

# Church, God, and Martyrdom, in Ignatius of Antioch and Justin Martyr

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Second century Rome was an attraction for a great variety of people. Such diverse figures as Ignatius, Marcion, Valentinus, and Justin found themselves there amongst the ‘polyglot oriental population of the Imperial capital’<sup>1</sup>. Ignatius of Antioch was propelled to Rome, to meet the death he yearned for, the death that would join him to the reality of the Passion of Christ. Justin Martyr sought Rome out to continue his philosophical investigations, proving Christianity to be true reason, and accepting death after the Socratic pattern. These martyrs both mount strong defences, *apologia*, for the developing Christianity of their times, this essay will compare their attitudes to the church, to theology and to martyrdom.

## Ignatius

The legacy of Ignatius of Antioch has been fought over repeatedly. Particularly contentious have been his presentation of the threefold order of ministry and the role of the Bishop, his understanding of the person of Christ, his use of supposed Trinitarian language, and his relationship with Gnostic thought. The wild growth of fantastical literature that flourished in the early church describing his martyrdom is testimony to the great appeal of his story. However, all the reliable evidence we have to assess his legacy is contained in the seven letters which Ignatius wrote during his journey from Antioch to the Roman amphitheatre to become ‘God’s wheat...ground by the teeth of the wild beasts... [to] be found pure bread of Christ.’ (*Rom.4*). This journey to martyrdom, this triumphal march from East to West<sup>2</sup>, provides what Lightfoot calls the one ‘vivid but transient flash of light’ against the backdrop of ‘the pitchy darkness which envelopes the life and work of Ignatius’<sup>3</sup>. The long debate surrounding the authenticity of Ignatius’ letters has itself proved fertile ground for dispute<sup>4</sup> and the shaping of opinions about Ignatius has been greatly affected by the different conclusions reached at different times. In the first part of this essay I will look at how Ignatius’ concerns for himself and for the life of the Church develop on his journey. In particular I will look at his appeals for unity and concern for church order, and the nascent

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<sup>1</sup> Patterson, *God and History in Early Christian Thought*, London, A&C Black, 1967, p.29.

<sup>2</sup> Schoedel, in Sanders, *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition*, London, SCM, 1980, p.52, ‘The prisoner [Ignatius] is actually a conquering hero’. Also see *Rom.5* ‘From Syria to Rome I am fighting with wild beasts, [etc]’.

<sup>3</sup> Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers, Part ii*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, London, Macmillan & Co., 1889, Vol.1, p.31.

<sup>4</sup> Lightfoot and Zahn’s acceptance of seven authentic letters is rarely challenged. For a more recent marginal view, see Weijenborg, *Les Lettres d’Ignace d’Antioch, Etude critique Litteraire et de Theologie*, Leiden, Brill, 1969. ME Thrall, reviewing *The Authentic Letters of Ignatius; A Study of Linguistic Criteria* by MP Brown in *JTS*, Vol.16, 1965, pp.185-187, picks up on the more precise Trinitarian formulations in Pseudo-Ignatius and the preference for *Xristos* (whereas Ignatius prefers *Iēsous Xristos*). The most recent discussions I have found are Brammel CPH, *Ignatian Problems*, *JTS*, Vol.33, pti, April 1982, pp.62-97 and the discussions in print quoted by Behr, *The Way to Nicaea*, New

York, St Vladimir’s Press, 2001, p.81, n.1.

theology that arises from these concerns; at how this theology is related to the heresies Ignatius wishes to combat, and at how he understands his impending martyrdom. These three areas; ecclesiology, theology in context, and understanding of martyrdom, will then be looked at in Justin's life and writings.

### Ignatius' ecclesiology

Ignatius wrote his letters whilst under armed guard on his way from Antioch to Rome<sup>5</sup>. We do not know why he had been arrested, but his language has led many to assume that he had been denounced by fellow Christians. He must have been tried in Antioch as he is fully aware of his sentence, and the manner prescribed for his execution excludes the possibility of his being a Roman citizen, unlike St Paul.<sup>6</sup> His journey, which would have been determined by the duties of his guards (presumably picking up other intended victims for the amphitheatre from Asia Minor), was punctuated by his sojourn with Polycarp, Bishop at Smyrna, and by a second break at Troas before sailing for Europe<sup>7</sup>. Lightfoot suggests that tidings must have been sent from a parting of the road after Laodicea facilitating the extensive gathering of supporters (possibly as many as twenty-five) at Smyrna.<sup>8</sup> He was joined by a further set of representatives from the churches when he reached Troas. These meetings must have been occasions for encouraging him in his progress, and for catching up on news from his companions particularly concerning the church in Syria. All the letters written from Smyrna show a concern for the lack of peace in the Church at Antioch, asking for prayers to be offered for a resolution to the conflict there (*Eph.* 21, *Mag.* 14, *Trall.* 13, *Rom.* 9.). Those written from Troas suggest Ignatius had received word that 'peace' had been achieved (*Phil.* 10, *Smyrn.* 11, *Poly.* 7).<sup>9</sup> This 'peace' has caused much comment, most writers assuming that the Church in Syria found peace in Ignatius' eyes only when it had appointed a new Bishop in his stead. Schoedel goes so far as to claim that 'Disunity in the Church of Antioch was likely the spur to all [Ignatius'] activity'<sup>10</sup> suggesting Ignatius' principal concern was the

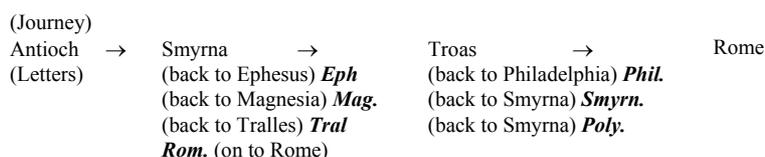
<sup>5</sup> Perhaps Ignatius' own destination is in his mind when he describes these guards as 'leopards' (the first appearance of this word in a Greek or Latin document). Saddington, *St Ignatius, Leopards, and the Roman Army*, *JTS*, Vol.38, ptii, Oct.1987, pp.411-412 argues that 'leopards' might be the adjectival regimental name of Ignatius' guards, possibly *lepidiana*. Lightfoot *op cit.* (Vol.1, p.35) comments 'His conflict with these human monsters was an anticipation of his approaching struggle in the amphitheatre.' Elsewhere Ignatius calls false teachers 'beasts' (*Smyrn.* 4, and *Eph.* 7)

<sup>6</sup> See *Eph.* 12 and Caird's comments in *JTS*, Vol. 20, pt ii, Oct. 1969, p.618.

<sup>7</sup> Lightfoot *op cit.*, Vol. 1, p.36, comments that Ignatius' first sight of Europe would have been the same as St. Paul's, (Acts 16:8,9). Schoedel suggests Ignatius is aware of a tradition connecting both Peter and Paul with journeying to Rome (cf. *Rom.* 4). This is worth comparing to *I Clem* 5.7; 'He [Paul] taught righteousness to all the world, and when he had reached the limits of the West he gave testimony before the rulers, and thus passed from the world and was taken up into the Holy place, the greatest example of endurance.'

<sup>8</sup> For a list of these people see Lightfoot, *op cit.*, Vol.1, p.33.

<sup>9</sup> Schlatter *The Restoration of Peace in Ignatius' Antioch*, *JTS*, Vol.35, Pt ii, Oct. 1984, pp.465-469, concludes that peace in Antioch coincides with the appointment of a new bishop. Lightfoot similarly, *op cit.*, Vol.2, p.277, n.5. The direction of Ignatius' journey and letters can be illustrated;



<sup>10</sup> Schoedel, in Sanders, *op cit.*, (p.38 ff), also suggests that Ignatius saw his coming sacrifice as a vicarious offering for the problems in the churches. 'The fact that all the churches are called upon to offer up the petitions

restoration of peace in Antioch rather than the establishment of a ‘monarchical’ episcopate. There is no doubt however that for Ignatius the Bishop is the key to unity and the principal authority in the Church (*Eph. 5, Mag. 3, Trall. 7, and Smyrn. 8*).<sup>11</sup> The Bishop is the ‘earthly representative of God, the very *typos theou*’<sup>12</sup>, without whom there is no church (*Smyrn. 8, Trall. 2, Mag. 7, and Poly. 4*), and no valid baptism, Eucharist or marriage (*Smyrn. 8, Poly. 5*). The bishop ‘presides in the place of God’ (*Mag. 6*), is respected ‘according to the power of God the Father’ (*Mag. 3*), represents the whole congregation in his person (*Eph. 1*), and is particularly to be respected when silent. Unlike Clement of Rome there is no argument for Apostolic Succession in Ignatius, rather, the Bishop is appointed ‘by the will of Christ’ (*Eph. 3*), and Ignatius ‘attribute[s] to the bishop the characteristics that he predicates of God’<sup>13</sup>. The threefold order of ministry seems to be evident, though again, this has been the cause of much dispute. The typology whereby the Bishop is Father is continued with the Presbyters ‘in the place of the Council of the Apostles’ (*Mag. 6 and cf. Smyrn. 8*) and the Deacons ‘entrusted with the work of Christ’ (*Mag. 6 and cf. Phil. 7*). As with the development of Trinitarian language it is perhaps easier for us to discern the kernel of later developments than it would have been for Ignatius to predict them<sup>14</sup>. The role of the Bishop, and of the Bishop of Rome (not mentioned or addressed by Ignatius) in the letters has been particularly brought to the fore when a writer has wished to stress the antiquity, even the Dominical foundation, of the tactile Apostolic Succession.<sup>15</sup> Ignatius presumably thought the Church in Rome was influential enough to prevent his martyrdom since he pleads with them not to interfere. It is also possible that Ignatius' letters are not representative of main stream opinion at the time.<sup>16</sup> On the geographical authority of the Bishop, Tugwell suggests that Christians in Antioch may have been used to the ‘system of more or less autonomous synagogues within one and the same city’<sup>17</sup> and that the concept of an overall authority is stressed by Ignatius to try to drive home the universal nature of the unity imposed by the Bishop. Similarly, although Ignatius is the first to use the term catholic church ‘the epithet *katholikē* is used in a geographical sense and not yet an ecclesiastical sense.’<sup>18</sup> Lightfoot is not alone in believing that ‘the ecclesiastical order was enforced by [Ignatius] almost solely as a security for the doctrinal purity.’<sup>19</sup> Ignatius' understanding of the Church, then, has been variously interpreted, and his writings have produced rich material for subsequent commentators.

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[for the church in Syria] suggests that the Bishop is using his triumphal journey through Asia Minor as a weapon in the Antiochene dispute’, and see *Mag. 14*.

<sup>11</sup> Though Behr, *op cit.*, (p.82 ff) has recently suggested that ‘the faith’ is the requirement for unity not the Bishop.

<sup>12</sup> Chadwick, *The Silence of Bishops in Ignatius of Antioch*, *HTR*, April 1950, Vol.43, No.2, p.170.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* p.171.

<sup>14</sup> For a trace of the Trinitarian pattern see for instance *Mag. 13*. Ignatius variously talks of the Father as *pleroma* (*Eph. Inscr.*), the Son as *logos* of God (*Mag. 7*), thought of God (*Eph. 3*), and knowledge of God (*Eph. 17*), and the Spirit as the charisma of Christ (also *Eph. 17*).

<sup>15</sup> For the developing Roman Catholic approach to this question compare Quasten, *Patrology*, Utrecht/Brussels, Spectrum, 1949 with Tugwell, *The Apostolic Fathers*, London, Chapman, 1989. For the succession at Antioch see Eusebius, who, in agreement with Origen, *Hom. 6*, and Theodoret, *Epist. 15.1*, has Ignatius ‘second to be appointed...in succession to Peter’ (*HE 3.36*). Jerome (*Vir. 111.16*) and Socrates (*HE 6.8*) place him 3rd.

<sup>16</sup> Ramsey, *Beginning to Read the Fathers*, New York, Paulist Press, 1985, p.10, ‘Just because Ignatius of Antioch...emphasises the role of the Bishop in the early 2nd century churches of Antioch and Asia Minor does not mean that anyone else felt the same way about the Bishop at that time, or even that Bishops existed in other churches at such an early period.’

<sup>17</sup> Tugwell, *op cit.*, p.107.

<sup>18</sup> Hastings, *A Dictionary of the Apostolic Church*, Edinburgh, T&T Clarke, 1915, p.601. Cf. Kelly, *op cit.*, p.385.

<sup>19</sup> Lightfoot, *op cit.*, Vol.1, p.40.

## Ignatius' theology

The most striking aspect of Ignatius' theology when placed in the context of the thought of his time is his desire to combat Docetism. There are many pointed references to the reality of Christ's birth, death, and resurrection, (*Mag.* 11, *Trall.* 9, 10, *Smyrn.* 2, etc.), and the reality of the Passion is at the root of his understanding of his own suffering and the suffering of Christians in general (*Smyrn.* 5, *Eph. Inscr.*, and *Mag.* 5). His Christology can be seen as the product of his refuting Docetic errors. What is less clear is whether Ignatius is also combatting Judaizing tendencies within the Docetic groups or as a separate threat. His adoption of some of the prevalent Gnostic terminology clouds the issues further<sup>20</sup>. Some commentators see the Judaizing tendencies and the Docetic doctrine as being intermingled.<sup>21</sup> However, Molland suggests that Jewish Christians in Asia Minor had ceased teaching the continued validity of the Mosaic law, that there was no 'sabbatizing' (*Mag.* 9), and that circumcision had ceased to be an issue. He concludes that the heretics combatted as Judaizers by Ignatius were simply claiming support for their Christological doctrine (with which Ignatius disagreed) from the OT and 'were not Judaizers in any other sense'.<sup>22</sup> Others have found that Ignatius' principal concern is to draw boundaries between the Christian and the non-Christian, and this concern has been seen to arise, again, 'partly in response to difficulties which he had experienced in maintaining control of his own church in Antioch'.<sup>23</sup> Schoedel thinks that 'the fragile links between the two threats [of Docetism and Judaizing] were superimposed on the situation by Ignatius himself'<sup>24</sup> and that Docetic denials of the reality of the Passion were a threat to Ignatius' understanding of his own coming sacrifice (*Smyrn.* 4, 5, *Trall.* 10). He feels that Ignatius may have taken up the accusation of Judaizing as a particularly apt tool for showing Christians that a decisive break was now needed from Judaism, and perhaps there are resonances here of the post-Jamnia situation described in Matthew's Gospel and *The Didache*, both products of Antioch. However, Schoedel also thinks that Ignatius shows an openness to pagan society and culture<sup>25</sup>. He demonstrates this through Ignatius' reliance on the culture of the Hellenistic city. This reliance is demonstrated in Ignatius' use of rhetorical method, of Hellenistic epistolary practice and metaphorical language drawn from favourite Hellenistic 'subjects' such as athletics and medicine. Other verbal elements of this culture adopted by Ignatius include references to the 'council of elders' (*Trall.* 3, *Mag.* 6, *Phil.* 8), his use of ambassadorial language about messengers (*Phil.* 10, *Smyrn.* 11) and the concept of concord (*homonía*). This last term is not found in the New Testament but was regularly in use between cities to describe their pacific home life or excellent co-operation with each other (e.g. Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 34-41 and Aelius Aristides, *Or.* 23-24). In marked contrast with this view Daniélou finds features typical of Jewish

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<sup>20</sup> For example the use of *sigē* (see below) and of *plerōma* for the Father (*Eph. Inscr.*) Schoedel, comments 'Ignatius refutes the Gnostic claim that Christian piety is artificial by adopting Gnostic terminology', *op cit.*, p. 316. Harnack and Schwietzer are among those who have classified Ignatius' writings as belonging to the school of 'Asia Minor Theology'. Barnard, *op cit.*, p.28, prefers 'Syrian Catholicism', p.28, where he makes the point that Ignatius' theology is not fully Matthean, Pauline, nor Johannine.

<sup>21</sup> Brammel CPH, *Ignatian Problems*, in *JTS*, Vol. 33, pt i, April 1982, p.83, 'Both groups may have spread superfluous "strange teachings" and there may well have been objectionable features shared by the two groups'.

<sup>22</sup> Molland E, *The Heretics Combatted by Ignatius of Antioch*, *JEH*, Vol.5, 1954, p.3, 'the Pauline catchwords are used in an un-Pauline manner and there is no trace of a conflict concerning the validity of the law for Christians'.

<sup>23</sup> Schoedel, *op cit.*, p.31.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* p.32.

<sup>25</sup> But not to the proverbially low moral standards associated with Antioch and to its fashionable suburb Daphne.

Christianity in Ignatius, including the imagery of the beloved (*agapēmenos*) applied to Christ, the metaphor of the Father as gardener (*Phil.3, Trall.11*), and the use of silence (*sigē* as a divine attribute).<sup>26</sup> The very presence of this word proves, for some commentators, a reliance on Gnostic conceptions of the divine attributes (as in Valentinianism with its two-fold deity *Bythos* and *Sigē*) and on the other, that Ignatius is grappling with the ‘essentially Syrian, Antiochene character of this type of Jewish Christianity’<sup>27</sup>. His application of the same term as a characteristic of Bishops at their most sublime is dealt with convincingly by Chadwick. His article surely disproves Lightfoot's suggestion that Ignatius might be describing a particular Bishop with a ‘retiring disposition’, or for Bauer a particular Bishop lacking eloquence, as these would hardly be attributes Ignatius would wish to posit of the divine prototype<sup>28</sup>.

### **Ignatius' understanding of martyrdom**

That such wide theological and ecclesiological use has been made of Ignatius' letters is remarkable when we consider that they were written in the midst of his journey to certain death. Ignatius treats his forthcoming martyrdom with a relish that has appalled and inspired. His death will join him to Christ in his Passion, ‘Suffer me to follow the example of the Passion of my God’ (*Rom.6*). Through this death he will become a ‘word of God’, ‘God's wheat’ which will become ‘pure bread of Christ’ (*Rom. 4*) and his death will be his birth in Christ (*Rom.6*), he will ‘receive the pure light’ (*Rom.6*), and ‘become a man’ (*Rom.6*). His excessive zeal for martyrdom has not impressed all;<sup>29</sup> Gnosticism was well known not to favour martyrdom (though the two versions of the *Apocalypse of James* in the Nag Hammadi discoveries have shed new light here), and his bravery would no doubt have been called theatrical by Marcus Aurelius<sup>30</sup>.

### **Justin Martyr**

Justin Martyr also found his way to Rome from the East. Born of Samaritan parents in (what is now) Nablus, and educated after the Hellenic fashion, he was converted to Christianity from Platonism (probably shortly after the bar-Chochba rising, 132-135, see *Dial.1*), and journeyed to Rome to found a school of philosophical Christian instruction. His more famous journey is the cerebral one he undertook through the prevalent philosophical schools of his day, arriving at Christianity as the destination of all true reason. Like Ignatius he embraced martyrdom, was concerned for the preservation of the Church as handed down from the Apostles, and developed his theology against the background of surrounding patterns of

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<sup>26</sup> Daniélou J, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity*, London, DLT, 1964, Vol.1, p.42. He also suggests that the threefold order of ministry ‘recalls the structure of the Essene community’. Surprisingly he doesn't pick up on ‘council of elders’ being of Jewish origin. For the view that Ignatius had a ‘third error’ to combat (anti-Episcopal charismatic action) see Trevett, *Prophecy and Anti-Episcopal Activity: A Third Error Combated by Ignatius? JEH*, Vol. 34, No.1, Jan.1983, pp.1-18. Hasting comments (*op cit.*, p.599), ‘Nowhere in the Ignatian Epistles is there any mention of Christians credited with personal charismata, nor is there any word of local or itinerant prophets such as we find in the Apostolic period.’

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* p.42. Ramsey, *op cit.*, p.15, thinks that silence as divine attribute ‘was later dropped [by the church] because...the Gnostic groups made use of it’, although he later claims that ‘silence seems to be for Ignatius what essence [*ousia*] would be for the later Fathers.’ (p.45).

<sup>28</sup> Chadwick, *op cit.*, p.171, perhaps Chadwick is a little strong when he says Ignatius had a ‘semi-Gnostic conception of God as silence’.

<sup>29</sup> For Ignatius as neurotic see LW Barnard, *Studies in the Apostolic Fathers and their Backgrounds*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1966, p.19.

<sup>30</sup> See, *Meditations*, xi.3.2

thought. In contrast with Ignatius, Justin sees philosophy as evidence of the divine *logos* fully revealed in Christ. He does not know the word *episkopos*, which would suggest a marked contrast with Ignatius, but his concern for church order is very real. As with Ignatius I will look at these three areas, ecclesiology, theology in context, and understanding of martyrdom in Justin's life and writings, before drawing together some conclusions.

### Justin's ecclesiology

Justin came to Rome to continue his engagement with, and his teaching of, the philosophical truth of Christianity, and it was in Rome that his writings became known. He had begun this teaching rôle at Ephesus, the location of his disputation with the Jew, Trypho, and he famously continued to wear the *pallium*, the philosopher's cloak. Of his pupils in Rome the most note-worthy was Tatian. Justin describes his philosophical apprenticeship, under Stoic, Peripatetic, Pythagorean, and Platonist masters, and his encounter with an old man by the sea who convinces him of the fulfilment of Prophecy in the birth from Mary the virgin, of Christ the true *logos* of God (*Dial.* 1. ff.). The withdrawal from the world for contemplation was a standard enough *topos* to receive ridicule in Lucian's *Philosophies for Sale*, and we do not know how much of Justin's description of his philosophical wanderings is true,<sup>31</sup> but evidence from the penultimate port of call, that of Platonism, is very strongly present in his Christian writings. That Justin also had a well-developed ecclesiology is less remarked upon. Justin sees the Church as universal, containing every race (*Ap.* 1, 25, 32, 40), though with more pagans than Jews or Samaritans (*Ap.* 53, similar to *2 Clem.* 2.3, of the same period; 'we [non-Jews] who have believed have become many more than those who seemed to have God'), and including the uneducated and different social classes (*App.* 10). The Church is the same supernatural body founded by Christ, or rather, founded by the Apostles in Christ's name (*Dial.* 63) and is the bearer of the doctrine delivered to the Apostles (*Ap.* 61, 66). This body of beliefs is the bulwark against heresy (*Ap.* 4) as is shown by its dealings with the heresies of Simon Magus, Menander, and Marcion (*Ap.* 26, 56, 58), and the Church is therefore not a club for philosophical speculation<sup>32</sup>. Having said this, it is also clear that the concepts Justin uses for the Church are very *philosophical* in themselves, and we have much less comment here than in Ignatius on structure, authority, or ministry. As noted, Justin is unaware of the term *episkopos*, though he perhaps uses *proestos* in a similar functional way.<sup>33</sup> Jalland's argument that Justin wishes to avoid confusing his pagan audience with technical terms seems unlikely in the light of the use of *diakonos*, but he makes a strong case for *proestos* being analogous to *ho arxōn* (the ruler), and therefore referring to the Bishop. Justin seems to display a "conventional" understanding of the function of the deacon, and it may be simply that the Christians in Rome had not begun to use *episkopos* at this time to refer to a church-leader. It also seems unlikely that we can talk of one leader of a Church at Rome at this

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<sup>31</sup> Estimates vary from nil to almost all. Unusually, RPC Hanson, *Justin Martyr's Dialogue with Trypho*, London, SPCK, 1930, p.8, draws a sensible middle line; 'it is unlikely that it represents precisely the actual words, or even the actual course, of the discussion. But there is no reason to think that some discussion did not take place between Justin and a Jew'.

<sup>32</sup> Barnard, *Justin Martyr, His Life and Thought*, Cambridge, CUP, 1967, p. 128 and 129, 'For Justin, Christianity was a body of beliefs he had received from the Church' and the church 'had not come into being from a fusion of pagan philosophy with earlier Christian teaching, but was the bearer of doctrines handed down from the Apostles.'

<sup>33</sup> This impression has perhaps been created in part by *proestos* being rendered 'president' in most translations. In *Ap.* 61 the elements are brought to the ruler of the brethren (*to proestōtītōn adelphōn*) and then distributed by the deacons (*diakanoi*). But see *Hermas* where *proestos* is presbyter (*Vis.* ii.4) 'with the elders who are in charge of the Church' (*meta tōn prestbuterōn tōn proistamenōn tēs ekklēσίας*) and see *Vis.* ii, 2, and *Vis.* iii, 9., and Eusebius where *proestos* is used as a synonym for *episkopos* when referring to Publius, Bishop of Athens, (*HE* 4.23).

stage.<sup>34</sup> It is only in describing the Eucharist and baptism that Justin mentions office within the church at all.

### **Justin's theology**

Unlike Ignatius whose theology can be defined negatively over against the heresies it aims to overthrow, with Justin we come across a much more subtle product of philosophical reflection on scripture. It is the exegesis of scripture and the possession of the correct scriptures that are at the root of Justin's theology. Justin used a corrected Septuagint text for the twelve Minor Prophets but this didn't prevent him from arguing against the synagogue elders in Nablus who, naturally, dismissed Christian appeals to prophecy. For Justin scripture contains the proof texts of the reality of the Christian *kerygma* (and proof, also, that carries the weight of antiquity). Like Ignatius, Justin delivers himself of short bursts of doctrine, but Justin seems to have something akin to a canon of truth on which he can draw, and which he views as a necessary minimum for Christian belief.<sup>35</sup> He describes himself as one of those 'whose belief is in every respect correct' (*Dial.* 80). These correct beliefs are occasionally presented in pithy credal snippets; 'the Word, who is the first-begotten of God, and our Master Jesus Christ, was born without sexual union, and...was crucified, and died, [no suggestion of a descent], and rose again, and ascended into heaven' (*Ap.*21). He is the first writer after John to develop the *logos* concept at any length, although Chadwick is sure that he does this independently of any written Johannine tradition. Thus we have the 'paradox that the man chiefly responsible for making the *logos* idea at home in Christian theology was little influenced by John'<sup>36</sup>. For Justin the theophanies of the OT are appearances of the *logos* (*Ap.*60, *Dial.*55) and here there is a fundamental difference with Ignatius; 'For Ignatius, the prophets looked forward to Christ as the sole locus of revelation, while for Justin, the revelation of God in the incarnate Word is the last, even if the most important, of a series of discrete revelations.'<sup>37</sup> For Justin there have been many Christians before Christ through the indwelling of the *logos spermatikos* which is not the object sown, or an innate kinship for God planted in all minds (see *Dial.*4), but the presence of the sower himself. Justin attempts a synthesis of Biblical and Hellenistic concepts, and is particular about what he will take from each tradition. He is fond of Platonist metaphysics until that system of thought describes this life as an imprisonment in the body (more attractive to the Gnostics). He finds that the Platonists have been nearest to Christians in their concept of God (as unchanging, impassible, incorporeal, without name, and outside time), and he uses the Platonic understanding of God's transcendence when arguing with Trypho for Christ as the pre-existent divine *logos*. The variety of divine transcendence adopted by Justin led to the development of markedly subordinationist Christologies, and to that distancing of Father and Son that would lead to Arianism. Justin shares the common philosophical outlook of his day that God's transcendence requires him (God) to have an intermediary. For Justin this intermediary is the Word. In *Dial.* 127, Justin wishes to make clear the 'immovability' of God the Father; 'You should not suppose that the Unbegotten God himself descended or went up from any place; for the ineffable Father and Lord of all things neither comes to any place, nor walks, nor sleeps, nor rises up, but always remains in His own place wherever it is...'. Yet Justin also famously describes Father and Son as distinct 'in number but not in will' (*Dial.* 56.), so there

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<sup>34</sup> This conclusion is for instance reached by Barnard, *op cit.*, p.132, 'Episkopos was not applied to the chief officer of the Roman Church until a period later than that of Justin'. Barnard also sees the term as an Eastern import (pp.133-134).

<sup>35</sup> Behr, *op cit.*, p.101.

<sup>36</sup> Chadwick H, *Early Christian Thought and the Classical Tradition*, Oxford, OUP, 1966, p.4.

<sup>37</sup> Behr, *op cit.*, pp.104-105.

is Trinitarian language in Justin, but no developed theology of three persons. Thus we find ‘the Son of the very God...in the second place, and the spirit of prophecy in the third place’ (*Ap.*10), which is promising. But then the ‘spirit’ also appears after angels in precedence ‘but both Him, and His Son who came from Him...and the host of other good Angels...and the Spirit of prophecy’ (*Ap.*6). The Word itself is called the Spirit and power of God (*Ap.*33), and indeed Christ is called ‘Angel’ and ‘Apostle’ (*Ap.*63). Justin found the Platonic system of transmigration and the idea of inherent immortality incompatible with Christian belief. He is also among those to hold that Plato brought together his harmonious collection of teachings with the aid of a providential visit to Egypt to read the law of Moses<sup>38</sup>. Justin is also impressed by the ethics of the Stoics, particularly the ideal of the ‘wise man’, but finds their teaching on materialism, pantheism, and fatalism, to be anathema. He is at pains to show that philosophy has been the intellectual preparation for the coming of the Gospel, just as the history of the Jews has been the spiritual and prophetic preparation. A blend of Stoicist ethics, Platonist metaphysics, and Aristotelian logic is the assumed common intellectual language for Philo, and Justin seems to write for a similarly well-educated audience. There is an eclecticism with regard to philosophy which can be contrasted with a thorough debunking of pagan myth and cult. Justin is particularly harsh on the worst excesses of Egyptian animal cults and the supposed deification of various Roman characters.

### **Justin's understanding of martyrdom**

If Ignatius patterned his forthcoming death after the Cross, Justin followed the Socratic model. Ignatius saw himself as a sacrifice, even perhaps a vicarious offering. Justin declares that ‘the lover of truth, even if threatened with death [should] choose to speak and to do what is right’ (*Ap.*3). Socrates, he tells us, ‘endeavoured by true reason and judgement to bring these things to light [the falsity of the pagan gods]... [but he has been] put to death as a godless and profane person’ (*Ap.* 5). Unlike Ignatius, Justin is not writing in the shadow of the arena. Nevertheless he expects that he may be killed (*App.* 3), and he faces this possibility with courage ‘since we fix not our hopes on the present, we take no thought when men murder us, knowing that we must assuredly die’ (*Ap.* 11). Chadwick suggests that Justin was well aware of the ‘good publicity’ martyrdom gave to Christianity ‘notably by offering an obvious refutation of popular accusations of nocturnal vice’<sup>39</sup>. However the lack of any substantial work offering Justin's final apologia would suggest that at the time of his death he was caught up in events moving swiftly. Justin's martyrdom seems to have been brought about by a dispute with the Cynic, Crescens, as Justin had predicted (*App.* 3). The Acts of Martyrdom in Justin's case appear reliable and they record him refusing to sacrifice to the pagan gods for Rusticus the Roman prefect, before being beaten and beheaded along with some companions. As Eusebius (*HE* 4.16) comments, ‘that martyrdom he himself, truly the most philosophical of men, clearly foretold.’

### **Conclusion**

In Ignatius and Justin we see Christian thought developing a greater self-understanding in the second century. The Church they describe in Rome and Asia Minor seems to be searching for

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<sup>38</sup> See the famous quote of Numenius in *Clem. Strom.*, 1.23 ‘What is Plato, but Moses in Attic Greek?’ (ti gar esti Platōn hē Mōusēs attixizōn;). In *ANF* the quote continues ‘This Moses was a theologian and prophet, and as some say, an interpreter of sacred laws’ (Vol. 2, pp.334-335).

<sup>39</sup> Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society*, Oxford, OUP, 2001, p.110.

clearer patterns of ministry and greater theological coherence. The threats to this coherence in Ignatius' mind came from Docetists seeking to deny the human reality of the divine revelation in Christ. For him, Church order and the authority of the Bishop are the solution to these problems, and these are solutions that he had perhaps tried and yet failed to deliver as Bishop of Antioch and he holds to his last chance to witness to the reality of Christ's Passion. Justin's philosophical wanderings led him to the *true reason* of Christianity via the Scriptural revelation of the *logos* fully revealed in Christ, and we glimpse in his writings the start of an understanding of how this Word may be seen as part of a God of persons. Both writers sought to defend Christianity from misunderstandings and from persecution. The defences they built proved firm enough bulwarks against heresy, and a strong platform on which the battle with Gnosticism could be joined.