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PRESENTS

Antioch, the *Logos*, and Christ:

A study of the pre-Nicene Antiochene Unity of the Godhead and its influence on the development and formulation of the church's Trinitarian doctrine of God.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with
God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with
God. All things were made through Him, and without Him
nothing was made that was made.

[John 1:1-3]

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Introduction

“It is not proven beyond doubt whether the term [λογος], as John uses it, is to be derived from Jewish or Greek or some other source. Nor is it plain precisely what he meant by it. John does not tell us, and we are left to work out for ourselves the precise allusion and its significance¹.” These sentiments, expressed by Leon Morris with respect to the λογος of the prologue of the gospel of John, are only echoes of what the Early Church Fathers struggled directly with for more than 300 years. The Johannine term, λογος, was the dominant motif² of the Early Church, as church leaders struggled to understand, define, and defend what was termed its λογος theology. The pre-Nicene debates over christology specifically focused on two major points: 1) the true deity and humanity of Christ; and, 2) the relationship and identity of the λογος to the godhead. Of interest to this study is the latter, mainly the emergence of the church’s early Trinitarian formula. Furthermore, how the church was to balance the paradoxical oneness-with-distinction of the godhead is a story which is indebted to several contributions - both orthodox and heretical - of the ancient church at Antioch.

The Apostle John, the *Logos*, and His Gospel

While some scholars speculate that the gospel of John might have originated in Antioch³ the inclusion of John’s gospel in this discussion is otherwise attractive mainly because it 1) forms a sound and apostolic benchmark for evaluating theological interpretations of the λογος as God or the Word of God; and, 2) because the Johannine writings, specifically his gospel, were probably used more frequently than any other NT text in the trinitarian and christological debates of the early church.

In studying the church’s historical understanding and development of its λογος theology and the use of the term by the Apostle John in his gospel, one can hardly avoid a discussion concerning the origin of the term. Depending on where the Apostle drew from in his use of this word, the interpretation of his gospel would vary, so it is said. Proceeding in this fashion then, some have sought to show that John’s λογος comes strictly from Hellenistic, Gnostic, Philonic, Essenic, and/or Stoic backgrounds; others have attempted to link it strictly with Old Testament thought. However, none of these sources, even the latter, when used exclusively to explain and give

¹ Morris, p. 66.

² Sproul, R.C., vol. 3.

meaning to John's use of the word allows for an adequate interpretation of his gospel and an understanding of the true *λογος*, Jesus Christ. For when applied to John's *λογος*, each "background" robs John of his own independent contribution to God's revelation.

Surely, John quotes the OT frequently both directly and indirectly⁴ in his gospel. That the Word of the Lord was given a divine role in the OT is not denied. From the first verses of creation in Genesis to the words of the Psalmist, "By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, And all the host of them by the breath of His mouth" (Ps. 33:6), the Word of God is present and active. John was most likely familiar - very familiar - with the pre-Johannine "Word of God" concept. Therefore, a proper setting of John's gospel should account for its Jewish roots, especially since John was receiving the revelation from the same God as the OT prophets did. Additionally, John may have also been familiar with the writings of Philo or acquainted with the thought of the Essenes, Stoics, and Gnostics. In fact, many NT commentators claim that John uses the term *λογος* to form an immediate contact with his Greek audience. However, a term recognizable by Jews and Gentiles alike, whether it be taken as referring to the maker of the heavens or to the rational principle behind the Universe, it is given deeper meaning by the Apostle John, by attributing personality and full deity to it. As Morris says, "John's thought is his own⁵." His revelation of the *λογος* as Christ is new.

Regardless of how John introduces his gospel, one cannot deny that the rest of John's gospel "shows little trace of acquaintance with Greek philosophy and less of dependence on it⁶." Although John mentions the *λογος* in his opening verses, after verse 14, John never again returns to the term later in his gospel. John quickly moves from the introduction of the *λογος* to a fuller presentation of Jesus Christ as the Son of God. The focus of the gospel is on Christ, not the *λογος* as defined by Heraclitus, Plato, Aristotle, Philo, or any other great thinker of the world. What John is concerned with is Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and in presenting him as the God-Man. Pollard has it right when he states that "The regulative christological concept of the Gospel is not *Logos*, but the *Christ, the Son of God*. The *λογος* is a term which shows up briefly as a point of contact, but which disappears immediately and permanently in the rest of the gospel of John⁷." Therefore, it will be shown that the church, when seeking to understand more about the *λογος*, has made far more progress and been far more accurate when

³ Morris, p. 54.

⁴ For example, in his themes of the "Good Shepherd" (ch. 10) and of the true Vine (ch. 15) he has unmistakable allusions to the Old Testament without specific quotation," according to Morris (p. 55). The very phrase "In the beginning ..." is a reference to the first words of Genesis.

⁵ Morris, p. 108.

⁶ *Ibid*, p. 103.

⁷ Pollard, p. 7.

seeking after Jesus Christ, the Son of God, than when it has sought after the λογος, the emanating ray, the ultimate reason, or principle cause of the universe. After all, the λογος is understood in a new and far superior way in Christ.

Ignatius

In his Church History, Eusebius lists the post-apostolic Bishops of Antioch in the order of Evodius, Ignatius, Hero, Cornelius, Eros, and Theophilus⁸. If the account of Ignatius' martyrdom⁹ is accurate, Ignatius was even an early disciple of the Apostle John, along with Polycarp. At the very least, since we have no writings of the bishop Evodius, Ignatius' extant writings represent the earliest known (near the turn of the first century), written, extra-biblical, ecclesiastical thought present in Antioch¹⁰. He is especially significant because of his concern with similar themes as the Apostle John (anti-docetism, anti-Judaism, and anti-gnosticism)¹¹.

Ignatius speaks of the word of God in two places. The first appears in his letter to the Smyrnaeans, wherein he states:

Ignatius, who is also called Theophorus, to the Church of God the Father, and of the beloved Jesus Christ, which has through mercy obtained every kind of gift, which is filled with faith and love, and is deficient in no gift, most worthy of God, and adorned with holiness: the Church which is at Smyrna, in Asia, wishes abundance of happiness, through the immaculate Spirit and **word** of God.¹² [emphasis added]

Here we see a potential reference to the second person of the trinity. However, it is vague and even if it does refer to Christ it is not clear exactly what can be concluded from analyzing it, other than its being a declaration of the distinction of the Spirit and the Word.

Of more interest to the study of Ignatius' λογος theology, is his letter to the Magnesians, specifically his direct reference of the λογος in chapter 8:

On this account also they [the divinest prophets] were persecuted, being inspired by His grace to fully convince the unbelieving that there is one God, who has manifested Himself by Jesus Christ His Son, who is His eternal **Word**, not proceeding forth from silence, and who in all things pleased Him that sent Him.¹³

In this reference to the λογος, Ignatius (like the Apostle John) clearly equates "Jesus Christ His Son" with the "Word". Furthermore, to Ignatius the λογος is "eternal" and it does not proceed forth "from silence." Although in

⁸ ECH 3:22 and 4:20.

⁹ Mart. Ign. 3.

¹⁰ It is assumed in this paper that seven of his letters to the following are authentic: Ephesians, Magnesians, Trallians, Romans, Philadelphians, Smyrnaeans, Polycarp. Also, the "shorter" versions of his writings will be assumed to be authentic over the "longer" versions, which appear to be added later in time.

¹¹ These themes are suggested by D. F. Wright in his article, "Ignatius," p. 498 of Douglas, J. D. They are also highlighted by Pollard, along with their similar "Son-christologies."

this verse Wolfson does not find a definite position taken by Ignatius, it would appear that Ignatius here forwards what Wolfson calls the “single stage theory of the logos.” He certainly does not clearly differentiate between an internal word and an emitted word. It is probably to Ignatius’ credit, though, that his *λογοζ* theology does not contain a developed and complicated pattern of thought or thinking about the *λογοζ* and its origin. In addition to only mentioning the Word of God in two of his writings, Ignatius limits his comments about the *λογοζ* just like the Apostle John. In fact, even in this excerpt from Ignatius, the *λογοζ* appears only as an adjective clause, something that adds to the main focus and his main theme, which is the oneness of God and Jesus Christ.

It is this general theme of the letter to the Smyrnaeans, the unity of the Son and the Father, which we find absolutely critical to understanding what little we know about Ignatius’ *λογοζ* theology as found in the eighth chapter. His statement about the *λογοζ* above is important, only because of its equation of the *λογοζ* with the Son, Jesus Christ. His *λογοζ* theology is mainly developed throughout his letters by focusing on Christ. Instead of approaching Christ by first understanding the *λογοζ*, he has first understood Christ, the *λογοζ* incarnate, and then added to our understanding of Christ as the *λογοζ*.

On Christ’s union with the Father, Ignatius reveals his theology in his perspectives on the unity in the church. Just as Paul reveals aspects of his trinitarian theology in his doctrine of the male-female relationship, so does Ignatius here reveal his underlying Father-Son theology in his doctrine on the unity of the church. In the chapter immediately preceding the eighth, Ignatius states:

As therefore the Lord did nothing without the Father, being **united** to Him, neither by Himself nor by the apostles, so neither do ye anything without the bishop and presbyters. Neither endeavor that anything appear reasonable and proper to yourselves apart; but **being come together** into the same place, let there be **one** prayer, **one** supplication, **one** mind, **one** hope, in love and in joy undefiled. There is **one** Jesus Christ, than whom nothing is more excellent. Do ye therefore all run together as into **one** temple of God, as to **one** altar, as to **one** Jesus Christ, who came forth from **one** Father, and is with and has gone to **one**.¹⁴
[emphasis added]

Ignatius teaches that we are to be one and united after the supreme model of the Father and Son. One cannot help but notice that the Apostle John records Jesus teaching identically in this fashion in several places: “Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner” (John 5:19); and, “I and My Father are one” (John 10:30); and, “Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are” (John 17:11); and,

¹² *Ign. Smyr.* Introduction.

¹³ *Ign. Magn.* 8.

¹⁴ *Ign. Magn.* 7.

“that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You ...” (John 17:21). For Ignatius, the Father and Son are One.

Ignatius, again like John, does not present Christ, the *λογος*, as an impersonal force or emotion. For Ignatius, the personal Word Incarnate is of central importance. In the first chapter to the Smyrnaeans, for example, Ignatius states, “I glorify God, even Jesus Christ, who has given you such wisdom.” Christ is, of course, the source of wisdom but never wisdom itself. Furthermore, while there is a subordination theme present in Ignatius’ writings, he never subtracts from the absolute ontological equality of the Son with the Father. In encouraging us to live for Christ, Ignatius states, “Let us therefore do all things as those who have Him dwelling in us, that we may be His temples, and He may be in us as our **God, which indeed He is**, and will manifest himself before our faces¹⁵” [emphasis added]. To Ignatius, Christ is nothing less than God. Ignatius was reported by others to have specifically declared Christ to be King before Trajan, prior to being martyred¹⁶. Ignatius also steers clear of adoptionism and makes the divine nature of Christ essential, from before time. For, Christ was “with the Father before the beginning of time, and in the end was revealed¹⁷.” He is content to state that the Son was begotten¹⁸ (and this only once in all of his authentic writings) without insisting that the Son was created or that the Son did not exist before time.

Elsewhere, although Ignatius does not use the word trinity, he does establish the full threeness of the godhead. He writes, “Study, therefore, to be established in the doctrines of the Lord and the apostles, that so all things, whatsoever ye do, may prosper both in the flesh and spirit; in faith and love; in the **Son**, and in the **Father**, and in the **Spirit**¹⁹” [emphasis added]. Therefore, he does justice to the Spirit as well as to the Son²⁰. Furthermore, Ignatius preserves the paradoxical mystery of the threeness and oneness when he urges his readers to be one as the “apostles to **Christ**, and to the **Father**, and to the **Spirit**²¹.” This is reminiscent of the charge Christ gave to baptize in the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the three in one.

¹⁵ *Ign. Eph.* 15.

¹⁶ *Mart. Ign.* 2. One cannot again help but to see the parallel here with John’s gospel and its main themes. For example, Bruce Milne subtitles his commentary on John, “Here is your King!”

¹⁷ *Ign. Mag.* 6.

¹⁸ *Ign. Rom.* Intro. Ignatius never refers to the term, except in this one passage. It is also a very brief, passing reference, like that of the Apostle John. The longer version of Ignatius’ “authentic seven” letters do contain several instances of the term; so do many of the inauthentic letters. That he does not use this term frequently in the “authentic seven” probably supports the idea that his other letters and the longer versions are not authentic. If these versions were authentic, then we would find an Ignatius more involved in speculating about the origins of the Son, being the firstborn of all creation, etc...

¹⁹ *Ign. Mag.* 13.

²⁰ Ignatius, interestingly, in these verses of chapter 13 mentions the Son first in the trinity both times. In the other triune reference (*Ign. Philad.* Intro), he does the same. If anything, Ignatius is strongly emphasizing Christ, the Son, as of central importance in understanding the triune God. Christ can hardly be seen as anything less than fully God in the writings of Ignatius.

²¹ *Ign. Mag.* 13.

Clearly, Ignatius does not hold a λογος theology; rather, he holds to a “Son” theology. He does not concern himself with the origin of the Son (he is content stating that the Son is “eternal” and from “before the beginning of time”), abstract and impersonal personifications of attributes like wisdom, or with philosophical speculations concerning the Word. Christ is the supreme revelation of God for Ignatius. Compared with the number of monarchian heresies that arose in the church at Asia Minor during the third century, we find a much more pragmatic approach to the trinity in Ignatius. Perhaps it is not a simple observation that Ignatius remained sound in his christology by confining himself to the apostolic boundaries presented by the Apostle John. His trinity is simple, yet profound; it affirms one, while allowing for three; it is devoid of futile speculation (Rom. 1:21) and mainly concerned with furthering the administration of God (1 Tim. 1:4).

Theophilus

Theophilus appears in Eusebius’ record of successors at Antioch four bishops after Ignatius, somewhere near the middle to end of the second century. Compared to Ignatius’ writings at least a half century earlier, Theophilus represents a progression of thought and development in the trinitarian doctrine at Antioch. While Ignatius’ theology was structured by Christ as God’s Son, Theophilus’ thought was confined mostly to a λογος framework. In fact, nowhere in his writings (although we do not have more than his books to Autolyucus) does he even mention the name, Jesus, except in reference to the “Son of Nun²².”

Most interesting in Theophilus, is his development of the “twofold stage theory²³” of the λογος. Unlike Ignatius, Theophilus clearly distinguishes between an internal (ἐνδιάθετος) and an uttered (προφορικὸς) λογος:

For before anything came into being He had Him as a counselor, **being His own mind and thought**. But when God wished to make all that He determined on, He begot this Word, **uttered**, the first-born of all creation, not Himself being emptied of the Word [Reason], but having begotten Reason, and always conversing with His Reason.²⁴

For Theophilus, there was a pre-creation begetting of the uttered λογος from the internal λογος, the latter of which was God’s “mind and thought.” Theophilus does not equate begetting with creating, though, as can be deduced from his introductory phrase above, “before anything came into being.” In fact, the internal λογος could never be created or brought into being, a point which Theophilus emphasized against Autolyucus’ Platonic/Gnostic thinking

²² A likely reference to Joshua. However, Theophilus does make frequent use of the Antiochene term, “Christian” rather frequently.

²³ Wolfson, p. 193-4.

²⁴ *Auto.* 2:22.

by stating that that which is created is “also needy²⁵.” Furthermore, immediately prior to these words, Theophilus is clear in stating that even the uttered word, the “voice” (the Son), was not “begotten from intercourse [with women],” but that he “always” existed²⁶.

In Theophilus, one can find an unmistakable unity of the Godhead: “He had this Word as a helper in the things that were created by Him, and by Him He made all things²⁷.” The Word was one with God in creation. The Word served as a “helper” in God’s creative act; creation was done by Him, yet not without God (the Father), as the Gnostics claimed in their mediator creator myths. Moreover, Theophilus holds to a threefold trinity. In addition to holding to the deity of the Word, he also included the Spirit, or “wisdom,” in his godhead. In his near exegesis of Genesis, for example, he states “But to no one else than to His own Word and wisdom did He say, ‘Let Us make²⁸.’” His united trinity was bigger than a mere λογος/θεος binitarian²⁹ theology.

Yet, even in this threefold, eternal, and united trinity, Theophilus falls short of fully assigning personality to the Word (Son) or Wisdom (Spirit): “He, then, being **Spirit** of God, and governing principle, and **wisdom**, and **power** of the highest, came down upon the prophets, and through them spoke of the creation of the world and of all other things³⁰.” According to Wallace-Hadrill, “Theophilus speaks of God, the totality of the Godhead, uttering his Word and his Wisdom: he does not speak of the Godhead being eternally threefold in structure, Father, Word, and Spirit³¹.” Theophilus essentially relies on the economy of the Word (the Son, the λογος προφορικος) to define personality for the Word; and he also never really gives the Spirit true personality (as there is no distinction between an internal and uttered Wisdom for Theophilus). Here one can find threads of thinking that were to be later introduced heretically by Paul of Samosata. Yet in fairness to Theophilus, his ideas do represent those from an earlier point in time, when the church was struggling to define what the relationship of the Son was to the λογος.

In relation to the Apostle John and Ignatius, Theophilus failed to focus on a Son theology, rather than a λογος theology. Theophilus maintained a link between the Son and the Word³², but approached the trinity from the

²⁵ *Auto.* 2:10.

²⁶ *Auto.* 2:22

²⁷ *Auto.* 2:10.

²⁸ *Auto.* 2:18

²⁹ A term used by Stead, Christopher, p. 157.

³⁰ *Auto.* 2:10

³¹ Wallace-Hadrill, p. 69.

³² *Auto.* 2:22.

λογος. The speculative and perhaps extra-biblical aspects of his theology opened the way for further λογος-centered thought (and error) in third century Antioch.

Late 2nd & 3rd Century Monarchian Controversies in Asia Minor

Arising in Asia Minor at the end of the second and beginning of the third centuries were the heresies of monarchianism. Instead of insisting on a triune godhead, the monarchians taught exclusively of a unipersonal God in an effort to establish monotheism. Their first goal was to preserve the unity of God³³ (hence the name, monarch³⁴). The downfall, however, was that they left this end unchecked by the rest of scripture and Johannine teaching on the threeness of God; they had become single-minded fanatics.

Whether the thinking of these heretics can be definitely traced specifically to Antioch is unsure. However, the limited evidence does show that the heresies were at least from Asia before they made their way to Pope Callistus' seat in Rome. Furthermore, the importance of the unity of God to these heretics can certainly have been a product of Antiochene teaching, for these individuals "sought to stress a fundamental biblical and Christian truth, namely, the conviction that God is one, the sole monarch of the universe³⁵."

Modalistic Monarchianism

In their attempts to retain the unity of God, the modalistic monarchians preserved the deity of Christ. In doing so, however, they failed to uphold a trinity of real persons (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). The development of modalism is captured below by the views of Noetus, Praxeus and Sabellius.

Noetus vs. Hippolytus

Noetus is believed to have come from Smyrna³⁶ and to have presented one of the earliest "modalistic monarchian" views. His theology was a form of "patripassianism," wherein the Father was equivalent to the Son, and therefore said to have suffered on the cross. Noetus' teaching is summarized (with unknown accuracy) by his chief opponent, Hippolytus: "He alleged that Christ was the Father Himself, and that the Father Himself was born,

³³ Stead points out that these heresies were over-simplifications made by those who were "less thoughtful or less cultivated folk" (p. 157). While we may find that these heretics did not grasp the complicated Trinitarian picture that was evolving in the church's theology (even some of the church fathers were struggling with this), these were still educated men, as they interacted with the church on complex concepts. Certainly, though, Stead is correct in pointing out that they oversimplified the situation; indeed, their focus on only one aspect, the unity of God, supports this fact.

³⁴ From the Greek: μοναρχια, where the epistemological root words mean "single beginning" or "single rule".

³⁵ Brown, p. 95.

and suffered, and died³⁷.” Hall points out that the probable driving force in Noetus-like theologies was that “since Christ performed all these functions [those of God], one feels the need to look no further [for the identity of God]³⁸.” And it is indeed, a simplistic view of the godhead proposed by Noetus, which preserves God’s unity and the deity of Christ (and his central role between God and man) but fails to allow for the three distinct persons of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Hippolytus, although accused by even Pope Callistus of believing in two gods, took to the defensive against Praxeus. While Hippolytus was not Syrian, his “Western” balance over and against the now exaggerated “Eastern” oneness of God may have some Syrian roots in itself³⁹. Nevertheless, Hippolytus confronted Noetus with an exegetical wholeness of the scriptures, turning Noetus’ misuses of texts against Noetus’ himself. In a method described by him as, “the proper way, therefore, to deal with the question is first of all to refute the interpretation put upon these passages by these men, and then to explain their real meaning⁴⁰,” Hippolytus points out that in arguing for the oneness of God from John 10:30, Noetus fails to realize that the text does not read, “I and the Father am one, but are one⁴¹.” Hippolytus’ frequent use of the gospel of John in his writings, as also in:

This Logos the Father in the latter days sent forth, no longer to speak by a prophet, and not wishing that the Word, being obscurely proclaimed, should be made the subject of mere conjecture, but that He should be manifested, so that we could see Him **with our own eyes**. This Logos, I say, the Father sent forth, in order that the world, on beholding Him, might reverence Him who was delivering precepts not by the person of prophets, nor terrifying the soul by an angel, but who was Himself —He that had spoken —**corporally present amongst us**⁴² [emphasis added].

is evidence of the fact that his own theology is not divorced of earlier developments in Antioch. For in Ignatius, Theophilus, and the Apostle John the real distinctness of Father and Son were clear; Hippolytus represents an important balance to a theological concept grown out-of-hand in the East. Furthermore, Hippolytus’ reliance on the economy of the trinity (and the reality of the Incarnation) is further indicative of his somewhat “Eastern” theology. For Hippolytus’ pre-creation distinction between Father and Son is rooted strongly in the incarnation: “the same [the Word] took to Himself the name common and current among men, and was called from the beginning the Son of man **on account of what He was to be**, although He was not yet man, as Daniel testifies

³⁶ *Ref. Her.* 9:2.

³⁷ *Ag. Noet.* 1

³⁸ Hall, p. 78.

³⁹ Pollard emphasizes the similarity between Hippolytus’ and Irenaeus’ argumentation and believes Hippolytus picked up where Irenaeus left off. He also offers reasons to believe that Irenaeus was a “Syrian” by birth (p. 48). Because Pollard believes that in Irenaeus, “the theology of Asia Minor and Syria comes to self-consciousness,” we cannot help but acknowledge then that the late second and third century Asian undue emphasis on the Oneness of God was countered partly by its own earlier and more balanced view of the oneness of God. Chadwick also supports the fact that Hippolytus & Tertullian were influenced heavily by Irenaeus (p. 83). Irenaeus was a “link” between East and West, and hence the defense against the “Eastern” monarchians is in part Eastern.

⁴⁰ *Ag. Noet.* 3.

⁴¹ *Ag. Noet.* 7.

when he says, 'I saw, and behold one like the Son of man came on the clouds of heaven'⁴³ [emphasis added].

The son was eternally the Son "from the beginning," yet only because of the incarnation, "what He was to be."

This smacks of Eastern christology both in terms of its trinitarian trueness to the gospel of John and its clear anti-docetic stress on the reality of the incarnation.

Praxeus and Tertullian

Praxeus brought his modalistic theology to Rome from Asia Minor⁴⁴. Like Noetus, he insisted on the oneness of Father and Son by using texts such as John 10:30 and 14:9. Schaff groups Praxeus with Noetus and states that, "they knew no other God but the one manifested in Christ, and charged their opponents with ditheism⁴⁵." According to Tertullian, Praxeus "put to flight the Paraclete⁴⁶, and he crucified the Father⁴⁷."

Tertullian's defense of the trinity is foreign to the thesis of this study, for as far as history dictates he had little to do (either by geography or training) with a strictly "Antiochene," "Syrian," or "Asian" theology. However, as an opponent to an Asian, his views are important. Additionally, in his orthodoxy, he does rely heavily on John's gospel. In fact, Pollard views his main contribution as restoring a straying church from a *λογος* theology to a Father/Son theology (something Ignatius had previously asserted). Furthermore, while insisting on a truly ontological trinity, Tertullian offers limited speculation beyond much more than a matter-of-fact statement of the trinity. For example, against Praxeus, he states:

Wherefore also does this Gospel, at its very termination, intimate that these things were ever written, if it be not, to use its own words, "that ye might believe that Jesus Christ is the **Son** of God?" Whenever, therefore, you take any of the statements of this Gospel, and apply them to demonstrate the identity of the Father and the Son, supposing that they serve your views therein, you are contending against the definite purpose of the Gospel. For these things certainly are **not** written that you may believe that Jesus Christ is the Father, **but** the Son⁴⁸ [emphasis added].

He is content, by focusing on Christ as Son, to confess that the Father and Son are separate persons; the Father is the Father, the Son the Son, the Spirit the Spirit, and the three are one God. As is evident from the following words of Tertullian: "Thus the connection of the Father in the Son, and of the Son in the Paraclete, produces three

⁴² *Ref. Her.* 10:29.

⁴³ *Ag. Noet.* 4.

⁴⁴ Norman J. G. G. (in Douglas, J. D. "Praxeas" p. 796) lists Praxeus as from Asia. Schaff, (in Schaff¹, vol. 2, p. 457) lists Praxeus specifically from Asia Minor.

⁴⁵ Schaff¹, p. 457.

⁴⁶ The stab against Praxeus' offense against the Spirit is probably more a result of Praxeus' anti-Montanist (Tertullian being a Montanist) views, rather than his flawed trinitarian view of the Spirit. In the first part of the sentence (not quoted), Tertullian states: "he drove away prophecy, and he brought in heresy; ..." Based on the parallel structure, it would then follow that Praxeus' putting to flight of the Paraclete corresponds to his driving away of prophesy. It was probably not until Sabellius, that we find a full modalistic view of all three persons of the trinity.

⁴⁷ *Ag. Prax.* 1.

coherent Persons, who are yet distinct One from Another. These Three are one essence [*substantia*], not one Person [*persona*], as it is said, 'I and my Father are One,' in respect of unity of substance not singularity of number⁴⁹," Tertullian brought "precision⁵⁰" in the use of everyday words (albeit Latin), to discuss the godhead. Tertullian, therefore, with his legal background⁵¹ brought definition to the doctrine of the trinity. In setting an adequate terminology of one *substantia* and three *personae* he created a means of expressing a paradox that was to be wondered at, professed, but not compacted into an inaccurate packet of simplicity. His precise definition of terms added a refined aspect to the development of trinitarian doctrine and helped the church avoid plunging into a monarchian view of the λογος.

Sabellius

While Noetus and Praxeas "held [specifically] that the Father was born as Jesus Christ, thus becoming the Son, and that he died and raised Himself from the dead⁵²," Sabellius, on the other hand, believed that "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three modes or aspects of God, much as the sun is bright, hot, and round.⁵³" Sabellius essentially extended the υἱὸπατήρ modalism beyond simply Father and Son to Father, Son, and Spirit. In fact, Hall refers to Sabellianism as a "sophisticated⁵⁴" form of modalism partly for this reason.

As Sabellius was from Lybia, he is not directly relevant to the discussion of the Antiochene "oneness" of God, per se. His views, however are the culmination of the modalistic monarchian development (that probably originated in Asia Minor) and demonstrated the dangers of exclusively emphasizing the oneness of God. Furthermore, Tertullian's rebuttal against Praxeus sufficiently applies to the teachings of Sabellius. Sabellius' "One person, three names⁵⁵" trinity is hardly a rival formula to Tertullian's superior "one *substantia*, three *personae*."

⁴⁸ *Ag. Prax.* 25.

⁴⁹ *Ag. Prax.* 25.

⁵⁰ Brown, p. 78.

⁵¹ Wright, D. F. points out (in Douglas, J. D. "Tertullian." P. 960-1) of Tertullian: "Reared in the cultured paganism of Carthage, he imbibed a solid literary, rhetorical, and perhaps legal training. He possibly practiced as an advocate, but is not identifiable with the Roman jurist Tertullianus, though he probably visited Rome." His legal background is probable after viewing his Trinitarian contributions. However, Hall affirms that there is "no sure evidence" of this (p. 67).

⁵² Latourette, p. 144.

⁵³ Latourette, p. 144.

⁵⁴ Hall, p. 79.

⁵⁵ Brown, p. 103.

Dynamic Monarchianism

Latourette best describes the dynamic monarchians as those who “believed that Jesus Christ was a man born of the Virgin Mary, and that in him was an impersonal power (*dynamis*) which issued from God⁵⁶.” It is typical to equate the term “dynamic monarchians” to “adoptionists,” as the dynamic monarchians typically conferred this power to Christ as an adopted Son somewhere near his baptism. The dynamic monarchians - or adoptionists - preserved God’s unity at the expense of Christ’s deity. The grand pre-Nicene example of this teaching is Paul of Samosata⁵⁷.

Paul of Samosata

From the Euphrates and a bishop in Antioch, Paul taught a christology that was certainly Syrian. Paul was indeed a direct product of Antiochene thinking⁵⁸ and his theology of the trinity reflected this. As Chadwick has it, “Paul’s doctrine is akin to the primitive Jewish-Christian idea of the person of Christ. His native air is Syrian⁵⁹...” In Paul, one finds the nadir of Antioch, a man who fully pushed the Antiochene Word/Wisdom concept errantly and heretically into a monarchianism which only accounted for the humanity of Christ.

Similar to modalism’s impersonal presentation of the *λογος*, Paul impersonalized the *λογος* (and wisdom) in God. As Latourette has it, he believed that “in God are the *Logos* and Wisdom” but that neither of these were personal or “distinct” beings⁶⁰. However, in addition to impersonalizing the *λογος*, Paul more importantly dissociated the *λογος* from Christ so much that Christ became a mere man indwelt by something special. Notwithstanding, Paul did grant “that the *Logos* dwelt in Christ in larger measure than in any former messenger of God⁶¹.” But, for Paul Christ was not the *λογος*, as is clear in the following excerpt:

A human being is anointed, the Word is not anointed. The Nazarene our Lord is anointed. For the Word is greater than the anointed one, i.e. Christ, since the anointed one became great through Wisdom. For the Word is from above, Jesus Christ is man from hence. Mary did not give birth to the Word; she was not

⁵⁶ Latourette, p. 143.

⁵⁷ Since it is debatable where the Arian heresy truly has its roots and it is not my intention to prove its Antiochene vs. Alexandrian ties in this paper, I do not labor the point that Arianism is the product of Antioch. For this reason, Paul stands, then as the “grand pre-Nicene example” of extremist Antioch teaching. Berkhoff states that Arius used an element of Origen’s teaching of the *Theos Deuteros* as a “stepping stone” to his theology while at the same time stating that the “dominant idea” of his teaching is the extreme monotheism of the monarchians (Berkhof, p. 84). Furthermore, if indeed, Arius truly combined parts of both schools, then a discussion of Paul’s theology would still stand as the primary “grand pre-Nicene example” to discuss. Lucian and Arius would only be relevant insofar as they represent Paul’s teaching or add anything distinctive to the discussion. For further reading on the origin of Arius’ errors, refer to resources by the following: pro-Antioch, Pollard, Sproul; pro-Alexandrian, Wiles, Stead, Barnard, Marrou and Kannengiesser.

⁵⁸ Without necessarily implying that the church of Antioch was teaching heresy.

⁵⁹ Chadwick, p. 114.

⁶⁰ Latourette, p. 144.

⁶¹ Schaff¹, p. 456.

before the ages. And Mary is not older than the Word, but she gave birth to a man like us, though better in every way, since he was of the Holy Ghost⁶².

The Word had a separate and independent⁶³ existence apart from Christ and was not essentially united with the Son from eternity (or even after the incarnation for that matter). Paul “conceived otherwise the conjunction with Wisdom, making it according to friendship, and not according to substance⁶⁴.” It’s no wonder that Paul’s use of the term, ὁμοούσιος, was condemned. For, according to Paul, Christ was a mere man “like us,” and it would follow for Paul that any man conjoined with God by a bestowal of the divine “wisdom” would be ὁμοούσιος with God. Paul’s error, though, was consistent with his own equation of an impersonal attribute such as wisdom or the λογος with God’s οὐσία. The problem lay in that God’s essence was more than an attribute bestowed upon Christ. Christ, the λογος, was a real person according to his Sonship; Christ was God not by a scant partaking of an attribute like wisdom or power, but by necessity.

While it is possible to find dynamic monarchianism present in Theodotus the Tanner, Aesclypedotus, and Theodotus the Money-Changer prior to Paul, certainly “it was more serious to revive adoptionist ideas after Christology had become more explicit⁶⁵.” It was to ignore the errors of “the preceding century⁶⁶.” Nonetheless, Paul’s theology seems to have afterwards influenced Lucian of Antioch, who was revered by later Church Fathers as a “great and holy martyr⁶⁷.”

Conclusion

Antioch’s contribution up through the creeds of Antioch and Nicea (325AD)

The contribution of the church at Antioch was critical to the development of the catholic church’s trinitarian theology. For in the Earliest church at Antioch, Ignatius forwarded a strongly Johannine Son christology, which focused on Christ as Son, and was content with a matter of fact affirmation of the simultaneous threeness and oneness of the godhead. Although not explicitly exclaimed so by Ignatius, the fact that he is silent about the origin of the λογος or Son is the late first century equivalent to what we find stated in the creed of Antioch of 325, that

⁶² Stevenson, J. p. 261. Quoting from de Riedmatten, *Les actes du procès de Paul de Samosate*, Fribourg en Suisse: Editions St Paul, 1952, op. Cit., S, 26, p. 153, from Leontius of Byzantium.

⁶³ Stevenson, J. p. 261. Quoting from de Riedmatten, op. Cit., S, 24, p. 147, from the Syriac.

⁶⁴ Stevenson, J. p. 261. Quoting from de Riedmatten, op. Cit., S, 24, p. 147, from the Syriac.

⁶⁵ Brown, p. 97.

⁶⁶ Brown, p. 97.

⁶⁷ Schaff¹, p. 637. Although both Chrysostom and Athanasius are reported to have respected Lucian, the Arians at the same time regarded him as “their teacher.”

Christ's being begotten is "ineffable" or "indescribable"⁶⁸. Furthermore, although in Antioch there was a gradual drift into *λογος* speculation - possibly first in Theophilus - and a definite sharp *λογος* divergence in the heresies of the third century, these developments in themselves added to the progress of trinitarian theology at Antioch. The church was forced to define its boundaries by negation. For as Wiles says, "the influence of heresy on the early development of doctrine is so great that it is almost impossible to exaggerate it"⁶⁹. Perhaps in Eustathius of Antioch (at least symbolically) the strong Antiochene Son theology was revived most strongly over and against the Arian heresy⁷⁰. Without a doubt, at the council of Antioch (325), there was a sharp refutation of Arian heresy by the Antiochene bishops. For these fathers, Jesus Christ was primarily, "only begotten Son," not by "adoption," but who existed "everlastingly"⁷¹.

The creed in essence was a revision of the rule of faith, the confession of belief in "one God, Father almighty, ..and in one Lord Jesus Christ, ..in one Spirit, one Catholic Church"⁷²... As a "revision," however, the creed stands mostly as a grand elaboration or expansion of the second article, the "one Lord Jesus Christ." The creed of Antioch captures much of the Antiochene historical developments with respect to the unity of Christ and the Father in the trinity. In only making reference to Christ as the *λογος* once and in its focus on Christ through the incarnation - as the image of God - it has a distinctly Antiochene flavor.

The Nicene creed goes a step further in never mentioning the *λογος*. Its focus is on Christ as Son. It also preserves the uniqueness of Christ's having been begotten by using the word, "μονογενῆ." The absence of the *filioque* clause (the procession of the Spirit from the Father only), and the importance of it not being there in the later debates in the Eastern Church is also evidence of the Antiochene "monarchian"⁷³ (single procession) influence on the creed. Perhaps most Antiochene about the creed is the phrase, ὁμοούσιον τῷ πατρὶ⁷⁴. This was the hallmark of Antioch, the unity of essence of Father and Son, the consubstantiality of Son and Father.

These two creeds, the Nicene especially significant as it is itself an ecumenical creed, represent an important point of theological definition for the church. In both, three centuries of Antiochene influences are clear. Monotheism and the Unity of God were preserved in part by the contributions that the Antiochene church made to the creed.

⁶⁸ Stevenson, p. 335. "The Council of Antioch, 325."

⁶⁹ Wiles, p. 36.

⁷⁰ See n. 57.

⁷¹ Stevenson, p. 335. "The Council of Antioch, 325."

⁷² Stevenson, p. 335-6. "The Council of Antioch, 325."

⁷³ Schaff⁴, vol 1, p. 26.

Antioch s“ Oneness”

But why did the Antiochene church emphasize so easily the oneness of God? Clearly, within Antiochene theology, there was variety of thinking; neither Ignatius, Theophilus, or any of the heretics of the third century were identical in their thinking. Yet, in their shared focus on the oneness of God (although to different degrees), could there have been a common influence? There probably is no single answer to this question. And, any proposed answers are only speculations into what little history has been preserved. But there are a few ancient facts that could have contributed to the Antiochene singularity of God.

In Antioch upon the arrival of Christianity and the first “Christians,” there existed a mixed population of pagans, Jews, and eventually gnostics⁷⁵. Just as today’s “God is love” setting in the United States affects “liberal” churches’ doctrines (even eliminates the reality of hell or satan), there is no reason to doubt that Antioch’s backdrop of paganism, Judaism, or gnosticism influenced the church then. In fact, in Syria the pagan concept of *ba’ al* as an impersonal deity was well known. As Wallace-Hadrill points out, *ba’ al* did not carry with it the idea of a “namable deity⁷⁶.” It was an adaptable concept which could be embraced by the latest trend or predominant cult. Perhaps, the nearly impersonal pre-incarnate λογος of Theophilus, certainly that of Paul of Samosata and the non-persons of the modalistic “trinity,” could be the product of such pagan twists of Christian revelation. There was certainly an impersonal character given to the λογος, which was distinct to Antioch.

Furthermore, as a “meeting point of the Greek and the Oriental civilizations⁷⁷,” Antioch also had its hellenized deities. These cults, which were based on “Zeus, Apollo, and the rest of the pantheon⁷⁸,” approached an understanding of the god’s through “personal,” essentially superhuman local deities. While some pre-incarnate Antiochene conceptions of Christ as the λογος were impersonal, one cannot help but see an influence of hellenized culture on Antioch’s economic understanding of Christ. The manhood of Christ, the bodily λογος, was always stressed in Antiochene theology, especially that of Paul of Samosata, and even Arius. God was understood by the Antiochenes through their new local “deity,” Christ. Additionally, the sharper focus on the Father and Son (with a de-emphasis on the Spirit) might partly be due to this same reason. Christ was easily seen

⁷⁴ Schaff⁴, vol 2, p. 60.

⁷⁵ Wallace-Hadrill, p. 14. Gnosticism certainly influenced the docetic movements which were strongly refuted by Antioch in the debates which centered on Christ s person. However, it is probably less important to the trinitarian peculiarities that emerged in Antioch and is consequently not developed in this paper as a significant factor to that debate.

⁷⁶ Wallace-Hadrill, p. 15.

⁷⁷ Downey, p. 120.

⁷⁸ Downey, p. 120.

as the one local deity with a particular prominence in revealing God (he was the image) and providing salvation - a concept which is not completely divorced from Semitic influences, which is discussed next.

The final important influence was the Jewish population. Probably, the influence of Judaism on the Antiochene oneness of God is of prime significance. For to the Jews, any introduction of a number greater than one in discussing God was appalling. No one can doubt the importance of God's oneness to the Jews when they repeatedly charged Christ with blasphemy and finally demanded his crucifixion. That Judaism was influencing Antiochene Christianity from its inception is clear also from the initial theological question of circumcision, which was settled by an early council in Acts 15. Outside of trinitarian thought, the impact of Judaism was clear, as Ignatius struggled in his letters to warn Christians of the Judaizers; furthermore, in Theophilus there were Jewish aspects in his directives in Christian worship⁷⁹. Within the debate in Asia Minor on the *μοναρχία* of God, OT texts were constantly referred to in support of their theories. For these monarchists were raising the banner of "I am the LORD, and there is no other; besides me there is no God ...". The problem lay in their resistance to understand the appropriate and apostolic basis for a threeness of real *personae* within God.

⁷⁹ Downey, p. 133-4.

Appendix

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Abbreviations

- Ag. Noet.* Hippolytus' "Against the Heresy of One Noetus," as found in Roberts and Donaldson, vol. 5.
- Ag. Prax.* Tertullian's "Against Praxeus," as found in Roberts and Donaldson, vol. 3.
- Auto.* Theophilus' letter to Autolycus, as found in Roberts and Donaldson, vol. 2.
- ECH:* Eusebius's Church History, as found in Schaff³, vol. 1.
- Ign. Eph.* Ignatius' letter to the Ephesians, as found in Roberts and Donaldson, vol. 1.
- Ign. Magn.* Ignatius' letter to the Magnesians, as found in Roberts and Donaldson, vol. 1.
- Ign. Philad.* Ignatius' letter to the Philadelphians, as found in Roberts and Donaldson, vol. 1.
- Ign. Smyr.* Ignatius' letter to the Smyrnaeans, as found in Roberts and Donaldson, vol. 1.
- Mart. Ign.* The Martyrdom of Ignatius, as found in Roberts and Donaldson, vol. 1.
- NT: New Testament
- OT: Old Testament
- Ref. Her.* Hippolytus' "Refutation of All Heresies," as found in Roberts and Donaldson, vol. 5.