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Not of the Father's Planting

Ignatius of Antioch and His Opponents

**Ritva H. Williams
Student #158186
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**"Not of the Father's Planting"
Ignatius of Antioch and His Opponents**

**submitted by Ritva H. Williams
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts**

Thesis Supervisor

Chair, Department of Religion

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12 May 1993

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ABSTRACT

In his letters to the churches of Asia Minor Ignatius of Antioch condemns certain individuals and groups. The identity, number and location of these individuals is the question to be answered. The paper begins with a reconstruction of the socio-historical situation out of which Ignatius emerges and which he addresses. A modified inductive and genre-sensitive analysis of the letters reveals that he is referring to three different groups - docetists, judaizers and travelling teachers - present in the Christian communities of Asia Minor. A comparison with other contemporary writings from this region confirms that such groups were indeed active at this time. The perspective of Berger and Luckmann's sociology of knowledge is brought to bear on Ignatius' treatment of and responses to these opponents. These are seen as an attempt to elaborate a way of explaining, identifying and dealing with deviant forms of Christianity.

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INTRODUCTION

Among the very few Christian documents to have survived from the early second century are seven letters written by one "Ignatius also called Theophorus."¹ While en route to his execution in Rome this bishop from Antioch in Syria² wrote to five Christian communities and one individual in Asia Minor, and the church in Rome. Although the mists of time and the aggrandizements of popular legend have effectively obscured the historical circumstances in which Ignatius lived and died,³ his letters have been described as a "mine of information" about the early church.⁴ Among the issues which have intrigued scholars is the question of the identity, number and location of the bishop's "opponents."

This essay seeks to bring some new perspectives to bear on this discussion of the opponents. Principles developed within the discipline of social history will guide the reconstruction of the socio-historical milieu within which Ignatius and his adversaries are situated. The identity, number and location of the opponents will be determined by a

¹. *Eph* inscr., *Mg* inscr., *Tr* inscr., *Rom* inscr., *Phd* inscr., *Sm* inscr., *Pol* inscr.

². *Rom* 2.2, 9.1, 10.2; *Phd* 10.1; *Sm* 11.1; *Pol* 7.1; *Eph* 21.2; *Mg* 14.1; *Tr* 13.1

³. Lightfoot, J.B, The Apostolic Fathers, Part Two, Ignatius and Polycarp, Volume 1 (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson Publishers, 1989 reprint of 1889), pp. 22, 31, 32

⁴. Musurillo, Herbert, "Ignatius of Antioch: Gnostic or Essene? A Note on Recent Work" in Theological Studies 22 (1961) 103-110, p.103

qualified inductive method which respects the coherence and integrity of the letters as literary units. Berger and Luckmann's sociology of knowledge will provide a framework for understanding Ignatius' treatment of and responses to his opponents. Thus, this historical inquiry will be modified by literary and sociological concerns.

The first part of this paper is devoted to reconstructing the socio-historical context of the letters, their author, and their recipients. A preliminary discussion of the date and provenance of the texts will demonstrate that the Syrian bishop is addressing Christians in Asia Minor during the first two decades of the second century C.E. It will be necessary, therefore, to develop a picture of the nascent Syrian Christianity out of which Ignatius emerges, as well as a description of the emergent Christianity of Asia Minor with which he is interacting. These characterizations will be based on literary sources associated with these two regions and which can be dated roughly between the last decade of the first century and the third decade of the second.⁵

This reconstruction will serve two, possibly three, important functions. It will set out, first of all, the broad context of the Ignatian correspondence, enabling the

⁵. Sound historical method admits the use of only contemporary documents and prohibits the use of later texts for reconstructing the history of a given period. See Sumney, Jerry L., Identifying Paul's Opponents, The Question of Method in 2 Corinthians, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), pp.80, 115

reader to orient him or herself within the world of early second century Christianity. This reconstruction will also serve as a guide or standard against which proposals about the identity of the opponents may be tested. Further it may be possible to relate groups referred to in the Ignatian texts with groups found in the larger setting.⁶

The second and central part of this paper seeks to identify, number and locate the opponents. The hypotheses of four major Ignatian scholars concerning this question will be reviewed. Lightfoot finds one group of judaizing-docetists situated in the cities of Asia Minor. Corwin locates two groups whom she refers to as docetists and Essenic judaizers in Syrian Antioch. Schoedel also posits two groups whom he calls docetists and judaizers, but places them in Asia Minor. Trevett asserts that there are three groups of opponents - docetists, judaizers and anti-episcopalian charismatics - in Antioch.

These hypotheses will be tested by a modified inductive analysis of the Ignatian epistles. This study presupposes, first of all, that these letters can be mined for information about "opponents," that is, persons whom Ignatius opposes, criticises or protests against. No hypothesis will be advanced concerning the identity and number of the opponents. It is conceivable that an examination of the letters could result in

⁶. Ibid, pp.83, 116 on the proper function of historical reconstructions

a conclusion that there are no opponents or conversely that there are one or more. The possible location(s) of Ignatius' opponents will be limited to Antioch and the cities of Asia Minor with which he interacted, unless explicitly stated otherwise in the texts themselves.

This examination of the Ignatian texts will be carried out in a genre-sensitive manner. The bishop wrote letters. By definition a letter is not a soliloquy but part of a dialogue.⁷ It is a form of communication ideally suited to addressing a specific situation.⁸ Therefore the letters⁹ will be analyzed individually on the assumption that each is addressing a particular situation which is intelligible to both Ignatius and his readers. Each of the letters to be assessed will be searched for explicit statements about and possible allusions to opponents. Care will be taken not to violate the literary coherence and integrity of the passages being scrutinized.

Only after each letter has been assessed in this way will opponents appearing in one text be related to those mentioned in another. Allowances will be made for the possibility of local distinctions and variations within any broad categories

⁷. Lieu, J.M., The Theology of the Johannine Epistles, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p.1

⁸. Sumney, p.88

⁹. *Romans* will not be included in this assessment, while *Polycarp* will be cited only as it supports *Smyrnaeans*. It is generally agreed that neither of these letters deals explicitly with opponents.

which might be suggested by the evidence. An attempt will be made to locate the opponents within the socio-historical context set out in Part One. Possible links with groups in the broader setting will be explored.

The third and final part of this paper will focus on Ignatius' treatment of and responses to the opponents. These will be presented within the framework of Berger and Luckmann's discussion of conceptual machineries of universe maintenance. Berger and Luckmann note that "historically, the problem of heresy has often been the first impetus for the systematic conceptualization of symbolic universes."¹⁰ In order to deal therapeutically with the problem of heresy or "deviations from the official definition of reality" a social group or organization must develop "a body of knowledge that includes a theory of deviance, a diagnostic apparatus and a conceptual system for the cure of souls."¹¹

This exposition will begin with a description of the nascent Christian mythology¹² which represents the symbolic universe or world view from which the Syrian bishop operates. In seeking to explain the existence of the opponents within the terms of his symbolic universe, Ignatius posits a theory

¹⁰. Berger, Peter, and Luckmann, Thomas, The Social Construction of Reality, A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge, (NY: Penguin Books, 1971), p.124

¹¹. Ibid, p.131

¹². Berger and Luckmann, p.128, mythology refers to a conception of reality that posits the ongoing penetration of the world of everyday experience by sacred forces.

of deviance. The opponents present alternative versions of the Christian world view challenging the bishop to define and justify more precisely the beliefs, practices and structures of the authentic Christian community, as he sees it. These definitions also provide a diagnostic apparatus against which alternative visions of Christianity may be measured. Finally this section will examine how Ignatius proposes to deal with the opponents, his recommended "therapy."

PART I

THE SOCIO-HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The date and provenance of a primary document have been identified as the two main concerns guiding the selection of source materials for reconstructing its socio-historical context. Movements and ideas change over time,¹ and tend to vary from one geographical location to another.² Contemporary sources originating in the same geographical area are, therefore, the most appropriate bases for reconstructing the historical situation of a document or collection of writings.³ Thus, the date and provenance of Ignatius' letters must be ascertained prior to setting out their socio-historical context.

Date and Provenance of the Letters

Internal Evidence

At the beginning of each epistle, the writer identifies himself as "Ignatius, also called Theophorus". He claims to be the "bishop" and "shepherd" of the Syrian church (*Rom* 2.2, 9.1) and expresses a particular concern for the Christian community at Antioch (*Phd* 10.1; *Sm* 11.1; *Pol* 7.1). Ignatius

¹. Sumney, p.78

². Ibid, p.79; Cf. Johnson, Sherman E., "Asia Minor and Early Christianity" in J. Neusner (ed) Christianity, Judaism and Other Greco-Roman Cults, Part 2, (Leiden: Brill, 1975:77-172), p.144, points out local cultural influences on Christianity in Asia Minor

³. Sumney, p.80

describes himself as a prisoner who is on his way to "fighting with beasts in Rome" (*Eph* 1.2).⁴ How he came to be in this situation is not revealed.⁵

Each epistle also states explicitly to whom it was addressed and from where it was sent. At Smyrna Ignatius composed letters to the churches of Ephesus, Magnesia and Tralles in Asia, as well as the one to Rome.⁶ Those intended for the churches of Philadelphia and Smyrna, and for Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, were written from Troas.⁷ The letter to Rome is dated "the calends of September", that is, August 24 (*Rom* 10.2). No indication of a year is given.

During his stay at Smyrna Ignatius not only wrote a number of letters but appears to have become well acquainted with a number of local Christians (*Sm* 12.2; *Po'* 8.2). In addition he was visited there by delegations consisting of bishops and other leading members from the churches at Ephesus (1.3-2.1), Magnesia (2) and Tralles (1.1). Ignatius appears to

⁴. Cf. *Eph* 12.1, 21.2; *Mag* 1.2, 12; *Tr* 3.3, 5.2, 12.2; *Rom* 4.3, 5.1; *Phd* 5.1; *Sm* 4.2, 11.2

⁵. Lightfoot, pp.22, 32. Lack of knowledge of the bishop's personal circumstances has not prevented speculation. See, for example, Richardson, C.C. Early Christian Fathers, (NY: The Macmillan Company, 1937), p.75; Hammond Bammel, C.P., "Ignatian Problems" in Journal of Theological Studies 33, (1982:62-97), pp.78-79; Trevett, C., "Ignatius 'To the Romans' and I Clement LIV-LVI" in Vigilae Christianae, 43, (1989:35-52), pp.36-48

⁶. See Inscriptions to *Eph*, *Mag*, *Tr*, and *Rom*; *Eph* 21.1; *Mag* 15; *Tr* 1.1; 12.1; *Rom* 10.1

⁷. See Inscriptions to *Phd*, *Sm*, and *Pol*; *Phd* 11.2; *Sm* 12.1; *Pol* 8.1

have visited and spoken with Christians in the city of Philadelphia (6.3-8.2), as did Philo from Cilicia and Rheus Agathopus from Syria who later joined him at Troas (*Phd* 11.1).

On the basis of internal evidence then, it is possible to determine that the writer is a Syrian Christian who appears to be associated with the church at Antioch. While en route to his execution in Rome, he meets with and converses with a number of Christians in the cities of Asia Minor. To these same Christians he writes six of his seven letters. The reconstruction of the socio-historical context of the letters must, therefore, include both the situation from which Ignatius emerges (Syrian Christianity) and the situation with which he is interacting (Christianity in Asia Minor). Dating these documents must be done on the basis of external evidence since the Syrian bishop does not date his writings.

External Evidence

The earliest witness to Ignatius and his letters is Polycarp (ca. 69-155 C.E.), bishop of Smyrna. In his letter to the church at Philippi in Macedonia Polycarp refers to Ignatius three times, once indirectly and twice by name (*Phil*.1.1; 9.1; 13.1). Polycarp states that he had received letters from Ignatius and had others on hand which he was sending along to Philippi (*Phil*.13.2). The date of Polycarp's *Philippians*, however, can only be determined by reference to

Ignatius,⁸ and so is of no assistance in dating the Ignatian correspondence.

After Polycarp, scholars list Irenaeus (ca.130-200), Origen (ca. 185-245) and Eusebius (ca. 260-340) as the main witnesses to Ignatius.⁹ Of these witnesses, it is only Eusebius who suggests a specific date for the Ignatian letters.¹⁰ He places Ignatius' martyrdom in the same time frame as that of Simon bar Cleopas in Jerusalem and the condemnation of Christians in Bithynia by Pliny Secundus, events that he associates with the tenth year of Trajan's reign, that is, 107/108 C.E.¹¹

Reliance on Eusebius' dates may be problematic for a number of reasons. According to Eusebius' own account, he is writing some two hundred years after the events which he is chronicling. Therefore, he is in no way "roughly contemporary" with Ignatius. Also, Eusebius is an isolated witness whose

⁸. Schoedel, W.R. "Polycarp" in R.M. Grant (ed), The Apostolic Fathers, Volume 5, (Camden, NJ: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1969), p.4

⁹. Harrison, P.N., Polycarp's Two Epistles to the Philippians, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1936), p.209; Schoedel, Ignatius of Antioch, p.1

¹⁰. An even later tradition, dating to the sixth century, associates Ignatius' arrest and condemnation with the earthquake which struck Antioch on December 13, 115. See Trevett, Ignatius and His Opponents, p.47; Downey G., A History of Antioch in Syria, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961) pp.292-293.

¹¹. Harrison, pp.210-212

sources are unavailable for corroboration.¹² His evidence must therefore be used with caution.

The dates which Eusebius suggests are themselves less than precise. For example, it is known that Pliny was governor of Bithynia between the years 110-113.¹³ His correspondence with Trajan concerning measures to be taken against Christians is dated to 112.¹⁴ On the other hand, Eusebius is substantially correct in associating the events in Bithynia with the reign of Trajan. He may, conceivably, be right in placing Ignatius within the same time frame. In the absence of any other compelling evidence, this essay will work with the scholarly consensus which places Ignatius within the first two decades of the second century (100-118).¹⁵

Ignatius is, therefore, a Syrian Christian who engages in both face-to-face and epistolary dialogues with Christians living in Asia Minor during the first two decades of the second century. Any reconstruction of the socio-historical context of Ignatius' letters must, therefore, take into

¹². Harrison, p.217

¹³. Trevett, Ignatius and His Opponents, p.49

¹⁴. Harrison, p.226

¹⁵. Schoedel, Ignatius of Antioch, pp.4-5; A discussion of the three main challenges to this consensus is beyond the scope of this essay. For an assessment of the theses put forward by Weijenbourg, Rius-Camps and Joly I refer the reader to (1) Schoedel, Ignatius of Antioch, pp.5-6, (2) Schoedel, W.R., "Are the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch Authentic?" in Religious Studies Review 6 (1980), pp.196-200; (3) Hammond Bammel, "Ignatian Problems."

account both Syria and Asia Minor. This requires in effect two reconstructions using documents which are roughly contemporary with Ignatius, that is, which can be dated between 90 and 130.

Ignatius' Contemporaries in Antioch and Syria

Matthew

The Gospel according to Matthew is commonly dated between the years 85-110.¹⁶ Although its place of origin cannot be determined with certainty current scholarly opinion favours Galilee or Syria.¹⁷ Behind Matthew's gospel stands a Christian community with a rich Jewish heritage.¹⁸ Jesus is presented in this gospel as the one who fulfils the prophecies of the Hebrew Bible.¹⁹ The primacy of the Law, as interpreted by Jesus, is affirmed (5:1-8:1, especially 5:17-19). Concern is expressed for fulfilling Jewish customs (15:15; 17:24-27; 18:21).²⁰

On the other hand, Matthew contains anti-Jewish

¹⁶. Freed, Edwin D., The New Testament, A Critical Introduction, (Belmont, Ca.: Wadsworth Publishing Company), 1986, p.118

¹⁷. White, L.M., "Crisis Management and Boundary Maintenance: The Social Location of the Matthean Community," pp.214, 229-237; and Segal, A.F., "Matthew's Jewish Voice," pp.19, 26-30 in D.L. Balch (ed), Social History of the Matthean Community: Cross-Disciplinary Approaches, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991:211-247 and 3-37)

¹⁸. Freed, p.117; Segal, p.5

¹⁹. Mt.1:22-23; 2:5-6; 2:15; 2:16-18; 2:23; 4:12-16; 13:35; 21:4-5; 27:9-10

²⁰. Segal, pp.7, 10

traditions as well. The Jews, or some part of the Jewish community, is held responsible for the death of Jesus (27:20-25; 21:33-46). The evangelist speaks of Christians being flogged in "their synagogues", being dragged before governors and kings, and being persecuted from town to town (10:17-18, 23). Jesus is depicted as teaching in "their synagogues" (4:23; 9:35) and condemning the practices of the "scribes and Pharisees" whom he calls "hypocrites".²¹ These elements are thought to reflect a history of social conflict between Matthew's community and emerging rabbinic Judaism.²²

In the period when the gospel reached its final form, the majority of Christians in the Matthean community were probably non-Jews.²³ They certainly were not members of the synagogue, but constituted a separate organization which they called an *ἐκκλησία* (16:18-19; 18:18). To what extent Jewish customs were actually practised within this community is difficult to determine. The dietary laws and Sabbath observance do not appear to have been mandatory (15:10-11; 12:1-8).²⁴ Jewish practices of prayer and fasting are eschewed (6:5,16). The

²¹. 6:2,5,16; 9:13; 12:7; 15:12-14,17-20; chapter 23

²². Segal, p.23; White, p.238; Sanders, Jack T., "Jewish Christianity in Antioch before the Time of Hadrian: Where does the Identity Lie?" in Society of Biblical Literature, 1992 Seminar Papers, (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992:346-361), p.354

²³. White, p.218, Sanders, p.354

²⁴. Sanders, p.358, argues that Matthew's silence concerning circumstance signifies that these Christians probably continued the practice of circumcision.

Christian alternatives are to be carried out privately, without any public display, suggesting a past, or perhaps, continuing need to avoid giving offence to Jewish neighbours.²⁵

Chapter 10 has been said to contain "a social handbook for what a proper Matthean disciple should look like."²⁶ The model disciple is here depicted as an itinerant preacher and healer who seeks no remuneration, travels without baggage of any sort, and lives by charity (10:7-11). Receiving and welcoming such prophets and righteous ones is considered a meritorious action (10:40-42). Nevertheless, the Matthean community is to be alert for false prophets (7:15), who will be recognizable by their "fruits" (7:16-20). For many false prophets will arise and try to lead astray even the elect with their signs and demonstrations of power (24:11,24; 7:21-27).

Matthew also manifests a special interest in teaching. This is presented as Jesus' most characteristic and prominent activity.²⁷ The great commission bequeathed to the Matthean community is that of making disciples of all nations and teaching them Jesus' commandments (28:19-20). "Prophets, sages and scribes" (23:34) carry out this work. The scribe trained

²⁵. Draper, J.A., "Christian Self-Definition against the 'Hypocrites' in Didache 8" in Society of Biblical Literature, 1992 Seminar Papers, (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992:362-378), pp.368, 372-373, posits both conciliatory and theological motives at work here.

²⁶. Segal, p.5

²⁷. Mt.4:23; 5:2; 7:28-29; 9:11; 11:1; 13:3,54; 19:16; 21:23

for the kingdom of heaven (13:52) has been described as Matthew's ideal community leader.²⁸

Matthew's is the only gospel to use the word *ἐκκλησία* - congregation or church - and is thought to reflect a concern for the institutional organization of the Christian community.²⁹ In 18:15-20 instructions are given for dealing with sin within the local community. In these matters the congregation appears to be the ultimate authority: whatever it binds on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever it looses on earth will be loosed in heaven (18:18). This power is also bestowed upon Peter, the gospel's exemplary disciple, upon whom the *ἐκκλησία*, or church, will be built (16:18-19).

This elevation of Peter to the position of chief authority for the Christian community is curiously offset by warnings not to behave like the "scribes and Pharisees" whose dress is religiously ostentatious (23:5), and who seek places of honour at banquets and the best seats in the assembly (23:6). Members of the community are not to be called "rabbi", "father", or "teacher", for they are all brothers and sisters, children of the one Father in heaven and disciples of the one teacher, Jesus (23:8-10). These admonitions are thought to provide tacit acknowledgement that there were individuals who were actually claiming such honours or who might potentially

²⁸. Hann, R.R., "Judaism and Jewish Christianity in Antioch: Charisma and Conflict in the First Century" in The Journal of Religious History, 14 (1987:341-360), p.350

²⁹. Brown & Meier, Antioch and Rome, p.66; Hann, p.350

be so honoured.³⁰

Matthew has been described as representative of a "moderately conservative Jewish/Gentile Christianity."³¹ The Matthean community is noted for its reverence of its Jewish heritage and its high regard for Jewish traditions, in their Christian interpretation. At the same time it sees its mission as that of baptizing and teaching all nations. Teachers and wandering prophets appear to be especially revered in the Matthean community. There is a need to be wary of false prophets. Those promoting or desiring special titles and honours are criticized.

Didache

The document titled The Teaching of the Lord to the Gentiles by the Twelve Apostles, commonly referred to as the *Didache*, is thought to have been produced in Syria or Egypt.³² Its influence is evident in such later Syrian compositions as the *Didascalia* and the *Apostolic Constitutions*.³³ Dates for its composition range from 70-110.³⁴ Because of the *Didache's*

³⁰. Trevett, C., Ignatius and his Opponents..., (University of Sheffield, unpublished PhD dissertation, 1980), p.374; Brown & Meier, p.70

³¹. Brown & Meier, pp.3-4

³². Draper, p.362; Streeter, B.H., The Primitive Church Studied with Special Reference to the Origins of the Christian Ministry, (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1930), p.279

³³. Streeter, p.285

³⁴. Trevett, Ignatius and His Opponents..., p.375; Streeter, p.98, suggests 90 C.E.; Draper, p.362, opts for 100 C.E.

affinities with Matthew, scholars have suggested that its author utilized either the gospel itself or the traditions which stand behind it.³⁵ It is considered by some to stand midway between Matthew and Ignatius on the Syrian scene.³⁶ An alternative proposition is that the *Didache* and Matthew developed together within the same community, with the gospel eventually replacing the earlier teaching document.³⁷

The *Didache* is the product of an originally Jewish Christian community now engaged in converting Gentiles. The first six chapters consist of moral teaching set out as the "two ways" of life and death. This catechetical instruction takes the form of an condemnation of those aspects of Greco-Roman culture which converts are to shun. Included are exhortations against sexual license, homosexuality and pederasty, magical practices, astrology and omens, abortion and infanticide.³⁸ This section concludes (6.1-2) by urging the convert to take on the "whole yoke of the Lord" - the Torah - if he or she is able. If not, then, as much of the dietary regulations as possible, and at the very least to abstain from meat sacrificed to idols (ch.6; cf. Acts

³⁵. Brown & Meier, pp.81-82; Streeter, p.280, Trevett, Ignatius and His Opponents..., p.375.

³⁶. Trevett, Ignatius and His Opponents, p.376; Streeter, p.141

³⁷. Draper, p.362

³⁸. Draper, p.365, calls this a Jewish perspective on Greco-Roman society and suggests that the Two Ways material may originate in Jewish proselyte instruction.

15:22,29).³⁹

Instructions concerning baptism, fasting, prayer and the eucharist follow (chapters 7-10). These Gentile converts are urged to fast on Wednesday and Friday, not Monday and Thursday as the "hypocrites" do (8.1). Likewise they are told to pray not like the "hypocrites," but to recite the Lord's prayer three times daily (8.2-3). "Hypocrites" is almost certainly a reference to Pharisaic Jews (cf. Mt 6:2,5,16). These practices are intended to create a public differentiation between the Jewish and Christian communities. Not only are Christians to have different habits of prayer and fasting, the choice of Friday as one of the obligatory fast days prohibits observance of the Jewish sabbath.⁴⁰

The remainder of the *Didache* is given over to advice concerning ministries within the Christian community. Travelling apostles, prophets and teachers appear to be a cause for concern. Teachers are to be received provided they are not perverted and do not teach a different doctrine than that set out in the *Didache*. Apostles are to be received "as the Lord", but they are to be given no more than two days lodging and sufficient bread to see them to their next shelter. An apostle who stays three days and/or asks for money is a false prophet. False prophets can be recognized by their behaviour; they do not practice what they preach.

³⁹. Draper, p.366

⁴⁰. Draper, pp.368-370

True prophets seem to be held in very high regard. They are to be permitted to offer thanksgiving (celebrate the eucharist) as often as they desire (ch.10). When speaking "in the Spirit" the true prophet is not to be tested (ch.11). True prophets who wish to settle in a Christian congregation are to be considered worthy of their food, as are true teachers. The "first fruits" of the Christian's agricultural products, wine, oil, money, clothing and possessions are to be given to the prophets who are the community's "chief priests". If a congregation has no prophet, then the first fruits are to be given to the poor (ch.13).

The *Didache* encourages communities to appoint bishops and deacons "who are meek and not lovers of money". These officers are not to be despised. They perform the service of the prophets and teachers, and stand alongside the prophets and teachers as the community's "honourable" persons (ch.15).

The *Didache* appears to have been written in an era of transition. Dependence on the charismatic ministries of wandering apostles, prophets and teachers is problematic mainly because the system is open to abuse. Two alternatives seem to be available to the churches addressed by the author. Incentives are offered to encourage prophets (and teachers) to take up permanent residence in Christian communities. Other congregations have appointed bishops and deacons who carry out the same functions as prophets and teachers. Although the writer of the *Didache* appears to favour this move, his remarks

suggest that this innovation was not unopposed.⁴¹

Summary

Matthew and *Didache* are the products of a dynamic Christian community, or communities, characterized by change and diversity. Both bear witness, on the one hand, to Syrian Christianity's Jewish roots, and on the other, to its Gentile orientation by the end of the first century. Matthew explicitly seems to place a greater emphasis on the Law, while the *Didache* advocates a more lenient stance. With regard to practices like prayer and fasting the gospel recommends that Christians keep a low profile, while the *Didache* appears to encourage a more aggressive attitude.

Both documents show an appreciation for the itinerant ministries of prophets and teachers, while warning against abuses of these roles. People who seek or adopt special honours associated with leadership are evident in the Matthean community, while appointed officials have taken over the functions of prophets and teachers in some of the communities addressed by the *Didache*. These moves are criticized by Matthew and "despised" by some of the *Didache's* readers.

The *Didache's* injunction against idol meat (cf. Acts 15:22, 29), as well as its support for bishops and deacons suggests that other Christian traditions may have been at work in Syria as well. There were in all likelihood Christian groups from whom there is no extant literature.

⁴¹. Trevett, Ignatius and His Opponents...., p.379

Later Christian writers, for instance, include in their lists of heretics Menander, a Samaritan and disciple of Simon Magus, who was thought to have been active in Antioch at the end of the first century.⁴²

Ignatius' Contemporaries in Asia Minor

There are extant a number of Christian documents addressed to or produced in Asia Minor which are roughly contemporary with the Ignatian letters. Of particular interest are the letters to the seven churches of Asia which comprise the first four chapters of Revelation, the pseudonymous epistle known as I Peter, and the pseudo-Pauline pastoral letters addressed to Timothy and Titus. In addition to these Christian witnesses there is the correspondence between the emperor Trajan and Pliny, governor of Bithynia (ca.110-113). *Revelation*

The Revelation to John (ca.92-96)⁴³ is an apocalyptic account of the end times which draws heavily on Hebrew Bible and Jewish apocalyptic traditions.⁴⁴ It begins with a series of messages addressed to the churches of Asia. Although the seer is aware of Christians being killed (2:13), his primary

⁴². Trevett, Ignatius and His Opponents..., pp.213, 241; Downey, pp.289-290

⁴³. Thompson, L.L., The Book of Revelation, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p.15; Hemer, C. The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia in their Local Setting, (Sheffield: JSOT, 1986), p.5

⁴⁴. Johnson, p.106

concern in these letters is the problem of false prophets (2:2; 2:20).

The church in Ephesus is commended for testing and discerning false apostles, and for "hating the works of the Nicolaitans" (2:2,6). Members of the church at Pergamum are eating idol meat and engaging in immorality (2:14), practices characteristic of the Nicolaitans (2:15). At Thyatira, a woman who calls herself a prophet is also teaching Christians to engage in immorality, to eat idol meat (2:20), and to explore "the deep things of Satan" (2:24), whatever they may be.

It has been suggested that the immorality of which these people are guilty is probably the idolatry resulting from their eating idol meat.⁴⁵ These Christians may have had contacts with the Pauline tradition or with a tradition similar to that of the "strong" at Corinth (I Cor 8).⁴⁶ It is also possible that they may simply have been employed in professions or held positions which required their attendance at various private and public functions at which "idol meat" was served.⁴⁷

At Smyrna and Philadelphia the churches are faced with a different problem. Here Christian communities are being slandered by those "who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan" (2:9; 3:9). Scholars have tried to

⁴⁵. Thompson, p.122

⁴⁶. Thompson, p.123; Cf. Johnson, p.107

⁴⁷. Thompson, p.123

identify these groups with the Jewish communities of Smyrna and Philadelphia.⁴⁸ This assessment, however, seems to go against the basic sense of the text.⁴⁹ It is more likely that they are precisely what the seer describes them to be - people who claim to be Jews but are not - that is, Gentile Christian judaizers.⁵⁰ They may have been affiliated in some way with the synagogue or perhaps may have tried to set themselves up as a "synagogue" congregation separate from the rest of the Christian community.

I Peter

I Peter (ca. 81-117)⁵¹ is a letter addressed to Gentile Christians (1:14,18; 2:10; 4:3) living in the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia (1:1). They are identifiable to their pagan neighbours as Christians because they do not participate in many facets of the cultures in which they live (4:3-4). As a result these Christians are being maligned, reviled and abused (1:6; 2:12; 3:16; 4:14,16).

The writer urges his readers to defend with gentleness

⁴⁸. Thompson, pp.126, 174; Hemer, pp.66-67

⁴⁹. For a more detailed discussion, see Wilson, S.G., "Gentile Judaizers" in New Testament Studies, 38, 1992:605-616, p.613

⁵⁰. Wilson, p.614; Cf. Gaston, L., "Judaism in the Uncircumcised in Ignatius and Related Writers" in S.G. Wilson (ed), Anti-Judaism in Early Christianity, Volume 2, (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1986:33-44), p.43

⁵¹. Freed, p.369; Streeter, p.98

and reverence their Christian beliefs (3:15-16) and to blend into pagan society as much as possible without departing from their Christian beliefs. They are to conduct themselves honourably, accepting the authority of every human institution (2:13). In particular, the authority of the emperor and his governors (2:13-14), of masters over slaves (2:18ff), and of (unbelieving) husbands over their (Christian) wives (3:1-7) is to be upheld.

The writer of I Peter identifies himself as an "elder" and assumes that the congregations he addresses are lead by "elders" (5:1). He instructs them to shepherd God's flock, exercising oversight (*ἐπισκοποῦντες*) willingly and eagerly, not for gain (5:2). They are not to lord it over their fellow Christians but are to set an example (5:3). They share in the office of Jesus who is described as the chief shepherd (5:4) and guardian (*ἐπισκοπον*) of souls (2:25).

The Pastoral Epistles

The pseudo-Pauline pastoral epistles (ca.125)⁵² promote the ecclesiastical leadership of married men filling the offices of bishop (I Tm 3:1-7; Tit 1:7-9), deacon (I Tm 8:10-13) and elder (I Tm 5:17-19; Tit 1:5-6). A clear distinction does not appear to exist between the functions of elder and bishop (Tit 1:5-7). The holders of these offices receive

⁵². Meeks, W.A., The Writings of St. Paul, (NY: W.W.Norton & Company, 1972), p.132; Streeter, p.98, favours a date about 100; MacDonald, D.R., The Legend and the Apostle, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983), p.54, 100-140C.E.

compensation (I Tm 5:17-18) and engage in the public reading of scripture, exhortation and teaching (I Tm 4:13; 5:17). The "gift" (*χαρίσμα*) which an official possesses is given "through prophecy and the laying on of hands by the council of elders" (I Tm 4:14).

Directions are given for reducing the number of women included in the order of widows (I Tm 5:3-16). Teaching and having authority over men are forbidden to women, for whom salvation is achieved through childbearing (I Tm 2:9-15; Tit 2:3-5). Slaves are to be obedient to their masters (I Tm 6:1-2; Tit 2:9-10). Christians are to be subject to the secular rulers and authorities (Tit 3:1), and offer prayers on their behalf (I Tm 1:2).

The author of the Pastorals is also concerned about, what he considers to be, false teachings (I Tm 1:3). It is probable that the writer has a variety of opponents in mind.⁵³ These might include Christians with gnosticizing tendencies (I Tm 6:20; 1:4ff; 2 Tm 2:18),⁵⁴ as well as Christians given to judaizing or to wondering about the significance of the Jewish scriptures and traditions for Christians (Tit 1:10, 14; 3:9-10).⁵⁵ Those who make use of myths and old wives tales (I Tm 4:7), forbid marriage and demand abstinence from foods (I Tm 4:2-3), and who "make their way into households and captivate

⁵³. MacDonald, p.56; Johnson, p.113

⁵⁴. MacDonald, p.56

⁵⁵. Ibid

silly women" (2 Tm 3:6-7), ironically, possess many of the characteristics attributed to Paul himself in works such as the Acts of Paul.⁵⁶ Thus, among the false teachers there might even be proponents of a rival Pauline tradition.⁵⁷

Pliny

Pliny was a Roman aristocrat who served as governor of Bithynia and Pontus from 111 to 113 C.E. In the course of carrying out his duties, Pliny was called upon to examine complaints brought by local citizens against some Christians. He tried and executed a number of these. As the investigations proceeded, however, denunciations multiplied and the names of Christians appeared in an anonymous pamphlet. So many people were put at risk that Pliny was forced to put a halt to the trials and seek advice from the emperor, Trajan.⁵⁸

In his letter to the emperor Pliny reveals that he has never attended the trials of Christians before and so is uncertain about the method and limits to be observed in examining and punishing Christians. In particular he asks whether the mere profession of Christianity is punishable or only the crimes associated with it.⁵⁹

Suspicion seems to have revolved around the Christian

⁵⁶. MacDonald, p.57; Johnson, p.113

⁵⁷. Macdonald, p.97

⁵⁸. Greig, C., Pliny, A Selection of His Letters, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), pp.73, 74

⁵⁹. Ibid, p.73

habits of meeting before daybreak, chanting hymns and swearing oaths. Questions appear to have been raised about the type of food used at Christian meetings as well. From the Roman perspective these activities were suggestive of secret conspiracies and possibly involvement in harmful magical practices.⁶⁰ Pliny's investigation had shown that these practices were quite innocuous. The oath turned out to be a commitment by Christians not to steal, rob, commit adultery, break promises or refuse repayment of a loan. The food consumed at their meetings was ordinary stuff and quite harmless.⁶¹

In Pliny's opinion Christianity amounts to no more than a depraved and excessive superstition.⁶² He likens it to an infectious disease which, although it has spread throughout the cities, towns and countryside, could still be stopped. Pliny assures the emperor that in fact things had already begun to improve as a result of the trials and his ban on political associations. People are once again frequenting the temples and reviving religious festivals. The supply of and demand for sacrificial animals has increased. This suggests that economic concerns may have prompted some of

⁶⁰. Benko, Stephen, Pagan Rome and the Early Christians, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), p.10-13

⁶¹. Ibid, p.74

⁶². Ibid, p.6; Greig, p.74

the accusations against Christians.⁶³

In his reply to Pliny, Trajan confirms that those who are named as and proven to be Christians must be punished. The test used by Pliny is appropriate and should be applied even to those suspected of having been Christians in the past. This test required the suspect to invoke the Roman gods, offer wine and incense before the images of the emperor and the gods, and to curse Christ. Trajan instructs Pliny to pardon all who do this. Christians, however, are not to be hunted out, and anonymous pamphlets are inadmissible evidence.⁶⁴

This correspondence between Pliny and Trajan reveals that Christians in Asia Minor came from every social class and included Roman citizens. Among those questioned by Pliny were two female deacons.⁶⁵ In some locales there were a sufficient number of Christians to have an economic impact on the pagan religious establishment. These letters indicate that to be a Christian was indeed a crime punishable by death. Pliny's hesitation and Trajan's reply make it clear, however, that no systematic enforcement of the law was envisaged by the authorities. The persecution of Christians at various times and places in Asia Minor thus appears to have been instigated by local populations.

⁶³. Benko, p.8

⁶⁴. Greig, p.75; Benko, p.7

⁶⁵. Greig, pp.73-74

Summary

These documents indicate two characteristics of Christianity in Asia Minor during this time period. To be a Christian could be at least potentially, and sometimes was actually, fatal. The author of Revelation knew of a Christian who had been killed at Pergamum (2:13). I Peter is concerned mainly with encouraging Christians who are being maligned, reviled and abused by their pagan neighbours. Pliny's official correspondence with Trajan confirms that Christians in Asia Minor were put on trial for charges brought against them by their pagan neighbours, and executed.

Christianity in Asia Minor was also characterized by diversity. Revelation provides evidence for the presence of Christians with Jewish Christian apocalyptic and eschatological expectations, judaizing Gentile Christians, and Christians whose accommodationist stance to pagan society is symbolized by "eating idol meat". I Peter is written to Gentile Christians who are experiencing difficulties with their pagan neighbours precisely because they do not participate in "the things Gentiles like to do". The Pastoral Epistles witness to the continuing influence of the Pauline tradition in Asia Minor, as well as to the possibility of diverging interpretations within a particular stream of Christianity.

Variety is also evident in the organization of Christian communities in Asia Minor. Charismatic figures appear to be

more important in Revelation than in the other documents. The author of Revelation is himself a prophetic visionary who opposes the teachings of other prophets and commends the Ephesian church for its ability to test apostles and discern those who are false. The communities addressed by I Peter are shepherded and overseen (ἐπισκοποῦντες) by elders. The author of the Pastoral Epistles advocates a church order comprised of the offices of bishop, elder and deacon. Although prophecy of some sort does seem to figure in the ritual of their appointments, these officials function primarily as preachers and teachers.

Ignatius' Contemporaries: The Gospel and Epistles of John

The gospel and three epistles attributed to John are generally thought to have been composed between 90-120 C.E.⁶⁶ These documents appear to be the work of a "Johannine school" and are addressed to a particular community or communities.⁶⁷ External testimony to these writings favours Asia Minor as the place of origin. Recent studies of John's gospel, however, disclose Syrian, and Palestinian, elements.⁶⁸ The evangelist's use of the Hebrew Bible, Jewish terminology, Semitic terms,

⁶⁶. Freed, p.192

⁶⁷. Ibid, p.26; Meeks, W.A., "The Man from Heaven in Johannine Sectarianism" in J.Ashton (ed), The Interpretation of John, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986:141-173), p.145

⁶⁸. Johnson, p.112; Freed, p.190; Painter, The Quest for the Messiah, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark Ltd, 1991), p.13

Hebrew place names and rabbinic exegesis show that the gospel is deeply rooted in Jewish traditions.⁶⁹ The gospel shares some striking features with the Qumran texts, as well as affinities with the writings of Philo, Jewish wisdom literature,⁷⁰ and to a lesser extent with Samaritan traditions.⁷¹

The reconstructed history of the Johannine communities begins with the recruitment of some of John the Baptist's followers by Jesus (Jn 1:35-51).⁷² After Jesus' death these former disciples of the Baptist formed the nucleus of the Johannine community adding to their numbers by converting Samaritans (Jn 4:4-42).⁷³ Around the time of the Jewish War (66-70 C.E.) this community settled in Syria or perhaps the Transjordan where they came into contact with other marginal

⁶⁹. Barrett, C.K., The Gospel of John and Judaism, (London: SPCK, 1975), pp.69-70

⁷⁰. Painter, pp.38-40; Barrett, p.70; Johnson, p.112

⁷¹. Meeks, W.A., "Am I a Jew? Johannine Christianity and Judaism" in J.Neusner (ed) Christianity, Judaism and Other Greco-Roman Cults, Vol.1, (Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1975:163-186), p.177

⁷². Painter, p.91; Brown, R.E., The Community of the Beloved Disciple, (NY: Paulist Press, 1979), pp.29-31, suggests the Baptist movement may have been the link with Qumran; cf. Cullmann, O., The Johannine Circle, (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1976), pp.33-34

⁷³. Brown, pp.37-38; Cullmann, p.57

Jewish groups.⁷⁴

It is in this Diaspora location that the Johannine Christians came into conflict with Pharisaic synagogue communities.⁷⁵ The dispute appears to have revolved around the christological claims of the Johannine Christians,⁷⁶ although charges of Sabbath breaking may have been involved as well (Jn 5:18; 7:22-24; 9:14-16). This strife culminated in the expulsion from the synagogue of those who professed that "Jesus is the Christ" (Jn 9:22; 12:42; 16:2).⁷⁷

By the time the fourth gospel was written this conflict was a thing of the past.⁷⁸ Its impact is reflected, however, in John's anti-Judaism. Jewish feasts and symbols are christologically re-interpreted (2:6-11, 19-22; 7:1-52; 8:12-59). The patriarchs and Moses are subordinated to Jesus (4:12-14; 8:53-56; 5:45-47; 6:32-35). Jesus and his followers are dissociated from the law (10:34; 15:25; 19:7). The Jews are presented as being hostile to Jesus (eg. 5:16,18; 7:1; 10:31) and to his followers (9:22; 12:42; 16:2). Jewish claims to be

⁷⁴. Cullmann, pp.58-59; Painter, p.13, agrees that a move was made from Palestine to the Diaspora but suggests Ephesus as the destination.

⁷⁵. Painter, pp. 48, 54, 102

⁷⁶. Brown, p.67; Jn 5:39-40, 45-47; 6:31-33; 7:23; 8:34-57; 10:34-36.

⁷⁷. Painter, pp.50, 103; Meeks, "The Man from Heaven..", p.164

⁷⁸. Painter, p.58; Brown, p.66; Lieu, Judith, The Second and Third Epistles of John, (Edinburgh: T and T Clark Ltd, 1986), pp.168, 212

the children of God are vehemently denied (8:39-47).

The break with the synagogue most likely led to greater contact with Gentiles (Jn 12:20). The language of the gospel (Greek) and the care which is taken to explain Jewish names and customs presuppose a Gentile audience.⁷⁹ It was in this environment that an interpretation of Johannine christology emerged which was influenced by the thought and language of the mystery religions.⁸⁰ The evolution of divergent interpretations of the common Johannine tradition is evidenced in the first epistle.⁸¹

The author of I John warns of "antichrists" who "went out from us" (IJn 2:18-19). These individuals deny that Jesus is the Christ (IJn 2:22; 5:1) and the Son of God (IJn 4:15; 5:5). They do not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh (IJn 4:2). These schismatic members of the Johannine community appear to be denying the identity of the human figure Jesus and the pre-existent divine figure of Christ.⁸² The writer emphatically insists that Jesus Christ came by water and blood (IJn 5:6) and that it is the blood of Jesus which cleanses from sin (IJn 1:7). These statements seem to imply that the schismatics did not view Jesus' historical life and death as

⁷⁹. Painter, p.55

⁸⁰. Ibid, p.397

⁸¹. Ibid, p.374

⁸². Ibid, pp.374-375

salvifically important.⁸³

The dissidents seem to have claimed some special fellowship with God (IJn 1:6) which resulted in a sinless state of being (IJn 1:7-8, 10). They professed to "know him" (IJn 2:4), to "abide in him" (IJn 2:6), to "be in the light" (IJn 2:9) and to "love God" (IJn 4:20). In the author's opinion these claims are demonstrably false since these individuals do not keep Christ's commandments (IJn 2:4-6), nor do they love their Christian brothers and sisters (IJn 2:10-11; 3:10,15,17; 4:20-21). Likewise their false christological confession proves that they do not possess God's spirit (IJn 4:1-3) or abide in him (IJn 4:13-16).⁸⁴

Although these members of the Johannine community had left, they appear to have been a continuing threat.⁸⁵ In the second epistle an un-named "elder" urges the "elect lady," most likely a sister church,⁸⁶ to be on guard against "those who do not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh" (2Jn 7). The elder exhorts his readers not to receive or welcome anyone whose teaching does not have both the Father and the Son (2Jn 9-10).

The third epistle is addressed to an individual, Gaius,

⁸³. Brown, p.113; Painter, p.397; Lieu, Judith, The Theology of the Johannine Epistles, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p.14

⁸⁴. Painter, p.390

⁸⁵. Lieu, The Second and Third Epistles..., p.80

⁸⁶. Ibid, p.65

who is being asked to provide patronage and financial support for some travelling missionaries (3Jn 5-8).⁸⁷ The elder indicates that he has written to the church but Diotrephes, "who likes to put himself first" does not acknowledge his authority (3Jn 9). He complains that Diotrephes is spreading false charges about "us," refusing to welcome the travelling missionaries, preventing others from welcoming them and even expelling those who would welcome them (3Jn 10).

The elder does not seem to be aware of any serious doctrinal disagreement between himself and Diotrephes. He tends to view the dispute in personal terms, attributing Diotrephes' actions against him to high-handedness.⁸⁸ Diotrephes' treatment of the missionaries and their supporters, however, parallels that advocated by the elder in 2 John against teachers of suspect doctrines.⁸⁹ Whether his actions were motivated by suspicion of possible non-Johannine elements in the elder's teaching⁹⁰ or by something else is not determinable.

The Johannine literature provides further evidence of the dynamic character of Christianity in this period. Johannine Christianity like that of Matthew and the *Didache* has Jewish roots, but goes farther in its efforts to distance itself from

⁸⁷. Ibid, pp.106-107

⁸⁸. Ibid, p.160

⁸⁹. Ibid, p.155

⁹⁰. Ibid, p.163

Judaism. Like the pastoral epistles the Johannine literature reveals the presence of divergent interpretations arising within a particular stream of Christian thought. 2 and 3 John might be suggestive of an emerging trend towards convergence between different traditions with the Christian movement.⁹¹ In these epistles questions concerning the treatment of perceived deviants and of legitimate authority are raised.

This survey of early Christian writings roughly contemporary with Ignatius indicates that Christianity in both Syria and in Asia Minor was a complex phenomenon. Diversity and change appear to be the only consistent features that one finds in these documents. How does Ignatius fit into this picture? Where does he stand in relation to his contemporaries in Syria? in Asia Minor?

Ignatius in Relation to his Contemporaries

Ignatius appears to have been a Gentile Christian, educated in and comfortable with Hellenistic urban culture. His letters conform to conventional Hellenistic epistolary models,⁹² and are written in *koine* Greek without traces of hebraisms or aramaisms, or evidence of translation from

⁹¹. Lieu, p.161, finds in 2 and 3 John elements suggestive of links with the Pauline tradition.

⁹². Schoedel, W.R., "Theological Norms and Social Perspectives in Ignatius of Antioch" in E.P.Sanders (ed), Jewish and Christian Self-Definition, Volume One, (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1980: 30-56), p.47

Syriac.⁹³ Ignatius' style is representative of "Asianism" a stream of popular rhetoric fashionable in Syria and Asia Minor during the first and second centuries.⁹⁴

Many of the images and metaphors which appear in the letters reflect Hellenistic culture. Ignatius draws from a stock of current comparisons using medical (*Eph* 7.1; 20.2; *Tr* 6.2; *Pol* 2.1), musical (*Eph* 4.1; *Phd* 1.2), nautical (*Pol* 2.3), and athletic (*Pol* 1.3; 2.3; 3.1) imagery.⁹⁵ His contrast between words and deeds (*Eph* 14.2, 15.1; *Mg* 4.1), and his concern for concord (*ὁμόνοια*)⁹⁶ are standard Hellenistic rhetorical themes.⁹⁷ Even pagan religious practices are reflected in the bishop's language (*Eph* 9.1; *Rom* 2.2).⁹⁸

Ignatius' knowledge of the Hebrew Scriptures appears to have been derived from secondary Christian sources.⁹⁹ His letters contain only three quotations (*Eph* 5.3; *Mag* 12; *Tr* 8.2) from the Hebrew Bible. Although he appeals to the Law of

⁹³. Riesenfeld, H., "Reflections on the Style and the Theology of St. Ignatius of Antioch" in Studia Patristica, Vol. IV, 1961:312-322; p.314

⁹⁴. Schoedel, Ignatius of Antioch, p.8; Riesenfeld, p.316

⁹⁵. Riesenfeld, p.317; Schoedel, "Theological Norms...", p.48

⁹⁶. *Eph* 4.1; 4.2; 13.1; *Mag* 6.1; 15.1; *Tr* 12.2; *Phd* inscr; 11.2

⁹⁷. Schoedel, Ignatius of Antioch, p.8

⁹⁸. Schoedel, "Theological Norms...", p.51

⁹⁹. Schoedel, Ignatius of Antioch, p.9; Trevett, Ignatius and His Opponents..., pp.142, 164, 166

Moses once (*Sm* 5.1) and to the Prophets several times,¹⁰⁰ their primary significance for him lies in their testimony to Jesus (*Mag* 8.2; 9.2; *Phd* 9.2). When challenged to do so, the bishop is unable to support his position by recourse to any texts of the Hebrew Scriptures (*Phd* 8.2). There is little in the Ignatian correspondence which is consciously Jewish or Jewish Christian.¹⁰¹

This Syrian Christian appears to have held Paul in particularly high esteem, revering him as an apostle (*Rom* 4.3), a letter writer and a martyr in whose footsteps he longs to follow (*Eph* 12.2).¹⁰² Ignatius knew of a collection of Paul's letters (*Eph* 12.2) and appears to have been thoroughly acquainted with I Corinthians.¹⁰³ Examination of his use of the Pauline text reveals that he borrows Paul's words, phrases and images, altering them (*Eph* 16.1; *Phd* 3.3; cf I Cor 6:9) and applying them to his own situation (eg *Rom* 9.2; cf I Cor 15:8).¹⁰⁴

Ignatius adapts and connects Pauline language with ideas

¹⁰⁰. *Mag* 8.2; 9.2; *Phd* 5.2; 9.1-2; *Sm* 5.1; 7.2

¹⁰¹. Schoedel, Ignatius of Antioch, p.16

¹⁰². De Boer, M., "Which Paul?" in W.S. Babcock (ed), Paul and the Legacies of Paul, (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1990: 45-54), p.48

¹⁰³. Schoedel, Ignatius of Antioch, p.9

¹⁰⁴. Grant, R.M., "Scripture and Tradition in Ignatius of Antioch", in R.M. Grant, After the New Testament, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967:37-51), p.39

originating in other streams of Christian thought.¹⁰⁵ A prime example of this is the bishop's treatment of flesh and spirit as two antithetical elements which are united in Christ (*Eph* 7.2; *Sm* 3.3) and in his followers.¹⁰⁶ Ignatius' indebtedness to Paul, then, is limited mainly to the use of Pauline terminology. His appeal to the apostle is motivated by Paul's function as a role model and by the continuing authority which the Pauline tradition enjoyed in Asia Minor.¹⁰⁷

A number of other strands of Christian tradition appear to have exerted some influence on this Syrian bishop. Parallels with Matthew have been identified (eg. *Sm* 1.1/*Mt* 3:15; *Pol* 1.3/*Mt* 8:17), however, it is not possible to establish a direct relationship between Ignatius and the gospel. It is more likely that the bishop was familiar with some of the oral traditions, particularly "M", which stand behind Matthew.¹⁰⁸ There is material in *Smyrnaeans* (3.2-3) which is thought to come from either Luke¹⁰⁹ or some

¹⁰⁵. Lindemann, A., Paulus im Altesten Christentum, (Tubingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1979), p.220

¹⁰⁶. *Eph* 8.2; 10.3; *Mag* 1.2; 13.1; *Tr* inscr.; 12.1; *Rom* inscr; *Sm* 1.1; 12.2.; 13.2; *Pol* 2.2; 5.1

¹⁰⁷. Lindemann, A., "Paul in the Writings of the Apostolic Fathers" in W.S.Babcock (ed), Paul and the Legacies of Paul, (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1990:25-44), p.29; De Boer, p.48

¹⁰⁸. Schoedel, Ignatius of Antioch, p.9; Trevett, Ignatius and His Opponents, pp.134, 137, 147; Grant, p.41

¹⁰⁹. Schoedel, Ignatius of Antioch, p.9

source such as the Teaching of Peter.¹¹⁰ *Magnesians* 5.1-2 is reminiscent of the "two ways" teachings found in the *Didache*.

Although there are no actual quotations from the fourth gospel, scholars have long noted affinities between the theology of Ignatius and John.¹¹¹ The Syrian bishop speaks of the eucharist as the "flesh and blood" of Christ (*Rom* 7.3; *Sm* 12.2; cf. *Jn* 6:54-59), which bestows immortality (*Eph* 20.2; cf. *Jn* 6:54). Ignatius' understanding of Jesus as "God"¹¹², the "word" (*Mag* 8.2; *Rom* 8.2; cf. *Jn* 1:1), and "God revealed in human form" (*Eph* 19.3; cf. *Jn* 1:14) has Johannine overtones. There are other passages in the letters which also have a "Johannine ring".¹¹³ It is conjectured, therefore, that Ignatius was either in touch with circles using similar concepts¹¹⁴ or that he was influenced by an early Syrian stream of Johannine teaching.¹¹⁵

Thus, Ignatius appears to be a Gentile Christian with little if any connection with the traditions of Judaism or

¹¹⁰. Corwin, St. Ignatius and Christianity in Antioch, p.97

¹¹¹. Barnard, L.W., "The Background of St. Ignatius of Antioch" in Studies in the Apostolic Fathers and their Background, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1966:19-30), p. 28; Corwin, p.70; Trevett, Ignatius and His Opponents, p.154

¹¹². *Eph* inscr; 18.2; *Rom* inscr; 3.3; *Sm* 1.1; *Pol* 8.3. Cf. *Jn* 20:28

¹¹³. Schoedel, Ignatius of Antioch, p.9

¹¹⁴. Corwin, p.70

¹¹⁵. Barnard, p.29

Jewish Christianity. A Syrian from Antioch, he does not appear to be a representative of Matthean Christianity although he seems to be familiar with some of its traditions. There are suggestions of familiarity with other Syrian influences as well. His theology bears a Johannine stamp, while much of his language is Pauline. Ignatius' background, therefore, seems to be characterized by a synthesis of various strands of Christian tradition.

This convergence of differing trends within early second century Christianity is evident in the Ignatian correspondence in other ways as well. On the one hand, Ignatius identifies himself as a bishop (*Rom* 2.2) and appears as an advocate of an ecclesiastical order consisting of bishop, council of elders and deacons.¹¹⁶ On the other hand, this bishop is a charismatic prophetic figure.¹¹⁷ His speech (*Phd* 7.1-2) and actions (*Rom* 7.2) are inspired. He possesses great spiritual insight (*Tr* 4.1; 5.1-2) and provides examples of it (*Eph* 19; 20.1-2). He advises his fellow bishop Polycarp to pray for revelations of "unseen things" so that he may "abound in every spiritual gift" (*Pol* 2.2). In Ignatius, charismatic and institutional forms of leadership meet.

¹¹⁶. *Eph* 2.2; 4.1; *Mag* 2; 3.1; 6.1; 7.1; 13.2; *Tr* 2.1-3; 3.1; 7.2; 13.2; *Phd* inscr; 4.1; 7.1; *Sm* 8.1; 12.2; *Pol* 6.1

¹¹⁷. Maier, H.O. The Social Setting of the Ministry as Reflected in the Writings of Hermas, Clement and Ignatius, (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1991), p.160

It was noted above that the Ignatian epistles are written in a distinctive Hellenistic style using metaphors and images that were common in Hellenistic urban society. This "at-homeness" in the Hellenistic world is reflected in the bishop's attitudes to members of the larger society.¹¹⁸ In the face of pagan hostility and abuse Christians are to remain gentle and humble (*Eph* 10.2). They are to give no cause for offense or for criticism to be levelled at the church (*Tr* 8.2). Christians are to pray for their pagan neighbours and hope for their conversion (*Eph* 10.1). For Ignatius, boundaries between the church and the world are open.¹¹⁹

The bishop of Antioch is not nearly so open and accommodating when it comes to the internal affairs of Christian communities. He warns his readers about people who try to deceive unsuspecting Christians with "evil teaching" (*Eph* 9.1, 16.2; *Phd* 2.2), "erroneous opinions" (*Mg* 8.1; *Sm* 6.2), "old fables" (*Mg* 8.1) and "evil pleasure" (*Phd* 2.2; *Tr* 6.2). He wishes to warn them against "schismatics" (*Phd* 3.3), "factions" (*Eph* 6.1; *Tr* 6.1), and "division" (*Phd* 2.1, 3.1; *Sm* 7.2) within the church. Who these individuals and groups are and how they relate to Ignatius and his contemporaries needs to be determined.

¹¹⁸. Schoedel, Ignatius of Antioch, p.14

¹¹⁹. Schoedel, "Theological Norms...", p.45

PART 2

THE OPPONENTS

Before embarking on a detailed analysis of Ignatius' letters, this section will begin with a brief review of what the scholars have to say about the bishop's opponents. Over the years various theses concerning the number, the identity, and the location of Ignatius' opponents have been put forward, challenged and defended. For a long time the debate revolved around the question of whether the Syrian bishop was dealing with one opponent or two. Recently it has been asserted that Ignatius may have had to deal with three groups of adversaries. The identity of the opponents appears to be closely related to the number of groups hypothesized, while their location is posited as either Antioch or Asia Minor. As it is beyond the scope of this paper to review the writings of every scholar who has addressed this question,¹ this survey will be limited four representative hypotheses.

What the Scholars Say

One Group of Opponents: Lightfoot

J.B. Lightfoot has argued that Ignatius is confronting a single front of opposition which he labels "Docetic Judaism" or "Judaic Docetism."² He asserts that the Syrian bishop is

¹. For a comprehensive listing of supporters of the one group and two group hypotheses see Trevett, C., Ignatius of Antioch..., pp.40-43.

². Lightfoot, J.B., The Apostolic Fathers, Part Two, Ignatius and Polycarp, Volume 2, (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1989), pp.103, 285

arguing against persons who have a docetic christology, asserting that Jesus' birth, death and resurrection happened in appearance only. These Gentile Christians also judaize, advocating the permanent validity of Mosaic ritual observances for Christians.³ In Lightfoot's opinion, this is a heresy similar to those found in Colossians, the Pastoral Epistles, Revelation, the Catholic Epistles, and Cerinthus - a Judaism crossed with Gnosticism.⁴

Lightfoot seems to see the opponents as false teachers who are travelling through Asia Minor. They had been repulsed at Ephesus, but appear to be busy in Philadelphia and Smyrna. The Trallian and Magnesians Christians are warned to be on their guard.⁵ The docetic aspect of their error is alluded to in *Ephesians*, and is denounced at length in *Trallians* and *Smyrnaeans*. Their judaizing is condemned in the letters to the churches of Magnesia and Philadelphia.⁶

Lightfoot's contention that Ignatius is accusing the same persons of both docetism and judaizing is based largely on his exegesis of *Magnesians* and *Philadelphians*. In the epistle to the church in Magnesia, he finds a condemnation of judaizing practices, especially keeping the Sabbath (*Mg* 9), alongside a

³ Ibid, pp.124, 173, 264

⁴ Ibid, p.124

⁵ Ibid, pp.16, 52, 103, 148

⁶ Ibid, p.173

rejection of docetic beliefs (*Mg* 9, 11).⁷ At Philadelphia, Lightfoot believes, the issues involve interpreting the prophets (*Phd* 5-6), the Hebrew Scriptures (*Phd* 8), and the role of priests (*Phd* 9). This letter also contains allusions to docetism (*Phd* inscr., 4, 5). He suggests that the topic of the debate recorded in *Phd* 8 was the cross.⁸

In addition, Lightfoot sees an identity of language linking *Magnesians* and *Philadelphians* with the letters in which docetism is attacked. Ignatius uses the same terms when speaking of both tendencies. For example, the term "heterodox" (*Mg* 8.1; *Sm* 6.2) is applied to both. Neither is "the planting of the Father" (*Tr* 11.1; *Phd* 3.1). Both are warned to repent to God or to his unity (*Phd* 8.1; *Sm* 9.1).⁹

Two Groups of Opponents: Corwin and Schoedel

Corwin uses the Ignatian epistles to reconstruct the situation of the church at Antioch. She produces a picture of the Antiochene Christian community in which Ignatius becomes the spokesman for a centre party caught between docetists on the left and judaizers on the right.¹⁰ In Corwin's opinion both groups have difficulty with Christ's passion and resurrection but for diametrically opposed reasons.¹¹ The

⁷. Ibid, p.124

⁸. Ibid, p.272

⁹. Ibid, pp.165, 243

¹⁰. Corwin, p.52

¹¹. Ibid, p.60

docetists view Christ as essentially spiritual, object to a realistic doctrine of the eucharist, show little concern for unfortunates, and hold the Jewish scriptures in contempt.¹² These people are strongly entrenched in Antioch and are active in spreading their beliefs among the Christians of Asia Minor.¹³

The judaizers, on the other hand, are problematic only in Antioch. Corwin notes that they are open to Jewish ways of living, but do not appear to be orthodox Jews since they do not practice circumcision. They celebrate separate ritual meals and hold theories about priests.¹⁴ These judaizers regard the Law and the Prophets as authoritative texts, and see a contradiction between these and the gospel. They revere Jesus as a teacher but are hesitant about emphasizing his death and resurrection.¹⁵ Corwin contends that there are sufficient points of contact between this group and the Essenes of Qumran to identify Ignatius' judaizing opponents as Essenic Jews who have partly accommodated themselves to Christianity.¹⁶

Schoedel interprets the Ignatian polemic as responses to groups encountered in Asia Minor: judaizers at Philadelphia

¹². Ibid, pp.55-56

¹³. Ibid, p.53

¹⁴. Ibid, p.58

¹⁵. Ibid, pp.59-60

¹⁶. Ibid, p.61

and docetists in Smyrna. Warnings against judaizers appear in *Magnesians* and *Philadelphians*, while *Trallians* and *Smyrnaeans* deals with docetists.¹⁷ In Schoedel's opinion the judaizers are attracted more by the "idea of Judaism rather than its practice".¹⁸ This interest manifests itself in a preoccupation with the Jewish scriptures and their exegesis which lead to questions about the observance of Jewish customs.¹⁹

Schoedel asserts that there are no docetists in Magnesia or Philadelphia. He argues that alleged allusions to docetism in the letters to these churches probably reflect Ignatius' adaptation of a single line of argumentation to different situations.²⁰ In the case of these judaizers Ignatius fears that their obsession with the Hebrew scriptures might prevent them from focusing on Christ as the centre of their faith.²¹

Although there may be links between the travelling teachers mentioned in *Ephesians* and the docetists at Smyrna, Schoedel views the latter as local Christians.²² They are condemned for both their christological beliefs and their actions. Not only do they deny that Christ was a bearer of flesh (*Sm* 5.2), they have no concern for the needy, and stay

¹⁷. Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch* p.12; cf. pp.195, 231, 236

¹⁸. Ibid, p.200

¹⁹. Ibid, pp. 209, 118

²⁰. Ibid, p.200, especially Note 1.

²¹. Ibid, p.209

²². Ibid, pp. 231, 235

away from the eucharist and prayers of the church.²³ Schoedel suggests that a church official, perhaps an elder, may be using his position to further docetism at Smyrna. This person may be behind the separate meetings which Ignatius condemns.²⁴

Three Groups of Opponents: Trevett

Trevett's thesis is set out as a reconstruction of the three "errors" faced by Ignatius in Antioch. Trevett finds references to docetism in *Ephesians*, *Magnesians*, *Trallians*, *Smyrnaeans* and *Polycarp*. The problem of judaizing appears in the letters to Magnesia and Philadelphia. In all the letters Trevett sees evidence of a "non-Judaizing *μερισμός*" whose proponents she labels as "charismatics."²⁵

Trevett regards docetism as a relatively new, "extra muros," phenomenon which the Syrian bishop is trying to ensure is totally rejected by Christian congregations.²⁶ She asserts that this error alone is designated as *αἵρεσις*, "heresy," by Ignatius (*Eph* 6.2; *Tr* 6.1).²⁷ Trevett contends that in the bishop's opinion the docetists are not Christians. He exhorts his readers to have nothing to do with them, and refuses even to name them.²⁸ Trevett characterizes the docetists as

²³. Ibid, pp. 230, 239-240

²⁴. Ibid, p.235

²⁵. Trevett, *Ignatius and His Opponents...*, pp.288, 305

²⁶. Ibid, pp.250-251

²⁷. Ibid, p.254

²⁸. Ibid, pp.247-248

possessing a negative view of the flesh both christologically and anthropologically, abstaining from the eucharist, and leading lifestyles marked by hedonism and a lack of charity.²⁹

Trevett describes the judaizers as an "intra muros" group firmly entrenched in the Christian community at Antioch.³⁰ They have separatist tendencies, preferring to worship apart, but do meet with and even engage in debate with other Christians.³¹ Trevett depicts the judaizers as uncircumcised Christians who may be keeping the Jewish sabbath although they do not otherwise insist on observance of the Law.³² In her assessment their judaizing consists mainly in a high regard for the Jewish scriptures, the pursuit of righteousness as a requirement for salvation, and a view of Jesus as fulfilling Judaism.³³ Trevett suggests that Ignatius' judaizing opponents in Antioch may have been representatives of a Matthean type of Christianity.³⁴

According to Trevett, the charismatics are also an "intra muros" group firmly entrenched at Antioch.³⁵ These individuals

²⁹. Ibid, pp.251, 257, 259

³⁰. Ibid, p.268

³¹ Ibid, pp.458, 476, 496

³². Ibid, pp. 266, 267, 471-475, 476, 496

³³. Ibid, p.496

³⁴. Ibid, pp.478-495. N.B. p.487 where Trevett writes that the Philadelphian judaizers may not have been the same as those in Antioch.

³⁵. Ibid, pp.306, 311

place a high value on charismatic gifts (including perhaps celibacy)³⁶ and on "words" of prophecy and teaching. They insist on their right to worship without liturgical constraints and supervision by elected officials such as bishops.³⁷ It is against this group that Ignatius defends 'silent' bishops and asserts his own credentials as a prophet.³⁸ Trevett likens the charismatic opponents with those Christians in the *Didache* who prefer prophets and teachers over bishops and deacons.³⁹

Summary

This brief survey of scholarly opinion concerning Ignatius' opponents reveals a number of things. There does appear to be some agreement concerning the identity of those whom the bishop opposes. All those reviewed agree that one of the characteristics of at least some of the opponents is docetism, a denial or questioning of the reality or nature of Christ's suffering, death and resurrection. There also appears to be a consensus that judaizing is a feature of some or all of the bishop's opponents. Scholars, however, do not concur on what this entails. Lightfoot finds an insistence on the validity of Jewish observances, where Schoedel sees a preoccupation with the Jewish scriptures. Corwin associates

³⁶. Ibid, pp.291, 293, 300-302

³⁷. Ibid, p.448

³⁸. Ibid, p.450

³⁹. Ibid, p.450

the judaizers with the Essenes, while Trevett connects them with Matthean Christians. Trevett raises the possibility that docetism and judaizing may not have been the only divisive tendencies confronting Ignatius.

The number of groups opposed by Ignatius appears to be related specifically to the exegesis of *Magnesians* and *Philadelphians*. In particular scholars seem to focus on alleged allusions to docetism in these letters, and the significance of the terminology these epistles appear to share with those in which docetism is being condemned. Lightfoot uses these textual details to support his one group thesis. For Corwin both the docetists and the judaizers are problematic from a christological point of view but for different reasons. Schoedel argues that these supposed allusions to docetism are the result of Ignatius' adaptation of a single line of argumentation to different situations. Trevett accepts the basic premise of the two opponent hypothesis, but goes beyond it to find evidence in all the epistles of a third group.

Assumptions concerning the location of the opponents inevitably have implications for assessing the identity of the adversaries. The external evidence used by scholars to support their hypotheses is directly related to where they locate the opponents. Thus, Lightfoot appeals to literature which is traditionally associated with Asia Minor - Colossians, the Pastorals, Revelation, the Catholic Epistles - and to the

figure of Cerinthus. Corwin justifies her use of the Qumran literature by asserting that after the destruction of Qumran in 68 C.E. its members fled north into Syria.⁴⁰ Trevett seeks parallels between Ignatius' opponents and the communities associated with Matthew and the *Didache*.

Assumptions about the location of Ignatius' opposition also affect the way the letters are treated. For example, both Corwin and Trevett use the letters for reconstructing the situation in Ignatius' home community of Antioch. In so doing, the letters are interpreted without much regard for what they might reveal about the churches in Asia Minor which they explicitly address. Trevett, for instance, uses *Philadelphians* to reconstruct the views of Ignatius' Antiochene opponents, although she concedes that it does allude to events which occurred in that city. Even after admitting that the Philadelphian judaizers may not be the same as the ones in Antioch, Trevett continues to use this letter as evidence for the Antiochene situation.⁴¹

From a scholarly perspective the main issues surrounding the question of Ignatius' opponents appear to be (1) the number of groups involved, (2) the identity and/or characteristics of the adversaries, and (3) the location of the opponents. The following analysis of the bishop's letters will be oriented to answering these three questions.

⁴⁰. Corwin, p.68

⁴¹. Trevett, Ignatius and His Opponents..., p.487

What Ignatius Says

This study presupposes, first of all, that Ignatius' letters can be examined for evidence of people who can be labelled "opponents," that is persons whom he opposes, criticises or protests against. Their identity, number(s) and location(s) will be determined through a modified inductive analysis of the Ignatian texts. It is conceivable that an examination of the texts could result in a conclusion that there were no opponents or conversely that there were one or more.

The possible location(s) of Ignatius' opponents is limited by the extent of the bishop's travels as far as they are known to us. Ignatius came from Antioch in Syria, he personally met with Christians in the Asia Minor cities of Philadelphia and Smyrna, and received reports from the leading members of the churches in Ephesus, Tralles and Magnesia. The bishop, therefore, may have derived some first hand knowledge of opponents in Antioch and in two Asia Minor communities, and second hand information from three other Asia Minor churches. This information, coming as it did from the bishops, elders and deacons of those communities, ought to be regarded as reasonably accurate. Thus, unless explicitly stated otherwise, this study will assume that the opponents are located either in Antioch or in the cities of Asia Minor with which Ignatius interacted.

The following examination of what Ignatius has to say

concerning the opponents will proceed using the genre-sensitive method described in the Introduction (p.4). This is based on the recognition that the texts to be scrutinized are letters, forms of communication addressing particular situations intelligible to both writer and reader. The letters to the churches of Ephesus, Magnesia, Tralles, Philadelphia and Smyrna will be examined individually for explicit and allusive references to opponents. Care will be taken to respect the literary coherence and integrity of the text. After each letter has been assessed in this manner the results will be summarized and related to the socio-historical situation described in Part One.

Ephesians

There are three explicit references to opponents in *Ephesians*. In 7.1 the bishop warns his readers of persons who deceitfully carry here and there (*περιφέρειν*)⁴² "the name," and who do things which are unworthy of God. It seems that these persons call themselves Christians and move about from place to place.⁴³ Ignatius singles out their deeds, without elaborating what they might be, as being particularly

⁴². For the Greek text used in this study see Lake, K. The Apostolic Fathers, Volume I, (London: William Heinemann Ltd, 1959). Translations of individual words are taken from Bauer, W., A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, Second Edition, 1979); Long quotations given in translation are from Schoedel, Ignatius of Antioch.

⁴³. Schoedel, Ignatius of Antioch, p.59

objectionable.

The Syrian bishop tells his readers that these people ought to be turned away or shunned (*ἐκκλίνειν*) like wild animals. He says they are almost incurable, rabid dogs that bite without warning (*λαθροδῆκται*; 7.1) suggesting perhaps that their outward presentation hides a harmful intent.⁴⁴ This is immediately followed by an assertion that "there is one physician...Jesus Christ, our Lord" (7.2). Ignatius seems to be implying that these individuals are so dangerous ordinary Christians ought to have nothing to do with them, but should leave their fate in Christ's hands.⁴⁵

Ignatius writes in 9.1 that he knows of some who had passed by from there with evil teaching (*κακὴν διδασχὴν*). These teachers appear to have been present and active in the city of Ephesus and had moved on from there.⁴⁶ The Ephesian Christians did not allow these persons to "sow" among them, but stopped their ears so that they would not receive their teaching. These itinerant teachers are probably the same persons the bishop refers to in 7.1.⁴⁷

In 16.1-2 Ignatius compares those who propagate "evil teaching" (*κακὴ διδασκαλίς*) with "corrupters of homes," that

⁴⁴. Ibid

⁴⁵. Ibid, p.60

⁴⁶. Ibid, p.65; cf. Lightfoot, p.52

⁴⁷. Lightfoot, p.52

is, with adulterers.⁴⁸ He asserts that the fate of those who by their evil teaching corrupt faith in God will be worse than that of adulterers. Such teachers are *'ρυκαρδοί* - unclean, defiled, or perhaps, sordidly avaricious. Both the teachers and any who listen to them will go into the unquenchable fire.

Ignatius continues in 17.1 by contrasting the incorruptibility - the eternal life - which Jesus breathes on the church with the "ill odor of the teaching of the ruler of this age". He warns his readers to be wary of this teaching lest they be led captive from the life set before them (17.1). Thus, the origin of evil teaching is the devil and its intent is to deprive Christians of eternal life. Sound teaching, of course, originates with Christ and has the effect of bestowing incorruptibility.⁴⁹

The next clearest reference to these opponents occurs in 6.2. According to the report which Ignatius has received, the Ephesian Christians do not even listen to anyone except those who speak truly about Christ. This seems to be an allusion to the travelling teachers of 9.1 against whom the Ephesians "stopped their ears". The implication of this statement is that these teachers do not, in Ignatius' opinion, speak truly of Jesus Christ. One aspect, then, of their "evil teaching" could be their understanding of Jesus.

Another aspect of their teaching might be alluded to in

⁴⁸. Schoedel, Ignatius of Antioch, p.79; Lightfoot, p.71

⁴⁹. Schoedel, Ignatius of Antioch, p.82

8.2. This passage is framed by the bishop's remarks concerning the travelling teachers in 6.2-7.2 and 9.1. Ignatius asserts:

Fleshly people cannot do spiritual things, nor yet spiritual people fleshly things; just as faith cannot do the things of faithlessness, nor yet faithlessness things of faith. But what you do even according to the flesh, that is spiritual; for you do all things in Jesus Christ.

This statement begins with what appears to be a Pauline distinction between fleshly and spiritual people (I Cor 2:14-15). The bishop's contention that what the Ephesian Christians do "even according to the flesh, that is spiritual" has been described as "an almost conscious correction of the Pauline antithesis."⁵⁰

Could it be that the travelling teachers are appealing to Paul's distinction between flesh and spirit to support their views? If so, it may be possible to infer that they are claiming to be *πνευματικοί*, and/or advocating a spiritualized understanding of Christ.⁵¹ Unfortunately, the specific details of their teaching are not retrievable from Ignatius' remarks.

In 19.1 the bishop asserts that the virginity of Mary, her giving birth and the death of Jesus are three mysteries that eluded the ruler of this age. Ignatius' association of the travelling teachers with this figure in 17.1 makes it possible to infer that it is their understanding of these

⁵⁰. Ibid, p.64

⁵¹. Corwin, p.55, and Trevett, Ignatius and His Opponents, p.252, see here a direct attack on a docetic position. Docetism, however, is not explicitly mentioned in this letter. A Pauline pneumatic is not necessarily a docetic.

events which the Syrian bishop considers deficient.⁵² A precise definition of their beliefs, however, is not possible.

The bishop's description of Jesus Christ (7.2) as:

both fleshly and spiritual, begotten and unbegotten,
come in flesh, God, in death, true life, both of
Mary and of God, first passible and then impassible

obviously represents what Ignatius considers to be an accurate statement about the person of Jesus Christ. The same is true of the statements that Jesus the Christ was born in Mary's womb "of the seed of David and of the Holy Spirit," (18.2) and that Jesus Christ is the "son of a human and son of God" (20.2). None of these assertions, however, tells us what the opponents believed of Christ, that is, in what respects their teaching differed from that of Ignatius.⁵³

The language of these passages clearly conveys Ignatius' animosity towards these persons. His opponents in this letter appear to be travelling teachers who claim to be Christians. Their unspecified deeds are "unworthy of God" perhaps because they are motivated by greed or because they are in some other way *ῥυπαροί*. Their teaching is described as evil and diabolical, aimed at robbing believers of the gifts bestowed on them by Christ. One aspect of this teaching may be a Pauline antithesis between flesh and spirit. It is implied

⁵². Schoedel, p.87, and Trevett, p.248, view this as an anti-docetic passage. See note 51, a deficient view of these events is not necessarily docetic.

⁵³. Many scholars see in these statements, especially in 7.2, an anti-docetic thrust (See Lightfoot, p.48; Schoedel, p.61; Trevett, p.251). See notes 51 and 52.

that these teachers says things about Jesus which are untrue. The content of their christological position is not, however, recoverable from Ignatius' remarks. That he is not more specific may be because he did not know what their actual beliefs were. He simply wishes his readers to be wary.

The Syrian bishop commends the Christians of Ephesus for not even listening to such people (6.2, 9.1). They are not deceived by these teachers because they are "entirely of God" (8.1). Their godly life is due to there being no strife among them (8.1). Here Ignatius seems to be suggesting a causal relationship between congregational unity in Ephesus and the Ephesian response to the travelling teachers.

In this letter Ignatius also urges his readers not to deceive themselves:

if anyone is not within the altar, he lacks the bread of God; for if the prayer of one or two has such power, how much more that of the bishop and the whole church! He, then, who does not come to the assembly, by that very fact displays arrogance and has judged himself....Let us be eager, then, not to resist the bishop that we may be obedient to God (5.2-3).⁵⁴

This warning occurs in the midst of an appeal for unity within the church which Ignatius defines as "running together with the purpose of the bishop" (4.1). It is also bracketed by affirmations of Ephesian unity. Their council of elders is attuned to their bishop "like strings to a cithara" (4.1).

⁵⁴. Trevett, Ignatius and His Opponents..., pp.291, 433, 438-441, sees here a reference to the Ignatius' charismatic opponents in Antioch.

Their concord and harmonious love sing Jesus Christ (4.1). Onesimus, their bishop, praises their orderliness and assures Ignatius that there is no dissension or faction (*αἰρεσις*) among them (6.2).

In other words, there are no members of the Ephesian church who are outside the altar, who pray apart from the bishop and the church, who do not come to the assembly, or who resist the bishop. In the Ephesian community such forms of behaviour represent a hypothetical danger about which Ignatius wants to alert his readers.⁵⁵ It is not inconceivable that the Syrian bishop may have known of and/or had experience of individuals in other churches who acted in these ways. To what extent such persons can be considered opponents, however, is difficult to assess on the basis of the bishop's brief remarks in this letter.

The language which Ignatius uses in speaking of those who engage in such actions is clearly critical but it is not as damning as that which he uses against the travelling teachers. In this church the bishop seems to associate the absence of dissenting and quarrelling voices with the Ephesians' ability to discern the true nature of the travelling teachers (8.1). In *Ephesians*, then, resistance to the bishop and staying away from the assembly appear more as pre-conditions favouring the reception of Ignatius' opponents, the travelling teachers, than as the characteristics of a distinguishable group of

⁵⁵. Trevett, Ignatius and His Opponents..., p.231

adversaries.

Magnesians

In *Magnesians* Ignatius deals explicitly with two issues, episcopal authority (3.1-7.2) and judaizing (8.1-11). His discussion of the former begins with a warning not to take advantage of the youth of the Magnesian bishop, Damas. He knows that the elders have not presumed on Damas' apparent youthfulness but yield to him. In doing so they yield to the Father of Jesus Christ, who is bishop of all (3.1). The Magnesians are urged to obey their bishop without hypocrisy so that they do not cheat God, their unseen bishop (3.2). Thus, Ignatius' anxiety about episcopal authority in Magnesia seems to be directly related to the youth of Damas.⁵⁶

There is also another reason for concern. The Syrian bishop writes that some call or name (*καλοῦσιν*) a bishop, but do everything apart from him (4.1). In Ignatius' opinion such people do not act in good conscience because they do not meet *βεβάτως*, regularly or validly, that is they hold unauthorized meetings apart from the congregation.⁵⁷ In this respect, the Magnesians are urged not only to be called Christians but to be Christians. Ignatius, thus, virtually defines a real Christian as one who is obedient to his or her bishop.⁵⁸

⁵⁶. Lightfoot, p.103; Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, pp.108-109

⁵⁷. Lightfoot, p.116; Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, p.109-110

⁵⁸. Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, p.109

The Syrian bishop goes on, exhorting the Magnesians to do all things in godly concord, with the bishop set over them in the place of God, the presbyters in the place of the apostles and the deacons entrusted with the service of Christ (6.1). They are to be united to the bishop and those set over them (6.2). They must do nothing without the bishop and elders, nor should they try to make something seem right individually among themselves (7.1). Ignatius urges them to have one prayer together (7.1), and to run together to one temple, one altar, one Jesus Christ (7.2). They are to be subject to the bishop and to each other as Jesus Christ was to the Father (13.2).

Ignatius does commend the Magnesian church for its orderliness (1.1). He knows that the deacon Zotion submits to the bishop and council of elders (2.1), and that the elders yield to Damas (3.1). The Magnesian Christians have Jesus Christ in them (12.1) and are "full of God" (14.1).⁵⁹ The appeals for submission to episcopal authority not only outnumber these instances of affirmation, but are more

⁵⁹. Trevett, Ignatius and His Opponents, p.288, includes Ignatius' remarks in 2.1 and 6.1 that he had seen the whole congregation in the persons of their delegation as a sign of congregational unity. Similar statements appear in *Ephesians* (1.3) and *Trallians* (1.1). Their absence in *Smyrnaeans* and *Philadelphians* Trevett attributes to the presence of division in these communities. The absence of such notices in the latter are better explained by the fact that Ignatius had actually visited these congregations and, therefore, did not have to rely on representatives to "see" them. The statements in the former, then, tell us nothing about internal state of affairs within those communities.

elaborate and more insistent.⁶⁰ It seems, then, that opposition to the bishop may have been at least a "real possibility",⁶¹ if not an actuality in the Magnesian church. Ignatius links this type of behaviour with the youth of the local bishop and the hypocrisy of some Christians who "call" a bishop but do everything without him.

Ignatius begins his condemnation of judaizing in 8.1 by warning his readers not to be deceived by strange or erroneous opinions (*ἐτεροδοξίας*), nor by useless old stories or fables (*μυθεύμασιν*). He then asserts:

if we continue to live until now according to Judaism we confess that we have not received grace.

It appears the bishop knows of Christians who lived like Jews in the past and who are continuing to do so in the present.⁶² It is not specifically said that such people are members of or associated with the Magnesian congregation. It seems reasonable, however, to suppose that Ignatius raises this issue here, because he has been told that some individuals in Magnesia are either practising, or advocating the practice, of a Jewish lifestyle.⁶³ Their activity appears to be connected

⁶⁰. The appeals for submission to episcopal authority are also not qualified by remarks indicating the community is in fact doing these things, such as are found in *Ephesians* (4.1) *Trallians* (2.2, 3.2, 8.1).

⁶¹. Trevett, *Ignatius and His Opponents*, p.232

⁶². Wilson, p.608; Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, p.118

⁶³. Trevett, *Ignatius and His Opponents*, p.233

in some unspecified way to "strange opinions" and "old stories."

Ignatius goes on to argue that the "most divine prophets lived according to Jesus Christ." They were persecuted for witnessing to God's revelation of himself in Jesus Christ his son (8.2). The Syrian bishop thus "christianizes" the prophets of the Hebrew Scriptures, declaring them to be models of Christian, and not Jewish, living.⁶⁴ He contends:

those who lived in old ways came to newness of hope, no longer keeping Sabbath, but living in accordance with the Lord's day...(9.1)

The prophets, like the early disciples who were raised as Jews, did not observe the Jewish Sabbath but lived "in accordance with the Lord's day."⁶⁵ Ignatius may have known of scriptural passages such as Isaiah 1:13 ("I cannot bear your new moons and sabbaths") which he thought indicated that the prophets abandoned Sabbath keeping⁶⁶ and so finds in them a scriptural precedent for the abandonment of Jewish practices.⁶⁷ Possibly this is intended to refute the judaizers' appeals to the Hebrew Scriptures in support of

⁶⁴. Schoedel, Ignatius of Antioch, p.119

⁶⁵. Lightfoot, p.128, and Schoedel, p.123, argue that "those who lived in old ways" must refer to early converts from Judaism. In the context of the whole passage, however, the implication seems to be that even the prophets did not keep Sabbath, as even Schoedel admits, p.119.

⁶⁶. Schoedel, Ignatius of Antioch, p.119

⁶⁷. Trevett, Ignatius and His Opponents, p.280

their own practices.⁶⁸ It may be inferred that keeping Sabbath instead of or in addition to the Lord's day was an important aspect of their Jewish lifestyle.⁶⁹

Ignatius is concerned not only to promote the observance of the "Lord's day" but to explicate its significance. This is the day:

...on which also our life arose through him and his death (which some deny), through which mystery we received faith...(9.1).

The Lord's day, thus, memorializes the resurrection, and hence, the death of Jesus. It is these events which shape Christian life and not the Sabbath and all it represents.⁷⁰ The practice of or interest in Sabbath observance, thus, implies a failure to appreciate the full import of the Lord's day and the radical newness of the life which Christ bestows.

Ignatius' parenthetical remark "which some deny" has been taken to signify that these judaizers denied the reality of Christ's death, that is, they held a docetic christology.⁷¹ The bishop does not explicitly say that the judaizers deny the

⁶⁸. Schoedel, p.118, suggests the Magnesian observance of Jewish customs grew out of what Ignatius considered a mistaken approach to Scripture.

⁶⁹. Trevett, Ignatius and His Opponents, p.266; Corwin, p.58; Wilson, p.609; Schoedel, Ignatius of Antioch, p.123

⁷⁰. Lightfoot, p.129; Schoedel, Ignatius of Antioch, pp.123-124

⁷¹. Lightfoot, p.130

authenticity of Jesus' death and resurrection.⁷² The main thrust of the passage seems to be to ground the newness of the "Christian" hope in the events of Jesus' historical life and not in Jewish covenantal obligations.⁷³ Further, it is not absolutely clear that those who deny Christ's death are even the same individuals who are arguing in favour of Sabbath observance. The remark is purely parenthetical, called to mind by the discussion of the Lord's day's roots in the death and resurrection of Christ, and most likely unrelated to the situation in Magnesia.⁷⁴

Ignatius continues, asserting that the prophets were disciples in the spirit, looking forward to Christ as their teacher. Consequently, Christ came and raised them from the dead (9.2). Hence, he warns his readers not be insensible to God's goodness (10.1), as symbolized by the Lord's day.⁷⁵ Like the prophets, they ought to become disciples of Christ and learn to live according to Christianity. A person who is

⁷². Donahue, P.J., "Jewish Christianity in the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch" in *Vigilae Christianae*, 32 (1978: 81-93), p.87. Donahue argues, p.84, that those who deny Christ's death are in fact unconverted Jewish judaizers.

⁷³. Rius-Camps, J., *The Four Authentic Letters of Ignatius The Martyr*, (Rome: Pontificium Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1980), p.46, to accept that Christian life began with the Lord's resurrection amounts to a denial of the salvific value of Jewish institutions, a position unacceptable to judaizers.

⁷⁴. Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, p.118, argues that the link between docetism and judaizing was invented by Ignatius; see his discussion of 9.1, pp.124-125

⁷⁵. Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, p.126

"called by any other name is not of God" (10.1). This last remark suggests that these judaizers did not call themselves "Christians." No clues are provided as to how they did identify themselves.

For the bishop Judaism is a thing of the past, an "evil leaven, old and sour." His readers are urged to turn to the "new leaven," Jesus Christ. They are to be "salted" by him so that they will not spoil (10.2). The implication of Ignatius' remarks is that clinging to "Judaism" will deprive one of the eternal life which Christ bestows.⁷⁶ Ignatius wraps up his argument by asserting:

It is ridiculous⁷⁷ to profess Jesus Christ and to Judaize; for Christianity did not believe in Judaism, but Judaism in Christianity, into which every tongue that has believed in God has been gathered together (10.3).

Thus, for the Syrian bishop a Jewish lifestyle is absolutely incompatible with the profession of Jesus Christ. Judaizing represents a backward move into an anachronistic and obsolete way of life.

Ignatius concludes this section by stating that he writes these things, not because he knows that some of the Magnesians are doing this (11), that is, judaizing. His intent is to forewarn them so that they will not get caught on the "hooks of vain opinion" (*κενοδοξίας*). They ought to be fully assured

⁷⁶. Schoedel, Ignatius of Antioch, p.126

⁷⁷ *ἄτοκόν ἐστίν*, it is out of place, improper, wrong or morally evil

of, or have perfect faith in, (*πεπληροφορηθῆναι*) the birth, passion and resurrection of Jesus Christ which took place in the time of Pontius Pilate. This is the source of Christian hope from which the Magnesians are not to turn away (11).⁷⁸ The import of Ignatius' discussion appears to be that judaizing threatens the centrality of these salvific events and betrays a lack of confidence in their efficacy.

If the Magnesian Christians are not actually judaizing, it is conceivable that the danger against which Ignatius wishes to protect them may be no more than opinions which he describes as "strange" (8.1) and "vain" (11). An interest in "old stories" (8.1), Sabbath keeping (9.1), and perhaps a high regard for the prophets of the Hebrew scriptures (9.1) may be the extent of the "judaizing" impulse in Magnesia. Curiosity about such matters might reflect the continuing influence of Christian Jews, or of social contacts with a local Jewish community,⁷⁹ or the presence within the church of former god-fearers.⁸⁰ Ignatius clearly sees these preoccupations of

⁷⁸. Lightfoot, p.135, and Trevett, p.270, regard 11.1 as an anti-docetic statement. Schoedel, p.128, seems to concur, but argues that the link between judaizing and docetism was invented by Ignatius (pp.118,125). Corwin, p.60, contends that the judaizers' disregard for the birth, passion and resurrection of Christ arises out of their reverence for Jesus as a teacher, not out of a docetic christology. Rius-Camps, pp.45-46, sees here an anti-judaizing warning, not an anti-docetic one (see note 73).

⁷⁹. Trebilco, Paul R., Jewish Communities in Asia Minor, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) p.29

⁸⁰. Wilson, p.608

the Magnesians as a serious threat which he goes to some lengths to discourage.

Trallians

Ignatius' central concern in addressing the Trallian church is to warn its members to "be deaf" to anyone who does not preach:

Jesus Christ, of the family of David, of Mary, who was truly born, both ate and drank, was truly persecuted under Pontius Pilate, was truly crucified and died...who was also truly raised from the dead...(9.1-2).

These people are docetists alleging that Christ "suffered in appearance" (τὸ δοκεῖν κεκοιθῆναι; 10.1). Judging from the bishop's christological assertions (9.1-2), these persons either deny or ignore the authenticity of Christ's historical and "fleshly" existence.⁸¹

The bishop describes these docetists as "godless" (ἄθεοι) and "faithless" (ἄπιστοι; 10.1).⁸² That they are Christians seems to be the implication of his warning to flee these "evil offshoots" (κακὰς παραφυάδας) which bear "death-dealing fruit" (11.1). In the bishop's opinion the docetists are illegitimate "offshoots" of the Christian community.⁸³ They are not the Father's planting (φυτεία πατρὸς; 11.1), otherwise they would

⁸¹. Schoedel, Ignatius of Antioch, p.155; Lightfoot, pp.143,173; Trevett, Ignatius and His Opponents, p.251

⁸². Trevett, p.247, views these terms as implying that the docetists are not Christians. Lightfoot, p.175, suggests that Ignatius uses such terms in order to place his opponents on the same level as the heathen.

⁸³. Schoedel, Ignatius of Antioch, p.156

reveal themselves to be "branches of the cross" (11.2), that is, they would affirm the reality of the crucifixion.⁸⁴

A possible allusion to the docetists might be contained in Ignatius' remark that even the ἀθέους, the godless, respect the bishop of Tralles (3.2).⁸⁵ It is conceivable, then, that docetists are indeed present at Tralles either as a separate community interacting with the church overseen by Polybius, or as fringe members of his congregation. Both scenarios could account for their respect for this exemplary bishop. Certainly there is nothing in the letter which might suggest that these docetists are not local people.

Another allusion to the docetists might be found in Ignatius' earlier appeal in 6.1 to use only "Christian food" and to avoid any "strange" or "alien plant" (ἀλλοτρίας βοτάνης). He defines this "alien plant" as a "dissension" or "faction" (αἵρεσις; 6.1), a group of Christian dissenters.⁸⁶ In the bishop's opinion they "mingle Jesus Christ with themselves in a show of integrity" like people who give:

a deadly poison mixed with honeyed wine, which the unsuspecting takes with evil pleasure and therewith dies (6.2).

⁸⁴. Ibid, p.157

⁸⁵. Lightfoot, p.160, and Schoedel, p.142, suggest that ἀθέους refers to "pagans" (cf. N.T. Eph 2:12). The difficulty is that elsewhere in the letter Ignatius refers to non-Christians as "gentiles" (ἔθνεσιν; 8.2).

⁸⁶. Trevett, Ignatius and His Opponents, p.254, interprets αἵρεσις as "heresy."

The Trallians are to be on guard against such people (7.1). This they will be, Ignatius assures them, if they are not "puffed up" and if they are inseparable from Christ, the bishop and the ordinances of the apostles (7.1).⁸⁷

What is meant by being "puffed up" can be inferred from Ignatius' comments in 4.1-5.2.⁸⁸ He asserts that he "thinks much" or "has many thoughts (*πολλὰ φρονῶ*) in God", but he must be careful not to perish through boasting (4.1). The bishop also loves "the suffering" of martyrdom but does not know if he is worthy (4.2). He insists that even in his own case neither his bonds nor his understanding (*νοεῖν*) of heavenly things make him a disciple (5.2). "Gentleness" is the power (3.2) which Ignatius feels he needs in order to defeat the ruler of this age (4.2).

The Syrian bishop associates being "puffed up" with taking inordinate pride in the possession of certain kinds of knowledge and, personally, in his approaching martyrdom.⁸⁹ The Trallian Christians have no cause to be "puffed up" in this respect. They are "infants" who would "choke" on the things which Ignatius could reveal to them (5.1). Instead he urges them to take up the "gentleness" (*πραυπάθειαν*) which will defeat the devil and to renew themselves:

⁸⁷. Lightfoot, p.148, regards such injunctions as an "antidote" to the poison of the docetists.

⁸⁸. Schoedel, Ignatius of Antioch, p.147

⁸⁹. Schoedel, Ignatius of Antioch, p.143

in faith - which is the flesh of the Lord - and
in love - which is the blood of Jesus Christ (8.1).

Flesh and blood are eucharistic terms which seem to point to the reality of Christ's suffering and death as the centre and ground of Christian faith and love.⁹⁰ In their preoccupation with heavenly thoughts the Trallian Christians have lost, or are in danger of losing, sight of this crucial point.

Ignatius, thus, draws a causal link between fascination with certain types of knowledge and being on guard against the docetists. He does not, however, actually associate such knowledge with the activities and beliefs of this "faction." The possession of such thoughts does not necessarily imply a deficient christology,⁹¹ nor is it inherently wrong.⁹² It is being "puffed up" about it which threatens to displace Christ's suffering and resurrection as the basis of salvation, and which makes one particularly vulnerable to those whom he considers to be the real enemy.

The Trallians' best defense against the docetists (in addition to not being puffed up) is to be inseparable from Jesus Christ, the bishop and the commands of the apostles

⁹⁰. Schoedel, Ignatius of Antioch pp.149-150; Lightfoot, p.171

⁹¹. Schoedel, Ignatius of Antioch, p.145, sees Ignatius' treatment of this subject as arising from the challenge to authority posed by the docetists.

⁹². Trevett, p.261, remarks that Ignatius introduces such knowledge as if it were a commonplace of Christian belief, but then treats it as a special feature of the anti-episcopal charismatics (cf.pp.291, 293, 296).

(7.1). The person who does anything apart from the bishop, the council of elders, and the deacons is not pure in conscience (7.2). Opposition to church leaders appears to be a potential threat against which the Trallians must be on guard (8.1).⁹³ Theirs is a church which is "at peace" (Inscr). It is their practice to do nothing without the bishop (2.2). They espouse the leadership of bishop, elders and deacons (3.1-2).⁹⁴ Ignatius urges his readers to persevere in their "concord" (12.2).

Of the two pre-conditions which Ignatius views as likely to inhibit an effective response to the docetist "faction" at Tralles, hypocrisy towards church officials does not appear to be an actual problem. Much more serious is the problem of those who are "puffed up" because of their understanding of heavenly matters. While Ignatius is implicitly critical of their behaviour, he is particularly concerned about its implications. These people do not appear to constitute a group of opponents;⁹⁵ rather their attitude makes them vulnerable to those whom the Syrian bishop clearly identifies as

⁹³. Lightfoot, p.148, views 8.1 as acquitting the Trallians of complicity in docetism. Trevett, p.233f, uses this passage to acquit the Trallians of both docetism and anti-episcopal activity. The immediate reference, however, appears to be 7.2 which speaks of hypocrisy toward church leaders.

⁹⁴. Ignatius' special instructions concerning deacons (2.3-3.1) appear to be arise from instances of abuse of office, rather from general contempt for the office itself; cf. Schoedel, Ignatius of Antioch, p.141.

⁹⁵. I disagree with Trevett here, see note 87 above.

adversaries.

Philadelphians

Philadelphia is one of the two cities which Ignatius visited and where he met with local Christians. *Philadelphians* refers to discussions he had with church members.⁹⁶ In 7.1 the Syrian bishop reminds his readers that some of them tried to deceive him. The Spirit, however, was not deceived and prompted him, as Ignatius writes:

I cried out while among you, I spoke with a loud voice - the voice of God: "Attend to the bishop and the presbytery and the deacons."

Some did not regard this as truly inspired speech but suspected that the Syrian bishop had received advance information about the "division" (*μερισμόν*) in their church (7.2). Ignatius swears, with Christ as his witness, that he did not learn of it from any human being. It was indeed the Spirit who proclaimed that they should "do nothing without the bishop" (7.2).

Ignatius acted as he did because he is a man "made for unity" knowing that God does not dwell where there is division (*μερισμός*) and anger. He assures his readers that all who repent to the "unity of God and the council of the bishop" will be forgiven (8.1). What the bishop discovered during his

⁹⁶. Lightfoot, pp.241,267; Schoedel, p.204; Trevett, p.265; Barrett, C.K., "Jews and Judaizers in the Epistles of Ignatius," in Jews, Greeks and Christians, Religious Cultures in Late Antiquity, R.Hamerton-Kelly & R.Scroggs (eds), (Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1976:220-244), p.232. Corwin, p.58, places these events in Antioch.

visit to Philadelphia is that there is a division (*μερισμός*) within the Christian community there. His exhortation to give heed to church officials, his audience's response, and the conditions Ignatius sets out for forgiveness suggest that this "division" is over the issue of obedience to these same officials.⁹⁷ Indeed, much of the letter, beginning with the bishop's opening words, appears to be preoccupied with this problem.

The Syrian bishop's salutation to the Christians of Philadelphia is qualified by his remark that he greets them:

especially if (emphasis mine) they are at one with the bishop and with the presbyters and deacons with him, who have been appointed in the purpose of Jesus Christ, whom according to his own will he established in strength by his Holy Spirit (Inscr).

Thus, at the very outset of his letter, Ignatius calls into question their loyalty to their congregational officials.⁹⁸ He further makes the point that these officials are part of Christ's purpose, intention or will (*γνώμη*) for the church.

This is followed by a defence of the unnamed bishop of Philadelphia who is described in glowing terms - gentle, attuned to the commandments, possessing a godly mind, virtuous and perfect, free from disturbance and from wrath (1.1-2). His ministry to the community was acquired directly from the

⁹⁷. Schoedel, Ignatius of Antioch, p.205; Trevett, Ignatius and His Opponents, p.237

⁹⁸. Schoedel, Ignatius of Antioch, p.195; Lightfoot, pp.250-251

Father and from Jesus Christ, not from himself nor through human beings nor from "empty conceit" or "excessive ambition" (*κενοδοξίαν*; 1.1). Thus, not only are church officials, in general, divinely appointed but this particular bishop's ministry also has a divine origin.

Ignatius urges his readers to flee "division" (*μερισμόν*) and "evil teachings" (*κακοδιδασκαλίας*; 2.1), thus associating the division in Philadelphia with objectionable teachings,⁹⁹ and teachers. The best protection against these "trustworthy" (*ἀξιόπιστοι*) wolves who wish to "take God's runners captive by evil pleasure" is to follow the shepherd - the bishop - like sheep (2.1-2). Those responsible for the troubles in this church are thus likened to sheep in wolves' clothing. They are "evil plants" (*κακὸν βοτανόν*) which are to be avoided since they are neither of Christ's cultivation nor "a planting of the Father" (*φυτεία πατρὸς*; 3.1).¹⁰⁰

In 3.1 the Syrian bishop states that he had not actually found "division" (*μερισμόν*) within the church at Philadelphia, but *ἀποδιύλισμόν*, a process of "filtering" or "purification" (3.1).¹⁰¹ He continues, nevertheless, insisting that only those

⁹⁹. Schoedel, Ignatius of Antioch, p.197

¹⁰⁰. Lightfoot, p.243; Schoedel, Ignatius of Antioch, p.197f

¹⁰¹. Lightfoot, p.256, Ignatius wishes to guard against the appearance of censuring the Philadelphians by implying that they had separated themselves from the "heretics". Trevett, p.128f, the errorists were beginning to separate themselves from the rest of the community. Schoedel,

who are with the bishop are "of God and Jesus Christ." Those who "repent" and "come to the unity of the church" will also be of God (3.2). Ignatius solemnly admonishes them that anyone who follows a "schismatic" (*σχίζοντι*) will not inherit the kingdom of God. Those who walk in an "alien purpose" (*ἀλλοτριᾷ γνώμῃ*) do not "agree with" or "consent to" (*συγκατατίθεται*) the passion (3.3).

*Ἀλλοτριᾷ γνώμῃ*¹⁰² refers to a purpose "alien" to or other than that of Jesus Christ, whose *γνώμη* includes the appointing of bishop, elders and deacons (Inscr). It may be possible to surmise that the schismatics who walk in an "alien purpose," are the same individuals who are not with the bishop. Another aspect of their position appears to be their disagreement with the "passion." What Ignatius' means by this may be inferred, perhaps, from his exhortation to *σπουδάσατε*, to hasten, to be zealous, to make every effort to celebrate one eucharist (4.1). This suggests that more than one eucharist is being celebrated. It may be that these schismatics are holding separate eucharistic celebrations.¹⁰³ It is not inconceivable that Ignatius has the eucharist in mind when he urges his

p.198, indicates (rightly, I think) that no separation had actually taken place. The opponents were very much a part of the church even after Ignatius' departure.

¹⁰². Trevett, p.239, regards this term as descriptive of the errorists' teaching, though she does not elaborate the content of that teaching.

¹⁰³. Lightfoot, pp.257-258; Corwin, p.58; Trevett, *Ignatius and His Opponents*, p.272; Wilson, p.609

opponents to repent or return to the "unity of the church" (3.2) and the "unity of God" (8.2).¹⁰⁴

The "division" within the Christian community at Philadelphia, then, appears to be over the issue of obedience to church officials. Some Christians there do not "pay heed" to the bishop, the council of elders and the deacons. These people are, in Ignatius' opinion, "schismatics" who do not walk in Christ's purpose. The breach within the Philadelphian community may have manifested itself in separate meetings and eucharistic celebrations.

A number of factors suggest that this "division" did not involve a radical or irreparable split within the community. Those who doubted the authenticity of Ignatius' inspiration in 7.2 are most likely those who do not wish to "pay heed" to church officials. Not only were these "schismatics" present when the bishop met with the congregation, but came close to deceiving him.¹⁰⁵ Later when thanking the Philadelphians for receiving his friends Philo and Rheus Agathopous Ignatius mentions that some "dishonoured" them (11.1). No doubt these are the same individuals who gave the bishop a hard time when he was there.¹⁰⁶ Ignatius indicates that the matter can be

¹⁰⁴. In 4.1 Ignatius presents the "one eucharist" as a symbol of the unity which he believes is an inherent character of Christ and his church. Cf. Schoedel, p.199.

¹⁰⁵. Schoedel, Ignatius of Antioch, p.205; Wilson, p.609

¹⁰⁶. Lightfoot, p.281; Schoedel, Ignatius of Antioch, p.214

resolved by repentance and a return to the "unity of the church" (3.2) and to the bishop's council (8.1).

The source of the "division" in the Philadelphian church may be found in Ignatius' account of a debate in which he participated while in that community. In 8.2 he urges his readers to do nothing from "contentiousness" (*ἐπιθελαν*). As an example of what he means, the bishop writes that he heard some individuals saying, "If I do not find (it) in the archives, I do not believe (it to be) in the gospel."¹⁰⁷ The *ἀρχεῖα*, "archives" or "original documents," referred to are probably the Hebrew Scriptures.¹⁰⁸ It may be surmised that some members of the Philadelphian church are looking to the Hebrew Bible as an authoritative standard for Christian beliefs and practices.¹⁰⁹

Ignatius records in 8.2 that he insisted, "It is written." His opponents responded with *πρόκειται*, "it lies before (us)." This looks like a challenge to the bishop to support his views with scriptural proofs. Ignatius appears to have been unprepared or unable to do this.¹¹⁰ Instead he

¹⁰⁷. For discussion of the wording of this sentence see Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, p.207, especially note 3; Lightfoot, pp.269-272

¹⁰⁸. Lightfoot, p.272; Corwin, p.58; Schoedel, pp.207-208; Trevett, pp.267, 458

¹⁰⁹. Trevett, *Ignatius and His Opponents*, p.267

¹¹⁰. Trevett, *Ignatius and His Opponents*, pp.166, 280; Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, p.209

appeals to Jesus Christ and the events of his life, asserting that these are the "inviolable archives," the foundational and authoritative documents, of Christianity.

Two passages in *Philadelphians* appear to contain further allusions to the opponents' views. In 5.2 Ignatius asserts, "we also love the prophets because they also made their proclamation with the gospel in view." They set their hope on Christ and waited for him. They believed in him and so were saved. The prophets are indeed saints worthy of love and admiration. They are "attested by Jesus Christ and numbered together in the gospel of the common hope" (5.2).

In 9.1, the Syrian bishop concedes, "the priests are also good," but the high priest, Christ is better. He alone is entrusted with the "secrets of God" because he is the "door of the Father." The patriarchs of Israel, the prophets of the Hebrew Scriptures, the apostles and the church all enter into God's unity through this "door" alone (9.1). The coming of Christ, his passion and resurrection are the distinctive features of the gospel. The "beloved prophets" made their proclamation precisely with these events in view (9.2).

Ignatius' statement, "we also love the prophets" (5.2) is apologetic and functions in much the same way as does the concessive statement that "priests are also good" (9.1). Both are indicative of the opponents' interests and both pave the way for the bishop to relativize his adversaries' claims.¹¹¹

¹¹¹. Lightfoot, pp.262,274

In each case he subordinates their heroes of faith, the patriarchs, prophets and priests, to Christ. For Ignatius the Hebrew Scriptures are authoritative only to the extent that they witness to Christ.¹¹²

It has been suggested that the interest of these Philadelphian Christians in prophets and priests might indicate contacts with certain strands of Hellenistic Jewish thought. In particular attention has been drawn to the writings of the Jewish historian Josephus. He seems to have referred to the Hebrew Scriptures as "archives" written by divinely inspired prophets. Priests appear as the custodians of these scriptures and as spiritual guides.¹¹³ Unfortunately it cannot be conclusively demonstrated that such ideas were common in early second century Judaism in Asia Minor.¹¹⁴

An alternative reconstruction sees this interest in prophets and priests as characteristic of those Christians for whom Revelation was written. The seer was familiar with the

¹¹². Trevett, Ignatius and His Opponents, p.164

¹¹³. Schoedel, W.R., "Ignatius and the Archives" in Harvard Theological Review, 71, (1978:97-106), pp.100-105

¹¹⁴. Trebilco, p.29, posits direct contact between the Philadelphian judaizers and the local Jewish community. He also points out (p.50) a 4th century C.E. inscription from the synagogue of Sardis commemorating a Jewish "priest" and "teacher of wisdom." He regards this as evidence that Sardis was well removed from the influence of emerging rabbinic Judaism. Because of its late date this inscription, tantalizing as it is, cannot be used to as proof that these second century Christians derived their interest in priests from contemporary Judaism.

Hebrew scriptures¹¹⁵ and his work is "rich in interpretation" of them.¹¹⁶ The seer and his circle revered prophets and prophecy, regarding this as a vehicle for the revelation of God's secrets.¹¹⁷ In this work Christians are depicted as priests who reign in the eschatological kingdom (1:6; 5:9; 20:6).¹¹⁸ Among the Christians of Philadelphia, then, may be some who are attuned to the type of Christianity represented by Revelation.¹¹⁹

A final allusion to these Philadelphians who debated with Ignatius may be found in 6.1 where he warns his readers not to listen to anyone who "explains," "interprets" or "proclaims" (*ἐρμηνευει*) Judaism to them. He warns them, "it is better to hear Christianity from a man who is circumcised than Judaism from a man uncircumcised" (6.1). At least some of those who were interpreting Judaism seem to have been uncircumcised. A number of suggestions have been made concerning the identity of these uncircumcised interpreters of Judaism. It has been

¹¹⁵. Trevett, C., "The Other Letters to the Churches of Asia: Apocalypse and Ignatius of Antioch" in Journal for the Study of the New Testament, 37, (1989:117-135), p.123

¹¹⁶. Trevett, C., "Apocalypse, Ignatius, Montanism: Seeking the Seeds," Vigilae Christianae, 43, (1989:313-338), p.325

¹¹⁷ Trevett, "Apocalypse, Ignatius...", p.324; Trevett, "The Other Letters...", pp.129-130

¹¹⁸. Trevett, C., "Apocalypse, Ignatius, Montanism: Seeking the Seeds" in Vigilae Christianae 43 (1989:313-338), p.327

¹¹⁹. Trevett, "The Other Letters...", p.130; Trevett, "Apocalypse, Ignatius...", p.329

proposed that they are representatives of a group of heterodox Jews trying to accommodate themselves to a pagan or Christian environment,¹²⁰ or even Jewish Christians.¹²¹ The most likely candidates, however, are gentile Christians who had previous contacts with Judaism or Jewish Christianity.¹²²

In the Syrian bishop's opinion, the Philadelphians would do better to listen to Jewish witnesses to Christ. Who these might be is not clear. Proposals include the apostles,¹²³ and Christian Jews living in or near Philadelphia.¹²⁴ Another possibility may be the prophets referred to in the preceding passage (5.2). Such Jewish witnesses may be heard, unlike the gentile interpreter of Judaism, but caution is necessary. If such a person fails to "speak of Jesus Christ" then he or she becomes like the uncircumcised who interprets Judaism; both are "tombstones and graves of the dead on which nothing but the names of men is written" (6.1). That the bishop appears to associate this interpreting of Judaism to Christians with the "evil arts and plots of the ruler of this age" (6.2) suggests that this is the evil teaching (2.1) of which he warns his

¹²⁰. Barrett, pp.234-235; Corwin, pp.58,63.

¹²¹. Donahue, p.89

¹²². Lightfoot, p.264; Trebilco, p.28; Johnson, p.111; Wilson, p.608; Trevett, Ignatius and His Opponents, p.278

¹²³. Schoedel, "Theological Norms...", p.34

¹²⁴. Trebilco, pp.28-29

readers earlier.

Ignatius' opponents in Philadelphia appear to have been gentile Christians whose activity he describes as interpreting or proclaiming Judaism. They appear to have regarded the Hebrew Scriptures as authoritative documents in which the teachings of Christianity ought to be grounded and to which the gospel ought to conform. These interpreters of Judaism seem to have especially revered the prophets of the Hebrew Bible and may have engaged in speculation about the role of priests. It is their approach to scripture which the Syrian bishop views as representative of the contentiousness which plagues the Philadelphian church.

Their insistence on the normative status of the Hebrew scriptures may be at the root of the division and disregard for appointed church leaders which characterizes the Philadelphian community.¹²⁵ The ministries of bishops, elders and deacons do not enjoy the same sort of scriptural sanction as do the ministries of prophets and/or priests. Ignatius' attempt to provide an inspired prophetic sanction for the threefold ministry of bishop, elder and deacon is rejected. These interpreters of Judaism may have held separate eucharistic celebrations but they are clearly members of the church who continue to meet with and who are welcomed by other

¹²⁵. Trevett, Ignatius and His Opponents, p.288, posits two groups, judaizers and anti-episcopalians. In her later writings, however, she appears to treat the opponents as one group combining anti-episcopalian and judaizing features, cf. "The Other Letters...", p.131

Christians in the Philadelphian community.

Smyrnaeans

Smyrna is the second city in which Ignatius spent some time and met with local Christians (12.2-13.1). His primary concern in *Smyrnaeans* is to alert his readers to the teachings and practices of some "faithless" (ἄπιστοι) persons who are saying that Christ suffered "in appearance" (τὸ δοκεῖν; 2.1). These docetists who deny the authenticity of Christ's human existence ¹²⁶ are themselves, in the bishop's opinion, merely "appearance" (τὸ δοκεῖν). Their ultimate fate will correspond to their thinking; they will be "bodiless" (ἄσώματα) and "demonic" (δαίμονικοι; 2.1). It has been suggested that the docetists thought of resurrection life as a spiritualized existence which Ignatius asserts is really demonic.¹²⁷

Ignatius counters the views of his docetist opponents by asserting that he knows and believes that Christ was "in the flesh even after the resurrection" (3.1). He then relates a tradition about Jesus in which the resurrected Lord is said to have encouraged his disciples to touch him and see for themselves that he is not a "bodiless demon" (δαίμονιον ἄσώματον; 3.2). According to this tradition, even after his resurrection Jesus ate and drank with his disciples just like a "fleshly being" (σαρκικός; 3.3). For the Syrian bishop,

¹²⁶. Lightfoot, p.293; Corwin, p.54; Schoedel, Ignatius of Antioch, p.225; Trevett, Ignatius and His Opponents, p.251

¹²⁷. Schoedel, Ignatius of Antioch, p.225.

and after the resurrection.¹²⁸

In 4.1 Ignatius tells his readers that he is recommending "these things" knowing, on the one hand, that they share his outlook. On the other hand he wishes to guard or protect them beforehand (*προφυλάσσω*) from "beasts in human form."¹²⁹ The "things" which the bishop recommends appear to be the traditions about Jesus just quoted (3.2-3; and perhaps 1.1-2). These are presented as ammunition to be used in refuting the claims of the docetists.

Ignatius urges the Smyrnaean Christians not to "receive" such individuals, presumably into their homes and/or gatherings. If at all possible, he would prefer that they not even "meet" them (4.1). That it would be possible for Christians in Smyrna to "meet" these people aside from formally "receiving" them into their gatherings suggests that the bishop has in mind locals rather than outsiders or travelling teachers.¹³⁰ His readers are only to pray for their repentance, which the bishop regards as so difficult only Jesus Christ alone can bring it about (4.1).

¹²⁸. Lightfoot, p.294

¹²⁹. Trevett, Ignatius and His Opponents, pp.234,249, treats this passage as an indication that docetists were not yet in Smyrna. Schoedel, Ignatius of Antioch, p.231, suggests that Ignatius' claims to be guarding his readers in advance cannot always be taken seriously, especially when other notices in the letter such that the docetists were local people.

¹³⁰. Schoedel, Ignatius of Antioch, p.231

Ignatius says that the docetists deny Jesus Christ, the perfect human being, meaning perhaps that they do not regard Jesus Christ as the epitome of genuine humanity. He alleges that as a result Christ has denied these "advocates of death" (4.2-5.1). The bishop asserts in 5.2 that the docetists do not confess that Christ is the "bearer of flesh" (*σαρκοφόρον*). In this way they deny him "completely" revealing themselves to be "bearers of corpses" (*νεκροφόρος*). The import of Ignatius' argument seems to be that in denying the authenticity of Christ's human experiences the docetist teaching leads to death and not the eternal life which Christ brings.¹³¹

In these matters his opponents have been persuaded by neither the prophecies nor the law of Moses, that is, the Hebrew Scriptures.¹³² The gospel, most likely Christian traditions about Jesus rather than a written document,¹³³ have failed to convince them, as have the sufferings of individual Christians (5.1). These remarks suggest that Ignatius' opponents do not accept the evidence of these

¹³¹. Lightfoot, pp.295, 303; Schoedel, Ignatius of Antioch, p.235

¹³². Lightfoot, p.295, takes the view that the docetists were judaizers who professed a great respect for the Hebrew scriptures but ignored their testimony to Christ's passion. Corwin, pp.57,60, regards this passage as indicating the docetists held the Jewish scriptures in contempt. Schoedel, Ignatius of Antioch, p.234, asserts that the passage has a neutral tone, being neither apologetic nor concessive, but taking for granted the authority of the scriptures in the Christian community.

¹³³. Lightfoot, p.308; Schoedel, Ignatius of Antioch, p.234

witnesses, that is, they do not regard as authoritative the Scriptures and the gospel traditions. Alternatively, they might accept these as authoritative witnesses but interpret them differently than does the Syrian bishop.¹³⁴

The latter seems to be the case in the instance of the suffering of individual Christians. Ignatius writes, "they have the same opinion about us" (5.2), as they do of Christ (implied). Not only do they have a truncated view of Christ's humanity, they diminish the significance of the bishop's bondage and martyrdom, reducing both to mere appearance (cf. 4.2).¹³⁵ This is Ignatius' reading of the implications of his opponents' position. That they would have stated their view of the matter differently is clearly indicated by the bishop's rhetorical question:

what benefit will anyone do me, praising me but
blaspheming the Lord by not confessing that he
is the bearer of flesh? (5.2)

What is disclosed here is that the opponents actually applaud Ignatius' actions. Thus, the problem is not that these persons do not value individual suffering but that they attribute to it a significance quite different from that which the bishop himself ascribes to it.¹³⁶

That these docetists have had opportunity to express praise for and to Ignatius indicates he is not speaking of

¹³⁴. Schoedel, Ignatius of Antioch, p.234

¹³⁵. Ibid

¹³⁶. Ibid

some hypothetical adversaries but of individuals with whom he has had actual dealings. The bishop writes that it did not seem right to record the faithless (*ἀπιστα*) names of these individuals (5.3), implying that these names would be meaningful to his readers.¹³⁷ He goes on to say that he would rather not even remember them until they repent concerning the "passion" (5.3). That the answer to their error is "repentance" (4.1; 5.3) indicates that they are Christians. If the individuals in question are known to both Ignatius and his readers, it is not inconceivable that they might actually be associated with, or even be members of, the church in Smyrna.

Although, Ignatius refuses to name his Smyrnaean opponents it is possible that his letter does contain an allusion to, at least, one of them. In 6.1 he admonishes his readers:

Let no one be deceived: even heavenly powers and the glory of angels and the rulers, both visible and invisible, if they do not believe in the blood of Christ, are also subject to judgment. He who can receive this, let him receive it. Let (high) position inflate no one...(6.1).

Judgment awaits all who do not believe in Christ's blood - the reality of passion - regardless of their heavenly or earthly position. This looks like a warning to someone with a "position" in the Smyrnaean church who the bishop suspects or

¹³⁷. Schoedel, Ignatius of Antioch, p.235; Trevett, Ignatius and His Opponents, p.250, tries to argue that Ignatius knew their names from information given him in Ephesus or from personal experience in Antioch.

knows (5.3) is propagating docetist teachings. Whether the reference is to an individual who holds an "official position" such as elder or deacon is not discernible.¹³⁸ Charismatic or prophetic, or even other, bases of status and influence cannot be ruled out.¹³⁹

Ignatius' tells the Smyrnaeans to "observe those who hold strange opinions (ἑτεροδοξούντας) about the grace of Jesus Christ" (6.2). Again the implication is that these are local people whom his readers are in a position to scrutinize. The bishop singles out two aspects of the opponents' behaviour as particularly discernible. He charges them with a lack of concern for "love" (περὶ ἀγάπης). Nor do they care about widows, orphans, persons in distress, those who are imprisoned or released, the hungry and the thirsty (6.2).

These individuals also stay away from the eucharist and prayers because they do not confess that the eucharist is Christ's flesh which suffered for our sins and which the Father raised (7.1). That Ignatius chides these people for avoiding the church's central rite suggests he is referring to members of the same Christian community who are eligible and who might well be expected to come to eucharist. The reason

¹³⁸. Schoedel, Ignatius of Antioch, p.236, thinks the reference is to an elder of the church.

¹³⁹. Trevett, Ignatius and His Opponents, p.294, suggests that this person may have been an officer of the church, but regards him or her as a representative of a anti-episcopalian charismatic group rather than as a docetist. The context of the passage, however, seems to favour identifying this person as a docetist.

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given for their withdrawal from the congregation's eucharistic celebration indicates that these people are docetists. For them the eucharist cannot symbolize Christ's suffering and resurrected "flesh" since their position is that Christ was not a *σαρκοφύρος*.¹⁴⁰

In the Syrian bishop's opinion these people who speak against "the gift of God" are dying as they dispute. He argues that it would benefit these people "to love" (*ἀγαπᾶν*) so that they too might "arise" (7.1). Both "gift of God" and "to love" appear to be allusions to the eucharist. Each points to a different but equally important dimension of the eucharist as understood by Ignatius. By staying away these individuals are depriving themselves of God's gift, the eschatological benefits of the sacrament, described here as "arising."

In the early church the eucharist frequently was celebrated in the context of the "love-feast" (*ἀγάπη*). This served as the primary agency for caring for the needs of the poor within the Christian community.¹⁴¹ By avoiding eucharistic celebrations these people also fail "to love", that is, they neglect their social obligations as Christians (cf. 6.2). Ignatius links this social aspect of the eucharist/love-feast to its eschatological fruits.

¹⁴⁰. Trevett, *Ignatius and His Opponents*, p.286, sees this as proof that a docetic christology made participation in the eucharist impossible, and proof that those referred to 8.1-9.1 could not have been docetists.

¹⁴¹. Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, p.241

The Syrian bishop advises his readers to keep away from these people (7.2). They are not even to talk about them publicly or privately (7.2). Ignatius clearly wishes to discourage any dialogue with and discussion of these opponents and their views. He urges the Smyrnaean Christians to pay attention only to the prophets and especially to the "gospel in which the passion is shown us and the resurrection accomplished," that is, those traditions which support Ignatius' anti-docetic views (7.2).

The bishop exhorts his readers to flee "divisions" (*μερισμοῦς*) as the beginning of evils (7.2). This is followed by an admonition that everyone follow the bishop and the council of elders. No one is to do anything related to the church apart from the bishop (8.1). Specifically, only eucharists presided over by the bishop or his appointee are valid (8.1). It is not permissible to baptize or celebrate the love-feast (*ἀγάπην κοίειν*) without the bishop or his approval (8.2). The person who honours the bishop honours God, while the one who does anything without his knowledge "serves the devil" (9.1).

Ignatius' pointed counsel regarding valid eucharists and love-feasts suggests that he may be alluding here to the practices of the opponents.¹⁴² If this is the case, then what

¹⁴². Trevett, *Ignatius and His Opponents*, p.288, considers these to be the activities of anti-episcopal charismatics not docetists. Lightfoot, p.306, and Schoedel, p.236, attribute this type of behaviour to the docetists.

he is objecting to in 6.2-7.2 is that these individuals are avoiding the "official" celebration of the eucharist/love-feast, not that these people are abstaining altogether. It seems, then, that these individuals were engaging in rites that paralleled the "official" ones, but differed in that their significance would have been understood in a manner consistent with the docetists' distinctive christology. It is not inconceivable that the individual(s) with "position" referred to in 6.1 may have been linked with these baptisms, eucharists and love-feasts which lack episcopal supervision and approval.

Ignatius' Smyrnaean opponents appear to be docetists who deny the authenticity of Christ's historical and human experiences. They do not appear to be a group radically separated from the Christian community. Rather these individuals appear to be members of, or are in some way associated with the Smyrnaean church. They have had opportunity to "praise" Ignatius. Their number includes a person or persons with some status and influence within the Christian community. The Syrian bishop criticizes them for staying away from the "official" eucharist implying that they are eligible and ought to attend. They need to "repent" - to turn around - and return to what Ignatius considers to be the right way to believe and behave.

Summary

This examination of the Ignatian correspondence has revealed that the Syrian bishop does criticize, oppose and protest against certain individuals. In *Ephesians* he condemns travelling teachers who call themselves Christians but whose unspecified deeds are unworthy of God. Their teaching may include a Pauline antithesis between flesh and spirit, as well as christological assertions with which Ignatius disagrees. The specific content of their christological position is not recoverable from the bishop's remarks. Words of warning are also issued concerning obedience to the bishop and staying away from the assembly, although these do not appear to constitute a problem within the Ephesian church.

In *Magnesians* hypocrisy toward the bishop and Christian judaizing come under attack. Ignatius fears that the youth of Damas, bishop of the Magnesian church, may be cause for opposition to episcopal authority. The judaizing which the bishop regards as a threat to this Christian community appears to be limited to an interest in "old stories" and Sabbath observance. He also goes to some lengths to "christianize" the biblical prophets suggesting that a preoccupation with scripture may have been another aspect of the activity which he views as judaizing.

Ignatius' target in *Trallians* is docetism. His readers are urged to flee from "godless and "faithless" individuals who say that Christ suffered only in appearance. These

docetists constitute a "faction" or "offshoot" of the Christian community. They may have some contacts with Polybius' congregation since Ignatius thinks that even the "godless" respect this exemplary bishop. The Trallians are also warned about hypocrisy toward church officials, which does not appear to be a problem in their community. Of greater concern, from the Syrian bishop's perspective, is the tendency of some to be "puffed up" over their understanding of heavenly things.

Ignatius' opponents in *Philadelphians* appear to be gentile Christians who are engaged in "interpreting Judaism." They regard the Hebrew Scriptures as the authoritative documents of the Christian community, and seem to be interested in the revelation of God's secrets by prophets and/or priests. This same group may have challenged the Syrian bishop's prophecy concerning obedience to church leaders. Their disregard for appointed officials may be an outcome of the normative status which they attribute to Scripture, and may have manifested itself in separate meetings and eucharistic celebrations.

In *Smyrnaeans* Ignatius exhorts his readers not to "receive," "meet" or even "speak about" those who assert that Christ suffered in appearance only. These docetists appear to be members of the Smyrnaean church and include a person(s) who holds "position" within it. They avoid the eucharists and love-feasts presided over by the bishop for ideological

reasons, holding parallel rites of their own, which are declared invalid by Ignatius.

The Identity, Number and Location of the Opponents

Although Ignatius is clearly opposed to the beliefs and behaviour of certain individuals it is difficult to reduce the state of affairs depicted in his letters to a simple equation:

the bishop of Antioch versus x number of opponents.

The situation is complex and nuanced. It may be possible, nevertheless, to place those whom Ignatius opposes within certain broad categories.

In both *Trallians* and *Smyrnaeans* Ignatius explicitly and vehemently condemns those who hold that Christ suffered in appearance only. While in both instances these opponents may be labelled "docetists" on account of their christological position there are some significant differences between the two groups. The Trallian docetists are described as a faction, an offshoot of the Christian community who, nevertheless, respect Polybius the bishop. At Smyrna the docetists appear to be members of the church with separatist leanings.¹⁴³ They are condemned for avoiding the eucharists and love-feasts presided over by church officials, and their parallel rites are declared invalid.

"Judaizing" and "interpreting Judaism" are condemned in *Magnesians* and *Philadelphians*. While similar, the issues

¹⁴³. Hammond Bammell, p.82

raised in these two letters do not appear to be identical. The judaizing of the Magnesians appears to involve the practice or advocacy of a particular lifestyle by gentile Christians. Sabbath keeping may have been a feature of this lifestyle which is associated in some way with "old stories" and "vain opinions" possibly about the biblical prophets. These issues are not raised in *Philadelphians*. What Ignatius labels as "interpreting Judaism" in this community is a particular attitude and approach to the Hebrew Scriptures, apparently taken by gentile Christians. It might be possible, however, to group "judaizing" and "interpreting Judaism" together under the umbrella of a continuing Christian interest in various features of Judaism.

The travelling teachers vilified in *Ephesians* ought to be treated as a separate case. The spirit-flesh distinction which may have been a feature of their teaching might point in the direction of docetism. There are hints that Ignatius may have been suspicious of their teachings about Jesus, but he never explicitly or implicitly imputes to them a specifically docetic christology. Thus, a positive identification of the travelling teachers with the docetists is not possible.¹⁴⁴ The Syrian bishop's description of these teachers as doing things unworthy of God and as being *ῥυπαροί* suggests that their behaviour and practices were equally, if not more,

¹⁴⁴. Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, p.231, concedes that such an identification is uncertain.

objectionable.

In each of the letters examined Ignatius admonishes his readers about potential or actual hypocrisy toward church officials. This involves "naming" officials, such as a bishop, but then doing everything apart from him. A careful assessment of the texts reveals this is a problem closely related to local circumstances and does not represent the position of any one particular group. In Magnesia hypocrisy toward the ecclesiastical authorities appears to be associated with the young age of their bishop Damas. In Philadelphia it seems to be related to a preoccupation with the Hebrew Scriptures and a high regard for prophecy. At Smyrna those who do everything apart from the bishop appear to be docetists whose rejection of mainstream rites is related to their christological stance. In *Trallians* and *Ephesians* an absence of anti-episcopal activity is presented as a safeguard against docetists and travelling teachers, respectively.

Akin to this is the problem of those Trallian Christians who are "puffed up" on account of their understanding of heavenly things. The possession of such knowledge is not inherently wrong nor does it necessarily entail a docetic christology. It is unacceptable, however, to concentrate on this sort of knowledge to such an extent that one loses sight of Christ's death and resurrection as the ground of salvation.

Ignatius is quite definitely opposed to two sorts of Christians whom he encountered - those who espoused a docetic

christology and those who displayed a continuing interest in Judaism. The travelling teachers encountered by the Ephesians appear to constitute a third group of opponents. It is not clear, however, whether the bishop is hostile to all such itinerant ministers or only to those who proved to be "false." Anti-episcopal hypocrisy and being "puffed up" do not seem to be the primary characteristics of any identifiable group of opponents. These might be better identified as tendencies which can arise in various circumstances and which Ignatius wishes to correct.

The docetists referred to in the letters are located in Asia Minor. In Smyrna they are members of the church. At Tralles they are an offshoot of the Christian community though perhaps not entirely dissociated from it. The group which displays the greatest affinity to these docetists are the schismatics of the Johannine epistles. Like the docetists encountered by Ignatius the Johannine separatists do not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh (1Jn 4:2; 2Jn 7) and do not appear to regard Jesus' historical life and death as salvifically important (p.33). Direct links between these two groups have been hypothesized, with Ignatius and Polycarp representing an orthodox Johannine party struggling against a docetic splinter group.¹⁴⁵

Philadelphians provides evidence of local gentile Christians with a continuing interest in Judaism. Revelation

¹⁴⁵. Hammond Bammell, p.96

(3:9) also speaks of gentile Christians in Philadelphia who are associated with the local synagogue (p.25). Ignatius' gentile "interpreters of Judaism" are distinguished by a particular view of the Hebrew Scriptures and an interest in prophets and priests which bear a resemblance to certain Hellenistic Jewish attitudes toward the same (p.80). Whether the Jewish community of Philadelphia actually espoused the views elaborated by Josephus (p.80) cannot be determined. If they did, the associations mentioned in Revelation may well be the source of the notions held by some Philadelphian Christians.

An alternative view of these opponents focuses on Ignatius' inability to meet his opponents' challenge to prove his case from the Scriptures (*Phd* 8.2). This may be seen as an indication that he is dealing here with a phenomenon he had not encountered before. The Philadelphian "interpretation of Judaism" may be a local peculiarity rooted in the Christianity of Asia Minor. It has already been pointed out (p.81) that these "interpreters of Judaism" appear to be well attuned to the perspectives represented by Revelation. Like the seer and his circle they are well versed in the Hebrew Scriptures, revere prophets and prophecy, and speculate about the role of priests. It has even been suggested that Ignatius' Philadelphian opponents may have been familiar with

Revelation.¹⁴⁶

In addition to the gentile "interpreters of Judaism" Ignatius also expresses concern about Jewish witnesses to Christ (*Phd* 6.1). Although the reference may be to the apostles or the prophets and intended as a rhetorical contrast to the gentile "interpreters of Judaism," Jews preaching to Christians are attested to in the Pastoral Epistles (p.25). Titus 1:10-11, in particular, expresses the need to silence individuals "from the circumcision" who are upsetting whole families with their teaching.

In *Magnesians* Ignatius seeks to discourage interest in "old stories" which are connected with leading a Jewish lifestyle. Observance of the Sabbath and a high regard for the biblical prophets appear to be other features of the Magnesians' continuing interest in Judaism. The writer of Titus, also urges his readers to ignore "Jewish myths" and "commandments" (1:14), and to avoid "quarrels about the law" (3:9).

The travelling teachers mentioned in *Ephesians* had passed through Ephesus and had not been received by the church there (*Eph* 9.1). The presence of itinerant "apostles" in Asia Minor is confirmed by the witness of Revelation (2:2). The Ephesian church, in particular, is singled out by the seer for its ability to discern false apostles and its unwillingness to

¹⁴⁶. Trevett, "Apocalypse, Ignatius..", p.325

tolerate evildoers (2:2).

Christian sources from Asia Minor confirm that the issues raised in Ignatius' letters are pertinent to local churches in that region. In particular Revelation seems to corroborate the Syrian bishop's observations concerning the Christian communities of Philadelphia and Ephesus. It is noteworthy that while Ignatius had not personally visited Ephesus he was able to pass on what appears to be accurate information about the character of its Christian community. That the bishop addressed his teaching about Mary and her virginity (*Eph* 20) to Ephesus, the city of the virgin goddess, has been pointed out as a sign that he knew of particular local situations and concerns.¹⁴⁷ If this can be demonstrated in the case of *Ephesians* it seems reasonable to suppose that *Trallians* and *Magnesians* also contain fairly reliable notices about local circumstances.

It is certainly conceivable that the Syrian bishop had to deal with the same or similar issues in his home congregation. Travelling teachers were also a feature of Syrian Christianity where they were sometimes problematic as well (*Did* 10, 11). Ignatius' vehement opposition to and familiarity with the views of the docetists might be seen as growing out of his Syrian experience. The same might be true of his continual warnings about anti-episcopal hypocrisy. Such assertions, however, amount to no more than undemonstrable suppositions

¹⁴⁷. Trevett, "The Other Letters...", p.121

and speculation. The Syrian bishop reveals very little in his letters about the situation from which he emerges.

The findings of this survey do not cohere entirely with any of the scholarly hypotheses examined above. While Lightfoot is correct in locating the opponents in Asia Minor, his thesis of a single front of opposition is not supported by the evidence. Corwin is mistaken in attempting to situate the opponents in Antioch, as is Trevett. Trevett's argument for the existence of an anti-episcopalian charismatic "error" does not appear to be sustainable either for Asia Minor or Antioch. Schoedel comes closest to the conclusions reached here, in that he locates the opponents in Asia Minor identifying them as docetists and judaizers. While Schoedel concedes that it cannot be conclusively demonstrated that the travelling teachers were docetists, he still subsumes them in the docetist category. This paper does not.

This assessment of the Ignatian correspondence has, thus, found opposition to three identifiable Christian groups, docetists, those with an interest in Judaism, and travelling teachers. All three categories of opponents were found to be located in Asia Minor. Two tendencies - anti-episcopal hypocrisy and being "puffed up" - about which Ignatius expresses concern were also identified. These also appear to have been related to local circumstances.

PART III

RESPONDING TO THE OPPONENTS

Berger and Luckmann's discussion of universe maintenance in the face of deviance will provide the framework for this exposition of Ignatius' responses to his opponents. They assert that in order to deal therapeutically with the problem of "heresy" or deviance a social group requires a body of knowledge from which may be extrapolated a theory of deviance, a diagnostic apparatus and a system of treatment.¹

This examination of Ignatius' responses will be begin, therefore, with a description of the nascent Christian symbolic universe within which the Syrian bishop operates. The opponents, as we shall see, relate to this symbolic universe in two ways. They are Christians and so are a part of the universe which Ignatius inhabits. In trying to find a place for them within this universe, the Syrian bishop posits a theory of deviance.

The opponents also present alternative versions of the Christian world view. These challenge Ignatius to define and justify more precisely the beliefs, practices and structures of the authentic Christian community as he sees it. These definitions of what is truly Christian function, on the one hand, to affirm the Syrian bishop's symbolic universe. On the other hand, they provide a diagnostic apparatus against which alternative visions of Christianity may be measured. Finally

¹. See above, p.5

this section will examine how Ignatius proposes to deal with the opponents, his recommended "therapy."

Ignatius' Symbolic Universe

Some scholars have tried to deny or explain away the implications of eschatological terms and images in Ignatius' letters.² Examination of these texts, however, reveals that to a very large extent the Syrian bishop shares the eschatological world view of the New Testament writers.³ The starting point for understanding Ignatius' symbolic universe is *Ephesians* 19.2-3. The bishop writes that when the Lord was revealed to the ages by the shining of a star in the heavens:

Thence was destroyed all magic, and every bond vanished; evil's ignorance was abolished, the old kingdom perished, God being revealed as human to bring newness of eternal life, and what had been prepared by God had its beginning; hence all things were disturbed because the destruction of death was being worked out (*Eph* 19.3).

For Ignatius the revelation of God in Jesus Christ marks a dramatic turning point in history. Christ's birth inaugurated a new era characterized by the "newness of eternal life" and

². Corwin, p.173; Bultmann, R., "Ignatius and Paul" in Schubert M. Ogden (ed) *Existence and Faith*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1961:267-277), pp.271-272; Bower, R.A., "The Meaning of EPITYGCHANO in the Epistles of St. Ignatius of Antioch" in *Vigilae Christianae* 28, 1974:1-14, p.13

³. Frend, W.H.C., *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church: A Study of Conflict from the Maccabees to Donatus*, (London: Blackwell, 1965), p.200

the destruction of all those powers hostile to humanity.⁴

It is the eschatological import of the Saviour's "coming" (*παρουσία*),⁵ his passion and his resurrection which make these the distinctive elements of the gospel (*Phd* 9.2). Christ's advent "in the end" (*Mg* 6.1) set in motion the process of salvation.⁶ As the Syrian bishop tells the Smyrnaeans, Jesus was:

truly nailed for us in the flesh under Pontius Pilate and Herod the tetrarch...that he might raise an ensign to the ages through his resurrection, to his saints and believers whether among the Jews or among the Gentiles in the one body of his church (*Sm* 1.2).

For Ignatius the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ mark the beginning of the eschatological ingathering of God's people into the body of the church.⁷

It is only within this community, called into existence through the cross (*Tr* 11.2), that eschatological salvation is actualized.⁸ Ignatius' understanding of the church's central rite, the celebration of the eucharist, demonstrates this

⁴. Aune, D.E., The Cultic Setting of Realized Eschatology in Early Christianity, (Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1972), Chapter IV, pp.141-142

⁵. Bultmann, p.172, argues from Ignatius' use of this term that the bishop has no futuristic apocalyptic expectations of a "second coming." This does not seem to be born out by the evidence, see especially *Pol* 3.2.

⁶. Aune, p.142

⁷. Schoedel, Ignatius of Antioch, pp.223-224; Weinrich, W.C., Spirit and Martyrdom, (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America Inc, 1981:111-163), p.121

⁸. Aune, p.165

quite clearly. When Christians come together to partake of the sacrament "the powers of Satan are broken and his destructiveness is shattered" (*Eph* 13.1). The warfare of heavenly and earthly beings is destroyed by the peace of eucharistic worship (*Eph* 13.2). In this way the church continues the process of evil's destruction initiated by Jesus.⁹

Ignatius describes the eucharist as "the medicine of immortality, the antidote preventing death, but leading to life in Jesus Christ forever" (*Eph* 20.2). It is only through participation in this "love feast"¹⁰ that one is empowered to "rise" (*ἀναστῆσιν*; *Sm* 7.1). Those who avoid the eucharist, refusing this "gift of God" die (*Sm* 7.1). Those who are not within "the altar" lack this "bread of God" (*Eph* 5.2). Participation in the church's eucharistic celebration is also the indispensable means for sharing in Christ's resurrection and the gift of eternal life which he brings.¹¹

Another outcome of the historical events of Jesus' life is that Ignatius and his readers are now living in the "end times" (*Eph* 11.1). It is a time of decision in which one must be conscious that "all things have an end, and two things are set before us together, death and life, and each person will

⁹. Aune, p.144

¹⁰. See above, pp.90-91

¹¹. Aune, p.156

go to his own place" (*Mg* 5.1).¹² The Syrian bishop warns his readers not to be complacent. God's patience could well become their judgment (11.1). They are exhorted to either "fear the coming wrath" or "love the present grace" so that they will be found in Jesus Christ possessing true life (11.1). The life which Christ brings is, thus, a future reality which must be chosen in the present.¹³

Judgment and hell fire await those who choose wrongly. Individuals who propagate "evil teaching" and those who listen to them will go into "the unquenchable fire" (*Eph* 16.2). Corrupters of homes and schismatics will not inherit the kingdom of God (*Eph* 16.1; *Phd* 3.3). Those who disobey their bishops will have to reckon with God (*Mg* 3.2). Even "heavenly beings," angels and rulers will be condemned if they do not have faith in the "blood of Christ" (*Sm* 6.1).

An important feature of Ignatius' eschatological world view is its qualified conflict dualism. His universe is in the grip of the destructive powers of Satan (*Eph* 13.1) and is populated by heavenly and earthly beings who are at war (*Eph* 13.2). Thus, standing over against, and antithetical to, Christ and his work of salvation is Satan and his evil

¹². Corwin, p.173, sees here a reference to judgment, but doubts that Ignatius looks forward to a single final judgment; Schoedel, p.110, asserts "all things have an end" is not a reference to judgment day but signifies that all things have a logical outcome. The references to life and death and each going to their own place seem to me to be judgmental themes.

¹³. Aune, p.159

forces. Both the dualism and the conflict of this world view are very real, but they are qualified eschatologically. Satan is ὁ ἀρχὸν τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου, the ruler of this age.¹⁴ His sovereignty is chronologically limited to this particular age.¹⁵ His defeat has been heralded by the appearance of the star in the heavens (Eph 19.3) and is being worked out in the eucharistic worship of Christ's church (Eph 13.1-2).

The antithesis between Christ and Satan is extended into the world of human beings too, as Ignatius says:

there are two coinages, the one of God, the other of the world, and each of them has its own imprint on it, the unbelievers that of this world, the believers the imprint of God the Father through Jesus Christ (Mg 5.2).

The world is, thus, populated by "believers" or "the faithful" (πιστοί) who belong to God through the agency of Christ, and "unbelievers" or "the faithless" (ἄπιστοι) who belong to "this world." This division is not, however, based on a radical ontological dualism. Ignatius makes it clear that the antithesis of "flesh" (σὰρξ) and "spirit" (πνεῦμα) is overcome in Christ (Eph 7.2) and in those who inhere in him (Eph 8.2).¹⁶

The boundary between the πιστοί and the ἄπιστοι is not impassable. There is "hope of repentance" for the faithless; they can learn to become disciples (Eph 10.1). The faithful,

¹⁴. Eph 17.1, 19.1; Mg 1.2; Tr 4.2; Rom 7.1; Phd 6.2. He is also called the Devil in Eph 10.3; Tr 8.1; Rom 5.3; Sm 9.1

¹⁵. Corwin, pp.156-157

¹⁶. Schoedel, p.23

if they are not wary, can lose their divine imprint. They can bring judgment upon themselves, for example, by not coming to the Christian assembly (*Eph* 5.3). Believers are also the targets of the "ruler of this age" who wishes to corrupt their "godly" intentions (*Rom* 7.1). The faithful must be wary of Satan's plots to lead them captive from the eternal life which Christ offers them (*Eph* 17.1).

Thus, Ignatius understands himself to be living in the "end times." This era began with the birth of Jesus Christ, whose advent makes possible the gift of eternal life to humankind and initiates the destruction of all the evils besetting the human race. The great drama of the God's salvific plan is being played out in the times in which the Syrian bishop lives. The church represents the eschatological ingathering of God's people. As the community of the end times, the church participates in the great cosmic warfare between Christ and Satan. Its activities contribute to the overthrow of the ruler of this age. Its members are the targets of the devil's abuse and subversive plots.

Legitimizing the Opponents: Ignatius' Theory of Deviance

All of Ignatius' opponents appear to be Christians. The travelling teachers encountered in Ephesus carry about "the name" (*Eph* 7.1). It is the judaizing of those who also preach Jesus Christ that the bishop objects to (*Mg* 10.1). The Trallian docetists are an "off-shoot" of the Christian movement (*Tr* 11.1). The Philadelphian opponents are members of

the church with whom Ignatius' meets and debates (*Phd* 7.2-8.2). At Smyrna the docetists avoid the church's eucharistic celebrations in favour of their own parallel rites (*Sm* 7.1, 8.1-9.1).

By virtue of their status as Christians these individuals and groups are members of the church - the eschatological ingathering of God's people. Yet they hold beliefs which Ignatius cannot countenance and behave in ways which he cannot accept. They cause division, dissension and strife within congregations. In the bishop's world view, conflict characterizes the relationship of Christ and Satan. It is also an aspect of interaction between the church and the world (*Rom* 3.3; *Eph* 10.2; *Tr* 8.2). It is not, or ought not to be, a feature of relationships within the Christian community.¹⁷ Yet, here he is confronted by individuals and groups, claiming to be Christian but holding, what are to him, deviant or heretical visions of what Christianity is all about.

Ignatius accounts for the presence of such people within the church by simply denying that they are truly Christian, thus, placing them in Satan's realm. This is demonstrated most clearly by what he says about the docetists. He explicitly calls them ἀθεοι, "godless," and ἀπιστοι, "faithless" (*Tr* 10.1; *Sm* 2.1, 5.3) clearly indicating that they are not to be numbered among the faithful who bear the imprint of Christ

¹⁷. Ignatius tells the Ephesians (*Eph* 8.1) that when there is no strife among them, then they live in a godly way.

(cf. *Mg* 5.1). Ignatius describes them as "evil off-shoots" which are not the Father's planting (*Tr* 11.1) implying that they are plants of the devil. Not only do they belong to Satan, the docetists are advocates of death (*Sm* 5.1; *Tr* 6.2, 11.1) and not of Christ's gift of eternal life.

The travelling teachers get the same treatment. They might call themselves Christians but, according Ignatius, they are engaged in "evil deceit" (*Eph* 7.1). These people are really "wild beasts" and "rabid dogs" who are "almost incurable" (*Eph* 7.1). Their teaching is "evil" (*Eph* 9.1) and gives off a "bad odor" betraying its diabolic origin and intent (*Eph* 17.1). Both the teachers and those who listen to them will not inherit the kingdom of God, but will go into the "unquenchable fire" (*Eph* 16.1-2).

Although Ignatius does not resort to such vicious name calling when he speaks of Christians who express an interest in Judaism, he does effectively and decisively exclude them from the camp of the faithful. Judaism is an "evil leaven, old and sour" which cannot "salt" his readers to keep them from "spoiling" (*Mg* 10.2), that is, preserve them to eternal life. Like docetism, then, Judaism delivers death. The bishop contends that it is ridiculous to judaize because "every tongue that has believed in God has been gathered together" into Christianity (*Mg* 10.3). By implication, then, those who are gathered into Judaism are "godless unbelievers." This is made explicit in the assertion that a person who is called by

any other name than that of Christ "is not of God" (*Mg* 10.1).

In *Philadelphians*, schismatic tendencies and "interpreting Judaism" are both treated the same way. Only those who are with the bishop are "of God and Jesus Christ" (*Phd* 3.2). Those who are not with the bishop must, then, be included with those "evil plants which Jesus Christ does not cultivate" and which are not the Father's planting (*Phd* 3.1). They belong to the devil and so will not inherit the kingdom of God (*Phd* 3.3). Anyone, whether Jew or gentile, who fails to speak of Jesus Christ is likened to a tombstone and a grave on which nothing is written but the names of men (*Phd* 6.1). "Interpreting Judaism" is one of the "evil arts and plots of the ruler of this age" (*Phd* 6.2).

Ignatius, then, denies that the opponents are genuinely Christian. In every case, regardless of the specific nature of their beliefs and practices, it turns out that they are agents of the ruler of this age leading unsuspecting believers to death. For Ignatius, deviance - in the form of the alternative versions of Christianity represented by his opponents - is the work of the devil. It is a manifestation of the basic conflict between Christ and Satan. In this way Ignatius legitimates, albeit negatively, his opponents. He also legitimates conflict within the Christian community. True Christians are now pitted against agents of the devil who have infiltrated the church.

Beliefs, Practices and Structures: A Diagnostic Apparatus

Ignatius' legitimation of his opponents raises an important question. If some people who call themselves Christians are really agents of the devil, how does one distinguish between true and false followers of Christ? The bishop of Antioch attempts to answer this question by defining more clearly the beliefs, practices and structures which he understands to be characteristic of authentic Christianity. These definitions function in two ways. On the one hand, they legitimate and affirm the Christian world view which Ignatius is defending. On the other they provide criteria against which alternative versions of the Christian symbolic universe may be measured.

Beliefs

Ignatius was one of the first, if not the first, early Christian writer to employ "semi-credal" statements in responding to his opponents.¹⁸ These consist of traditions about Jesus woven together into definitive assertions of correct belief.¹⁹ The most extensive of these is found in *Smyrnaeans* where he commends his readers for being convinced that the Lord is:

¹⁸. Maier, p.175f; Ritter, A.M., "Creeds" in I.Hazlett (ed), Early Christianity, Origins and Evolution to A.D.600, (London: SPCK, 1991:92-100), p.93

¹⁹. Maier, p.175

truly of the family of David according to the flesh, Son of God according to the will and power of God, truly born of a virgin, baptized by John that all righteousness might be fulfilled by him, truly nailed for us in the flesh under Pontius Pilate and Herod the tetrarch...(1.1-2)

Similar briefer statements appear in *Ephesians* (7.2; 18.2; 20.2), *Magnesians* (11.1), *Trallians* (9.1-2), and *Polycarp* (3.2). No other vision of Christ is to be entertained among his readers (*Tr* 9.1, 11.1; *Eph* 6.2). He warns the Smyrnaeans not to be deceived for even heavenly beings, angels and rulers will be condemned if they do not believe rightly (*Sm* 6.1).

A correct christology is important because, for Ignatius, Christianity is essentially and decisively christocentric. The teaching about Jesus is the most fundamental and important of all beliefs. Christian hope is founded on the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus not on the vain opinions of judaizers (*Mg* 11). Discipleship is rooted in the flesh and blood of the Lord not in knowing heavenly things or in martyrdom (*Tr* 8.1, 5.2). The cross, death and resurrection of Christ are the "inviolable archives" of Christianity not the Hebrew Scriptures (*Phd* 8.2).

The beliefs and practices of Christians are informed by and the outcome of christology. Because Christ is both fleshly and spiritual (*Eph* 7.2), what those who are "in Jesus Christ" do in the flesh is spiritual (*Eph* 8.2). The Hebrew Scriptures are correctly understood only when read christologically, as prophecies concerning the coming of Christ (*Phd* 5.2, 9.2; *Mg* 9.2). Just as the Smyrnaean docetists do not confess that

Christ is a "bearer of flesh" (*Sm* 5.2), they also do not confess that the eucharist is the flesh of Jesus Christ which suffered and was raised (*Sm* 7.1).

Practices

For Ignatius the eucharist is the central rite of the church.²⁰ Each community ideally should celebrate only one eucharist (*Phd* 4.1) which is presided over by the bishop or whomever he appoints (*Sm* 8.1). It may be surmised that this eucharist is understood to be the "flesh of Jesus Christ" (*Sm* 7.1).²¹ Participation in this one eucharist is a public confession of one's christological stance,²² as well as a sign of one's submission to ecclesiastical authority.²³ Avoidance of the eucharist is one of the distinguishing marks of "false Christians" (*Sm* 6.2-7.1; *Phd* 3.3-4.1; *Eph* 5.2-3).

True and false Christians may also be discerned by their attitude to ecclesiastical authority. Ignatius asserts:

when you are subject to the bishop as to Jesus Christ, it is clear to me that you are living not in human fashion but in the fashion of Jesus Christ... (*Tr* 2.1)

In yielding to the bishop one yields to God (*Mg* 3.1-2; *Eph* 6.1). Those who honour the bishop are honoured by God (*Sm* 9.1). Ignatius knows of some who "call" or "name" a bishop but

²⁰. Schoedel, Ignatius of Antioch, p.21

²¹. Ibid

²². Aune, p.147

²³. *Phd* 4.1, see discussion on pp.76-77

do everything apart from him. Such people may be "called" Christians but, in his opinion, they are not really Christians (*Mg* 4.1). In opposing the bishop they not only disobey God (*Eph* 5.3) but actually serve the devil (*Sm* 9.1).

The quality which Christians ought to cultivate is that of "gentleness" or "humility" (*Pol* 6.2).²⁴ Ignatius describes this virtue as a "power" (*Tr* 3.2), by which "the ruler of this age is destroyed" (*Tr* 4.2). The Trallians are urged to take up "gentleness" in order to protect themselves against the devil's snares (*Tr* 8.1). Gentleness is even advocated in the face of pagan hostility so that "no plant of the devil" might take root in their communal life (*Eph* 10.2-3).

Opposed to this attitude of humility is a frame of mind characterized by "boasting" and/or being "puffed up."²⁵ To be "puffed up" on account of "position" in the church is to court judgment (*Sm* 6.1). Those who "boast" of their chastity are lost (*Pol* 5.2). Ignatius himself must take care that his knowledge of heavenly things does not lead to "boasting" or being "puffed up" lest he perish (*Tr* 4.1). Christians are protected against false teachers when they are not "puffed up" (*Tr* 7.1). Since those who have Jesus Christ in them are not

²⁴. *πραότης* (*Pol* 6.2); *πραότης* (*Tr* 3.2); *πραότητος* (*Tr* 4.2); *πραυπάθειαν* (*Tr* 8.1); *ἐπιείκεια* (*Eph* 10.3)

²⁵. Puffed up: *φυσιοῦτω* (*Sm* 6.1); *φυσιοῦσιν* (*Tr* 4.1); *φυσιοῦμένοις* (*Tr* 7.1); *φυσιοῦσθε* (*Mg* 12.1)
Boasting: *καυχῆσται* (*Pol* 5.2); *καυχῆσαι* (*Tr* 4.1);

"puffed up" (*Mg* 2.1), it may be surmised that Christians who display these characteristics have been caught in the "snare of the devil" (*Tr* 8.1).

Ignatius urges the Christians of Magnesia to be subject to the bishop and to each other so that they may experience *ἐνωσις*, "union" (*Mg* 13.2). Polycarp (1.2) is instructed to be concerned about "union" (*ἐνόςσεως*) since, in the bishop's opinion, there is nothing better. Ignatius prays for "union" (*ἡνωσιν*) in the churches (*Mg* 1.2). What he seems to mean by this term is a sense of social solidarity²⁶ and freedom from strife and dissension. "Union" is necessary since it is through congregational "unity" (*ἐνότητις*) that Christians "participate in God" (*Eph* 4.1). It is only when there is no strife in the Christian community that its members are living "according to God" (*Eph* 8.1). For God does not dwell where there is division and anger (*Phd* 8.1). Ignatius regards "divisions" as the beginning of evils (*Sm* 8.2), which is why he is a man committed to "unity" (*Phd* 8.1).

Ignatius asserts that "those professing to be of Christ will be seen by what they do" (*Eph* 14.2). "True" Christians participate in "valid" eucharists presided over by appointed officers. They respect and obey their church leaders, particularly their bishops. Genuine Christians are marked by an attitude of humility and a commitment to Christian unity. "False" Christians avoid the "official" eucharist and/or

²⁶. Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, pp.21-22

participate in separate rites. They hypocritically "name" bishops but do everything apart from them. Unauthentic Christians are boastful and "puffed up," and contribute to strife and division within the Christian community.

Structures

Ignatius asserts that nothing can be called a church without a bishop, a council of elders, and deacons (*Tr* 3.1). These officials have been appointed in the purpose of Jesus Christ who is the Father's purpose (*Phd* Inscr.; *Eph* 3.2). Ignatius argues that the bishop is to be regarded as the Lord himself (*Eph* 5.3). More frequently he compares the bishop with God or the Father of Jesus Christ (*Tr* 3.1; *Mg* 2, 3.1-2, 6.1). The elders are likened to the council of God, the band of apostles (*Tr* 3.1; *Mg* 6.1; *Sm* 8.1), and the law of Jesus Christ (*Mg* 2). The deacons have been entrusted with the "ministry" of Christ (*Mg* 6.1), and are to be respected as Jesus Christ (*Tr* 3.1) and the commandment of God (*Sm* 8.1). Clearly Ignatius is attempting to legitimate these offices by grounding them in recognized historical and heavenly sources of authority.²⁷

This tri-partite organizational structure advocated by Ignatius appears to have been common among the communities he addressed and visited in Asia Minor (*Eph* 2.1; *Mg* 2; *Tr* 3.2; *Phd* Inscr.; *Sm* 12.2). The Syrian bishop was not, therefore,

²⁷. It does not seem that Ignatius is trying to portray these officials as earthly counterparts to some heavenly hierarchy, recreating microcosmically in each community some transmundane reality. See Maier, pp.184, 185; Schoedel, pp.109, 113-114, 141-142

encouraging the adoption of new forms of leadership. His concern grew out of the behaviour of some Christians who did not accord these officials the respect and obedience which Ignatius thought was their due. He complains that some "name" bishops but do everything apart from him (*Mg* 4.1). It is in response to such behaviour that he seeks to strengthen the authority of bishops, elders and deacons.

Although most of the time Ignatius urges submission to church officials in general²⁸, he does appear to be especially concerned to increase the prestige and authority of bishops. He asserts that the prayer of the bishop with the whole church is more effective than the prayer of one or two (*Eph* 5.1). The congregation is wherever the bishop appears (*Sm* 8.2). A eucharist is valid only if it is held under the bishop or the one whom he appoints in his place (*Sm* 8.1). Baptisms and love-feasts are not permissible apart from the bishop (*Sm* 8.2). Bishops were to be responsible for the guardianship of widows (*Pol* 4.1), for calling meetings and councils (*Pol* 4.2, 7.1), for preaching sermons (*Pol* 5.1), and for approving marriages (*Pol* 5.2).

Ignatius also encourages Polycarp to look after his own spiritual well-being. He is to make time for constant prayer (*Pol* 1.3). In particular he should ask that unseen things may be revealed to him so that he might be rich in every gift

²⁸. *Eph* 2.2, 20.2; *Mg* 6.1-2, 13.1; *Tr* 3.1, 13.2; *Phd* inscr. 4.1, 7.1, 8.1; *Pol* 6.1; Cf. Maier, p.180

(*Pol* 2.2). This last bit of advice suggests that Ignatius and/or some (perhaps many) Christians expected church leaders to be charismatically gifted. Ignatius certainly seems to have considered himself the possessor of prophetic abilities (*Phd* 7.1-2; *Rom* 7.2) and spiritual insights (*Tr* 4.1; *Eph* 19.1-20.2). A mastery of such gifts would surely have enhanced the authority of a bishop, especially among Christians who valued prophecy and other forms of charismata.

Summary

For Ignatius, then, authentic Christianity can be identified by its beliefs, practices and organizational structures. Orthodoxy involves not only espousing a correct christology but being christocentric. Christ is defined by the Syrian bishop in semi-credal statements asserting both his humanity and his divinity. The historical events of Jesus' life are the foundation on which the church, the community of the end-times, is built. Christology and christocentricity inform beliefs and attitudes towards human beings, the Hebrew Scriptures, worship and cultic activities, and life styles.

Authentic Christianity manifests itself in participation in the common eucharistic celebration (with its attendant concern for meeting the needs of the poor and underprivileged) and in respect for ecclesiastical authority. Genuine Christians are humble and gentle, seeking to promote unity and solidarity within the Christian community.

For Ignatius, the Christian church, by definition, is a

community led by a bishop, a council of elders, and deacons. In response to what he perceives to be a lack of due respect for these officers, the Syrian bishop seeks to strengthen their positions, by grounding their offices in recognized historical and heavenly authorities. While Ignatius wishes to enhance the prestige of all church officials, he is especially concerned to increase the power of bishops over their congregations.

By defining the correct and central beliefs of Christianity, its essential practices and characteristic organizational structure Ignatius affirms and defends his own symbolic universe, a particular vision of Christianity. In doing so, he also establishes a diagnostic apparatus consisting of specific criteria for distinguishing between what he saw as authentic and deviant forms of the Christian movement.

Boundaries: Dealing with the Opponents

Ignatius' letter to the Smyrnaeans best exemplifies the way in which he sought to deal with his opponents. All three components of the diagnostic apparatus are brought into play. The bishop cites what he considers are authentic gospel traditions about Jesus (*Sm* 1.1-2, 3.2-3) in order to refute the opponents' christological claims. He points out the opponents' avoidance of the church's eucharists and love-feasts (*Sm* 6.2-7.1). He condemns their contemptuous attitude toward the bishop manifested in their preference for their own

parallel rites (*Sm* 9.1-9.1).

On the basis of their beliefs, behaviour, and attitude toward the bishop the Smyrnaean docetists are marked as deviants or "false" Christians. They do not belong in the community of Christ's followers as is made clear by the Syrian bishop's recommendations to the Smyrnaean church. Ignatius urges the "orthodox" members of the community not to receive or meet with their docetist neighbours (*Sm* 4.1). They are not even to talk about them publicly or privately (*Sm* 7.2). All baptisms, eucharists and love-feasts held apart from the bishop and/or without his knowledge are declared invalid (*Sm* 8.1-9.1). Such a move, declaring the docetists and their rites illegitimate, effectively excommunicates them. By insisting that the "orthodox" shun all social contacts with these deviants Ignatius hopes to insulate the churches from their influence.²⁹

Ignatius wishes to erect a clear boundary between "right-believers" and those who are christologically deviant, excluding the latter from the Smyrnaean church. This move places them in the realm of the "faithless." In the Syrian bishop's symbolic world, however, the boundary between the faithful and the faithless is not impermeable. Even for the "faithless" docetists repentance is possible, though difficult (*Sm* 5.3, 4.1). In this way Ignatius is able to affirm the qualified dualism of his eschatological world view. The

²⁹. Maier, p.174

docetists have revealed themselves to be servants of the devil, yet it is in Christ's power to bring about their repentance (*Sm* 4.1). Christians may, therefore, pray that this will come about (*Sm* 4.1).

The same combination of exclusion, while maintaining the possibility of restoration is applied to the travelling teachers. The travelling teachers who deceitfully bear the name of Christ are "hard to cure" (*Eph* 7.1). The Ephesian Christians are commended for refusing to hear these persons (*Eph* 6.2, 9.1) and urged to leave their healing in the hands of Jesus Christ, the "one physician" (*Eph* 7.2).

In *Trallians* Ignatius urges the right-believing Christians of Tralles to maintain high boundaries between themselves and the christologically erring docetists (*Tr* 6.1, 9.1, 11.1). The best defence against these "false" Christians in the Syrian bishop's opinion is the adoption of "humility" as a way of life and a commitment to organizational solidarity (*Tr* 7.1-8.1).

The situation in the Philadelphian community is much more complex. Right belief, or christology, does not appear to be an issue; authentic Christian practice is. Loyalty to church officials appears to be a matter of contention (*Phd* inscr, 7.2). Here the Syrian bishop tries to draw the same kind of boundaries as he does at Smyrna. He insists that only those who are with the bishop are of God and Jesus Christ (*Phd* 3.2). Schismatics will not inherit the kingdom of God (*Phd* 3.3).

Forgiveness and inclusion with those who are "of God" is assured to all who repent and return to the unity of the church (*Phd* 8.1, 3.2). It seems unlikely, however, that the Philadelphians were impressed by the Syrian bishop's efforts to create such boundaries within their community (*Phd* 11.1).

The other issue in the Philadelphian community, which may have been related to the first, is that some members are asserting that the Hebrew Scriptures are the foundational documents of the community. Ignatius appears to view such a stance as a potential threat to christocentricity. It is Jesus Christ and the events of his life which are the "inviolable archives" of the Christian community not the Hebrew Scriptures (*Phd* 8.2, 9.2). The bishop's response to these biblically oriented Christians may have arisen, in part at least, from his own lack of expertise in this area.

The bishop of Antioch feels that his opponents' esteem for these writings also involves, or at least exposes them to, an "interpretation of Judaism." Thus, included in the error of these Philadelphian Christians is the crossing or blurring of the line dividing Christianity from Judaism. For Ignatius this boundary is legitimately permeable only from the Jewish side. A Jewish person may conceivably preach the gospel of Christ, but a Christian cannot licitly proclaim Judaism (*Phd* 6.1).

The judaizing Christians of Magnesia are in precisely the same situation, wanting to profess Christ and live Jewishly, an invalid and dangerous move in the Syrian bishop's opinion

(*Mg* 10.2-3). Such a move also threatens the christocentricity of their hope (*Mg* 11.1). In *Magnesians* Ignatius is more concerned to strengthen the boundary between Christianity and Judaism (*Mg* 8.1, 9.1, 10.1-3) than he is to create the sort of barriers between "true" and "false" Christians that he does in his letters to Smyrna, Tralles and Philadelphia. This may be because he sees judaizing there as a potential rather than an actual problem (*Mg* 11.1).

Thus, Ignatius deals with his opponents by attempting to create and strengthen boundaries between right believing, right oriented and right practising Christians on one side and those whose beliefs, orientation and practices he considers to be wrong on the other. These demarcation lines are intended to insulate or protect authentic Christians from the influence of suspect travelling teachers, docetists, interpreters of Judaism and judaizers. These borders are also meant to exclude all these individuals and groups from the Christian community. No attempt is to be made by either the leaders or members of the churches to "resocialize" or "reintegrate" these people. They are agents of the devil whose fate must be left in the hands of Jesus Christ who alone is able to cure them and bring about their repentance. Until such time as that comes about, the opponents are, thus, consigned to the outer darkness of Satan's realm.

CONCLUSION

This paper began with an examination of the provenance and date of the Ignatian correspondence. It was determined that Ignatius was a Syrian Christian from Antioch. While en route to his execution in Rome he visited two Christian communities in Asia Minor and met with delegations from three others. It is to these Christians of Asia Minor that six of his seven letters are addressed. This correspondence was took place sometime between 100 and 118 C.E.

In order to sketch out the socio-historical situation of the letters, it was necessary to describe both the Christianity from which Ignatius emerged and the Christianity with which he was interacting. This was done using documents roughly contemporary with Ignatius' epistles, and which are believed to have originated in either Syria or Asia Minor.

Syrian Christianity in this time period, as represented by Matthew and the *Didache*, shows evidence of both strong Jewish roots and a gentile orientation. Both show an interest in Jewish traditions and customs with Matthew appearing to take a more conservative and conciliatory approach to the problem of differentiating the Christian and Jewish communities. These documents also indicate a movement away from the itinerant ministries of prophets and teachers towards reliance on locally established officials. This development is criticized by Matthew and "despised" by some of the *Didache's* readers.

Revelation, I Peter, the Pastoral Epistles and Pliny's correspondence with Trajan were examined for information concerning the situation in Asia Minor. These documents show that Christianity in that region was characterized by a great deal of diversity. Christians of many varieties are represented - some with Jewish apocalyptic expectations, gentile judaizers, some who conform with pagan society, others who are persecuted for their non-conformity, and groups with differing interpretations of the same tradition. Some Christian communities in Asia Minor prefer the charismatic ministry of prophets, while others are shepherded by elders. Some churches are ministered to by a team consisting of a bishop, elders and deacons.

The Johannine literature was treated separately due to the uncertainty of its provenance - both Asia Minor and Syria have been suggested. Johannine Christianity has Jewish roots but goes farther than Matthew or the *Didache* in distancing itself from Judaism. I and 2 John provide evidence for the emergence of a separatist Johannine movement characterized by its failure to confess that "Jesus Christ has come in the flesh" (IJn 4:2; 2Jn 7). Suggestions of the adoption of, or a merging with, a Pauline tradition are present in 2 and 3 John. Issues related to the treatment of deviants and of legitimate authority are also raised in these epistles.

Ignatius seems to represent a synthesis of a number of traditions within the Christian movement. A Syrian from

Antioch, he is not a representative of Matthean Christianity although he appears to be familiar with some of its traditions. His theology bears a marked Johannine stamp, while much of his language is Pauline. Although an ardent advocate of a church leadership consisting of bishop, council of elders, and deacons, Ignatius presents himself as a charismatic figure.

The second part of this paper was devoted to a discussion of the number, identity and location of Ignatius' opponents. This began with a brief review of what four Ignatian scholars have to say concerning these questions. Lightfoot posited a single front of judaeo-docetic opposition in Asia Minor. Corwin argued for the presence of docetists and Essenic judaizers in Antioch. Schoedel located docetists and judaizers, in Asia Minor. Trevett hypothesized a situation in which Ignatius was confronted by docetists, judaizers, and anti-episcopalian charismatics in Antioch.

An examination of what Ignatius had to say about the opponents followed. This was guided by a "modified inductive" and "genre sensitive" approach. While it was assumed that the letters could be examined for evidence of "opponents" no specific hypothesis concerning the number, identity and location of such individuals or groups was presupposed. The letters were treated as individual communications addressed to specific communities. The analysis tried to respect the literary integrity and coherence of each letter.

After examining each letter individually it was concluded that Ignatius was opposed to three identifiable Christian groups all located in Asia Minor. Docetists were encountered personally by the bishop in the Smyrnaean church, and appear to have constituted an "offshoot" of the Trallian community. Christians with a continuing interest in Judaism constitute a second group. At Philadelphia Ignatius debated with some church members whose attitude towards and interest in the Hebrew Scriptures he labelled "interpreting Judaism." In *Magnesians* the bishop discourages a form of judaizing in which "old stories," Sabbath keeping and the biblical prophets seem to be featured.

The third group, the travelling teachers encountered by the Ephesians have usually been included with the docetists. Since such an identification appears uncertain, it is perhaps better to treat them as a separate case. In addition to these three groups of opponents Ignatius was also concerned to warn his readers of two tendencies which he felt were detrimental to congregational life. These were anti-episcopal hypocrisy and being "puffed up." Neither of these appears to be the primary characteristic of any particular group, but seem to be associated with various local circumstances.

Connections were drawn between these opponents and Christians mentioned in the Johannine literature and in the documents from Asia Minor. The Johannine schismatics display the greatest affinity to the docetists encountered by

Ignatius. Revelation confirms the presence of travelling teachers in Asia Minor, as well as the Ephesian church's aptitude in discerning "false apostles." Revelation also provides evidence for contacts between gentile Christians and the Jewish community in Philadelphia. The Philadelphian opponents' Hellenistic Jewish view of the Hebrew Scriptures may derive from such contacts. Alternatively, it has been noted that this group appears to share some of the same interests as the writer of Revelation. The Pastoral Epistles witness to a continuing interest in Asia Minor in Jewish stories and commandments, as well as debates about the Law.

The final part of the paper sought to understand Ignatius' treatment of and responses to his opponents within the framework of Berger and Luckmann's discussion of conceptual machineries for universe maintenance. The bishop's responses were seen as an attempt to define a theory of deviance, a diagnostic apparatus for detecting deviants and a system for dealing with such individuals based on the nascent Christian mythology or symbolic universe from which he operates.

Ignatius was shown to have possessed an eschatological world view. He understood himself to be living in the "end times" which had been inaugurated by Christ's birth. The historical events of Christ's life initiated the destruction of those forces hostile to humanity, and made available to humankind the gift of eternal life. These events also set in

motion the ingathering of God's people into the one body of Christ, the church. It is only within this eschatological community that the benefits of the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus are actualized. As the community of the end times, the church also participates in and contributes to the overthrow of the satanic ruler of this age. Its members are the targets of the devil's abuse and subversive plots.

An examination of what Ignatius has to say about the docetists, the travelling teachers and those with an interest in Judaism reveals that in each instance he accounts for their deviance by denying that his opponents are truly Christians. In every case they turn out to be agents of the ruler of this age. The devil has infiltrated the church and the great cosmic war is being fought within the ranks of the faithful. The Syrian bishop, thus, accounts for deviance - alternative visions of Christianity - by attributing it to the work of the devil. In this way he legitimates, that is, finds a place within his symbolic universe for his opponents.

In order to affirm and defend his own particular vision of Christianity Ignatius seeks to establish its correct and central beliefs, its essential practices and characteristic organizational structure. In so doing he also provides a diagnostic apparatus for distinguishing between what he saw as authentic and deviant forms of the Christian movement. He defines authentic Christianity in terms of christological beliefs. He expresses these in semi-credal formulations

asserting both the genuine humanity and divinity of Christ. For Ignatius Christianity is also essentially and decisively christocentric being founded on the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus.

Ignatius identifies the two central practices which distinguish genuine Christians from their false brothers and sisters as participation in "valid" eucharists presided over by properly appointed officials, and respect for and obedience to church leaders. Authentic Christians are also marked by an attitude of humility and commitment to unity. In terms of community organization, Ignatius insists that without a bishop, a council of elders, and deacons no group can legitimately call itself a church. Although he urges submission to church officials in general, Ignatius appears to be particularly concerned to increase the prestige and authority of bishops.

The Syrian bishop's preferred method of dealing with the opponents is exclusion. In each letter he seeks to create and/or strengthen boundaries between right believing and practising Christians and those whose beliefs, orientation and practices reveal them to be "false" Christians. He urges that no attempt be made by church officials or members to resocialize and reintegrate the opponents. Such moves are intended to insulate the "orthodox" churches from the influence of deviant forms of Christianity. Although Ignatius appears to have successfully consigned his opponents to the

realm of the faithless on paper, his readers may not have been as enthusiastic in carrying out his recommendations.

This study has mined the letters of Ignatius for information concerning his opponents and his responses to them. In the process the mists of time have been parted a little to reveal that Ignatius was a man of his time, who thought in the mythological terms of his age. At a time when the Christian movement was characterized by diversity and change, even fragmentation, this charismatic bishop appears, synthesizing divergent traditions and bases of authority. As a result of his confrontation with the opponents Ignatius passed on to the church two enduring legacies - the articulation of his faith in semi-credal christological statements and his advocacy of ecclesiastical leadership by bishop, council of elders and deacons. These were to play a significant role in the consolidation of the Christian movement in the centuries that followed.

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