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The Christology of Ignatius of Antioch

by Cullen I. K. Story

Professor Cullen, who teaches New Testament at Princeton Theological Seminary, originally delivered this paper at a meeting of The Geneva Forum in Philadelphia. It now forms his second contribution to THE EVANGELICAL QUARTERLY, the first being his essay on 'The Nature of Paul's Stewardship with Special Reference to I and II Corinthians', published in EQ 48:4, Oct. 1976, 212-29.

Approximately in the year AD 106-107, Ignatius, bishop of the church of Antioch in Syria, was seized by Roman authorities and removed from his church. The circumstances of his arrest are unknown. Two things, however, are clear: first, Ignatius — in fetters and guarded by a detachment of ten soldiers — was led away a prisoner toward Rome to meet his fate with the wild beasts in the Roman amphitheatre; and second, while he was en route, he wrote seven letters — six to churches and one to a bishop. Four of the seven letters were written from Smyrna (to the churches of Ephesus, Magnesia, Tralles, and Rome) and three from Troas (to the churches in Philadelphia and Smyrna and to Polycarp, bishop of the Smyranean church).

The text of the letters was established by J. B. Lightfoot in the nineteenth century.¹ Since Lightfoot's monumental work, the content of the letters has been the object of serious inquiry by numerous scholars. My concern in this essay is not with the writer — though what a fascinating study this is! There is, for example, the refreshing honesty of the bishop as it emerges from his letter to the church at Rome. He pleads with the church not to intercede for him to the Roman authorities to have his death sentence commuted, for, he affirms, my death in the Roman arena is God's will. Yes, even if upon arriving at Rome I should ask you to intervene on my behalf, do not listen to me. Listen, rather, to what I am writing to you now (Rom. 7:1-2). Here is a person who knows full well the frailty and fickleness of the human mind and heart — his own included. But our primary concern in this essay is not with the bishop, nor even with the churches to which he writes — their faith and life, their unity and hierarchical form of government including Ignatius' passionate concern for the right ordering of their sacramental life. Nor are we for the moment concerned with an investigation of the relationship which the Ignatian letters have to the various New Testament writings, especially to those of John and Paul — though what an attractive and demanding study that is!

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¹ J. B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers, Part II, St. Ignatius, St. Polycarp*, Vol. II, Sect. 1 (1885). But see also the much more recent critical text of Karl Bihlmeyer, *Die apostolische Väter, Neubearbeitung der Funkschen Ausgabe*, Teil 1 (1956). The suggested date of Ignatius' arrest and martyrdom, i.e., AD 106-107, is based on the independent witnesses of the apocryphal Antiochene and Roman Acts of the Martyrdom of Ignatius, i.e., the ninth year of the emperor Trajan. See Lightfoot, pp.473-536 for the text of the two Acts of Martyrdom.

Our focus falls on one item only: the christology that the Ignatian letters reveal. Or, to put it simply, we address to Ignatius the same question which Jesus posed to the leaders in Jerusalem, 'Ignatius, what do you think of Christ?' (cf. Matt. 22:42). The answer of Ignatius is important and far-reaching. I suggest that it can be expressed under two main headings found in the New Testament pastoral letters. To Ignatius,

- (1) Christ is God made manifest in the flesh (variant reading of 1 Tim. 3:16), and
- (2) Christ is God our Saviour (Tit. 3:4; 2:10).

GOD MANIFEST IN THE FLESH

The very first mention of Christ in the Ignatian letters (inscription, Eph.) uses the striking phrase, 'Jesus Christ, our God' (cf. also Eph. 15:3; 18:2; 19:3; Tr. 7:1; Rom. inscription, 3:3; 6:3; Smyr. 1:1; Polyc. 8:3). Taken by itself, the recurring claim could imply an incipient monophysite doctrine which emerged later full-blown as a reactionary position to the Council of Ephesus (431) only to be condemned by the Council of Chalcedon (451). Taken, however, in the larger context of the Ignatian corpus, the claim 'Jesus Christ our God' expresses a firm conviction of the deity of Christ. It appears appropriately amid numerous references to the various persons of the Godhead distinguished from each other yet united to each other in person and work. God manifest in the flesh, therefore, means that God manifested himself through Jesus Christ his Son 'who is his Logos having come forth from silence, who in every way pleased the one who sent him' (Mag. 8:2). The language is clear and brings together texts in John 1 and John 8 in a mosaic-like form. That is to say, the Word who 'became flesh . . .' (John 1:14) claimed unequivocally, 'I do always the things that please him' (John 8:29).²

The incarnation takes on special meaning in view of the work of Jesus Christ in creation. He is the one who spoke the word and creation appeared (Eph. 15:1, cf. Psalm 33:9) and the one who has wrought in silence things that are worthy of the Father. The text is brief but it weaves together with swift strokes the sovereign work of the pre-incarnate Jesus and his silence during his incarnation — in childhood (but cf. Luke 2:49), in his refusal of kingship (cf. John 6:15), and before his accusers (cf. Mk. 14:61; 15:5).³

Similarly also, Ignatius juxtaposes the incarnation to holy history. The

² Cf. the helpful essay of C. Maurer, *Ignatius von Antiochien und das Johannes-evangelium* (*Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments*, 18 [1949], 41f.).

³ Cf. Lightfoot, 69.

pre-incarnate Christ, he claims, actively inspired the Old Testament prophets so that unbelievers might be fully persuaded that there is one God, the God who manifested himself through Christ his Son (Mag. 8:2). In the following sentence (9:1-3) Ignatius claims that the prophets were Jesus' disciples 'in spirit' and that they lived in expectation of his coming, who, when he came, 'raised them [*i.e.*, the prophets] from the dead' (Mag. 9:3).⁴ It is possible that Ignatius refers to the curious text in Matt. 27:52-53 concerning a resurrection of many bodies of saints sleeping, though both Matthew and Ignatius need careful exegetical treatment on the issue.

The form of the incarnation, according to Ignatius, is the virgin birth (Eph. 7:2; 18:2; 19:1; Tr. 9:1). Jesus was conceived through Mary but he is of the seed of David. Ignatius' account of the star that 'shone above all the stars' at Jesus' birth is intriguing in itself as well as in its relationship to Matt. 2. But much more important is his interpretation of the event in Eph. 19:3. The verse contains six affirmations, each of the six main verbs occurring in the imperfect tense signifying an action that begins in past time and continues (the imperfect forms and their equivalents are indicated below by italics).

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(1). 'From which fact, all magic *was being destroyed*'. The adverb *ὅθεν* links the statement to the supernatural phenomenon of the star (19:2, *cf.* Matt. 2:2, 9, 10), while *μαγεία* surely suggests a reference to the *μάγοι* mentioned by Matthew (Matt. 2:1 ff.). It is a well-known fact that early writers sensed that the birth of Jesus meant the overthrow of magic and sorcery,⁵ which were viewed as manifestations of the evil one. So, for example, Justin Martyr describes the magi (Matt. 2) as those who had been made a prey due to all (their) evil practices which 'were being energized' by the evil one. Yet by coming and worshipping the Christ, 'They appear as ones who had withstood the power that had once made them a prey'.⁶ Presumably, in a somewhat similar way, Ignatius sees the demise of *μαγεία* in the journey of the *μάγοι* to Bethlehem and in their obeisance to the young child.

(2). 'Every bond of malice *was disappearing*'. Ignatius sees beyond Herod's malicious massacre of the Bethlehem children to the king's own fast-approaching death (Matt. 2:16-19).

(3). 'Ignorance *was being overpowered*'. The situation in Matthew comes immediately to mind. A question is asked and answered correctly from the prophetic word (Matt. 2:4-6), yet the very ones who answer by quoting the prophecy — *i.e.*, the priests and scribes — fail to act on their own answer. The ignorance of the magi, however, 'was being overpowered' (or 'destroyed') for,

⁴ *Cf.* also the text of Philad. 9:1-2 and the later discussion of it in this essay.

⁵ See the references in Lightfoot, 83.

⁶ *Dialogue with Trypho*, 78:9.

in contrast to the religious leaders, they made their way to the feet of the newborn king.

(4). 'An ancient kingdom *was being ruined* while God *was appearing* in human form unto newness of eternal life'. Ignatius clearly directs us to the impending ruin of Herod 'the king' (king, by the way, not 'of the Jews' but of 'Judea'; Jesus alone is βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων, 'king of the Jews' — contrast Matt. 2:1 and Luke 1:5 with Matt. 2:2 and 27:29, 37). As for the phrase, 'while God was appearing in human form', it finds its true reference in the one who is called Emmanuel, 'God with us' (Matt. 1:23).

(5). 'The thing perfected in the presence of God *was receiving* a beginning'. Ignatius is conscious that the birth narrative in Matthew points to the fruition of the perfect counsel of God (Isa. 7:14 = Matt. 1:22-23; Mic. 5:2 = Matt. 2:5-6), but no less to the beginning of the fruition of that counsel (cf. Matt. 1:1, 'The book of the birth [γένεσις = beginning] of Jesus Christ, son of David, son of Abraham').

(6). 'From then on all things *were being set in motion* because the destruction of death *was being carried out*'. It is possible that Ignatius has given to us in this single sentence a deep and comprehensive understanding of the birth narrative in Matthew, *i. e.*, what it means that God was 'manifested in the flesh'. By his use of the passive voice in the two expressions ('were being set in motion' and 'was being carried out'), the bishop of Antioch suggests that God is behind the birth events (cf. in Matt. 1-2 divine providence in the prophetic word, the conception by the Spirit, and in the guidance that was offered through star and dream). And what God is doing behind the scenes, says Ignatius, points in the direction of the 'newness of eternal life' (sentence 4 above) as well as the 'destruction of death' (sentence 6). In the massacre of the Bethlehem children (Matt. 2:16-18), it is clear that Matthew points to the tragedy of death. Yet both Matthew and Ignatius claim that the birth of Jesus marks the inauguration of a life-giving and saving work of God whereby human sin and death are ultimately to be conquered and destroyed (cf. Matt. 1:20-21). In this light, it is quite certain that Ignatius has found the birth account in Matthew to be the narrative of the confession, 'God was manifested in flesh'.⁷

Ignatius' confession was made in the face of the docetic heresy that had its subtle beginning in his own day. In a recent article in this journal,⁸ Issa A. Saliba has pointed out clearly how Ignatius' confession contrasts sharply with Gnosticism and its precursors. He notes that the gnostic idea claiming evil to be inherent in the material world confronted the problem of the person of Jesus Christ with the question, 'How could the Holy Saviour enter the realm of evil matter and possess a physical body?'⁹ The

⁷ Cf. ἐφανερώθη ἐν σαρκί (1 Tim. 3:16) with ἐφανερώθη τοῖς αἰώσιν (Ign. Eph. 19:2).

⁸ The Bishop of Antioch and the Heretics: A Study of a Primitive Christology', *EQ* 54 (1982), pp.65-76.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 67. Saliba's article throughout focuses on the anti-docetic quality in Ignatius' letters, certainly a legitimate study.

heresy lies in the background of the confessional statements in the Johannine letters, e.g., 'Every spirit which confesses Jesus Christ as having come in flesh is of God' (1 John 4:2; cf. 2 John 7). At times, Ignatius' confession assumes a credal form, e.g.:

Jesus Christ . . . the one of the race of David, the one of Mary, who truly was born, he both ate and drank, he was truly persecuted in the time of Pontius Pilate, he was truly crucified and died, while those dwelling in heaven and those on earth and those under the earth were looking on, who also was truly raised from the dead, his Father having raised him, whose Father in Christ Jesus in a similar way also will raise us up who believe in him, apart from whom we do not have the true life.

(Tr. 9:1-2)

The iterative or intermittent occurrence of the adverb *ἀληθῶς* ('truly') gives to the credal statement a solemn and sober quality as though to say that the various stages in the life of Jesus Christ are supported by incontrovertible evidence that will stand firm under the most careful and critical scrutiny.¹⁰ Moreover, Jesus' life enjoys a vast host of witnesses — heavenly, earthly, and even witnesses from under the earth (cf. Philipp. 2:10-11). At times, in order to underscore his conviction concerning the incarnation, Ignatius uses the very word from which we receive the term 'docetic' or 'docetism'. I refer to the verb *δοκέω*, 'to seem, appear, be unreal'. For example, in Tr. 10:1 he writes: 'Now if . . . certain . . . unbelieving ones claim that he [Christ] has suffered in an unreal way, they themselves being unreal, why am I in bonds . . .' (cf. also Smyr 2:1; 4:2).

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Without doubt, to Ignatius, Christ was God manifested in flesh. More than in any other place, the claim of Ignatius emerges with clarity and vigour in the third chapter of his letter to the church of Smyrna where he addresses the subject of Jesus' resurrection appearances. His language is quite similar to that of Luke 24:39. In fact, the four words, 'handle me and see' in Luke are reproduced exactly in Smyr. 3:2, *ψηλαφήσατέ με καὶ ἴδετε*.

¹⁰ The confession found in Eph. 7:2 has lines throughout of almost equal length. M. Staniforth, *Early Christian Writings, The Apostolic Fathers* (Penguin Books), 77f., has attempted to capture the rhythmic and lyric quality of the confession and shows that it must have been originally an early hymn. He renders it as follows:

Very flesh, yet Spirit too;
Uncreated, and yet born;
God-and-Man in One agreed,
Very-Life-in-Death indeed,
Fruit of God and Mary's seed;
At once impassible and torn
By pain and suffering here below:
Jesus Christ, whom as our Lord we know.

For I know and believe that he was in the flesh even after the resurrection. And when he came to Peter and his companions, he said to them, 'Take, handle me and see, because I am not a disembodied spirit.' And immediately they touched him and believed, being mixed together with his flesh and with his spirit. Because of this, they even despised death and were found beyond death. Now after his resurrection, he ate together with them and drank together with them as a fleshly person although spiritually he was united to the Father (Smyr. 3:1-3).

Is he God? Yes, for spiritually he was united to the Father. Is he fully human? Yes, for after his resurrection he ate together and drank together with his disciples. They touched him and believed, 'being mixed together with his flesh and spirit'. 'Being mixed together' — what a strange expression to be used here! The verb *κεράννυμι* is normally used of mixing wine and water together. Its compound form (*συγκεράννυμι*) is found in Heb. 4:2, where it suggests that the word which ancient Israel heard was not mixed together with another ingredient, *i. e.*, faith, and thus the word did not benefit the people.¹¹ Word mixed together with faith; disciples mixed together with the flesh and spirit of Jesus. Like the repeated *ἀληθῶς* in Tr. 9:1-2, the term in Smyr. 3:2 is intended to arouse the readers to the real in-flesh person of the risen Jesus with whom the disciples had to do. But now, we hasten on to the second part of Ignatius' answer to the question, 'What do you think of Christ?'

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CHRIST IS GOD OUR SAVIOUR

In Ignatius' first letter (*i. e.*, to the Ephesians), Jesus Christ appears successively as 'our God' (inscription) and 'our Saviour' (Eph. 1:1). According to Ignatius, God's salvation through Jesus contains both a *dynamic* and a *eucharistic* emphasis.

It is *dynamic* with respect to objective and experimental emphases. In Eph. 9:1, Ignatius describes vividly the growth of the church via a unique 'building' metaphor. At the outset, one realizes that the description is comparable to the metaphor in Paul's Ephesian letter (2:20-22) of a building 'founded upon the apostles and prophets', which building 'continues to grow unto a holy temple in the Lord'. But Ignatius' description goes further. The stones prepared for the Father's sanctuary, he says, 'are being carried up to the heights through the lifting crane of Jesus Christ which is the cross using for a rope the Holy Spirit'. The text

¹¹ The interpretation of Heb. 4:2 that is indicated is based on the singular form of the participle of *συγκεράννυμι* that is found in the Nestle text (25th ed.). The UBS text (3rd ed.), prints the plural form, with the probable meaning for the entire clause, 'those who were not united with those who heard it [*i. e.*, the word] in faith' (*cf.* Bauer-Gingrich-Danker, 773b).

shows that all three persons of the Trinity are involved in the construction with the central place given, it seems, to the cross of Christ. Yet, as the latter part of the verse shows, the experiential emphasis is not lacking. The church is a-building, says the bishop, for the stones are being carried up by the cross, but the path to the heights is a path of love, a path that you must travel along with your trusted guide, *i.e.*, your faith.

In another vivid picture, Ignatius views the cross as a tree. In one text, the branches are said to be Christians and their fruit imperishable (Tr. 11:2). In another text, the fruit itself is viewed as Christians, fruit, says Ignatius, of Jesus' most blessed passion (Smyr. 1:2). In a recent article, I have noted that in these passages, Ignatius unconsciously gave to the disappointed gnostic churchman, Valentinus, part of the framework for Valentinus' interpretation of redemption which he portrays in *Evangelium Veritatis* (18:30-35).¹² Consciously, however, Ignatius herein reveals a dynamic concept of salvation. That the cross is an objective event in history is clear as is seen in the writer's contextual reference to Pontius Pilate (Smyr. 1:2, *cf.* Mag. 11:1; Tr. 9:1) and to the tetrarch Herod (Smyr. 1:2). At the same time, what happened in history, says Ignatius, involved 'us' — explicitly and experientially. Thus the Christians at Smyrna are assured that not only has Christ been 'nailed' for them 'in (the) flesh' (1:2) but that they 'having been knit together' in unshakable faith are themselves also, as it were, 'nailed to the cross' (1:1). The expressions 'knit together' and 'nailed' are perfect passive participles accompanied in the sentence by two other perfect passive participles (a favourite form of Ignatius) — 'firmly established in love' and 'fully convinced with respect to our Lord'. The tense points to the permanent effects of the experience of the Smyranean Christians.

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In still another text, Ignatius claims that his own spirit is 'the offscouring of the cross' (Eph. 18:1). The word he uses is *περίψημα*. It is found in 1 Cor. 4:13 in the phrase *πάντων περίψημα*, translated by some as 'the scum of the earth'.¹³ Since the removal of the 'offscouring' or 'scum' cleanses the thing to which it is attached,¹⁴ the additional meaning of 'ransom' or 'scapegoat' emerges, *e.g.* in Tob. 5:19: 'may it (*i.e.*, the silver) be a ransom for our child'. It is this meaning that the word seems to have in Eph. 8:1: 'I am your ransom'. But what does the word mean in Eph. 18:1? It is known that by the third century the word spawned a new idea, the idea of 'polite self-depreciation'.¹⁵ Such an idea has influenced

¹² 'Ultimate Reality and "The Gospel of Truth"', in *Ultimate Reality and Meaning*, IV, no. 4 (1981), 284.

¹³ *The Jerusalem Bible*, *Good News Bible*, and *The New English Bible*.

¹⁴ Bauer-Gingrich-Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (2nd Eng. ed., 1979), 653b.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

recent translations of Eph. 18:1, e.g., 'My spirit is now all humble devotion to the cross' (M. Staniforth), 'My spirit is devoted to the cross' (R. M. Grant), and 'I am the most humble servant of the cross' (Bauer-Gingrich-Danker lexicon). It is a serious question, however, as to whether a third-century meaning should be foisted on a text that may be as early as AD 106-107. Moreover, given the clear quotations and allusions to 1 Corinthians 1 and 4 in Eph. 18:1 and given the vivid and dynamic nature of Ignatius theology, why may we not allow the use of *περίψημα* in 1 Cor. 4 to inform the meaning of the term in Eph. 18:1? To be sure, Ignatius' spirit is not the cross; the cross belongs to Christ alone. Nevertheless, it is surely possible that Ignatius understands his spirit to be the offscouring of the cross. That is to say, his spirit is so closely associated radically and realistically with the cross as to cause offence to the unbelieving (Eph. 18:1). After all, Ignatius says very pointedly in Rom. 6:3, 'Permit me to be an imitator of the passion of my God'.

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But the dynamic nature of salvation is found elsewhere in the bishop's letters. In Philad. 9:1, he combines uniquely the figure of the High Priest with the image of the door in a *heilsgeschichtliche* fashion. Far better than the priests, writes Ignatius, is the High Priest of God who is entrusted with the Holy of holies . . . who himself is the door through which patriarchs and prophets, apostles and church all enter. Ignatius probably refers to the Day of Atonement and the ministry of the High Priest with reference to the sins of the people. Apparently the lively imagination of the writer has sensed that the saving highpriestly work of Jesus (according to Hebrews, e.g. 9:25f.) is to be linked to John 10:9: Jesus the door, the only door to the Father for the ancient people of God (Israel) no less than for the new people of God (the church).

Briefly now, we note another emphasis in Ignatius connected with the saving nature of Christ's work. I refer to his treatment of the eucharist. The *eucharistic* references in the letters are frequent and they point us likewise to the second main stress in Ignatius on God or Christ our Saviour. Let us hear the writer speak in a few places:

(1). Eph. 20:2, 'Assemble in one faith . . . in order to break one loaf which is the medicine of immortality'.

(2). Tr. 8:1, 'Renew yourselves in faith which is the flesh of the Lord, and in love which is the blood of Jesus Christ'.

(3). Rom. 7:3, 'I desire the bread of God which is the flesh of Jesus Christ . . . and for drink I desire his blood which is immortal love'.

(4). Philad. 4:1, 'Be diligent, therefore, to use one eucharist, for the flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ is one, and (there is) one cup with a view to the oneness of his blood, one altar . . .'.

(5). Smyr. 7:1, 'They abstain from (the) eucharist and from prayer because

they do not confess the eucharist to be the flesh of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, which (flesh) suffered in behalf of our sins, which — in goodness — the Father raised up’.

To understand the eucharistic emphasis that is here, we need to sense the burning passion of Ignatius for the unity of the church. He calls himself a man who does his own thing (!), one who is set on unity — *εἰς ἔνωσιν κατηρτισμένος* (Philad. 8:1), and one who is utterly convinced that God does not take up residence where division exists (8:1). Two nouns meaning ‘oneness’ and the verb *ἔνώω* ‘to unite’ occur an aggregate of some 25 times in the letters. Moreover, there are some other 30 references to the numeral ‘one’. Unity appears in many forms, not only the unity of the church at Antioch which church Ignatius had to leave behind, but the unity of the Asian churches with their respective bishops, presbyters, and deacons, and the all-important unity of the Father and the Son (Mag. 1:2). In this light, it is not at all strange to find in Ignatius the emphasis on the eucharistic feast. It is in the holy sacrament that the unity of the church appears in bold relief. The eucharist is valid if it is ‘under the bishop’ or the person to whom the bishop entrusts its celebration (Smyr. 8:1). ‘Run together’, he says to the Magnesian church, ‘as to one altar, to one Jesus Christ’ (7:2). The unity of God and of the church are solidly imbedded not only in the passion and resurrection as unique events, but in the sacrament, ‘in his flesh and blood’ (Smyr. 12:2) as the unique celebration of those events. In brief, the concern in Ignatius is not on how the eucharist is to be celebrated, even less on what happens or does not happen to the bread and wine during the celebration of the eucharist. In essence, the eucharist is a feast that proclaims God our Saviour. The eucharist is the bread of God (Rom. 7:3) and the flesh of the Saviour, which flesh suffered for our sins, which flesh the Father raised up (Smyr. 7:1). The eucharist is ‘the cup of Jesus’ blood’ (Philad. 4:1). Moreover, in the context of the eucharistic ‘altar’ we hear Ignatius express it in still another way. The eucharist means, he says, that you ‘renew yourselves in faith’ (Tr. 7:2-8:1), faith in Jesus Christ our God and Saviour (Eph., inscription and 1:1).

CONCLUSION

The christology of the church has always been and ever will be the crucial issue in every age of her history. What do you think of Christ? On the one hand, to answer the question by parroting the Bible can at best produce only a dry sterile confession, perhaps orthodox to the very core, yet void of power. On the other hand, to attempt to answer the question out of personal experience and from a sensitive societal consciousness revealing,

however, only a partial and selective concern with the biblical message itself may both imperil and erode the christological foundation on which the church stands. We are familiar with the shaky 'second-hand' witness of the seven sons of Sceva and the withering and embarrassing question put to them by the demon-possessed man as he sent them reeling, 'I know Jesus and I know Paul, but who are you?' (Acts 19:15).

Like the psalmist (Psalm 46) who proclaimed God as both a fortress and a flowing stream, the church is to be faithful to the strong biblical witness concerning Christ and yet to be dynamic in her reformulation of christological emphases as the Spirit of God leads her in witnessing to a society whose distinctive features include change and decay. The continuity of a strong biblical and dynamic christology in Ignatius contains the kind of encouragement that we need. 'My *eros* has been crucified', says Ignatius, 'and there is in me no fire that desires anything material' (Rom. 7:2).

182 With clarity and conviction, Ignatius has answered the christological question which we posed to him at the beginning. He, in turn, leaves us with a haunting christological question which may be framed as follows: 'Is our own self-love — like his — crucified and does Christ's love "press in upon us from every side"¹⁶ and cleanse us as it cleansed Ignatius from "material" gain, and claim from us as it claimed from Ignatius a fearless witness to church and society of that one who knew no sin whom God made sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in him' (2 Cor. 5:21)?

¹⁶ See the verb form *συνέχει* in 2 Cor. 5:14 (cf. also its use in Luke 8:45 and 19:43).