

as it exists in England cannot fail, I think, to be impressed by the exact theological intelligence, as well as the great practical tact, that preside over it. This is in greatest part due, of course, to the excellence of its leadership. There is a remarkable clarity of thought, an uncompromising integrity in the maintenance of Catholic truth, which are supported by a genuinely religious and prayerful spirit and protected by a real sense of the dangers to which Catholic faith is exposed. At the same time, doctrinal exactness is joined to a greatly courteous charity, which excludes any tendency to ally orthodoxy with undue suspicion, complacency, or rudeness. Above all, there seems to be about the whole movement a certain freshness and victorious spirit, which recalls the words of Pius XII in his Jubilee message: "The Church today cannot completely return to the primitive method required by the small primitive flock. She cannot without being untrue to herself retain to herself and carry on the forms of life and activity of those earlier days. No, there cannot be for the Church any going back. There can be for the human soul who studies her history only a desire to go forward to more victories."

There are some who see, as the victory of the future whose seeds are being planted now by the movement toward Christian co-operation, the achievement of Christian reunion. But it is hardly possible at the moment to explore the relationships between these two movements.²⁶

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CHRISTIAN ARCHAEOLOGY

Somewhere in Syria, the year being 1910, Arab workmen unearthed a mass of ancient silverware. One of the objects was a squat beaker which came in time to be the subject-matter of a lively scientific and literary controversy. Competent scholars and amateurs took sides, popularizers and propagandists aroused the interest of wide reading circles. During the last two decades various expositions have given prominence to the so-called Great Antioch Chalice and still further increased the knowledge of this interesting object. Yet many questions regarding it have not yet received a definitive answer. Unfortunately, in the English language few publications of real scientific value saw the light, so that many false impressions have received currency. We must, therefore, welcome the sane, though not very extensive, survey of the whole controversy which was made by H. Harvard Arnason

²⁶On this question, cf. Anon., "That They All May Be One," *Blackfriars*, XXII (1941), 102-7; Vincent McNabb, O.P., "The Joint Letter on the Five Peace Points," *ibid.*, pp. 124-31; Henry St. John, O.P., "Spadework for Reunion," *ibid.*, pp. 132-44; Anon., "Christians and Unity," *ibid.*, pp. 451-4; Henry St. John, "Collaboration and Reunion," *ibid.*, 471-7.

and Floyd V. Filson in the last two numbers of the *Biblical Archaeologist*.¹ These studies are accompanied by a number of small but sufficiently clear illustrations which will suffice to initiate the non-specialist student into the history and present status of this discussion. It is the purpose of this paper to summarize the results and to add some remarks.

The chalice has been in the possession of Kouchakji Frères of Paris and New York for a number of years. The history of the find and of the first transactions is somewhat obscure. The place of discovery no doubt was Syria, but Antioch or its neighborhood, Aleppo, and some other places have been mentioned. The chalice seems to have passed through the hands of dealers in antiquities before the present owners acquired it. Though the political and social conditions of the time afford a reasonable explanation of these obscurities, yet the doubt they create cannot be brushed aside as of no consequence.

The vital question of authenticity hinges to a certain extent on that of provenance. As we have no accurate description of the manner and position of the find, we are reduced to the use of internal criteria, and here the points of comparison with other artistic products of earlier centuries are not overly abundant. It is not surprising, therefore, that some should suspect fraud and declare it to be a modern fabrication. Morey in 1925 threw doubts on it,² Wilpert attacked it vigorously,³ G. de Jerphanion after his careful and masterly iconographical analysis still had misgivings. Yet it may be said that the overwhelming weight of competent judgment favors the genuinity of the object. De Jerphanion himself, after a more careful inspection at Paris and a discussion with those who cleaned the chalice, declared, "considering everything, we see no further reason now to doubt the authenticity of the chalice of Antioch."⁴ The chief argument rests on the fact that a thick encrustation formed by oxidation covered it when it was discovered, and on a comparison of the decorative elements with other products of ancient times.

The dating of the chalice is even more difficult than the question of authenticity. It was Dr. Gustavus Eisen who first reported on the find, beginning with a short preliminary report in 1916, then in two additional

¹H. Harvard Arnason, "The History of the Chalice of Antioch," *The Biblical Archaeologist*, IV (1941), 53-63; *ibid.*, V (1942), 10-16; Floyd V. Filson, "Who Are the Figures on the Chalice of Antioch?" *ibid.*, V (1942), 1-10.

²Charles R. Morey, "The Antioch Chalice," *Art Studies*, III (1925), 73-80: quoted by Arnason, *op. cit.*

³Giuseppe Wilpert, "Ristauri di sculture cristiane antiche e antichità moderne," *Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana*, IV (1927), 310-33; see also *Art Bulletin*, IX (1926), 89-141.

⁴Guillaume de Jerphanion, S.J., in *La Voix des Monuments*, II, 32; this is republished from *Byzantion*, VI (1931). The author has repeated the same conviction to me in private.

articles in 1917, and finally in two sumptuous folio volumes in 1923.⁵ This latter work caused a sensation. Eisen argued that here was a work of the first century of our era, in fact that at least the inner cup was used by Our Lord at the Last Supper. This might be the Holy Grail about which medieval fancy had woven such wonderful tales. It was found, however, when sober criticism was applied, that the arguments for such contentions were weak indeed, and that many assertions were mere assumptions. Careful critical studies were made in various European languages from archaeological, artistic, and iconographical standpoint which demonstrated the impossibility of such early dating. Yet all these seem to have made no impression on Eisen and on the popularizers who followed in his wake. As late as 1939 a magazine of wide circulation reproduced the assertion that the chalice was made "in the last third of the first century." Among scholars, Strzowski reiterated Eisen's dating on various occasions but without giving independent arguments or going into the question in any detail.

When students who disagree on this account with Eisen come to assign their own date, great divergence is found. Father de Jerphanion, whose monograph is one of the outstanding contributions to the subject, in 1925 assigned the year 500 A.D. as an approximate date.⁶ This he maintained also in his later article.⁷ On the other hand L. Bréhier is inclined to adopt an earlier date, the fourth century or a little before.⁸ Arnason conservatively states that "all the archaeological probabilities point to a date in the fourth or fifth century."⁹ On this matter the last word has not yet been spoken. Attention has been drawn on various occasions to the parallels between the decorative elements of the chalice and the episcopal chair of Maximin at Ravenna. Perhaps the elaborate publication of this monument which is now in process will allow a more thorough and satisfactory comparison than has been possible so far.

As Syria was the place of discovery, so it is generally considered to be the original home. There can be no doubt that probabilities favor this assumption. Yet a chalice is an object easily transported and another place of

⁵Gustavus A. Eisen, "Preliminary Report on the Great Chalice of Antioch Containing the Earliest Portraits of Christ and the Apostles," *American Journal of Archeology*, XX (1916), 426-37; "The Plate with Seven Loaves and Two Fishes on the Great Chalice of Antioch," *ibid.*, XXI (1917), 77-9; also *The Great Chalice of Antioch* (New York: 1923), 2 vols. fol., 60 plates.

⁶Guillaume de Jerphanion, S.J., "Le calice d'Antioche. Les théories du Dr. Eisen et la date probable du calice," *Orientalia Christiana*, VII (1926).

⁷Guillaume de Jerphanion, S.J., "Le calice d'Antioche à l'Exposition d'Art Byzantine de 1931," *Byzantion*, VI (1931); also *La Voix des Monuments*, II, 27-34.

⁸L. Bréhier, "A propos du grand calice d'Antioche," *Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana*, III (1926), 275-86.

⁹H. Harvard Aranson, "The History of the Chalice of Antioch," *The Biblical Archaeologist*, V (1942), 16.

manufacture cannot be excluded a priori. Similarities between the chalice and products of Egyptian manufacture have been pointed out. The problem is complicated by the consideration that artistic tendencies within the Roman empire had by the fourth century become contaminated or merged as a result of the intense exchange that had been going on for several centuries. In the very district of Syria in which the chalice was discovered, the careful study of the ancient churches which has been made by H. C. Butler and others has revealed the conflict between the original native tendencies and the superimposed Hellenistic civilization.

Nothing is known of the history of the chalice. It was probably hidden away with other treasures on the occasion of one of the Persian or Saracenic invasions. In the opinion of the experts who cleaned the silver, the oxidation which encrusted the whole must have been due to several centuries of burial in soil. There is, so they aver, no known chemical process by which it could be brought about artificially.¹⁰ The conservation is good and uniform, though some small parts are missing. These had at first been restored but were later removed. "The work of restoration was done with conscientious care."¹¹

In appearance and makeup the chalice is somewhat singular. Above a rather low and small foot and a corresponding knob sits a truncated ovoidal cup of large capacity. The maximum diameter is 18 cm.; the height of the whole is 19 cm. The capacity is given as two and one-half liters or about 2.65 quarts. The inner silver cup is distinct from the silver ornamentation and may not be of the same age. It may well be that it replaced an earlier cup of glass or of some other material.

The glory of the chalice is in its outer ornamentation of silver. From the base of the bowl there spring up grape vines that rise nearly to the brim where a wreath of roses closes them off. Leaves and bunches of grapes show that it is near the time of vintage. On the branches are various animals—doves, an eagle, a hare, etc. On the ground stand baskets and some animals. But most interesting of all are two groups of six persons each seated on chairs or thrones. The central person of each is facing the onlooker, the others are all in profile. All are on medallions and are placed within the coils of the grape vines. In this manner nearly the whole outer surface of the chalice is covered with decorations of one form or another. As it is in the study of these ornaments that the main elements must be found for a decision regarding authenticity, age, and provenance, it is not surprising that opinions of great diversity should have been expressed. Criticism must be directed to technique, workmanship, artistic conceptions, and iconography. As yet the materials for a comparative study are few and these not yet completely investigated.

¹⁰G. de Jerphanion, S.J., *La Voix des Monuments*, II, 28-30.

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 34.

According to L. Bréhier the decorative work was done by a process of chasing.¹² On the other hand, Father de Jerphanion describes it as made for the most part "by making an impression in a thin silver plate and finishing by a process of chiseling."¹³ It was gilded, as some remnants still show. The heads of the figures are inlaid. Bréhier distinguishes two schools of Syrian silversmiths who used gilding to finish off their work. In one the style is monumental, as shown by majestic figures symmetrically arranged and by an architectural background; the other, to which the chalice seems to belong, is more free in treatment and spontaneous in movement, less concerned with symmetry than with the graceful play of fantasy.¹⁴ The workmanship displayed on this monument has aroused the enthusiastic praise of some critics. They speak of the precision and elegance with which the work is done.¹⁵ Yet Father de Jerphanion, after examining the original very carefully, is more sober in his judgment. He says that the first impression is not a good one; some parts are carefully done, others show less attention.¹⁶

The use of foliage as a framework for men and animals in artistic conception and usage is one of the points which merits special attention. It was this which Wilpert made use of in questioning the authenticity of the chalice.¹⁷ Yet Bréhier points out that it is found on the sixth-century palace at Mishatta and much earlier in Syria. So also at Constantinople two capitals of pillars show a similar treatment. Here also a wide field of study and comparison remains to be investigated. Yet in iconography more than in anything else that pertains to this subject there is diversity of opinion and uncertainty. Who are the persons represented and what is their significance? Do they represent a real historical scene or are they symbolical? What is the history of the usage in this matter? These and other similar questions need to be settled before a complete study of this chalice can be made. Eisen was very positive in his identifications and found a simple answer to many questions. Yet already in 1918 Georg Stuhlfauth showed that these solutions could not stand in the face of well known facts in the history of Christian iconography. He showed that it was not till the fourth or fifth centuries that the types of Jesus and the Apostles reached standardization.¹⁸

¹²L. Bréhier, "A propos du grand calice d'Antioche," *Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana*, III (1926), 270.

¹³G. de Jerphanion, S.J., *La Voix des Monuments*, II, 31.

¹⁴L. Bréhier, *op. cit.*, p. 274.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 279.

¹⁶G. de Jerphanion, S.J., *op. cit.*, p. 28.

¹⁷G. Wilpert, "Ristauri di sculture cristiane antiche e antichità moderne," *Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana*, IV (1927), 313.

¹⁸Georg Stuhlfauth, *Die Aeltesten Portraits Christi und der Apostel* (Berlin: 1928), quoted by Arnason, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

There is a fair amount of agreement among experts that the central figure of each group is Christ, once unbearded, the other time bearded. This is not surprising, as the two manners of representing Christ subsisted side by side in the Christian art of the Orient till the sixth century. As to the significance of the other figures there is no agreement. Eisen himself was not consistent in his interpretation. His contention that they are portrait figures has no foundation in early Christian tradition, either literary or monumental. It remains to investigate whether the manner of representing the figures and their positions belongs to the earlier Hellenistic manner or to the Oriental which succeeded it. Father de Jerphanion finds a mixture of the two modes of treatment which complicates the study still further. In summing up whatever evidence there is for dating from iconographical data, Floyd V. Filson states that "in the present state of the investigation a date at least as late as the fourth century is highly probable."¹⁹

Consequently, only on a few points can we be positive in the matter of this unique monument of Christian antiquity. Yet we must repeat the concluding paragraph of Mr. Arnason: "Through all the confusion that still exists, the importance of the chalice of Antioch is manifest. It remains one of the most significant pieces of early Christian silver in existence. The uniqueness for which it has been suspected is, it seems to me, one of the elements of its importance. When its date and provenance have been securely settled, as we hope one day they may be, it will become a key monument for the history of early Christian art in eastern Europe."²⁰

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THE PROSOPOGRAPHIA CHRISTIANA

Any *Prosopographia* will naturally suggest the monumental work inspired by Theodor Mommsen. The undertaking launched at Fordham University on January 10 of this year is frankly following the lead of the *Prosopographia Imperii Romani*, and in every question of procedure and method follows the system adopted by that work insofar as the different objectives of the two permit. The enormous services of the *P.I.R.* to classical studies challenged a similar effort in the field of ancient Christian history. Hence it becomes apparent that the work envisaged is not just another Dictionary of Christian Biography but a Biographical Dictionary resting exclusively on primary sources.

Over and above this, the similarity is principally one of method. For the

¹⁹Floyd V. Filson, "Who Are the Figures on the Chalice of Antioch?", *Biblical Archaeologist*, V (1942), 9.

²⁰H. Harvard Arnason, "The History of the Chalice of Antioch," *Biblical Archaeologist*, V (1942), 16.