

THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE AND APOSTOLIC DOCTRINE IN IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH

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Ignatius is generally recognized to have been bishop of the church at Antioch in Syria in the first part of the second Christian century.¹ His life and thought are known almost exclusively from the seven letters he wrote while being taken to be martyred in Rome sometime during the reign of Trajan (A.D. 98-117).² Stevan Davies has dated the writing of these letters at A.D. 113 from his analysis of the legal status of Ignatius, the time of the persecution of Christians in Asia Minor, and the absence of Trajan from Rome after A.D. 113.³ Whether the date can be fixed so exactly may be questioned, but most scholars are willing to place Ignatius' martyrdom in the latter part of Trajan's reign (110-117).⁴ Therefore the picture of Christianity given in his letter is very close in time to that of the apostles and properly earns him the designation of an "apostolic father." Unfortunately this picture was blurred throughout much of the history the Church by the interpolation of passages into his seven letters and the addition of six spurious ones in the third or fourth century.⁵ It was not until the work of Zahn and Lightfoot in the late nineteenth century that the authenticity and proper text of the seven letters was settled, although scholars since the Reformation had expressed doubts about the "long recension."⁶

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¹Early Christian Fathers (ed. C. C. Richardson; New York: Macmillan, 1970) 74-75 (hereafter ECF). See also Irenaeus *Ad. haer.* 5.28.4; Eusebius *Hist. eccl.* 3.22.36.

²ECF 75. These letters were written to the Ephesians, Magnesians, Trallians and Romans (from Smyrna) and to the Philadelphians, Smyrnians and Polycarp bishop of Smyrna (from Troas).

³S. L. Davies, "The Predicament of Ignatius of Antioch," *VC* 30 (1976) 175-180. However, G. Downey (*Ancient Antioch* [Princeton: University Press, 1963] 131-132) ties Ignatius' arrest to persecution following an earthquake in December of A. D. 115.

⁴E. J. Goodspeed, *The Apostolic Fathers: An American Translation* (New York: Harper, 1950) 204.

⁵B. Altaner, *Patrology* (New York: Herder, 1960), 1. 106-107; J. Quasten, *Patrology* (Westminster: Newman, 1951) 73-74.

⁶J. B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers* (2 vols.; London: Macmillan, 1885); T. Zahn, *Ignatius von Antiochien* (Gotha: Perthes, 1873). See also V. Corwin, *St. Ignatius and Christianity in Antioch* (New Haven: Yale University, 1960) 5-6; J. Pelikan, *Development of Christian Doctrine: Some Historical Prolegomena* (New Haven: Yale University, 1969) 58-59. There have been some recent attempts to discredit the Ignatian "middle recension" first identified by Zahn and Lightfoot. These include the theories of R. Joly (*Le Dossier d'Ignace d'Antioche* [Brussels: University Press, 1979]) and J. Rius-Camps (*The Four Authentic Letters of Ignatius, the Martyr* [Rome: Pontificium Institutum, 1979]). Both are extensively reviewed and effectively refuted by C. P. H. Bammel ("Ignatian Problems," *JTS* 33 [1982] 62-97).

The portrait of Ignatius that emerges from the authentic letters is that of a dynamic, fervent and extraordinary Christian. His language was often figurative and perhaps even mystical as he greatly desired to "get to God" through martyrdom.⁷ One of his chief themes was unity: He described himself as "a man utterly devoted to unity" (*Phld.* 8.1); Polycarp was advised by him to "make unity your concern—there is nothing better than that" (*Pol.* 1.2); Ignatius continually urged the Philadelphians to "do nothing apart from the bishop" and to "value unity; flee schism" (*Phld.* 7.2).⁸ As a corollary to this he strongly denounced heresy and heretics: They were to be avoided like "wild beasts"; they were "mad dogs which bite on the sly" (*Eph.* 7.1); their teaching was a "deadly poison" that, when the "unsuspecting victim" gladly accepted it, he drank "down death with fatal pleasure" (*Trall.* 6.2); they were "specious wolves who, by means of wicked pleasures, capture those who run God's race" (*Phld.* 2.2).⁹

A very contested issue in Ignatian studies is whether he was condemning two separate heresies (one Jewish with an emphasis on Christians following the law, the other docetic with a denial of Christ's real humanity) or only one syncretistic heresy.¹⁰ To some degree this question is beyond the scope of this paper as our concern is to examine how Ignatius used Scripture, apostolic doctrine, and tradition in his letters to both promote unity and refute heresy. By such an examination it should become clear that these were seen as complementary authorities but that the highest regard was given to apostolic doctrine that included not only matters of faith but incidental matters of history.

"Scripture" for all the apostolic fathers was the OT, which may have included the apocrypha or deuterocanonical books.¹¹ The references to NT writings as "Scripture" were rare, but the content of various NT books was often alluded to favorably.¹² The problem of course is to determine the perceived value of the NT

⁷See R. A. Bower, "The Meaning of *EPITYNCHANŌ* in the Epistles of St. Ignatius of Antioch," *VC* 28 (1974) 1-14.

⁸ECF 110, 118.

⁹ECF 90, 100, 108.

¹⁰Two distinct heresies were being condemned according to C. Richardson (*The Christianity of Ignatius of Antioch* [New York: Columbia University, 1935] 51-54); Corwin (*Ignatius* 52-87); R. M. Grant (*The Apostolic Fathers: A New Translation and Commentary* [New York: Thomas Nelson, 1964], 1. 54; 4. 22-24); J. Gunther ("Syrian Christian Dualism," *VC* 25 [1971] 89-91); and others. One syncretistic heresy was attacked according to Lightfoot (*Apostolic Fathers*, 2. 173); E. Molland ("The Heretics Combated by Ignatius of Antioch," *JEH* 5 [1954] 1-6); L. W. Barnard (*Studies in the Apostolic Fathers and Their Background* [Oxford: Blackwell, 1966] 23-27); Bammel ("Ignatian Problems" 81-84); I. A. Saliba ("The Bishop of Antioch and the Heretics: A Study of a Primitive Christology," *EvQ* [1982] 65-75); and others. C. Trevett ("Prophecy and Anti-Episcopal Activity: A Third Error Combated by Ignatius?," *JEH* 34 [1983] 1-18) has even argued that three distinct heresies were being refuted, but this novel view has yet to gain many adherents.

¹¹J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (San Francisco: Harper, rev. ed. 1978) 52-56. Pseudepigraphal works, however, would certainly have been excluded. See T. Lea, "The Early Christian View of Pseudepigraphic Writings," *JETS* 27 (1984) 68-70.

¹²D. A. Hagner, *The Use of the Old and New Testaments in Clement of Rome* (Leiden: Brill, 1973) 341-346.

when the canon had not been settled and when there was even little recognized need to delineate what it included.¹³ On the other hand, the authority of Jesus and the apostles was widely recognized. Yet in the era of the apostolic fathers there was not a sharp distinction between the Christian teaching found in "apostolic" centers like Jerusalem, Antioch, Ephesus and Rome and that actually written in NT books. But this does not mean there was no distinction. B. F. Westcott correctly said of the apostolic fathers:

Without any exact sense of the completeness of the Christian Scriptures, they still drew a distinct line between them [i.e. the apostles] and their own writings. As if by some providential instinct, each one of those teachers who stood nearest to the writings of the New Testament plainly contrasted his writings with theirs, and definitely placed himself on a lower level.¹⁴

This still does not answer on what level the writings of the NT were placed by Ignatius (or other apostolic fathers). The citations to NT words were often only imprecise allusions, usually without any introductory formulas such as "it is written," which were almost exclusively reserved for the OT in this period. This complicates the task of determining Ignatius' view of the NT. Nevertheless, when the allusions are studied and compared with the high esteem granted to the apostles by Ignatius and other early Christian writers it becomes obvious that "their first norm is the authority of the apostolic testimony enshrined in the epistles and gospels to which they so constantly refer."¹⁵ At times it even seems as if this norm was placed above the OT. So it is fair to conclude that the apostolic fathers viewed the teaching of the NT books at least as equal in authority with the OT.¹⁶ Just how the OT was viewed is sometimes debated, but here it will be assumed that it was received as "divinely inspired and authoritative" by the early fathers, just as it was regarded by normative Tannaic Judaism with the exception that it was interpreted Christologically.¹⁷

"Tradition," which is often considered a body of unwritten doctrine passed down through the Church or the handing down of such doctrine, is frequently contrasted with Scripture.¹⁸ But in the apostolic fathers and early apologists the Greek word for tradition and its cognates (*paradidonai*, *paradosis*: 1 *Clem.* 7.2; *Pol. Phil.* 7.2; Justin 1 *Apol.* 49.5; 66.3) emphasized authoritative delivery.¹⁹

¹³Ibid. See also E. C. Blackman, *Marcion and His Influence* (London: SPCK, 1948) 26-32.

¹⁴B. F. Westcott, *The Canon of the New Testament* (Cambridge: Macmillan, 1855) 65.

¹⁵G. W. H. Lampe, "The Early Church," in *Scripture and Tradition* (Greenwich: Seabury, 1955) 86.

¹⁶G. W. Bromiley, "Authority and Scripture," in *Scripture, Tradition, and Interpretation* (ed. W. Gasque and W. S. LaSor; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978) 12-13; Kelly, *Christian Doctrines* 34, 56.

¹⁷G. W. Bromiley, "The Church Fathers and Holy Scripture," in *Scripture and Truth* (ed. D. A. Carson and J. D. Woodbridge; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983) 212-214; R. D. Preus, "The View of the Bible Held by the Church: The Early Church Through Luther," in *Inerrancy* (ed. N. L. Geisler; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980) 358.

¹⁸Kelly, *Christian Doctrines* 30.

¹⁹Ibid.

Therefore by "tradition" they meant "doctrine which the Lord or His apostles committed to the Church, irrespective of whether it was handed down orally or in documents."²⁰ This tradition was not contrasted with Scripture but was treated as virtually identical to it (as indeed it included what would later be designated NT Scripture).²¹ J. N. D. Kelly prefers to call this body of information the "apostolic testimony," and our term for the same thing is "apostolic doctrine" to emphasize more completely the theological content and concrete character of this witness. However, oral tradition is not excluded from apostolic doctrine.

It is nearly impossible to determine when Ignatius is referring to truths transmitted orally or to written documents, or in some cases if the documents were works that were later recognized as being canonical.²² This makes it very difficult to identify his views regarding the scope, authority and truthfulness of the Bible *per se*. But we shall try to reach some valid conclusions concerning his beliefs about the authority and trustworthiness of the NT books.

The circumstances under which the seven letters were written by Ignatius did not lend themselves to frequent quotation from books: The citations from NT material were from memory, but it was a memory of actual texts, not an oral tradition, according to Robert Grant.²³ Early collections of NT letters and gospels are generally recognized to have existed in such centers as Antioch,²⁴ and so Ignatius could have had access to some of Paul's letters, for example. Ignatius' words made it clear that he did know several of these letters:²⁵ *Eph.* 18.1-2: "'Where is the wise man? Where is the debater?' Where are the boasts of these supposedly intelligent?"²⁶ (cf. 1 Cor 1:20); *Trall.* 13.3: "I need your love, so that I may be judged worthy of the lot which I am set to obtain, 'lest I be found a castaway'" (cf. 1 Cor 9:27).²⁷ Grant finds "no fewer than forty-six allusions" to 1 Corinthians in Ignatius and concludes that he knew the book "practically by heart."²⁸ In fact Grant sees allusions to all the other Pauline epistles and, while

²⁰Ibid., pp. 30-31.

²¹Ibid., p. 34. See also R. M. Grant, "From Tradition to Scripture and Back," in *Perspectives on Scripture and Tradition* (ed. J. Kelly; Notre Dame: Fides, 1976) 18-22.

²²*Smyrn.* 3.1-3 is often viewed as a citation from an apocryphal gospel, perhaps the *Teaching of Peter* (so Origen believed) or the *Gospel According to the Hebrews* (so Jerome said). Corwin (*Ignatius* 68) favors the former, but Grant (*Apostolic Fathers*, 1. 63) believes that this is merely a paraphrase from memory of Luke 24:39.

²³Grant, *Apostolic Fathers*, 1. 61. See also R. M. Grant, *After the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967) 37-53.

²⁴Hagner, *Clement* 314-332.

²⁵Grant, *Apostolic Fathers*, 1. 55-57.

²⁶ECF 92.

²⁷Grant, *After the New Testament* 39.

²⁸Ibid.

recognizing that this may only reflect scholarly ingenuity, feels it more likely shows that Ignatius had read Paul's letters.²⁹ The polite exaggeration of Ignatius to the Ephesians that Paul "in all his letters" mentioned them (*Eph.* 12.2)³⁰ is taken as further evidence that he was familiar with an early collection of Paul's letters.

Ignatius' awareness of Matthew is frequently recognized by researchers, and his knowledge of John is sometimes conceded.³¹ More important than the exact source of his knowledge of apostolic doctrine, which is often in doubt (some commentators have suggested that his awareness of Johannine ideas came from talks he had with John personally), was his treatment of it as the final authority in settling disputes. In a very interesting passage that gives in condensed fashion a debate Ignatius had with apparently Jewish opponents (see *Phld.* 6.1; 9.1-2), this is evident:

When I heard some people saying, "If I don't find it in the original documents, I don't believe it in the gospel," I answered them, "But it is written there." They retorted, "That's just the question." To my mind it is Jesus Christ who is the original documents. The inviolable archives are his cross and death and his resurrection and the faith that came by him (*Phld.* 8.2).³²

The final part of this passage shows the Christological center to the exegesis of Ignatius that on the surface might appear to be saying that his concern was with the central issues of Christianity, not the less important content of the "original documents." However, while the importance of Christ to Ignatius cannot be underestimated, there was no disparagement of the gospel (*Phld.* 9.2). Thus the "original documents," although taken by Zahn to mean the original autographs of the NT,³³ were almost certainly the "archives" or "charters" of the Jews—i.e., the OT.³⁴ The phrase by Ignatius "it is written" was elsewhere used to introduce OT quotes (*Eph.* 5.3; cf. *Magn.* 12.1) and, as previously mentioned, generally applied only to the OT in the apostolic fathers. The issue in this debate seemed to be whether the OT, which would be the final court of appeal for Judaizers, taught the Christian faith as presented in the gospel and Ignatius. As his opponents were unconvinced of this, he went on to make Jesus Christ and the key gospel concepts about him the hermeneutical principle for understanding the OT. That he viewed the OT prophets as revealing Christ is clear from *Magn.* 8.2-10.3. The larger context of the debate makes it more definite that the question was the interpretation of the OT, as Ignatius said of Christ:

²⁹Ibid., p. 40. See also Grant, *Apostolic Fathers*, 1. 57.

³⁰ECF 91.

³¹Corwin, *Ignatius* 67-68; J. N. Sanders, *The Fourth Gospel in the Early Church* (Cambridge: University Press, 1943) 11-14.

³²ECF 110.

³³According to Lightfoot (*Apostolic Fathers*, 2. 272) this was the position of Zahn.

³⁴W. R. Schoedel, "Ignatius and the Archives," *HTR* 71 (1978) 97-106. This is also the view of Corwin (*Ignatius* 58-60), Grant (*Apostolic Fathers*, 4. 106) and J. Lawson (*A Theological and Historical Introduction to the Apostolic Fathers* [New York: Macmillan, 1961] 134-135).

He is the door to the Father. Through it there enter Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the prophets and apostles and the Church. . . . The beloved prophets announced his coming; but the gospel is the crowning achievement forever (*Phld.* 9.1-2).³⁵

A further conclusion justified from this exchange is that Ignatius placed a very high value on apostolic doctrine. This was so much the case that he was open to the charge of belittling the OT. He apparently was aware of some accusations to this effect and tried to show his appreciation for the prophets by desiring

that I may gain that fate which I have mercifully been allotted, by taking refuge in the "Gospel," as in Jesus' flesh, and in the "Apostles," as in the presbytery of the Church. And the "Prophets," let us love them too, because they anticipated the gospel in their preaching and hoped for and awaited Him, and were saved by believing on Him (*Phld.* 5.1-2).³⁶

The "Gospel" and "Apostles" (a possible reference to a twofold division of the NT),³⁷ because they related Christ and promoted faith in him, were still more highly prized by Ignatius than the OT. But there was not any hint of the corollary sometimes incorrectly deduced from such an emphasis on the essentials of Christian faith—viz., that historical or scientific facts are not important in Christian revelation or that they may be erroneously passed down without affecting it. Ignatius made it very clear that the historical truths of apostolic doctrine were vital for orthodox Christianity.³⁸ Christ's genealogy was important: He was of the family line or seed of David (*Eph.* 18.2; 20.2; *Trall.* 9.1; *Smyrn.* 1.1). Historical incidents connected with his life, death, and resurrection were very significant: He was baptized by John (*Smyrn.* 1.1); he suffered and died on the cross during the procuratorship of Pontius Pilate and in the reign of Herod the tetrarch (*Magn.* 11.1; *Trall.* 9.1; *Smyrn.* 1.2); he rose from the dead on the Lord's day (*Magn.* 9.1); he ate and drank after his resurrection (*Smyrn.* 3.2-3).³⁹ It is impossible to believe that these historical facts were merely superfluous, as they were vital to Ignatius' case against docetism. It would be even more incredible to hold that Ignatius did not think they were true but had instead simply been passed down without intentional deceit because this was exactly the position his docetic opponents had adopted. They argued that people had been fooled by a Christ who only appeared to be human.

Moreover these historical facts, which were based on NT truths,⁴⁰ were linked

³⁵ECF 110.

³⁶ECF 109.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Corwin, *Ignatius* 94-104.

³⁹These references were adapted from a longer list in Corwin (*Ignatius* 94-95) that shows even more forcefully the historical nature of Christian truth perceived by Ignatius.

⁴⁰Christ was of the "seed of David," according to Rom 1:3; of the virgin Mary, Matt 1:22-25; baptized by John, Matt 3:15; crucified under Pilate and Herod, Luke 23:7-24; resurrected on the first day of the week, according to all the gospels; and ate and drank with the disciples after his resurrection, Acts 10:41.

with Ignatius' creedal summaries of the central elements of Christianity (*Eph.* 7.2; *Trall.* 9.1-2; *Smyrn.* 1.1-2). These creeds were directed against the docetic denial of the reality of Christ. Ignatius testified: "He *genuinely* suffered, as even he *genuinely* raised himself. It is not as some unbelievers say, that his Passion was a sham. It's they who are a sham!" (*Smyrn.* 2.1).⁴¹ He further urged the Magnesians to "be thoroughly convinced of the birth, Passion, and resurrection, which occurred while Pontius Pilate was governor. Yes, all that was *actually* and assuredly done by Jesus Christ, our hope. God forbid that any of you should lose it" (*Magn.* 11.1).⁴² The Greek word in both these references (and in *Trall.* 9.1-2) variously translated "genuinely," "actually," "really" or "truly" was *alēthōs*.⁴³ As the context illustrated, it referred to something real as opposed to mere appearance⁴⁴ and would therefore mark a correspondence or coherence theory of truth in Ignatius.⁴⁵

The authority and truthfulness of apostolic doctrine even extended to matters of science or astronomy. Ignatius saw three secrets (Christ's birth from the virgin Mary, his incarnation, and his atoning death; *Eph.* 19.1)⁴⁶ that were to be revealed:

How, then, were they revealed to the ages? A star shone in heaven brighter than all the stars. Its light was indescribable and its novelty caused amazement. The rest of the stars, along with the sun and the moon, formed a ring around it; yet it outshone them all. . . . As a result all magic lost its power and all witchcraft ceased. . . . The ancient kingdom [of evil] was utterly destroyed (*Eph.* 19.2-3).⁴⁷

This story was based on Matt 2:2, 9-10 (perhaps as influenced by Gen 37:9) and indicated that Ignatius believed the incident of the epiphany star was true. He even went so far as to make a theological application of its importance. The view that the kingdom of evil was destroyed was in line with Pauline thought (1 Cor 2:6-8; Gal 4:3; Eph 4:12; Col 2:15).⁴⁸ However, the notions about the destruction of magic and witchcraft, while common in later fathers,⁴⁹ were not as clearly

⁴¹ECF 113 (italics mine).

⁴²ECF 97.

⁴³See the Greek text in K. Lake (*The Apostolic Fathers* [2 vols.; Cambridge: Harvard University, 1945] 208, 220, 252).

⁴⁴BAG 37; LPGL 73.

⁴⁵Just as *alēthōs* signifies in the NT, according to R. Nicole ("The Biblical Concept of Truth," in *Scripture and Truth* 293-294). This approach by Ignatius differs from that of Origen, who apparently believed that Scriptural teaching could be true on a spiritual or allegorical level but could sometimes be erroneous on a literal level. See M. Holmes, "Origen and the Inerrancy of Scripture," *JETS* 24 (1981) 221-231.

⁴⁶Lawson, *Introduction* 117.

⁴⁷ECF 93.

⁴⁸Lawson, *Introduction* 118.

⁴⁹Justin *Dial.* 77.4; 78.1, 7, 9; 88.1; 102.2-4; Irenaeus *Ad. haer.* 3.9.2; Tertullian *De Idol.* 9; etc. See H. Remus, *Pagan-Christian Conflict Over Miracle in the Second Century* (Cambridge: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1983) 54-57, 80-82, 238-239.

expressed in Scripture, and their historical or theological truthfulness might be suspected.

In this regard it is important to note that Ignatius made a distinction between his own teaching and that given by the apostles: "I do not give you orders as if I were somebody important" (*Eph.* 3.1); "I have not thought it my place to give you orders like an apostle" (*Trall.* 3.3).⁵⁰ Therefore the possibility of error in his own words would probably have been admitted, but that error was present in historical or theological information based on apostolic doctrine (such as the virgin birth of a truly human Jesus) would not have been granted. The pattern throughout his letters helps show this. He seemed to make a citation or allusion to apostolic doctrine (or in a few cases the OT) and then draw his own point from this to promote unity or refute heresy. An example would be *Eph.* 16.1-2:

Make no mistake, my brothers: adulterers will not inherit God's kingdom (cf. 1 Cor. 6:9-10). *If, then*, those who act carnally suffer death, how much more shall those who by wicked teaching corrupt God's faith for which Jesus Christ was crucified. Such a vile creature will go to the unquenchable fire along with anyone who listens to him.⁵¹

There is little if any evidence as to Ignatius' view of the inspiration of the Bible. However, there is no reason to believe he held any lesser view than that current in Judaism regarding the OT, except that it was understood to magnify Christ. Since at times he seems to elevate apostolic doctrine above the OT, it is reasonable to conclude that he felt its authority was at least as great as that of the OT. He saw no problem in relating an OT promise to apostolic doctrine: "Make a real effort, then, to stand firmly by the orders of the Lord and the apostles, so that 'whatever you do, you may succeed'" (Ps 1:3 LXX).⁵²

He viewed the ultimate source for all authority as God given through Christ. There was a hierarchy that extended on to the apostles and then to the Church with its bishop, presbyters and deacons (*Eph.* 3.2-5.1; *Trall.* 2.1-3.2; *Smyrn.* 8.1). He even said, "It is not right to presume on the youthfulness of your bishop. You ought to respect the authority of God the Father" (*Magn.* 3.1).⁵³ Yet even though the Church and its officers carried authority, and all the members should follow them, it is hard to escape the conclusion that apostolic doctrine had a higher authority and was in a separate class. Ignatius said, "There is something special about the gospel" (*Phld.* 9.2); "pay attention to the prophets and *above all* the gospel" (*Smyrn.* 7.2).⁵⁴ Even his own words as a bishop and "God-inspired"⁵⁵ were not viewed as equal in authority to that of the apostles: "I do not give you

⁵⁰ECF 88, 99.

⁵¹ECF 92 (italics mine).

⁵²*Magn.* 13.1; ECF 97.

⁵³ECF 95.

⁵⁴ECF 111, 114 (italics mine).

⁵⁵The opening inscription of each letter of Ignatius included this designation.

orders like Peter and Paul. They were apostles: I am a convict" (*Rom.* 3.3).⁵⁶

In summary, it is possible to find allusions in Ignatius to many NT truths, but the lack of recognition of a certain NT canon and the indirect character of his citations makes an evaluation of his views of Biblical authority very difficult. However, he did have a very high regard for what we have called apostolic doctrine. He used it to promote unity and refute heresy and seems to have expected it to be convincing (*Smyrn.* 5.1-2). Indeed it was more effective than appeals to the OT Scriptures, as his Christological interpretations of those books were not accepted by his opponents. The apostolic testimony included matters of history and even astronomy that were seen to be as "really" true as the deity of Christ or other central aspects of Christianity. Its authority was special and distinct, in a separate class from the obedience to be given to the bishop or the value of Ignatius' own words. As apostolic doctrine mirrored the text of the NT in many cases, his views of its nature indirectly testify to his beliefs regarding the truthfulness and authority of Scripture as a whole.

⁵⁶ECF 104.