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The Doctrine of the Sacraments in the Apostolic Fathers

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THE DOCTRINE OF THE SACRAMENTS
in
The APOSTOLIC FATHERS

Louis Breitenbuecher

April 3, 1924

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The doctrine of the sacraments in the Christian Church is a most comforting, and strength and life giving teaching which our Lord and Master Jesus Christ Himself, in His holy ministry as the Savior and Redeemer of sinful man, established and confirmed for a definite purpose. It is a fundamental teaching of the new dispensation which is taught with plainness and perspicuity by practically all of the several writers of the New Testament. Together with the Word of God the sacraments compose the Means of Grace which are given for the salvation of man, and without which the power of the Holy Spirit does not operate. Was this Christian doctrine of the sacrament taught in its purity in subapostolic literature, or did the immediate followers of the disciples and apostles already inject into it part of the leaven of unrighteousness which in time was destined to corrupt almost the entire Christian Church and to culminate in that diabolical institution of which Paul says in 2 Thess. its head is: the son of perdition who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God? This question will be answered in the following discourse. The treatment of the doctrine of the sacraments by the Apostolic Fathers will be considered. What was the substance of the doctrine? What did they teach of the form, material, object of these sacraments? Before entering into the body of the discussion, however, an appreciation of the meaning of the terms "Apostolic Fathers" and "Sacraments" will be in order.

I. "The name of 'Apostolic Fathers' is so firmly established by usage that it will certainly never be abandoned; but it is not altogether a satisfactory title for the collection of writings to which it is given. It means that the writers in question may be

supposed to have had personal knowledge of some of the Apostles, but not actually to have belonged to their number. It should also be noted that the title does not represent any ancient tradition, there are no traces of any early collection of "Apostolic Fathers," and each of them has a separate literary history."1) The name is given to certain writers who lived from the time of the death of Saint John, the last surviving Apostle (about 100 A.D.), to the death of Polycarp, Saint John's aged disciple (155-156).2) Those generally included under the title are Clemens Romanus, Ignatius, Polycarp, Barnabas, Hermas, and the writers of the Didache, Epistle to Diognetus, and 2d Clement. Sometimes the name is extended to Papias of Hierapolis, Apology of Aristides, and Justin Martyr; these last named are, however, not properly included in the title. These men have bequeathed to posterity their religious feelings in monuments of literature. They are among the earliest utterances of Christian faith which have come down to us. All of them are of the nature of occasional products and breathe a spirit of deep piety.3) This Christian literature is of great historical interest and importance. "This is owing to the light is thrown back on Apostolic times and the testimony borne to Christian life, thought, worship, work and organization during an age when the Church was under the guidance, mainly, of men who had been associating with the Apostles.2) Let this brief explanation of the term suffice; an inquiry into the authenticity, integrity, etcetera, of the various books would lead too far afield from the point at issue.

2. What teaching do we mean to set forth when we employ the word 'sacrament'? What is meant when we speak of a sacrament? Let us understand fully the value of this term. What the Christian Church teaches when it speaks of sacraments is very well expressed by Dr. A. Graebner: "The sacraments are sacred acts of divine institution, in which, wherever they are properly administered by the use of the prescribed external elements in conjunction with the divine words of institution, God is, in a manner peculiar to each sacrament, present with the Word and element, earnestly offers to all who partake of the sacrament forgiveness of sins, and eternal salvation, and operates toward the acceptance of these blessings, or toward greater assurance of their possession."4) According to this statement there are three

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- 1) Kirsopp Lake, The Apostolic Fathers, vol. I, vii
 - 2) Henry Cowan in International Orr, p. 1566
 - 3) Encycl. Brit. II, 164
 - 4) Doctrinal Theology p. 161

requirements necessary to complete a sacrament, namely: 1. the command of God (mandatum); 2. the promise of forgiveness of sin (promissio gratiae); 3. a visible element prescribed by God (elementum).1) Having this in mind we find that Holy Scripture sets forth but two sacraments: Baptism and the Lord's Supper.1) These two alone fulfil the requirements demanded of a sacrament, and these two only are established by God's Word; I John 5, 6,8: This is He that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth. For there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.2)

3. And now we may place the question: What is the teaching of the Apostolic Fathers concerning the sacraments? What do they teach of Baptism and of the Lord's Supper? Is the number of sacraments restricted to two or is there reason to believe that the Romish Church finds in these writings ground for its teaching of seven sacraments? In treating first on Baptism and then on the Lord's Supper these questions will be taken care of.

Of Baptism

4. While the sacrament of Holy Baptism is not mentioned in each one of the books of the Apostolic Fathers, yet it can be taken for granted that it was believed and practised by the authors of these books. For they all proclaim the saving truth of Jesus Christ crucified and include the Means of Grace of which the sacraments are a part; not always in clear outspoken words, 'tis true, but yet it is the foundation of their religion whether they mention it or not. The purpose of the book in some cases operated to exclude general truths. Consider the Martyrdom of Polycarp in which book there is little opportunity to speak of the sacraments, for it is a narration of an historical occurrence, yet the pure words of the apostolic truth of the vicarious atonement are sounded when the author says: "Christ, the Son of God, who suffered for the salvation of those who are being saved in the whole world, the innocent for the sinners;"3) and what finer Christian words could be spoken than when Polycarp said: "For eighty and six years have I been his servant, and he has done me no wrong, and how can I blaspheme my king who saved me?"4) Could such noble confessions of Christian faith be professed but a few decades after the time of the divinely

1) Fieper III, pp.135f. F.C. of Apol., Art.XIII, Schwan, Catechism.

2) Guenther, Symbolik p.285 3) XVII, 2

4) ut supra IX, 3; Also in Eusebius, Eng. tr. p.134

inspired Apostles and the teachers which they set forth concerning Baptism and the Lord's Supper be denied? The doctrine of Baptism was extant universally, this is shown Eusebius' account of the heretic Marcus, who, in imitation of the true religion, "conducted them to water and baptizing them, repeated these words, unto the name of the unknown Father of the universe, unto the truth, the mother of all, unto Jesus unto whom that descended." 1) But we have mention of Baptism in the collection. Fermas tells us, "Your life is saved and shall be saved through water" 2) and Clement II asks, "With what confidence shall we enter into the palace of God, if we keep not our Baptism pure?" 3) and so Barnabas, and Clemens Romanus makes mention of Baptism, and Ignatius speaks of Baptism as of a sacrament taught by the Christian Church as a means unto salvation. 4) Thus we have teachers from widely scattered lands give us acknowledgment of the Christian teaching of the Sacrament of Holy Baptism. How this doctrine was taught will now be taken up.

5. Who instituted Holy Baptism? God Himself; for Christ, our Lord, in the last chapter of Matthew, charged His Church to baptize all nations. 5) Our Savior confirmed this divine ordinance through His inspired Apostles. 6) And the Apostolic Fathers recognized Baptism as a sacrament ordained by our Lord Himself and taught in the Scripture. Ignatius avers that "He, Christ, was born and baptized, that by himself submitting he might purify the water." 7) Barnabas answers the emphatic, rhetorical question: "let us inquire if the Lord took pains to foretell the water of baptism;" the Children of Israel, he says, "will not receive the baptism," for that is to come in New Testament time, "I will go before you... and I will give thee treasures of darkness, secret, invisible," (the mysteries of God's religion) "that they may know that I am the Lord God." 8) And when Clement tells us that Christ "commanded us to celebrate sacrifices and services," 9) he refers to the sacraments and to the Church services as the context shows.

1) Eusebius, Eng. tr. p. 127 2) vis. III, III, 5
3) VI, 9 4) ad Eph. XVIII, 2
5) Schwan, question 274. 6) Acts 2, 38, & others.
7) ad Eph. XVIII, 2. (But Luke (vol. II, 183) raises the question concerning $\pi\alpha\sigma\theta\epsilon\iota$ in the phrase $\epsilon\upsilon\alpha\gamma\gamma\epsilon\lambda\iota\sigma\tau\eta\varsigma$ $\pi\alpha\sigma\theta\epsilon\iota$ $\tau\omega$ $\upsilon\delta\omega\tau\omega$ as perhaps meaning "by His suffering;" this would destroy the allusion. $\pi\alpha\sigma\theta\epsilon\iota$ is the Epic Greek form, pres. tense, meaning, to experience, to undergo)
8) VI, I, 4 9) Clement, XI.

Diognetus informs his readers that God's mysteries (including the sacraments) must be revealed by God alone, "But do not suppose that you learn from man the mysteries of a Christian's own religion." 1) From these few citations it can readily be seen that the Apostolic Fathers clung to Baptism as a teaching given by our Lord Himself; that it was God's work alone was seen by these teachers of the early Church just as clearly as the Christian Church has ever seen it. Modern critics do not like to admit the truth of this statement; e.g., F. Kattenbush exclaims, "The expressions (of Baptism) of the Fathers are very indefinite;" 2) but that should surprise no one for they deny the very Bible.

6. The visible element in the sacrament of Holy Baptism as ordained by God, that is, the water, was recognized by the early teachers of the Church. Such expressions as, "(Christ) was baptized, that.. he might purify the water," 3) "they had need to come up through the water that they might be made alive," 4) "Baptize in running water," 5) "we go down into the water full of sin," 6) admit of no further argument concerning this point. Water only, was the visible element permitted.

7. But the water, to be a water of Baptism, must be accompanied by the Word of God, as Christ commanded in Matthew 28. And these words of Baptism we find in the Didache, which teaches, "concerning Baptism, baptize thus:.. 'in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,'" 7) and these words are repeated almost immediately, excluding all doubt. 8) Concerning these words in the Fathers F. Kattenbush admits, "The speaking of God's name is the important thing." 9) While this is the only one clear statement we have of the words in the Baptism, yet it is evident that it was universally practised with these words: *eis to onoma tou Patros, kai tou Yeu kai tou Agiou Pneumatos.* Hermas makes this quite plain in his 'Apocalypse' when he says, "no man shall enter into the Kingdom of God except he take his holy name," 10) and again, "They had need to come up through the water that they might be made alive... (and this Baptism must occur) in the name of the Lord." 11) Are these words of Hermas not very clear? 12) Clement all but mentions these very

1) IV, 6

2) Her Schaff-Perzog, I. 436

3) Ign. ad Eph. XVIII, 2

4) Hermas, sim. IX, XVI, 2

5) Did. VII, I

6) Barn. XI, II 7) VII, I

8) VII, 3

9) Fauck, Realenc. I, 405

10) sim. IX, XVI, 4

11) vis. III, VII, 3

12) "We cannot at all agree with Hosoa Ballou 2d, in Ancient History of Universalism, that, "the conversation

words when he teaches, "How do we confess him? By doing what he says!... For with what confidence shall we enter into the palace of God, if we keep not our Baptism pure?"²⁾ (Have we not been baptized in His name)? "keep the flesh pure and the seal of Baptism undefiled,"³⁾ (For into the Kingdom of the Lord have we been named). It is taken for granted by these Fathers that their readers are faithful in all the words of their dear Redeemer, that they rejoice in the sacraments instituted by Jesus "who suffered for the salvation of those who are to be saved in the whole world, the innocent for the sinners."⁴⁾

8. The contention has been brought forth that the Apostolic Fathers taught a Baptism of immersion. A. T. Robertson, a Baptist, attempts to build up a defence for his immersion doctrine by interpreting in a deluding manner the words in the Didache concerning the application of the water, "Baptize (baptison) in running water, but if thou hast no running water, baptize in other water... if thou hast neither pour (okoheo) water three times on the head."⁵⁾ His words follow: "There is no doubt that baptism was so important that, when the real baptism - immersion - could not be performed because of lack of water, pouring might be used in its place... It is to be noted that for pouring another word (ekcheo) is used, clearly showing that baptidzo does not mean 'to pour.' The very exception filed proves the Baptist contention concerning baptidzo. Now in the New Testament baptidzo is the word used for Baptism. Ekcheo is never used. Harnack in a letter to Rev. C. Dolls, Madison, Ind. (Independence Feb. 9, 1885) under date of Jan. 16, 1885 says, 'baptidzo in undoubtfully signifies immersion (eintauchen). No proof can be found that it signifies anything else in the New Testament and in the most ancient Christian literature.' Thus is the whole point of the Baptists admirably stated by Adolph Harnack. There is no thought of denying that pouring early in the 2d century came to be used in place of immersion in certain extreme cases. The meaning of baptidzo is not affected a particle by this fact."⁶⁾ Has Dr. Robertson brought out a startling new statement here? Let us investigate. It is true that ekcheo is not used in the New Testament; but in place of it we have such fine words as apolouo, apoXlouo, and also brecho, louo, nipto, pluno. And concerning the word baptidzo itself: baptismos is used only once for Baptism in the New Testament and three times for washing;⁷⁾ baptidzo,

he (Hermas) attributes to his celestial visitants is more insipid than we commonly hear in the weakest of men."

1) III, 4

2) VI, 9

3) VIII, 5.6

4) Martyr. of Poly. XVIII, 2

5) VII, 1-3

6) Intern. Orr, 387

7) Mark 7, 4.8; Hebr. 9, 10

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in the middle and passive, is used twice for Baptism, but also as many times for washing.1) Thus the whole point of the Baptists admirably falls down. The very fact that Robertson must admit that in the 2d century pouring was considered valid takes the very foundation away from their argument. D. S. Schaff too, takes this Didache passage in the same light, he says, "It is a complete immersion in the open air, if it permits still water to be used in place of running, and affusion in place of immersion the local conditions are obviously taken into account - the probably frequent scarcity of water in a Syrian summer."2) The same answer holds good in this case as in the case just mentioned; if Baptism is permitted by affusion at all, no matter what the reason, then immersion can be done away with today and the Baptism is valid. We need not agree with these men at all, for the Didache never meant immersion when it employed the term baptizoin. The Didache considered Baptism a very important matter in a Christian's life, hence it taught fasting before the ceremony took place, not only for the one to be baptized but also for the baptizer (VII, 4), and how could a Baptism be more beautifully celebrated than to baptize the way Christ was baptized;3) namely, to stand in shallow water near the bank? That is the meaning embodied in the term baptizoin which the Didache used.

9. Was Holy Baptism intended for all men?

The Apostolic Fathers preached a universal Baptism for young and old. Christ is addressing every believer when it reads, "For the Lord says in the Gospel: 'If ye do not guard that which is small, who shall give you that which is great?' He means, then, this: Keep.. the seal of baptism undefiled."4) Does Hermas mean to exclude some from being saved when he says: "No man shall enter into the Kingdom of God, except he take his holy name (Baptism);"5) indeed not, salvation is for all and Baptism is for all.

10. But what of Infant Baptism? We will

quote D. S. Schaff, "No time can be assigned for the beginning of the practise of infant baptism. If it had been an innovation, it seems likely that it would have provoked a violent protest... Infant baptism, it is reasonable to assume,* arose naturally from the very beginning as Christianity took hold of family life and training."6) How true this statement is! If Infant Baptism had arisen as a new doctrine would not something have been done concerning it at, e.g., the Council of Nicea in 325;

* This phrase may well have been omitted.

1) Mk. 7,4; Lk. II, 38

2) New Schaff-Herzog, I, 141

3) Mt. 3, 13ff

4) I Clement VIII, 5.3

5) sim. IX, VII, 4

6) New Schaff-Herzog, I. 450

325
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especially since this Council did pass a resolution which dealt with Baptism?1) Or would a Council not have been made necessary at an earlier date? The complete silence shown by the early Church in this matter is a proof of its validity. But God's Word itself, which the Church professed, is the real proof.

II. The promise of the forgiveness of sin was connected with Baptism. Barnabas expresses this beautifully when he says, "we go down into the water full of sins and foulness, and we come up bearing the fruit of fear in our hearts, and having hope on Jesus in the Spirit."2) Baptism is a seal whereby we are made the property of God, it is a "bleibende Waffe,"3) an invincible weapon against the devil and his angels. "Let your baptism remain as your arms,"4) For through it we are made temples of the living God, "but I say to you all, as many as have received the seal, keep simplicity and bear no malice."5) By Baptism we are taken out of the power of Satan and established in the Kingdom of God.7)

12) But some of the early Fathers went too far in this matter. They went beyond Scripture in teaching that there is no forgiveness after Baptism. Why could they not have remained satisfied with the inspired writings? If we are not with the Scriptures we are against them, "verecur in hoc mundo cuius iudicium e diametro pugnat cum iudicio Spiritus S. in rebus fidei. Ratio nostra extollit se contra agnitionem Dei."6) Here we have the beginning of that Satanic Church of Perversion which Luther tried to purify in the sixteenth century. What a fine argument this is against the infallibility of the Pope, who claims to be a successor of Peter. Even in the Old Testament Church, which was a Theocracy, we had men who went astray. This very thing Chemnitz holds against the Pope's claim; "nec satis certum Kryterion est, si praetendatur titulus ordinarii ministerii: scriptum est enim Jerem. 14, (14): Mendacia Prophetarum vaticinantur nomine meo: non nisi eos, ... dolium cordis sui vaticinantur."6) Having once left the right path we quickly go astray. Thus with the Fathers, we find that one slight error lead to other greater ones. They taught a sinless life after Baptism. "For of those who have not kept the seal of Baptism: Their worm shall not die and their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be a spectacle for all flesh."6) "With what confidence shall we enter into the palace of God, if we keep not our baptism pure?"6) Of these two passages in I Clement Knopf says, "we can surely take it for granted that

1) Hoander, Geschichte christl. Rel. u Kirche., Band 4, Abt. 2, 703
2) XI, 10, II
3) Kattenbusch, Hauck Realenc. 16, 406
4) Ign. ad Foly. VI, 2
5) Hermas, IX, XVI, 4
6) Chemnitz, Examen. Preuss ed. p. 6, par. 7
7) Hermas, sim. IX, XVI, 4; Engelhardt, Dogmengeschichte I, 327
8) I Clement., VII, 6
9) idem VI, 9

he considers that at Baptism an invisible shining mark as a seal is placed upon the head of the regenerated one. Through sin it loses its brightness, and according to the condition of the seal will he receive his judgment. The sin of the ungenerate are taken away, nor he must remain pure and undefiled.. Christians cannot sin."1) Hermas brought this out more strongly in his conversation with the Shephard, "You have heard correctly.. for he who has received remission of sin ought never to sin again, but to live in purity,.. if a man is tempted by the devil and sin, he has one repentance, but if he sin and repent repeatedly it is unprofitable for such a man for scarcely shall he live." 2)

13. While this teaching is not brought out by all of the Fathers, the tenet of the necessity of Baptism to salvation, it appears, was more generally taught. "Blessed are those who hoped on the cross and descended into the water;"3) "those who have not kept the seal .. shall be a spectacle for all flesh,"4) "Whosoever receives not his name shall not enter the kingdom of God;5) They had need to come up through the water that they might be made alive."6) "Let your baptism remain as your arms;"7) these and the great importance the Didache places upon the Baptism 8) seem to prove that only through Baptism was entrance gained into heaven. The practise of "clinic Baptisms" also strengthens this view.9)

14. Hermas even teaches a Baptism of the Dead, "These apostles and teachers, who preached the name of the Son of God, having fallen asleep in the power and faith of the Son of God, preached also to those who had fallen asleep before them, and themselves gave to them the seal of preaching,.. through them they were made alive and received the knowledge of the name of the Son of God."10) We may attribute this, as well as other confusing teachings, to the Alexandrian influence which was evident at the time and which was a factor in forming the Gnostic teachings which were in the process of formation. The fact that this conception of Baptism is mentioned nowhere else, and that Hermas was all but forgotten at the time of Jerome, seems to indicate that this doctrine was not accepted by the Church at large.

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| 1) Apostl. Vaeter, I | 2) man. IV, III, 1-6 |
| 3) Barn. XI, 8 | 4) II Clem. VII, 6 |
| 5) Herm. sim. IX, XVI, 2 | 6) idem XVI, 2 |
| 7) Ign. ad Poly. VII, If | 8) idem VII, 1-4 |
| 9) Robertson, Intern. Orr, p.387 | |
| 10) sim., IX, XVI, 5-7 | |

16. There is one more point to be taken up and we are done with Baptism. Who was permitted to be the minister of Baptism? The Didache teaches, "Before the baptism, both the baptizer and he who is to be baptized shall fast." 1) This seems to indicate that any Christian was permitted to baptize, but the monarchical Episcopate was quite well established at this time and no doubt some officer of the Church performed the ceremony; and thus we read in Ignatius, "It is not lawful either to baptize or to hold a love-feast without the bishop; but whatever he approve, this is also pleasing to God, that everything which you do may be secure and valid;" 2) and still stronger is I Clement, "He has himself fixed by his supreme will the places and persons whom he desires for these celebrations, in order that all things may be done piously according to his good pleasure, and be acceptable to his will .. the layman is bound by the ordinances for the laity." 3) (This last reference from I Clement smacks very much of papal succession, and no doubt it is the beginning of that great system.)

Of the Holy Supper.

18. Of all the (fundamental) doctrines of Christianity the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist was kept the most pure by the early Church. We find noble Christian confessions of the true body and blood of our Lord being partaken of in the Lord's Supper. This doctrine was jealously guarded by the Fathers. "There is one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ and one cup for union with his blood.. Be careful, therefore, to use one Eucharist;" 4) is the warning to the Church. "So generally accepted and without suspicion was the Lutheran, i.e., the true Biblical, doctrine of the Lord's Supper in the prepatristic true Catholic Church that it was employed as a counter argument against the Separatists and Transubstantiationists in the controversy of the two natures in Christ. And it was used in this way, that, just as the divine gift, namely, the body and blood of Christ, is really and truly present in, with, and under the bread and wine, and yet is not changed into flesh and blood, nor is separated from it, so also is the union of the divine and human natures in the one person of our Lord Jesus Christ." 5)

17. When our Lord instituted the Holy Supper He gave His disciples bread and said unto them: toute estin to soma mou, and when He gave them the cup of wine and said: toute estin to haima mou. He did not

1) VII, 4

2) ad Smyr., VIII, 2

3) XI

4) Ign. ad Phila. IV

5) Dr. Sihler, "Gibt es Alt- und Neu- Lutheraner?" Lutheraner, Jahrgang 2, p.75, note 2, column 2.

say that the elements were symbolical of His body and blood, nor did He say that they were changed (verwandelt) into His body and blood, but, as stated above (note 5, p. 10) that in, with, and under the bread and wine Christ gives His body and blood, united, but not separated. That is what the Christian Church must believe if it be truly Christian. 1) And that is what the early Church, by the grace of God, did hold and teach in purity. The Church was warned to guard the purity of the Eucharist against unbelievers, "for there is one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ and one cup in (eis) union with his blood." 2) The Church should, "Join in the common meeting... breaking one bread, which is the food (pharmakon) of immortality, the antidote that we should not die, but live for ever in Jesus Christ," 3) For this immortal food is the body and blood of our Lord Himself. Those who did not believe in the true presence of the body and blood in the Eucharist kept away from the Lord's Table; so Ignatius reports of the Gnostics: "They abstain from the Eucharist and prayer, because they do not confess that the Eucharist is the flesh (sarka einai) of our Savior Jesus Christ who suffered for our sins." 4) And so also the "Gnostics" of the modern times keep away from the true Eucharist because they do not believe in the Real Presence, they attack us with a bombardment of objections. They refuse to accept the 'eatin' of the Bible and therefore must object to the 'eatin' in the early Church. So Georg Rietschel affirms that in the 'sarka einai' "some have found a distinct affirmation of the real presence of the glorified body of Christ. But it is possible to lay too much stress on them... His (Ignatius) view of the Lord's Supper, then, is certainly not purely symbolical, but it would be rash to conclude from this that he accepted the real presence of the glorified body of Christ." 5) Against this statement we will hold Dr. C.F.W. Walther's words when he writes against the Methodists on "Die Lehre der ersten Kirche vom heiligen Abendmahl;" "(there is a bodily presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper) The testimony, which comes us in good stead, as we were yet driven about by the winds of man's reason, we found in Ignatius, who was Bishop at Antioch in Syria. He himself says in his letter to the congregation at Smyrna (III), "(the Apostles) have seen the Lord Himself in the flesh after his resurrection," and then he uses the passages just quoted (vide notes 2.4). 6) Adolf Harnack considers "the entire ceremony of the Lord's Supper as a sacrificial

* Lake, I, 243, destroys the meaning of this passage by translating the 'eis' with 'for'.

1) F.C., Art. VII

2) Ign. ad Phila. IV

3) Ign. ad Sph. III

4) Ign. ad Smyr. VII

5) Schaff-Herzog, 7, 27

6) Lutheraner, Jahrgang 3, p. IIS

act." parallel to the offerings brought forth in the Old Testament. 1) D. Loofs has much to say of the Ignatius conception of the Lord's Supper, "It is by no means symbolical. But the conclusion would be premature; hence he must have accepted the true presence of the glorified flesh and blood of Christ. He can have accepted in an analogical way the 'toute estin' without thinking more of it; he could have considered the 'henosis sarkike kai pneumatike' in Christ analogous to the union of the spiritual and physical in the believer," 2) Thomasius says of the 'sarka eimai' that, "it was the general belief of the ancient Church that through prayer and petition the consecrated food was the body and blood of Christ, and that the partaking of this God-man life was strengthening for the soul and body." 3) But why go any further? There is confusion and discord over the early Church's conception of the Lord's Supper only because there is discord over the same matter in the Bible; to the believers of the 'estin' in the Bible there is positive proof of the 'estin' in the Apostolic Fathers.

18. The Catholic doctrine of the Eucharist cannot be based on the Apostolic Fathers. Attempts are made to include these early teachers in the traditions which favor the mass, etc. The Romanists themselves are at loggerheads concerning the origin of their teaching. James Cardinal Gibbons, c.g., says that, "Tradition with its 100 tongues proclaims the perpetual oblation of the Sacrament of the Mass, from the time of the Apostles to our own day. If we consult the Fathers of the Church, they will all tell us, with one voice, that the Mass is the center of their religion;" 4) while the Catholic Encyclopedia claims that, "the origin of the Roman Mass is a most difficult question." 5) Neither can their teaching of 'Communion under one kind' be taken from the Apostolic Fathers. We will again quote Cardinal Gibbons: "Whoever partakes of the form of bread partakes of the living flesh of Jesus Christ, which is inseparable from His blood, and which, being now in a glorified state cannot be divided, 6)... It is also the received doctrine of the Fathers that the Eucharist is contained in all its integrity either in the consecrated bread or in the chalice." If they can make these teachings agree with the Bible they can make them agree also with the Apostolic Fathers.

19. The Eucharist was instituted by Christ Himself, of this there is no question. "Do not think we learn from man the mysteries of God," 7) writes the Apologist in his Epistle to Diognotus. "Be careful to use one

1) Dogmengeschichte, I, 198

3) Dogmengeschichte, I, 404

5) Under "Mass"

7) Iv, 6

2) Realency. I, 391

4) Faith of our Fathers, p. 313

6) Faith of our Fathers, p. 300

Eucharist.. that whatsoever you do you may do according to God."1) "Let us then be obedient to his most holy and glorious name;"2) and especially Clement, "He (Christ) commanded us to celebrate sacrifices and services."3) These citations leave us in no doubt concerning this matter.

20. In the Eucharist our Lord promised His followers forgiveness of sin and strength for their faith, and so we find it in the writings before us. Ignatius, who wrote his epistles just before his death as a martyr to his religion, gives us ample testimony of this. He mentions the Eucharist in almost each one of his letters. It is a weapon against the powers of Satan,4) a medicine of immortality, an antidote against eternal death, and a strengthener unto life eternal in Jesus Christ.5) And so it was a blessed food unto spiritual life to all the faithful. They found in it new life and strength, as they came together each Lord's Day to partake of it.

21. - The practise of sanctifying Sunday as the Lord's Day and of holding congregational services on that day to the honor of His name and for its own edification was already begun by the early Church before the death of the Apostle John;6) and was well established at the time of the Apostolic Fathers.7) The first Christians held services in one another's homes in which they celebrated the Lord's Supper in connection with a common meal, which is called Agape, love-feast.8) So Paul observed the celebration of the Eucharist, "in one of the "we" sections of Acts (20,II), where Luke is giving personal testimony as to the manner in which the Lord's Supper was observed by Paul in a church of his own founding, we find the breaking of bread associated with and yet distinct from an eating of food, in a manner which makes it natural to conclude that in Troas, as in Jerusalem and Corinth, Christians when they met together partook of a common meal."9) Paul makes mention of this in several places in his writings.10) This combined Eucharist and Agape we find in the Didache ca. 8.10. How did the Agape come about we might ask? We can attribute it to the Jewish custom of religious meals, to the fact that in holding services at each others homes the Christian host was expected to serve a meal, for many of the faithful came from distances and there was no convenient means of

1) Ign. ad Phila. IV

3) idem VI

5) idem ad Rom. VII, 2.3

7) Ign. ad Mag. IV; Did. XIV; Barn. XV; vide Kliefoth, Ursprungliche Gottesdiensts-Ordnung, I, 236

8) Cf. Acts 2, 42.43

10) I Cor. 10, 16; II, 17-24; Th. Zahn in Schaff-Werzog, I, 80

2) IClement LVIII

4) Ign. ad Eph. VIII

6) Rev. In IC

9) J. S. Lambert, Intern. Orr p. 70

traveling; then too, such a common table supplied the needs of the poor from the abundance of the rich.1) Whatever its origin may have been it did show what deep and fervent love the early Christians had for the spiritual food and drink which God prepared for them; for as stated, the Agape was connected with the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. There is much dispute as to whether the Lord's Supper was celebrated before the Agape or after it. Without going into any critical detail we must admit that despite Harnack 2) we consider the passages, "After you are satisfied with food," and, "If any man be holy, let him come," in the prayer of the Eucharist, Didache 10, to mean that the Agape was first and the Holy Meal after it. So Rietschel considers it, the Eucharist was held "after the end of the common meal, meta to empethanaí."3)

22. But the Lord's Supper to be a valid sacrament must include the blessing and consecrating of the bread and wine before it is dealt out and partaken of by the communicants.4) Did the Apostolic Fathers observe this essential norm? Were the elements consecrated by the words of institution in I Corinthians II, 24-25? Directly, we can find no affirmation to this question, but indirectly, there are many indications which compel us to say yes. Luther taught so when he said, "No one will deny that we have the Lord's Supper just as it was instituted by Christ, and just as it was used by the Apostles and by the whole Christian Church; and we eat and drink therefore with the ancient and entire Christian Church from one table, and we receive that same old sacrament, and we have in it nothing that is new nor has anything been changed, as Saint Paul, I Cor., 12, 13."5) While this quotation refers especially to the Apostolic Church it also includes the subapostolic Church, for the Christian Church of the first two centuries held a pure doctrine true to the living memory of Christ and His Apostles. The references and citations already referred to, the esteem and purity in which the Eucharist was held by the Church, the very name given to the celebration, Eucharist, the blessings and prayers offered, leave no doubt as to the correctness of

1) Acts 4, 32; I, 14; 2, 44

2) "The closing words of prayer (10, 6) do not pertain to the partaking of the Lord's Supper. They reach much further, for they do not at all stand in the prayer proper, but in an original and separate dictum suspirans, which was attached to the prayer and contained a petition that the end of the world might come and the Lord draw near.

.. The congregation, which has just nourished itself at the Lord's Table yearns for His visible coming." Apostil, p. 430, Die Chronologie des altchristlichen Litteratur

3) I, 246, vide Kretzmann, Popular commentary, N.T. 2, 141

4) Walther Pastorale, pp. 138ff, has a fine exposition, Pieper, VII, 427f.

5) XVII, 1367f.

Luther's words with reference to the subapostolic Church. Was there a fixed and uniform liturgy in connection with the Lord's Supper? While I Clement, cc. 52, 61, in his prayers gives evidence of a fixed rite,¹⁾ yet it was not that fully organized and settled Church service which we find in Justin Martyr more than a century later.²⁾ The custom that seems to have been followed is noted in Didache 10, 7, "But suffer the prophets to hold Eucharist as they will," that is, let them offer prayer and blessing *ex corde*.³⁾ The pastor who knows the words of institution offers prayer and blessing, and consecrates the Eucharist *ex corde*. So the Didache, c. 5., suggests such prayers. In chapter IX it names, "the prayers over the cup and the bread in the Eucharist, the prayer in chapter X being in the nature of a preface, ending with 'Hosanna to the Lord of David'."⁴⁾ Professor W. Armit considers the prayer in chapter IX to apply to the Agape and the prayer in X to be spoken just prior to the Lord's Supper proper, X, 6 being the invitation to come to the table of the Lord's Supper: "If any man be holy, let him come." This agrees very nicely with the context. X, 3 is the consecration of the bread and wine, "but us hast thou blessed with the spiritual food and drink and with eternal light through thy child." The prayers in chapter IX agree happily with this view. They are Christianized forms of ancient Hebrew prayers; e. g., the prayer over the cup: "We give thanks to thee, our Father, for the Holy Wine of David thy child," is in the traditional Hebrew prayer: בְּרָכָה לְפָנֶיךָ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְנִשְׁמְחָה לְפָנֶיךָ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ "Blessed art thou, Lord our God, thou king of the world, who hast created the fruit of the vine."⁵⁾ And so of the bread (IX, 3), "As this bread was scattered upon the mountains, but was brought together, בְּרָכָה לְפָנֶיךָ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ "The brought forth out of the earth bread."⁶⁾ The whole service of the Lord's Supper is summed up in a few words in chapter XIV, I, "On the Lord's Day of the Lord come together, break bread and hold Eucharist." Could it have been summarized any better than that? We can put a correct and a beautiful meaning upon those words: Sanctify the holy day by partaking of the blessed consecrated Supper of the Lord.

23. We find another factor in the practise of the Lord's Supper in the apostolic Fathers which is undisputable proof of the preceding deduction; to wit, the custom of granting admission to the Lord's Table only after certain restrictions had been complied with. These

1) Krebsmann, Christian Art, p. 242; Rietschel, Lehrbuch der Liturgik, I, 243

2) Apostils pp. 200-203, Harnack, Dogmengeschichte, vol. I

3) idem, note I 4) idem

5) Knopf, Didache 6) idem

upon the necessity of Sacramental Confession as a Divine Institution."1) There is no need to go into the matter; the purity of these passages speaks for itself. The passages include no more than is included in the Epistles of Paul and in the remainder of the New Testament, and this insistence (on the part of the Catholics) must get its authority from the Bible if it is to stand.

23. And finally, concerning the minister of the Eucharist. The same holds true of the minister of the Lord's Supper as of the minister of the Holy Baptism. Too much value was placed upon the bishop's work, too much stress was laid upon the pastor's duty. This was taken advantage of by the supposed successors of Peter as time went on much to the sorrow of the Christian Church.

In conclusion. We find that the Apostolic Fathers taught the sacraments with almost the same purity that Christ had instituted them within His Church. They were included in the Means of Grace which were given by God as the only way into salvation. "We certainly find tokens of deep Christian life in the works of the Apostolic Fathers, yet the remarkable lack of new thought and the constant repetition of the Apostolic Scripture alike witness that, in a spiritual sense, an ebb had ensued upon a mighty flood, or that the Church is no longer under the influence of extraordinary power of inspiration."2) "Taken in their entirety the writings are practical and valuable, but with little value for edification. A part, however, contains much false doctrine and sets aside the true meaning of Scripture by interpreting allegorically."3) Impurity was present even at this early date in the Church. The devil and his hosts of angels would not permit the Church of Christ to exist unharmed and unattacked. Satan tempted the immediate followers of the Apostles by challenging their right of judgment in Scriptural matters. He pointed to the completed Scripture and said, "Does God really mean that?" And in time he succeeded, to a horrible extent, in severing the Church from these Books of God. We can see the leaven of unrighteousness at work in these writings, it is not much, yet, it took only a lantern to burn down the city of Chicago. But God held Satan in check, the devil was not permitted to do as he wished; the doctrine of the Eucharist, in particular, was not to be pointed by Satanic powers. That was to remain pure unto the Church until the ninth century. If this were a sermon I should say: Let us ask the blessing of God that our Church may keep forever pure the sacred teachings of His holy Word.

1) Faith of our Fathers, p.345

2) Martensen, Christian Dogmatics, p.408

3) Dr. F.A.W. Krauss, Lebensbilder, p.42

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