

Docetism in the Early Church

The Quest for an Elusive Phenomenon

Edited by

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“... the Flesh of Our Saviour Jesus Christ, Which Suffered for Our Sins”

The Early Christian “Dying for” Formula, Suffering, and the Eucharist in IgnSm 7:1

Dominika Kurek-Chomycz

I. Introductory Remarks

Ignatius’ familiarity with at least a part of the Pauline corpus can be determined with relative certainty, although, as anything pertaining to this enigmatic figure, none of this is beyond debate. According to Paul Foster, “The four epistles for which a strong case for Ignatius’ usage can be supported are, in declining order of likelihood, 1 Corinthians, Ephesians, 1 Timothy, and 2 Timothy.”¹ Whether he was familiar with others is difficult to ascertain; what his letters make abundantly clear, however, is Ignatius’ familiarity with, and great esteem for, the figure of the Apostle Paul. Writing to the Ephesians, Ignatius notes that they are fellow initiates (συμμύσται) of Paul, the one who “has been sanctified (τοῦ ἡγιασμένου), approved (τοῦ μεμαρτυρημένου) and deservedly blessed/worthy of blessing (ἀξιομακαρίστου)” (IgnEph 12:2).²

Not only is Ignatius’ esteem for the Apostle Paul remarkable but, as Alexander Kirk has argued, when speaking of his own suffering and imminent death, Ignatius to a significant extent models it on Paul’s self-understanding.³ Consequently, rather than conceiving of it in terms of direct imitation of Jesus, in this regard the direct model is the Apostle Paul. And yet, although there is a general agreement

¹ P. FOSTER, ‘The Epistles of Ignatius of Antioch and the Writings That Later Formed the New Testament’, in A. F. GREGORY, C. M. TUCKETT (eds.), *The Reception of the New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers* (Oxford: OUP, 2007), 159–86, here: 172.

² With the majority of scholars, I accept the authenticity of the middle recension, and the date in the first half of the 2nd century, although more likely in the Hadrianic, rather than the Trajanic period. The Greek text (and the numbering of chapters and verses when different from Holmes) is taken from Bart Ehrman’s Loeb edition.

³ A. N. KIRK, ‘Ignatius’ Statements of Self-Sacrifice: Intimations of an Atoning Death or Expressions of Exemplary Suffering?’, in *JTS* 64 (2013), 66–88. Cf. also D. M. REIS, ‘Following in Paul’s Footsteps: *Mimēsis* and Power in Ignatius of Antioch’, in A. F. GREGORY, C. M. TUCKETT (eds.), *Trajectories through the New Testament and the Apostolic Fathers* (Oxford: OUP, 2007), 287–305.

that Ignatius knew First Corinthians, when needed, he does not hesitate to use arguments which contradict Paul's statements, a reminder that an esteem for the Apostle in that period did not necessarily translate into a strict adherence to the letter of the text, and that a desire to be found in Paul's footsteps (cf. ὑπὸ τὰ ἴχνη, IgnEph 12:2) did not exclude the influence of other traditions, such as Johannine or Petrine, against which some aspects of Ignatius' theologising can be better understood.

Keeping the above in mind, the similarities on the one hand, and the changed historical situation on the other, but also different personal circumstances, make comparing aspects of the Pauline letters and those of Ignatius highly instructive. In addition, such an endeavour contributes to our understanding of the developments both in the early Christian movement, and in the social and cultural environment in which it spread in the century after the death of Jesus.

In this contribution I propose to analyse the way in which Ignatius creatively uses the early Christian "dying for" formula, first attested in the Pauline letters, and how it undergoes transformation, partly related to Ignatius' focus on the reality of Jesus' suffering. While Ignatius' stress on the reality of Jesus' suffering may have been part of his polemics against those who held "docetic" views, it would be too reductive to limit their interpretation to a polemical context. The significance that Ignatius ascribes to suffering needs to be understood against the broader social, cultural and religious context, as opposed to those who in the past dismissed his interest in suffering as pathological.

In what follows, I begin with a short overview of how Ignatius creatively used the "dying for" formula in his letters. In the subsequent section I then provide a more detailed discussion of the different elements of IgnSm 7:1, which is used in a Eucharistic context, and which provides a striking statement of Eucharistic realism. In this section I also comment on some of the differences and similarities between Ignatius' and Paul's ideas, pointing out likewise how Ignatius' formulation can be situated in the context of other early Christian literature contemporary with, or earlier than his letter collection, although whether he was actually familiar with these other writings remains unclear. This is followed by another short section in which I consider the broader context of the Ignatian letters in which the understanding of the Eucharist as "the flesh of our Saviour Jesus Christ suffering for us" is to be situated. I end with some concluding reflections.

II. The "Dying for" Formula in the Ignatian Corpus

A quick survey allows one to observe that the idea of "dying for" is anything but consistently expressed in Ignatius. Quite puzzling is Ignatius' assertion that he himself will willingly "die for God" in IgnRom 4:1: ἐγὼ ἐκὼν ὑπὲρ θεοῦ ἀποθνή-

σκω. Lightfoot’s translation (“I die gladly for Christ”)⁴ indicates a possible way of understanding ὑπὲρ θεοῦ in this context as referring to Jesus. The idea of dying or suffering “for Christ” is attested already in Paul’s *Letter to the Philippians*. In Phil 1:29 Paul uses ὑπὲρ twice in the following way: ὅτι ὑμῖν ἐχαρίσθη τὸ ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ, οὐ μόνον τὸ εἰς αὐτὸν πιστεῦν ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ πάσχειν, literally: “For it has been granted to you on behalf of/for Christ, not only to believe in him but also to suffer on behalf of/for him.”⁵ If Lightfoot is correct and ὑπὲρ θεοῦ refers to Jesus Christ, then the use of θεός in reference to Jesus may indicate a post-Pauline development. That Ignatius could refer to Jesus as “God” is confirmed in IgnRom 6:3. Notably, here Ignatius will ask the Romans to allow him to be the “imitator of the suffering of his God” (ἐπιτρέψατέ μοι μιμητὴν εἶναι τοῦ πάθους τοῦ θεοῦ μου). One could argue, however, that there is a difference between referring to “my God”, ὁ θεός μου, and simply “God”, as in θεός, so IgnRom 6:3 must not be an indication that Ignatius would necessarily have the same referent in mind in both cases. As a matter of fact, the interpretation of IgnRom 4:1, on which Lightfoot’s translation is based is not the only way to understand this text. If we interpret 4:1 in connection with what follows in 4:2, it is not necessary to take Christ as the referent of ὑπὲρ θεοῦ. In 4:2, Ignatius asks the addressees: “Entreat Christ for me so that through these instruments [i. e. wild beasts], I may be found to be God’s sacrifice” (λιτανεύσατε τὸν Χριστὸν ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ ἵνα διὰ τῶν ὀργάνων τούτων θεοῦ⁶ θυσία εὔρεθῶ).⁷ It is possible that with ὑπὲρ θεοῦ ἀποθνήσκω in IgnRom 4:1 the metaphor of sacrifice is already introduced.⁸ We may recall in this context that in the Pauline letters the most explicit sacrificial, and more broadly, cultic, imagery appears in reference to Paul himself and other Christ believers, and *not* Jesus.

The other ὑπὲρ and διὰ statements in Ignatius’ letters have Jesus Christ as the subject, yet exactly the same formulation is never repeated. This as such is not

⁴ J. B. LIGHTFOOT, *The Apostolic Fathers: Vol. 2, Part 2: S. Ignatius, S. Polycarp* (London: Macmillan, 1889²), 206.

⁵ G. D. FEE, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 171, suggests that the awkward repetition of the ὑπὲρ phrase “probably resulted from dictation.” According to Fee, “Paul (apparently) began to dictate the subject (‘to suffer on behalf of Christ’) immediately after the verb (‘it has been graciously given’). But he got as far as ‘on behalf of Christ’ and interrupted himself with a ‘not only’ phrase, intending to emphasize their suffering for Christ, but within the context of what has just been said about their salvation.”

⁶ In a part of the textual tradition the reading θεῶ, instead of θεοῦ, is attested, which reinforces the sacrificial imagery.

⁷ Or alternatively, as in Ehrman’s translation: “That I may be found a sacrifice through these instruments of God.” Such a rendering is of course only possible with the reading θεοῦ (cf. the previous note).

⁸ Sacrificial imagery is possibly already implied, as LIGHTFOOT, *Apostolic Fathers* (see note 4), 2:207, argues, in IgnRom 4:1 in the metaphor of Ignatius as the “pure bread of Christ.” On ὑπὲρ and the sacrificial context, cf. R. BIERINGER, ‘Traditionsgeschichtlicher Ursprung und theologische Bedeutung ὑπὲρ-Aussagen im Neuen Testament’, in F. VAN SEGBROECK ET AL. (eds.), *The Four Gospels 1992. FS F. Neirynck*, BEThL 100A (Leuven: Peeters, 1992), 219–48.

surprising, especially in view of Paul's usage. Perennial debates concerning the background/origin and significance of the so-called *Sterbensformel*, or "dying for" formula,⁹ and *Hingabeformel*, or "surrender" formula, might wrongly suggest that these were indeed fixed formulas, and as such are well attested in the New Testament and other early Christian writings. If one considers Paul's use of the notion of "dying for", however, a broad variety is well attested. As is well known, in 1 Cor 15:3 Paul quotes what he introduces as part of received tradition:

παρέδωκα γὰρ ὑμῖν ἐν πρώτοις, ὃ καὶ παρέλαβον, ὅτι Χριστὸς ἀπέθανεν ὑπὲρ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν κατὰ τὰς γραφάς.

For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures (NRSV).

Other than in the variation of the "surrender formula" in Gal 1:4 ([κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ] τοῦ δόντος ἑαυτὸν ὑπὲρ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν),¹⁰ Paul does not repeat the reference to dying for "our sins."¹¹ Instead, he refers to dying "for" (ὑπὲρ) "us" (ἡμῶν – 1 Thes 5:10; 1 Cor 11:24); "all" (πάντων – 2 Cor 5:14c,15a); "them" (αὐτῶν); the "ungodly" (ἀσεβῶν – Rom 5:6); "us when we were still sinners" (ἡμῶν ἁμαρτωλῶν ὄντων – Rom 5:8). In 1 Cor 8:11 διὰ seems to be used synonymously with ὑπὲρ, in reference to "the brother for whom Christ has died" (ὁ ἀδελφὸς δι' ὃν Χριστὸς ἀπέθανεν). We leave aside the significance and origin of these statements, including the question whether they predate Paul, or whether they represent Paul's creative way of adapting the early Christian traditional formula to specific contexts.¹² We see, however, that while Paul's wording may vary as far as those who benefit from Christ's action are concerned, there is less of a variation with regard to the predicate. Other than the addition of καὶ ἐγερθέντι in 2 Cor 5:15b, the statements about Jesus' beneficial death as a rule use ἀποθνήσκω as predicate.¹³ In the case of the "surrender formula", the variation is limited to the simple verb δίδωμι and the compound παραδίδωμι.

⁹ Cf. the chart in R. BIERINGER, 'Dying and Being Raised For: Shifts in the Meaning of ὑπὲρ in 2 Cor 5:14–15', in IDEM, M. M. S. IBITA, D. A. KUREK-CHOMYCZ, T. A. VOLLMER (eds.), *Theologizing in the Corinthian Conflict: Studies in the Exegesis and Theology of 2 Corinthians*, BiTS 16 (Leuven – Paris – Walpole MA: Peeters, 2013), 163–75, here: 165.

¹⁰ Transl.: [The Lord Jesus Christ] who gave himself for our sins to set us free from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father (NRSV).

¹¹ But note Rom 4:25: ὃς παρεδόθη διὰ τὰ παραπτώματα ἡμῶν καὶ ἠγέρθη διὰ τὴν δικαίωσιν ἡμῶν (who was handed over to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification, NRSV), possibly also a traditional text.

¹² Among recent contributions to the debate, cf. C. ESCHNER, *Gestorben und hingegeben "für" die Sünder: Die griechische Konzeption des Unheil abwendenden Sterbens und deren paulinische Aufnahme für die Deutung des Todes Jesu Christi*, vol. 1: *Auslegung der paulinischen Formulierungen*, WMANT 122 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2010); J. J. WILLIAMS, *Christ Died for Our Sins: Representation and Substitution in Romans and Their Jewish Martyrological Background* (Cambridge: Clarke, 2015).

¹³ But note also Paul's ironic μη Παῦλος ἐσταυρώθη ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν; (Was Paul crucified for you?) in 1 Cor 1:13.

In the case of Ignatius, by contrast, in the majority of instances those who benefit are referred to as “we.” In IgnEph 16:2 there is a curious reference to the πίστις θεοῦ, for which Jesus Christ was crucified, and which is now corrupted by evil teaching (ἐὰν πίστιν θεοῦ ἐν κακῇ διδασκαλίᾳ φθείρη ὑπὲρ ἧς Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς ἐσταυρώθη).¹⁴ Other than that, it is for “us” that Christ Jesus or Jesus Christ “died” (τὸν δι’ ἡμᾶς ἀποθανόντα, IgnTrall 2:1 and τὸν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἀποθανόντα, IgnRom 1:2), but also “for us has risen” (τὸν δι’ ἡμᾶς ἀναστάντα, IgnRom 1:2), “was truly nailed for us in the flesh under Pontius Pilate and Herod the Tetrarch” (ἀληθῶς ἐπὶ Ποντίου Πιλάτου καὶ Ἡρώδου τετράρχου καθηλωμένον ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἐν σαρκί, IgnSm 1:2), “suffered all these things for us, in order that we might be saved; and he truly suffered” (ταῦτα γὰρ πάντα ἔπαθεν δι’ ἡμᾶς ἵνα σωθῶμεν καὶ ἀληθῶς ἔπαθεν, IgnSm 2:1). The Eucharist is “the flesh of our Saviour Jesus Christ which suffered for our sins (τὴν ὑπὲρ τῶν ἀμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν παθοῦσαν) and which the Father raised in his kindness” (IgnSm 7:1/6:2 in Holmes). Finally, God (?) is the one who, though “intangible and unsuffering, became suffering for us, who for us endured in every way” (τὸν ἀψηλάφητον τὸν ἀπαθῆ τὸν δι’ ἡμᾶς παθητὸν τὸν κατὰ πάντα τρόπον δι’ ἡμᾶς ὑπομείναντα, IgnPol 3:2).

Ignatius thus, just like Paul, expresses the idea of “dying for” in different ways, yet unlike Paul, this variety pertains mainly to the predicate. The majority of occurrences of expressions echoing the traditional “dying for” expression are in the *Letter to the Smyrnaeans*, but it is noteworthy that this is also the letter in which we do not encounter the expected predicate, “to die.” The latter appears in this context twice in *Romans*, once in *Trallians*, and once in the *Letter to Polycarp*. In *Smyrnaeans*, by contrast, the predicate is twice “to suffer” and once “to nail.” In the next section we shall consider in more detail IgnSm 7:1, which in its Eucharistic realism is rather unique in this period and in some ways is strikingly un-Pauline, but which in the connection that Ignatius draws between social

¹⁴ W. R. SCHOEDEL, *Ignatius of Antioch: A Commentary on the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia PA: Fortress, 1985), 79, suggests that faith here “is the personified affirmation of the church ‘on behalf of which’ Christ died.” Rather than as a personification of (or a metonymy for?) the church, however, one should perhaps think of the benefits that Ignatius associates with the death of Jesus on the cross and faith, namely salvation and escaping death (cf. IgnTrall 2:1: [Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν] τὸν δι’ ἡμᾶς ἀποθανόντα ἵνα πιστεύσαντες εἰς τὸν θάνατον αὐτοῦ τὸ ἀποθανεῖν ἐκφύγητε). We note that faith is a prominent motif in this letter; the substantive πίστις occurs twelve times in Ignatius’ Ephesians, thus more frequently than in his other letters (four times in *Magnesians*, just once in *Trallians*, twice in *Philadelphians*, four times in *Smyrnaeans*, and once in the letter to Polycarp). Earlier in the letter (IgnEph 9:1) Ignatius uses a vivid image which further illustrates the link between faith and the cross: ἀναφερόμενοι εἰς τὰ ὕψη διὰ τῆς μηχανῆς Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ὃς ἐστὶν σταυρός, σχοινίῳ χρώμενοι τῷ πνεύματι τῷ ἀγίῳ ἢ δὲ πίστις ὑμῶν ἀναγωγεὺς ὑμῶν ἢ δὲ ἀγάπη ὁδὸς ἢ ἀναφέρουσα εἰς θεόν (you are being carried up to the heights by the crane of Jesus Christ, which is the cross, using the Holy Spirit as a rope, and your faith is what lifts you up, while love is the way which carries you up to God).

concerns and the liturgical context does nonetheless echo Paul's understanding of the Lord's Supper in 1 Cor 11:17–34.¹⁵

III. The “Flesh Which Suffered for Our Sins” in IgnSm 7:1

IgnSm 7:1 is the only instance where the traditional phrase ὑπὲρ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν appears in the Ignatian corpus. In refuting those who “have false opinions on the grace of Jesus Christ” (τοὺς ἑτεροδοξοῦντας εἰς τὴν χάριν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ), Ignatius first criticises them because (IgnSm 6:2)

they do not care about love, nor the widow, nor the orphan, nor the oppressed, nor the one in chains, nor the one released, nor the one who hungers or thirsts.

περὶ ἀγάπης οὐ μέλει αὐτοῖς οὐ περὶ χήρας οὐ περὶ ὀρφανοῦ οὐ περὶ θλιβομένου οὐ περὶ δεδεμένου ἢ λελυμένου οὐ περὶ πεινῶντος ἢ διψῶντος.

What is more, and related to this, “they abstain from the eucharist and prayer”, and this is due to doctrinal differences (IgnSm 7:1):

They do not confess that the Eucharist is the flesh of our Saviour Jesus Christ which suffered for our sins and which the Father raised in his kindness.

εὐχαριστίας καὶ προσευχῆς ἀπέχονται διὰ τὸ μὴ ὁμολογεῖν τὴν εὐχαριστίαν σάρκα εἶναι τοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τὴν ὑπὲρ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν παθοῦσαν ἣν τῇ χρηστότητι ὁ πατὴρ ἤγειρεν.

There are several points of interest here. The concern for the more vulnerable members of the community emphasises a connection between ethics and right/correct belief, but also prepares the reader for the strong expression of what the correct understanding of the Eucharist implies. The Eucharistic gathering is thus depicted as a safe space where also bodily needs of the members should be taken care of, similar to the ideal Lord's Supper as envisaged by Paul, the ideal which the Corinthians according to him fall short of (cf. 1 Cor 11:23–34). While in Corinth the tensions are within the community, in Smyrna those who disagree apparently hold their own Eucharistic gatherings (cf. IgnSm 8:2).

Furthermore, as noted above, IgnSm 7:1 is the only place where the traditional phrase ὑπὲρ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν appears in the middle recension of the Ignatian corpus. This seems to be also the only occurrence of the substantive ἁμαρτία, a further indication that this is not part of Ignatius' own vocabulary (the verb ἁμαρτάνω also occurs only once, in IgnEph 14:2). One might wonder what led Ignatius to retaining this part of the traditional formula, although other than that, he obviously felt free to tweak it to suit his point. Precisely how Ignatius may have understood the significance of suffering (and dying) “for our sins” is un-

¹⁵ On the latter, cf. especially S. WATTS HENDERSON, “‘If Anyone Hungers ...’: An Integrated Reading of 1 Cor 11.17–34”, in *NTS* 48 (2002), 195–208.

clear. His other references to “dying” or “suffering for” stress the effective nature of Jesus’ suffering and dying (implying that ὑπέρ can often be translated as “for our benefit”), rather than their vicarious character (note, however, τὸν δι’ ἡμᾶς ἀποθανόντα ἵνα πιστεύσαντες εἰς τὸν θάνατον αὐτοῦ τὸ ἀποθανεῖν ἐκφύγητε, IgnTrall 2:1).¹⁶ There is in any case little indication that Ignatius would have perceived of them in terms of penal substitution.¹⁷ Rather, Gustav Aulén’s *Christus Victor* model¹⁸ comes closer to fitting the majority of other occurrences (cf. esp. IgnSm 1:2), but in the Ignatian context, importantly, it is the *suffering* Christ that becomes the victorious Christ.

In IgnSm 7:1, however, while the salvific character of the event is emphasised by referring to “our Saviour (τοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν) Jesus Christ”, rather than in terms of victory achieved as a result of suffering, it is depicted in strikingly passive terms. It is not Jesus as such, but his σὰρξ (flesh) *which* has suffered, and *which* then was raised by the Father. While this can be accounted for by the Eucharistic context, the imagery remains forceful in its vividness. The Eucharistic setting similarly may account for the choice of the predicate complement (σάρκα), especially since the reference to “flesh” in a Eucharistic context appears also in IgnPhld 4:1. It is not, however, in line with either the Pauline or the synoptic usage. We recall that in both the synoptic accounts and in 1 Corinthians 11 in the context of the Lord’s Supper the reference is to σῶμα, which in Luke is characterised as τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν διδόμενον (which is given for you, Lk 22:19), while in First Corinthians simply as τὸ σῶμα τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν (body that is for you, 1 Cor 11:24). The only place in the New Testament where σὰρξ occurs in what most likely is a Eucharistic context is John 6, and especially vv. 51–56. Jesus in Jn 6:51 refers to his flesh (ἡ σὰρξ μου) as being ὑπὲρ τῆς τοῦ κόσμου ζωῆς (for the life of the world). There has been a considerable debate as to whether Ignatius knew (and used) the Gospel of John, and I do not wish to enter it at this point. Foster in his assessment of the use of the New Testament in Ignatius concludes that of the Gospels only for Matthew can a good case be made; Ignatius’ use of the Fourth Gospel cannot be established with any degree of certainty, although Foster concedes that there is a difference between use and familiarity.¹⁹ With

¹⁶ Transl.: “the one who died for us, so that believing in His death ye might escape death” (my transl.).

¹⁷ It is to my mind telling that J. ALOISI, “His Flesh for Our Flesh”: The Doctrine of Atonement in the Second Century’, in *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 14 (2009), 23–44, who argues that the interpretation of the death of Jesus as involving substitution and satisfaction dates back to the 2nd century, in opposition to those who claim that it was not known before Anselm’s time, does not include Ignatius in his discussion. In his essay, he focuses on Clement of Rome, Epistle of Barnabas, Justin the Martyr, Epistle to Diognetus and Irenaeus instead.

¹⁸ Cf. G. AULÉN, *Christus Victor: An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of Atonement*, transl. by A. G. HEBERT (London: SPCK, 1931).

¹⁹ FOSTER, ‘Epistles’ (see note 1), 184; he notes Charles Hill’s defence of Ignatius’ familiarity with the Fourth Gospel, but stresses the difference between use and familiarity: “Hill is presenting an argument for ‘knowledge of John’ rather than use of John” (*ibid.*). Cf. C. E. HILL,

respect to IgnSm 7:1, the context is too different to argue for any direct dependence, but the reference to the “bread of God” (ἄρτος θεοῦ) “which is the flesh of Jesus Christ” (ὃ ἐστὶν σὰρξ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) in IgnRom 7:3 (cf. also ἄρτος θεοῦ, IgnEph 5:2) has by some authors been taken as an indication of Ignatius’ use of the Fourth Gospel.²⁰

Even more foreign to Paul’s concepts is the last clause of IgnSm 7:1, where Ignatius states that the same flesh was raised by the Father (ἦν τῇ χρηστότητι ὁ πατὴρ ἤγειρεν). The expression “resurrection of the flesh” not only is not attested in the New Testament,²¹ but even seems to be denied in 1 Cor 15:50: “Flesh and blood will not inherit the kingdom of God.”²² Given how unclear the New Testament notion of resurrection is, the problem was to become a matter of debate in subsequent centuries.²³ We come across a reference to the resurrection of the

The Johannine Corpus in the Early Church (Oxford: OUP, 2004), 427–43. H. E. LONA, *Über die Auferstehung des Fleisches: Studien zur frühchristlichen Eschatologie*, BZNW 66 (Berlin – New York: de Gruyter, 1993), 40, notes that “σὰρξ bedeutet hier [in IgnSm 7.1] die ganze menschliche Wirklichkeit des Erlösers in einer dreifachen Dimension.” He then specifies that this includes the soteriological, Christological, and sacramental aspects, and he identifies the same three dimensions in the Johannine literature, where they occur “in einem ähnlichen antidoketischen Kontext.” While referring to the context of John 6 as ‘anti-docetic’ is farfetched, and not everyone would agree that Jn 6:51–58 “stellt die sakramentale Interpretation der Rede vom himmlischen Brot dar;” the similarities in the use of σὰρξ in this context are notable. Lona may thus be right that these indicate a common traditional background. In addition, we may note that also *First Clement* speaks of “flesh” which Jesus Christ has given “for our flesh” (1 Clem 46:6: ἐν ἀγάπῃ προσελάβετο ἡμᾶς ὁ δεσπότης διὰ τὴν ἀγάπην ἣν ἔσχεν πρὸς ἡμᾶς τὸ αἷμα αὐτοῦ ἔδωκεν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς ὁ κύριος ἡμῶν ἐν θελήματι θεοῦ καὶ τὴν σάρκα ὑπὲρ τῆς σαρκὸς ἡμῶν καὶ τὴν ψυχὴν ὑπὲρ τῶν ψυχῶν ἡμῶν).

²⁰ Cf. LIGHTFOOT, *Apostolic Fathers* (see note 4), 2:226, on IgnRom 7:3: “Here again is an expression taken from S. John’s Gospel, vi.33.” Also SCHOEDEL, *Ignatius* (see note 14), 185, agrees that, “The link between the bread of God and Christ’s blood is reminiscent of John 6:26–59.” But, as he hastens to add, “There is no clear evidence of literary dependence on John here or elsewhere.”

²¹ Throughout the New Testament resurrection is commonly referred to as “resurrection from the dead” (νεκρῶν). Lk 24:39 implies that the risen Jesus does still possess σὰρξ, as opposed to a ghost.

²² For some thoughts on the differences between the Pauline and Ignatian notions of σὰρξ, albeit influenced by his own presuppositions on Paul’s understanding of σὰρξ, cf. R. BULTMANN, ‘Ignatius und Paulus’, in J. N. SEVENSTER, W. C. VAN UNNIK (eds.), *Studia Paulina in Honorem Johannis de Zwaan* (Haarlem: Bohn, 1953), 37–51.

²³ Monographs and collected volumes on resurrection are plentiful; among those published recently are: O. LEHTIPUUS, *Debates over the Resurrection of the Dead: Constructing Early Christian Identity*, Oxford Early Christian Studies (Oxford: OUP, 2015); C. R. KOESTER, R. BIERINGER (eds.), *The Resurrection of Jesus in the Gospel of John*, WUNT 222 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008); J. BECKER, *Die Auferstehung Jesu Christi nach dem Neuen Testament: Ostererfahrung und Osterverständnis im Urchristentum* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007); D. C. ALLISON, *Resurrecting Jesus: The Earliest Christian Tradition and Its Interpreters* (New York – London: T&T Clark, 2005); C. SETZER, *Resurrection of the Body in Early Judaism and Early Christianity: Doctrine, Community, and Self-Definition* (Leiden: Brill, 2004); R. BIERINGER, V. KOPERSKI, B. LATAIRE (eds.), *Resurrection in the New Testament. FS J. Lambrecht*, BEThL 165 (Leuven: Peeters, 2002); F. AVEMARIE, H. LICHTENBERGER (eds.), *Auferstehung/Resurrection: The Fourth*

flesh in 1 Clem 26:3: “and again Job says, you will raise this flesh of mine, which has endured all these things” (καὶ πάλιν Ἰὼβ λέγει Καὶ ἀναστήσεις τὴν σάρκα μου ταύτην τὴν ἀναντλήσασαν ταῦτα πάντα). The text refers to Jb 19:26, but interestingly enough, the Septuagint manuscripts of Job have in this verse either τὸ δέρμα or τὸ σῶμα.²⁴ It is likely that τὸ σῶμα was the reading that the author of *First Clement* was familiar with but, possibly quoting from memory, used τὴν σάρκα instead.²⁵ Whether intended or not, however, 1 Clem 26:3 likely attests to the ongoing debates concerning resurrection, already reflected in the Pauline letters, especially 1 Corinthians 15, but which were to continue in the following centuries. Among the writings of uncertain date, albeit possibly contemporary with Ignatius, resurrection of the *flesh* is most strongly asserted in 2 Clem 9:1–5, which opens with a warning: “And let none of you say that this flesh is not judged and does not raise again!” (καὶ μὴ λεγέτω τις ὑμῶν ὅτι αὕτη ἡ σὰρξ οὐ κρίνεται οὐδὲ ἀνίσταται).²⁶ While in this case we cannot know whether the author was familiar with 1 Corinthians 15, there are ardent defenders of the resurrection of σὰρξ even among authors who not only clearly knew First Corinthians, but even

Durham-Tübingen Research Symposium Resurrection, Transfiguration and Exaltation in Old Testament, Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity, WUNT 135 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001).

²⁴ Codex Alexandrinus has: ἀναστήσει δέ μου τὸ σῶμα τὸ ἀναντλοῦν ταῦτα. Ziegler in his Göttingen edition accepts the reading attested in Codex Vaticanus: ἀναστήσαι τὸ δέρμα μου τὸ ἀναντλοῦν ταῦτα παρὰ γὰρ κυρίου ταῦτά μοι συνετελέσθη (cf. J. ZIEGLER [ed.], *Job*, Septuaginta, Vetus Testamentum Graecum 11/4 [Göttingen: V&R, 1982]). τὸ δέρμα is also found in Sinaiticus, although there it was subsequently corrected to τὸ σῶμα, which by a later corrector was then, in turn, changed back to τὸ δέρμα, not only evidence that the two readings were attested, but also, possibly, an echo of resurrection debates. On Clement’s scriptural quotations, cf. D. A. HAGNER, *The Use of the Old and New Testaments in Clement of Rome*, NT.S 34 (Leiden: Brill, 1973). The MT in Jb 19:26 reading differs significantly from any of the readings attested in the LXX manuscripts: וְאַתָּה עֹזְרִי נִקְפֹּזֶנָּה אֶת־אֶמְשָׁרִי אֶתְחַזֶּה אֱלֹהִים. In NABRE rendered as: “This will happen when my skin has been stripped off, and from my flesh I will see God.” Even though in the Hebrew text the word בָּשָׂר appears, “Eine Erklärung der Fassung von I Clem 26,3 durch den Einfluß des hebräischen Textes ist wenig wahrscheinlich” (H. E. LONA, *Der Erste Clemensbrief*, KAV 2 [Göttingen: V&R, 1998], 310).

²⁵ LONA, *Clemensbrief* (see note 24), 310, suggests an alternative possibility, namely a collection of biblical “resurrection texts”, which *First Clement* may have used. He does not deem it likely that a “redaktionelle Gestaltung” of the Septuagint text is likely, given the explicit acknowledgement of familiarity with First Corinthians in this text, and deliberately changing σῶμα to σὰρξ would contradict Paul’s statement in 1 Cor 15:50. Such a reasoning, however, presupposes a modern mindset; as we may cf. above, neither for Ignatius, nor even for the author of *Third Corinthians*, pretending to be Paul, did Paul’s explicit denial that flesh will survive beyond death form an obstacle to asserting the opposite. What is more, neither did the readers, some of whom accepted *Third Corinthians* as canonical, deem this contradiction problematic.

²⁶ For the text and commentary, cf. C. TUCKETT, *2 Clement: Introduction, Text, and Commentary*, Oxford Apostolic Fathers (Oxford: OUP, 2012). Christopher Tuckett notes that the argument “runs parallel to that of Paul in 1 Cor 15,” observing also that it goes against 1 Cor 15:50 (*ibid.*, 203). He is right, however, that there is nothing in the text to allow us to ascertain whether the author was familiar with or was referring to Paul’s argument.

invoked Paul's authority to defend their views.²⁷ The most striking example is the apocryphal *Third Corinthians*, where the purpose of the conception by the Holy Spirit and the birth of Mary is explained as follows: "[T]hat he might come into this world and save all flesh by his own flesh and that he might raise us in the flesh from the dead as he has presented to us as our example."²⁸

All these passages demonstrate abundantly that while Ignatius' assertion that the Father has raised the flesh of Jesus may sound un-Pauline, the idea of the resurrection of the flesh was not unique among early Christian "followers" of Paul. It is nonetheless interesting that Ignatius deemed it important to stress the continuity between the suffering and the risen flesh in the Eucharistic setting. The addition of the clause about the Father "raising" Jesus' flesh echoes other polemical passages, such as IgnTrall 9:1–2 and IgnSm 1:2–3:3, where the affirmation of the reality of suffering and death of Jesus are followed by the affirmation of the reality of his resurrection, stressing the continuity between the two.²⁹

Finally, in IgnSm 7:1 we note the predicate of the participial clause: παθοῦσαν. We already saw that earlier in the same letter, as well as in the *Letter to Polycarp*, Ignatius refers to "suffering for", rather than "dying for." The fact that in IgnSm 7:1 this clause refers to a liturgical context, in which one might expect a *Hingabe*-, rather than *Sterbensformel*, could make us wonder if the "flesh suffering for our sins" is not a paraphrase of the "flesh given up for our sins." This cannot be excluded, but we note that the verb παραδίδωμι, well known from early Christian tradition attested both in Paul and in the synoptic Gospels, seems to be absent from the middle recension. The only time he uses the so-called "surrender" formula, is in reference to Ignatius himself, not Jesus, using the simple verb δίδωμι (IgnSm 4:2).³⁰

Both "suffering for us" and "for our sins", are attested in First Peter. In 1 Pt 2:21 we read: "For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you (ἔπαθεν ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν), leaving you an example, so that you should follow in his steps." Then in 1 Pt 3:18, the author states: "For Christ also suffered for sins once for all (Χριστὸς ἅπαξ περὶ ἀμαρτιῶν ἔπαθεν), the righteous for the unrighteous,

²⁷ Cf. B. L. WHITE, *Remembering Paul: Ancient and Modern Contests over the Image of the Apostle* (Oxford – New York: OUP, 2014), 121–30.

²⁸ The English translation is taken from J. K. ELLIOTT, *The Apocryphal New Testament: A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation* (Oxford: OUP, 1993). For the Greek text of *Third Corinthians*, cf. M. TESTUZ (ed.), *Papyrus Bodmer X–XII: Manuscrit du III^e siècle X, XI, XII, X, XI, XII* (Cologne – Geneva: Bibliotheca Bodmeriana, 1959).

²⁹ On anti-docetic polemic as one of the factors leading to the emergence of the belief in the resurrection of the flesh, cf. J. G. DAVIES, 'Factors Leading to the Emergence of Belief in the Resurrection of the Flesh', in *JTS* 23 (1972), 448–55.

³⁰ The clause in which the formula occurs is preceded by Ignatius' sarcastic anti-docetic comment: "If these things have been accomplished by our Lord only in appearance (εἰ γὰρ τὸ δοκεῖν ταῦτα ἐπράχθη), I also am in chains in appearance. But why then have I handed myself over (τί δὲ καὶ ἑαυτὸν ἔκδοτον δέδωκα) to death, to fire, to the sword, to wild beasts?" Additional occurrences of the "surrender" formula with δίδωμι can be found in the longer recension.

in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit.” Especially in the latter verse there is admittedly a “bewildering diversity of readings”, as Bruce Metzger puts it, pertaining both to the predicate (ἀπέθανεν or ἔπαθεν), the preposition (ὑπέρ or περί), and the possessive pronoun (our/your sins, or no pronoun). The verb ἀπέθανεν is also attested in some manuscripts in 1 Pt 2:21. Given that it is more likely that the scribes substituted the more familiar ἀπέθανεν for ἔπαθεν, and on the other hand, considering the use of this verb throughout the letter (eleven times besides here), ἔπαθεν is deemed more likely to be original.³¹

The importance of suffering in First Peter is usually regarded as a sufficient explanation for the change in the formula, although concerning 1 Pt 2:21 more specifically, the influence of Isaiah 53 has also been proposed as prompting the change. As David Horrell observes, “There is no direct quotation of Isaiah in this transitional and introductory verse [2:21], but use of Isaianic material is prominent in the following verses, where the character and conduct of Christ are described through an exegetical engagement with Isaiah 53. The influence of Isaiah 53 may possibly be evident in the headline phrase, Χριστὸς ἔπαθεν ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν, which probably reflects an established creedal formulation.”³² The use of the Isaianic material in this context is remarkable for, as Paul Achtemeier notes, “Despite what appears to modern eyes the obvious relevance of the Servant Songs of Isaiah (particularly the fourth, 52:13–53:12) to the passion of Christ, they simply did not receive extended application in Christian canonical literature.”³³ In much of especially older scholarly literature one encounters the view that the *Sterbensformel* as attested in 1 Cor 15:3 reflects the interpretation of the saving

³¹ O. HOFIUS, ‘The Fourth Servant Song in the New Testament Letters’, in B. JANOWSKI, P. STUHLMACHER (eds.), *The Suffering Servant: Isaiah 53 in Jewish and Christian Sources*, transl. by D. P. BAILEY (Grand Rapids MI – Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2004), 163–88, here: 187, translates ἔπαθεν in 1 Pt 3:18 as “died,” arguing that it “here means to ‘die’, as in Luke 22:15; 24:46; Acts 1:3; 3:18; 17:3; Heb 9:26.” However, even in the case of these other New Testament passages one can at most say that the verb denotes *both* suffering and death, and not that it simply means “to die.” As for 1 Pt 3:18, the second part of the verse makes it clear that Christ’s suffering ended in death (θανατωθεις σαρκι), but the fact that a few verses later, in 1 Pt 4:1, the author again presents Christ “suffering in the flesh” (Χριστοῦ οὖν παθόντος σαρκι) as a model for the addressees of the letter shows that the use of ἔπαθεν in 1 Pt 3:18 was purposeful and must not be reduced to the moment of dying only. The adverb ἅπαξ in this context probably refers to the fact that there was no need to repeat Christ’s suffering, although it can also mean simply “once on a time, formerly,” as in Jude 5. (I have used the English translation of *The Suffering Servant* volume given that it includes expanded and partly revised contributions which had originally appeared in German as B. JANOWSKI, P. STUHLMACHER [eds.], *Der leidende Gottesknecht* [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996].)

³² D. G. HORRELL, ‘Jesus Remembered in 1 Peter? Early Jesus Traditions, Isaiah 53, and 1 Peter 2.21–25’, in A. J. BATTEN, J. S. KLOPPENBORG (eds.), *James, 1 & 2 Peter, and Early Jesus Traditions*, LNTS 478 (London – New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), 123–50, here: 131.

³³ P. J. ACHEMEIER, ‘Suffering Servant and Suffering Christ in 1 Peter’, in A. J. MALHERBE, W. A. MEEKS (eds.), *The Future of Christology: Essays in Honor of Leander E. Keck* (Minneapolis MN: Fortress, 1993), 176–88, here: 177.

significance of the death of Jesus against the backdrop of Isaiah 53, which possibly not only predates Paul, but even goes back to the historical Jesus. If this were so, later use of Isaiah 53 could be taken for granted. Yet this view has been repeatedly questioned.³⁴ While it would be difficult to speak of a consensus reached by exegetes with respect to the background of the “dying for” formula, the majority would now agree that the notion of vicarious death is well attested in Greek and Roman traditions, and thus can be considered as a background of the early Christian “dying for” and “surrender” formulas. As Henk Versnel has shown, this includes dying intended as atonement to appease the wrath of god(s).³⁵

While it is doubtful that a convincing case can be made to ground the origin of the traditional “dying for” formula in Isaiah 53, and the majority of references to Isaiah 52–53 in the New Testament do not focus on suffering, First Peter was not the only late 1st and early 2nd century writer to make a link between the Isaianic text and the suffering of Jesus for the sins of others. In an extended quotation in 1 Clem 16:3–14, the text of Is 53:1–12 LXX is rendered fairly faithfully but there is a remarkable departure from it in v. 7: instead of καὶ κύριος παρέδωκεν αὐτὸν ταῖς ἁμαρτίαις ἡμῶν of Is 53:6 LXX, *First Clement* has καὶ κύριος παρέδωκεν αὐτὸν ὑπὲρ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν. As Christoph Marksches comments, given the use of ὑπὲρ in the Eucharistic context, this is likely to be liturgically motivated, regardless of how exactly this change came about.³⁶ This could be taken as an in-

³⁴ The classic book length challenge to this view is M. D. HOOKER, *Jesus and the Servant* (London: SPCK, 1959). When revisiting the issue forty years later, admittedly, Morna D. Hooker acknowledged that “there is a clear echo of Isaiah 53 in Paul, and that is in Romans 4:25” (cf. EADEM, ‘Did the Use of Isaiah 53 to Interpret His Mission Begin with Jesus?’, in W. H. BELLINGER, W. R. FARMER [eds.], *Jesus and the Suffering Servant: Isaiah 53 and Christian Origins* [Harrisburg PA: Trinity, 1998], 88–103, here: 101), yet both she and the majority of contemporary scholars remain skeptical concerning the self-understanding of the historical Jesus against this background.

³⁵ Cf. H. S. VERSNEL, ‘Making Sense of Jesus’ Death: The Pagan Contribution’, in J. FREY, J. SCHRÖTER (eds.), *Deutungen des Todes Jesu im Neuen Testament*, WUNT 181 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 213–94. Earlier important contributions include K. WENGST, *Christologische Formeln und Lieder des Urchristentums*, StNT 7 (Gütersloh: Gütersloher, 1972); S. K. WILLIAMS, *Jesus’ Death as Saving Event: The Background and Origin of a Concept*, HDR 2 (Missoula MT: Scholars, 1975); M. HENGEL, *The Atonement: A Study of the Origins of the Doctrine in the New Testament*, transl. by J. BOWDEN (London: SCM, 1981). More recently, cf. C. ESCHNER, *Gestorben und Hingegeben ‘für’ die Sünder: Die griechische Konzeption des Unheil abwendenden Sterbens und deren paulinische Aufnahme für die Deutung des Todes Jesu Christi*, vol. 2: *Darstellung und Auswertung des griechischen Quellenbefundes*, WMANT 122 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2010). Concerning Rom 4:25, as Cilliers BREYTENBACH (‘The Septuagint Version of Isaiah 53 and the Early Christian Formula “He Was Delivered for Our Trespasses”’, in *NT 51* [2009], 339–51) has argued, if early Christians drew on Isaiah 53 to explain the significance of the death of Jesus, they were influenced by its Greek translation. This translation, however, in “its LXX form ... cannot be regarded as an independent, non-Greek Israelite or Jewish tradition. It illustrates the influence of Hellenised Alexandrian Judaism on early Christian tradition.”

³⁶ C. MARKSCHIES, ‘Jesus Christ as a Man before God: Two Interpretive Models for Isaiah 53 in the Patristic Literature and Their Development’, in *The Suffering Servant* (see note 31), 225–323, here: 238.

dication that rather than originating in Isaiah 53, the “dying for” and “surrender” formulas were secondarily interpreted against its backdrop.

According to Marksches, the only other “Apostolic Father” writing where Isaiah 53 is quoted is the *Epistle of Barnabas* (Barn 5:1–2).³⁷ Interestingly enough, however, also in Polycarp’s *Letter to the Philippians* (Polyc 8:1), we come across Isaianic material, but mediated via 1 Pt 2:22–24, with v. 22 quoted verbatim. In view of this it is not surprising that earlier in the letter, in Polyc 1:2, he speaks about “our Lord Jesus Christ who endured for our sins up to the point of death (ὕπέμεινεν ὑπὲρ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν ἕως θανάτου).”³⁸ In Polyc 9:2, however, Polycarp has the “dying (and rising) for” expression in a more traditional Pauline form: τὸν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἀποθανόντα δι’ ἡμᾶς ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ ἀναστάντα.

Polycarp thus, as noted by both modern and ancient interpreters, was clearly familiar with First Peter.³⁹ Could Ignatius have known First Peter? As with the majority of other writings which were later to form the New Testament, this is difficult to know.⁴⁰ It is perhaps notable that Ignatius speaks of Jesus’ suffering in terms that echo First Peter in the letter to the community of Smyrna and to its bishop. Regardless of whether there is a direct relationship between First Peter and Ignatius, considering First Peter is instructive in several regards. Firstly, the freedom and creativity with which Paul used the traditional formula is also attested in this later text.⁴¹ Secondly, there may have been various reasons why the authors adapted it for their purposes, not necessarily the presence of the opponents who insisted that Jesus only seemed to suffer (δοκεῖν αὐτὸν πεπονθέναι).

Before I proceed to consider Ignatius’ reference to Jesus’ suffering flesh in a broader context of his letters, I first return briefly to First Peter’s use of Isaiah to see whether this can shed further light on Ignatius’ use. Paul Achtemeier suggests

³⁷ For comments, cf. MARKSCHIES, ‘Jesus Christ’ (see note 36), 239–41.

³⁸ As Paul HARTOG (*Polycarp’s Epistle to the Philippians and the Martyrdom of Polycarp: Introduction, Text, and Commentary*, Oxford Apostolic Fathers (Oxford: OUP, 2013), 101 n. 56) observes, “‘For our sins’ may either be attached to ‘endured’ ... or to ‘reaching the point of death’” The ambiguity is likely intended, and resembles the use of πάσχω in Ignatius and First Peter.

³⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, 62: “Pol. *Phil.* Clearly uses materials from 1 Peter, as Eusebius noted.” On the reception of First Peter in patristic literature, cf. A. MERKT, *1. Petrus*, Novum Testamentum Patristicum 21/1 (Göttingen: V&R, 2015).

⁴⁰ In W. R. INGE, ‘Ignatius’, in OXFORD SOCIETY OF HISTORICAL THEOLOGY (ed.), *The New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1905), 63–83, here: 76, there is only a brief mention made of 1 Pt 5:5 as parallel to IgnEph 5:3, and of 1 Pt 2:25; 5:2 as parallel to IgnRom 5:1. However, the rating given (d) and the accompanying comments make it clear that the likelihood of Ignatius’ familiarity with this writing is minimal. FOSTER, ‘Epistles’ (see note 1), 185, makes a general comment that apart from First Corinthians, Ephesians, and First and Second Timothy, “No decisive case can be made for Ignatius’ use of the other epistles of the New Testament.”

⁴¹ The relationship between First Peter and the Pauline letters similarly remains unclear. On 1 Pt 2:22 and 3:18, cf. also C. BREYTENBACH, “Christus litt euretwegen”: Zur Rezeption von Jesaja 53 LXX und anderen frühjüdischen Traditionen im 1. Petrusbrief’, in *Deutungen des Todes Jesu* (see note 35), 437–54.

that the “notion of the presence of Christ with the Old Testament prophets” attested in First Peter, and especially in the author’s use of Isaiah 53 in 1 Pt 2:21–25, “represents a further step along the line of christological development that is represented in the kind of typology Paul presents.”⁴² This made it possible for the author of First Peter, “for the first time in the developing New Testament Christology, to associate directly with the passion of Christ the witness of Isaiah 53 to the suffering servant.”⁴³ This insight, in turn, according to Achtemeier, “also lies behind the total appropriation of the language of Israel for the Christian communities that we see in 1 Peter.”⁴⁴

Several references to the prophets throughout the Ignatian corpus show that Ignatius could already take for granted the process of “Christianisation” of the prophets. They are “the most divine prophets” who “lived according to Jesus Christ” (cf. IgnMagn 8:2: οἱ γὰρ θειότατοι προφηῆται κατὰ Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν ἔζησαν); “the prophets who were disciples in the spirit” (μαθηταὶ ὄντες τῷ πνεύματι, IgnMagn 9:2). We should love them as their “proclamation anticipated the gospel ... they were saved by believing in him” (προφήτας δὲ ἀγαπῶμεν διὰ τὸ καὶ αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον κατηγγελέκναι ... ἐν ᾧ καὶ πιστεύσαντες ἐσώθησαν, IgnPhld 5:2). Prophets, however, together with other biblical figures, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, as well as the apostles, all enter through the only door to the father, the archpriest, which clearly in this context (IgnPhld 9:1), refers to Jesus.

That Ignatius may have been aware of the association made between the suffering servant and the passion of Jesus is perhaps implied in IgnSm 7:2, the passage immediately following his refutation of those who do not “confess that the Eucharist is the flesh of our saviour Jesus Christ.” In IgnSm 7:2 Ignatius advises his addressees to avoid “such people” and not to speak of them, but to pay attention instead to “the prophets, and especially to the gospel, in which the passion is clearly shown, and the resurrection is fulfilled” (πρέπον ἐστὶν ἀπέχεσθαι τῶν τοιούτων καὶ μήτε κατ’ ἰδίαν περὶ αὐτῶν λαλεῖν ... δὲ τοῖς προφήταις ἐξαιρέτως δὲ τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ ἐν ᾧ τὸ πάθος ἡμῖν δεδήλωται καὶ ἡ ἀνάστασις τετελείωται). If the passion (τὸ πάθος) is clearly shown (δεδήλωται) in the Gospel, this suggests that it is already anticipated in the prophets, and in this context Isaiah 53 is possibly alluded to.⁴⁵

While we cannot be sure which prophetic texts Ignatius had in mind as supposedly pointing to the Passion, there is a stark difference between First Peter, where the community is couched in scriptural terms, appropriating thus the language used originally in reference to Israel, and Ignatius’ letters, where no such

⁴² Achtemeier, ‘Suffering Servant’ (see note 33), 186.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 187.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Similarly, IgnPhld 5:2, quoted above, could be understood in a similar vein. Cf. C. E. Hill, ‘Ignatius, “the Gospel,” and the Gospels’, in *Trajectories* (see note 3), 267–85.

phenomenon takes place, and where terms such as γένος, ἔθνος or λαός, which abound in other early Christian writings, are strikingly absent.

IV. The “Flesh Which Suffered” in the Broader Context of Ignatius’ Letters

The significance of the flesh suffering “for our sins” is thus not to be sought in the new people of God, new Israel, new law, or new race, which unites all the Christians, for these appear to be concepts foreign to Ignatius. What is more, while in First Peter suffering is also what unites believers, Ignatius’ addressees are not envisaged as affected by their own suffering. Neither does Ignatius expect that all the Christians should suffer. When the verb πάσχω occurs in passages other than those which we quoted at the outset, it is mainly with Ignatius as the subject (IgnTrall 4:2; IgnRom 4:3; 8:3). In IgnTrall 10:1, as in IgnSm 2:1, the subject is Christ Jesus, who some say “only appeared to suffer” (τὸ δοκεῖν πεπονηθέναι αὐτόν). Only in IgnPol 8:2, in the exhortation to imitating Christ in his endurance is the predicate in the first person plural, implying that other believers, too, are included. All the other occurrences of the verb contribute to strengthening the link between Ignatius’ suffering and that of Jesus, with others only indirectly included. This is in contrast to other early Christian documents, where suffering is a recurring motif, such as the *Letter of Barnabas* or *Shepherd of Hermas*, in which πάσχω encompasses a wider circle, and functions as a community binding agent.

While the choice of the verb πάσχω in the participial clause in IgnSm 7:1 is likely motivated by polemical concerns, and in this sense this vivid expression of Eucharistic realism may be a response to “docetic” attempts not only to question the reality of the suffering of Jesus, but also and the continuity between his earthly and post-resurrection body, or flesh, it is in line with Ignatius’ ideas expressed elsewhere. Ignatius’ desire to suffer has often been, rather unhelpfully, labelled as neurotic or pathological, Judith Perkins has demonstrated how the “emphasis on pain and suffering” in authors such as Ignatius and Aelius Aristides “reflects a widespread cultural concern, which during the period was using representations of bodily pain and suffering to construct a new subjectivity of the human person.”⁴⁶

Ignatius’ concern with his own suffering features primarily in his *Letter to the Romans*, but that of Jesus is a recurring motif in all his letters. Ignatius appears to be the first writer to refer to Jesus’ suffering as πάθος, a noun that he uses around fifteen times, almost always clearly in reference to the suffering (and death?) of

⁴⁶ J. PERKINS, *The Suffering Self: Pain and Narrative Representation in the Early Christian Era* (London – New York: Routledge, 1995), 173.

Jesus.⁴⁷ It may be debated whether translating the term merely as “suffering” does justice to it, or whether the term “Passion” is not more appropriate. Both Bart Ehrman and Michael Holmes in their respective translations tend to use the term “Passion” mainly in *Smyrnaeans*, yet this creates an artificial distinction between this letter and others, where πάθος is similarly, on the one hand, an important element in the life cycle of Jesus, besides birth and resurrection, which can all be historically situated (cf. IgnMagn 11:2), and on the other, an element which is to bind Christians together and to which they owe their assent (cf. IgnPhld 3:3). The notion of the Eucharist as the flesh of Jesus Christ “which has suffered for our sins and which the Father raised” thus could be understood not only in the context of *Smyrnaeans*, but also other communities grounded in the Passion and resurrection of Christ. It is noteworthy that the warning against a schism equated with a lack of assent τῷ πάθει in IgnPhld 3:3 (where, admittedly, both Ehrman and Holmes render τὸ πάθος as “the passion”) is followed immediately by an appeal to the addressees to be eager to celebrate “one eucharist.” Schoedel is probably right that this is “not because the eucharist was seen as a reenactment of the passion”,⁴⁸ at least not in a literal sense. In addition, while Ignatius is eager to suffer, there is no indication that this is a path for all the Christians. Rather, the “re-enactment” could be said to consist in love for one another and concern for those in need.⁴⁹ In IgnSm 7:1 those who disagree with reality of Jesus’ suffering and with the understanding of the Eucharist as formulated by Ignatius are advised “to love” (or “engage in deeds of love”) so that they may also rise up (συνέφερον δὲ αὐτοῖς ἀγαπᾶν ἵνα καὶ ἀναστῶσιν). It is not surprising thus that earlier in IgnSm 7:1 the Father is said to have raised Jesus “in this kindness.”

While it is in the writings of Ignatius that the use of πάθος in reference to the Passion of Jesus is first attested, it is possible that it had developed in Christian circles prior to Ignatius. It is not used by other “Apostolic Fathers”, apart from Barn 6:7, where it is followed, notably, by a quotation from Isaiah. Martin Elze has suggested that Ignatius’ use of πάθος is due to the influence of the mystery cults.⁵⁰ Yet it would be rather farfetched to state with any confidence what the origin of this term is, especially given that a few quotations from literary sources that Elze provides do not give sufficient evidence of the term’s use in mystery cults.⁵¹ More recently Allen Brent has forcefully argued that Ignatius’ oeuvre

⁴⁷ It is not entirely clear what πάθος with which Jesus was to purify water in IgnEph 18:2 refers to.

⁴⁸ SCHOEDEL, *Ignatius* (see note 14), 198.

⁴⁹ Recall in this context how Paul in 1 Cor 11:17–34 envisages an ideal celebration of the Lord’s Supper as a re-enactment of the proclamation of the death of the Lord “until he comes” (v. 26).

⁵⁰ M. ELZE, *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zur Christologie der Ignatiusbriefe: Habilitationsschrift* (Tübingen: Eberhard-Karls-Universität, 1963), 63–4.

⁵¹ Martin Elze quotes Herodotus, *Hist.* 2,171; Athenagoras, *Apol.* 28; Lukian, *De Dea Syria* 6; and Themistius as quoted by Stobaeus. We note, however, that while the substantive πάθος

differs from much of other early Christian literature in that his letters are best understood against the background of Second Sophistic, including the idea of unity and concord, as well as the “liturgical forms of pagan mystery processions and ... the images borne in them as part of a mystery play, that characterized the central liturgical acts of the religion of the city-states of Asia Minor.”⁵² Brent’s work is illuminating and it sheds light on much of Ignatius’ imagery and concepts. Unity and concord (ὁμόνοια) are important themes in the Ignatian corpus, 2nd century civic discourse is thus a helpful backdrop against which Ignatius’ letters can be read. One may wonder, however, to what extent the motif of “suffering gods” in mystery cults helps us understand the suffering of Ignatius’ God, especially given that the relationship between Christianity and mystery cults has been largely questioned. Are not the similarities between them too superficial?⁵³ While Brent’s account is sophisticated, there is a danger of perceiving similarities while not paying enough attention to the differences. Nonetheless, envisaging Ignatius’ passage through Asia as a dazzling cultic procession is helpful also in that it reminds us of the role that spectacle plays in constructing the meaning of suffering.⁵⁴

One of the writings that is often compared with Ignatius’ letters is 4 Maccabees.⁵⁵ There is indeed a striking overlap of terminology between them, including

does appear in various contexts in reference to gods associated with mystery cults, such as Isis or Dionysius, rather than “suffering,” more often it is in a broader classical sense of “that which happens” or “what one has experienced,” even if negative experiences are also meant. Cf., for example, Plutarch, *De Iside* 358 F; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. Rom.* 2,19.

⁵² A. BRENT, ‘Ignatius and Polycarp: The Transformation of New Testament Traditions in the Context of Mystery Cults’, in *Trajectories* (see note 3), 325–49, here: 326. For more details, cf. IDEM, *Ignatius of Antioch and the Second Sophistic: A Study of Early Christian Transformation of Pagan Culture* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006).

⁵³ The idea that the motif of suffering is especially prominent in mystery cults has been largely discounted in more recent literature on mystery cults. In addition, while the motif may be present in the myths pertaining to gods associated with mysteries, as W. BURKERT, *Ancient Mystery Cults*, Carl Newell Jackson Lectures (Cambridge: HUP, 1987), 74–6, cautions, one must be careful not to limit the myth of a “suffering god” specifically to mystery cults. This is because, on the one hand, tales of suffering are not limited to mythological figures associated with mystery cults, and on the other hand, not all the deities worshipped by adherents of such cults could be classified as “suffering gods,” Mithras being the best known example of the latter. What is more, it may be questioned whether mystery cults as such should be singled out as a specific type of ancient worship, given how fuzzy the boundaries between official civic cult and various mystery cults were in practice. H. BOWDEN, *Mystery Cults of the Ancient World* (Princeton NJ: PUP, 2010), provides a helpful introduction to ancient mystery cults, although, perhaps due to the book being intended for a broader audience, the complexity of how to distinguish between mystery cults and other types of worship in antiquity is not clearly acknowledged.

⁵⁴ As C. EDWARDS, ‘The Suffering Body: Philosophy and Pain in Seneca’s Letters’, in J. I. PORTER (ed.), *Constructions of the Classical Body* (Ann Arbor MI: UMich, 2002), 252–68, here: 252, notes, “the aspect of the spectacular can be seen as crucial to the construction of the meaning of pain.”

⁵⁵ The classic study is O. PERLER, ‘Das vierte Makkabäerbuch, Ignatius von Antiochien und die ältesten Märtyrerberichte’, in *RAC* 25 (1949), 47–72.

a rare term ἀντίψυχον, although in this case, too, one risks drawing parallels too easily, obscuring the differences. There is no sufficient evidence that Ignatius may have known 4 Maccabees, and it is not even clear how they relate chronologically. In terms of worldviews, the authors have in common the importance ascribed to endurance, ὑπομονή, which is also very much at home in 2nd century civic discourse. And yet Ignatius does not share the popular Stoic perspective which pervades 4 Maccabees. The term πάθος occurs in the latter work over sixty times, almost exclusively in reference to emotions which one needs to master. Ignatius' use of the substantive is diametrically opposed to this. While to discuss it would be beyond the scope of the present contribution, let me raise the following question: Could the recurring references to Jesus' Passion, πάθος, be also an expression of Ignatius' subtle polemics with a popular Stoic worldview such as attested in 4 Maccabees?

V. Concluding Remarks

In one of the numerous critical comments on Mel Gibson's (in)famous 2004 film "The Passion of Christ", the following was asserted:

The point of Jesus' death is not that he died horribly but that he died to save us from our sins ... If Jesus had died slipping on a banana peel or quietly in his sleep, he would still, within the context of the Gospels, our creeds, and our faith, have died for our sins because his Father, our God, so deemed it necessary. It is the ultimate sacrifice: the birth of grace.⁵⁶

This quotation reflects a view shared by a number of contemporary Christians that not the suffering, but exclusively the death of Jesus has a salvific significance. Implied in this view is the conviction that the so-called *Sterbensformel* was fixed from very early on as "Jesus *died* for our sins." However, as a glance at early Christian sources shows, neither the exact formulation nor an exclusive focus on the death of Jesus are to be found there.

In this essay I have considered how Ignatius uses expressions based on the early Christian *Sterbensformel*, and how they vary depending on the context. Following a brief overview of all the occurrences in the Ignatian letters, I focused in more detail on a striking assertion in IgnSm 7:1 that the "eucharist is the flesh of our Saviour Jesus Christ, which suffered for our sins, and which the Father in his kindness raised up." I have shown how different elements are echoed in other early Christian literature of the 1st and early 2nd centuries, and are part of wider ongoing debates, although apart from First Corinthians, for none of the other writings do we have sufficient evidence to prove Ignatius' familiarity with them.

⁵⁶ A. FAIZ, 'Gibson's Passion is Disturbing: The Point of Jesus' Death is Not that He Died Horribly but that He Died to Save Us from our Sins [The Passion of the Christ]', in *The Presbyterian Record* 128/4 (2004), 46.

While in other ancient Christian pieces references to enduring or suffering for sins as a rule appear in material quoted or paraphrased from Isaiah 53, in the case of Ignatius such a link is difficult to ascertain, although it cannot be excluded. The participial clause with παθοῦσαν as a predicate, however, can be accounted for in different ways. The controversies concerning the reality of Jesus’ suffering are part of the context, but his usage also needs to be interpreted against his overall notion of suffering and the unparalleled significance that Jesus’ πάθος plays in Ignatius’ letters.

In the majority of studies on the “dying for” formula the focus in the past used to be on its development, and “suffered” was often taken to be a synonym of “died.” Yet this is misleading, for while often ἔπαθεν in this context referred to suffering which eventually led to death, thus encompassing both suffering and death, the point was that suffering was an integral part of the event.⁵⁷ As Judith Perkins observed concerning the significance of suffering in Christianity more generally, it is not self-evident why early Christians “chose to foreground their own suffering in their early texts and why they picked the suffering in their founder’s life to emulate.”⁵⁸

Klaus Wengst in his seminal work on christological formulas makes the following comment concerning the *Sterbensformel*:

Das in der Vergangenheit geschehene Sterben Christi war weder ein schicksalhaftes Ereignis noch nur ein notwendiges Durchgangsstadium zur Herrlichkeit oder lediglich schriftgemäß, sondern es hatte einen in ihm selbst liegenden positiven Sinn. Dem will die Formel Ausdruck geben. Das tut sie mit einer präpositionalen Wendung: ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν.⁵⁹

We could paraphrase his statement and apply it to Ignatius’ use of πάσχω in this context. Suffering was neither accidental nor merely a necessary step, but suffering as such has a salvific dimension.

⁵⁷ How the two were easily collapsed in early Christian discourse can be seen in the various forms of creedal statements and creeds attested throughout the centuries, both in Greek and in Latin. The wide variety there includes early baptismal interrogations in which two participles, *natum et passum*, capture the main point about Jesus’ humanity, but also creeds where suffering and death (or crucifixion) are explicitly stated. Cf. the classic treatment by J. N. D. KELLY, *Early Christian Creeds* (London: Longman, 1972³); cf. W. KINZIG, M. VINZENT, ‘Recent Research on the Origin of the Creed’, in *JTS* 50 (1999), 534–59. While this would need to be further substantiated, one could tentatively suggest that the inclination to use the verb πάσχω in a creedal context to encompass both suffering and death was at least partly related to anti-docetic concerns (the influence of Isaiah 53, as attested in early Christian literature from at least early 2nd century on being another factor, although often the two could be related).

⁵⁸ PERKINS, *Suffering Self* (see note 46), 13. Note that suffering has a prominent place in some New Testament writings, first and foremost Hebrews, but the text does not assert that suffering as such is salvific. While the synoptic Gospels include sayings about the Son of Man (Mt 17:12; Mk 8:31; 9:12; Lk 9:22; 17:25) or the Messiah (Lk 24:26, 46; Acts 3:18; 17:3) who is to suffer, in none of these is the beneficial effect of this suffering made explicit.

⁵⁹ WENGST, *Christologische Formeln* (see note 35), 79–80.