



Learning Christ: Ignatius of Antioch and the Mystery of Redemption

Gregory Vall

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For centuries Ignatius of Antioch has been underestimated by his admirers and vilified by his critics. Scholars tend to view him as either a careless epistolographer and lesser theologian, or a manipulative ecclesiastical politician seeking to gain sympathy for himself and support for his agenda. Critics feel that he departed dangerously from the pure Pauline gospel of justification by faith and veered off into "early Catholicism," if not gnosticism.

Learning Christ represents a thorough reevaluation of Ignatius as author and theologian, demonstrating that his seven authentic letters present a sophisticated and cohesive vision of the economy of redemption. Gregory Vall argues that Ignatius's thought represents a vital synthesis of Pauline, Johannine, and Matthean perspectives while anticipating important elements of later patristic theology. Topics treated in this volume include Ignatius's soteriological anthropology, his Christology and nascent Trinitarianism, his nuanced understanding of the relationship between Judaism and Christianity, and his ecclesiology and eschatology.

Methodologically, *Learning Christ* can be situated among recent attempts to recover a genuinely theological approach to early Christian texts within the perspective opened by modern historical-critical research. It aims to interpret Ignatius's thought in a manner that is authentically rooted in the communicative intention embodied in the text of his letters, while avoiding the historicist reduction of their significance to its hypothetically reconstituted contextual meaning. Vall argues that we can learn a great deal from Ignatius both about the content of revealed truth and about how to do theology.

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