

## NOTES

### THE TYPOLOGY OF EPISCOPAL CONSECRATION

Types of what was to come in the history of salvation can be found not only in the Old Testament as regards the New, but in the doings of Christ also (as described in the Gospels) in regard to the Church that is to come. Hippolytus, in a fragment of one of his genuine works, says that the Ascension and the ensuing Pentecost are types of Christ's heavenly kingdom,<sup>1</sup> thus early giving expression to the principle I have enunciated. One might elaborate the idea suggested by Hippolytus into the following propositions: Christ's blessing of the apostles at the Ascension with an imposition of hands over them (in the Jewish manner of blessing) and the descent of the Spirit upon the apostles at Pentecost were two parts of one event, providing together a type or pattern to be followed in episcopal consecration. There Christ imposed hands and the Spirit descended with a visible accompaniment; here the consecrator imposes hands and the Spirit descends, a visible accompaniment being provided by the placing of the open Gospel book on the nape of the neck of the bishop-elect.

In his work on the *Benedictions of Moses* (now more fully available<sup>2</sup>) Hippolytus is commenting on the words of Dt 33:8 ("Give to Levi his revelations and to the holy man his truth") and says:

Assuredly the writer here indicates Christ, priest of the invisible and most high God, who has taken upon Himself in these last times the revelations and the truth, wearing His long robe and carrying upon His shoulders the two Testaments (the revelations being the Old Law and the truth the Gospel), in order that He may be seen to be priest perfect of the all-perfect Father.

This is a remarkable picture of Christ as an Aaronic high priest, a picture which Hippolytus appeals to again in his *Commentary on Daniel*, where he writes: "Christ, wearing a many-colored chiton, showed by a sign the manifold character of the naming of the graces. The priestly chiton was fashioned of different colors to manifest the diverse character of those races that looked for the coming of Christ, that we might be established with manifold graces."<sup>3</sup> It would thus seem that Hippolytus found extensive typological relations between Ex 28 and the priestly work of Christ. But how does that lead on to his ideas about Ascension and Pentecost? To answer this question one must try to see what the parted tongues of fire would have meant for an

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Hippolytus, Fragment 4 on Elkanah and Anna (*GCS* 1 [= Hippolytus 1/2] 122).

<sup>2</sup> *Patrologia orientalis* 27, 145.

<sup>3</sup> *Commentary on Daniel* 4, 36 (*GCS* 1 [= Hippolytus 1/1] 282).

early Christian. It is admitted, whatever may be the debates about Urim and Thummin, that the high-priestly robe had two *lapides humerales* or shoulder stones (Ex 28:9-13), while Josephus tells the story of the remarkable properties these stones were supposed to have. "Of the two stones which the high-priest bore on his shoulders it used to happen that the one shone out whensoever God was present at their worship, i.e. the one fixed on the right shoulder, a flame of fire coming out of it and shining to those afar off, though this effect did not happen normally with the stone."<sup>4</sup> Josephus adds that the phenomenon had not occurred for some two hundred years before the time at which he wrote, but sixty years before that the memory of it would have been fresher. "Tongues of fire" is a scriptural image, being found in Is 5:24, but tongues of fire sitting upon the men would more naturally recall the flashing fire of the shoulder stone. When, therefore, Hippolytus pictures Christ in His long robe shouldering the Gospels, he seems to be trying to bring out a threefold parallel between the Aaronic high priest, Christ, and the apostles at Pentecost, the fire on the shoulder being the connecting idea.

It cannot be said that in the account of the making of a bishop which Hippolytean documents (however transmitted) have delivered to us, there is any direction that the book be placed on the shoulders of the candidate, but it is quite certain that the Church was observing this practice at the time when our extant versions of the *Traditio apostolica* of Hippolytus were being written down. The so-called *Statuta ecclesiae antiqua* (which are as old as the Latin version of Hippolytus) direct that "when a bishop is ordained, two bishops place and hold in position the Gospel book upon his head and neck, and while one bestows the blessing upon him, the rest of the bishops present touch his head with their hands."<sup>5</sup> In the dialogue of Palladius about John Chrysostom (which can be dated to 408) there is a passage which laments some recent goings on at Ephesus. There, according to Palladius, the clergy had chosen for their bishop the eunuch of the tribune Victor, a most unworthy man. In horror-struck language he tells that this man had once in a drunken revel garlanded himself with ivy and carried chorus girls mounted on his shoulders round the room. (Vase paintings of Sileni and maenads will give an idea of the scene.) On those shoulders where such crea-

<sup>4</sup> Josephus, *Antiquitates Iudaicae* 3, 215-16. Philo, *De decalogo* 33 and 46 (Cohn-Wendland 4, 276 and 279), had already described the voice of God on Sinai as a flame of fire which affected sight rather than the sense of hearing.

<sup>5</sup> *Statuta ecclesiae antiqua* 2: "Episcopus cum ordinatur, duo episcopi ponant et teneant evangeliorum codicem super caput et cervicem eius, et uno super eum fundente benedictionem, reliqui omnes episcopi qui adsunt manibus suis caput eius tangant." The rubric of the present Roman Pontifical orders the book to be placed "super cervicem et scapulas."

tures had been carried, men now dared to lay the sacred book of the Gospels. It sat upon his shoulders exactly as the wicked girls had done.<sup>6</sup> The rubric of a somewhat later time directs that the book should do just this: "Ponit archidiaconus quatuor evangelia super cervicem eius et inter scapulas clausum." This rubric (from *Ordo* 35 of Andrieu) leaves no doubt that the book has to rest between the shoulders of the candidate. The word "clausum" may be meant to refer to the "evangelia," in an ungrammatical way, but the later practice (which is still followed) was for the book to be opened for this placing, and the medieval mind delighted to use this opportunity to take *sortes evangelicae* by observing the opening words of the left-hand page, which were then taken to give the keynote of the new bishop's reign.

If one can envisage a codex of purple vellum, or a scroll of the same, held by the two assistants so that it rested on the shoulders of the candidate, the likeness to tongues of fire sitting upon an apostle would be exact. The artistic usage of the Middle Ages and later seems to have been to picture the tongues issuing from the top of the head, but if the imposition of hands at a consecration was simultaneous with the imposition of the book—as the *Statuta* show it was—then it is hard to see how the ceremony could convey any reference back to the typical action of the Spirit at Pentecost, unless it be accepted that the Spirit in the form of tongues of fire sat upon the shoulders of the apostles.

Severian of Gabala, slightly later in time than John Chrysostom, shows a change of emphasis that has come in among Eastern Christians. "Since the descent of the Spirit is now invisible, the Gospel is placed on the head of the one to be consecrated, and when it is placed there, the scene is none other than the descent of a fiery tongue on to his head, a tongue by reason of the kerygma, and a fiery tongue by reason of that word: 'I came to cast fire upon the earth.'"<sup>7</sup> This way of taking the ceremony seems to envisage the placing of the book on the top of the head, and in another sermon which is probably by Severian<sup>8</sup> this positioning is left in no doubt, for the act of placing the book is there said to represent the putting on of the high priest's tiara: "Since the high priest was head of the people, it was proper for him to have a power upon his head—for unlimited personal power is intolerable, whereas a power that has upon it the symbol of its rule is under a law. Thus

<sup>6</sup> Cf. *PG* 47, 53. The story makes it clear that he carried the girls *ep' omōn*. See also the edition by P. Coleman-Norton (1928) p. 92.

<sup>7</sup> This passage of Severian is cited in *PG* 125, 533. That some kind of investiture took place at a consecration is implied by Julian, *Ep.* 79 (Bidez and Cumont, p. 94).

<sup>8</sup> Cf. *PG* 56, 404. This sermon, on the single origin of the Old Law and the New, is preserved among the *spuria* of John Chrysostom.

Scripture ordered the high priest to have his head covered, in order that the head of the people might understand that he had a power set over him. For this reason, too, the Church puts the Gospel of Christ on the head of bishops at their consecration, in order that the bishop-elect may understand that he is being given the true crown of the Gospel and that, even if he is the head of all, he is yet subject to the law of the Gospel." The preacher—whether Severian or another—goes on to cite Ignatius to Polycarp in the same sense: "Let nothing be done without your consent, but do you do nothing without the approval of God." One may leave to others the speculation on the reasons why the older typological relation of the open book and the tongues of fire has here been changed; it is sufficient to notice that there has been a change made and that, for whatever reason, a practice that is in possession at the end of the fourth century has been reinterpreted with a change of emphasis in Syria of the early fifth. In the West the new Syrian approach seems to have found no imitators.

The shoulder stones of the high priest were inscribed with the names of the twelve tribes, and in the Talmud this fact is appealed to by Rabbi Johanan (*Yoma* 73 b) to explain how it was that God could communicate with His people by means of these stones. "The letters on the stone stood forth," said the Rabbi. Glowing fire came from the stone, said Josephus, while the Rabbi adds that the letters were somehow luminous. Neither account would present much difficulty to a Christian who wanted to understand how it was that the placing of the Gospel book on the shoulders of a new bishop harked back to the robing of the high priest. "Prophet" and "Apostle" had been for a time the general designations of the two parts of the Scripture, the Old Testament and the New, in the second century. To think of the New Testament as somehow marked with the names of the twelve apostles would not have been difficult. For a general justification of the appeal from the placing of the book to the robing of the Jewish high priest, there is a phrase in the consecration prayer for bishops as given in the *Traditio apostolica* which has not hitherto been given much value. Hippolytus makes the consecrator narrate how "Christ gave the Spirit of power to the apostles for the Church, which is the Temple of God . . . thus securing that the sanctuary of God was not left without its princes and priests."<sup>9</sup> Although this phrase does not mention the imposition of the Gospel book, it does seem to state the general comparison between the Aaronic high priest and the bishop-elect. Already in

<sup>9</sup> These elements of the consecration prayer of Hippolytus can best be studied in the careful analysis of that prayer made by R. H. Connolly in *Texts and Studies* 8/4, 12-20, in items 39-40, 44-45, and 27. The Ethiopic version here agrees best with the Greek that has been preserved in the *Epitome*. The Latin version follows these somewhat haltingly.

1 Clement 40:5 the parallel is set forth between the Aaronic high priest and his priests and levites on the one hand, and the Christian bishop and priests and deacons on the other. Lightfoot entered some very special pleading against taking this analogy too closely, but his arguments are inconclusive.<sup>10</sup> Apart from the question-begging claim that 1 Clement as a whole knows nothing of a threefold ministry, he urges that a little higher up in his letter Clement has used a similar argument from the analogy of the order of the Roman legions, with tribunes, centurions, etc.; but in that place Clement indicates by his vague language that he does not mean the analogy to be pressed, while in the present section he is giving a fourfold division (high priest, priest, minister, and layman), and it is quite certain from what follows that he means the last part of the analogy (the distinction between minister and layman) to be pressed. If so, one may claim Clement as an authority for the parallel between Aaronic high priest and Christian bishop. "To the high priest are given special liturgies, to the priests a special place is assigned, and for the levites there are appointed special ministrations, while the layman is bound by his lay duties." In the early liturgy the priests were the least active of the three orders, and it was precisely their place in church which characterized them, whereas the deacons had to be more active in the subordinate work connected with the sacrifice. The use of the term "Jerusalem" to designate the place of the bishop's throne in the nave of an early Syrian church is another sign that Clement in this passage is speaking with precision about the liturgy.<sup>11</sup>

If one has to assign reasons for the fading from the Christian consciousness of this typology of episcopal consecration, the one that first comes to mind is the separation which comes about towards the end of the fourth century between Ascension and Pentecost as dates in the Christian calendar. The evidence for this separation would need another paper to itself. While it is true that the separation took effect in the liturgical year, there are not wanting signs that the older idea of the two events as two aspects of the same situation lingered among the artists; for the ampullae used for bringing oil from Jerusalem in the sixth and seventh centuries (such as those of Monza) carry on the side quite often a composite picture: Christ ascends towards heaven

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers* 1/2, 123.

<sup>11</sup> The witness of the early heretics to this parallel of high priest and bishop is of some importance. Hippolytus (*Contra Noetum* 1) and after him Epiphanius (*Haer.* 57, 1) tell how Noetus said that he was Moses and his brother was Aaron, while the Montanists, to justify their placing of women in the ranks of the priesthood, claimed that the OT status of the sister of Moses was their warrant (Epiphanius, *Haer.* 49, 2). According to Jerome (*Ep.* 41, 2) these *conhospitae* took rank above bishops and below the patriarch himself.

with His hand extended in blessing, while below the apostles are grouped together with the fire already above their heads.<sup>12</sup> The use of these ampullae and their oil is somewhat of a mystery, but it may be pertinent to remark that the period of their use was just the time when unction was being introduced into the consecration service. What more fitting than to set upon the oilstock a representation of the one scene which provided the type for the service of consecration?

*London, England*

JOSEPH CREHAN, S.J.

<sup>12</sup> The illustration given in *DACL* (*s.v.* "Ampoules," fig. 458) by Leclercq is an example. Under the heading "Monza," Leclercq reports other similar examples from Bobbio. He there speaks of the vessel as showing a combination of the scenes of Ascension and Pentecost. It would be more exact to say that the artist has preserved from division than that he has compounded. Attempts were made at Trent to have it defined that Christ made the apostles bishops at the Ascension; Salmeron, Torres, and others were in favor, and the matter was shelved but not ruled out.