not only his death, by which Jesus made peace with God possible is significant for understanding what the eucharist is intended to accomplish as both a propitiatory sacrifice of bread and wine and a eucharological sacrifice of considerable praise and thanksgiving. The bishop asks God over the offered bread and wine

that you might be well pleased in them to the honor of your Christ, and send down your Holy Spirit upon this sacrifice, the witness of the sufferings of the Lord Jesus, that he may show this bread to be the body of your Christ and this cup to be the blood of your Christ; so that the ones partaking of this might be strengthened toward piety, might find remission of sins, might be rescued from the devil and his deceit, might be filled with your Holy Spirit, might become worthy of your Christ, [and] find eternal life by your reconciliation to them, almighty Master.<sup>133</sup>

By receiving the body and blood of the crucified Jesus newly enlivened in bread and wine by the Spirit, the people receive the benefits both of Jesus' death (deliverance from the power of sin which allows people to grow in God) and of his life (peace with God, forgiveness for sins). Put the other way around, not only is peace with God restored, the life of communicants and the church as a whole in the power of the Spirit is renewed and strengthened.

Intercessions for the church and the world follow the bishop's oblation. Immediately following petitions for the clergy are petitions for leaders in the world and for armies.

And we implore you, Lord, on behalf of the king and the rulers, and all the foot soldiers, that they might be peaceful toward us, that leading all our time of life in peace and quietness, we might glorify you through Jesus Christ our hope.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>133</sup>Metzger (vol.3) 198, 200 (VIII.xii.39-40). Translation mine.

<sup>134</sup>Metzger (vol.3) 200 (VIII.xii.40). Translation mine.

This petition reflects a situation in which the church was still concerned about the possibility of persecution carried against it by pagan rulers, and possibly a time when still not many Christians were part of the army in the area where this was composed. At the same time, it values the role not only of armies, but also of other rulers, in making a general peace possible which, in turn, makes Christian living (glorifying God) also more possible. That the prayer for rulers and soldiers is a prayer for peace indicates the high value this community placed on peace, not only interpersonally, but culturally as well. Soldiers and rulers may not be Christians, but God may be using some of them to preserve the good gift of temporal peace for God's people.

But it is not only temporal peace with the culture or peace with God individually that the bishop's prayer of oblation seeks or offers. At the end of the bishop's final doxology, he says to the people, "The peace of God be with you all," to which the people reply, "And with your spirit." The peace of the Holy, reconciling, glorious One whom the bishop has just been praising on behalf of the people is spoken to the people, and shared among them. There follows a set of bidding prayers offered by the deacon, but these cover very much the same ground as the prayers the bishop has just offered, and function, most likely, as a kind of liturgical background music while the bishop is completing the breaking of the bread into the appropriate number of pieces. Thus, the verbal exchange of peace is in essence the final liturgical act before reception of the body and blood. This teaches the supreme value of God's peace shared among God's people, a peace born in thanksgiving and fellowship in prayer and sustained by the sacramental hope of reconciliation and further growth toward fulfillment in God within the life of the Christian community as a whole. The eucharistic prayer that began with an exhortation to be at interpersonal peace with one another ends with an exchange between bishop and people of the very peace of God which empowers and enlivens that peace. In the peace of God, they will share the holy meal prepared and given for their peace with God, their

culture, and one another in the Spirit.

***Conclusion: The Teaching of Peace Confirmed in a Shifted Theology***

A critical theological tenet shifted from the original Didascalia to its revision in Apostolic Constitutions. The teaching concerning the second legislation now finds a propitiatory understanding of the death of Jesus and the eucharistic sacrifice to be proper, while Didascalia had clearly rejected this. This theological shift, however, does not appear to have substantially altered the commitment in the Syrian tradition to the teaching of peace. Institutionally, the bishop's court appears no less strong than its predecessor in Didascalia, and may have undergone some tactical improvements. Interpersonally, penitents, including those whose interpersonal conflicts required time and works of penance to restore their relationships, are still dismissed in both the rites (revised Didascalia and Clementine), while in the Clementine liturgy interpersonal peace rites occur twice (kiss of peace among the faithful, pre-eucharistic exhortation to peace). And theologically, because in the Clementine liturgy it is the whole life of Jesus which is understood as propitiatory, his teachings, including his emphasis on interpersonal peacemaking, remain as significant in the central rite of Christian worship as his incarnation, death, resurrection and ascension. Perhaps this is why the peace of God is also offered to catechumens at their dismissal and exchanged between the bishop and the faithful before they receive the holy meal. Despite the change in theological framework, one could not participate in this community's worship without experiencing its deep commitment to a life of reconciliation and peace.

***The Teaching of Peace and Contemporary Liturgy: Some Historically  
Normative Practices***

*Minister: The peace of the Lord be always with you.  
People: And also with you.*

So begins a rite of exchanging the peace of Christ which has come to be a common part of the worship of many Christian congregations. In many mainline Protestant traditions, the exchange of the peace occurs after the “prayers of the people” and a rite of confession of sin, and before the offertory and celebration of the eucharist, as part of the means of preparing the gathered community to offer and receive from the Lord’s table.<sup>135</sup> That this location for the exchange of peace is similar to that of the peace rites in a number of early Christian liturgies is not accidental. The ecumenical convergence witnessed in the World Council of Churches’ *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (1982) and the ecumenical scholarship in early Christian liturgical materials have been foundational for the shape of the more recent “official” liturgical materials published by the mainline churches.<sup>136</sup>

Liturgical scholarship to this point has thus discerned and successfully established a place and function for a peace rite in mainline Protestant worship based on early texts. But does this “new” peace rite (corporate confession followed by a handshake or embrace and the exchange of peace words) effectively teach or enact what the early liturgies were teaching about peace? Or are there more “normative” practices we might discern from

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<sup>135</sup>So it appears in the *United Methodist Book of Worship* (1992, p. 35), Presbyterian Church USA’s *Book of Common Worship* (1993, p. 20), *Book of Worship: United Church of Christ* (1986, p. 57), *The Book of Common Prayer* (1979, p. 360). In the LCA/ALC/ELCC/Missouri Synod *Lutheran Book of Worship* (1978, 86), the peace may be exchanged after the prayers, but the confession of sin is normally at the beginning of the service; in many Lutheran congregations, then, the peace is exchanged nearer to the beginning of worship. This option of a confession of sin followed by the peace at the beginning of worship is also offered by the Presbyterian and UCC liturgical materials.

<sup>136</sup>The *Book of Common Prayer* (1979) was the first of the “scholarly” revisions in the US. This may be why the *Lutheran Book of Worship* still retains a confession of sin and peace at the beginning of the service rather than closer to the eucharist.



our study of the early liturgies which should also be included in contemporary practice in order faithfully to teach what they taught?

Here I will suggest that from the three liturgical families we have surveyed (Syrian, Roman, Egyptian) we may discern four such normative practices: public dismissals of persons in conflict, an established system for intervening in and settling interpersonal conflict within the congregation, a peace rite shared by the baptized or potential communicants only, and a vision, sustained by words and tangible practices, of peace with God as empowerment for spiritual warfare with “the world.” I refer to these as normative for historical, rather than ideological reasons. Each of these practices occurs either as a hallmark of a textual family (dismissals and peacemaking procedures in Syria), or in at least two textual traditions over time (exclusive peace rites in Syria and Rome, spiritual warfare in Rome and Egypt).

### ***Strengthening Interpersonal Peace: Dismissals and Re-integration***

Pre-eucharistic dismissals from worship were certainly practiced in the Syrian and Egyptian traditions<sup>137</sup> for a variety of classes of persons, including catechumens, energumens, penitents, and illuminands. In Didache, Didascalia, and Apostolic Constitutions, the textual evidence is plain that persons who were in active conflict with one another were likewise obliged to leave the worship place before the gathered community would be able to celebrate the eucharist. The ethos behind the dismissals in the Syrian tradition appears to draw from the sacrificial principle set forth in Didache: only a pure community can offer a pure sacrifice worthy of the great King. Persons who are engaged in active conflicts with each other may, by their actions, have disqualified themselves from the purity necessary to offer the sacrifice themselves. Their presence in an otherwise relationally pure community so taints that community that not only are the

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<sup>137</sup>While it would appear probably that catechumens would be dismissed from the Sunday service after the “liturgy of the word” in Justin and Apostolic Tradition, we lack concrete evidence in the texts themselves to support this claim.

disputing individuals incapable of the sacrifice, the whole community is as well.

The use of a system of dismissals requires a corresponding system for integrating those dismissed into the celebrating community. Both the Syrian and the Egyptian traditions, as well as the Roman, appear to have had systems for integrating catechumens through a catechetical process, and the rites of healing in the Prayer Book appear to have provided a means whereby the Spirit through the church might be able to reclaim and reintegrate energumens. The Syrian tradition appears to have developed over time a system for reintegrating those who had fallen into interpersonal conflict: early, the personal interventions required in *Didache*, and, later, the bishop's court for notorious sinners and persons in conflict. Through these systems, persons were reconciled as sin was named, judgment was ascribed, and acts of restitution (penance) were done, and forgiveness was pronounced to heal the relationship with God, the other person, and the community of faith.

The corporate confession of sin, as we have it in contemporary Protestant peace rites, appears to have taken the place of prayers of dismissal. Its practical effect for peacemaking, however, is not the same as that of the public dismissal. While the corporate confession may acknowledge sins against God and neighbor, its aim is chiefly to restore the vertical relationship with God. One may say the general confession, shake hands and offer peace to others, and be present for the offering of the eucharist while being in a serious conflict with another Christian; the only bar, if there is one, might be on receiving from the table.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>138</sup>There are no stated bars on communing persons in conflict in the United Methodist Church, Presbyterian Church USA, or United Churches of Christ. The Episcopal Church has the following disciplinary rubric in the 1979 Book of Common Prayer. p. 409: "When the priest sees that there is hatred between members of the congregation, *he* shall speak privately to them, telling them that they may not receive Communion until they have forgiven each other. And if the person or persons on one side truly forgive the others and desire and promise to make up for their faults, but those on the other side refuse to forgive, the priest shall allow those who are penitent to come to Communion, but not those who are stubborn. In all such cases, the priest is required to notify the bishop, within fourteen days at the most, giving the reasons for refusing Communion." This last requirement fairly guarantees this rubric is rarely, if ever, used.

Thus the contemporary peace rite of confession of sin and an exchange of the peace teaches in practice, if not in intent, that participation in offering (and in several communions receiving) the eucharistic sacrifice ultimately is not dependent on one's relationships with others in the congregation, but only on asking God's forgiveness for one's offenses. The early Syrian tradition, however, taught through dismissal of persons in conflict and re-integration through the bishop's court, that interpersonal peace was a prerequisite to offering right praise through the eucharistic sacrifice, and that the way to the necessary interpersonal peace was through personal engagement in a process of working to restore damaged relationships, not simply to have those relationships declared restored by God. Serious theological, liturgical, and pastoral reflection might well be employed to explore and discern new ways the contemporary church might listen to and embody the high value on interpersonal reconciliation, corporate sacrificial integrity, and authoritative peacemaking systems the early Syrian tradition held as norms for the Christian worshipping community.

***Strengthening Corporate-Spiritual Peace: An Exclusively Christian Peace Rite***

With the sole exception of the blessing of the catechumens in the Clementine Liturgy, the Syrian tradition as we have surveyed it reserved peace rites for those who could participate in the eucharist only. Indeed, none of those not able to participate would even have been in the room while the peace was exchanged. Though Justin does not record dismissals as such, his recounting of the baptismal liturgy makes it appear that non-baptized persons, except perhaps for the children of the baptized, would not have been present for the welcoming kiss, either. In Apostolic Tradition, however, we noted that catechumens regularly were present to witness of kiss of peace exchanged by the baptized near the end of a daily office service, but they were not themselves able to participate "because their kiss is not yet holy."<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Botte, 74, 76 (ch.18). Translation mine.

While the meaning of the kiss or peace exchange across these various traditions varies somewhat, as we have already seen, all of them share one common value: there were peace rites that only those who were baptized and able to participate in the eucharistic sacrifice could share. Whether baptism was understood as “illumination” as in Justin, or as identification with Christ as in the Syrian tradition<sup>140</sup>, or an empowering impartation of the Holy Spirit as in Apostolic Tradition, that only the baptized, and in some places only those who could receive communion, could exchange some rites of peace implies that the peace exchanged could only be fully offered and received by those who had a particular spiritual qualification. They, and only they, could share and receive “the peace that passes understanding.”

The peace rites of the contemporary church, while following a general confession of sin, and in some traditions an absolution, are offered to and exchanged by all who are present, regardless of their baptismal or spiritual status. Perhaps this is intended as an offering of blessing and hospitality toward all, or reflects a view that in some way all persons are enabled to receive, if not share, the peace of Christ through another. Perhaps the intended teaching, then, is that the Christ is gracious and offers his peace to all who confess their sin and trust in God’s forgiveness.

The Roman and Syrian traditions pose at least three questions for the contemporary rite that liturgical revision should address. First, is the peace of Christ intended primarily as an expression of hospitality? The practice Justin describes, as we have seen, would seem to involve primarily hospitality, though only toward other baptized Christians. Thus, second, if it is a matter of hospitality, does it express hospitality toward all persons generally, or only those who are concretely being made into a new people under the discipline of the baptized community? Finally, but related, is there a peace of Christ, or peace of God, that only those who know Christ can begin to

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<sup>140</sup> Didascalia and Apostolic Constitutions III.xvii; Didache makes little mention of the theological meaning of baptism.

understand? If so, then is the church being faithful to the God of that peace, or even honest about the offer of that peace, by acting as if any person who has said a prayer of confession of sin may exchange it? If we wish in our worship to strengthen our teaching and experience of that peace which passes understanding, we will need to pay careful attention to questions such as these.

### ***Strengthening Cosmic Peace: Tangible Spiritual War***

In initiatory practices of Apostolic Tradition, multiple exorcisms are a prerequisite to receiving the baptism and anointings through which the peace of God can be imparted.

In the Prayer Book, the pre-baptismal anointing eliminates any Satanic taint, and a post-baptismal anointing fairly commissions the Christian for spiritual warfare. Indeed, every text we have surveyed, except for Didache, pictures spiritual warfare in some form, and all but Justin connect it directly or implicitly with peace. What makes Apostolic Tradition and the Prayer Book stand out, however, is the tangible, physical acts that accompany the engagement of the powers in the initiatory rites.

The contemporary baptismal and eucharistic liturgies influenced by the work in liturgical studies have all been greatly strengthened in their language along similar lines. Baptismal rites now regularly include a renunciation of Satan (or some equivalent term). Eucharistic texts now regularly speak of Christ as deliverer and send people forth to deliver others.<sup>141</sup> The teaching in baptism is that our renunciation of evil and confession of faith followed by the cleansing from sin (though not Satanic powers) in the water and, in some traditions, a post-baptismal anointing with oil as a seal of the Spirit, is all the battle needed. Because of the work of the Spirit and the faith of the individual (and perhaps the church) no direct encounter with evil powers is needed for God's peace to be imparted.

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<sup>141</sup>This is so universally the case that footnoting examples makes little sense.

The practices recorded in Apostolic Tradition and Sarapion, however, seem to teach that direct engagement with and conquest of evil powers are essential for the full attainment of peace with God, and that tangible acts of exorcism, including washings, breathing on the candidate, (Apostolic Tradition) laying on of hands, and anointings (Apostolic Tradition and Sarapion) embody this engagement faithfully.

As the church in the U.S. and Europe is becoming more aware that the world in which it lives is not run by powers friendly to the gospel, it may be significant for it to reflect on these Roman and Egyptian witnesses to tangible acts of spiritual warfare as it seeks to reflect a deeper understanding of the Christian teaching of peace.

***Conclusion: The Possibility of a “Fuller” Liturgical Peace in Contemporary Practice***

The historically normative practices of liturgical peacemaking commended by the witness of early Christian liturgies represent serious challenges to the church as it currently exists. A church that takes interpersonal peacemaking so seriously that it routinely excludes persons in conflict from communion, offers judgment for their sins leading to the conflict, and assigns penance and restitution to repair damaged relationship challenges the contemporary church’s fear of confronting, offending or excluding persons in any way from its fellowship. A church that understands the peace of God in Christ is a spiritual gift that only those in Christ through baptism in water and Spirit may obtain or exchange questions the contemporary church’s general ethos of undifferentiated friendliness to all. Finally, a church that identifies evil powers which endanger the soul of the individual and the peace of the church and exorcises them in word and deed through the Spirit calls the contemporary church to reexamine its apparent assumptions that either such evil forces do not exist or that the church need not be tangibly engaged against them in order to enjoy the full benefits of the peace of God in its commonlife, ministry, and witness.

Behind all of these early Christian normative practices of peacemaking is a basic

worldview which the contemporary church in the U.S. and Europe is only beginning to appreciate again. The unanimous witness of the texts we have surveyed is that the church is a new society, a new humanity, an embodiment of a spiritual life distinct from the spiritual life of the culture in which it finds itself. It is not a religious extension of that culture's life to accomplish or bless its aims, nor can it be if it is to be faithful to its calling. As the contemporary church begins to understand and practice more fully this ancient orientation toward the world in which it lives, perhaps something like the fuller ministries and practices of peace we have seen in this study may begin to emerge in official liturgical texts.

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