

A Comparison of the Recensions of the Ignatian Corpus

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THE Ignatian Corpus, or the body of Ignatian writings, has probably caused more discussion and controversy among scholars of the New Testament and of Patristics than any other writing of the period of the Apostolic Fathers. Unquestionably, the reason for this fact is that the seven letters, known to have been written by Ignatius and generally attributed to him by scholarship both ancient and modern, are extant in two distinct recensions in Greek, each of a different length, and that, of these letters, three are extant in a greatly abbreviated recension in Syriac. Adding to the aura of confusion surrounding the Ignatian Corpus is the fact that, included with the long Greek recension, in some manuscripts are certain other writings which have been related in one way or another to the name of this ancient worthy, but which have been regarded by most scholars to be spurious. In order properly to identify each of these recensions as they are discussed later in this essay, it is well, perhaps, to adopt the terminology of J. B. Lightfoot in classifying them, namely: the Long Form, the Middle Form, and the Short Form, the reference being, in order, to the Long Greek Recension, the Short Greek Recension, and the Syriac Recension, or the expanded, the genuine, and the abbreviated letters of the Antiochian martyr.

Space precludes the possibility of entering into a discussion of many of the problems involved in a study of these letters. The issue is manifold. For example, textual criticism becomes in-

volved if one is seeking to draw some conclusion about the reading originally penned by Ignatius himself. In the total picture, one could give his time and attention to determining which of the three recensions represents the original work of Ignatius. The time of the abbreviations and/or expansions could well serve as a single avenue of approach to the letters. Our purpose in this essay, however, is not to deal at all with these possibilities but to compare and/or contrast the three recensions and to do this in only one area of teaching and doctrine. More will be said about this later in our discussion.

Ignatius the Man

It is well, indeed, at this point to introduce the man with whom this discussion has to do, for it is not possible to understand nor to appreciate the letters of Ignatius without knowing something about Ignatius, himself. Apart from the letters, little or nothing is known about him, and yet what is known about him helps us to understand his writings. We know that he was arrested in Antioch, during the reign of emperor Trajan, that he was taken to Rome for execution, and that he was accompanied upon his journey by a company of ten soldiers. The course of his journey is not known with any degree of accuracy, but it is known that he spent some time in Smyrna and that he passed through Troas on his way to the imperial city. From the former city, he wrote letters to the Christians in Ephesus, Magnesia, Trallia, and Rome, while from Troas, he penned the epistles to the Christians in Philadelphia and Smyrna and a personal communication to Polycarp, who was a bishop of the latter city. His travels from the cities in which his letters

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were written are also clouded by the darkness of things unknown. Whether he went overland or by sea is not known, but we do know that he was finally executed in the city of Rome under the emperor Trajan. The time of his execution and so for the writing of his letters could be fairly set within a span of five years or so on either side of the year A. D. 110. This, too, is the conclusion of J. B. Lightfoot and represents considerations sufficient to our interest here.

Lightfoot says of the man and of his letters: "The pitchy darkness which envelopes the life work of Ignatius, is illumined at length by a vivid but transient flash of light."¹ It seems proper, however, to inject the pungent reminder that the flash of light illumines this man of the faith while he is enroute to his martyrdom and that it originates primarily from the writings which he left as a heritage. It is highly probable that we would know nothing of him at all had he not designed to correspond with certain churches and individuals while he made his way, conducted by his Roman guards, to Rome and to his death. What we know of significance about him stems not from our knowledge of his bishopric at Antioch nor from what we know of the details of his martyrdom apart from his letters, but from these letters themselves, which are in fact the springboard from which traditions about him have come into the stream of history.

The Letters of Ignatius

There are fifteen letters which have been attributed to Ignatius of Antioch. They are to be identified as follows: one letter to the Virgin Mary, two letters to the Apostle John, one letter to Mary of Cassabola, and letters to the Tarsians,

to the Antiochians, to Hero, to the Philippians, to the Ephesians, to the Magnesians, to the Trallians, to the Romans, to the Philadelphians, to the Smyrnaeans, and to Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna. The first three are in Latin, while the balance exist also in Greek. The first eight of these letters are admittedly spurious in the considerations of most scholars. The last seven, as we have previously suggested, are considered to be genuine, but this is their Middle Form.

While it will not be possible in the space allotted to discuss the textual history of these letters, it should perhaps be said that the recension extant at the beginning of extensive discussion about the Ignatius Corpus was the Long Form, including all of the letters mentioned above. The differences in readings in the extant manuscripts of the Ignatian Corpus and quotations from Ignatius by early Christian writers were noticed by certain scholars of Patristics in the early modern period. Effort was made at once to distinguish the genuine from the spurious in the Ignatian correspondence. Vedelius, a professor at Geneva, was one who made such an effort. Vedelius published an edition of the Ignatian letters, in which the seven letters now regarded as genuine were so set forth. The remaining five of the manuscript with which he worked were pronounced spurious. It is probable that his conclusions were based upon the fact that Eusebius of Caesarea quotes alone from the seven letters. It should be said at this point that, while the conclusions of Vedelius have been given general consent by scholars since that time, the testimony has by no means been unanimous.

As time passed another problem was introduced to the scene, and at this point a significant contribution was made by Archbishop Ussher. Ussher discovered certain quotations from Ignatius in some writings of the thirteenth century which differed considerably from the version then extant. His find

¹ J. B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, Part II, *S. Ignatius and S. Polycarp* (London: Macmillan and Company, 1889), I, 31. All quotations from the letters of Ignatius, genuine or spurious, are from the Ante-Nicene Fathers, eds., Roberts and Donaldson, unless otherwise specified.

led him to conclude that somewhere there existed a purer version of the letters of Ignatius. The truth of his conclusion was established in a later discovery of a Latin manuscript of the seven letters which Vedelius had pronounced genuine, but in a much shorter form than in the previously known versions. The shorter Latin text of the Ignatian letters was published in 1644. A final link in the chain of evidence was supplied by a discovery, on the part of Isaac Voss of Amsterdam, of a Greek text of six letters of the shorter version. Only the Roman letter was missing, but it was discovered and published by Ruinart in 1689, from a manuscript dating in the tenth century. Through the discovery of Ussher, scholars were able to discover which of the letters were genuine, and to separate from them certain extensively interpolated portions, as well as the false letters which had been attributed to the name of the Antiochian bishop.

In the mid-nineteenth century another problem was introduced. Dr. William Cureton, then in charge of the Syriac department of the British Museum, discovered among some recently deposited manuscripts three letters of Ignatius, in Syriac, but in a much abbreviated form. The letters were: Polycarp, Ephesians, and Romans, the latter of which contains also a portion of the Trallian letter from the Middle Form. The discovery of Cureton was signal for the beginning of a long battle of words and essays, some for and some against the conclusion that the three letters in Syriac represented the original work of Ignatius. Cureton, of course, was certain that he had discovered the genuine Ignatian writings, and at once wrote to that point, concluding that the remaining four of the seven letters, which had been pronounced genuine by Vedelius, were in fact spurious. Cureton has been adequately answered, particularly by J. B. Lightfoot in his definitive work on the Ignatian correspondence, but out of this history and argumentation the present status of the Ignatian Corpus has

come to be. The terms have been appropriately adopted: the **Short Form**, contains the very abbreviated letters as indicated above; the **Middle Form**, contains the seven genuine letters of the noble martyr; the **Long Form**, contains the original seven letters but in a very greatly expanded form, as well as some obviously spurious letters attributed to the name of Ignatius. Some manuscripts of the Long Form also contain two additional letters, one from Mary of Cassobola to Ignatius and one from the Virgin Mary to Ignatius, also obviously spurious.

Out of a consideration of the relationship between the three forms of the Ignatian letters certain questions come at once to the fore. Why were the original letters of Ignatius expanded, so as to bring into existence the extant Long Recension? Similarly, would it be possible through an investigation of the contents of the letters to draw some conclusions as to why the Short Form came into existence? A cursory glance at the letters in the various forms, as is possible in parallel columns as in the **Ante-Nicene Fathers**, edited by Roberts and Donaldson, is sufficient to cause one to conclude that something is amiss. Such brief consideration of the relationship between the Short Form and the other forms also raises one's feeling of suspicion quite considerably.

A closer look at the letters confirms the suspicions one may have derived from surface considerations. The subject matter of the letters, after all, is more important than the mere matter of their size, whether large or small. At the outset of such consideration, as one compares the Long and the Middle Recension, two matters keep coming to the surface. The Long Form considerably expands the writing of the original Ignatius in respect to the place of the bishop and to the person of Jesus Christ. The same truth may be observed in certain creed-like statements in the genuine letters, which are enhanced into forms very similar to the earliest creeds in the long Form and in

the Spurious Letters. Additionally, the sacramental nature of the ordinances of Jesus and of the early church is built up in a significant fashion in the Long Form over the Middle Form. Too, the church in the Long Form is observably more authoritarian in the Middle Form. The same kind of build-up may be detected in reference to Mariolatry and to martyrism, the seeking after martyrdom on the part of early Christians, although there is probably less build-up in the latter area than in any of the other cases mentioned.

The abbreviations of the Short Form, however, come into a considerably different focus when compared or contrasted to the Middle and the Long Forms. Here, the build-up of the Long Form in the connections mentioned above is dropped completely out of the picture. This is very interesting, especially in view of the fact that there may be reason to suppose that the Short Form is an abbreviation of the Long Form, instead of an abbreviation of the Middle Form, as scholars have previously concluded. It almost appears as though someone who was opposed to the authoritarian bishop and church and the sacramental aspects of the ordinances, as these matters were developing in the first three centuries of the Christian era, sought to gain Ignatian authority for his point of view by dropping these tendencies from the recension of the Ignatian Corpus he then knew and perhaps suspected. His exclusions went to the extent of dropping completely four of the original letters as well as the spurious letters, as considered by modern scholarship. Of the matters previously called to attention, only martyrism is continued in the Short Form, and this at about the level of the Middle Form. The emphasis of the Long Form on all of the other points is cancelled by the Short Form, by way of abbreviation and/or deletion. Whether this supposition be true or not, it is an interesting possibility to contemplate.

Comparisons on the Person of Jesus

In attempting to illustrate the relationship between the recensions of the Ignatian Corpus, it was thought best to discuss the one subject which is probably not only more significant than the others but which also would be more well known and more easily understood by the average reader, namely: the person of Jesus. It is obviously true that the Ignatian expander was making an effort to point his interpolations and his false writings against some person or group of persons who were making too little of Jesus Christ in their teaching, too little, that is, from his own point of view. It is not denied that Ignatius, himself, attends to teaching on the person of Jesus in the genuine letters, the seven letters of the Vossian group, but it is also true that the expansions of the Long Recension are directed against those heresies which, to the writer or writers of the expansions, attempt to do damage to the concept of Jesus which was commonly held by the Christians of the time in which they were penned. In some cases, the recensions differ very little on the point, but, in other cases, great and swelling details are added by the Long Form or are included in the spurious letters. At the outset, it should suffice to say that the heresy seems to be some brand of Gnosticism, which at times seems to have some Judaistic inclinations.

While it is not possible to present here a discussion of the Gnostic sects of the first and second century in anything like a complete manner, it might be well to include a general review of some of the more salient features of their teaching, so as to make more intelligible some of the subtle points of distinction involved in the differences between the Ignatian recensions. Gnosticism is a very difficult system to characterize, and there are several reasons for this truth. It should at first be mentioned that, even when the same ideas were written or spoken about by two gnostics, it was highly probable that

each would adopt his own terminology. It is certainly not arguable that this kind of thing would lend any unity to the movement to say nothing of the understanding outsiders would have of it. In addition, there were many branches of the general movement, which seem to have been differing attempts to deal with certain basic questions, namely: How could a perfect God have had anything to do with the creation of so imperfect a world? or How could God be conceived as having suffered, as Christ or God in flesh is said by the ordinary Christians to have suffered? Two answers were forthcoming from the fertile imaginations of the Gnostics on these points. Some of them said that God did not create the world, and they attributed this action to a subordinate of God who was by them identified with the Jehovah of the Old Testament. Others said that God did not suffer when Jesus suffered, because Jesus was of only seeming existence and therefore did not really live nor did he really suffer. A second answer supplied by others of the Gnostics, which seems to have satisfied their minds on the problem, is that God did not suffer with Jesus because His Spirit came upon Jesus at His baptism and left Him at the cross, leaving only Jesus as the one suffering and this at a time when God was not in Him. It is to this question that the Ignatian letters give their attention mainly.

There is no question but that this subject is touched upon by Ignatius himself in his recognized letters. It goes without saying, therefore, that some form of Gnosticism existed at the time of his martyrdom and that it posed a sufficient danger to the churches that he felt constrained to call attention to the errors which seemed to him to be involved. However, that the expansions of the Long Form treat the question so much more comprehensively, seems, perhaps, to reflect that either Gnosticism was becoming significantly more influential or was becoming more men-

acing and dangerous to "normal" Christianity than it had been in the past. It is possible, perhaps even probable, that both of these alternatives were true. In any event, there is no question but that the Gnosticism current in the time of the expander is more directly and emphatically the object of the attack of the expander than the Gnosticism of the time of Ignatius was the object of the attack of that noble martyr himself. This will be seen as the differences between the recensions are called to attention.

In the Long and Middle Forms

Ephesians.—In turning to the Ephesian letter, it will be found that the matter of false teachers is brought up in chapter seven. In the Middle Form, as Roberts and Donaldson translate in the **Ante-Nicene Fathers**, Ignatius writes:

There is one Physician who is possessed both of flesh and spirit; both made and not made; God existing in flesh; true life in death; both of Mary and of God; first possible and then impossible, — even Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Long Form reads:

But our Physician is the only true God, the unbegotten and unapproachable, the Lord of all, the Father and Begetter of the only-begotten Son. We have also as a Physician the Lord our God, Jesus the Christ, the only-begotten Son and Word, before time began, but who afterwards became also man, of Mary the Virgin. For 'the Word was made flesh,' Being incorporeal, He was in the body; being impassible, He was in a passible body; being immortal, He was in a mortal body; being life, He became subject to corruption, that He might free our souls from death and corruption, and heal them, and might restore them to health, when they were diseased with ungodliness and wicked lusts.

While the Middle Form makes attempt to deal with the false teachers by inserting the correct teaching, as Ignatius understood it, the Long Form, as is readily notable, offers considerable additional evidence in support of the orthodox position. It should be pointed out that, while the Middle Form says there is only one physician, the Long Form is so altered as to allow the addition of Jesus and raise the number of Christian physicians to two. The simple idea of Jesus being "God existing in human flesh," as stated in the Middle Form, is considerably enhanced and embellished by the additions of the Long Form. The effort is so obvious and so labored that it takes on an almost creedal form, which was mentioned earlier as another possible area of comparison between the Ignatian Recensions. Also important for our noting here is that fact that, while God himself is impassible, that is incapable of suffering, when he became incarnate in Jesus He became passible, that is capable of suffering. This is found in both the Middle and the Long Forms, but appears to be built up in the latter. The differing forms of Gnosticism, which attempted to circumvent this idea in one way or another, are the probable targets of both forms with the emphasis increased in the Long Form.

One additional illustration of this difference will be noted in chapter nineteen of the Ephesian letter. In this statement an even more important distinction may be noted. The Middle Form has Ignatius saying:

Hence every kind of magic was destroyed, and every bond of wickedness disappeared, ignorance was removed, and the old kingdom abolished, God Himself being manifested in human form for the renewal of eternal life. And now that took a beginning which had been prepared by God.

Parallel to this in the Long Form is the statement:

Hence worldly wisdom became folly; conjuration was seen to be more trifling; and magic became utterly ridiculous. Every law of wickedness vanished away; the darkness of ignorance was dispersed; and tyrannical authority was destroyed, God being manifested as a man, and man displaying power as God. But neither was the former a mere imagination, nor did the second imply a bare humanity; . . . Now that received a beginning which was perfected by God.

Attention is called to the fact that "manifested in human form" becomes "manifested as a man" in the Long Form. The Long Form also introduces the expander's belief that Jesus was not "a mere imagination," evidently as opposed to the Gnostic conception of Jesus as a mere imaginative apparition of some sort or other. This could not be other than an attempt to answer the docetism of certain of this ancient sect. It is possible that the additions imply a time when a more definite and decidedly re-enforced statement, over that of the Middle Form, was called for by increased Docetic strength or numbers or both.

Magnesians.—The matter of the person of Jesus is introduced in several places in the Magnesian letter. One of these is found in chapter eight, where, according to the Middle Form, Ignatius writes:

. . . There is one God, who has manifested Himself by Jesus Christ His son, who is His eternal Word, not proceeding forth from silence, and who in all things pleased Him that sent Him.

On the other hand, the Long Form reads at this point:

. . . There is one God, the Almighty, who has manifested Himself by Jesus Christ His Son, who is His Word, not spoken, but essential. For He is not the voice of an articulate utterance, but a substance begotten by divine

power, who has in all things pleased Him that sent Him.

It would be possible for Gnostics to agree somewhat with the Middle Form at this point, but the word "Almighty" used in describing God and the expression "a substance begotten by divine power" would be more difficult for them to accept. The purpose of the additions of the Long Form is quite obvious.

From the eleventh chapter of the Magnesian letter come further statements whose contrast points in the Gnostic direction. The Middle Form has Ignatius writing:

. . . I desire to guard you before hand, that ye fall not upon the hooks of vain doctrine, but that ye attain to full assurance in regard to the birth, and passion, and resurrection which took place in the time of the government of Pontius Pilate, being truly and certainly accomplished by Jesus Christ, who is our hope. . . .

The statement parallel to this one in the Long Form is too long for us to include as a whole. It is, in fact, a very formalized statement about Jesus Christ, almost creedal in form, in which the ideas that Jesus "made known the one and only true God" and that he "underwent the passion" are introduced amidst all of the added material, ideas evidently directed as Gnosticism and made more obvious and emphatic in the Long Form.

Trallians.—A contrast of, perhaps, more significant nature may be noted in the sixth chapter of the Trallian letter. The Middle Form reads:

I therefore, yet not I, but the love of Jesus Christ, entreat you that ye use Christian nourishment only, and abstain from herbage of a different kind; I mean heresy.

In the Long Form, those who teach the "herbage of a different kind" are almost directly attacked, and, while the statement is too long to include here, it may be well to point out that Igna-

tius is made to accuse the teachers of the false doctrine of alienating "Christ from the Father, and the law from Christ." They are accused of denying "His passion" and of not believing "His resurrection," of introducing "God as a Being unknown." Some of the heretics, as the expander would term them, are guilty of asserting that "the Son is a mere man" and that "the creation is the work of God, not by Christ, but by some other strange power." The Gnostic denial of the passion of God in Christ, their denial of the Old Testament, their disassociation of the true God and the Old Testament Jehovah, their assertion of the mere manhood of Jesus, and their teaching that the creation is the responsibility of some divine power other than the true God, are all equally considered for refutation by the Ignatian expander in this statement. Nothing of such matters is to be found in the Middle Form in this chapter.

Chapters eight, nine, and ten continue the discussion of this same theme. The identification of the heresy is not exactly revealed in the Middle Form, but in the Long Form is a clear-cut analysis and refutation of docetic Gnosticism, even to the calling of the names of some, an obvious anachronism. The obvious nature of the expansions cannot be mistaken, and the names included make absolutely certain that the expander's attack was being directed at the Gnostics. One especially interesting point to be seen here in the expansion of the Long Form over the Middle Form is the intensification of the warning included against the heretics, so called, from, if one "tastes of their death-bearing fruit," "he dies instantly," to "he instantly dies, and that not a temporary death, but one that shall endure forever." While such a thing might occur normally in the work of a later editorial expander, this seems rather to indicate some increase in the nature of Gnostic opposition or threat to the Christian forces, or a feeling that

a warning with increased pressure against it was called for.

Philadelphians.—A similar contrast may be found in the sixth chapter of the Philadelphian letter. The statement from the Middle Form is quite simple:

But if . . . such persons (as preach the law) do not speak concerning Jesus Christ, they are in my judgment but as monuments and sepulchres of the dead, upon which are written only the names of men.

The Long Form contains many significant additions to this basic statement, which serves more as a form than as an idea source for the expander. An appropriate consequence is appended to the hypothesis, if anyone denies "that the Father of Christ is . . . the Maker of heaven and earth," or if anyone "thinks the Lord to be a mere man," or if anyone "calls the incarnation a mere appearance." The expander asserts that "such an one has denied the faith, not less than the Jews who killed Christ." In addition, among those who are classified in this heresy are those who say that the Word took the place of the human spirit in Jesus. Certainly there are here shades of Marcionism and of Gnosticism, but also of the Arian controversy and others leading to the council of Chalcedon in A.D. 451. While the "false teachers" attacked in this statement are not identified, the statement itself is one of the more pronounced examples of the force of the enlargements of the Long Form over the Middle Form.

Smyrnaeans.—The force of the additions in the Long Form over the matters included in the Middle Form continues in the Smyrnaean letter. In chapter two of the Middle Form, Ignatius writes:

Now, he suffered all these things for our sakes, that we might be saved. And he suffered truly, even as also He truly raised up himself, not, as certain unbelievers maintain, that he only seemed to suffer.

While this statement admittedly is anti-docetic, the point is made more explicit in the Long Form, which reads:

Now, He suffered all these things for us; and he suffered them really, and not in appearance only, even as also He truly rose again. But not, as some of the unbelievers . . . affirm, that in appearance only, and not in truth, He took a body of the Virgin, and suffered only in appearance. . . . The Word therefore did dwell in flesh, for 'Wisdom built herself an house.'

Attention is called to the fact that, while the Middle Form indicates that the heretics believed He only seemed to suffer, the Long Form provides their reason for so believing. He was totally and only an appearance, from His birth and on to the end of His life.

In chapter five of the Smyrnaean letter a slight difference may be seen. The Middle Form reads: "For what does any one profit me, if he commends me, but blasphemes my Lord, not confessing that He was (truly) possessed of a body?" Parallel to this statement, the Long Form has Ignatius writing: "For what does it profit, if any one commends me, but blasphemes my Lord, not owning Him to be God incarnate?" The latter statement simply defines what the heretical assertion of the former means to the expander, doctrinally, but it certainly says more than is included in the Middle Form. Again, in all probability, Gnosticism in its docetic forms is the point of attack and the reason for the expansions to be found in the Long Form.

Polycarp.—Even in his letter to Polycarp, Ignatius continues his attack upon those whom he considered to be heretics, and, as has been the case in all of the other letters to which we have given attention, the expander also continues his enlargements as designed to make the oppositions of Ignatius more pronounced and emphatic. The Middle Form, in chapter three of the letter to Polycarp, reads as follows:

Look for Him who is above all time, eternal and invisible, yet who became visible for our sakes; impalpable and impassible, yet who became passible on our account; and who in every kind of way suffered for our sakes.

In the Long Form Ignatius is quoted as saying:

Look for Christ, the son of God; who was before time, yet appeared in time; who was invisible by nature, yet visible in the flesh; who was impalpable, and could not be touched, as being without a body, but for our sakes became such, might be touched and handled in the body; who was impassible as God, but became passible for our sakes as man; and who in every kind of way suffered for our sakes.

Again, the additions of the Long Form re-enforce the Middle Form's refutation of docetic Gnosticism. Whatever level of this system was being faced by Ignatius himself, the scholar who was responsible for the expansions of the Long Form thought his time called for something decidedly more emphatic and complete, and he hastened to supply it upon the authority of the name of the highly respected martyr.

The fifth chapter of Ignatius' letter to Polycarp reveals a possible change in the Long Form of a most subtle nature, contributing to the purposes of the expanding editor as we have found them. In the Middle Form, as translated by Roberts and Donaldson, Ignatius writes: "If any one can continue in a state of purity, to the honour of Him who is Lord of the flesh, let him so remain without boasting." The Long Form at this point reads: "If any one can continue in a state of purity, to the honour of the flesh of the Lord, let him so remain without boasting." The Greek manuscripts give some support to the headings as above given. The manuscript of Cureton, for example, agrees exactly with Roberts and Donaldson's

translation. However, the Greek text of Lightfoot, while agreeing to the possibility in the footnotes, has the expression the same in both recensions. If the translation as we have presented it is correct, and it is possible that it is, it is perfectly obvious that a complete change of meaning has been made here, in a comparatively obscure and relatively unimportant statement, in-so-far as the context is concerned, for the subject under consideration is marriage. In the Long Form, this obscure phrase would become a refutation of Gnosticism; in the Middle Form, no such connection would be possible. In this case, it is not probable that the change would be made from "flesh of the Lord" to "Lord of the flesh." The priority of the Middle Form would, thus, seem indicated, and the Long Form would be established as definitely interpolated at this point, if in no other.

In the Short Form

The Short Form, consisting of abbreviated forms of the letters of Ignatius to Polycarp, to the Ephesians, and to the Romans, has but little reference to the person of Jesus either polemically anti-docetic or otherwise. In fact, the only references of the type we have been investigating are to be found in the Short Form of the letter to Polycarp. In this letter, there are two statements having to do with our present theme, and both of them are quite clearly attempts to refute the idea that Jesus was only an apparition. One statement is in chapter three and reads as follows:

Look for Him that is above the times, Him who has no times, Him who is invisible, Him who for our sakes became visible, Him who is impalpable, Him who is impassible, Him who for our sakes suffered, Him who endured everything in every form for our sakes.

The similarity of this statement to one previously quoted from the Middle and Long Forms of the letter to Polycarp will be at once noted. The other state-

ment appears in chapter five. It reads: "If any man is able in power to continue in purity, to the honour of the flesh of the Lord, let him continue so without boasting." One point of vital concern to us emerges in the consideration of these statements. As they appear in the English translation, they are quite more closely related to their counterparts in the Long Form of the Ignatian Corpus than in the Middle Form, as we have seen it. Not only do they constitute an obviously more emphatic opposition to Docetism than the statements parallel to them in the Middle Form, but the latter statement includes the very subtle switch from the "Lord of the flesh," which we have seen as a possibility in the Middle Form, to "the flesh of the Lord," as in the Long Form. From this observation, it would seem possible that the Short Form, short as it is, is an expurgation of the Long Form and not of the Middle Form, as has heretofore been supposed. This conclusion would have some measure of agreement with Lightfoot's conclusions concerning the dates of the involved recensions, since he dates the Short Form not much earlier than A.D. 400,² and the Long Form about mid-fourth century.³ It is true, why the abbreviator decided to make his expurgation can only be conjectured. In any event, it contains opposition to Docetism, if only in the letter to Polycarp, at a level consistent with the Long Form. This much must be admitted.

In the Spurious Letters

So soon as one begins to read the spurious letters of the Ignatian Corpus, that soon he is struck full in the face with an overflow of antignostic statements, which often take on the form of a treatise on the subject rather than an incidental statement in a letter dealing with things of other importance. This is not true of all of them, but it is true of the longer letters of the spurious list. Space

does not permit the inclusion of illustrative statements from these letters. Investigation of typical statements in the letters themselves will reveal that the same kind of docetic Gnosticism is being opposed in the spurious letters as was being opposed by the expander of the Long Form and that, if anything, the editor of the spurious group is even more vehement in his opposition.

The Historical Context

While this article has investigated only one phase of the expansions of the Long Form over the Middle Form of the Ignatian Corpus, it must be admitted that any final conclusion as to the time and purpose of the expansions must await consideration of the total picture. Some interesting indications of this study may be seen, however. We have found that the Middle Form contains matters significantly pointed against Gnosticism of a docetic variety. This is obvious and unmistakable. However, the study has also uncovered the fact that the Long Form is not such, merely, but that it takes on the form of a thoroughgoing polemic against Docetism in about every form in which it existed. "Manifested in human form" becomes "manifested as a man"; "who was with the Father before the beginning of time" is changed to "he, being begotten by the Father before the beginning of time"; and "The Lord of the flesh" is possibly adjusted to read "the flesh of the Lord." Great stress is laid again and again upon the reality of the birth, the life, the crucifixion, the suffering, the burial, and the resurrection of Jesus, and the idea of his being a "mere" man is opposed vehemently. Furthermore, the God of the Old testament is defended in no uncertain terms as the Father of Jesus and the Creator of all that is in the world. We have found, too, that the spurious letters are consistent with this anti-docetic tendency and that the Short Form although greatly abbreviated, seems to continue the same emphasis.

Although space does not permit the

² *Ibid.*, p. 326.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 273.

inclusion of documentation for the assertion, the interpolations and forgeries of the Ignatian Long Form fit very well into the period of the last quarter of the third century as a polemic against Marcion Docetism and against the Monarchianism of the school of Theodotus and/or of Paul of Samosata, c. A.D. 260.⁴ The fact that the Short Form continues the emphasis of the Long Form on the person of Jesus, although it drops the emphasis of the Long Form on the place of the bishop, seems to justify the conclusion that it belongs about in the same period, perhaps a little later, as a resistance to the incursions of Marcion Gnosticism but also as an opposition to the development of authoritarianism in the bishop. Incidentally, the harsh opposition of the interpolations and forgeries against anyone who claims to be the incarnation of the paraclete, particularly in the spurious letters, is also consistent with our conclusion here and fits such statements into a context with Manichaeism and in opposition to it. The time element, as above reviewed, is in accord with this view, and it seems quite possibly the case.

It was stated earlier that other matters of importance are also involved in the expansions of the Ignatian pseudopigrapher. This study, in fact, is but a segment of research which involved itself in a comparison of the Ignatian recensions in several other areas, namely: the place of the bishop, creedalism, sacramentalism, the church, mariolatry, and martyrism. If what may be found on all of these subjects through a comparison of the recensions of the Ignatian Corpus were brought into consideration, what may be said, then of the interpolator and forger, who expanded and/or abbreviated in order to bring into existence the three forms of the Ignatian letters? At best, it must be admitted that only probabilities and at times possibilities may be acknowl-

edged. The following general conclusions, however, seem to be justified. He lived in a time of growth, development, and change, as regards the church. The bishop of Rome was either grasping for ascendancy or he was being assigned that position by other bishops throughout the empire. The Ignatian forger was ready to admit the authoritarian position of the located bishop but he was not ready to admit the primacy of the Roman bishop over all others. Heresies were also rampant in his time. Particularly, the school of Docetism of Marcion of Pontus and of Rome was strong and was threatening the unity of the churches. The Monarchian heresy was also adversely influencing the faithful, probably in terms of the teaching of Theodotus. The Ignatian forger was opposed to both of these concepts and wrote almost vehemently against them.

The forger lived in the period leading up to the formation of the great creeds of Christendom in their first forms. He is accused by modern scholarship of leaning in several directions, theologically, and the findings of the scholars are probably justified in the fact that the Ignatian forger actually leaned in all of these directions at the same time, since the intricacies of theological differentiation were not yet worked out, but in the throes of his doctrinal battles the Ignatian forger makes his own contribution to the working out of some of the details and orders his own thinking in exceedingly creed-like formalizations in some instances. Thinking contemporary to the Ignatian forger held the bishop in a priestly position, and with this he agreed in a most wholehearted manner, advocating both the sacramental aspect of the ordinances and the sacerdotal position of the bishops. The Ignatian falsifier wrote at a time when Mariolatry was beginning its formalization. He agreed that the mother of Jesus should hold a position of high respect, almost of adoration, in the minds of those who were

⁴ Albert Henry Newman, *A Manual of Church History* (Philadelphia: The American Baptist Publication Society, 1943), I, 198.

faithful members of the church. The martyrdoms of his time also claimed his attention, and with the Christians of his time he held the point of view that martyrdom was the gateway to true faith, true discipleship, true salvation. The time was probably the last half of the third century, possibly the last quarter of that century, as evidence from contemporary history seems to bring to the surface.

The Short Form, on the other hand, was brought into existence through the abbreviating efforts of another hand. Most scholarship seems to have assumed the likelihood that this hand abbreviated the Middle Form of the Ignatian writings. Evidence brought to light in this study, however, seems to suggest another possibility. An incident or two has been pointed out in the wording of the Short Form which seems to follow more closely the Long Form than it does the Middle Form. This would suggest the possibility that the abbreviator followed the forger in time and that his purpose was to disintegrate Ignatian authority for certain matters which he dropped from the Long Form. He begins by dropping all of the letters but three. Two of these, Romans and Polycarp, are distinct, even in their Middle Form, for the absence of authoritarianism, and this notion is also completely dropped from the third letter of the Short Form, namely: the letter to Ephesians. The abbreviator, thus, expresses his displeasure with the authoritarianism of the Long Form, which would in fact become displeasure with authoritarianism whether expressed in terms of bishops, creeds, or churches, in any form of the Ignatian Corpus. Incidentally, in addition to certain generalities of the Long Form, the abbreviator seems to include that Form's stress on martyrism

which he carries over without diminishing emphasis with any perceptable degree. This suggests that he holds in high regard the Christian who would surrender his life in behalf of the cause of Christ. This concept, of course, still prevails in the Roman Catholic church with an undiminished zeal, and all Christians today are certainly prone to hold such in quite high regard. What time the Ignatian abbreviator lived cannot, of course, be determined, but he certainly stands in opposition to the development of the authoritarian church, even as the genuine Ignatius understood it. It is probably his step back toward the genuine Ignatius that has caused scholars to place him between the Middle and the Long Form, instead of after the Long Form. In fact, his apparently pre-Ignatian notions on this point have caused some scholars to place the abbreviator even before the genuine Ignatius, or, to make the Ignatius of the Short Form the genuine Ignatius.

The Ignatian Corpus, thus, reveals the ebb and flow of the religious and theological controversy of the first three centuries of the Christian era. It gives evidence of how men in the various aspects of this controversy expanded or abbreviated in order to call the authority of one whom all respected to one or another side of the issue, and it demonstrates this in reference to one man and in reference to one group of that man's writings. It is hoped that this study will contribute to a deepening of our heritage in things Christian and will help us to understand from whence we came, where we are, and whither we go, as it is recognized that all times are on the move, including those of Ignatius and of our own.

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