The Church of Antioch and the Eucharistic traditions (ca. 35–130 CE)


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ABSTRACT

It is a widespread view in modern scholarship that, in the earliest church of Syrian Antioch (ca. 35–130 CE), there came together ‘divergent theological traditions’. Yet here these traditions were ‘balanced’ and ‘synthesized’. So, from Antioch, there emerged a ‘middle [traditional or theological] position’, the via media that facilitated the ‘Christian unity’ of the ‘universal church’. This via media theologica offered a way of keeping together the divergent Jewish and Hellenistic groups of Antioch.

This study challenges this view and proposes a nuanced understanding of the dynamics of the theological traditions in the earliest church of Antioch. It is beyond reasonable dispute that ‘divergent traditions’ did emerge at Antioch. However, the case for the formulation of a ‘synthesized... middle position’ needs to be re-examined. To this end, the present study 1) analyses the eucharistic traditions of earliest Christianity, focusing on the following key texts: 1 Cor. 11.23–25 (Lk. 22.17–20), Matt. 26.26–29, Did. 9.1–10.6, and Ignatius, Phil. 4.1; and 2) traces their use within the earliest church of Antioch, arguing that all these traditions were composed (or adapted) and used here, between ca. 35–70 CE.

Having located the eucharistic traditions in the church of Antioch, their internal dynamics are subsequently investigated. While these internal dynamics cannot be conclusively unravelled, due to the lack of adequate data, it is highly improbable that, in Antioch, the eucharistic traditions were ‘balanced’ or ‘synthesized’. Rather, there seems to be a pattern of recurrent additions: a recent tradition was added to those already existing, while the older traditions were also kept and revalued. It is by this pattern of the ‘addition’ of new traditions and ‘revaluation’ of older traditions that the church of Antioch sought to keep and consolidate the unity of its factions.

Finally, since existing scholarship concerns both 1) ‘the divergent groups/traditions’ and 2) ‘the Christian unity... of the universal church’, this study seeks to find an appropriate model of ‘unity and diversity’ in Antioch, by locating the internal dynamics of the Antiochene eucharistic traditions into the larger context of the ‘unity and diversity in earliest Christianity’. The patterns and dynamics uncovered in this study appear to corroborate Hurtado’s more recent ‘interactive diversity model’.

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studies in our own day, that this study has been written. Eucharist, Bishop, Church aims to define the relationship connecting the unity of the Church with the Eucharist and the Bishop as it was understood in the consciousness of the early Church. Bishops-History of doctrines--early church, ca. 30-600. 3. Church--Unity--History of doctrines, ca. 30-600. 1. Title. BV823.Z5913 2001 The presence at that university of distinguished professors, in particular G. Florovsky, G. Williams and K. Stendahl, was a font of inspiration and encouragement during the entire course of the research. The scholarly grounding of its conclusions seeks to persuade any sincere reader, Orthodox or not, that Orthodoxy, not as ideology but as Church, as founded on the teaching and the blood of a St Ignatius of Antioch, an The Church's living teaching office, which consists of all Bishops, in communion with the Pope and the Bishop of Rome. Episcope. Greek for overseas or the Bishops decided what writing to include in the New Testament. What are the four books that met the standards of Apostolic Tradition? The heritage of faith contained in a sacred scripture and sacred tradition. It has been passed on from the time of the Apostles. The Magisterium takes from it all that it teaches as revealed truth. Saint Ignatius Antioch was an apologist who was very loved by his people and refused renounce the Christian faith. Antioch wrote seven letters of encouragement and instructions to the Christians of Asia Minor and Greece. Saint Justin Martyr.