Ignatius of Antioch. Aspects of Faith

Ignatius was Bishop of Antioch in Syria in the early 2C AD. He was arrested and taken under guard to Rome for execution in the arena, a fate for which he shows an extraordinary enthusiasm. Thus he begs the Christians at Rome not to show 'an unseasonable goodwill' and speak on his behalf to hinder his death; rather he wants to be 'God's wheat', 'pure bread of Christ'; the beasts need to be enticed in order that they may become his 'tomb'. The language is vivid to the point of excess in this passage (1 Romans 4), and in this is typical of the way in which Ignatius writes to his fellow Christians.

The journey to Rome from Syrian Antioch is lengthy and painful. Ignatius is guarded by 'ten leopards', as he describes his military escort. They make their journey up through Asia Minor, and despite the apparent harshness of the treatment Ignatius is allowed visits from the local Christians, and especially the bishops, in the cities at which they halt. Again, the conditions allow Ignatius to write letters to the communities which he has visited, and it is these letters which allow us to form a picture of the bishop and an impression of his faith. He is a Father in God with a deep pastoral sense and a total commitment to his calling and to his impending death. His mind is focused; his language picturesque; his concern for the gospel passionate; and his faith strong.

It is his faith on which this essay will focus. It is possible to distinguish different aspects of faith in the letters. This reflects his concern for the problems of specific communities which he has visited and in which he has had discussions with the bishop. Many of these communities have been disturbed by docetists, i.e. those who teach that the incarnation, death and resurrection of Jesus have no reality but are only an appearance. Other communities have been disturbed by Judaisers, i.e. those who teach the necessity for Christians to adhere to the fullness of the Jewish Law. Ignatius' own impending death
demands of him endurance, confidence, conviction and virtue. All these qualities form part of what he understands by faith. This understanding of faith is expressed graphically and enthusiastically, with vehemence, and often with the use of striking imagery to drive the point home.

Ignatius' style is often rather stilted, and difficult to translate for this reason. The uncomfortable conditions and the personal pressures which he was under may account for some of this. However, the urgency with which he writes and the need he feels to convey his message to the churches in an arresting fashion also play their part. He was probably a fairly passionate character by nature; it is a pity that we do not have any letter or other writing addressed to his own Christian community at Antioch for comparison. All the letters we have are addressed to the Asia Minor churches he visited, at Ephesus, Magnesia, Smyrna, Tralles and Philadelphia; to the Roman Christian community begging their restraint in offering support; and a personal letter to Polycarp, the bishop of Smyrna, containing pastoral advice and a more general conclusion addressed to the whole church which discusses proper behaviour.

In regard to faith specifically, it is possible to discern five broad categories under which πίστις and its cognates occur, namely:

1. Faith as the standard of belief and behaviour.
2. Faith as true belief, over against the teachings of the docetists.
3. Faith as a virtue, an emphasis which begins to emerge in the later letters of the New Testament and which becomes more dominant in the sub-apostolic period.
4. Faith as a general term for true religion.
5. Images of faith.

1 The translations offered here are my own. I have deliberately kept them fairly literal to preserve Ignatius' style so far as that is possible. The text is that in P. Th. Camelot, Ignace D'Antioche, Sources Chrétien nes No. 10, Les Editions Du Cerf (Paris, 1969) (cited hereafter as Camelot).

2 I have taken the Middle Recension of the letters, including the letter to the Romans, as the basis for this essay. On this see W. R. Schoedel, A Commentary on the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch (Fortress Press 1985) 3-7 (cited hereafter as Schoedel).
Using these headings, we will build up a picture of what faith meant to Ignatius, and relate his words to the understanding of discipleship in our own time.

1. Faith as the standard for belief and behaviour

Faith and love together are the two basic principles of the Christian life for Ignatius. The two nouns represent the two sides of discipleship; that which faces towards God and that which faces towards people. The duo shows the inseparability of belief and behaviour. Ignatius expresses faith and love as the standard according to which Christians live. This is the force of the phrase κατά πίστιν καὶ ἀγάπην which occurs at 1 Ephesians 1.1 in a context which elaborates the significance of the standard.

Professor Arnold points out that there are a number of instances in the New Testament where this word order is used. For example, in Acts 28:28, the apostle Paul says, "And you yourselves know, that these hands ministered unto the saints during all my time in Asia. To whom I am debtor both of the Greeks and of the Hebrews, for the brotherhood of Christ Jesus. Wherefore, having obtained your much loved name, which you have obtained by a righteous nature in accordance with faith and love in Christ Jesus..........being imitators of God, being rekindled in the blood of God, you have perfectly completed the task so well suited to you.

1 Ephesians 1.1

Ignatius makes frequent use of κατά plus the accusative in phrases which indicate a standard according to which Christians are to live.3 In the present context, the righteous nature of the Ephesians is in

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3 This is a standard usage with κατά, see W. F. Arndt & F. W. Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (Chicago, 1952) (hereafter AG) s.v. II.5.a.g, and compare Matthew 9.29 where two blind men are healed by Jesus who inquires first if they believe that (πιστεύετε ὅτι...) he is able to do this. When they assert that they do, Jesus replies ‘According to your faith (κατὰ τὴν πίστιν) let it come about for you’ i.e. they have reached an acceptable standard of faith for the miracle to take place.
accord with an acceptable standard of faith and love. At \textit{I Ephesians} 1.3 Ignatius makes mention of the local bishop, a man called Onesimus\textsuperscript{4}, whom he describes as ‘a man of indescribable love............whom I pray that you may love in accordance with Christ Jesus (κατὰ Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν).’ Lightfoot\textsuperscript{5} translates this phrase ‘after the standard of Christ’ and comments ‘i.e. with a Christian love’. He compares \textit{I Romans} 15.4 where the same phrase occurs. At \textit{I Ephesians} 2.1 \textit{ad fin.} Ignatius claims to have seen the whole Ephesian church in the persons of their representatives sent to meet him at Philadelphia ‘in accord with the standard of love’ (κατὰ ἀγάπην). The loving presence of these representatives, and especially of Burrhus the deacon, who stayed with Ignatius at his request (2.1 \textit{ad init.}), was a great encouragement. Their presence is an expression of the standard of their own love as well as that of the whole congregation who sent them.

Truth is another standard of the Christian life. At \textit{I Ephesians} 6.2:

Onesimus himself praises highly your good order in God, because you all live according to the truth (κατὰ ἀλήθειαν) and because no heresy dwells in you.

It looks as if truth is to be understood in two senses here. The absence of heresy indicates that the Ephesians have resisted the docetic and Judaising teachings mentioned elsewhere in the letters; so ‘truth’ is ‘true faith/belief’. On the other hand what Onesimus praises so highly is their ‘good order’ (εὐταξία), so truth may be equivalent to ‘rule of life’.\textsuperscript{6} εὐταξία has military overtones and is so used from Thucydides on; in later Greek it indicates orderliness and regulation in a more general sense. The word is applied in the Christian context to indicate the disciplined and orderly life required of disciples (Lampe\textsuperscript{7} s.v.).

\textsuperscript{4} Not the same person as the slave in the \textit{NT} letter to Philemon. The name was common (Schoedel 43).

\textsuperscript{5} J. B. Lightfoot, \textit{The Apostolic Fathers}, 3 vols (Macmillan, 1889).


A striking instance of Ignatius' fondness for this idea of standards in the Christian life is to be found at I Magnesians 10.1. The context is an exhortation to reject the teachings of the Judaisers.

So let us not be unperceptive of his kindness. For if he were to imitate us and our actions, we would not exist. Therefore, since we are his disciples, let us learn to live according to Christianity (μαθωμεν κατα Χριστιανισμόν ζην).

The interest here centres on the word Χριστιανισμός. This is the first known occurrence, appropriately from the pen of the bishop of Antioch, Acts 11.26 (Camelot 89 n. 3). Just as Judaism describes the whole system of the Jewish Law and religion, so Christianity becomes an all-embracing word to describe the whole system of ethics, doctrine and church order to which the Christian disciple is committed. In the thought of Ignatius, salvation depends on an acceptable standard of belief and behaviour, as does the attainment of discipleship.8

Having established the importance of standards for Ignatius, it is now worth while returning to the passage with which we began this discussion, I Ephesians 1.1. Here, the standards of faith and love are the outworking of the 'righteous nature' which the Ephesians are said to possess. In other words, faith and love are the outcome of a life lived in a right relationship with God and other people. The righteous nature is characterised by faith in God and love for people. The outward sign of the righteous nature is the 'much loved name' which the Ephesians have obtained.

In several places Ignatius uses 'name' as a designation of the person; in the case of Alke (I Smyrnaeans 13.2; Polycarp 8.3) and Crocos (I Romans 10.1). Camelot (57 n.3) further suggests a play on words between Ἐφεσος and ἐφεσις (desire). The sense may be that the Ephesians are in a right relationship with God and with each other; in this sense they are imitators of God engaged in his work. It would be natural for Ignatius to 'desire' their fellowship and support, given so lovingly in the sending of their representatives. It would also

8 V. Corwin, St Ignatius and Christianity in Antioch, (Yale, 1960) 227.
be typical of Ignatius’ style and his love of striking imagery to make such a connection. Imitation of God is an important idea in the letters. At 1 Ephesians 10.3 it is imitation of the graciousness (ἐµείκεια) of God; in other places imitation becomes a literal following of Jesus to the martyr’s death. In the present passage it is the loving actions of the Ephesians that constitute their imitation of God.

‘Being imitators of God, being rekindled (ἀναζωµηρησάντες) by God’s blood, complete perfectly the work which is natural for you’. So ends the quote under discussion with further vivid imagery. ἀναζωµηρείν is not an uncommon word in the vocabulary of spiritual revival; it is found in the Pastoral Letters of the NT (2 Timothy 1.6) and at 1 Clement 27.3. In the septuagint it is used in the literal sense of ‘to revive’ (2 Kings 8.1,5 in the sense of reviving a dead child, cf. also Genesis 45.27; 1 Maccabees 13.7), and the imagery of fire seems to be missing. Moulton and Milligan⁹ (s.v.) comment that the word is ‘a characteristic compound of the Pastorals, but vouched for in the common speech of the day’. It looks very much as if the verb is an example of that reduction to the conventional which seems to occur from frequent usage in the ordinary language of every day. If this is the case in Ignatius, the vividness of this statement lies in the reference to ‘God’s blood’ rather than in the rekindling.

Blood is a sign of God’s love, because the shedding of blood is associated with the saving death of Jesus on the cross. In this sense being ‘rekindled in God’s blood’ is to be spiritually revived in the love of God which the disciple is to imitate. But there are almost certainly eucharistic connections here too. It is in the Eucharist that the blood of Christ is shared by the faithful, and their love is rekindled by their participation in the sacrament. It is this that enables the perfect completion of the work ‘so well suited’ or ‘natural’ (τὸ συγγενικὸν ἔργον) to the Ephesians.¹⁰ The point is that the Ephesian Christians have completed a work which is that specifically Christian task of imitating God’s love. Because love is natural to Jesus, being part of his essential nature of love displayed on the cross.

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¹⁰ ‘Natural’ is the translation preferred by Lightfoot.
and shared with believers in the Eucharist, the task is also natural for
the disciple who seeks to imitate his or her Master.

In relation to the discernment of aspects of faith, it is shown here
coupled with love as the standard in accordance with which Christian
life is to be lived. These two virtues are the outworking of a righteous
nature towards God and other people. The concomitants of faith in
this case are love, together with the imitation of God as he is revealed
in the faith and love of Jesus, in turn demonstrated in the kindness of
the Ephesian Christians towards Ignatius in his need. The motivation
for imitation is the rekindling of Christian love through the Eucharist,
and the result is the perfect completion of a work natural for
Christian disciples.

This standard of faith and love occurs again in the Inscription of
Ignatius’ letter to the Romans.

I Romans Inscr.

It seems that even in the time of Ignatius the Roman church was
regarded as having a pre-eminence over the surrounding churches,
although the reference is likely to be geographical rather than
theological, and reflects the importance of the city to Ignatius as the
place of his impending martyrdom (Camelot 106 n.1; Schoedel 165ff).
There is a dignity and expansiveness about this Inscription which is
absent from the other letters, even in the case of Ephesus, the leading
city of the Asia Minor seaboard. The complimentary list of ἀξιο-
compounds in the latter part of the Inscription adds greatly to its effect.
This Roman church is described as 'preeminent in love', προκαθημε'νη της αγάπης. Schoedel (166) translates this phrase as 'presiding over love', and interprets this as the 'territory' over which the Roman church holds sway and as referring to its 'long history of benefactions to the poor and those in mines'. Schoedel criticises Protestant scholars; (e.g. Harnack) who wish to avoid translating as 'preside' on the grounds that Ignatius is here speaking metaphorically. Camelot's lengthy note (107) makes a similar point. However it is difficult not to see here a glance back to κατὰ πίστιν καὶ ἀγάπην above. In the thought of Ignatius, faith and love are so closely connected and so often go together that it is likely that in mentioning one the other is also in mind. The presiding church is preeminent in the basic essentials which form the standard of the Christian life, however this might be expressed in good works.

The role of the Roman church as 'presiding', then, whatever this may or may not indicate in regard to territorial authority and leadership, at the least means that in the mind of Ignatius it sets a standard in the essentials of Christianity, namely faith and love.

This community is greeted as 'beloved and enlightened in the will of the one who wills all things that exist, in accordance with faith in and love for Jesus Christ (κατὰ πίστιν καὶ ἀγάπην Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ). O. Perler argues that the genitive Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ is objective, not subjective, and this is in line with the almost invariable usage in the NT. A misunderstanding of this genitive has led some editors to reject πίστιν here. Perler notes the chiasmus ἡγαπημένη καὶ πεφωτισμένη / πίστιν καὶ ἀγάπην. The Roman church, beloved by God, reflects that love from God in a corresponding love for God; and enlightenment by God issues in faith. The chiastic arrangement is rhetorical.

11 O. Perler, 'Ignatius von Antiochien und die römische Christengemeinde' Divus Thomas Ser. 3.22 (1944) 413-451.
13 See the critical apparatus in Camelot's edition.
The point is that the principal church is especially beloved and enlightened by God, and so is able to set the standards of faith and love. In this the Roman church is an example to other churches. This is the only place in the Roman letter at which Ignatius mentions faith. This reflects the different interest of the letter. Here he is not concerned to combat heresy or attack Judaisers; his concern is to emphasise martyrdom as the way to true discipleship and to persuade the Roman Christians not to intervene to mitigate the sentence.

There is an interesting comparison here with the teaching of St Paul. The Apostle emphasises the relational aspect of faith much more than Ignatius does. This can be illustrated by Paul’s words in the NT letter to the Romans 5-8. Romans 5.1 begins with the statement that ‘having been justified by faith we have peace with God’. This leads to the teaching about grace and forgiveness, and to the caution against ‘sinning that grace may abound’ at the beginning of 6. Paul’s argument here is that a believer cannot continue in sin because baptism is ‘baptism into the death of Christ’. The argument continues at 6.8 by making a connection with belief in the resurrection. ‘If we have died with Christ (i.e. in baptism), we believe (πιστεύομεν ὅτι) that we will also live with him’. Here faith is that trust in Christ which enables grace to work and results in justification - i.e. in being brought into a right relationship with God. But faith is also the belief in the truth of the resurrection. It is not possible to set the trust/belief aspects of faith in juxtaposition like this in the letters of Ignatius.

Th. Priess\(^{14}\) points to other differences between Paul and Ignatius which reflect the different emphasis in regard to faith; these have to do with the different view of martyrdom taken by the two.

Ignatius’ whole desire is to become a martyr and so to become in the truest sense a disciple; in this he literally imitates the passion of Jesus. Paul, although he believes it would be personally advantageous for him to die (Philippians 1.22ff.), subordinates that

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desire to the need for him to preach the gospel which he sees as his first responsibility. For Paul, entry into the death of Christ is a spiritual experience which takes place through baptism and is reflected in the death to sin and in renewal of life spiritually and morally. For Ignatius it is all a literal going to death with Jesus. To imitate Christ is to die as he died. This is the way of true discipleship, and discipleship is imitation. Not that this is just for personal advantage; the passion of the martyr has its own redemptive value for the church as well.15

Ignatius speaks of himself in sacrificial language: ‘Do not provide more for me than that I should be poured out as a libation to God, as long as the altar is prepared....’ (I Romans 2.2). Ignatius is himself a ‘sacrifice to God’. If the Roman Christians intervene they will not only spoil his chances of attaining true discipleship, but they will also deny the church the benefits of his sacrifice.

This kind of commitment to martyrdom requires great faith. It requires a firm belief in the resurrection and its corollary that death is not the end. It also requires trust in Christ to see him through the horrors not only of the beasts but of the journey with the ‘ten leopards’ (I Romans 5). Ignatius speaks of faith when he refers to belief in the resurrection; but when it comes to the more personal side of trust he tends to speak not of faith but of imitation and discipleship. This is how Ignatius speaks of his commitment to Christ, a commitment which Paul would call faith. It is possible to say that Ignatius sees his relationship with Christ in terms of imitation and discipleship, while Paul speaks of faith and trust.

This leads to a consideration of Ignatius’ teaching about true belief as against the teachings of the docetists and the Judaisers who were disturbing the churches he visited.

2. Faith as true belief over against the teachings of the Docetists

Docetism is that heresy which teaches that the Incarnation and human life of Christ are τὸ δοκεῖν - ‘seeming’:

For if these things have been done by our Lord in appearance (τὸ δοκεῖν), I also am bound in appearance (τὸ δοκεῖν).

I Smyrnaeans 4.2

In this case the resurrection too is only an appearance. Thus the heresy cuts the ground from under the central doctrine of Christianity, and renders the promises of forgiveness and life after death null and void. In Ignatius' own case, his martyrdom and sufferings are useless and the rewards of the martyr an illusion.

The heresy seems to have been widespread in the early church, and although there are some connections with Gnosticism it is unlikely that Ignatius had actually encountered Gnosticism in a developed form. 16 Ignatius found the heresy especially well established at Smyrna, Philadelphia and Tralles, judging by the tone of those letters. Ephesus was also threatened by heretics travelling through from these other places (1 Ephesians 7).

There is a good deal of disagreement about the identity of the docetists, or as to whether Ignatius is opposing a single group or two groups or even more. Lightfoot argued for a Judaeo-docetism, and for a single group of heretics. Corwin advocates a fight on two fronts against two distinct groups; the evidence is summarised and weighed by Barnard who favours Lightfoot’s judgement.17 Donahue has supported the two heresy view.18

Sumney19 warns of the danger of using faulty methodology in investigating the problem. He regards each letter as unique and analyses the passages concerned within the context of their letter. He

19 J. L. Sumney, art. cit.
identifies docetists, especially in the letter to the Smyrnaeans. At Philadelphia the problem seems to be with the authority of the Jewish scriptures rather than with Jewish practice. He finds no evidence for any opposition in Magnesia. It is unlikely that it is possible to reach finality on this question of the identity of the disturbers; however it makes no real difference to the discussion of the faith contexts. For Ignatius, faith must include a belief in the reality of Jesus’ Incarnation, life and death, and especially his resurrection and its corollary of life after death. These are the areas which the docetists called τὸ δοκεῖν.

There are strong words about the docetists and the damage they do to the church:

For some are accustomed to bandy about the Name with evil guile, practising some other things which are unworthy of God; whom you must avoid as wild beasts. For they are mad dogs who bite with stealth, against whom you must be on your guard, since their bites are difficult to heal. There is one physician, fleshy and spiritual, begotten and unbegotten, being God in flesh, true life in death, both from Mary and from God, first passible then impassible, Jesus Christ our Lord.

I Ephesians 7

It is possible that the antitheses in this passage reflect early credal material, but Ignatius has articulated the material in his own striking way. Rabies was notoriously hard to cure, and the false teachers are badly infected (Schoedel 60f.). Faith comes in the next section:

Let not anyone, therefore, lead you astray, being wholly God’s. For when no strife has taken root among you which is able to torment you, then you are living according to God’s will (κατὰ θεόν). I am your humble servant (περίφημα) and I am dedicated for you Ephesians, a church renowned for ever.

οἱ σαρκικοὶ τὰ πνευματικὰ πρᾶσσειν οὐ δύνανται οὐδὲ οἱ πνευματικοὶ τὰ σαρκικά, ώσπερ οὐδὲ ή πίστεις τὰ τῆς ἀποστίας οὐδὲ ή ἀποστία τὰ τῆς πίστεως.
People of flesh cannot practise the things of the spirit, neither spiritual people the things of the flesh. Similarly faith cannot practise the things of unbelief, neither unbelief the things of faith.

I Ephesians 8

The teaching about faith springs directly out of the warnings about the damaging effects of heresy, as damaging as the bite of a mad dog and as difficult to heal. There is only one physician who has the cure, Jesus Christ, who is both flesh and spirit, begotten and unbegotten etc. The antitheses describe the two sides of Christ's nature; he is true God and true man and is real in each aspect. 'Flesh and spirit' is the basic principle which determines the remaining antitheses.

The Ephesians are to remain firm in this belief, otherwise it is not possible to live κατὰ θεόν. In the same way, Ignatius' offering of himself would be pointless unless he firmly believed in the reality of the two natures of Christ. This is the sense in which he dedicates himself for the Ephesians20, an act that would be meaningless if Christ's sufferings and resurrection were merely an appearance.

The people of the flesh, then, are the docetists, and they are so described because wrong belief leads to wrong behaviour; to strife (ἔρις) which tortures, and to a life which is not lived according to the will of God. πίστις here must be understood as right belief, which cannot indulge in the destructive works of unbelief (ἀπίστία). For the true believer, everything is done 'in Christ Jesus', and even the everyday things which are related to the flesh are spiritual because done in Christ. This is the conclusion that Ignatius comes to at the end of 8.2:

The things which you do according to the flesh, these things are spiritual; for you do everything in Christ Jesus.

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20 ἈΓ s.v. ἁγιώται 2b. Ignatius' designation of himself as περίφημα has the same sense; the word is connected with ideas of expiation even though it has become by this time a common word of humble self-identification, see Schoedel 63; Camelot 64 n.3.
It remains true that belief and behaviour go together as two sides of the one coin. The heresy leads to strife and division, discord and disruption. Such behaviour is typical of people of the flesh. Osborne’s comment that the most serious thing about heresy is the behaviour of heretics contains a warning about the importance of faith/belief.  

The point is further elaborated by Ignatius at \textit{I Ephesians} 16.1:

\ldots if those who do these things according to the flesh have died, how much more if someone should corrupt faith in God (\(\piστιν \ θεού\), objective genitive\textsuperscript{22}) by evil teaching, for which faith Christ was crucified? Such a person, being filthy, shall go into the unquenchable fire, and likewise the hearers.

\textit{I Ephesians} 16.1

In his vivid style Ignatius here gives his readers a warning of the likely moral consequences of wrong belief.

Faith as belief in the reality of the death and resurrection of Christ finds its next mention at \textit{I Magnesians} 9. The passage stands in its wider context of 8-11. Ignatius draws a contrast between law and grace: ‘If until now we live according to law (\(κατά νόμον\)), we confess that we have not received grace’. Christian prophets have pointed the way to Christ and demonstrated the reality of grace; this is why Ignatius finds it so astonishing that there are still some who cling to the old Judaism (Schoedel 120). Moreover these prophets have given proof of their genuineness by enduring persecution. Judaism is but a preparation for Christianity; it is therefore illogical to move from Christianity to Judaism. The movement is the other way (10.3).

The need for faith/belief stands between this contrast of law and grace, and the illogicality of the transfer from Christianity to Judaism:


\textsuperscript{22} As against Corwin 239, where she translates ‘faith of God’. The objective genitive is well established as the prevailing usage: W. F. Richardson, ‘"The Faith" in the New Testament: A linguistic study’ \textit{Prudentia} 7.1 (1975) 21-32; T. C. Gilmour, ‘The Development of the Language of Faith’ \textit{Prudentia} 17. 2 (1985) 55-70.
If, then, those who lived according to the ancient customs came into a new hope, no longer observing the sabbath but living according to the Lord's Day,

in which also our life has arisen through him and his death, which some deny, through which mystery we received faith and on account of this we endure, in order that we may be found disciples of Jesus Christ......

Schoedel understands 'our life' as a reference to 'Christ, or the new being embodied in Christ', but it is more likely that personal renewal is uppermost in Ignatius' mind here; it is 'our' life, the life of the believer, which is raised through Jesus and his death. This personal renewal means nothing to the one who reverts to Jewish beliefs and practices. 'Keeping the sabbath' and 'living according to the Lord's Day' represent two whole ways of life (Schoedel).

It is through the mystery of the life and death of Jesus that believers receive faith, expressed here as τὸ πιστεύειν. This is the only place in the letters where Ignatius uses the articular infinitive to express the idea of faith, although the usage can be paralleled by τὸ ἐπιθυμεῖν at I Magnesians 5.2 and I Trallians 2.1. In the former case the construction may arise from the idiomatic Hellenistic use of τὸ ζῆν in the next clause; in the latter case it may be for the sake of variation. In the present context it seems best to understand the usage as emphasising the act of believing. Ignatius wants his readers to assent intellectually to the reality of Jesus' Incarnation and death; as against the Judaisers.

The ability to believe in the reality of the Incarnation is not something attained by human effort; it is the gift of God. Like love, belief is to Ignatius one of the charismata: 'We have received faith'. This idea of faith as a divine gift comes again in the 'machine metaphor' of I Ephesians 9.1 and in the Inscription of the letter to the Smyrnaeans. In both these examples faith is coupled with love, but
there seems no reason to suppose that intellectual faith is any less of a gift than the more emotive trust faith. The Spirit works on the intellect as well as the emotions. The train of thought in this passage from Ignatius is that if one believes as a result of God’s gift in the reality of the Incarnation, death and resurrection of Jesus, then the result will be the endurance needed for the disciple whose discipleship will be perfected in martyrdom.

Tralles was a wealthy city near Laodicea on the Meander river. The area is fertile, and this coupled with an ability to win the favour of the Roman overlords brought prosperity. The danger of this as far as Christian faith is concerned is that it leads to luke-warmness. This is precisely the accusation made at Revelation 3.14ff. The Bishop, Polybius, had travelled to Smyrna to meet Ignatius. At the beginning of his letter, Ignatius expresses his appreciation of the visit and the effort made. He sees in the Bishop the representative of the whole community. In their care for Ignatius they are ‘imitators of God’ (I Trallians 1.2). Ignatius goes on to develop this theme of imitation at 2.1. To imitate God is to live κατά Ἰησούν Χριστόν in accord with the standards of Jesus Christ and not by human standards. This is then linked with the need to ‘believe in his death and so to escape death’ Again, without belief in the reality of Jesus’ death there can be no true imitation and the basis of discipleship is cut away. A similar line of thought is to be found at I Magnesians 5.2.

After a fairly gentle start, Ignatius becomes much more explicit with the Trallians and expresses himself in colourful imagery. It appears that heresy was a real problem:

I exhort you..........take only the Christian nourishment and reject foreign herbage, which is heresy. Those who make a pretense of honesty (οἱ καταξιοπιστευόμενοι) blend Jesus Christ for themselves, as giving a deadly poison with honey-sweet wine, which the ignorant person gladly receives, and in this evil pleasure receives death.

I Trallians 6.1f

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23 As against Corwin 243. Cf. also NT Romans 12.3; Acts 17.31; and the cry of the father at Mark 9.23f. for help to believe sufficiently to enable Jesus to cast out the demon in his son.
καταξιωστεῶμαι is a hapax legomenon in early Christian literature. The meaning is ‘to pretend to be trustworthy’, and the commentators and AG compare Polybius 12.17.1 where the equivalent καταξιωστεῶθαι occurs. The usage suggests a colourful picture of the devious and deceptive behaviour of the heretics.

Once again Ignatius will go on to develop the theme of the behaviour of heretics and true believers. At Trallians 7 the implication is that the heretics are ‘puffed up’. True believers are ‘within the altar’ and ‘pure’. This leads on to the memorable words of Trallians 8:

“You, then, putting on gentleness, have yourselves recreated in faith (ἀνακτίσασθε ἐαυτοὺς ἐν πίστει), which is the flesh of the Lord, and in love, which is the blood of Jesus Christ.

I Trallians 8

Faith is the flesh and love is the blood; the eucharistic reference is clear enough. The flesh and blood of Christ in the Eucharist are the normal food of Christians just as faith and love are the basic and normal virtues which are the product of eucharistic grace. The striking language is meant to emphasise the reality of the flesh and blood which in turn show the reality of Christ and the Incarnation; this is what the docetists deny. Accepting this belief requires a gentleness of spirit which the heretics lack. Ignatius proceeds in Trallians 9 with what amounts to a credal statement, and at 10 with the explicit statement that the heretics are ‘atheists and unbelievers’ who say ‘in appearance he has suffered - they themselves being the appearance (τὸ δοκεῖν)’.

The problems at Tralles seem to have been repeated at Philadelphia, to which the next letter is addressed. Here they are ‘plausible wolves (λύκοι ἀξιώματοι)’ whose behaviour contrasts with the ‘gracious moderation (ἐπιείκεια) of the true believers (I Philadelphians 2). The letter goes on to speak of the divisions which inevitably occur under the influence of heresy. The Eucharist is the centre and means of unity. This question of unity is developed in a remarkable way in section 8:
I therefore have tried to play my part as a man committed to unity. Where there is division and wrath God does not dwell. The Lord will forgive everyone who repents, if in repentance they come into unity with God and to the council of the Bishop. I have confidence in the grace of Jesus Christ (πιστεύω τῇ χάριτι,...) who will loose you from every bond.

I exhort you to do nothing from selfish ambition, but in accordance with the teaching of Christ (κατὰ χριστομαθίαν). Nevertheless, I have heard some saying that, except I find it in the archives I do not believe in the gospel (ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ οὗ πιστεύω), and when I say that it is written there (in the OT) they answer me that this is the question at issue (ὁτι πρόκειται). To me the archives are Jesus Christ, the inviolable archives his cross and death and resurrection and the faith which is through him (ἡ πίστις ἡ δι ' αὐτοῦ)—by which things I wish by your prayers to be justified.

1 Philadelphians 8.1f

So far as the meaning of faith is concerned, there is some interest in this passage because the emotive trust and the intellectual assent are expressed side by side: 'I believe in grace' is set alongside 'I do not believe in the gospel'.

In the former case, Ignatius must believe in grace in the sense that Jesus is able to forgive sins; but the predominant thought is that of the trust and confidence in the willingness of Christ to deliver from the bonds of sin, and in Ignatius' case also from the literal bonds which hold him. The expression shows how difficult it is to separate the various nuances attached to faith.

In the latter case, it is better with Schoedel (207) to understand a direct object: 'Except I find (it) in the archives, I do not believe (it) in the gospel'. The archives are the scriptures of the OT.24 The heretics were apparently indulging in discussion of OT texts and finding Christian pointers there, and this is what worries Ignatius (Schoedel

24 The evidence cited by Schoedel ad loc. seems to be decisive, esp. the parallel with Josephus.
In terms of the understanding of the nature of faith, there is a strong emphasis here on the intellectual process of searching the scriptures (of the OT) as the basis for the content of the gospel, understood as the message of repentance and the arrival of God’s rule preached by Jesus and demonstrated in the miracles, cf. Mark 1.14f.

These two phrases discussed above show a predominant emphasis, the first emotive, the second intellectual; but both cannot be classed as exclusively one or the other. Faith contains both elements and while one or the other may be uppermost in any particular context the other is always likely to be present.

Just as the church at Smyrna was similar to that at Philadelphia, so Ignatius uses very similar expressions to combat docetism in his letter to the Smyrneans. Smyrneans 1 contains another credal type of statement; there are references to the reality of Christ under the figures of flesh and spirit, and to the futility of Ignatius’ own position if Christ and his death and resurrection are merely τὸ δοκεῖν (section 4). In another striking piece of imagery Ignatius speaks of the need for faith as immovable as if it were nailed to the cross (1.1). The reality of the sufferings of Christ is emphasised in section 2:

These things he suffered for us in order that we might be saved; and truly he suffered, as also truly he raised himself, not as some unbelievers say, that he appeared to have suffered. They are the ones who only ‘appear’; and even as they think, it will also turn out for them, being disembodied and demonic.

I Smyrneans 2

In other words, those who disbelieve the real death and resurrection will get the after life which they deserve because of their unbelief. The risen Jesus is no bodiless demon, as Ignatius goes on to explain in section 3. Even after the resurrection he was not only seen but touched by witnesses. Ignatius probably has the accounts of the appearance to Mary Magdalene (John 20.11ff) and that to the Emmaus disciples (Luke 24.13ff) in mind. It was experiences like this and the conviction which they generated that gave the martyrs the courage to despise death and make the ultimate offering of discipleship.
Disbelief in the reality of the death and resurrection also leads to the neglect of the Eucharist:

They neglect the Eucharist and prayer, because they do not confess the Eucharist to be the flesh of our Saviour Jesus Christ, which (flesh) suffered for our sins, which the Father raised by his kindness.

1 Smyrnaeans 7.1

This has a stark and arresting quality about it and compares with the similar language of John 6. The reference to 'flesh and blood' is necessary as an emphatic assertion of the reality of the crucified and risen Christ and his real presence in the eucharistic elements. Thus wrong belief leads not only to wrong behaviour and divisions in the church, but ultimately to the destruction of the worshipping life of the Christian community. The Bishop on his way to martyrdom has an intense belief himself and expresses himself in striking language and imagery; he sees the damage of inadequate faith and misguided unbelief in sharp focus.

3. Faith among the virtues

More and more in the post New Testament period faith appears alongside virtue words, or in lists of virtues. This happens to some extent in the NT in passages like 1 Corinthians 13, where faith and love are associated, but in Ignatius the incorporation of faith into virtue lists and the association of faith with virtue ideas is common.

Pray unceasingly for others; for there is in them hope of repentance, that they may attain to God. Permit them to become disciples, if only by their works.

In the face of their anger, you display gentleness; to their boastful talking you present humble-mindedness; to their blasphemies you say prayers, to their deception you be firm in faith (εδραίοι τη πίστει); in response to their cruelty you show mercy, not being zealous to imitate them.

1 Ephesians 10.1&2
Building imagery probably lies behind the language of faith in this quotation, cf. Colossians 1.23; 1 Corinthians 15.58. The context for Ignatius is still the threat of the docetists to shake disciples loose from their foundations. Belief and behaviour go together, and faith is seen as the opposite of the docetic deceit just as the other virtues mentioned are seen as opposites of docetic behaviour. The exhortation goes on to mention other virtues in the next section:

Let us be found their brethren in graciousness (ἐπείκεια); let us be zealous to be imitators of the Lord. Who more than he has been wronged, deprived, rejected? - in order that no plant of the devil may be found among you, but in all purity (ἀγνεία) and moderation (σωφροσύνη) you should abide in Jesus Christ in your flesh and in your spirit.

1 Ephesians 10.3

The believing disciple is an imitator of the Lord whose own behaviour is described by St Paul as being characterised by ἐπείκεια at 2 Corinthians 10.1. The word seems to convey the Christian ideal of gentle and gracious forbearance in imitation of Jesus himself, an attitude which is believing and accepting, gracious and moderate, and which does not insist on ‘rights’.25

The ‘plant of the devil’ in another of Ignatius’ picturesque phrases which may well indicate not just the wrong belief of the heretics but their misbehaviour as well.26 In the effort to witness to faith, persuasiveness needs to be tempered with graciousness and accompanied by behaviour which is sufficiently attractive to make the hearers want to emulate it (Liebaert 59 n.7; Corwin 193).

Ignatius proceeds in this letter to the Ephesians with further exhortation about the need for virtue. Sections 10-13 cover a variety of topics, warnings about the last times, the need for affection within the Christian community, instructions about the Eucharist. Finally, there is nothing more important than peace. The rather disjointed coverage

26 So Lightfoot, ad loc.
is probably due to the circumstances of writing, but the context is clearly enough ethical rather than doctrinal. It is in this context that we are to interpret three references to faith which occur in section 14.

Of these things nothing escapes your notice, if completely you have faith in Jesus Christ and love for him, which is the beginning of life and the end; the beginning is faith, the end is love. The two things being in unity are God, and all other things follow on for nobility of character (εἰς καλοκάγαθίαν).

1 Ephesians 14

Faith and love go together in Ignatius as in Hermas (Vision 3.8.3). The two virtues stand as the beginning and end of the Christian life and as those which embrace all other virtues. Ignatius would seem to indicate that faith is the virtue from which all other virtues flow and that love is the perfect expression of faith. ‘Nobility of character’ is Lampe’s suggestion for καλοκάγαθίαν. We are to understand that faith and love together lead on to that nobility of character which should be the hallmark of the Christian who has God at the centre of his or her life.27 This centrality of God in the Christian life is poetically expressed by Ignatius in his statement that love and faith together are God. We may compare 1 John 4.8. The idea is that faith and love in their perfection bring us into the very presence of God (Corwin 244).28

The outcome of this life centred upon God and lived in his presence is that the faith and love which characterise it are not to be merely talked about but also acted upon:

No one proclaiming faith sins, nor possessing love hates. ‘The tree is manifest by its fruits’. So those who declare that they belong to Christ shall be seen by their deeds.

For now the work is not one of declaration, but that one should be found perfect in the power of faith.

1 Ephesians 14.2

27 This is quite different from the old Greek idea of the καλός–καγάθος, the gentleman, whose values were centred on the need for social and material success. See A. W. H. Adkins, Merit and Responsibility (Oxford, 1960) 245f.

28 For similar expressions cf. 1 Eph. 17.2; Mag. 7.1; Sm. 10.2.
The sense of the passage is that it is not saying so that makes one a Christian. It is in God himself that faith that does not sin and love that does not hate are found. This is the perfection of faith and love which humans find very hard to reach. The point is expanded in section 15: God spoke out of silence in the creation, and the creation tells us what sort of God he is. In the same way Jesus showed by his actions the essential goodness of God. In both cases it is not a matter of speech alone but of action.

It is better to be silent and to be (a Christian) than speaking not to be. It is good to teach if the teacher also acts. There is one teacher who ‘spoke and it came to pass’; what he did in silence is worthy of the Father.

*I Ephesians* 15.1

God is the example of sinless faith and love which are known by their actions. Faith and love together can in this sense be said to be God, by that imaginative transfer which is typical of the way Ignatius has of expressing himself. Another outcome of this union with God is that harmony and unity which should be typical of church life. It is desirable that Christians should maintain a sense of unity with each other under the bishop.

ἐνωσίς is a key word in these letters. ‘(It) has to do at once with the union of the believer and God in faith and love, and with the unity of Christians in faith and worship. When, however, Ignatius speaks of the unity of faith and love, we are not to think merely of the individual Christian life, but of the individual Christian within the body of Christ, the Church, in which alone there can be union of faith and love’.29 Thus Ignatius can talk about ‘the harmony of your faith’ (*I Eph.* 13.1) which destroys the power of Satan and the peace that should be typical of church life. Peace, harmony and unity go together and are the product of faith and love. The strongest appeal for unity appears at *I Eph.* 20.2 where Ignatius speaks of ‘coming together in one faith and in Jesus Christ’ in obedience to the bishop and in the reception of the new life in Jesus Christ. Apart from unity there can be no sharing of this new life.

This latter idea is picked up at I Magnesians 1.2 and linked with the thought of Jesus Christ as the source of life, and with the unity of faith and love. Again there is some very striking language where the union is said to be ‘in the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ’. The phrase expresses the wholeness of the person of Christ as against the docetic denials. True unity involves not only faith and love in behaviour, but also faith as right belief in the truth of the Incarnation. Once again, belief and behaviour go together.

Ignatius’ most vehement plea for unity is that in his letter to the Philadelphians. The bishop on his way to martyrdom seems desperate with the things that destroy the unity of the church and spoil the witness to Christ. Obedience to the Bishop, proper behaviour, faith and a sense of discipleship are all necessary:

I cried out when I was in the midst of you; I spoke with a loud voice, with the voice of God; hold fast to the Bishop and to the council of Elders and to the Deacons......Do nothing apart from the Bishop; keep your flesh as God’s temple, love unity, flee divisions, be imitators of Jesus Christ, as he himself is of his Father.

......Where there is division and wrath, God does not dwell. The Lord will forgive everyone who repents if they repent towards unity with God and the Council and the Bishop. I believe in the grace of Jesus Christ (μισθεύω τῇ χάριτι Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) who will loose every bond from you.

I beseech you to do nothing from selfish ambition (κατ’ ἐρίθειαν), but in accordance with Christian discipleship (κατὰ χριστομαθίαν).

I Philadelphians 7&8

Schism excludes God and arises from selfish ambition. It also goes with moral depravity as the exhortation to ‘keep your flesh as God’s temple’ indicates (cf. 1 Corinthians 6.19). Unity depends on obedience to the Bishop and the organised church, although forgiveness is possible where disunity has occurred provided that the penitent comes into unity with the Bishop and the church. The grace referred to (note the article) is that of forgiveness and release (cf. 1 Phil. 6.2). Belief in this
grace involves intellectual assent; but the tone of the passage suggests an element of trust as well.

Of some interest is the word χριστομαθία. It is a coinage of Ignatius’ own and stands alongside similar words in his letters: χριστοφόροι, χριστιανισμός, χριστονόμος. The word means ‘Christian discipleship’ and the context suggests that Ignatius understood this to describe the attitude of the believer who lives within the unity of the church, depending on God’s grace, and behaving in a manner which is consistent with true belief. In a sense the concept of discipleship sums up in one word the attitude and behaviour which emerges from faith as the originator of all Christian virtue. In the NT the word ‘discipleship’ does not occur; the idea of discipleship is expressed as ‘following’ or ‘imitating’ Christ. In fact it can be shown that in the NT imitation is a way of expressing the idea of discipleship. Ignatius makes the connection explicit.

4. Faith as a general term for true religion

There is a group of contexts in the letters where the emotional content of faith and the idea of commitment seem to be uppermost in the mind of Ignatius. In these cases faith describes that true religion which is reflected in commitment to Christ and which issues in newness of life. This renewal makes a link also with the foregoing contexts where faith is related to virtue. Faith has so many facets that there will always be some overlapping of emphases.

In the concluding sections of the letter to the Ephesians, Ignatius makes reference to his intention to send a second letter to Ephesus, if it should be God’s will.

If Jesus Christ counts me worthy by your prayers and if it is his will, in the second letter which I am about to write to you, I will make clear to you the plan which I began in relation to the new man Jesus Christ (ής ήρξάμην οικονομίας εις τὸν καιρὸν ἀνθρώπον....), in faith in him (έν τῇ αὐτῷ πίστει) and in love for him, in his sufferings and resurrection.

I Ephesians 20.1

30 On this see Liebaert 48 and Lampe s.v.
It seems that this second letter was never written. At *I Polycarp* 8.1 Ignatius refers to his sudden sailing from Troas to Neapolis and asks Polycarp to ensure that the courier who travels from Smyrna to Antioch carries a message to the churches to which Ignatius has not been able to write. This sudden sailing probably precluded further writing (*Camelot* 77 n.1; 154 n.1). In Ignatius' mind all this reflects the will of God.

To Ignatius nothing was outside the realm of God's providence and the implication is that if God had wanted the letter written he would have made it possible. Ignatius is not naive about this. It is possible for humans to frustrate the will of God as he was afraid the Roman Christians would do if they spoke out on his behalf (*I Romans* 2&4). In the present case Ignatius accepts what he cannot change and finds the next best way of getting the information to the churches. In relation to faith, Ignatius expresses commitment which accepts the inevitable and leaves the end result in God's hands. God has his own way of working his purpose out. Ignatius' faith in and love for God are willing to let this happen in God's own way. This plan of God Ignatius describes as a stewardship, οἰκονομία, an idea which has wide currency in early Christianity.\(^{31}\)

It is worth noting that Ignatius does not do more than mention the idea of renewal. His mind is on his impending martyrdom and he really does not pause to spell out the implications of the new life of Christ as it is lived by believers. Such matters are worked out in great detail by later writers, and especially in such figures as Diognetus' *Christian as the soul of the world* (*Diognetus* 6). Ignatius passes quickly from the mention of renewal back to his own situation and its significance.

I am the ransom (ἀντίψυχον) for you and for those whom you sent for the honour of God to Smyrna......Pray for the church in Syria from whence I am being led bound to Rome, of whom I am the least of the believers there (τῶν ἐκεί ματῶν, i.e. in Syria).........

\(^{31}\) Cf. in the *NT* *Ephesians* 1.10; 3.9; *Colossians* 1.25; *1 Corinthians* 9.17. The idea is that God has a plan which becomes a stewardship which he entrusts to believers. Cf. also the Letter to Diognetus 7.1. See further C. F. D. Moule, *The Epistles to the Colossians and Philemon* (Cambridge, 1957) 80.
Ignatius is a 'ransom'; the word denotes a life given for a life and is close in its sense to the other title that Ignatius uses for himself at I Eph. 8.1, 18.1, viz. περιψήμα, ‘offscouring’ literally, but used of an expiatory victim and translated in general usage as ‘your humble servant’. Lightfoot comments that the idea of vicarious death is almost obliterated and the idea of devotion to and affection for another is prominent. However it should be noted that in this passage Ignatius is explicitly speaking of himself as on the way to Rome and as being the least of the Syrian believers. It is precisely in the martyrdom that Ignatius most clearly expresses his affection and devotion. Jesus showed his in the same way and the martyr seeks to imitate his Master.

Shared faith is the basis of the relationship of Christians within the church, linked with obedience to the Bishop. This is a faith emphasis that appears in the letter to the Magnesians.

Knowing the good order of your godly love, rejoicing, I determined in faith in Jesus Christ (ἐν πίστει Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) to address you.

I Magnesians 6.1

The absence of the article indicates that the statement is qualitative; the fact that Ignatius and his readers have faith in Jesus Christ is what gives them common ground. Faith here is an expression of Christian commitment in a general way. This is further suggested by the following mention of the visit of Damas, the Bishop, together with the ‘worthy Presbyters’:

Since in the aforementioned persons I have seen the whole congregation in faith, and I loved them........

In these representatives Ignatius deals with the whole congregation. A common faith is what makes this possible. The outcome of this should be harmony, and this is exhorted in the next sentence. Ignatius then goes on in the remainder of the section to speak of the necessity for this harmony to be expressed in obedience to the Bishop and the clergy, since they have all received a ‘divine agreement in (their) convictions’ (6.2). Once again the overlap between the general religious sense of faith and its ethical side is evident.
Faith and love together form the essence of true religion; faith as the expression of commitment, trust and belief and love as its ethical outcome. It is not surprising, therefore, to find faith and love together in the summary passages at the beginning and end of some of the letters.

Show zeal to be made firm in the precepts of the Lord and the Apostles, in order that 'you may prosper in all you do' in flesh and spirit, in faith and love, in Son and Father and in Spirit, in beginning and in end......

_I Magnesians 13_

The build up of phrases describing the prosperity of the Christian who sets himself firmly in the keeping of Christ's precepts is designed to show the totality of that prosperity. The phrase 'flesh and spirit' expresses the total personality. Faith and love express the totality of religious commitment in both the relational and ethical senses, and this is further expanded by 'in the Son etc.' The ultimate importance of these things for Christians is expressed by 'in the beginning and end'. The wideness of faith as a general term covering many aspects of religion is apparent here. Similar expressions are found at both the beginning and end of the letter to the Smyrnæans.

In this section it has been shown that faith can act as an umbrella word for Christian commitment in its widest sense. Faith is the basis of the relationship between Christians; it is a shared relationship with God that makes it possible for Ignatius to enter fellowship with other Christians in the places through which he travels, even if he only actually sees some representatives. Faith is commitment to Christ; it is linked with love as its ethical outcome. Faith and love together express the spiritual and ethical content of Christianity in general terms.

5. Images of Faith

Ignatius' imagery is what makes his writing memorable and remarkable. There are three passages where faith is associated with imagery and an examination of these is a fitting way to conclude this study of faith contexts in the letters.
At 1 Eph. 2.2 Ignatius has been exhorting the Ephesians to obedience to the Bishop; he then goes on to soften his approach:

I am not commanding you as though I am someone. For even if I am bound in the name (of Jesus Christ), not yet am I perfected in Jesus Christ. For now I am beginning to be a disciple, and I address you as my fellow disciples. It was necessary for me to be anointed by you with faith, admonition, steadfastness and patience.

But since love does not allow me to be silent concerning you, on this account I undertook to exhort you, in order that you may run together with the thought of God. For Jesus Christ also, our unwavering life, is the thought of the Father, as also the Bishops......are in the thought of Jesus Christ.

1 Magnesians 3.1&2

Ignatius acknowledges that it is only martyrdom that will perfect his discipleship. There is always the risk that at the last moment he will lose courage, and he has the humility to recognise this possibility. For this reason he needs to be ‘anointed with faith, admonition, endurance and patience’ by the Magnesians. The imagery is that of the martyr/athlete who needs to be anointed before the contest.32 There is also the possibility that Ignatius has in mind in this imagery the anointing of Jesus at Bethany before his death, Matthew 26.6-13. Matthew is explicit that this anointing was a preparation for burial. In Ignatius the athletic imagery predominates, however, and occurs again with the exhortation that the Ephesians should ‘run together with the thought of the Bishop’. This is a vivid way of encouraging unity and obedience to the Bishop; it is carried further in section 4 under the figure of the chords of the cythara symbolising harmony.

As to faith here, it is the commitment to carry his intentions through to their fulfilment in martyrdom. It involves the element of trust in God to see him through the ordeal and its concomitant belief in the reality of the after life without which martyrdom would be futile.

32 For parallels to this passage, Camelot 60n.1; Schoedel 49 n.6.
Perhaps the most remarkable of Ignatius' images is that known as the 'machine metaphor' at *I Ephesians* 9.1. Ignatius has been strongly condemning the heretics and their teaching; the passages are discussed above pp.000.

I learned to know certain people who had passed by on their way from that place, having evil teaching; whom do not you allow to sow it among you, stopping your ears, with a view to your not receiving the things sown by them, as being stones of the Father's Temple, prepared for a building of God the Father, being borne up into the heights by means of the machine of Jesus Christ, which is his cross, using for rope the Holy Spirit; and your faith is what leads you upwards (ἡ δὲ πίστις ὑμῶν ἀναγωγεῖς ὑμῶν), and love is the way which bears you to God (ἡ δὲ ἀγάπη ὁδὸς ἡ ἀναφέρουσα εἰς θεόν).

*I Ephesians* 9.1

There are four images in this passage: seed sown; stones of a Temple; a crane; and in 9.2 Ignatius leads into the image of a Christian procession. In these images Ignatius shows himself to be in the mainstream of the picture language of the early church, but he develops this in his own peculiar way.\(^{33}\)

Camelot and Lightfoot both comment that the crane image is less than completely coherent; none the less, it has great interest and is far from being inappropriate. The question here is primarily how faith is elucidated by the image.

It is likely that the machine metaphor is suggested by the building imagery of *Ephesians* 2.20-22. There Christ is the chief corner stone; here his cross is the machine used in the building. The latter image could be understood as an extension of the former. The machine remains inert until the rope is attached to the load and raised. The rope is the Holy Spirit. 'Ignatius realises the work of the Spirit in the lives of all the members of the church. With a characteristically graphic extension of the New Testament metaphor he.....well expresses the office which the Holy Spirit fulfils in the personal life,

\(^{33}\) For a detailed discussion of this point, Schoedel 65-68.
placing his work in its true relation to the sacrifice of the cross on the one hand, and to human responsibility on the other. The grace of the Spirit, Ignatius would say, brings the machinery of redemption into vital connection with the individual soul. Apart from this, the cross stands inert, a vast machine at rest, and about it lie the stones of the building, unmoved. Not till the rope has been attached can the work proceed of lifting the individual life through faith and love to the place prepared for it in the church of God.34

In the metaphor, faith is described as the ἀναγωγεύς·. This is a very rare word and the meaning ‘windlass’ has been suggested.35 It is perhaps more likely that faith as the motive power refers to people pulling the rope through a system of pulleys.36 However we understand the construction of the crane, it is quite clear that its motive power is faith. The figure describes the human response to the Holy Spirit; the motivation without which God’s gifts remain ineffective. Faith is coupled with love which provides the upward path. In the context of this section, faith as true belief issuing in orthodoxy, unity and harmony is the motivating power and the guide along the way of love that leads ultimately to God. This is a graphic and memorable figure of responsive faith in cooperation with the power of the Holy Spirit.

Every Christian must make a choice between God and the world; the last figure to be considered is that of the two coinages and its association with faith.

For things have an end and there lies before us the two together, death and life, and each is about to go to his own place.

For so there are two coinages, the one of God and the other of the world, and each of them has its own impression stamped

35 LSJ quote only one example, from the 5C AD, in the sense of ‘one who raises’. Corwin 242 has ‘windlass’. Lampe and AG s.v. remark that ‘windlass’ is unlikely and prefer ‘one who guides/leads upwards’.
36 On the variety of systems associated with ancient cranes see J. G. Landells, Engineering in the Ancient World (London, 1980) 84ff.
thereon, the unbelievers (οἱ ἀπιστοὶ) that of this world, and the believers (οἱ πιστοὶ) in love the impression of God the Father through Jesus Christ.....

I Magnesians 5.1&2

In the context of this passage being a believer is being sufficiently committed to Jesus Christ to be prepared to die for him. This expresses Ignatius’ own commitment to martyrdom. For Ignatius there is really no middle ground, the choice between faith and unfaith is absolute. There is a contrast here with Hermas who is much less black and white. The coin imagery is applied to Jesus at Hebrews 1.3 where he is said to bear the stamp of God’s actual being. Ignatius writes in this context of the importance of not only being called a Christian but also of being one. Similarly he condemns the hypocrisy that calls on the Bishop and then ‘does everything apart from him’. A Christian believer bears the imprint either of the world or of God; he or she will be known by their imprint as also by their fruits. The concern for fruitfulness is expressed in the passages discussed under Part 3 where faith is seen in connection with the virtues. Here the requirement is transferred to the coinage imagery. The contrast between the stamps vividly conveys the absolute demand of discipleship which was so important to Ignatius, even if others like Hermas modified the strict view here expressed.

Conclusion

Ignatius places his individual stamp on his understanding of faith. He is the totally committed martyr bishop who sees discipleship as a literal imitation of Christ even to death; only so, he believes, can he truly become a disciple. His impending martyrdom focuses his mind and he speaks strongly against those who do not believe in the truth of the Incarnation of Christ. If the Incarnation is only an appearance, then so too the death and resurrection of Jesus are merely an appearance. Then the whole basis of hope and salvation disappears and Ignatius’ own death will be hopeless and

37 See esp. H.Sim.9.
meaningless. Faith goes further than this, though. It is the motivation for Christian behaviour, especially that behaviour characterised by love. Belief and behaviour go together, as do unbelief and misbehaviour.

Faith becomes an umbrella term for true religion. It is not only the martyr who demonstrates discipleship. The latter word is new with Ignatius and indicates the equivalence of discipleship and imitation. Thus the behaviour of all believers imitates that of Jesus himself. While modern Christians may draw back or even be repelled by Ignatius' literalness about his death, the teaching about discipleship and imitation, commitment and church unity are of permanent value. Faith is the human response, and at the same time the gift of God which enables belief and trust, commitment and direction in the Christian life. The concepts, emphases, imagery and vividness with which these truths are expressed are as valuable and helpful now as they must have been to those 2C Christians who first read the letters. In an age of watered down Christian ethics and ecclesiastical disunity the message of Ignatius needs to be heard again in all its vigour and freshness and vividness.

T. C. Gilmour
University of Auckland