

FRAZER MACDIARMID

The Memory of Ignatius of Antioch

*Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen
zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe*

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Mohr Siebeck

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581



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The Memory of Ignatius of Antioch

The Martyr as a Locus of Christian Identity,
Remembering and Remembered

Mohr Siebeck

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	V
Abbreviations and References	XI
Introduction	1

Part I. The Remembering Ignatius

Chapter 1: Patriarchs, Prophets, and Israel: Remembered and Reconstructed.....	11
1. <i>Ignatius' Memory of the Heroes of Israel</i>	11
2. <i>Jews and Judaisers Refuted by the Memory of Israel</i>	13
3. <i>Docetism Refuted by the Memory of Israel</i>	19
4. <i>Memory of the Scriptures Transformed by Christ into a Source of Union</i>	23
5. <i>Conclusion</i>	26
Chapter 2: Ignatius' Inheritance of 'Extra-Christian' Memory	29
1. <i>Antioch</i>	30
2. <i>Ignatius and the Pagan Cult</i>	34
2. <i>Ignatius and the Pagan Cult</i>	34
2.1 <i>Mysteries and Processions</i>	35

2.2 The Pagan Cult and Memory	37
2.3 The Pagan Cult Baptised	38
3. <i>Ignatius and Empire</i>	40
3.1 Ignatius and Homonoia	41
3.2 The Thesis of Allen Brent	43
4. <i>The Possible Contribution of Sociology</i>	46
5. <i>Limits and Taking it Too Far</i>	49

Part II.

‘Memory Poiesis’ – Ignatius as a Forger of his own Memorialisation

Chapter 3: <i>Θυσία Θεοῦ: Ignatius’ Self-Construction as Sacrifice</i>	55
1. <i>Sacrifice in Early Christianity</i>	57
2. <i>Ignatius’ Self-References as Sacrifice</i>	60
2.1 Romans 4.1–2	61
2.2 Romans 2.2	63
3. <i>Language of Vicariousness</i>	66
3.1 περίφημα	68
3.2 ἀγνίζομαι	71
3.3 ἀντίπνοχον	73
3.4 Language of Vicariousness – Conclusion	76
4. <i>Étienne Decrept – a Further Theory about Ignatius’ Self-Portrayal as Sacrifice</i>	82
5. <i>Conclusion</i>	87
Chapter 4: <i>The Girardian Ignatius</i>	88
1. <i>Introduction: Girard and Patristic Theology</i>	88
2. <i>The Girardian System</i>	90
2.1 Mimesis, Scapegoat, and Sacrifice	90
2.2 The Ambiguity of Mimesis	92
3. <i>Synthesis: The Girardian Ignatius</i>	93

3.1 Ignatius as Scapegoat for Roman Society?	93
3.2 The State of Ignatius' Communities According to Current Scholarship	96
3.3 Girardian Analysis of Ignatius' Communities	98
4. <i>Ignatius' Self-Conception as Scapegoat</i>	99
5. <i>Ignatius and Mimesis</i>	101
5.1 Nachfolge and Nachahmung.....	101
5.2 Imitation in Apostolic Literature	103
5.3 Imitation and Discipleship in Ignatius	104
5.4 Ignatius' Vision of Positive Mimesis.....	107
5.5 The Threefold Ministry.....	109
5.6 The Eucharist.....	112
5.7 Ignatius' Contribution to Positive Mimesis	114
6. <i>Ignatius' Perpetuation of Negative Mimesis</i>	116
7. <i>Conclusions</i>	121

Part III.

The Early Christian Memory of Ignatius

Chapter 5: Authenticity and Forgery in Literary Remembrance	125
1. <i>Forgery and Authenticity Re-Examined</i>	126
2. <i>Authorship</i>	129
2.1 The Notion of Authorship Re-Examined.....	129
2.2 Authorship in the Early Church	132
2.3 The Example of Phalaris.....	139
3. <i>Biography in Antiquity</i>	141
3.1 The Letter and Christian Biography	143
3.2 The Long Recension as Christian Biography	145
Chapter 6: Ignatius in the Long Recension	148
1. <i>The Long Recension in Recent Scholarship</i>	148
1.1 Lightfoot and J.D. Smith	148
1.2 The Work of Paul Gilliam (2017).....	152

2. <i>Analysis of the Long Recension</i>	155
2.1 Theology	156
2.2 Heresiology	163
2.3 Ecclesiology	170
2.4 Imitation of the Middle Recension	179
2.5 Remaining Concerns	189
2.6 Case Study: Tarsians 1	195
3. <i>Memory and Memorialisation in the Long Recension</i>	196
4. <i>Conclusion: The Long Recension's Appropriation and Memorialisation of Ignatius</i>	199

Chapter 7: The Ignatian Cult: Martyrology and Material Culture	204
1. <i>Hagiography and the Cult of Saints in Christian Antiquity</i>	206
2. <i>The Antiochene Acts of Ignatius</i>	209
2.1 Ignatius Memorialised in the Antiochene Acts	211
2.2 Relationship with the Middle Recension	215
2.3 Excursus: The Depiction of Trajan	217
2.4 Historical Context	220
3. <i>John Chrysostom's Homily on the Holy Martyr Ignatius</i>	222
3.1 Similarities with the Antiochene Acts	223
3.2 Relationship with the Middle Recension	225
3.3 God and the Devil	226
3.4 Ignatius' Effective Suffering	227
3.5 Commemoration of Ignatius' Martyrdom	228
4. <i>The Roman Acts of Ignatius</i>	230
5. <i>Conclusion</i>	232

Concluding Comments	235
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Bibliography	239
Index of References	259
Index of Modern Authors	265
Index of Subjects	267

Abbreviations and References

- ANF *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325*. Ed. Donaldson, J. and Roberts, A. with Coxe, A.C. American reprint of the Edinburgh Edition. 10 vols. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985.
- BDAG *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. Ed. Arndt, W.F., Gingrich, F.W. and Bauer, W. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.
- LCL Loeb Classic Library.
- LPGL *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*. Ed. Lampe, G.W.H. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961.
- LSJ *A Greek-English Lexicon*. Ed. Liddell, H. J. and Scott, R. 9th revised edn. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940.
- NPNF 2 *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church: Second Series*. Ed. Schaff, P. and Wace, H. 14 vols. Reprinted Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994. Originally published Oxford; New York: Parker; Christian Literature Company, 1890–1900.
- OCD⁴ *Oxford Classical Dictionary*. Ed. Hornblower, S., Spawforth, A. and Eidinow, E. 4th edn. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- PG *Patrologia Graeca*. Ed. J.-P. Migne. 162 vols. Paris: 1857–86.
- PL *Patrologia Latina*. Ed. J.-P. Migne. 217 vols. Paris: 1844–64.
- RSV *The Holy Bible: Revised Standard Version, containing the Old and New Testaments*. New York; London: Collins, 1973.
- SC Sources Chrétiennes

Letters of Ignatius

Middle and long recensions:

Ephes. – *Letter to the Ephesians*.

Mag. – *Letter to the Magnesians*.

Trall. – *Letter to the Trallians*.

Rom. – *Letter to the Romans*.

Phld. – *Letter to the Philadelphians*.

Smyrn. – *Letter to the Smyrneans*.

Pol. – *Letter to Polycarp*.

Long recension only:

Mary to Ign. – *Letter of Mary to Ignatius*.

Ign. to Mary – *Letter of Ignatius to Mary*.

Tar. – *Letter to the Tarsians*.

Phlp. – Letter to the Philippians.

Ant. – Letter to the Antiochenes.

Hero – Letter to Hero.

References to Ignatius' letters are in italicised type with a full stop separating chapter and verse. By contrast, references to Paul's letters are in roman type with a colon separating chapter and verse.

As it engages with both the middle and long recensions, in part III all references to Ignatian letters are prefixed by either MR- or LR-.

The bibliography of primary sources lists all other abbreviations of ancient texts employed in this study.

Note to the reader: All translations are my own unless specified otherwise. Where I translate or cite a primary text in its original language, I supply the editor and page number when useful, e.g. Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Saint Macrina* 1 (ed. Maraval, 140).

For the Greek text of the MR I rely upon Holmes, M.W. (2007) *The Apostolic Fathers*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, pp. 166–271. For the Greek text of the LR I rely upon Lightfoot, J.B. (1889) *The Apostolic Fathers: Clement, Ignatius, and Polycarp*. Part II. Vol. III. 2nd edn. London; New York: Macmillan, pp. 135–273.

Introduction

Scholarship on Ignatius of Antioch has traditionally concerned itself first and foremost with questions of authorship, authenticity, and date. It is almost obligatory that each new piece spend a good deal of space summarising the historical arguments, weighing their merits and faults, and then situating itself within the raft of opinions offered on the debate over the centuries. The prevailing opinion since Theodor Zahn and J.B. Lightfoot (writing at the end of the 19th century) has been that the seven letters of the so-called middle recension (MR) were written by the Syrian bishop in the early second century.¹ Yet even the combined testimony of scholars of such calibre is not allowed to settle before increasingly more convoluted studies emerge to reconsider the interrelations of the recensions: that the long recension (LR) in fact predates the MR;² that the Syriac short recension (SR) is really the most ancient;³ or that Ignatius wrote just four letters, which relate to our current corpus only via many subtly interconnected mutations.⁴ Others accept the MR as earliest, but argue for a date considerably later than traditionally ascribed.⁵ Clearly, these kinds of discussions are important in their own right; they are valuable for highlighting the provisionality and ambiguity of the source material, and the sensitivity with which it must be treated. They also stem from a very proper concern about authenticity, that a text's purported author is also its author in fact.⁶

As is slowly being recognised within the academy, however, Ignatian scholarship is saturated with such studies, and each new attempt met by the logic of diminishing returns. None, it is commonly accepted, has been able to upset the Lightfoot/Zahn consensus.⁷ Some of the most influential studies of Ignatius have given relatively little attention to the problem of historical authenticity;⁸

¹ Zahn (1873); Lightfoot (1889).

² E.g. Hannah (1960); Weijenborg (1969).

³ Vinzent (2019), esp. 327.

⁴ Rius-Camps (1980).

⁵ E.g. Barnes (2008); Hübner (1997).

⁶ Lookadoo (2020b) admirably attempts to make sense out of the voluminous scholarship produced since 1997 on the question of the MR letters' dating and authenticity.

⁷ Foster (2006: 489) nuances the notion of consensus: "perhaps it would be better from a text-critical perspective to say that they [the seven MR epistles] represent the earliest recoverable stage of the textual transmission of the Ignatian letters."

⁸ E.g. Corwin (1960); Schoedel (1985).

indeed, some of the most recent articles make no reference at all to the debate, and proceed on the assumption that the MR represents what Ignatius really wrote.⁹ I join these in accepting the MR as ‘genuine’ – that is, written in the early second century by the man Ignatius, whose remarkable journey from Antioch to Rome we are led to believe ended in the arena. (To anticipate chapter 6, I follow Lightfoot and J.D. Smith who believe the LR to have been a late fourth-century work, probably composed in Antioch.¹⁰) By accepting this, in full knowledge of the attendant problems, the scholar is freed to move the conversation on, to consider the figure of Ignatius as he is known and met *through* the letters. Nonetheless, it will become clear that much of my argument would stand even if discussion of the MR required the name ‘Ignatius’ to be surrounded by quotation marks.

Every piece of literature, whether fictional or non-fictional, ‘forged’ or ‘genuine,’ invites the reader to infer an authorial persona. For this reason, all the recensions that make up the Ignatian corpus are open to a study of how they portray the figure of Ignatius. This allows the scholar effectively to bypass questions of ‘historical authenticity’ and investigate the more stimulating questions surrounding the locus of *memory*. The letters of the MR assume of their audiences certain memories, sacred and profane. How does Ignatius evoke these memories, and transform them towards the cause of Christ and community? How does Ignatius portray himself as a figure to be remembered in the MR? How does this compare to the manner in which he has indeed been remembered in the church, such as in the LR and in martyrological texts?

Such questions have only begun to receive attention in scholarship. Elizabeth Castelli uses Ignatius as a case study in her exploration of how the early Christian experience of martyrdom and persecution became a “form of culture making, whereby Christian identity was indelibly marked by the collective memory of the religious suffering of others.”¹¹ She expresses a similar frustration as I with insoluble questions of ‘what really happened,’ and employs memory because of its particular suitability to ask “how particular ways of construing the past enable later communities to constitute and sustain themselves.”¹² Candida Moss has recently undertaken an analysis of the style of the Antiochene martyrology’s memorialisation of Ignatius as a Pauline martyr.¹³

⁹ E.g. Hartog (2019); Lookadoo (2019). I, like these scholars, remain conscious that the MR is to some degree a scholarly construct: we rely upon the Antiochene *Acts* to supply the text of *Romans*, and corrections to the other letters are often supplied on the basis of the Latin translation or quotations from other authors. See Lookadoo (2020b).

¹⁰ J.D. Smith (1986).

¹¹ Castelli (2004), 4.

¹² Castelli (2004), 5.

¹³ Moss (2016).

Memory has already proved to be a popular tool to break the stalemate of ‘historical Jesus’ research,¹⁴ and elsewhere in New Testament (NT) and patristic scholarship.¹⁵ My study takes a cue from Dale Allison (among others), who points out that some aspects of a person’s character and significance are not accessible to the person themselves, or even to their contemporaries, but are only appreciable *after* their death: “Self-perception is only partial perception, and while the passing of time dims memories, it can also unfold significance.”¹⁶ The LR is proof that Ignatius continued to be significant centuries after his martyrdom. The present study questions the privileging of the MR as our *only* source of insight into Ignatius, and the second century as the definitive context in which the meaning of Ignatius’ words must be decided.

However recently ‘memory’ has attracted interest within the academy, it goes without saying that memory was as important for the ancients as it is for us moderns. Indeed, Carruthers notes a dissonance between the modern tendency towards a pejorative view of the faculty of memory as merely functional and uninteresting, compared to the ancients’ awe and esteem of it as the seat of the intellect, morality, and identity.¹⁷ The broad conceptual structure of all Abrahamic religions lends particular significance to memory, as the means of contextualising current lives within the divine economy and in reference to God’s revelation to humanity.¹⁸ Christianity has a particularly strong relationship with memory as it understands God himself to be the object of memory, in the life of the human being Christ. Remembrance of the person of Jesus was from very early on central to the worship and praxis of the believing community.¹⁹ The Jesus of each gospel is constructed in relation to (and as the culmination of) centuries of history, prophecy, divine election and economy, as well as elements thought outside of that relationship with God; Jesus presents himself to be remembered in certain ways, and patristic theology may in part be seen as the charting of that memory. Most apostolic and post-apostolic Christians show a concerted interest in the ‘memoirs’ and lineages of ‘living memory’ stemming from witnesses to the NT events, and often orientate their own authority in relation to them.²⁰ Ignatius demonstrates a similar connection with and interest in memory, and benefits from treatment in the light of it.

However, ‘memory’ can be a term as vague and elusive as it is evocative and penetrating. Although its popularity in the humanities increased from its

¹⁴ See Keith (2015), (2015a) for an overview of the project’s progress.

¹⁵ E.g. Bockmuehl (2010), (2012).

¹⁶ Allison (2009), 24; cf. Bockmuehl (2010), 18–29.

¹⁷ Carruthers (2008), 1–16.

¹⁸ The atrocities of the Holocaust sparked a revival of Jewish scholarship rediscovering the centrality of memory for Judaism. See particularly Yerushalmi (1982), Spiegel (2002).

¹⁹ See Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:24–25.

²⁰ Bockmuehl (2010), 22–29.

most influential modern study by Maurice Halbwachs almost a century ago,²¹ successful application in one field does not necessarily guarantee the same in another. Its use in the NT field has not met with universal approval. Some nervousness regarding such a theory-based approach goes without saying,²² but the heart of some scholars' mistrust seems to be the over-confidence with which memory studies are employed to establish the historical validity of the gospel accounts, particularly the words of Jesus.²³ More generally, there is a large degree of uncertainty about the relation between the *presentist* concerns of 'social' or 'collective memory,' and the past events of historical reality.²⁴ Doubtless some scholars, especially in historical Jesus research, have exploited this uncertainty to claim maximal correspondence between memory and history,²⁵ though others are more circumspect.²⁶

Many of these criticisms are valid. To them might be added: the multiplicity of 'memory theorists and theories'; the historian's lack of qualification in choosing just one of these, and in applying it appropriately; and the polysemy of the word 'memory' not only between disciplines, but even individual people.

It will be seen, however, that my use of the word memory largely escapes such pitfalls. My project does not use memory with the (implicit) aim of confirming certain historical facts, nor does it rely on 'memory theory' in a specialist or technical sense.²⁷ Rather, I believe Ignatius to be a figure whose contours and significance are thrown into particularly sharp relief by the *idea* of memory. For this reason, and because of the diverse uses to which I put the word throughout this study, it is impossible to give a single definition of the term 'memory,' other than what is commonly understood by the word in its non-technical, everyday use. Whereas most other early Christian martyrs are available to us only through the words and reflections of others,²⁸ Ignatius is peculiar in having left us his own thoughts about his impending death, and so specially lends himself to such an investigation. I wish to unpack how memory can help us to understand what Ignatius (or the author of the MR) considered valuable to hand on to posterity, both in continuing the memory of pre-existing Old Testament and pagan figures, and also in forging anew a memorial for himself. Memory also covers the remit of reception history, with which I intend to examine how Ignatius has in fact been remembered. This will be based around the LR whose first-person biographical testimony must be rare if not

²¹ Republished Halbwachs (1992).

²² Crook (2013), 61–67; Foster (2012), 201–2.

²³ Foster (2012), 191–92.

²⁴ Foster (2012), 196–98; as noted by Halbwachs (1992), 182–83. Cf. Erll (2011), 39.

²⁵ Foster (2012: 200) suggests Bauckham (2006).

²⁶ Foster (2012: 201) suggests Allison (2010).

²⁷ Practitioners of 'memory theory' are occasionally consulted for their hermeneutic value, accompanied by appropriate caveats.

²⁸ See Buol (2018).

unique in antiquity, but also examines martyrological accounts of Ignatius. I hope thereby to expand the work of Castelli and other scholars of Christian hagiography, to understand how the memory of Ignatius has created meaning, purpose, and culture out of Christians' experiences of suffering and earthly estrangement. In short, my project seeks to discover the interpretative potential of memory understood as a *creative* faculty and exercise.

Since its marginalisation by Zahn and Lightfoot, the long recension has been largely overlooked in scholarship. "While each decade brings forth a new dispute on the authenticity of seven letters attributed to Ignatius, the second-century bishop of Antioch, barely a drop of ink is spent on the persona that he acquires in [the LR]," writes Edwards.²⁹ This is partly due to a fascination with 'authenticity,' and a corresponding apathy towards anything convicted of pseudepigraphy. As I demonstrate in this volume, questions of 'authenticity' and 'authorship' are far more complex than they appear, and opinion regarding what constitutes each has altered considerably since the first centuries of the Christian church. An examination of the LR reveals that these 'forgeries' contain reminiscences of the second-century bishop, which demonstrate the continued influence of Ignatius' persona. These are interesting as much for the light they shed on their own age as for the manner in which they are 'resurrected' and exploited in the service of specific theological, social, and polemic causes. The figure of Ignatius who emerges from the LR as the intended authorial persona is found to be a catena of individuals and communities that have each contributed towards the memorial tradition of Ignatius – written testimony for the continuing life and relevance of the bishop through the centuries. The LR's memorial of Ignatius is one of several in fourth-century Christianity, each competing for legitimacy, historical verisimilitude, and the right to claim the martyr for themselves. My study goes some way to exploring the untapped potential in the LR, and providing the "exhaustive examination of all the important features of the forger's work" called for by Ehrman.³⁰

In part I, I investigate how Ignatius situates himself as a participant in the divine economy by evoking certain memories in the minds of his readers. Ignatius characterises the election, history, prophecy, and heroes of Israel as preparation for the revelation of Christ, and the proper inheritance of Christian communities (chapter 1). Ignatius also constructs Christian identity in relation with pagan things, people, and events, sometimes concluding that these too are ultimately to be brought within the fold of God's love (chapter 2). In this first part, I approach the MR from a text-critical perspective, and interrogate the relationship between these memories and Christian identity as understood by Ignatius, with particular reference to its borders with potential 'Jewish' and

²⁹ Edwards (2013), 342.

³⁰ Ehrman (2013), 469.

‘pagan’ identities. While my research at times intersects with that of other modern scholars, this is a largely novel approach to Ignatius, and yields original findings.

Part II is entitled “‘Memory Poiesis’ – Ignatius as a Forger of his own Memorialisation” and looks at the ways in which Ignatius constructs himself as a figure to be remembered in the MR. Central to this issue is the question of whether, and if so, how, Ignatius portrays himself as a sacrifice. Chapter 3 involves a close reading of the passages in question. I ask what kind of sacrifice might be intended and the reasons for it, investigating potential sources for this notion. The fourth chapter builds upon the third and tests the suggestion of Allen Brent that Ignatius considered himself to have been a scapegoat for his communities’ sake. Whereas Brent describes only a vague ‘social-psychological theory,’ without any workable mechanism, I employ the mimetic theory of René Girard, whose affinities with Ignatius are striking. Although Ignatius’ self-presentation might be said to show an awareness of his (and Christians’ in general) function as a scapegoat in a Graeco-Roman context (as Brent suggests), he himself wishes to undermine this impulse to violent mimesis by offering himself, like Christ, as a model of nonviolence and self-denial to be imitated by Christians and the world. He longs for his legacy to be the establishment of a system of ministry by which this positive mimesis might be promulgated. Part II may be seen to compare conventional text-critical methods with modern anthropological theory, as hermeneutical tools for Ignatian studies. While some clear discrepancies arise, the two chapters produce strikingly similar conclusions with regard to Ignatius’ understanding of his suffering as vicariously beneficial.

Since most of the texts which memorialise Ignatius ‘dissemble’ in some way (the LR is pseudepigraphic, the martyrologies employ first-person narration), I begin part III with an analysis of literary ‘forgery’ (chapter 5). I consider what it means to write ‘honestly’ or pseudepigraphically, authentically or inauthentically, using one’s own words or the words of another, and attempt to critique some of these common false dichotomies. This analysis takes in evidence from the early church, and engages with modern scholars of literature, philosophy, and theology. I end with a discussion of the ‘genre’ of biography in antiquity, and in this regard compare the biographical elements present in Athanasius’ *Life of Antony*, Gregory’s *Life of Saint Macrina*, and the long recension, which all adopt the epistolary form for their projects. As the LR constitutes the most substantial literary memorialisation of Ignatius, chapter 6 looks in depth at the probable context of its composition, and the ways in which its author ‘resurrects’ Ignatius to speak to the issues of his own day. The combination of redacting the seven MR letters, and composing six from scratch, grants the author unique command over the authorial voice of Ignatius; moreover, it allows me to compare how these two modes depict the martyr, and to draw out common-

alities and themes. I also examine the LR's theological persuasion, anti-heretical polemic, ecclesiology, and the means by which he attempts to create verisimilitude. Finally, chapter 7 turns to three other early reminiscences of Ignatius, namely the Antiochene and Roman martyrologies, and John Chrysostom's *Homily on the Holy Martyr Ignatius*. As well as examining their portrayal of Ignatius, I trace how each bears witness to the novel devotional, liturgical, and material phenomenon of the cult of saints. A comparison of these portrayals of Ignatius with his own self-memorialisation finds divergence as well as surprising points of commonality, particularly surrounding the efficacious nature of his suffering for fellow Christians.

Due to the breadth of this study, I have decided that the relevant secondary literature is best dealt with in the context of each chapter, rather than in a prefacing section. In a voluminous chapter of his 2019 book *Writing the History of Early Christianity*, Markus Vinzent has provided something of a history of scholarship on the three recensions since the Enlightenment.³¹ Even if my project quite quickly diverges from his, Vinzent convincingly demonstrates the value of applying a retrospective perspective to Ignatius,³² of considering the chronically-overlooked LR, and indeed the worth of studying Ignatius at all.³³ That Ignatius is a figure who has "impacted," well as been a "product of" various "social, political, ethical and religious constellations," is a point at which our projects coincide.³⁴

The need for a study such as this is, I believe, quite clear. In the year I began this project, Harry Maier hinted at the generative potential of applying a lens of memory to the figure of Ignatius, which I have taken as encouragement for the first two parts of my project.³⁵ Similarly, Markus Bockmuehl speaks of his study on the memory of Simon Peter³⁶ as a "test case for both the potential promise and the limits of an approach that seeks to attend more carefully to the way Christianity's originating figures left a footprint in living memory."³⁷ His project has more than vindicated such an approach, and I offer my study as a further opportunity for its potential to be plumbed and extended in a second-century context. The third part of my study has received backing from Bart Ehrman, who in 2013 considered "a full critical commentary on the Pseudo-Ignatians" to be a "major desideratum in the field."³⁸ The three parts together

³¹ Vinzent (2019), 266–409.

³² See Vinzent (2019), 273–74.

³³ See Vinzent (2019), 272–73.

³⁴ Vinzent (2019), 409.

³⁵ Maier (2017: 212): "Social memory – both what is past and the form that Ignatius creates in the course of his writings – is central to Ignatius's strategies as religious entrepreneur vouching for a particular vision of God and the social consequences he derives from it."

³⁶ Bockmuehl (2010) and (2012).

³⁷ Bockmuehl (2012), xiv–xv.

³⁸ Ehrman (2013), 469.

demonstrate the immense wealth of meaning able to be held within this single figure Ignatius, and the power of memory to unlock it. The work of Jan and Aleida Assmann on the connective power of memory,³⁹ though explicitly mentioned in these pages only occasionally, has been instrumental in encouraging me to pursue this project. I would count it a great compliment if echoes of their words are detected among my own.

It is one of the many ironies about Ignatius that he places more trust in what he writes than in his verbal testimony and physical presence.⁴⁰ The fixity and durability of writing was appealing to one whose bodily (and perhaps mental) circumstances were so unpredictable. Indeed, it is appropriate that though Ignatius wishes to be annihilated bodily, he longs to be remembered literarily;⁴¹ while other writers hope to remain in their writings *in spite* of their death, Ignatius hopes to remain *because of* his death. My study charts the nature of this hope, and the manner in which it is realised.

³⁹ E.g. J. Assmann (2006), 1–30, 81–100; (1995), 128–33; A. Assmann (2010), 17–20.

⁴⁰ *Rom.* 7.2: “If upon my arrival I myself should appeal to you, do not be persuaded by me; believe instead these things that I am writing to you.”

⁴¹ *Rom.* 4.2; cf. *Rom.* 2.1 where he hopes that through death he will become λόγος θεοῦ, as opposed to φωνή if he remains alive. Space does not allow me a full exploration of Ignatius’ rich (and enigmatic) use of the conceptual locus λόγος, which is coupled both with φωνή and στή/ήσυχία.

Part I.

The Remembering Ignatius

Chapter 1

Patriarchs, Prophets, and Israel: Remembered and Reconstructed

This first part of my study sets out to frame Ignatius as both a passive recipient of the memories proper to his time and social milieux, and also an active agent shaping, directing, and sometimes omitting these memories to confront issues present and anticipated. As an inherent faculty of the human mind, ‘memory’ is in essence intangible. My exploration in this chapter examines the material traces of memories, as they became visible in the interaction between Ignatius and his addressed communities. I also use the term ‘collective memory/memories’¹ to refer to a body of memory (of events, figures etc.) which may be considered to be shared between a number of people – in our case, Ignatius, the members of his communities, and often his polemical opponents.

In this chapter, I examine memories associated with Israel: that is, the extent and manner in which Ignatius recalls figures and elements of the Hebrew scriptures, and the work that remembrance of the same performs. The context of this creative recollection is often polemical, as we glimpse Ignatius searching for language and concepts to define and delimit authentic Christian identity *against* a pre-existing religious identity. Indeed, the father of modern memory studies, Maurice Halbwachs, believed that early Christians’ self-construction as in continuity with Hebraic religion was essential for its viability as a movement.² This chapter seeks to investigate the limits of this claim in the context of Ignatius of Antioch.

1. Ignatius’ Memory of the Heroes of Israel

While it is regularly noted that Ignatius shows only a vague interest in Hebrew scripture – quoting it explicitly twice, non-explicitly once, and alluding to it perhaps three times more³ – it is certain that scriptural theology, concepts, and

¹ My use of this term does not presuppose or invoke any particular theory; rather, it is descriptive.

² Halbwachs (1992), 86–87.

³ *Ephes.* 5.3; *Mag.* 12; *Trall.* 8.2; *Ephes.* 15.1; *Mag.* 10.3, 13.1. See Holmes (2007), 174; Schoedel (1985), 9.

figures provide for him essential confirmation of the historical legitimacy of Christianity, and indeed act as witnesses against the contemporary groups with whom Ignatius contended.⁴ Vall notes that Ignatius' "modus operandi is not to cite authoritative texts but to adapt and weave them into the fabric of his own discourse."⁵ Grant too sees him as a faithful recipient and hander-on of the body of 'apostolic tradition' as interpreted in Antioch, often expressed through concepts and terminology drawn from Hebrew scriptures.⁶ Ignatius draws upon the memories held by the congregations to whom he writes, and what can be assumed knowledge surrounding scriptural types and prophecies, to fill out or affirm their understanding of the significance of Christ, which in turn informs their understanding of Ignatius' own life and impending death.⁷ In this sense, Ignatius resembles the medieval rabbis who found meaning in contemporary events insofar as they conformed to scriptural types.⁸

Schoedel is correct in noting that scripture's "authority is simply taken for granted in the Christian community."⁹ For Ignatius, scripture and the body of traditions and information it provides are true and salutary – when interpreted correctly – and thus must continue to be held within the community's memory, and be used for teaching and worship. Those who deny the reality of Christ's passion and resurrection Ignatius berates as ignorant and obstinate, "whom the prophecies did not persuade nor the law of Moses."¹⁰ The Smyrneans are to pay attention to "the prophets," whom he elsewhere says that he loves.¹¹ In keeping with later patristic writers, yet in a manner less subtle and nuanced, Ignatius understands scripture's value as derived primarily from its anticipation of, and continuity with, the figure of Christ. Athanasius will write in the same vein: "For when he that was signified had come, what need was there still to signify him? When the truth was present, what need was there still of the shadow? For this

⁴ I use 'scripture' to refer to the writings considered part of the Hebrew Bible, or 'Old Testament' (OT). Though I do not treat it here, the prospect that Ignatius may well draw from traditions surrounding the Maccabean martyrs in 2 and 4 Maccabees and other apocryphal literature is tantalising; see chapter 3 below and Perler (1949). For the parallels between Ignatius and the *Ascension of Isaiah*, see Hall (1999).

⁵ Vall (2013), 43.

⁶ Grant (1963), 333–34.

⁷ Vall (2013: 7) talks about Ignatius' directing his audience's attention to "extratextual realities."

⁸ Spiegel (2002), 152: for medieval rabbis, "recent or contemporary occurrences acquired meaning only insofar as they could be subsumed within Biblical categories of events and their interpretation bequeathed to the community through the medium of Scripture."

⁹ Schoedel (1985), 234.

¹⁰ *Smyrn.* 5.1.

¹¹ *Smyrn.* 7.2; *Phld.* 5.2.

was the reason for their prophesying in the first place – until the true Righteousness should come, even the one who ransoms the sins of all.”¹² Despite the unusual terminology, the force of his statement that “the archives are Jesus Christ” is clear. The writings of the ancients are fulfilled and made unalterable by Christ’s “cross and death and...resurrection and the faith that comes through him.”¹³ As Schoedel writes, “Ignatius thinks of the appeal to the Scriptures as making sense only if it is recognized that they point forward to Christ and find their fulfilment there.”¹⁴ This complementarity between the testimony of the Old Testament and the life of Christ, and the continuity of the divine plan evident therein, explains Ignatius’ so readily recalling the scriptures.

2. Jews and Judaisers Refuted by the Memory of Israel

Ignatius is surely aware that there exist Jews who reject Christ.¹⁵ They might be said to observe the practices of the “priests,” who indeed “were good,” but have not submitted to the “high priest,” who “is better.”¹⁶ This tussle between Ignatius and those Jews who deny Christ might be understood as a contested claim to direct and interpret the memory of the early church. If the language Ignatius uses against Judaism is “sharp, sweeping, uncompromisingly dismissive, and perhaps even shameful,”¹⁷ this betrays Ignatius’ polemical effort to discount the legitimacy of the Christ-denying Jews, by delegitimising their interpretation of communal memories. Both parties remember and revere the same patriarchs, prophets, and scriptures, as foundations of their faith. Yet whereas the one understands them as forerunners to Christ, to be remembered insofar as they relate to him, the other denies this association, and wishes them to be remembered as founders in their own right, whose provisions for piety and religious observance pertain to this day. These Ignatius seems to call “erroneous teachings” and “ancient myths,” which those who live in accordance

¹² Athanasius, *On the Incarnation* 40.2 (PG 25:165).

¹³ *Phld.* 8.2.

¹⁴ Schoedel (1985), 234.

¹⁵ Lieu (1996), 23–24. While it seems unlikely that Ignatius directly addresses Jews who have shown no interest in Christianity at all, it is probable that he “brings an indictment against Judaism as a whole” (Robinson [2009: 151]); this is natural for a group whose identity was “most sharply defined at points where the Christian community was reshaping the boundaries or revising the core of its Jewish heritage” (Robinson [2009: 142]). It is sufficient here to highlight the presence of Jews as a party contending for both adherence and interpretative licence over certain memories, within the same polemical arena in which Ignatius also operated and contended. For ease, I use the term ‘Jews’ to refer to these, and ‘Judaisers’ to refer to those who accept Christ in some measure. See Zetterholm (2003), 203–11.

¹⁶ *Phld.* 9.1.

¹⁷ Robinson (2009), ix.

with Judaism still practise.¹⁸ These practices, as well as their memory and its interpretation, are παλαιοί¹⁹ – a word Ignatius uses elsewhere to mean that directly opposed to, and abolished by, God.²⁰ Not only are they ancient or obsolete, but also “bad,” “stale and sour” yeast which must give way to the new leaven, Jesus Christ.²¹ Ignatius argues that without the addition of Christ, these memories and practices of Judaism will continue to ferment and fester, bringing forth fruit tending towards corruption and displeasing to God.²² Failure to remember and enact what it means to live κατὰ Χριστιανισμόν results in not belonging to, or being of, God.²³ Such strong language reflects how the interpretation of collectively-held memories functioned as boundary markers for group identity, often antagonistically situated.

Yet it appears that Ignatius also faces a more insidious problem than Jews who reject Christ altogether. His appeals to the scriptures and the figures therein also seem to be aimed against Judaising Christians,²⁴ who, despite their acceptance of Christ, “still live according to Judaism,” and thus deny the “grace” which comes through Christ.²⁵ His aim in recalling the scriptures is to ensure that his audience’s interpretation of them accords with Christ, for “the most godly prophets lived according to Christ Jesus.”²⁶ To interpret the prophets without reference to Christ is to misconstrue them completely, since “they believed in him,” and expected him “as their teacher.”²⁷ Molland believes Ignatius understands the prophets as “Christians already, not Jews,” judging from the difficult *Magnesians* 9.²⁸ But whatever label people profess to have, unless they mention Jesus Christ, Ignatius regards them as “gravestones and tombs of

¹⁸ *Mag.* 8.1.

¹⁹ *Mag.* 8.1, 9.1.

²⁰ *Ephes.* 19.3; see Schoedel (1985), 119.

²¹ *Mag.* 10.2.

²² *Mag.* 10.2.

²³ *Mag.* 10.1.

²⁴ Much has been written about the precise nature of Ignatius’ Judaising opponents: e.g. Boyarin (2018), Myllykoski (2005), Goulder (1999), Lieu (1996, chapters 2 and 8), Sumney (1993), Barrett (1976). See especially Marshall (2005), who helpfully problematises definitions involved in this discussion, and suggests that the heat of Ignatius’ wrath towards his opponents stems from insecurity about his actual degree of separation from them. For our purposes, it is sufficient to note that the Judaisers “see a different sort of continuity between Judaism and Christianity than Ignatius allows” (Sumney [1993: 359]). Whether or not Ignatius wrote to any churches in which Judaising practices were observed, he surely writes to guard against such an eventuality occurring. Note the first-person plural at *Mag.* 8.1: “For if *we* still live according to Judaism, *we* admit not to have received grace.” There seems to be a large element of intra-ecclesial tension reflected here.

²⁵ *Mag.* 8.1.

²⁶ *Mag.* 8.2.

²⁷ *Phld.* 5.2; *Mag.* 9.2.

²⁸ Molland (1954), 3–4.

the dead, upon which only people's names have been written."²⁹ Despite using language which anticipates later formulations, Vall's summary of the relation between scripture and Christ is consonant with Ignatius' words on the subject: "Among those realities that can be called λόγος θεοῦ, Jesus Christ is the prime analogue. He alone is Word of God in a definitive and unqualified sense, while Scripture is the "word of God" by virtue of its economic participation in the mystery of Christ."³⁰

There is in Ignatius a relentless and unquestioning Christo-centrism to the act of remembering. It is taken for granted that Christ is the key that unlocks the entirety of history; this is why Ignatius can make the paradoxical statement "Christianity did not believe in Judaism, but Judaism in Christianity."³¹ No history, whether before or after his coming, is understood correctly unless it is understood in the light of Christ – whose gospel has become the "untouchable archives."³² Temporal succession would appear to be a matter of little importance: all events and personages, insofar as they have any abiding significance in God, come to him through the "door" that is Christ.³³ But as the communal act of remembrance has been turned on its head by Christ, so does this hermeneutical assumption direct the congregations' present and future. This last statement is made against those who believe faith in Christ and the practice of Judaism to be compatible. Judaism and the prophets were good and necessary insofar as they proclaimed Christ beforehand, but they were incomplete; now that we have the gospel, the "imperishable finished work," it would be madness to cling to what was only ever intended to be provisional.³⁴ Indeed, the church should cease from divisions based on such quibbling, and come together in the "unity of God"³⁵ – the same unity that encompasses all the historical figures the church remembers to partake in salvation history.³⁶

Ignatius' Christo-centric lens for remembering is at once both a theological statement – a move of supersessionism, relegating the self-sufficiency of Judaism at a stroke – and a means of reinforcing the collective identity of the congregations to whom he writes. He lays down a rule concerning those who persist in their Judaism, and refuse properly to confess Christ: they are to him "gravestones and tombs of the dead," squarely outside the church's boundaries.³⁷ They are in fact pawns of the "ruler of this age," whose schemes work

²⁹ *Phld.* 6.1.

³⁰ Vall (2013), 31.

³¹ *Mag.* 10.3.

³² *Phld.* 8.2.

³³ *Phld.* 9.1.

³⁴ *Phld.* 9.2 (trans. Holmes); cf. Gal. 3:22–25.

³⁵ *Phld.* 8.1.

³⁶ *Phld.* 9.1.

³⁷ *Phld.* 6.1.

to disrupt the unity enjoyed by the church.³⁸ Like the docetists and non-Christians, the definition of these people as opposed to, and other than, the genuine Christian community, works to strengthen the bonds which unite the church.³⁹

It is sometimes said that Ignatius understands the prophets and patriarchs as types of Christ. Of course, that they dwelt on earth and preached before Christ is sure, and Ignatius certainly believes them to have “anticipated” Christ, “hoped in him and awaited him...[and] believed in him.”⁴⁰ Yet I believe he rather understands Christ himself as the type of the prophets, the mould to which they conformed. Vall is right to comment that for Ignatius, “the Old Testament prophets did not simply foresee the coming of Christ but participated in his mystery proleptically.”⁴¹ Christ is described as “the door [θύρα] of the Father, through which [δι’ ἧς] Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and the prophets and the apostles and the church enter in: all these come into the unity of God.”⁴² Ignatius’ image of a door, to whose dimensions these heroes of Israel must conform to enter into God’s unity, surely grants Christ the status of “pattern” or “mould.” It is conceivable that Ignatius here obliquely refers to 1 Corinthians 10:1, the Pauline epistle he appears to know best.⁴³ Paul tells the Corinthians that

our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea [πάντες διὰ τῆς θαλάσσης διήλθον], and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same supernatural food and all drank the same supernatural drink. For they drank from the supernatural Rock which followed them, and the Rock was Christ.⁴⁴

The image of the patriarchs “passing through” a significant, but ultimately provisional, stage in their salvation history, invites a complement, which Ignatius finds in the image of Christ the door, through whom these same heroes not only pass, but in fact “enter in” (εἰσερχονται). Whereas the people of Israel passed through the sea into the uncertain and desolate “wilderness,” where many desired evil, displeased God, and were “overthrown” (vv. 5–6), the church, along with its sanctioned heroes – the patriarchs, the prophets, and the apostles – through Christ enter into the “unity of God,” a reality which appears to be in some sense completed. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob appear to have represented to early Christians genuine piety among the dross of misinterpretation and hardheartedness which otherwise characterised Judaism; Barnabas also singles out these three, calling them “great in God’s sight.”⁴⁵ In any case, in a manner

³⁸ *Phld.* 6.2.

³⁹ Cf. *Mag.* 10.2.

⁴⁰ *Phld.* 5.2.

⁴¹ Vall (2013), 32.

⁴² *Phld.* 9.1.

⁴³ Foster (2005), 164–67.

⁴⁴ 1 Cor. 10:1–4 (RSV).

⁴⁵ *Barn.* 8.4 (trans. Holmes, 405); cf. 6.8.