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Preface

In addition to the retention of all of the sources included in the previous 1970 version, this revised and expanded edition also contains Eastern Christian texts from the great East Syrian Church Fathers, Aphrahat (+ after 345) and Ephrem (306–73), as well as selections from The Rite of the Assyrian Church of the East, The Rite of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch, and the Maronite Rite. Together with the retention of The Armenian, Coptic and Byzantine Rites from the previous edition the study of the Eastern baptismal liturgies in English translation is thus greatly enhanced by this edition. Additional Western texts include the famous Pentecost Homily attributed to the fifth-century semi-Pelagian bishop, Faustus of Riez, Letter 26 to Januarius from Pope Gregory I, and the Rite of Confirmation from the Pontifical of William Durandus, toward the goal of providing a more complete picture of the development of Christian initiation in the Roman Rite.

Together with these additional texts, the way in which this volume is organized is also significantly different from that of the previous edition. That is, instead of placing local councils together in one section (e.g. ‘Local Councils in the West’), individual councils and, occasionally, important letters and homilies are placed in their respective geographic locales (e.g. Rome, Gaul, and Spain). Further, instead of continuing to use the category of ‘Hybrid Documents’ to group together such diverse texts as the *Gelasian Sacramentary*, *Ordo Romanus XI*, the *Bobbio Missal* and the *Stowe Missal*, both the *Gelasianum* and *Ordo Romanus XI* have been placed under ‘Rome’ and the Bobbio and Stowe Missals under ‘Gallican Documents’.

By far, however, the most significant differences between this edition and the previous one are two: (1) the inclusion of bibliographical lists in a variety of languages either for each document studied (especially for those documents from the patristic period) or for each geographic locale (e.g. Rome, Spain and Gaul); and (2) the changes in translation. By

providing select bibliographies it is hoped that this volume might be of even greater use to students and teachers of Christian initiation.

With regard to translations, where more recent translations of the documents were available these were used in place of those used in the previous edition. As such, most of the translations for the patristic documents, with the notable exception of the Syrian Apocryphal Acts, are new to this version. Even where newer translations were not available, however, the previous translations have either been corrected at certain places according to the original languages or modified in the light of more recent and commonly accepted English expressions (e.g. thou, thee, thy, and thine have been changed to you and your). In the foreword to his 1970 edition, E. C. Whitaker stated that 'an attempt to improve the pedestrian quality of much of my translation would have been too large a task.'¹ For one having been raised liturgically on Whitaker's fine translations of baptismal texts, only minor changes have been made to those translations.

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1 E. C. Whitaker, *Documents of the Baptismal Liturgy*, revised and expanded edition, London: 1970, p. vii.

Introductory Essay

The Study of the Rites of Christian Initiation Today¹

It is surely no exaggeration to say that since 1960 E. C. Whitaker's *Documents of the Baptismal Liturgy* has become *the* classic text in English for the study of the rites of Christian initiation. Almost every page of my own copy of the 1970 revised and supplemented version is filled with underlining, marginal notes, outlines of rites and various textual comments. What an honour then to have been invited by SPCK to prepare yet another new revised and expanded edition of this significant collection for the beginning of the twenty-first century.

In the 1960s and 1970s there were several common historical and influential assumptions made about the origins and early practice of Christian initiation, namely:

1. that there was a single, monolinear, and original unitive pattern of baptism, 'confirmation' and first communion, celebrated from antiquity at the Easter Vigil (interpreted by a Romans 6 death-and-burial imagery) and prepared for by at least a nascent Lent, which, in the course of the Middle Ages, was disrupted and separated into distinct sacraments and ultimately divorced from its 'original' connection to Easter;
2. that an important document, like the *Apostolic Tradition*, ascribed to Hippolytus of Rome (c. 217), thanks to the work of Bernard Botte² and Gregory Dix,³ was actually composed by the early-third-century anti-pope Hippolytus himself and thus reflected our earliest

1 This introductory essay is taken in large part from my recent article, 'The Role of *Worship* in the Contemporary Study of Christian Initiation: A Select Review of the Literature', *Worship* 75, 1 (2001): 20–34.

2 B. Botte, *La Tradition apostolique de saint Hippolyte*, Münster Westfalen, 1963.

3 G. Dix, *The Treatise on the Apostolic Tradition of St. Hippolytus of Rome*, London, 1937; reissued 1992.

- and authoritative piece of evidence for reconstructing early initiation practice at Rome; and
3. that any variations to this supposed normative pattern (e.g. that of early Syria) were to be viewed precisely as accidental and unimportant ‘variations’ or idiosyncratic departures from this norm.

Today, however, all of these assumptions, owing to a new scholarly and critical reading of the sources, have been, and are increasingly being, revised. Thanks, in large part, to the seminal work of Gabriele Winkler on the early Syrian and Armenian liturgical traditions,⁴ summarized in English in a highly significant 1978 article,⁵ modern liturgical scholars have come to emphasize that what was normative in early Christian initiation practice was liturgical diversity and multiple patterns from the very beginning.⁶ In other words, there appears to have been no single common pattern, ritual contents or theological interpretation which suggest themselves as universally normative, apart from some rather obvious things like catechesis, the water bath and the profession of trinitarian faith. Hence, some of what has been viewed as universally normative was but the result of various developments toward liturgical uniformity brought about in the aftermath of Constantine’s imperial ascendancy and the various trinitarian and christological ecumenical councils of the fourth and fifth centuries. While a threefold pattern of baptism, ‘confirmation’ and first communion, for example, *does* appear to be a discernible early *Roman* pattern for initiation (see John the Deacon and the letter of Innocent I to Decentius of Gubbio), other patterns are also available. In Syrian documents like the *Didascalia Apostolorum* and the *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles*, for example, an initiatory pattern appears consisting of anointing, baptism and first communion in that order and, in the non-Roman West, a ritual pattern of baptism, anointing and handlaying, with or without a concluding ‘consignation’, also exists (see Tertullian, Cyprian of Carthage, Augustine of Hippo, and later Spanish and Gallican documents) as do distinct theological interpretations of the overall meaning of these rites.

4 See G. Winkler, *Das armenische Initiationsrituale*, *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 217, Rome, 1982.

5 ‘The Original Meaning of the Prebaptismal Anointing and Its Implications’, *Worship* 52, 1 (1978): 24–45 (*LWSS*, pp. 58–81).

6 The best guide, of course, to early Christian liturgical diversity is the study of Paul Bradshaw, *The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship: Sources and Methods for the Study of Early Liturgy*, revised edn, Oxford/New York, 2002.

As Winkler demonstrated clearly, a John 3.5 interpretation of baptism as ‘new birth’ or ‘adoption’, with Jesus’ own baptism in the Jordan as paradigm, for example, seems to have been favoured over the strangely silent theology of Romans 6 in several places in early Christianity until a synthesis was formed in the late fourth century which resulted in several transitions within the rites of the Christian East. Such transitions are reflected especially in the writings of the great Eastern mystagogues: Cyril of Jerusalem, John Chrysostom and Theodore of Mopsuestia. Certainly one of those transitions has to do with the establishment of the theoretical ‘norm’ of Easter baptism including the concomitant development of Lent as a pre-paschal season of catechumenal preparation.⁷ Similarly, prior to these immediate post-Constantinian developments, the high point of the rite, at least in the early Syrian tradition, was not the water bath or any postbaptismal rite but the *prebaptismal* anointing of the head (later the entire body) as the pneumatic assimilation of the neophyte to the messianic priesthood and kingship of Christ. While eventually all of the rites of the Christian East would locate or shift the ritualization of the initiatory Spirit gift to a postbaptismal location, with prebaptismal rites becoming exorcistic and merely preparatory in nature (see Cyril, Theodore, Pseudo-Dionysius and the Byzantine Rite), evidence of the other pattern and interpretation is still discernible in the sources (see *The Apostolic Constitutions*, Aphrahat, Ephrem, the Armenian Rite, the Rite of the Assyrian Church of the East and the Maronite Rite). It is quite possible as well that the baptismal rites in Egypt (Sarapion of Thmuis, the *Canonical Responses* of Timothy of Alexandria, the *Canons of Hippolytus* and the Coptic Rite) reflect a similar transformation as do those in Syria and Syro-Palestine.⁸

7 See P. Bradshaw, “‘*Diem baptismo sollempniorem*’: Initiation and Easter in Christian Antiquity”, in *LWSS*, pp. 137–47; M. Johnson, ‘From Three Weeks to Forty Days: Baptismal Preparation and the Origins of Lent’, in *LWSS*, pp. 118–36; and M. Johnson, ‘Preparation for Pascha? Lent in Christian Antiquity’, in P. Bradshaw and L. Hoffman (eds), *Two Liturgical Traditions*, Vol. 6: *Passover and Easter: The Symbolic Structuring of Sacred Seasons*, Notre Dame, 1999, pp. 36–54 (= M. Johnson (ed.), *Between Memory and Hope: Readings on the Liturgical Year*, Collegeville, 2000, pp. 207–22).

8 See G. Kretschmar, ‘Beiträge zur Geschichte der Liturgie, insbesondere der Tauf liturgie in Ägypten’, *Jahrbuch für Liturgik und Hymnologie* 8 (1963): 1–54; P. Bradshaw, ‘Baptismal Practice in the Alexandrian Tradition: Eastern or Western?’, in *LWSS*, pp. 82–100; and M. Johnson, *Liturgy in Early Christian Egypt*, Alcuin/GROW Liturgical Study 33, Cambridge, 1995, pp. 7–16.