

Reviews

The memory of Ignatius of Antioch. By Frazer MacDiarmid. (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe, 581.) Pp. xii + 271. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2022. €94 (paper). 978 3 16 161499 6
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This study represents the published version of MacDiarmid's Oxford doctoral thesis. The key approach of the analysis is the application of the category of memory as an interpretive tool to understand the meaning and purpose of the writings of Ignatius of Antioch. MacDiarmid is aware of the critiques levelled against memory studies when employed to make claims about historical realities. However, he states that:

[m]y project does not use memory with the (implicit) aim of confirming certain historical facts, nor does it rely on 'memory theory' in a specialist or technical sense. Rather, I believe Ignatius to be a figure whose contours and significance are thrown into particularly sharp relief by the *idea* of memory (p. 4).

In this vein, MacDiarmid employs memory both to analyse what Ignatius sought to memorialise in the so-called middle recension of his letters, and also to assess how Ignatius himself was remembered in the expanded long recension of his writings and in other texts written about him.

After the introduction, the volume is arranged in three parts. The first two interact with the middle recension, while part III focuses upon the long recension. In the first two chapters that constitute part I, MacDiarmid considers how Ignatius redeploys and develops existing memories of Old Testament figures and pagan characters. Here MacDiarmid notes that '[t]here is in Ignatius a relentless and unquestioning Christo-centrism to the act of remembering' (p. 15). From this perspective it is recognised that any act of remembrance of Israel's past without reference to Christ is from Ignatius' perspective a misconstrual of that memory. Of course the Christocentric nature of Ignatius' thought and the way that the religious texts of Judaism are interpreted through a Christological lens are not new insights in themselves. Rather, through the application of memory, MacDiarmid is able to provide another angle on that aspect of Ignatius' thought. This line of enquiry is continued in the second chapter, but with the focus on memories that are derived from the wider thought-world of the ancient Mediterranean (pp. 29–52). For instance, in regard to the various usages of athletic metaphors in his letters it is suggested that Ignatius was drawing upon the widespread memory of the thirty days of games held in Antioch every four years (p. 31). Similarly, Ignatius makes

use of shared cultural memories of pagan cults and perceptions of empire. Here one might seek further clarity to understand why such aspects are better described as cultural memories, rather than perhaps as shared knowledge or background information. Perhaps the reason for this is that the label 'memory' speaks more to the malleability and adaptability of such traditions and their ability to be redeployed for a variety of rhetorical purposes.

In the second part of this volume, MacDiarmid turns to the manner in which, in the middle recension, Ignatius fashions the presentation of the way he wishes to be memorialised. In chapter iii, drawing primarily on Ignatius' *Epistle to the Romans*, the study considers the way in which Ignatius presents himself as a sacrifice. In this regard, MacDiarmid argues that Ignatius views his suffering as Christomorphic, especially 'insofar as it benefits the churches in growth and strengthening' (p. 87). From this perspective it is argued that Ignatius wishes to broker the memorialisation of himself in order that his entire life is viewed as an offering to God. This perspective is a valuable one, but it needs to be balanced with Ignatius' own comments that the current events in his life are also transformative for him personally. Thus he describes the circumstances he was experiencing at the time of writing his letters as reshaping his identity: 'now at last I am beginning to become a disciple' (*Epistle to the Romans* 5.3, cf. *Epistle to the Ephesians* 3.1). From here, MacDiarmid offers a Girardian reading of Ignatius' self-sacrificial language. This approach permits MacDiarmid to perceive that the death of Ignatius provides a model for imitation. Or, as he states the matter, '[i]n Girardian terms, this imitation is not the negative mimetic tendency of Satan to retaliate and victimise, but is the positive mimetic calling of Christ to self-denial and openness to Other' (p. 100).

The final three chapters of the third part of this study offer a fascinating account of the perspective of the long recension and other texts on the figure of Ignatius. Here MacDiarmid skilfully employs the category of memory in a manner that bypasses historical questions and instead probes the way in which the figure of Ignatius continued to shape subsequent debates and theological concerns through his 'remembered profile' (p. 236). First, the long recension is viewed as a type of 'fourth-century Christian biography' (p. 145), although certain *caveats* are provided. In chapter vi a very helpful account of the various theological tendencies of the long recension are described (pp. 155–96). This will be an important point of departure for further work on the long recension. Then MacDiarmid turns to his central concern, the memory of Ignatius in the long recension (pp. 196–203). The act of commemoration within the long recension is seen to be in line with the process of shaping his own memory that Ignatius embarked upon in the middle recension. Here MacDiarmid sees his key insight to be that of problematising the view that the aims of the long recension and the middle recension are distinct, if not diametrically opposed. The commonality is found precisely in the act of memorialisation: 'in the case of the long recension, we encounter a forger whose voice and ethic are profoundly shaped by and around his hero' (p. 203). The final chapter looks at three further examples of the memorialisation of Ignatius that are found in the Antiochene Acts of Ignatius, in John Chrysostom's homily on the Holy Martyr Ignatius and in the Roman Acts of Ignatius (pp. 204–34). Here MacDiarmid finds one of the key points of commonality in these three texts to be 'the memorialisation of Ignatius as one whose suffering and death in some sense benefits others' (p. 232).

As a whole this is an outstanding and ground-breaking study. It illustrates a helpful application of the concept of memory in a manner that is freed from historical concerns and instead looks at reception and tradition. It also provides a deep analysis of the long recension by providing a helpful account of the forger's concerns, while also showing that there is continuity between this later author and Ignatius in their shared concern to shape the memory of Ignatius. As such, this volume is an important contribution to the study of Ignatian writings in their various forms and stages.

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Irenaeus, the Scriptures, and the apostolic writings. Reevaluating the status of the New Testament writings at the end of the second century. By Kenneth Laing. (Library of New Testament Studies, 659.) Pp. x + 213 incl. 1 fig. London–New York: T&T Clark, 2022. £85. 978 0 5677 0193 0

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This work is introduced with the assertion that its subject matter probes ‘the nature and basis of authority of the apostolic writings in the thought of Irenaeus of Lyons, and the ways in which these relate to his conception of divine revelation’ (p. 1). The ‘reevaluation’ alluded to in the title is a re-examination of the consensus view that Irenaeus ‘is held to consider the New Testament writings that he knows and uses to be “scripture”, understood to be equivalent to the status of the Old Testament scriptures’ (p. 2). Laing prefers to designate the Christian texts as the ‘apostolic writings’, rather than Scripture, arguing that

the unique revelatory authority of the apostolic writings in Irenaeus’ thought does not arise from (or lead to) a notion of their scriptural status. In positive terms, it is contended that the apostolic writings are conceived of instead as the written record of the *apostolic tradition*, acquiring their unique revelatory authority on this basis as a result of their perceived apostolic origin ... apostolicity, not inspiration, is the foundation of the unique authority of the apostolic writings (p. 5).

In support of the thesis, the study is divided into two sections. The first, ‘Assessing the Traditional Interpretation’, is a careful examination of the relevant Irenaeus references to Scripture and to the authority of sacred texts in general. These are excellent chapters and fill a much-needed gap in Irenaeus and New Testament canon research. Laing’s cataloguing and analysis of the second-century bishop’s writings is exhaustive, yet not exhausting. Interacting with the key Latin, surviving Greek and, on occasion, even a few Armenian terms, the volume effectively demonstrates previously under-appreciated features of the texts. Among the most important contributions is the argument that Irenaeus – in the vast majority of instances – refers only to Jewish writings when using the term ‘scripture’ (*graphie*). Moreover, the study shows that the term is not regularly used for the early Christian texts. Concerning the handful of instances where the opposite seems to be true, Laing carefully examines the larger context of those pericopes and offers convincing, alternative readings (to the consensus view which argues that they do prove a scriptural status equal to the Jewish Scriptures). If there are a few instances where his interpretations may seem less certain, the cumulative