

The Epistles of Ignatius of Antioch (Part 1)



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Ignatius of Antioch, bishop, martyr and letter writer, provides what is perhaps the clearest snapshot of the diverse expressions of Christianity that existed in part of the eastern Mediterranean world in the early second century, although, admittedly, he himself was not a supporter of such diversity. His writings reflect tensions within Christianity as it struggled to become a more organized and structured movement. Moreover, in these epistles, it is possible to see some highly significant doctrines emerging in embryonic form. Part 1 considers the number and date of the epistles, as well as opposition and heresies.

KEYWORDS

Apostolic Fathers, Ignatius, Antioch, second century

With two exceptions, the authors of the texts known as the *Apostolic Fathers* remain shadowy or even totally invisible figures. One of the exceptions is Polycarp the Bishop of Smyrna, for whom we have a graphic description of the events surrounding his martyrdom, an epistle written by him to the Philippians, and an epistle addressed to him.¹ The writer of that last document, the epistle addressed to Polycarp, is the other exception to the general phenomenon of anonymous or shadowy authors of the texts in the corpus of the *Apostolic Fathers*; that person is Polycarp's earlier contemporary, Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch. Like Polycarp, we have a martyrdom account for Ignatius (although this is not included among the *Apostolic Fathers* due to its late date) and epistles written by Ignatius. Yet while Ignatius emerges from the shadows of anonymity, the epistles he composed come from a very brief period of his life, all being penned while he journeyed to Rome to face martyrdom. Although the epistles may have

been written in as little as a span of a few weeks, they provide a remarkable insight into the nature of the person facing martyrdom, as well as conveying much about the beliefs and theological positions he held.

1. *How many Epistles?*

Open any modern version of the writings of Ignatius and it contains seven epistles. Five of these are addressed to communities with which Ignatius had had contact during his journey to Rome, namely the epistles to the Ephesians, Magnesians, Trallians, Philadelphians and Smyrneans. Another is addressed to the Roman church prior to the arrival of Ignatius in the imperial capital. In that letter he counsels them not to intervene on his behalf by trying to prevent his martyrdom (*I. Rom.* 4.1). The remaining letter is directed to Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, urging him to be steadfast and dignified in his episcopal office (*I. Poly.* 1.2; 3.1; 6.1). Yet this consensus surrounding a sevenfold corpus of Ignatian epistles took a long time to establish itself. In the late Middle Ages at least thirteen letters written in Greek circulated in various collections under the name of Ignatius. Such collections contained letters written to the bishop of Antioch. These additional epistles included a letter from a certain Mary of Cassobola and the reply from Ignatius, letters to the Tarsian, Philippian and Antiochean communities, as well as

¹ Ehrman makes a similar assessment about Polycarp. 'In some ways we are better informed about Polycarp of Smyrna than any other Christian of the early second century. Among the writings of the *Apostolic Fathers*, there is one text written to him (by Ignatius), another written about him (the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*), and yet another written by him, a letter sent to the Christians of Philippi.' B. Ehrman, *The Apostolic Fathers*, vol. I (LCL 24; Cambridge, MA: HUP, 2003), 324.

an epistle addressed to Hero, deacon in Ignatius' see of Antioch.² To this corpus was often added the prayer written by Hero to Ignatius. These letters, in conjunction with expanded versions of the seven letters printed in modern critical editions, form what is termed the Long Recension of the epistles. Furthermore, although not usually referenced in the discussion of the Ignatian writings, additional texts are ascribed to the Bishop of Antioch in the Latin tradition. These consist of correspondence with St. John the elder and the Virgin Mary. Both the fact that no Greek manuscript evidence exists for these documents and the fact that their textual history cannot be traced earlier than the Middle Ages has led scholars to view these letters as spurious.³ When one reads the theological orientation of the Ignatian epistles it becomes fully apparent why they were not congenial to Puritan writers who espoused and even intensified many of the anti-ecclesiastical notions of certain Reformation thinkers. Thus, the entire corpus was deemed by Puritan writers to be a forgery, while Roman Catholic writers affirmed the authenticity of the entire collection.

This impasse was overcome by the careful and scholarly work of James Ussher, Archbishop of Armagh. Ussher noted the divergence between the form of text that Faber had published in 1498 and the quotations given by Medieval English writers (Robert [Grosseteste] of Lincoln [c. AD 1250]; John Tyssington [c. AD 1381]; and William Wodeford [c. AD 1396]), which agreed with those of the Church Fathers.⁴ Conjecturing that the printed text represented an interpolated recension, and observing that English authors appeared to know a shorter form, Ussher went manuscript hunting around the libraries of England. His labours did not go unrewarded. Ussher discovered two Latin manuscripts, *Caiensis* 395, held at Gonville and Caius College, and *Monticatianus*, now lost, but part of the library of Richard Montague, Bishop of

Norwich (1638–41).⁵ These manuscripts contained the seven epistles printed in modern editions in a shorter form, now known as the Middle Recension, along with the other epistles in the same form as they appear in the Long Recension. Ussher was able to conclude that the additional epistles were spurious, and that the genuine Ignatian letters had originally circulated in a shorter form. His one mistake was to judge the letter to Polycarp to be spurious.⁶ This Middle Recension was first published in its Latin form by Ussher in 1644.⁷ Two years later Isaac Voss published the first printed edition of the Greek version of the Middle Recension,⁸ based upon the manuscript *Mediceo-Laurentianus* 57.7, housed in Florence. This manuscript was lacking the epistle to the Romans, which has had a different transmission history to the rest of the corpus.⁹ This letter was published in its Middle Recension form in 1689 by Ruinart, from the manuscript *Parisinus Graec.* 1451 housed in the National Library, Paris. Since these initial publications three further manuscripts of the Middle Recension of *Romans* have been discovered, but of the other six epistles of the Middle Recension only a single fragment of *Smyrneans* 3.3–12.1 (Berlin papyrus, Codex 10581) has come to light. The significance of this fifth-century manuscript is that it pre-dates other Greek texts of the Middle Recension by at least five centuries.

The textual problems surrounding the form of the epistles appeared to have been finally settled by the meticulous investigations of Ussher and his fellow seventeenth-century scholars. However, this consensus, which held sway for almost exactly two hundred years, was challenged when, in 1845, William Cureton published three Syriac manuscripts of the epistles of Ignatius.¹⁰ The earliest of these manuscripts, *British Museum Add.* 12175, dated to the first half of the sixth century, contained only

⁵ Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers: Part 2 Ignatius and Polycarp*, vol. 1, 76–86.

⁶ Cross and Livingstone (eds.), 'Ignatius, St.', 822.

⁷ J. Ussher, *Polycarpi et Ignatii Epistolae* (Oxon: Lichfield, 1644).

⁸ In the article on Ignatius in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* it is claimed that Voss was directed to this manuscript by Ussher. 'Voss edited the corresponding Greek text which Ussher had traced to a Florentine MS (Laur. Plut. l.vii.7).' Cross and Livingstone (eds.), 'Ignatius, St.', 822.

⁹ Ehrman, *The Apostolic Fathers*, vol. 1, 214.

¹⁰ William Cureton, *The Ancient Syriac Version of Saint Ignatius* (London: Rivington, 1845).

² For what is still the most readily accessible cataloguing of the manuscripts of the Long Recension see the work of J. B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers: Part 2 Ignatius and Polycarp*, vol. 1, 109–34.

³ The Latin text of the correspondence with St John and the Virgin Mary is given in J. B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers: Part 2 Ignatius and Polycarp*, vol. 3, 69–72.

⁴ See F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone (eds.), 'Ignatius, St.', in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd revised edn (Oxford: OUP, 2005), 822.

the epistle to *Polycarp*. The other two manuscripts, *British Museum Add.* 14618, dated to the seventh or eighth century, and *British Museum Add.* 17192, dated by Cureton to the sixth or seventh century, but by Wright to the tenth century,¹¹ both contain the epistles to *Polycarp*, *Ephesians*, and *Romans* in that order. From this evidence Cureton postulated that this three-letter Syriac collection represented the authentic Ignatian correspondence. This became known as the Short Recension. Without rehearsing the arguments of Zahn¹² and Lightfoot¹³ in favour of the opinion that the Short Recension was an epitome or abbreviation of the Middle form, one important piece of evidence that can be added to the discussion

is the discovery of the fragment of *Smyrneans* 3.3–12.1, dated to the fifth century. This undermines the observation that the additional four epistles of the Middle Recension cannot be dated prior to the tenth century, whereas the Short Recension is attested in the manuscript tradition as early as the first half of the sixth century. Thus the consensus that has emerged in modern scholarship and is reflected in printed editions is that the seven epistles of the Middle Recension represent the genuine form of the Epistles of Ignatius, though perhaps it would be better from a text-critical perspective to say they represent the earliest recoverable stage of the textual transmission of the Ignatian letters.

MIDDLE RECENSION	LONG RECENSION	SHORT RECENSION
<p>Seven epistles written in Greek.</p> <p><i>Ephesians, Magnesians, Trallians Romans, Philadelphians, Smyrnaeans, Polycarp</i></p>	<p>Expanded forms of the seven epistles of the middle recension, with six or seven further writings in Greek and sometimes combined with four writings in Latin.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Ephesians, Magnesians, Trallians Romans, Philadelphians, Smyrnaeans, Polycarp.</i> 2. <i>From Mary of Cassobola, to Mary of Cassobola, letters to the Tarsian, Philippian and Antiochean communities, a letter to Hero, and the Prayer of Hero.</i> 3. <i>In Latin: Two letters from Ignatius to John the elder. One epistle from Ignatius to Mary the Christ-bearer and a letter from Mary to Ignatius.</i> 	<p>Three epistles in a Syriac collection.</p> <p><i>Polycarp, Ephesians, and Romans</i></p>

¹¹ W. Wright, *Catalogue of Syriac MSS in the British Museum* (London: British Museum, 1870–72).

¹² T. Zahn, *Ignatius von Antichien* (Gotha: Perthes, 1893).

¹³ Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers: Part 2 Ignatius and Polycarp*, vol. 1, 280–327.

2. *Ignatius and the Date of the Epistles*

Information about the life of Ignatius is derived primarily from the seven epistles of the Middle Recension, early Christian writers, especially the writings of Eusebius of Caesarea, and an account of the Martyrdom of Ignatius, which may date to the fourth or fifth century. From his own hand we learn that Ignatius was also known by the name Θεοφόρος ('Theophoros' = 'God-bearer'), that the occasion of writing these letters was during his transportation to Rome to face martyrdom (*I.Eph.* 21.1-2; *I.Rom.* 4-5), and that he was the Bishop of Antioch (*I.Rom.* 2.2). The place of Ignatius in the episcopal succession lists of Antioch has been seen as confused, because of supposedly conflicting information provided by the Church Fathers (in particular the two references contained in Eusebius). Without stating the name of his predecessor, Origen describes Ignatius as the second bishop of Antioch (*Hom. vi in Luc.* 1). Eusebius both confirms and expands upon this tradition. First, he states, 'Ignatius was famous as the second bishop at Antioch where Euodius had been the first' (*H.E.* 3.22.1). Later, however, in book three Eusebius still maintains that Ignatius was second to hold episcopal office in Antioch, but provides a more famous predecessor, although not labelling him as 'bishop'. Describing distinguished church leaders in Asia Minor Eusebius writes, 'Ignatius, still a name of note to most men, the second bishop of Antioch received the succession from Peter' (*H.E.* 3.36.1). This tradition, which does not mention Euodius, appears to imply that Ignatius was second in a chain instigated by Peter, although Peter himself is not counted part of that episcopal succession.¹⁴ The *Apostolic Constitutions* likewise refers to Ignatius as bishop of Antioch, but it may in fact envisage a joint episcopacy shared by Euodius and Ignatius, although it is still possible to read the tradition as describing Ignatius as the second bishop of Antioch. Providing succession lists for prominent cities it comments, 'Of Antioch, Euodius, ordained by me, Peter; and Ignatius by Paul' (7.46). The historical value of this tradition is questionable, and it may be more concerned to demonstrate apostolic succession than to represent accurate history. Ehrman comments, 'early tradition holds that he

¹⁴ Later succession lists for Antioch from the fifth century onwards mention Peter as the first bishop, but Eusebius does not designate Peter as bishop of Antioch.

[Ignatius] was second bishop there [Antioch], after Peter (Origen, *Hom. 6 in Luke*) or third, following Peter and Euodius (Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.* 3.22.36 [sic]).¹⁵ This is only partially true. The consistent testimony of early Christian writing is to describe Ignatius as the second bishop of Antioch, although there is some confusion surrounding his predecessor. Euodius is most commonly ascribed this role, but an alternative tradition lists Peter as the predecessor. Modern scholarship has at times tried to harmonize this data by suggesting that in some traditions Ignatius is presented as the third bishop of Antioch after Peter and then Euodius. This formulation, however, does not occur in ancient sources.¹⁶

The date of the seven epistles is related to the period during which Ignatius lived. This remains the case even if the letters are a forgery circulated in his name, since they must be written after the period when the martyrdom of Ignatius appeared imminent. Fixing the date of even Ignatius' death is not, however, as straightforward as is often assumed. In the context of events during Trajan's reign in the third book of his *Ecclesiastical History*, Eusebius places the description of the martyrdom of Ignatius. However, unlike the notice about Clement of Rome's death, 'In the third year of the aforementioned emperor [i.e. Trajan], Clement ... departed this life' (*H.E.* 3.34.1), there is no temporal notice of when the martyrdom of Ignatius took place. For this reason it may be the case that Eusebius has decided to locate the tradition he had concerning Ignatius during the Trajanic period, without any external indication of the date. In his *Chronicon* Eusebius provides further information about the date of martyrdom. In that work, under the entry for the tenth year of Trajan's reign (i.e. AD 107), Eusebius lists three undated events, the martyrdom of Simon the son of Cleopas, the martyrdom of Ignatius and the persecution in Bithynia.¹⁷ Having referenced

¹⁵ Ehrman, *The Apostolic Fathers*, vol. I, 203-204.

¹⁶ Lake baldly states, 'He was the third bishop in Antioch in Syria' and in a footnote asserts, 'According to tradition Peter was first and Euodius the second (*Hist. Eccl.* 3.22).' Kirsopp Lake, *The Apostolic Fathers*, vol. I (LCL 24; Cambridge, MA: HUP, 1912), 166. Similarly the *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* comments that 'Acc. to Origen he [Ignatius] was the second Bp. of Antioch, the successor of St Peter, acc. to Eusebius he was the third, following St Peter's successor Euodius, c.69.' (822).

¹⁷ Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers: Part 2 Ignatius and Polycarp*, vol. 2, 449.

Trajan at the beginning of the undated paragraph inserted after the data for the tenth year of the reign, Eusebius specifically states 'Itidem Antiochensium episcopus [Ignatius] martyrium passus est' (Eusebius, *Chron.*). Thus, this undated entry appears to be the basis on which subsequent writers have affirmed that the martyrdom of Ignatius took place in the tenth (or ninth¹⁸) year of Trajan's reign. The accuracy of the *Chronicon* in relation to dates surrounding the life of Ignatius is called into further question by the fact that it places his elevation to episcopal office in Antioch in the year AD 69. This seems to be improbably early. Lightfoot himself, while maintaining that the martyrdom occurred during Trajan's reign, preferred the slightly later date of 'within a few years of AD 110, before or after'.¹⁹ This left open the possibility that the Eusebian date was still correct.

The problem with a date in the first or second decade of the second century is not based on doubts about the occurrence of martyrdoms during this period; they undoubtedly took place and are well documented. Rather, it is the theological character of the very writings of Ignatius which seem somewhat discordant with what is known of early second-century Christian writers. If the year AD 110 were indeed the correct date, it needs to be remembered that some of the New Testament writings would be roughly contemporaneous. The Gospel of Luke may have been written only twenty years earlier,²⁰ the Pastorals towards the end of the first century, the Johannine epistles around the start of the second century, and 2 Peter maybe as late as AD 130. The problem is that the ecclesial concepts so prominent in the seven epistles of Ignatius are

noticeable by their absence from these supposedly contemporary Christian writings. The later New Testament writings and the Epistles of Ignatius appear to inhabit different thought worlds and very different stages in the development of church order in Christian congregations. The same problem was highlighted by Lightfoot (although he did not explore the implications) in relation to the corpus of the Apostolic Fathers. Commenting specifically on 1 *Clement* he wrote,

The transition from the first to the second Apostolic father – from Clement to Ignatius is rapid; but, when it is made, we are conscious what a wide chasm has been passed. The interval of time indeed is not great. Twenty years at the outside separate the Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians from the letters of Ignatius. But these two decades were a period of exceptionally rapid progress in the career of the Church – in the outward extension of the Christian society, in its internal organization and government, in the progress and ramifications of theological opinion.²¹

Yet the writings of the New Testament that may well date from the reign of Trajan show that the developments evidenced in the epistles of Ignatius had not touched upon all strands of Christianity in the first quarter of the second century. How is this to be accounted for?

Two basic explanations are possible. Either Ignatius represented a localized ecclesial development in the Antiochene Church, being himself the harbinger of monarchical episcopacy and a host of other theological innovations, or his epistles have been misdated. Both of these alternatives have had proponents, although the first option is more often than not supported *de facto* rather than actually being overtly stated. Disquiet over the suitability of placing the theological ideas of Ignatius in the context of the early second century has led to a number of alternative proposals. It has been argued that although the historical Ignatius may have lived at the beginning of the second century, the letters associated with his name were forged at a later period in that century. Rius-Camps maintains that only four of the letters are genuine,²² while Joly

¹⁸ See the *Chronicon Paschale* and *Brit. Mus. Add. 14* 642.

¹⁹ Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers: Part 2 Ignatius and Polycarp*, vol. 1, 30.

²⁰ In fact Raymond Brown uses what he takes to be the secure date of the Ignatian corpus to date Luke's Gospel. He states, 'a date no later than 100 is indicated. The Gospel's symbolic interest in Jerusalem as a Christian center does not match the outlook of 2-d century Christian literature. For Asia Minor in particular and specifically for Ephesus the writer of Acts seems to know only a church structure of presbyters (Acts 14:23; 20:17). There is no sign of the developed pattern of having one bishop in each church so clearly attested by Ignatius for that area in the decade before 110.' R. E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 273–74.

²¹ Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers: Part 2 Ignatius and Polycarp*, vol. 1, 1.

²² J. Rius-Camps, *The Four Authentic Letters of Ignatius* (Rome: Pontificium Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1980).

suggests that the whole collection of seven epistles is a fabrication.²³ Alternatively, Hübner argues that the epistles show knowledge of texts that were not composed before the mid second century and, moreover, that they suppose a more developed form of Gnosticism which is not consistent with a date in the first few decades of the second century.²⁴ The arguments put forward by Hübner have been expanded and developed by his student Thomas Lechner.²⁵ Basically Lechner's study falls into two major sections. In the first he demonstrates the extremely weak foundation upon which the traditional dating of Ignatius' letters is based. The second part seeks to demonstrate the 'Hymn of the Star' (*I.Eph.* 19) is a parody of Valentinian myth. Hence he argues that some of the polemic contained in the epistles is an intentional attack on Valentinian gnosis. Consequently he dates the epistle to the period between 165 and 175 CE.²⁶

So far the scholarly consensus has not shifted to any marked extent because of the arguments mounted by Lechner and Hübner. In part this is due to the fact that the points of literary contact between the epistles of Ignatius and Valentinian writings appear weak. The majority of scholars retain the traditional dating proposed by Lightfoot of around AD 110, without showing awareness of the flimsy basis by which it is established. It remains possible to maintain Ignatian authorship of the seven genuine epistles, but to recognize that the date of their composition could be significantly later than usually assumed. A *terminus ad quem* can be established if the epistles are from Ignatius' own hand, for the letters would pre-date the martyrdom of Polycarp (a problematic date in itself, with opinion encompassing the range of dates from 155–77 CE, with most scholars favouring the earlier period). Therefore, taking a cue from Eusebius' uncertainty about the dating of information concerning Ignatius in his *Chronicon*, one may conclude that the letters

could have been composed at some stage during the second quarter of the second century, i.e. 125–50 CE, roughly corresponding to Hadrian's reign or the earlier part of Antoninus Pius' period in office.

3. Opponents

In his discussion of the role of the bishop, one issue that has been underlying the topic was the need for Ignatius to defend the development of episcopal leadership in the face of opposition to such a structure. The identity of such opponents can be traced through the information Ignatius provides in his epistles. One of the fundamental issues that has arisen in scholarly debate is the number of groups of opponents to which Ignatius refers.²⁷ The problem revolves around the different ways in which Ignatius describes his detractors in the individual letters. In the epistle to the *Ephesians* there is a generalized description against heresy, although the addressees are commended for 'speaking truthfully about Jesus Christ' (*I.Eph.* 6.3) and Ignatius describes Christ as 'both fleshly and spiritual, born and unborn, God come in the flesh, true life in death, from both Mary and God, first subject to suffering and then beyond suffering' (*I.Eph.* 7.2). When writing to the Trallians and describing similar tendencies, he is more explicit concerning the description of the opponents. 'But if, as some who are atheists – that is, unbelievers – say, that he only appeared [δοκεῖν] to suffer, it is they who are the appearance [δοκεῖν]' (*I.Trall.* 10.1). The same critique of heretics emerges in addressing the Smyrneans. This refutes the notion that Jesus Christ accomplished his redemptive work in appearance or semblance alone (*I.Smyr.* 4.2), and Ignatius continues by declaring,

For how does anyone benefit me if he praises me but blasphemes my Lord, not confessing that he bore flesh? The one who refuses to say this denies him completely, as one who bears a corpse. But I see no point in recording their disbelieving names. I do not even want to recall them, until they repent concerning the Passion, which is our resurrection. (*I.Smyr.* 5.2–3)

Employing language reminiscent of that used against the secessionists by the author of 1 John, Ignatius levels against his opponents the charge that they

²³ R. Joly, *Le Dossier d'Ignace d'Antioch* (Université libre Bruxelles, Faculté de Philosophie et lettres 69; Bruxelles: Éditions de l'université de Bruxelles, 1979).

²⁴ R. M. Hübner, 'Thesen zur Echtheit und Datierung der sieben Briefe des Ignatius Antiochen', *ZAC* 1 (1997), 44–72.

²⁵ T. Lechner, *Ignatius adversus Valentinianos? Chronologische und theologiegeschichtliche Studien zu Briefen des Ignatius von Antiochen* (VCSupp 47; Leiden: Brill, 1999).

²⁶ Lechner, *Ignatius adversus Valentinianos?*, 306–307.

²⁷ For a brief summary see C. N. Jefford, *The Apostolic Fathers: An Introduction* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 61–62.

likewise deny the reality of Christ appearing and suffering in the flesh. Trebilco, specifically discussing the situation Ignatius addressed in Ephesus, suggests that 'what Ignatius says about the *current* threat of docetists as he writes shows that the Johannine secessionists are still in town, have developed their teaching further in the docetic direction, and that Ignatius is concerned that they might continue to gain a hearing'.²⁸ Furthermore, the suggestion that the docetists were actively engaged in missionizing is supported by the presence of similar teachings among the Smyrneans and Trallians, as well as by the observation that those described in 1 John with such Christological views had gone into the world and 'the world listens to them' (1 John 4:5).²⁹ For Ignatius, those who hold such beliefs are blasphemers and have no hope in partaking in the resurrection since by denying the physical suffering of Christ they deny the efficacy of the redemptive act.³⁰

When one looks at the description of opposition or false beliefs in the other Ignatian epistles a noticeably different characterization emerges. Most fully in the epistle to the *Magnesians* (*I. Mag.* 8.1-10.3) the tendency towards maintaining Jewish practices is rebutted in vitriolic terms. Thus, Ignatius declares in tones of obvious exasperation,

It is outlandish to proclaim Jesus Christ and practice Judaism. For Christianity did not believe in Judaism, but Judaism in Christianity – in which every tongue that believes in God has been gathered together. (*I. Mag.* 10.3)

In specific terms, the practices Ignatius criticizes include living by 'false opinions and old fables' (*I. Mag.* 8.1) and observing the Sabbath rather than 'living according to the Lord's day' (*I. Mag.* 9.1). The critique resembles that contained in the Pastoral Epistles, where Timothy is charged to instruct the congregation to 'have nothing to do with godless and foolish myths' (1 Tim 4:7) and Titus is instructed to rebuke those who 'give heed to Jewish myths' (Titus 1:14).³¹ The correspondence

between the Pastorals and Ignatius' description of his opponents here is much less explicit than that which exists between Ignatius' docetic adversaries and the Johannine secessionists. For this reason Schoedel's caution is well heeded that 'we cannot assume that the situation in the Pastorals and in Ignatius was the same simply because they share a common polemical vocabulary'.³² The critique of Judaism presented by Ignatius also occurs in the letter to the *Philadelphians*, although the reference is far more fleeting (*I. Phil.* 6.1-2). It includes the rather enigmatic advice that, 'if anybody should interpret Judaism to you, do not listen to him. For it is better to hear Christianity from a man who is circumcised than Judaism from one who is uncircumcised' (*I. Phil.* 6.1). The possibility of hearing Judaism from an uncircumcised person, suggests that those whom Ignatius describes are not ethnic Jews or even proselytes to the Jewish faith, but rather certain Gentiles who held to a form of Christian faith that promoted Jewish observance without the necessity of circumcision. Here Grant is surely incorrect when he states that 'Ignatius seems to have Gentile converts to Jewish Christianity in mind, not unlike those whom Paul describes as not keeping the law but advocating circumcision' (Gal 6:13).³³ Rather Schoedel's explanation is far more plausible: 'no one was actually recommending circumcision, and the issue had probably been injected into the debate under the influence of Pauline models'.³⁴

The confrontation of both Jewish and docetic tendencies has led to a protracted debate concerning the number of groups of opponents that Ignatius confronted. Lightfoot argued for a close connection between these two tendencies and saw the Judaizing aspect that Ignatius rebuts as closely aligned to the false teaching under discussion in Colossians. Hence, he suggested that the 'old fables' referenced by Ignatius were 'probably myths relating to cosmology and angelology'³⁵ as may be the case in Col 2.18. This is then characterized as a gnosticizing form of Judaism which embraces docetic tendencies. Lightfoot then announces that 'the foe in question

²⁸ P. Trebilco, *The Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 695.

²⁹ For a fuller explanation of this suggestion see Trebilco, *The Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius*, 695.

³⁰ See *I. Smyr.* 5.2-3.

³¹ For an extended discussion see Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers: Part 2 Ignatius and Polycarp*, vol. 2, 124.

³² Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 119.

³³ R. M. Grant, *The Apostolic Fathers: Vol. IV Ignatius of Antioch* (Camden, NJ: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1966), 103.

³⁴ Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 203.

³⁵ Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers: Part 2 Ignatius and Polycarp*, vol. 2, 124.

therefore was Doceto-judaism.³⁶ Others have not been as convinced by the connections that Lightfoot draws, nor even persuaded that 'Doceto-judaism' was a category that had any real existence. Bauer argued that part of the confusion was due to the tendency of Ignatius to collapse differentiated categories into a closer association for the sake of polemic.³⁷ Similarly, Schoedel argues for the existence of two discrete groups, but sees Ignatius as intentionally confusing categories. He states, 'It is my view that in *Mag.* 8–10 Ignatius is speaking about the observance of Jewish customs (based on what he regards as a mistaken approach to Scripture); that such Judaizing was not characterized by docetic thinking; and that the link between Judaizing and docetism was invented by Ignatius.'³⁸

Recently, the alternative views of either a single group or two separate opposing parties have again been articulated. Marshall employs Jewish speculation concerning angels evidenced by the Qumran scrolls to argue that an angelomorphic Christology was part of the belief system of Ignatius' opponents. He concludes that, 'the people against whom Ignatius warns his readers may be understood as a single group of Jewish Christians who understand Jesus to be an angel'.³⁹ It is then suggested that the stress Ignatius places on the corporeal reality of the sufferings of Christ was intended as a counter to such 'angel christologies', which by their very nature stood in opposition to the affirmation of Christ suffering in the flesh.⁴⁰ By contrast, Myllykoski distinguishes two groups of opponents. The first, evidenced in correspondence to the Philadelphian and Magnesians communities, is a Jewish Christian group which, according to Myllykoski, views 'Jesus as the true and last high priest and prophet in a long chain of these anointed ones in the history of Israel'.⁴¹ However, what is

new in his treatment is the way he characterizes the other group of opponents. The term 'docetic' is rejected as an inadequate description of this group. This is not only because 'the idea of Docetism is obscure',⁴² but more significantly since this group of opponents 'did not carry the idea so far as to assume that the Roman soldiers crucified a ghost or a phantasma'.⁴³ It may be fairly asked if any precision is available in determining what this group of opponents believed. Moreover, just because the term is obscure from a modern perspective, it does not follow that it may not have been clear to ancient audiences, although admittedly in the heresiological controversies terms are cast at opponents more for impact than accuracy. Instead Myllykoski states that '[t]he heresy opposed in *Ephesians*, *Trallians*, and *Smyrneans*, in turn, denied the incarnation, virgin birth, true bodily suffering and resurrection of Jesus (particularly in *Trallians* 9–10 and *Smyrneans* 1–4)'.⁴⁴ This list seems to present key aspects of what many scholars would understand the term 'docetic' to represent, even if this does not encompass the full-blown development of a system of docetic and gnostic ideas that separated the highest form of divinity from the taint of the material realm. Notwithstanding reservation about the way in which Myllykoski describes the second group,⁴⁵ his arguments for maintaining a distinction between two groups appear to be the more compelling way to read the texts. This is primarily because on the whole Ignatius treats these heresies in distinct letters, even if he occasionally uses similar language to lambaste those whom he labels as heretics.

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³⁸ Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 118.

³⁹ J. W. Marshall, 'The Objects of Ignatius' Wrath and Jewish Angelic Mediators', *JEH* (2005), 17–18.

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⁴² Myllykoski, 'Wild Beasts and Rabid Dogs: The Riddle of the Heretics in the Letters of Ignatius', 367.

⁴³ Myllykoski, 'Wild Beasts and Rabid Dogs: The Riddle of the Heretics in the Letters of Ignatius', 367.

⁴⁴ Myllykoski, 'Wild Beasts and Rabid Dogs: The Riddle of the Heretics in the Letters of Ignatius', 373.

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TOURING THE HOLY LAND

Dagmar Winter, *In the Footsteps of Jesus* (London: Epworth, 2005. £7.99. pp. ix + 130. ISBN 0-7162-0581-5).

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This work is for a popular audience and simulates a Holy Land tour where the participants reflect a wide variety of backgrounds from theologically conservative to agnostic. The tour guide, Julia, performs the role of explaining each of the sites visited and communicates how most scholars view the event and its background in question. This work is written in a very accessible style. Each chapter is quite short. Among the locales covered are Bethlehem, the Jordan River and wilderness, Galilee, Capernaum, the Sea of Galilee, the locale associated with the Sermon on the Mount, and Jerusalem where a discussion of parables emerges, as well as a discussion of the issues for Jerusalem as tied to the passion and resurrection.

The book serves well as an introduction to basic views about Jesus as seen by centrist scholarship. The tone of the work is to show how people of different backgrounds can discuss Jesus, even at points to agree to disagree. Each chapter ends with questions for discussion, making the work a nice text for a discussion group or Sunday school. There is a bibliography at the end. The one problem with it is that the selection is too limited in viewpoint to really help readers appreciate why differing views about Jesus exist.

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