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SUMMARY

of abilitation thesis ANTIOCH – ecclesial and theological center of multiple valences

This habilitation thesis presents in summary the main results of my researches on the history and theology of Antioch as a Christian center. The main scientific principals I followed in my research were: a multi-perspective analyse of the available historical sources in order to avoid any unilateral interpretation; a coherent connection between church history and general history of Antioch; good knowledge of archaeological remains related with Antioch through visits to Antioch; direct knowledge of the present situation of the Patriarchate of Antioch due to visits in the Middle East, as well as to Antiochian communities in diaspora.

The first part is dedicated to the pre-Christian history of Antioch and its importance for the knowledge of the Christian history of Antioch. I briefly presented the history of the foundation of Antioch and some essential information related with its geographical sides, the suburbia in order to understand the importance of Antioch as an urban center of the Orient before Christianity. I highlighted also the ethnic and religious diversity of the pre-Christian Antioch in order to understand the cosmopolite character of this city at the beginning of Christian era. At the end of the first part I presented the implication of this diversity for the rise of Christianity in this city: (1) Christianity did know how to use the advantages provided by such a metropolis based so closed to Jerusalem. If we follow the spread of Christianity from Jerusalem to Antioch, we understand the process of urbanization of the Christian mission, a process essential for the rise of Christianity in the Roman Empire; (2) Christian mission made use of the ethnic and religious diversity of Antioch, as well as of the imminent openness of such a metropolis for everything that was new, in order to prove its superiority upon other religions; (3) the presence of a large Jewish community which was open for non-Jewish circles prepared the way of Christian mission by spreading the idea of monotheism and by creating the category of “God’s fearers” which, many of them, entered later on the Christian Church.

The second part is dedicated to the beginnings and rise of Christianity in Antioch in the first Christian century. The first significant event of the Christian era in Antioch, which largely determined the way of Christianity in the roman world, was a political one. In 5-6 AD Palestine became part of the Roman province of Syria. This facilitated the connections between Jerusalem and the capital of the province of Syria, which was Antioch and contributed to the spread of Christianity in this metropolis of the Ancient world. We have a quite good knowledge of the beginnings of the Christian Church in Antioch because of the New Testament records, especially of the book of Acts. In order to understand that the main source for knowing the beginning of the Church in Antioch is the New Testament itself, it is sufficient to say that Antioch is mentioned 19 times in the New Testament and 17 times in the book of Acts. There are four essential characteristics of the biblical history of Antiochian history: (1) Antioch has been the Christian center for whom it was decided that the Gospel can be preached to the gentiles without any obligation to observe the Jewish law. The question if and how the gentiles should be received in the Church appeared stringently when the Gospel reached a city like Antioch which was majority pagan. The Antiochian Jewish community was more opened than other communities to receive Pagans, probably granting them the statute of “God fearers.” Later on they probably showed interest to receive the Gospel. The issue of how gentiles could be received in the Christian Church was solved in the “Apostolic Synod” as is called in Church

History the conference gathered in Jerusalem. It was an event organized in strong collaboration between Antioch and Jerusalem. A central attention has been given to the issue of authority. The decision to admit the gentiles in the Christian Church without the obligation to observe the Judaic law, but following however a few principals formulated in the synod changed significantly the fate of the Christian Church, opening its way to universality. The history of the Antioch Church provides us with evidences that not everyone was pleased with this solution. Chefa who is one of the 70 disciples of our Lord and not the same person as Peter the Apostle is one of those who expressed reservations on the decisions of the synod. Some of them separated from the Church and formed the group of *Judaizants*. (2) An Antioch, the Disciples of Christ were called for the first time Christians (Acts 11:26b). This information contented in the book of Acts a few decades after the related events took place emphasize the fact that the name of "Christian" was attributed to the Antiochian community either by the roman community in Antioch or by local authorities, due to a need to distinguish the followers of Christ from the rest of Jewish community. The necessity of such a distinction highlights the fact that the Christian Church formed already its own identity, also in the eyes of external observers. The name of "Christian" seems not to have initially any negative or criminal connotations. Therefore it was adopted by the Antiochian Christian community and gradually by the entire Christianity. (3) Antioch was an important missionary center of the first Century, becoming quickly from a metropolis object of mission, a missionary city. At the beginning the object of Antiochian mission was Antioch itself, especially the gentiles. That is way the problem of the way how they could be received into Church appeared in Antioch. After a decision regarding this issue was taken, the Church of Antioch enlarged its mission to Asia. Antioch was the base for the first missionary trip of Barnabas and St. Paul. Barnabas moved from Jerusalem to Antioch in order to be together with Cypriot missionaries who brought the gospel to Antioch.

St. Paul was brought to Antioch by Barnabas, after a visit to Jerusalem. Antioch was also a missionary center for other missionaries like John Mark and Syla. After Antioch stopped being the missionary center for St. Paul (around 50 AD), the Antiochian missionary activity kept being intensive. Modern scholars believe that after the fall of Jerusalem (70 AD) Antioch took the role of Jerusalem in coordinating missionary activities. Unfortunately we do not possess literary evidences for the Antiochian missions of the second part of first Century and first part of the second century. However if one accept that the *Didache* is originated in Antioch than we have an image of the dynamics and programmatic character of the Antiochian missions. (4) the image of the missionary dimension in Antioch in the last part of the first Century is clearer if one accepts that the gospel of Mathews is originated in Antioch or at list in Antiochian milieu. Mathews Gospel reveals a missionary community which used as motto the commandment from Mathews 28:19-20 to preach the Gospel to all nations. At the same time Mathews Gospel contents passages which suggest that the mission should be limited only to the Jews. We may conclude that in the Mathean community had exist two directions, each of them having several groups: one in favour of the mission to gentiles and one in favour of restricting the mission only to the Jews. The two directions mentioned above coexisted in Antioch at the time of Mathews Gospel. The process of separation between Judaizants and the Church was still going on.

The third part presents the theological developments in Antioch from the beginning of the second Century to the beginning of the epoch of Constantine. The first great post-biblical Antiochian personality has been St. Ignatius. He was martyr, author of seven epistles dedicated to several Asian communities, as well as to the roman community and to St. Polycarp of Smyrna. St. Ignatius` epistles give us an image of the respect he enjoyed as a bishop in the all Asia, as well as his strong integration in an existing Antiochian tradition. He strongly pledged for a monarchic episcopate and rejected with a lot of energy the heresies of his time, especially

the *judaizants* and the dochetists. He developed an “incarnationist Christology” against the latest. Theophil of Antioch wrote a totally other type of theology. He put emphasis on defending Christianity and on proving the superiority of it over other Pagan religions. The argumentation he used is based mainly on the Old Testament. This made several scholars to indicate on the growing Jewish influence upon Antiochian theology in Theophil’s time. The use of Old Testament in Theophil’s work could be partly explained in my opinion, based on the thematic he discuss, to whom the Old testament easily deliver the appropriate argumentation. Another complementary explanation might be given by the fact that in the judaizants were at Theophil’s time completely separated from the Church. Therefore quoting intensively the Old Testament wasn’t anymore a sensitive issue. The use of Old Testament by Theophil could be interpreted as an anti-marcionite approach. In the period after Theophile and until the constantinian age, in Antioch were active many theologians, some of them bishops of Antioch, some not, some heretics and some Orthodox. This theological diversity does not affect the prestige of Antioch as an ecclesial and Christian center, however it tells us something about the complexity of challenges the Church of Antioch was facing in that period. Tatian the Assyrian opened a school in Antioch around 172, coming from Rome. We do not have further details about this. Bishop Serapion of Antioch has been a great personality of his time, writing against several heretics of his time, like the new prophecy of frigians and against the monthanists. He also advised a community with whom he kept correspondence not to use the Gospel of Peter. According to several sources, bishop Babylas of Antioch have had the courage to confront a roman emperor. Dorotheos and Lucian of Antioch have been Antiochian theologians who prepared in a way the foundation of the “classical” Antiochian school.

The fourth part is dedicated to the “classical” period of the Antiochian school. In my opinion this starts with the theological activity of St. Eustathius of Antioch. His work could be divided into two periods: *pre-Arian* and *post-Arian*. The writings from the pre-Arian period are dominated by exegesis, especially on the biblical text about the witch of Endor which reveals a complex argumentation based among others on logic. The same work offers also the occasion of developing some demonological concept. The Christology of St. Eustathius could be also divided into the pre-Arian and anti-Arian period. In the pre-Arian period St. Eustathius used the Logos-Anthropos typology and expressions that suggest the idiomatic communication. In the anti-Arian period he continued using the same Christological typology against the neo-Arians who were teaching that Jesus Christ did not possess a human soul. Diodor of Tarsus has been the one who founded an *asketerion* i. e. a Bible study school where St. John Chrysostom and Theodor of Mopsuestia studied. His Christology could be also divided into a pre-apolinarian and anti-apolinarian one. While the pre-apolinarian Christology is closed to the Capadocians, his anti-apolinarian Christology is dominated by the so-called “Christology of separation. St. John Chrysostom was in many ways an atypical Antiochian. His emphasis was on pastoral and spiritual issues. However, his non-doxological Mariology highlights the Antiochian character of his Christology. His work is relevant today especially for spirituality and social theology. Theodore of Mopsuestia is a classic representative of the Antiochian school. His Christology is focused on condemning apolinarism in which he saw a big treat for human salvation. Nestorius was the one who highlighted the extremes of the Antiochian Christology. Therefore he was condemned by the 3rd ecumenical synod.

The 5th part presents the main characteristics of the Patriarchate of Antioch in 20th Century, as well as the present situation and some possible future perspectives. Hope is expressed that the bi-millenary spirit of Christian Antioch will find its way in the third millennium.