# Chapter 6: Traditions of Paul and the Ignatian Letters

## The *Acts of Paul*

## The *Ignatian Letters*

The Letters of Ignatius of Antioch or, the Ignatians, are a complex phenomenon of a collection of letters by a certain Ignatius to various communities of Asia Minor and Rome and to one or more individuals - depending on which collection one looks at. The collection of seven letters, now considered genuine, is widely regarded as the oldest, non-canonical one, and is rightly placed by Andreas Lindemann in the "reception history of Paul".[[1]](#footnote-1) Elsewhere, I have recently devoted a longer study of my own to the various collections of the Ignatiana, so that I can be more brief here and only supplement that study.[[2]](#footnote-2) The fact that the following section is nevertheless not short is due to the importance that the Ignatiana has for the picture of the beginnings of Christianity up to the present day.[[3]](#footnote-3)

There is currently a consensus in research - one of the few in questions of the Ignatiana - that the collection of seven letters, the so-called "middle recension", is the earliest to be attributed to the 2nd century Bishop of Antioch. For there still exists a shorter version of three of these letters in Syriac, and in addition there is a longer version of all seven letters, which are connected with further six letters. Both, the smaller and the larger, collection are considered inauthentic and belonging to the 4th century. The only controversial questions, as it seems, are whether the seven letters in the "middle recension" are authentic or were written by a forger and whether, according to the dating of Eusebius of Caesarea, they were written between the years 107 and 116 or, as Lindemann and others suggest, around 130 or, as others in research argue, even later in the last third of the 2nd century.[[4]](#footnote-4)

David Trobisch has investigated how collections of letters were created in antiquity by reviewing "about two hundred letter collections from 300 B.C.E to around 400 C.E.", "written by more than one hundred different authors, covering more than three thousand letters".[[5]](#footnote-5) In the process, he gained the insight that collections of letters do not usually "just happen", but rather "develop", as a rule in three stages:[[6]](#footnote-6)

"1. Authorized Recensions  
The author of the letters prepares letters for publication.  
2. Expanded Editions  
After the author’s death these editions are expanded. Further editions of published and unpublished letters are produced.  
3. Comprehensive Editions  
All the available editions are combined."[[7]](#footnote-7)

Trobisch connects this overview with the following important comment:

"What I personally had not reckoned with was that virtually all the collections I examined, which could be traced back to correspondence that had actually been conducted, had been published in their original form by the letter writers themselves.[[8]](#footnote-8) The author himself was responsible for the selection of letters and for editing them. If this publication was a success, often further letter collections would follow. I will refer to these editions as “authorized recensions”.  
The second stage begins when the author dies. Unpublished letters are collected. If their topic is somehow related to authorized recensions, they are published as appendices to these collections. Otherwise letters covering the same subject or addressed to the same person are put together and published as separate volumes. I will call editions of this second stage “expanded editions”.  
In the third stage of the development of a letter collection scribes try to produce manuscripts containing all known letters. I will refer to editions of this third stage as “comprehensive editions.”[[9]](#footnote-9)

If one now wants to apply these findings to the so-called Ignatians, one will not follow the chronological-idealistic path from one author and his "genuine" letters to the collections of mixed content, of genuine and "spurious" material, up to "comprehensive editions", but rather ask about the profiles given to a particular collection and the parts of it over time, and work out the projections derived from this on the author figure associated with it.

Ignatius is a wonderful example in this respect, which at the same time illuminates the idea of early history associated with his person and collections, even if not directly with the beginnings of Christianity.

As I have already tried to show in a retrospective walk through history elsewhere,[[10]](#footnote-10) the almost exclusive focus of research on Ignatius' collection of seven letters is a phenomenon of the last 150 years or so. This view was cemented with the work of two researchers in particular, namely Joseph Barber Lightfoot (1828-1889) and, before him, Theodor Zahn (1838-1933).[[11]](#footnote-11) Doubts had already arisen earlier about the authenticity of, for example, the four letters to and from Ignatius, which have been preserved in Latin alone and which are only attested in the Middle Ages. In turn, they made the authenticity of the collection of the twelve or thirteen letters suspicious, though also preserved in Greek, with which the four letters had been connected. This collection of seventeen or, if we only take the letters preserved also in Greek, the thirteen or twelve letters, contained seven letters which were given in a long version and also in a short version. Only the latter seven letters are the ones that Lightfoot and Zahn recognized as authentic and, following these two scholars, are accepted today as the genuine letters of Ignatius. Most importantly, Lightfoot and Zahn also rejected the authenticity of three of these seven letters that exist in a much shorter version, albeit only in Syriac translation. These three letters only were taken as genuine by their discoverer William Cureton (1808-1864).[[12]](#footnote-12) But Lightfoot's and Zahn's not only rejected the view of Cureton, their writings obliterated Cureton’s findings for the past 150 years. On the basis of Lightfoot and Zahn, therefore, all present editions and translations of the Ignatians only contain the seven letters in what is called the ‘middle recension’,[[13]](#footnote-13) whereas the the most recent and last "comprehensive edition" of the Ignatians was produced by the mentioned Lightfoot, dating from 1889.[[14]](#footnote-14)

The reduction in the number of Ignatians, however, began earlier. While the *Codex Monacensis Graecus 394* from the 10th/11th century still has a Greek collection of 13 letters, in which only the four letters that have been handed down exclusively in Latin are missing, the *Codex Reginensis 81* from thesame time period only has a Latin translation of twelve of these letters. One of the letters, the opening letters written by a lady to Ignatius, is missing in the *Codex Monacensis Graecus 394* collection, perhaps because it does not claim authorship by Ignatius, but is addressed to Ignatius. A closer examination of this opening letter, however, shows that this letter may have been eliminated by scribes and later editors, not only because it does not come from Ignatius himself, but also because it purports to come from a resolute woman, Mary Cassobolites. Still, it is a riddle, that this letter became omitted, as the first letter by Ignatius is a direct response to this letter of Mary and, without the preliminary letter of Mary, hangs in the air, as it provides answers to questions that are no longer present in the collection due to the omission of Mary's letter.

### The Seven Letter Collection

The seven-letter collection of the present day consequently offers us an Ignatius who is freed from the enquiries, desires and concerns of Mary Cassobolites; they also no longer contain the questions and submissions that are negotiated in the Latin letters between Ignatius and John the Evangelist, between Ignatius and the Virgin Mary, and between the Virgin Mary and Ignatius. Despite the anachronological pseudonymy introduced by these exclusively Latin letters, which was certainly not completely hidden even from readers of the time, these letters nevertheless enjoyed a certain authority for the image and conception associated with Ignatius and the early Church in subsequent centuries, beyond their critical assessment and elimination from the manuscripts and editions of the Reformation period. Moreover, both the Letter of Mary Cassobolites and the Latin letters are treasures of the history of piety that remain to be unearthed.[[15]](#footnote-15)

Here, however, I would like to limit myself to the picture of the beginnings of Christianity, which result very differently from the various types of collections of the Ignatians, whereby I again proceed retrospectively and begin with the seven-letters-collection of the "middle recension" which is seen as the genuine one today.

Schoedel summarises the state of research: There is "everything to suggest that the middle recension" of this collection of seven letters will, according to the prevailing majority opinion of research, "remain recognised as what the scholarly consensus today sees in it: a collection of genuine letters of Bishop Ignatius of Antioch,[[16]](#footnote-16) written (as Eusebius indicates) during the reign of Trajan (110-118; Lightfoot II, 21889, 435-472) or shortly thereafter (Harnack II/1, 388-406)."[[17]](#footnote-17)

If this were so, then the Epistles of Ignatius would not only represent, as indicated, our first extra-canonical Christian letter collection, written and collected soon after or parallel to that of Paul, but through them the beginnings of Christianity would already exhibit the following characteristics, which would remain unknown to us for this time period without knowledge of these letters:

The seven letters provide a clear testimony to the fact that, at the latest in the first decade of the 2nd century, "Christianity" (IgnRom 3; IgnMag 10) existed as an entity not only in the minds of non-Christians, but especially in those of the members of this institution, in sharp contrast to an equally understood religious and cultural counterpart, that these letters call "Judaism" (IgnMag 10; IgnPhilad 6). However, within Christianity there were members who tended to "Judaise" (IgnMag 10).[[18]](#footnote-18)

This contrast between Christianity and Judaism includes the further antithesis between the law of Christ and the Jewish law of Moses (IgnPhilad 6). Consequently, Christianity had developed during the 1st century, presumably either already during Jesus' ministry, i.e. during his lifetime, or at the latest soon after his death - perhaps since Claudius' edict in the 40s - into an independent entity alongside and outside Judaism. Nevertheless, it had not completely understood itself as a non-Jewish religious community, since at least Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in Christianity, together with the Jewish prophets who foretold Jesus, the apostles and the Church, occupied a prominent place in Scripture and the Church's self-understanding (IgnPhilad 9; 5-6; IgnMag 8).

In the congregational performance, the praise of the priests was sung, but higher praise still was given to the high priest, who was considered the door to Abraham and the other authorities mentioned (IgnPhilad 9; 5-6). Finally, part of this hierarchical conception in Christianity is the existence of a single bishop as the sole head of a church (IgnPhilad 4; IgnMag 4). It is this monepiscopos who presides over it in the place of God (IgnMag 6), even if the bishop appears as a young person in contrast to a presbyterate, that is, the body of elders (IgnMag 3). As there is already a bishop for Syria in Ignatius of Antioch (IgnRom 2), so it is insinuated that probably other congregations should also be led by a single bishop. Despite the special position of Christianity in relation to Judaism, the Christianity of this Ignatius nevertheless claims that the Christian elders should be understood as the Jewish "Sanhedrin of God" (IgnTral 3). In general, fundamental to the self-assessment of Christianity is its character of novelty, expressed in the antithesis between the old order of things and the new hope (IgnMag 9-10), between Sabbath observance and life in the observance of the Lord's Day (IgnMag 9). For Christians, life is no longer oriented towards the Jewish Sabbath, but these celebrate Sunday (IgnMag 8-9).

The above-mentioned elements are unique features of this early Christianity, which are neither found in the writings of the New Testament nor in other testimonies from the 1st or the first half of the 2nd century. In addition to these unique characteristics, there are other elements that can, indeed, also be found in other testimonies of early Christianity, which, however, are often difficult to date.

Thus this collection of seven letters underlines the existence of the Eucharistic celebration with bread and wine. It also stands for the outstanding importance of Paul's letters, which will be discussed in more details below. For the first quotation by Lindemann from IgnEph 12, which is "very effusively formulated" and which "surprisingly" speaks of "Paul mentioning the Ephesians 'in every letter'", is found in this "middle recension" of the seven letters.[[19]](#footnote-19) The collection of seven letters is also a key witness to the outstanding importance of the idea of martyrdom in early Christianity, which stood in distinction not only from Judaism, but also from Greco-Roman paganism that threatened it. Certainly, Christianity also has elements of Roman cultic ideas, adapted concepts and liturgical practices from the pagan environment,[[20]](#footnote-20) but there is already a distinctly own Christian culture and theology, the centre of which is Christ's resurrection, the reason for the resurrection of human beings. Although even in the "middle recension" there is only a single quotation from narratives in the canonical Gospels (IgnSm 1:1 with a parallel in Mt 3:15, though still a Lord’s saying rather than part of a narrative), the language, often close to Paul, gives the letters a proximity to canonical literature.

It is not surprising, then, why, since the work of Zahn and Lightfoot, critics of the authenticity and early dating of the Ignatians have met with stubborn resistance from their colleagues, since these "middle recension" letters, on the one hand, convey such striking and often unique features of early Christianity not encountered elsewhere, and, at the same time, form one of the most important supports for the picture of early Christianity as it is handed down in standard works of New Testament and Patristic scholarship today. [[21]](#footnote-21)

For if one were to agree with the critical position of scholars that these letters were only written in the late period of Hadrian, i.e. in the 130s or even later, namely in the last third of the 2nd century, Ignatius would not be the lonly lighthouse reaching far out into the dark sea illuminating many questions, but rather, if not in all respects, then at least in many respects, would range amongst a series of other lighthouses on the edge of the shore, as he would join witnesses such as Justin Martyr, the sophist Lucian of Samosata and Irenaeus of Lyons. For our research landscape, therefore, the question is whether Ignatius is the great loner and the historical exception and forerunner, or whether he forms part of a wider picture, still there maintining an exceptional role as a representative of a gradually consolidating Christianity.

### The Three Letter Collection

Immediately before Lightfoot and Zahn, William Cureton had made the Syriac find of three letters of the seven-letter collection, which show a considerably shorter version than these letters in this collection. After Lightfoot and Zahn had relegated this "short recension" to the 4th century as an abbreviation of the "middle recension", research on this recension had remained largely silent until today. However, if one compares the "short recension" with the "middle recension", one notices how much the two differ in content and what a different picture emerges, especially of the Christian faith, for the early period of Christianity.

The "short recension" comprises only three letters, Ignatius' letter to Polycarp (IgnPol), his letter to the Ephesians (IgnEph) and his letter to the Romans (IgnRom), which for their part are, indeed, considerably shorter than the "middle recension", even if they exhibit individual peculiarities beyond brevity. For example, the final chapter IgnRom 8 of the "short recension" is found divided into two chapters in IgnTral of the "middle recension" (or vice versa, depending on how one sees the dependence), while the chapter IgnRom 8 of the "middle recension" has different content, followed by two more final chapters. Finally, it should be noted that it could be established that this "short recension" is also attested in the 6th century at the earliest and already shows traces of contamination with the "middle recension". Often, however, parallels and traces of the "short recension" are found in the Latin translation of the "longer recension", and, as research has already correctly seen in the past,[[22]](#footnote-22) one must always keep a watchful eye on this Latin translation as well as on all textual witnesses, including those of the Oriental translations, as all translations are needed to create a critical the text of Ignatius’ letters. Unfortunately, there is still no major critical edition of the Ignatiana, which is an indispensable necessity for any future work with this text corpus. In this respect, my remarks here can only be provisional.[[23]](#footnote-23)

Nevertheless, a few observations can be made as to what ideas of the beginnings of Christianity the "short recension" conveys in contrast to the picture of the "middle recension".

In the "short recension", the relationship to the Jewish tradition is not discussed at all. Indeed, the letter to Polycarp reads in this review at first like a Jewish letter that warns with all clarity and at the same time modesty against false teachers. These seem to dispute the monarchian belief in God, which reads:

" Expect Him who is above the times. Him to whom there are no times, Him who is unseen, Him who for our sakes was seen, Him who is impalpable, Him who is impassible, Him who for our sakes suffered, Him who endured everything in every form for our sakes." (IgnPol 3:2)

The name of Jesus Christ is not mentioned in the text of the letter - the one mention in the preface is text-critically uncertain, as the Latin translation of the "long recension" proves - but there is only talk of this one God, who paradoxically is both above the times, for whom there are no times, but who has subjected himself to all that is temporal for humanity. If one trusts the Latin translation of the "long recension", then the letter to Polycarp seems to have closed with this confessional formula, which goes back to the Asia Minor teacher Noët of Smyrna of the 2nd century .[[24]](#footnote-24) If this were so, this part of the letter would also lack any emphasis on the office of bishop, which one reads in the later chapters of this letter (IgnPol 4-6) and even more so in the further chapters of the "middle recension" (IgnPol 7-8), where, for example, the succession election of the bishop is also addressed (IgnPol 7). The institutionalisation of "Christianity" is precisely a characteristic of the "middle recension", which, for example, includes the remarks on human existence that can still be read in the Latin translation of the "longer recension" to IgnRom 3.[[25]](#footnote-25)

Consequently, while the "middle recension" knows Christianity as an abstract self-description of Christians and sets them apart from both Judaism and paganism in relation to the other abstract institutions, neither this form of institutionalisation nor a self-conscious differentiation of Christians with regards to Jews or pagans is found in the "short recension". Christian cult practice is not formulated as an antithesis between the law of Jesus (the "new man") and the Jewish law of Moses as the old way of life. On the other hand, there is no application of the Jewish typology of priesthood or high priesthood to Christian church offices, hence any underpinning of the faith and life practices of the church by reference to Abraham or David is missing. Neither do we find in any of the three letters of this “short recension” the obsession with the bishop’s office that is so prominent in the letters of the “middle recension”. There is also a remarkable difference, how the two “recensions” talk about those members who are seen as having gone astray: the “short recension” is soliciting and caring for these, not excluding them, the “middle recension” draws a clear line and is harsh towards them.

### Comparison of the Three and Seven Letter Collections

The mentioned general differences, which have to do with the special features of the "short recension" of the three-letter collection and the "middle recension" of the seven-letter collection, can be followed by further detailed observations.

In the Letter to the Ephesians of the three-letter collection, Ignatius expresses his desire to be consumed by the beasts of Rome (IgnEph 1), thus already linking the letter to the subsequent Letter to the Romans (IgnRom 2; 4-5). Even though the bishop is mentioned in IgnEph, one does not read anything about a focus on the episcopal office, a hierarchical submission of the members of the congregation to the bishop or of the episcopal office as the organ present in all congregations, as this characterises the "middle recension" (IgnEph 2-6, "middle recension"). In contrast to the "middle recension", one neither reads here the diatribe against the false teachers, who are compared to wild beasts and associated with the "prince of this world" (IgnEph 7; 9; 16-18; IgnRom 7). Against the background of the previous desire to be consumed by wild beasts in Rome, this image of heretics in the "middle recension" seems rather strange and also clashes with chapter 10 of the letter present in both recensions, which recommends merciful attention to and prayer for those who have gone astray and produce blasphemies (IgnEph 10).

Even though the Letter to the Ephesians and the Letter to the Romans in the three-letter-collection are still like IgnPol clearly oriented towards God the Father, Christ also has a certain place in them. Take, for example, the image of the building site in IgnEph 9[[26]](#footnote-26) or the parallel image of Ignatius bound to Christ (IgnRom 1). Yet, if one compares the version of these letters with that of the "middle recension", one notices a more elaborated form of Christology,[[27]](#footnote-27) which even culminates in the fact that the author holds out the prospect of him writing a second booklet in the future about “the new man Jesus Christ” and to detail “the dispensation”, Christ’s “faith”, his “love”, his “suffering, and his “resurrection” - how does this fit in with the journey of a martyr to the place of his martyrdom? – hence which he had planned out to deal with the core of Christian doctrines.[[28]](#footnote-28)

Ignatius' "astonishing density" with its "quasi-confessional narratives" (IgnTral 9,1-2), the "abstract and schematic" formulas (IgnMag 7,2), his "quasi-poetic way" (IgnEph 7,2) of "learning Christ" (IgnPhilad 8,2), or the tying together of the titles "Son of Man" and "Son of God" (IgnEph 20,2) stem solely from the "middle recension". When, for example, Gregory Vall considers as the main theme of Ignatius' letters the realities such as Jesus Christ who is 'God in man’ (IgnEph 7:2), the deeds that were "truly and certainly fulfilled" by Christ (IgnMag 11:1) with emphasis on the "Catholic Church" (IgnSmyr 8:2), these too are all specifics that come from the "middle recension".[[29]](#footnote-29) In fact, all the quotations Vall gives as typically Ignatian in the overview of his detailed study are found exclusively in the "middle recension". [[30]](#footnote-30)

The peculiarity of the "short recension" compared to the "middle recension" becomes even clearer when the theology is considered in a strict sense:[[31]](#footnote-31) Christ is in the "middle recension" the "perfect man" (τέλειος ἄνθρωπος, IgnSm 4:2), the "new man" (... τὸν καινὸν ἄνθρωπον, IgnEph 20:1),[[32]](#footnote-32) descended from the seed of the tribe of David (IgnEph 18:2; 20:2; IgnTral 9:1; IgnRom 7:3; IgnSm 1:1) and truly born of the Virgin Mary (Ign 7:2; 18:2; 20:2; IgnTral 9:1; IgnSm 1:1), while the "short recension" knows only the Virgin Mary (IgnEph 19:1).[[33]](#footnote-33) The "middle recension" alone adds the detail from Jesus' life that he was baptised by John (IgnSm 1:1; IgnEph 18:2), that he truly ate and drank (IgnTral 9:1), that he was crucified (IgnTral 9:1; IgnSm 1:1; 2; IgnMag 11; IgnEph 19), even though the cross is mentioned twice as a means of salvation in the "short recension". But the "middle recension" knows other historical details, namely that the crucifixion happened under Pontius Pilate (IgnTral 9:1) and the tetrarch Herod (IgnSm 1:1), that Christ rose from the dead (IgnTral 9:2) or raised himself (IgnSm 2; 3:1-3) and that he will raise others (IgnMag 9:2). Only the "middle recension" sometimes calls him simply "Jesus" (IgnEph 2:2; IgnMag 1:2; IgnPhilad 5:1) or "Christ" (IgnEph 18:2; IgnMag 13:2; IgnRom 7:3[?]), also simply "God" (IgnEph 7:2; 19:3; IgnTral 7:1; IgnSm 10:1),[[34]](#footnote-34) "the God" (IgnSm 1:1; 6:1), "our God" (IgnEph praef., 15:3; 18:2; IgnRom praef. [2 x]; 3:3; 9:1; IgnPol 8:3) or "my God" (IgnRom 6:3).[[35]](#footnote-35) He is united with the Father (IgnSm 3:3) and also one with Him (IgnMag 7:1; IgnEph 5:1). Twice we read the triadic formula.[[36]](#footnote-36) He is the one who created the world (IgnEph 15:1), he is the one who knows all things and of whom nothing is hidden.[[37]](#footnote-37) While the "short recension" has God as the addressee of prayers, in the "middle recension" it is Jesus Christ (IgnRom 4:2; IgnSm 4:1; IgnEph 20:1), he is the object of faith, love and hope (IgnEph 14; IgnPhilad 11:2).[[38]](#footnote-38) But the "middle recension", despite equating Christ with God and His divine attributes, subordinates the latter to the Father,[[39]](#footnote-39) even if this subordination is only in the flesh (IgnMag 13:2; 7:1; 8:2; IgnSm 8:1). On the other hand, we find the "patripassian" passage in IgnPol 3,2 in both recensions, which already reminded the Tertullian editor Emil Kroymann of the confession of Noët of Smyrna. [[40]](#footnote-40)

One of the most prominent Christological differences between the "middle" and the "short recension" is the title "Son of the Father", "Son of God" or simply "Son" in the "middle recension" and the plain title "Son" in the "short recension" (IgnEph 4:2; 20:2; IgnRom praef. [2x]; IgnMag 8:2; 13:1; IgnSm 1:1).[[41]](#footnote-41) Similarly, only the "middle recension" speaks of Christ as the "Logos" (IgnMag 8:2; IgnTral 7:1; IgnSm 1:1)[[42]](#footnote-42) and of a "gnosis" of God (IgnEph 17:2) or the Father (IgnEph 3:2).[[43]](#footnote-43) Likewise, only this recension repeatedly names Christ by the other Johannine title "the life" (IgnEph 3:2; IgnMag 1:2; IgnSm 4:1; IgnTral 9:2) and "the hope," though this title is encountered as many as six times in five of the epistles (IgnEph 21:2; IgnMag 11:1; IgnTral praef.; 2:2; IgnPhilad 11:2; IgnSm 10:2). This frequency indicates that we are dealing here with "a distinctive freshness and vigour in Ign's thought of Jesus".[[44]](#footnote-44) The absolute use of ὄνομα ("name") in describing "Christians" is found only in the "middle recension" (IgnEph 3:1; cf. 7:1; IgnMag 10:1; IgnPhilad 10:1), which, as Lightfoot noted, led later writers to add genitives such as τοῦ Κυρίου.[[45]](#footnote-45)

### The evidence fo the Three and the Seven Letter Collections

Once again, our retrospective view does not lead directly to the question of which of the two recensions and letter collections is the older or the younger, but to the more important one of the time and the cultural and socio-political environment in which the collections show their effect or were also taken up. This question, as my earlier study points out, had already preoccupied the opponents Cureton, Zahn and Lightfoot, even if they had not reached common conclusions. Today we are in a better starting position because there are critical editions of many writings, especially from the second century, and there is a wealth of individual studies that deal with the relevant works and their authors. The examination of sources and studies makes it possible to continue the older controversy of the 19th century, whereby I have come to the conclusion that Cureton's position must be rehabilitated at least in part.

Cureton was right in that up to Eusebius and to some extent even later, those passages which were quoted verbatim from the Ignatians by authors of the 2nd to 4th centuries, including Eusebius, and which were in part explicitly assigned to the letters of Ignatius, are such passages which are found in the "short" (and therefore also in the "middle recension"), but none which originate exclusively from the "middle recension". The silence of these authors, not mentioning any reference to a specifically “middle recension” text, makes one assume that the seven-letter collection is a product later than the three-letter collection and that it enjoyed less authority than the former one, as can be seen from the following observations:

The martyrdom of Polycarp is an interesting first case. While the oldest tangible version of the martyrdom, the date of which is disputed but is sometimes being placed after the middle of the 2nd century, only provides one passage from IgnRom which is found in the three-letter collection,[[46]](#footnote-46) the revision of this martyrdom by Pionius in the 4th century offers such a piece, which we do not in this collection of the "short recension" but only in the seven-letter collection.[[47]](#footnote-47) Other witnesses that provide parallels with the "short recension" before the 4th century are Melito of Sardis, who knows IgnPol 3.[[48]](#footnote-48)

A special position is held by the pagan sophist and critic of Christians, Lucian of Samosata. In his books "Peregrinus" and "Alexander or the Lying Prophet", we find expressions that strongly remind of text that we know from the Ignatiana in the seven-letter collection which raised the question amongst scholars as to whether Lucian is a witness to the "middle recension"[[49]](#footnote-49) or whether the "middle recension" borrowed from Lucian.[[50]](#footnote-50) Insofar as the first option seems to me the more likely, it would follow that the first reader of the "middle recension" or the seven-letter collection was the Christian critic Lucian, perhaps a reason why no one up to Eusebius of Caesarea in the 4th century paid special attention to this collection or explicitly attributed texts to Ignatius other than those found in the three-letter collection of the "short recension". Even if Irenaeus of Lyons in the last third of the 2nd century may have known the seven-letter collection,[[51]](#footnote-51) the only explicit quotation that he gives derives from IgnRom 4,1, which is already part of the "short recension". Why Irenaeus, however, is only mysteriously referring to the author of this quotation as "one of our own", an anonymous martyr, makes one doubt whether even the three-letter collection "must have seemed highly enigmatic, if not suspect, to Irenaeus."[[52]](#footnote-52)

From Origen, probably the writer, best informed about the existing Christian literature up to his time, we learn that he knew the letters of Ignatius, but one specific quote which can be found in the Letter to the Smyrnaeans – one of the letters of the seven-letter collection – he expressly attributes not to Ignatius’ letters, but to the *Doctrina Petri*,which, in my opinion, is a clear sign that he only knew of the three-letter collection as the one by Ignatius.[[53]](#footnote-53)

Consequently, the "middle recension" first appears in Asia Minor in the last third of the 2nd century (Lucian, Irenaeus) and may have reached Lyon with Irenaeus, where echoes of it can be found in the "Letter of the Churches of Lyon and Vienne".[[54]](#footnote-54)

The external testimony consequently speaks for the possibility suggested by Cureton that Ignatius' collection of three letters preceded the collection of seven letters. This is supported by the previously described differences in content, theology, and language, which I have addressed in greater detail in the aforementioned study.[[55]](#footnote-55) If these observations were correct, then one could place them with those of David Trobisch on collections of letters in antiquity and conclude that there was probably first a small edition of three, relatively short letters collected under the name of Ignatius of Antioch and, as far as our witnesses permit a judgement, this collection became first known after the middle of the 2nd century. Whether these letters were genuine or published pseudonymously as a collection cannot be decided at this point, but from a retrospective point of view the question of authenticity is less important than the fact that and when a collection becomes known under a specific name. To these letters, according to Trobisch's second stage, not only four more pseudonymous letters seem to have been added in an expanded edition some years later with material, spun, like the Letter to the Trallians from the eighth chapter of the older Letter to the Romans, or using material from other writings like the *Doctrina Petri*,which was used in the Letter to the Smyrnaeans. Moreover, Trobisch's model can be supplemented, because with the addition of the new letters, the texts and contents of the three letters of the "short recension" were also adapted to the state of discourse in the last third of the second century, they were linguistically revised, expanded in many places, more Paulinised, interlocked with the novel letters and, in particular, linked to these new letters by the addition of names that are planted into the old letters and also occur in the new letters, serving as bridges between the two.[[56]](#footnote-56)

Strikingly, the phenomenon of expansion and further revision of the old collection of the three letters and the new collection of the seven letters can also be traced in the course of the next centuries for the Ignatius letters. In contrast to the tripartite nature of Trobisch's model, it can be seen in the case of the Ignatian letters that we have to reckon with considerably more stages in the life of letter collections, indeed that perhaps a clear differentiation of later stages may be obsolete. It seems to me that with reference to the Ignatians and the different versions mentioned so far ("short", "medium" and "long" recensions), it would be more appropriate to speak of different letter collections, as already been done here, of the three-letter collection (= the "short recension"), the seven-letter collection (= the "middle recension"), the thirteen-letters collection (= the "long recension"), and together with the for additional four Latin medieval letters the seventeeen-letter collection (= the "complete edition").

If one wants to stick to the concept of recensions, one should rather speak of a "near-original recension" (= the three-letter collection, not always identical with today's "short" recension preserved in Syriac), of a "revised recension" (= "middle"), and then of many stages of "further" recension(s). On the basis of these clearly distinguishable perspectives of development, an *editio critica maior* would have to be compiled in the future.

The historical, retrospective examination of the Ignatians has shown that the three-letter collection and that of the seven-letter collection seem to have existed in parallel for a certain time before the seven-letter collection finally became clearly established without, however, completely replacing the three-letter collection. Adding to the complexity, the seven-letter collection must also have had impacts and influences on the transmission, text and content of the three-letter collection. Then we find that in the course of further copies, translations and editing of these collections, the three-letter collection in particular must have possessed a traditional weight, which led to a form of the thirteen-letter collection whose translation from Greek into Latin still clearly shows the textual stock of the three-letter collection, even if the thirtee-letter collection builds fundamentally on the seven-letter collection and the recension of these letters, editing them and adding further six letters. This can be seen from the Greek text of the thirteen-letter collection, available today, which probably first appears in the 4th century in *Codex Borgensis* 248,[[57]](#footnote-57) as it is clearly indebted to the "middle" recension of the seven-letter collection and represents a revision and expansion of the seven-letter collection, which, like the Latin translation, was supplemented with the same six additional pseudonymous letters. In addition, the Letter to the Romans, present already in the three-letter collection, and revised and expanded as the other two letters in the seven-letter collection, experienced a transmission distinct from the other letters of the seven-letter collection (which, therefore, appears in manuscripts only as a six-letter collection[[58]](#footnote-58)). IgnRom became integrated into a chapter of one of Ignatius’ martyrdoms and proves most clearly through the numerous manuscripts that survive from this martyrdom that instead of speaking of just three recensions of this letter, we need to add many more of those stages. For we have additional Greek and Arabic witnesses that form the bridge between all the aforementioned collections and recensions of the first millennium. Interestingly, the seven-letter collection is only found bound together with the thirteen-letter collection in manuscripts and we have not a single codex in which the seven-letter collection (or, in fact, at least the six letters) of the “middle recension” stand alone.

What can be summarised from this complex manuscript evidence for the various collections and recensions: Trobisch's picture of the development of epistolary collections has been confirmed in principle, even if it still needs to be nuanced and expanded, especially for late antiquity and the early Middle Ages. Collections of letters such as the Ignatians are created (sometimes pseudonymously), but are subject to further stages of processing, both of the collection and of the textual stock, are adapted, revised, incorporating new themes and redefined in their scope. Further editions rearrange these collections for various reasons, reduce them, rearrange them, comment on them, whereby the question of attribution through all the centuries is an important aspect of the adaptations, also in the case of the Ignatians. The pseudonymous nature of many of the later added letters also raises the question whether or not already the first stock of letters are genuine. Nevertheless, the first collection of Ignatius’ letters was a winner, as it has grown in stages over more than thousand years.

### The Thirteen Letter Collection

While the two collections of the three letters and the seven (or six) letters have been discussed so far, we should at least take a look at the collection of thirteen letters.

After examining the Acts of Paul, we will be little surprised if the Seventeen Epistle Collection, first encountered in the 4th century, circulates with a strong focus on marriage and asceticism, as has been suggested.[[59]](#footnote-59) However, research has so far paid little attention at all to this collection and, if anything, questions of authenticity and non-authenticity, authorship and dating have been in the foreground, but hardly those of the social and religious-historical function of this collection.[[60]](#footnote-60) In this respect, Stephanie Cobb only recently made a first attempt:

"Ignatius of Antioch, that second-century staunch defender of proto-orthodoxy, zealous supporter of the monarchial episcopacy, and possible masochistic martyr (who confesses “I love to suffer”), wrote twelve letters as he traveled from Syria to Rome to face death: nine to churches – *Ephesians, Magnesians, Trallians, Romans, Philadelphians, Smyrnaeans, Tarsians, Philippians, Antiochians* – and three to individuals – Polycarp, Mary of Cassobola, Hero. Or, at least, such was the thought for the better part of 1200 years. Indeed, these twelve letters, plus a letter from Mary of Cassobola to Ignatius, circulated as the Ignatian epistolary corpus from the late fourth century until 1644"[[61]](#footnote-61)

These 12 letters plus the one letter of Mary, which was then supplemented in the Middle Ages with four Latin medieval letters, formed an Ignatian collection with which Ignatius was identified for a very long time. What image did this collection convey not only of Ignatius, but above all of the beginnings of Christianity?

The collection of letters strongly advocates a merely moderate Christian asceticism and speaks more clearly than many other writings for a sexual intimacy that is not even exclusively designed for the procreation of offspring, but is simply considered significant for a meaningful life:

"Devote yourself to fasting and prayer, but not beyond measure, lest you destroy yourself thereby. Do not altogether abstain from wine and flesh, for these things are not to be viewed with abhorrence, since [the Scripture] says, You shall eat the good things of the earth (*Isa* 1:19). And again, You shall eat flesh even as herbs (*Gen* 9:3). And again, Wine makes glad the heart of man, and oil exhilarates, and bread strengthens him (*Ps* 104:15). But all are to be used with moderation, as being the gifts of God. For who shall eat or who shall drink without Him? For if anything be beautiful, it is His; and if anything be good, it is His" (*IgnHer* 1).

Immediately at the beginning of his letter, the author not only recommends moderate enjoyment of all essential goods, but also warns against over-asceticism and over-spirituality, which would be self-destructive. Moreover, the ascetic is expressly admonished not to abstain completely from wine and meat.

The connection between wine and meat is not only found in the scriptural passage quoted, but also appears as a theme in the 4th century in other authors such as Jerome. In his letter to Eustochium, for example, we read:

"Wine and youth incite each other to sensual pleasure. Why do we pour oil on the flames? Why do we add fresh fuel to the pathetic body that is already blazing? Noah drank wine and became drunk ... his drunkenness was followed by his body being emptied; revelry led to lust (Gen 9:20-21). First the belly is filled, then the other limbs are stimulated. Similarly, in a later passage it says, 'The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play' (*Ex* 32:6)."[[62]](#footnote-62)

In "a side remark ... Chrysostom demonstrates that Jerome was not alone in noticing that drinking wine might endanger one's sexual integrity, especially women's sexual integrity".[[63]](#footnote-63) In contrast to Chrysostom, who in a male-chauvinist way attributes sexual unrestraint primarily to women, and Jerome, who thinks first of the young who cannot restrain themselves, the collection of thirteen letters is reserved in its criticism of the enjoyment of wine and meat as well as that of young people and women. For it is precisely these two groups, which in late antiquity were far lower in the social hierarchy than older men, that this collection vigorously supports. According to it, early Christianity is a movement that breaks down such hierarchical structures, as we shall see.

This counter-traditional social dynamics is already shown to some extent in the quoted passage from the beginning of *IgnHer*. The first two biblical quotations speak not only for the enjoyment of meat as food, but also in a figurative sense for sexual activity, as the link with "oil", which exhilarates, suggests. This figurative sense is further developed by the reference to enjoying meat like plants. Sexuality is thus not something that is exclusively purposeful, such as for the preservation of physical life,[[64]](#footnote-64) but is also meant to delight life. Just as wine gladdens the heart of man and oil elates,[[65]](#footnote-65) all other things are gifts from God. These are fundamental to the thirteen-letter collection, they are "good things of the earth" that God offers us.

Now, criticism of excessive asceticism was not peculiar to the late 4th century, as can be seen from the sixth book of the Apostolic Constitutions, even though, as already seen, there was a growing interest and concern for ever more rigorous forms of practised asceticism. These forms of ascetic and spiritual practices and the question of their relationship to God's gift of grace culminated in the dispute between Pelagius and Augustine. Now the collection of thirteen letters is strongly influenced by the Pauline Pastoral Epistles, which we will discuss further below in more detail. Especially 1Tim is been quoted, a letter which defended the drinking of wine and sexuality in marriage with a "clearly anti-ascetic" tendency. Like the Paul of the Pastoral Epistles, the thirteen-letter collection emphasises the importance of marriage and food, refers to God's creation to support the argument, even if it does not refer to prayer and the Eucharist.[[66]](#footnote-66) Moreover, whereas in 1Tim sexuality is strictly oriented towards the procreation of offspring,[[67]](#footnote-67) in the thirteen-letter collection, particularly in the Letter to Hero, one reads that the sexual act, as long as it is according to the law, "should not be abhorred". Sexuality and diet are not the only topics in which this collection of letters goes beyond the Pastoral Epistles. The Ignatian collection has a special respect for woman and places them in an elevated role within Christianity, very different from many church orders and other early Christian writings. The Letter to Hero states:

" Do not hold women in abomination, for they have given you birth, and brought you up. It is fitting, therefore, to love those that were the authors of our birth (but only in the Lord), inasmuch as a man can produce no children without a woman. It is right, therefore, that we should honour those who have had a part in giving us birth. Neither is the man without the woman, nor the woman without the man (1 *Cor* 11:11) except in the case of those who were first formed. For the body of Adam was made out of the four elements, and that of Eve out of the side of Adam. And, indeed, the altogether peculiar birth of the Lord was of a virgin alone. [This took place] not as if the lawful union [of man and wife] were abominable, but such a kind of birth was fitting to God. For it became the Creator not to make use of the ordinary method of generation, but of one that was singular and strange, as being the Creator." (*IgnHer* 4)

In this bold passage, the author asserts that the Lord's "peculiar" birth of a virgin and the creation of the first man "of the four elements" and Eve "out of the side of Adam" were extraordinary events and exceptions, but do not correspond to the ordinary way of childbearing through the sexual union of woman and man. But even at this point, the collection of thirteen letters continues by building on these observations and formulating, based on 1 *Cor* 11:11, that the mutual dependence of man and woman, indeed, their intimacy, is the absolute prerequisite for the existence of the addressees, a relation that obliges every offspring to honour those who have begotten them, first and foremost, the mother or wife, who therefore, as the passage opens, is not to be held in low but in high esteem. Marital intercourse is not to be abhorred.[[68]](#footnote-68)

As the exhortation in the beginning of the quotation to cherish women shows, this text is addressed primarily to a male readership, a characteristic that is also important for understanding the opening letter of the collection from Mary to Ignatius. When in IgnAnt 9 first men are mentioned who are to "love their wives", just as conversely women are to be faithful to their husbands as their only partners, then this is a small indication that not only extramarital relationships of both sexes were known, but primarily men had to be admonished.

In IgnHer 9, Mary is praised more clearly than, for example, Nympha in the Pauline Col 4:15. In IgnHer 9, we read: "Mary my daughter, distinguished both for gravity and erudition, as also the Church which is in her house". The climax of the praise of a woman is certainly the highly stylised preface of Ignatius' Letter to Mary (IgnMarC), which, therefore, I will discuss in more detail. As this is a response to a foregoing letter by a certain, otherwise unknown Mary Cassobolites to Ignatius, we will also look into this letter.

As we will see, the collection of thirteen letters paints a picture of the first Christians that is favourable to women and young people and, as the argumentation reveals, certainly a consciously contrasting picture to the expectations of the time.

Mary, who is described as a proselyte, begins her letter to Ignatius with a request that "Maris, our friend, bishop of our native Neapolis, which is near (Ana)zarbus,[[69]](#footnote-69) and Eulogius and Sobelus the presbyter, be sent to us, that we be not destitute of such as preside over the divine word." (MarCIgn 2) It sounds like Mary is trying to lobby Bishop Maris of Neapolis for men, Eulogius (and Sobelus) to preside over her congregation in Cassobola. The problem with these, however, is their youth and the fact that they have obviously only recently become priests (MarCIgn 3).[[70]](#footnote-70)

This is where the peculiarities of this opening letter of the collection begin. Firstly, it is a woman who appears as a spokesperson, writes to Ignatius and even, according to the manuscripts, provides the opening letter to the entire collection of Ignatiana; secondly, as will become quickly clear from her letter, she is concerned to undermine the venerability of old age, which was built on the traditional argument of "the older, the more valuable" (*presbyteron kreitton)* (as evidenced by the "hoary heads" mentioned below in MarCIgn 2),[[71]](#footnote-71) and breaks a rod not only for these men alone, but with a number of selected biblical examples for youth in general, and precisely as far as questions of sexual abstinence are concerned:

"They are wise about the flesh, and are insensible to its passions, they themselves glowing with all the glory of a hoary head through their own intrinsic merits, and though but recently called as young men to the priesthood." (MarCIgn 2)

Considering the importance and appreciation in antiquity and to some extent up to the present day of a person's age and the social position in family and society often associated with it, Mary's demands and justifications still have an extraordinary effect on today's reader and certainly must have had at the time, even though they again echo the message of the Pastoral Epistles, but go far beyond them (1 Tim 4:12; 5:1-2; 2 Tim 2:22; Tit 2:7). From Scripture, Mary cites famous examples where the divine choice fell on young men as successful and outstanding role models outshining old men. These examples are of such radicality that older male readers probably felt confronted, which would explain the reaction that such readers, scribes, redactors and copyists removed this letter from their collection of Ignatius’ letters. It is all the more astonishing, however, that precisely these remarks even appear in two versions within the collection, once in Mary's letter to Ignatius (MarCIgn 3-4) and again repeated with editorial changes in Ignatius' letter to the Magnesians (IgnMag 3), a passage that is missing from the "middle recension".[[72]](#footnote-72)

The first of Mary’s biblical examples is "the wise Daniel" who as " a young man, passed judgement on certain vigorous old men, showing them that they were abandoned wretches, and not [worthy to be reckoned] elders" (MarCIgn 3). Who among the readership would like to identify with these "abandoned wretches"? Unfortunately, it is unclear exactly which biblical story Mary is referring to, perhaps she was inspired by 2 Sam 12:5-11 and Lev 18:19-27,[[73]](#footnote-73) perhaps also by Rom 1:28 - 2:1.[[74]](#footnote-74)

If the text of Mary's letter should refer to the first passage, then the young David's praise reflects his critical self-judgment as he has grown older. Whereas in youth he was shaped by wise insight, as an older man he has fallen prey to sexual licentiousness. If we add to the text from Mary's letter the parallel passage from IgnMag 3, the judgement becomes even clearer: at the "age of twelve" David "became possessed of the divine Spirit, and convicted the elders, who in vain carried their grey hairs, of being false accusers, and of lusting after the beauty of another man's wife".

The example of David is followed in IgnMag 3 by that of Samuel, which is not to be read in Mary's letter. Samuel stands for the "little child" who accuses the great old prophet of nepotism. Another example, which is again found in both versions, is the prophet Jeremiah. In Jer 1:7 it says that Jeremiah wants to reject God's call in view of his own youth, but that God answers him: "Do not say, 'I am still so young. Wherever I send you, you shall go; and what I charge you with, that shall you declare." With these and other examples, Scripture confirms for Mary that God promised his assistance to the young presbyters and from this she formulates her request as a divine command to Ignatius.

In this letter, which presents itself as the letter of a woman who is closely connected with the bishop of her native city,[[75]](#footnote-75) one hears the female voice that speaks with divine and prophetic authority and knows how to refer to Scripture, whereby it is noticeable that she does not, or at least not explicitly, base herself for her argument on New Testament passages.

That Mary defends the young men first by pointing out that they are armed against sexual temptations casts a moral shadow over the elders who contrast with these young men. Deviant moral behaviour and religious practice go hand in hand and both are addressed in Mary's letter. The young men, called by God and far superior to all the elders, both their parents and their advisors, and these serve as shining counter-examples according to Mary.

Let us also turn our attention to Ignatius' response in his letter to Mary and see what this letter makes with the strong views and challenges that Mary’s letter provides. First, Ignatius agrees with Mary's request to support her case. In an elaborate preface, IgnMarC 1 reads:

"Sight indeed is better than writing, inasmuch as, being one of the company of the senses, it not only, by communicating proofs of friendship, honours him who receives them, but also, by those which it in turn receives, enriches the desire for better things. But the second harbour of refuge, as the phrase runs, is the practice of writing, which we have received, as a convenient haven, by your faith, from so great a distance, seeing that by means of a letter we have learned the excellence that is in you. For the souls of the good, O you wisest of women! resemble fountains of the purest water; for they allure by their beauty passers-by to drink of them, even though these should not be thirsty. And your intelligence invites us, as by a word of command, to participate in those divine draughts which gush forth so abundantly in your soul."

Rhetorically embellished, Ignatius longs to see Mary physically, but perhaps also offended by her criticism of old, unrestrained incumbents and old voyeurs, Ignatius expresses in a most elegant way that he is content with the second best “harbour of refuge”, namely the written exchange between them. From the outset, he is full of admiration for her intelligence, also points out the straight forward tone of command he sensed in the letter, and says that he is drawn to Mary's divine effusions, her wisdom, her faith, her exceptionality and her insights. Thus he emphatically calls her by the honorific title of the "wisest of women", who resembles the "fountains of purest water".

However, this preface also conceals no small amount of male chauvinism when he alludes to the beauty of these fountains, which attract the passer-by even against his will.[[76]](#footnote-76) Packaged as praise, it is a masculine rejection of the criticism in Mary's letter of the old men who behave dishonestly. According to Ignatius, it is not their fault if they, as ascetics, stay near women and then fall, but he turns female beauty into attraction and attraction into seduction, wherein he seeks to grasp the nature of women. The question is whether such nuances are merely the result of a learned male literary figure, or whether this correspondence was not based on a historical source after all, so that the first letter was actually written by a female author who was answered by a male minister, an exchange of letters that was subsequently brought into the larger context of the Ignatiana by an editor. The clear message of Mary and her voice praising and commending the young men, but also the subtle yet no less forceful criticism of Ignatius, ultimately perhaps formed the reasons why in the course of the later transmission of the thirteen-letter collection Mary's first letter to Ignatius was excluded from the corpus of Ignatians, especially in the Latin Western tradition, while Ignatius' response remained part of that too, even though with the exclusion or loss of Mary’s letter Ignatius’ response hangs somehow in the air. And yet, Mary's examples found their way into IgnMag. Perhaps this again speaks to the fact that the collection of letters cannot be traced back to a single editor, but that in different geographies and at different times, different hands and minds have tried to make this collection their own and give it their own face.

Without tracing this correspondence in detail here - I have presented a somewhat more detailed interpretation in the study already mentioned[[77]](#footnote-77) - I would like to briefly discuss the picture of the beginnings of Christianity conveyed by this correspondence and then also by the thirteen- or twelve-letter collection of the Ignatiana.

First of all, it has already become clear that the two collections of letters have a different message. The collection of the thirteen letters conveys the rare image of a Christianity whose first voice is that of a woman and whose prophets, priests and kings called by God are young men. Even if this is reminiscent of the function of stories and legends, which have destabilising functions especially for socially discriminated groups,[[78]](#footnote-78) it does not quickly suggest a feminist image of early Christianity, nothing would be further from the literary reality of this collection, but it shows that self-confident, clever, highly esteemed and presumably highly educated and best-connected women also worked massively to support a male-organised church led by an entirely male hierarchy. Whether the correspondence between Mary and Ignatius at the opening of the collection is historical or not is less significant than the fact that even the image of the self-confident, downright prophetic woman is shown to be highly serviceable to this hierarchical male organisation. In the same way that women are institutionally integrated, the same happens to the young men in this collection. They have no voice of their own, but for them the female voice, that closely cooperates with the male hierarchy, speaks with the authority of God, the calling voice of God himself and the voice of the bishop.

It is peculiar to the collection of twelve letters that the inquiring and requesting female voice has been dropped, and that with Ignatius' answer, the subtle but male-chauvinistic view of women opens the entire collection of letters. In the further letters, which are the same in both collections, this image of a church dominated by the bishop and the network between these bishops together with other members of the hierarchy and in association with parishioners supporting them is developed further. It is precisely the female, deviant and demonic threat that is most clearly expressed in IgnPhil. The life of the first Christians is dominated by struggle, ascetic, anti-heretical and anti-demonic fights. Even though these letters preach moderation in all this, it is this clear recommendation of being vigilant that shows that Christianity is surrounded by much more radical Christian ideas from which this orthodoxy wants to set itself apart as a middle way.

Christianity is presented right from the beginning as a fixed institution, clearly distinguished from Judaism and the pagan environment by its scripture, which includes the Old and New Testaments. The Jews are seen as the ones who murder Christians like Stephen (IgnTar 3). Even more, in contrast to the seven-letter collection, it is claimed here that "Judaism has come to an end", indeed that "where Christianity exists, there can be no Judaism" (IgnMag 10). It becomes apparent how far the Pauline tradition has moved here from a "near-original" version of the three-letters collection, which was still strongly influenced by Judaism, to a "revised" one in the seven-letters collection, in which "Christianity" is already understood as a separate entity alongside and outside of "Judaism" (IgnMag 10), before a rejection and replacement of Judaism by Christianity has been reached in the "further" or "long" recension of the thirteen- or twelve-letter collection.

The question arises whether the collections of letters of the Ignatians, which basically correspond to the structure of Trobisch's result of his study of ancient collections of letters and their historical developments, represent an isolated case in Christianity, or whether, for example, the collection of Pauline letters that has become canonical has similar characteristics in its genesis.

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1. Thus in O. Wischmeyer, Ed. Paulus Leben - Umwelt - Werk - Briefe (2012), 382-383, 388-389; A. Lindemann, Paulus im ältesten Christentum. Überlegungen zur gegenwärtigen Diskussion über die frühe Paulusrezeption (1979); M. Theobald, Israel-Vergessenheit in den Pastoralbriefen. Ein neuer Vorschlag zu ihrer historisch-theologischen Verortung im 2. Jahrhundert n. Chr. unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Ignatius-Briefe (2016), 289-314. However, Theobald sees in the multiple correspondences of the Pastoral Epistles, the Ignatians and the Acts of Paul a "tradition from Asia Minor" that they share. He dates the Ignatians to the second half of the second century, the Pastoral Epistles to before the middle of the second century. See also T.D. Still, Ignatius and Paul on Suffering and Death: A Short, Comparative Study (2017); D.J. Downs, The Pauline Concept of Union with Christ in Ignatius of Antioch (2017); H.O. Maier, Paul, Ignatius and Thirdspace: A Socio-Geographic Exploration (2017). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. M. Vinzent, Writing the history of early Christianity: From reception to retrospection (2019), Kapitel 5. Cf. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. One need only consider the place of Ignatians in critical reviews of my earlier studies, cf. for example M. Edwards, Markus Vinzent on the Resurrection (2016). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. On the question of dating and the various proposals, cf. my study just mentioned. One should add the observation on the use of the term "martyr", which led Boudewijn Dehandschutter to date the "middle recension" to the second half of the second century, cf. B. Dehandschutter, L’Authenticité des épîtres d’Ignace d’Antioche (2007). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. D. Trobisch, Paul's letter collection : tracing the origins (1994). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. This opening sentence of the quote is shortened in the English version of Trobisch’s book, but has been added (own trans.) here, taken from D. Trobisch, Die Paulusbriefe und die Anfänge der christlichen Publizistik (1994), 77. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. D. Trobisch, Paul's letter collection : tracing the origins (1994). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. M. Vinzent, Writing the history of early Christianity: From reception to retrospection (2019). [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. J.B.B.o.D. Lightfoot, The Apostolic Fathers. Part II. S. Ignatius, S. Polycarp. Second edition (1889); T. Zahn, Ignatius von Antiochien (1873). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. W. Cureton, The Antient Syriac Version of the Epistles of Saint Ignatius to Saint Polycarp, the Ephesians, and the Romans (1845); W. Cureton, Vindiciae Ignatianae; or the Genuine writings of St. Ignatius, as exhibited in the antient Syriac version vindicated from the charge of heresy (1846); W. Cureton, Corpus Ignatianum: A Complete Collection of the Ignatian Epistles, Genuine, Interpolated, and Spurious (1849). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. M. Vinzent, Writing the history of early Christianity: From reception to retrospection (2019). [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. J.B.B.o.D. Lightfoot, The Apostolic Fathers. Part II. S. Ignatius, S. Polycarp. Second edition (1889). [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. A first approach to an interpretation is offered by M. Vinzent, Writing the history of early Christianity: From reception to retrospection (2019). [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. A.v. Harnack, Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur bis Eusebius. 2. erweiterte Auflage mit einem Vorwort von Kurt Aland (1958). [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. W.R. Schoedel, Art. Ignatius von Antiochien (1987). [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. See further details in M. Vinzent, Ignatius of Antioch on Judaism and Christianity (2020); E. Norelli, Χριστιανισμός e χριστιανός in Ignazio di Antiochia e la cronologia delle sue lettere (2015). [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. O. Wischmeyer, Paulus Leben - Umwelt - Werk - Briefe (2006), 388-389. Lindemann in ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. A. Brent, Ignatius’ Pagan background in Second Century Asia Minor (2007); A. Brent, Ignatius of Antioch and the Second Sophistic : A Study of an Early Christian Transformation of Pagan Culture (2006); A. Brent, Ignatius of Antioch : a martyr bishop and the origin of monarchial episcopacy (2009). [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. E. Norelli, La mémoire des origines chrétiennes: Papias et Hégésippe chez Eusèbe (2001); E. Norelli, Papias di Hierapolis. Esposizione degli oracoli del Signore. I frammenti (2005); M. Edwards, Markus Vinzent on the Resurrection (2016), 130-133; P.R. Trebilco, Self-designations and Group Identity in the New Testament (2014), 272. Cf. E. Norelli, La mémoire des origines chrétiennes: Papias et Hégésippe chez Eusèbe (2001); E. Norelli, Papias di Hierapolis. Esposizione degli oracoli del Signore. I frammenti (2005); M. Edwards, Markus Vinzent on the Resurrection (2016), 130-133; P.R. Trebilco, Self-designations and Group Identity in the New Testament (2014), 272. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. A. Urbán, Polycarpi et secundae epistulae Clementis romani concordantiae (2001), 9; F.X.v. Funk and F. Diekamp, Patres apostolici (1901), lvi. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. B. Gleede, Parabiblica latina. Studien zu den griechisch-lateinischen Übersetzungen parabiblischer Literatur unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der apostolischen Väter (2016). [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. R.M. Hübner and M. Vinzent, Der Paradox Eine : antignostischer Monarchianismus im zweiten Jahrhundert (1999). [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. The abstract has also been incorporated into the Syriac version of the "short review". [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. "And you are prepared for the building of God the Father, and are lifted up on high by the crane of Jesus Christ, which is the cross, and you are drawn upward by the rope, which is the Holy Spirit; and your pull is your faith, and your love is the means that brings you up to God. “ [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Cf. IgnRom praef. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. IgnEph 20: ... ἐν τῷ δευτέρῳ βιβλιδίῳ, ὃ μέλλω γράφειν ὑμῖν, προσδηλώσω ὑμῖν, ἧς ἠρξάμην οἰκονομίας εἰς τὸν καινὸν ἄνθρωπον Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν, ἐν τῇ αὐτου πίστει καὶ ἐν τῇ αὐτοῦ ἀγαπῃ, ἐν πάθει αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀναστάσει. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. G. Vall, Learning Christ. Ignatius of Antioch & the Mystery of Redemption (2013), 19. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Ibid. 23-26 [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Ignatius, W. Cureton, W. Watts, F. Rivington, J. Rivington and Francis and John Rivington (Firm), Corpus Ignatianum: : a complete collection of the Ignatian epistles, genuine, interpolated, and spurious; together with numerous extracts from them, as quoted by ecclesiastical writers down to the tenth century; in Syriac, Greek, and Latin xxxvii–xxxviii. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. M. Rackl, Die Christologie des Heiligen Ignatius von Antiochien nebst einer Voruntersuchung: Die Echtheit der sieben Ignatianischen Briefe verteidigt gegen Daniel Voelter (1914), 133-135. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Ibid. 136-137 [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Ibid. 89-90 [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Ignatius, W. Cureton, W. Watts, F. Rivington, J. Rivington and Francis and John Rivington (Firm), Corpus Ignatianum: : a complete collection of the Ignatian epistles, genuine, interpolated, and spurious; together with numerous extracts from them, as quoted by ecclesiastical writers down to the tenth century; in Syriac, Greek, and Latin xxxvii. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. *IgnMag* 13,1: ἐν υἱῷ καὶ πατρὶ καὶ ἐν πνεύματι; *IgnMag* 13,2: τῷ Χριστῷ καὶ πατρὶ καὶ τῷ πνεύματι. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. M. Rackl, Die Christologie des Heiligen Ignatius von Antiochien nebst einer Voruntersuchung: Die Echtheit der sieben Ignatianischen Briefe verteidigt gegen Daniel Voelter (1914), 191.*IgnEph* 15,3: οὐδὲν λανθάνει τὸν κύριον, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰ κρυπτὰ ἡμῶν ἐγγὺς αὐτῷ ἐστιν. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Ibid. 194-196. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Ibid. 227-228; E.A.v.d. Goltz and E. Klostermann, Ignatius von Antiochien als Christ und Theologe. Eine dogmengeschichtliche Untersuchung. Griechische Excerpte aus Homilien des Origenes (1894); E.A.v.d. Goltz, Das Gebet in der ältesten Christenheit eine geschichtliche Untersuchung (1901). [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Q.S.F. Tertullianus and E. Kroymann, Adversus Praxean (1907), xii; M. Rackl, Die Christologie des Heiligen Ignatius von Antiochien nebst einer Voruntersuchung: Die Echtheit der sieben Ignatianischen Briefe verteidigt gegen Daniel Voelter (1914), 367-368; R.M. Hübner and M. Vinzent, Der Paradox Eine : antignostischer Monarchianismus im zweiten Jahrhundert (1999). [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. M. Rackl, Die Christologie des Heiligen Ignatius von Antiochien nebst einer Voruntersuchung: Die Echtheit der sieben Ignatianischen Briefe verteidigt gegen Daniel Voelter (1914), 233. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Ibid. 70-77, 235 [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Ibid. 277-284 [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. M.P. Brown, The Authentic Writings of Ignatius. A study of linguistic criteria (1963), 26. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. J.B.B.o.D. Lightfoot, The Apostolic Fathers. Part II. S. Ignatius, S. Polycarp. Second edition (1889), 37.Cf. Lightfoot in his note on IgnEph 3:1: ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. M. Vinzent, Writing the history of early Christianity: From reception to retrospection (2019), 279; O. Zwierlein, Die Urfassungen der Martyria Polycarpi et Pionii und das Corpus Polycarpianum (2014), I 19. MartPol 3 encounters IgnRom 5; cf. M. Vinzent, Writing the history of early Christianity: From reception to retrospection (2019), 279; O. Zwierlein, Die Urfassungen der Martyria Polycarpi et Pionii und das Corpus Polycarpianum. Untersuchungen zur antiken Literatur und Geschichte. 116 (2014), I 19. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. M. Vinzent, Writing the history of early Christianity: From reception to retrospection (2019), 279. MartPol 22:1 encounters IgnEph 12:2. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Cf ibid. While Hans von Campenhausen was of the opinion that Ignatius was the creator of the doctrinal formula of IgnPol 3 (together with similar formulations in other places of his letters), Reinhard M. Hübner was able to show that this formula goes back to that of Noët of Smyrna. However, Melito, who lacks a decisive Noëtian passage ("begotten and unbegotten") as in the "short recension", seems to me to be more of a witness for this "short version" of IgnPol 3, while the "middle recension" does indeed have this passage and may well have drawn on Noët. This would also be supported by the fact that these Noëtian antitheses left further traces in the "middle recension", cf. on this the passage cited above in my recent work, also the older research in H.F.v. Campenhausen, Das Bekenntnis im Urchristentum (1972), 241-246; R.M. Hübner and M. Vinzent, Der Paradox Eine : antignostischer Monarchianismus im zweiten Jahrhundert (1999), 131-154. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. J.N. Bremmer, Lucian on Peregrinus and Alexander of Abonuteichos: A sceptical view of two religious entrepreneurs (forthcoming); A. Brent, Ignatius of Antioch and the Second Sophistic : A Study of an Early Christian Transformation of Pagan Culture (2006), 183-207. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. O. Zwierlein, Petrus in Rom, die literarischen Zeugnisse : mit einer kritischen Edition der Martyrien des Petrus und Paulus auf neuer handschriftlicher Grundlage (2010), 194-201; O. Zwierlein, Die Urfassungen der Martyria Polycarpi et Pionii und das Corpus Polycarpianum. Untersuchungen zur antiken Literatur und Geschichte. 116 (2014), II 405-407; K. Waldner, ‘Ignatius’ Reise von Antiochia nach Rom: Zentralität und lokale Vernetzung im christlichen Diskurs des 2. Jahrhunderts (2006), 118. Cf. the discussion in M. Vinzent, Writing the history of early Christianity: From reception to retrospection (2019), 280. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. This is indicated by his description of the Docetists in his work Adv. haer. IV 33,5 with parallels in the writings of the "middle recension" IgnTral 10 and IgnSm 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. R.M. Hübner and M. Vinzent, Der Paradox Eine : antignostischer Monarchianismus im zweiten Jahrhundert (1999), 143. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. M. Vinzent, 'Ich bin kein körperloses Geistwesen'. Zum Verhältnis von *Kerygma Petri*, "Doctrina Petri" und *IgnSm* III (1999), 260-273. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Cf. in Euseb. Caes., Hist. eccl. V 1 the parallel to IgnEph 11:2, cf. on this M. Vinzent, Writing the history of early Christianity: From reception to retrospection (2019), 281; J.B.B.o.D. Lightfoot, The Apostolic Fathers. Part II. S. Ignatius, S. Polycarp. Second edition (1889), 141. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. M. Vinzent, Writing the history of early Christianity: From reception to retrospection (2019). [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. On the importance of personal names in linking the new letters to each other and to the old letters, a phenomenon that can also be noted in later times in the further revision and expansion of these collections of Ignatius' letters, cf. Ibid. 393-402 [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Ibid. 435. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. See Codex Paris. Bibl. Nat. syr. 62 (olim Sangermanensis 38), the Codex Cantabrigensis syr. add. 2023, and in the oldest Greek manuscript of the “middle recension”, the 11th c. Codex Laurentianus Plut. lvii. Cod. 7 = Codex Mediceus, and again in the 15th c. Codex Casanatensis G. v. 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Cf. L.S. Cobb, Neither "Pure Evangelic Manna" nor "Tainted Scraps": Reflections on the Study of Pseudo-Ignatius (2016), 188. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. M. Vinzent, Writing the history of early Christianity: From reception to retrospection (2019), 379-380. On the question of authorship, cf. L.S. Cobb, Neither "Pure Evangelic Manna" nor "Tainted Scraps": Reflections on the Study of Pseudo-Ignatius (2016), 186; M. Vinzent, Writing the history of early Christianity: From reception to retrospection (2019), 379-380. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. L.S. Cobb, Neither "Pure Evangelic Manna" nor "Tainted Scraps": Reflections on the Study of Pseudo-Ignatius (2016), 181. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Here, Ep. 22,8,2-4 (CSEL 54,154-155 Hartel). [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. A. Merkt, Reading Paul and Drinking Wine (2013), 75. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Here, for example, the Apostolic Constitutions are to be mentioned, which are often associated with the collection of thirteen letters in terms of content and language and are said ti be derived from the same author, cf. on this M. Vinzent, Writing the history of early Christianity: From reception to retrospection (2019), 380. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. A contrasting interpretation of this passage is offered, for example, by Chrysostom in Hom. in Eph. 19,1 (PG 62,127-129) and Hom. in Rom. 28,2 (PG 60,652), cf. A. Merkt, Reading Paul and Drinking Wine (2013), 72. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. H.-U. Weidemann, Engelsgleiche, Abstinente - und ein moderater Weintrinker. Asketische Sinnproduktion als literarische Technik im Lukasevangelium und im 1. Timotheusbrief (2013), 58. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. E.M. Synek, Oikos. Zum Ehe- und Familienrecht der Apostolischen Konstitutionen (1999), 222. Similarly in the Apostolic Constitutions, cf. on this ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. L.S. Cobb, Neither "Pure Evangelic Manna" nor "Tainted Scraps": Reflections on the Study of Pseudo-Ignatius (2016), 191. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. Of several cities in antiquity called "Neapolis", this one seems to mean a city of this name, which is near Antioch, because the further indication that it is near "Zarbus" - a shortening of Anazarbus - would fit this (cf. also IgnHer 9). However, the name may have been chosen only as a literary fiction in memory of the place where Paul and his companions first arrived in Europe (Acts 16:11). [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. A. Amelungk, Untersuchungen über Pseudo-Ignatius. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte einer litterarischen Fälschung (1899). One of the few recent studies of this letter is N. Brox, Pseudo-Paulus und Pseudo-Ignatius (1976). An older one is offered by A. Amelungk, Untersuchungen über Pseudo-Ignatius. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte einer litterarischen Fälschung (1899). [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. P. Pilhofer, Presbyteron kreitton. Der Altersbeweis der jüdischen und christlichen Apologeten und seine Vorgeschichte (1990). However, this criticism of the elderly is already known in antiquity, for example in Juvenal. Even Cicero had to defend his old age, see with evidence T.G. Parkin, Age in antiquity (1998), 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. M. Vinzent, Writing the history of early Christianity: From reception to retrospection (2019), 383-387. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. Lev 18:19-27 (the quotation further down in the main text). [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. Rom 1:28 - 2:1: "1,28 Furthermore, just as they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, so God gave them over to a depraved mind, so that they do what ought not to be done. 29 They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, 30 slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; 31 they have no understanding, no fidelity, no love, no mercy. 32 Although they know God’s righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them. 2,1 You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge another, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things." [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. A. Brenner and C.R. Fontaine, The Song of Songs: A Feminist Companion to the Bible (2000), 28-29. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. Cf. also IgnPhil 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. M. Vinzent, Writing the history of early Christianity: From reception to retrospection (2019), 379-394. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. V. Burrus, Chastity as Autonomy. Women in the Stories of Apocryphal Acts (1987), 84; S.L. Davies, The Revolt of the Widows. The Social World of the Apocryphal Acts (1980), 61-62. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)