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Charismatic Patronage and Brokerage
Episcopal Leadership in the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch

by

© Ritva H. Williams

December 1997



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Abbreviations

Books and Periodicals

AAAnthr.	American Anthropologist	JSNT	Journal for the Study of the New Testament
ASR	Americal Sociological Review		
ATR	Anglican Theological Review	JSNTSup.	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
BAGD	W. Bauer, W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich and F. W. Danker, <u>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</u> (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1958)	JTS	Journal of Theological Studies
		LCL	Loeb Classical Library
		NovT	Novum Testamentum
Bib.	Biblica	NovTSup	Novum Testamentum Supplements
BTB	Biblical Theology Bulletin		
Bib.Tr.	Bible Translator	NTS	New Testament Studies
CBQ	Catholic Biblical Quarterly	RSR	Religious Studies Review
CH	Church History	SC	Second Century
ETL	Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses	Soc.Res.	Social Research
		SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
EvQ	Evangelical Quarterly	SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
HTR	Harvard Theological Review		
Int.	Interpretation	Soc.Inq.	Sociological Inquiry
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature	TDNT	G. Kittel and G. Friedrichs (eds), <u>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</u> , 10 Volumes (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmanns, 1964-76)
JEH	Journal of Ecclesiastical History		
JES	Journal of Ecumenical Studies	TS	Theological Studies
JECS	Journal of Early Christian Studies	VC	Vigiliae Christianae
JRel.	Journal of Religion	VCSup	Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae
JRH	Journal of Religious History		

Ancient Writers

1 Clem.

1 Clement

Did.

Didache

Eusebius

Hist. eccl.

Historia Ecclesiastica

Gos. Thom.

Gospel of Thomas
(NHC 2,2)

Ignatius

Eph.

Ephesians

Mag.

Magnesians

Tral.

Trallians

Rom.

Romans

Phld.

Philadelphians

Smyr.

Smyrnaeans

Pol.

Polycarp

Polycarp

Phil.

Philippians

Plutarch

Self-Praise

περί του εαυτὸν ἐπαινεῖν ἀνεπιφθονῶς

“On Praising Oneself
Inoffensively,”

Plutarch’s Moralia VII,
(LCL, 1984)

Abstract

The goal of this dissertation is to engage in a comprehensive and systematic examination of the writings of Ignatius of Antioch on the subject of episcopal leadership. Working on the premise that the episcopacy is both an historical and a social phenomenon in the early church this study will attempt to combine historical and social-science methods of investigation. A review of 20th century scholarly work on the Ignatian correspondence will provide a point of departure for this work. In particular three issues raised by contemporary scholarship will be addressed. (1) With respect to the question of the historical plausibility of Ignatius' views on episcopal leadership, this study will seek to understand how his concept of the episcopacy fits into early 2nd century Christianity as it was developing in Syria. An examination of Matthew, the *Didache*, the Johannine Gospel and Epistles, and the *Gospel of Thomas* will be the basis of a reconstruction of leadership trends that are roughly contemporary with Ignatius. A comparison of these texts with the Syrian bishop's writings will show that his views seem to be partially rooted in developments that were preserved by the writers of the *Didache* and the Johannine texts. (2) Ignatius' notions about episcopal leadership also reflect hierarchical social arrangements that were prevalent in the Greco-Roman households which formed the immediate social context of the early church. Patronage was the means by which patriarchal authority was extended beyond the household into economic, political and religious relationships. The patron-broker-client model of social organization will be presented as an unconscious *emic* model shaping the way many early Christian writers, including Ignatius, understood and expressed the relationship between God and humans, and between church leaders and their congregations. (3) Weber's typology of authority, together with his work on the routinization of charisma, will be employed as an *etic* model to classify and compare the different leadership preferences displayed in the early Christian texts under review. This analysis will show that Ignatius' own personal authority was of the charismatic type deriving from his liminal position as a martyr-elect. He argues that bishops are chosen by the Holy Spirit to occupy an office which clothes them with "grace" and with spiritual gifts. These arguments point to a conception of episcopal authority that may be described *etically* as being of the routinized charismatic type. In this respect Ignatius moves beyond, and in a somewhat different direction than other early Syrian Christian writers.

1.0 Introduction

In the latter years of Emperor Trajan's reign (98-117 CE) Ignatius, a Christian bishop in the city of Antioch, was arrested and condemned to die by fighting with beasts in the arena at Rome.¹ The circumstances which led to his conviction and execution remain a mystery; whether he was a victim of pagan persecution or internal Christian wrangling are matters of speculation.² What is known, however, is that as Ignatius was transported in chains by a small military detachment through the province of Asia Minor he was visited by members of five local churches. To each of these congregations he sent a letter thanking them for their kindness to him, warning them against deviant teachings and practices, urging them to stand in solidarity with church leaders, and asking them to pray for, or to send messengers to, the church in Antioch.³ Ignatius wrote two other letters during his journey, one contained personal advice for his fellow bishop Polycarp of Smyrna, the other asked the church in Rome to do nothing to prevent his martyrdom. These seven letters are among the very few Christian documents to have survived from the early 2nd century,⁴ and are thus an important source of information about the early church, and especially about the development of church leadership roles.

"Do nothing without the bishop!" is the passionate cry of Ignatius as he meets with, and writes to, the Christians of Asia Minor (*Phld.* 7.2). He insists that without a bishop, elders and deacons "nothing can be called a church" (*Tral.* 3.1). Indeed, in all but one of his letters the Syrian bishop ardently defends and promotes this threefold church order, even going so far as to describe himself as a sacrificial offering, dying for the cause of those subject to bishop, elders and deacons (*Pol.* 6.1).

¹ The general time frame for Ignatius' martyrdom is dependent on Eusebius *Hist.eccl.* 3.21-22, 36.

² Glanville Downey, *A History of Antioch in Syria from Seleucus to the Arab Conquest*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1961), 292-4, treats Ignatius as a victim of pagan persecution. For the notion that internal disputes in the church created a disturbance of the peace which led to Ignatius' arrest see P. N. Harrison, *Polycarp's Two Epistles to the Philippians*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1936), 229, and William R. Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch: A Commentary on the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch*, (Hermeneia; Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1985), 11. Simon Tugwell, *The Apostolic Fathers*, (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1989), 108, suggests that Ignatius was denounced by members of his own congregation; while J. Rius-Camps, *The Four Authentic Letters of Ignatius the Martyr*, (Rome: Pontificium Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1980), 142; and Christine Trevett, "Ignatius 'To the Romans' and I Clement LIV-LVI," *VC* 43 (1989) 35-52, pp.47-48, suggest that he turned himself in.

³ Virginia Corwin, *St. Ignatius and Christianity in Antioch*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1960), 21.

⁴ Apparently due to the efforts of Polycarp (*Phil.* 13.2).

Ignatius' particular emphasis on this form of church leadership in which the bishop is distinguished from, and elevated above, elders and deacons put his writings at the centre of 16th and 17th century theological disputes over the historical basis and legitimacy of various forms of church government. Catholics and Anglicans used these letters as evidence of the early date of the monarchical episcopacy, while Protestants and Puritans dismissed them as forgeries representing later developments in church history.⁵ The controversies were compounded by the presence of three different versions of the Ignatian epistles.

19th century scholarship, however, produced an almost unanimous consensus that the seven letters of the Middle Recension are authentic documents dating from the first decades of the 2nd century.⁶ As a consequence Ignatius emerges as one of the earliest, if not the first, Christian writer to clearly describe and promote a church order dominated by a single bishop. Given the subsequent significance of episcopal leadership in the church, one would expect Ignatius' writings on this subject to have been thoroughly scrutinized by numerous generations of scholars. Yet a work devoted solely to a comprehensive examination of Ignatius' conception of the episcopacy has yet to appear. This means that an important issue in the Syrian bishop's letters remains only partially understood, resulting in an incomplete picture of the origins and development of the episcopacy. It is this state of affairs which I wish to address. As a prelude to setting out the specific objectives and methods that will direct my work, it is necessary to begin with a brief review and assessment of 20th century scholarship on Ignatius and the question of church leadership.

1.1 Review of Scholarly Work

In this century Ignatius' views on episcopal leadership have been treated within the context of resolving other more general questions. Out of the wealth of literature available eight works have been selected for review. None of these scholars has produced a major work (i.e. a book) devoted solely to the topic of Ignatius' understanding of the episcopacy, rather each has dealt with this subject

⁵ See discussions in J. B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, Part II. S. Ignatius. S. Polycarp, Vol. 1 (London, UK: Macmillan, 1889), 330-4; Harry O. Maier, *The Social Setting of the Ministry as Reflected in the Writings of Hermas, Clement and Ignatius*, (Dissertations SR 1; Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1991), 1-2.

⁶ Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 3-5; Lightfoot, 70-1; 328.

as it relates to some other primary interest. These can be broadly grouped together as addressing one of three larger issues: (1) the authenticity and early dating of Ignatius' letters, (2) the identity of the Syrian bishop's opponents, and (3) the historical and social origins of church leadership.

The challenges of Joly and Rius-Camps to the consensus concerning the authenticity and early dating of Ignatius' correspondence depend, in part, upon the presence and role of bishops in those letters. Joly regards the Syrian bishop's statements about church leadership as descriptive,⁷ and seeks confirmation of the presence and powers of bishops as described by Ignatius in the churches of Asia Minor at the beginning of the 2nd century. Joly argues that such corroborating evidence is lacking in late 1st century New Testament texts and in the one surviving letter of Polycarp,⁸ but is found in documents written after the year 160.⁹ On the basis of this silence in the earlier writings¹⁰, Joly contends that Ignatius' letters cannot have been written during the reign of Trajan. He thereby declares as inadmissible an important piece of evidence that might help us understand how and why the church moved in a space of 60 years from the leadership of councils of presbyter-bishops and deacons *circa* 100 CE, to the leadership of a single bishop together with a council of elders, assisted by deacons *circa* 160 CE.

Rius-Camps perceives in Ignatius' letters a contradiction concerning the territorial range of episcopal supervision. In *Romans* 2.2 Ignatius describes himself as the bishop of Syria, suggesting a provincial jurisdiction, while *Philadelphians* 10.2 seems to limit episcopal authority to churches clustered in and around a particular city. In Rius-Camps' opinion these references represent irreconcilable positions. Since Irenaeus (ca. 180) seems to describe Polycarp as bishop of Asia Minor residing in Smyrna, Rius-Camps concludes that in Ignatius' time bishops were in charge of entire provinces.¹¹ All references to bishops in individual cities in Ignatius' letters, therefore, must be the work of a 3rd century forger. These, and other considerations, are the basis of Rius-Camps thesis that

⁷ R. Joly, *Le Dossier d'Ignace d'Antioche*, (Éditions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 1979), 75.

⁸ *Ibid*, 75-80.

⁹ *Ibid*, 83-5, where he insists that the subordination of elders and deacons to bishops, the use of the term *presbyterion*, and the power of bishops to approve marriages are not attested until the 3rd century.

¹⁰ Joly's arguments are critiqued by Schoedel, "Are the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch Authentic?" *RSR* 6 (1980) 196-200.

¹¹ Rius-Camps, 30-33.

only the four letters written from Smyrna (*Romans, Magnesians, Trallians, Ephesians*) are authentic while the other three (*Philadelphians, Smyrnaeans, Polycarp*) are forgeries.¹² Rius-Camps' reconstruction of the jurisdiction of episcopal authority in the time of Ignatius is methodologically faulty relying as it does on a tenuous reading of a late 2nd century text.¹³

The arguments of Joly and Rius-Camps are not generally regarded as convincing with respect to the authenticity and early dating of Ignatius' letters,¹⁴ nor do they contribute much if anything to our understanding of episcopal leadership in the Syrian bishop's thought. Their arguments, however, have served as a springboard for the endeavours of Australian scholar, Allen Brent, whose writings include a refutation of Rius-Camps' assertion that the Ignatian forger drew his ideas from the 3rd century Syrian church order, the *Didascalia*.¹⁵ In another article, Brent concedes that Joly has raised an important question concerning Ignatius: how to account for his "apparently unique concept of church Order uncorroborated by contemporary documents."¹⁶ Brent addresses this legitimate problem by asserting that Ignatius' description of church order is "not an objective record" of how things might have appeared to his contemporaries, but "is the idealized product of his own mystical imagination, unique and individual but not chronologically false."¹⁷ In other words, Ignatius' writings on the subject are more prescriptive than they are descriptive. They set out, as an ideal, a tripartite church order that may not have been wholly realized in practice at the time of writing, but which was just beginning to emerge.

Brent's motives for defending an early dating of the Ignatian epistles are revealed in his book Cultural Episcopacy and Ecumenism, in which he seeks to construct a model of church leadership to meet the needs of aboriginal peoples in Australasia. In this task he regards the letters of Ignatius as

¹² Ibid, 129-243.

¹³ See criticisms in Schoedel, "Are the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch Authentic?" 197-8.

¹⁴ Schoedel, "Are the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch Authentic?" 196-200; and C. P. Hammond Bammel, "Ignatian Problems," *JTS* 33 (1982) 62-97, especially pp. 62-77.

¹⁵ Allen Brent, "The Relations between Ignatius and the *Didascalia*," *SC* 8/3 (1991) 129-156.

¹⁶ Allen Brent, "The Ignatian Epistles and the Threefold Ecclesiastical Order," *JRH* 17/1 (1992) 18-32, p.18.

¹⁷ Ibid, 19.

of supreme importance because they constitute "the first systematic statement of what makes a group of Christian individuals into a corporate society," a different and distinct culture within a particular social environment.¹⁸ Drawing upon the sociological insights of Durkheim, Brent interprets the Ignatian bishops as collective representations giving an outward and visible form to a value system in which church leaders incarnate liturgically Father, Son and Spirit-filled apostles, and wear the "corporate personalities" of the communities they lead.¹⁹ Brent argues that Ignatius' church order is not patterned after any existing Jewish or Greco-Roman models, but signals the emergence of a distinctive Christian culture.²⁰ The Syrian bishop's accomplishment in church order is explained by Brent in terms of a synthesis of the binary relations (as developed by Lévi-Strauss) between order/charisma and in history/beyond history.²¹

While it is impossible to fault Brent's objective of trying to find a model of church leadership which could do justice to the needs of aboriginal peoples the world over, his concept of a representational cultural episcopate resting on Ignatius is built on shaky foundations. Brent is quite correct in regarding the Syrian bishop's letters as being primarily prescriptive documents that seek to encourage their readers to adopt certain social and cultural positions and attitudes over against others. In doing so, however, he completely ignores the social and cultural context out of which this distinctive Christian culture emerges. Ignatius is a 1st century Syrian bishop writing to Greek speaking urban dwellers in Asia Minor; his letters are filled with topics and images that were commonplace in Greco-Roman²² city life. This is the raw material that Ignatius takes up and

¹⁸ Allen Brent, Cultural Episcopacy and Ecumenism: Representative Ministry in Church History from the Age of Ignatius of Antioch to the Reformation with Special Reference to Contemporary Ecumenism, (Studies in Christian Mission 6; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992), 66.

¹⁹ Ibid, 88.

²⁰ Ibid, 88-91.

²¹ Ibid, 92-7.

²² "Greco-Roman" is used throughout this work as a convenient shorthand to describe the common features of Mediterranean urban life that emerged from the Roman political dominance of Greek and/or Hellenized social groups. These elements that linked the cities of the Mediterranean include the use of Greek as a common language of commerce and communication, civic organization, education, religious institutions, patronage, the value of honour, etc. These common institutions enabled peoples of diverse cultures to interact with each other in the general context of the Roman Empire. They were naturally subject to influence from a wide variety of local cultures which provided the specific circumstances in which they operated. See for example Wayne A. Meeks, The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul, (New Haven, CT:

reconfigures in his particular conception of episcopal authority, and not some "mystical vision" as Brent insists.²³

The challenges of Joly and Rius-Camps to the authenticity and early dating of the Ignatian correspondence highlight the paucity and ambiguity of corroborating evidence with respect to the presence and powers of bishops at the beginning of the 2nd century. Brent resolves this difficulty by arguing that Ignatius' writings on this topic are not so much descriptive as they are prescriptive, setting forth an ideal which the Syrian bishop advocates but which is only beginning to emerge, if it exists at all. Brent's assessment of Ignatius' letters is limited, however, to a one-sided sociological interpretation of a few passages that he believes evoke a distinctive Christian culture. Brent makes no attempt to understand the relationship of those passages within the historical, social and cultural context in which they are rooted, and indeed denies that there is any connection between Ignatius' notion of episcopal leadership and any models prevalent in Greco-Roman or early Jewish society.

Scholars working on the question of the identity of Ignatius' opponents have taken the relationship of the Syrian bishop to his social situation much more seriously. Both Corwin and Trevett use the Ignatian correspondence to reconstruct the situation of the church at Antioch. Corwin produces a picture of a Christian community in which Ignatius is the spokesman for a centre party caught between proto-gnostic docetics and a group of Jewish Essenes who have partly accommodated themselves to Christianity.²⁴ Ignatius' emphasis on congregational unity under the leadership of a united ministry, she insists, is best understood as a response to this situation.²⁵ In an interesting move, Corwin argues that Ignatius patterned the role of bishop on that of the "overseer" or "censor" of the Essenes who were his opponents in Antioch.²⁶ Although there is little evidence of

Yale University Press, 1983) 9-12; Peter Garnsey and Richard Saller, The Roman Empire: Economy, Society and Culture, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1987) 5-19.

²³ Brent, Cultural Episcopacy, 86-87, 94 where charisma points to "the autochthonous origins of the church sprung from the mysterious realm of the Spirit without natural origin." See also Brent, "Ignatius and Ecclesiastical Order," 19; and Brent, "History and Eschatological Mysticism in Ignatius of Antioch," ETL 54 (1988) 309-29.

²⁴ Corwin, 52-63.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 81.

²⁶ Corwin, 83-84; also B.E. Thiering, "Mebaqquer and Episkopos in the Light of the Temple Scroll," JBL 100 (1981) 59-74.

an Essene presence in Antioch,²⁷ Corwin's thesis does try to find a local Syrian model for the role of bishops, and seeks to explain the emergence of episcopal leadership in relation to the situation in Antioch. Unfortunately she attempts to reconstruct that situation almost wholly on the basis of Ignatius' letters which are addressed to churches in Asia Minor. A larger data set emerging from *and* addressing Syrian concerns is needed in order to produce a reasonably accurate picture of conditions in early 2nd century Antioch.

Trevett uses the letters of Ignatius alongside Matthew and the *Didache* to reconstruct the nature of the opposition which the Syrian bishop faced in Antioch. She suggests that Ignatius had to deal with docetics, judaizers, and anti-episcopal activists in his home congregation.²⁸ Noting the importance of charismatic, prophetic ministries in early Syrian Christianity, Trevett argues that this ideal had not been lost in Ignatius' day. The Syrian bishop was himself a prophet who used his charismatic powers, and not his episcopal authority, to counter the anti-episcopal tendencies of some Christians.²⁹ Ignatius was also concerned that his fellow bishops should not be found lacking in *charisma*, and singled out for special support silent bishops.³⁰ These efforts, Trevett suggests, were a response to Christians like those addressed by the *Didache* and Matthew who valued teaching and prophetic ministries.³¹ Trevett's article improves on Corwin's approach by making greater use of other Syrian materials, and raises two related issues which call for further investigation. The anti-episcopal activists need to be identified with greater precision. Are they in any way connected with judaizing and/or docetic tendencies? The relationship between charisma or prophecy and church order begs for a detailed and nuanced assessment. There is a real irony involved in a prophetic figure endorsing and promoting a form of episcopal leadership which, asserts Trevett, "threatened to exclude the exercise of the prophetic gift."³² This may prove to be one of the most interesting features of Ignatius' thought.

²⁷ Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 16; H. Musurillo, "Ignatius of Antioch: Gnostic or Essene?" *IS* 22 (1961) 103-10.

²⁸ C. Trevett, "Prophecy and Anti-Episcopal Activity: A Third Error Combated by Ignatius?" *JEH* 34 (1983) 1-18, pp.3-4.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 5-6, 9, 17-8.

³⁰ *Ibid*, 8-9.

³¹ *Ibid*, 7-12.

³² *Ibid*, 18.

Corwin and Trevett have been criticized for assuming too quickly that the opponents addressed in Asia Minor are the same as those confronted by Ignatius in Antioch.³³ They are, nevertheless, right in their premise that the Syrian bishop's ideas about church leadership (and other things) were formed within the social and cultural context of Antioch. The challenge is to find a way to reconstruct that context without relying too heavily on Ignatius' own letters which are addressed to Christians in another location. In addition Corwin's and Trevett's work raises a number of questions concerning the origins of Ignatius' ideas about episcopal leadership. Might he have found a role model among his opponents as Corwin suggests? What sort of Christians in Syria might have opposed the establishment of bishops, and why? What is the relationship between prophets, bishops and anti-episcopal activity?

Streeter, von Campenhausen, and Maier have all addressed the question of the relationship between prophecy and bishops in Ignatius' writings within the context of larger works on the origins and development of church leadership roles. Streeter advances the thesis that by the end of the 1st century "there existed in different provinces of the Roman Empire, different systems of church government."³⁴ His work is, therefore, arranged geographically with the letters of Ignatius appearing together with the *Didache* in his chapter on the church in Syria. Streeter asserts that these two Syrian witnesses reflect "types of church order at the furthest possible remove from one another," and seeks to reconcile the apparent conflict between the two.³⁵ While the *Didache* urges congregations to appoint bishops and deacons, it indicates that the prophet who settles permanently in the community is to be regarded as its high priest celebrating the Eucharist as much as he likes and living off the first-fruits of community members. Such a resident prophet, Streeter argues, would have been "to all intents and purposes a monarchical bishop."³⁶

Streeter maintains that Ignatius' "over-enthusiastic defence" of the threefold church order of

³³ See for example Maier, 147.

³⁴ B. H. Streeter, The Primitive Church studied with reference to the origins of the Christian ministry, (London, UK: Macmillan and Co., 1930), ix.

³⁵ Ibid, 140-1.

³⁶ Ibid, 144, 150-1.

bishop, elders and deacons is evidence that it is of recent origin and is not yet securely established.³⁷ The gulf between this system of leadership and that of the *Didache* is bridged by Ignatius himself whose prophetic seizures and trance practice indicate that he was a prophet.³⁸ This bishop of Antioch, Streeter implies, was a resident prophet for whom the consolidation of church order in the face of the attractions of heretical teachers and the tendency to form independent groups became an *idée fixe*.³⁹ One of the "chief weapons" wielded by Ignatius in his crusade for episcopal authority, according to Streeter, was the document known as *1 Clement* "with its stress on the necessity of discipline under a ministry deriving authority from Apostolic succession."⁴⁰ Streeter refuses to be put off by the fact that this document originates in Rome, is addressed to Corinth, and reflects forms of church leadership prevalent in those cities and *not* in Syria. Undaunted, Streeter argues that Ignatius misinterpreted *1 Clement* by reading it through the lens of the *Didache*.⁴¹

The strength of Streeter's thesis is that it places Ignatius within the context of Syrian Christianity and seeks the origins of the leadership roles he promotes in that milieu. Particularly suggestive is Streeter's contention that the resident prophet of the *Didache* may be a forerunner of the Ignatian bishop. He does not, however, satisfactorily explain the transition from the *Didache*'s resident prophet leading alongside multiple bishops and deacons to Ignatius' single bishop ruling over, and with, elders and deacons. Where did the elders come from? Streeter's argument that the gap between these two systems of church leadership is bridged by Ignatius' misreading of *1 Clement* is problematic. His contention that Ignatius knew this document rests on one oblique reference to the Roman church as having "taught others" (*Rom.* 3.1), Ignatius' silence concerning church leadership in his letter to the church at Rome, and the popularity of Clement from the 2nd to 5th centuries in Syria as the pseudonymous writer of church orders.⁴² Not only is Streeter's argument tenuous, it

³⁷ Ibid, 163-4.

³⁸ Ibid, 152, 165-7.

³⁹ Ibid, 165, 173-5.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 155, 177.

⁴¹ Ibid, 152-9.

⁴² Ibid, 152-9.

ignores the significant differences between *1 Clement* and Ignatius, especially the stress on apostolic succession in the former and its complete absence in the latter.

Von Campenhausen's project is to set out the historical evidence which demonstrates the mutual relationship and importance of charisma and office in the early church.⁴³ In organizing his work, von Campenhausen places the letters of Ignatius alongside *1 Clement* and the Pastoral Epistles as the major witnesses for the beginnings of official authority. He treats the Ignatian epistles descriptively, asserting that they reveal "an advanced stage" of development in which the system of monarchical episcopacy is already in place. Von Campenhausen relates this to Ignatius' Syrian background and the particular circumstances of life in Antioch in a general way without giving any specifics.⁴⁴ When he does speculate on the origins of Ignatius' particular view, von Campenhausen suggests that they might be connected with Syrian prophetic and/or gnostic movements. In his estimation, however, Ignatius is "neither a prophet in the Pauline sense nor a gnostic in the heretical."⁴⁵

Von Campenhausen notes that for Ignatius the bishop is the centre of the congregation and is vested with all important functions: leading worship, dispensing the sacraments, commissioning worship leaders, authorizing marriages, and instructing the congregation in order to save its members from false teaching.⁴⁶ In spite of the bishop's importance, von Campenhausen asserts that Ignatius marshals no special arguments in support of episcopal authority. This alleged lack of explicit argumentation makes it difficult for von Campenhausen to define the nature of episcopal authority as it is conceived by Ignatius. He notes that the bishop's role is "neither a specific commission which he has received nor a clearly defined official ministry." Ignatius' conception of the episcopal role displays, according to von Campenhausen, "a distinctive combination of pneumatic and official or ecclesiastical thinking,"⁴⁷ in which a bishop is expected to carry out his ministry in such a way that

⁴³ H. von Campenhausen, Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power in the Church of the First Three Centuries, (transl. J. A. Baker; London, UK: Adam & Charles Black, 1969), 2-3.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 97.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 106.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 101.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 102-4.

it is clear to all "that he possesses genuine, divine legitimation."⁴⁸

Von Campenhausen suggests important categories for understanding Ignatius, but he never defines what he means by "pneumatic," "official," "ecclesiastical," or any of the other terms that he uses, such as "charisma" and "office." The result of this lack of precision and clarity is evident in Von Campenhausen's description of Ignatius' ideas as pneumatic and spiritual, but not prophetic. What is the difference between being a prophet and being pneumatic? How are prophets and pneumatics related to the concepts of charisma and office? This shortcoming in von Campenhausen's work highlights the need for clearly articulated definitions and models in any comparative analysis of Ignatius' conception of episcopal authority. Although he himself does not pursue the matter, von Campenhausen does point to Syrian Christian movements as possible sources for Ignatius' views on church leadership.

Maier makes explicit use of sociological models and ideal types in order to provide "an account of the origins and development of the ministry in the Christian communities represented by the writings of Hermas, Clement and Ignatius."⁴⁹ He argues that households provide the social setting for the emergence of leadership structures, and that typical church leaders were "*patres-familias* with houses large enough to accommodate meetings."⁵⁰ Maier treats Ignatius' letters as reflecting primarily the situation of churches in Asia Minor, and reconstructs their household context with information from the Johannine Epistles and the apocryphal Acts of the Apostles.⁵¹ Using Ignatius' correspondence and the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, Maier draws a portrait of Polycarp as a well-to-do man who invited the church into his home for common meetings. The Smyrnaean bishop is, according to Maier, a typical house-church patron who plays a central role in the leadership of the church in his city.⁵²

Noting that Ignatius never makes use of his episcopal authority, Maier argues that the Syrian

⁴⁸ Ibid, 105.

⁴⁹ Maier, 2.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 4.

⁵¹ Ibid, 148-153.

⁵² Ibid, 155-6.

bishop fits Weber's charismatic authority type. Ignatius engages in prophetic speech and possesses extraordinary spiritual knowledge. In addition, his status as a prisoner for Christ and martyr-elect enhances the Syrian bishop's prestige, particularly in light of the sectarian nature of the Asian churches.⁵³ Maier asserts that Ignatius uses his charismatic authority in a protective and innovative fashion to protect and insulate the Christian communities from the effects of false teaching by articulating definitions of belief, and by placing all aspects of community life under the supervision of local church leaders.⁵⁴ Maier interprets Ignatius' advocacy of the threefold order sociologically as an effort to legitimate local structures of authority by linking them with the "sacred defining symbols of the group."⁵⁵ Maier concludes that hierarchical social arrangements arising out of the church's social setting in the household "helped to shape Ignatius' reflection on the relationship between the heavenly and earthly hierarchy," and this in turn reinforced those arrangements.⁵⁶

Maier's thesis provides a solid foundation for further social science examinations of church leadership in the letters of Ignatius. Taking seriously the destination of the Ignatian correspondence, Maier shows clearly and plausibly how the bishop's letters might have influenced the development of leadership structures in those churches. In doing so, however, Maier leaves unanswered certain questions concerning the origins of Ignatius' views. Given that Ignatius was a Syrian bishop whose experiences of church leadership occurred in Antioch, what social factors there influenced him and contributed to his advocacy of episcopal leadership? Although Maier describes Ignatius as a charismatic leader, he says nothing explicitly about the authority of bishops in general. Was Polycarp also a charismatic leader, or did his authority flow from his status as a house-church patron? Was Polycarp a bishop *because* he was a house-church patron? What other factors, if any, were involved in the selection or emergence of church leaders according to Ignatius? Maier asserts that hierarchical social arrangements arising from the household setting of the church are both reflected in and reinforced by episcopal leadership; he does not, however, explicate what these social arrangements

⁵³ Ibid, 158-70.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 170-1.

⁵⁵ Ibid, 180-2.

⁵⁶ Ibid, 187.

are. Which particular social relationships are replicated in the leadership of the church?

Streeter, von Campenhausen and Maier all treat episcopal leadership in the letters of Ignatius as a historical and social phenomenon in a particular context. Within the historical setting of early Syrian Christianity, Streeter seeks to establish a link between the role of the bishop as understood by Ignatius and that of the resident prophet of the *Didache*. Von Campenhausen seeks to understand the Syrian bishop's advocacy of episcopal authority within the context of a mutual relationship between charisma and office without explaining the exact nature of that relationship. Maier explores the connection between church leadership in Ignatius' letters and its social setting within households in Asia Minor. Each of these works points to potentially fruitful avenues of investigation.

1.2 A Point of Departure - Responding to the Issues Raised by Contemporary Scholars

This review of 20th century scholarly work raises a number of specific issues which need to be addressed. Joly, Rius-Camps and Brent raise the question of the historical plausibility of Ignatius' conception of episcopal authority in the first decades of the 2nd century. There are questions as to whether this threefold church order was actually in place in the communities addressed by Ignatius.⁵⁷ The Syrian bishop's contacts with Christians in Asia Minor were largely limited to prison visits. Only in Philadelphia and Smyrna was the Syrian bishop able to actually meet with local Christians, engaging in a debate in the former location (*Phld.* 7.1-8.2) and making the acquaintance of a number of persons in the latter (*Smyr.* 13; *Pol.* 8.2).⁵⁸ It is entirely possible that Ignatius attributed titles to Polycarp and the other church leaders which they might not have claimed for themselves and which may not have yet been widely used in Asia Minor.⁵⁹ What this means is that Ignatius' exhortations on the subject of church leadership are probably more prescriptive than they are descriptive. Their chronological authenticity does not depend on the presence or absence of bishops in Asia Minor at the beginning of the 2nd century, but on the plausibility of episcopal leadership emerging in the

⁵⁷ Maier, 177; Trevett, "Prophecy and Anti-Episcopal Activity," 3-4; Brent, "Ignatius and Ecclesiastical Order," 19; P. Burke, "The Monarchical Episcopate at the End of the First Century," *JES* 7 (1980) 499-518.

⁵⁸ Brent, "Ignatius and Ecclesiastical Order," 19-20, takes the view that even in Philadelphia and Smyrna local members had to visit Ignatius in his confinement.

⁵⁹ Maier, 181; Brent, "Ignatius and Ecclesiastical Order," 23; Joly, 78-85.

environment in which Ignatius' thinking was formed. Unless he invented the concept *ex nihilo* its roots are most likely to be found in Antioch and in Syria. Thus with respect to the question of historical plausibility, then, this study will ask how Ignatius' concept of the episcopacy fits into early 2nd century Christianity as it was developing in Syria. The main focus will be to determine if Ignatius' ideas could have originated in early Syrian Christian circles and to identify which ones. Any conclusions reached on this question will have the secondary effect of supporting the early dating of the Ignatian corpus.

This immediately brings us to the problem highlighted in the work of Corwin and Trevett: how to reconstruct the Syrian situation out of letters addressed to churches in Asia Minor. The socio-historical context of Ignatius' writings includes *both* the situation in Syria from which he emerges *and* the situation in Asia Minor that he is addressing. His letters reveal much about practical problems confronting Christians in Asia Minor, yet his solutions to those problems cannot help but to reflect his Syrian background.⁶⁰ In particular what Ignatius has to say about episcopal leadership emerges from and reproduces in some way his own experience as a church leader in Antioch. Concerning the role of bishops, therefore, Ignatius should be regarded as primarily representing Syrian developments. In reconstructing these developments, however, the Syrian bishop's correspondence must be used cautiously because it is addressed to Asia Minor and, even more importantly, Ignatius never explicitly describes the situation in Syria or in Antioch. Instead we must examine *other* Syrian documents in order to get a sense of how leadership issues were being handled in various Christian communities in that region. The result will not be a precise reconstruction of Ignatius' specific situation; rather what will emerge is a generalized picture of Syrian developments with which Ignatius' conception of episcopal leadership may be compared and contrasted. In this task the way has been marked out to a certain extent by Streeter's exploration of the relationship between Ignatius and the *Didache*, Trevett's appeal to the *Didache* alongside Matthew, and by von Campenhausen's suggestion that we look to Syrian prophetic and gnostic movements. The documents to be used in this reconstruction of leadership patterns in early Syrian Christian communities include Matthew, the *Didache*, the Johannine Epistles and Gospel, and the *Gospel of Thomas*.

⁶⁰ John P. Meier, "Matthew and Ignatius: A Response to William R. Schoedel," in David Balch (ed), Social History of the Matthean Community, (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1991) 178-86, here 178-9.

Although this essay will not focus in any direct way on the question of the identity of Ignatius' opponents either in Antioch or in Asia Minor, it may nevertheless contribute something to that discussion in a roundabout way. An examination of the Syrian evidence, for instance, will reveal that different communities idealized different models of leadership. Matthew's ideal leader is the scribe, the *Didache* urges the appointment of bishops and deacons to serve alongside or in place of prophets and teachers, Johannine prophets pave the way for pastors, while the *Gospel of Thomas* idealizes socially radical charismatics. When these are compared and contrasted to Ignatius' concept of episcopal authority it will become evident that he rejects the Matthean scribal model as well as Thomas' socially radical charismatic ideal, adopting and combining the Johannine pastoral paradigm with the structure of the *Didache*. An assessment of those leadership patterns rejected by Ignatius in conjunction with statements about his opponents may throw some light on the identity of these people. Although the scope of the present work does not extend to this last step, this dissertation may at least indicate some avenues for future investigation.

Maier argues that hierarchical social arrangements arising from the social setting of the house-church are both reflected in and reinforced by the leadership structure advocated by Ignatius without specifying precisely what those social arrangements were. This essay will include, therefore, a discussion of the centrality of the household in the ancient world and the extension of patriarchal authority beyond the household through the institution of patronage. Patron-broker-client relations replicated in economic, political and religious relationships the hierarchical structure of the Greco-Roman family, and were the primary means of interaction between persons of different status and power.⁶¹ Early Christian writers often picture God as a heavenly father or patron with Jesus acting as his broker in relation to the community of faithful followers. Ignatius operates with a high christology that frequently blurs the distinction between God and Jesus so that both function as divine patrons. The primary role that Ignatius attributes to bishops is that of brokers mediating God's and

⁶¹ Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, suggests 4 "models from the environment" that helped to shape early Christian groups. These included the household, the synagogue, voluntary associations and philosophical schools. Meeks finds both similarities and differences with all 4. Rather than choosing one of these "models from the environment" as does Maier (i.e. the household) or J. T. Burtchaell (i.e. the synagogue, in *From Synagogue to Church: Public Services in the Earliest Christian Communities*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992)), I have sought to find a model that embraces all of these specific organizations. Patronage was rooted in patriarchal household authority and was instrumental in establishing and shaping hierarchical relations in synagogues, voluntary associations and philosophical schools.

Christ's gifts in the context of worship. Within the local community Ignatius expects bishops to act as patrons, representing the community in its dealings with outsiders, protecting it against the dangers of deviant teachers, and acting as guardians and fathers in relation to individual members. Nothing in Ignatius' writings, however, suggests that bishops were selected primarily because they were patrons of the church.

A recurring theme in discussions of Ignatius and church leadership is the role and significance of that element which has been described as prophetic, pneumatic and/or charismatic. Trevett, Streeter, and Maier all take the view that Ignatius is himself a charismatic advocate for church offices, while Brent and von Campenhausen regard his conception of the episcopacy as combining or synthesizing charisma and office. Although the relationship of charisma and office has been explored in depth by sociologist Max Weber and his followers, only Maier has actually made an attempt to utilize this material in his work. Maier limits the application of Weber's ideas, however, to identifying the Syrian bishop as a charismatic authority figure. My intention is to use Weber's typology of authority as an interpretive tool to describe in *etic* terms not only the authority of Ignatius but also the nature of episcopal authority as it appears in his letters. Weber's typology will also serve as a heuristic device for comparing and contrasting the authority of the Ignatian bishop with that of other model leaders in early Syrian Christianity. This social-science analysis will demonstrate that Ignatius appealed to a charisma arising from his liminal position as a martyr-designate to back up his arguments in support of church leaders. He insists that bishops are to be obeyed because (1) they occupy the office of God's representative in the local community, and (2) they are chosen by the Holy Spirit. The latter suggests that bishops may have been selected using some process of divination such as the drawing of lots, revelations, prophetic oracles and the like. As noted by Weber, the selection of leaders by means of such procedures points to the beginnings of a process of routinization of charisma. These episcopal leaders might be described, therefore, as routinized charismatic officials. With respect to the method of selection, the Ignatian bishop seems to resemble most closely the Johannine pastor, epitomized by Peter in the final chapter of the Fourth Gospel.

The goal of this dissertation, then, is to engage in a comprehensive and systematic examination of Ignatius' writings on the subject of episcopal leadership. Working on the premise that episcopal leadership is both a social and a historical phenomenon in the early church this study will

combine both historical and social science methods of investigation. These methods include the comparative analyses of documents from roughly the same time and space, and the use of social-science models as heuristic tools to assist in the organization, analysis, and comparison of the historical evidence. This interdisciplinary approach will show that Ignatius' particular conception of the role of bishops represents an adaptation of dominant cultural patterns of leadership to a specifically Christian context. The general pattern of patron-broker-client relations which enabled people of different status to interact in the Greco-Roman world functions as an unconscious *emic* model of leadership shaping Ignatius' understanding of relations between divine and human persons, and between the bishop and congregation. The threefold system of church order, consisting of bishop, elders and deacons, appears to be a fusion of leadership forms that were emerging in the communities which produced the Johannine texts and the *Didache*. Weber's typology of authority, and especially his concept of the routinization of charisma will be used to elucidate the significance of charisma as the basis of Ignatius' own personal authority, its role in the development and legitimation of episcopal leadership, and its transformation in this process.

In keeping with my goal of being systematic, this study will proceed from here with a discussion of method and models which will include a statement of the objectives and procedures relevant to a socio-historical study, a description of Weber's typology of authority, and a definition of the sociological terms to be used. A discussion of leadership and authority models in the Greco-Roman world focusing on the extension of patriarchal authority beyond the household through the institution of patronage will conclude this section. Part 2 will feature an exploration of leadership and authority in the Syrian Christian communities represented by Matthew, the *Didache*, the Johannine literature and the *Gospel of Thomas*. The goal will be to produce an etic description of leadership models prevalent in the environment from which Ignatius emerges. The Syrian bishop's writings on the subject of episcopal leadership will be the centre of attention in Part 3 where they will be assessed in terms of Weber's typology as well as in relation to both Greco-Roman and Syrian Christian models of leadership. A retrospective conclusion will wrap up the study and suggest further avenues of research.

2.0 Method and Models

Episcopal leadership in the letters of Ignatius is a social, as well as historical, phenomenon. It is a social arrangement in which church members are urged to obey and submit to their bishop (*Eph.* 2.2), to fear him (*Eph.* 6.1), to respect him (*Mag.* 3.1), to be subject to him (*Mag.* 13.2; *Tral.* 2.1), and to do nothing without him (*Phld.* 7.2; *Smyr.* 8.1, 9.1; *Mag.* 4.1; *Tral.* 7.2). These terms indicate that episcopal leadership is a social relationship in which power and authority are claimed and exercised by one person over a number of others. But what kind of authority does Ignatius think that bishops actually, or ideally should, have? Is episcopal authority as conceived by the Syrian bishop similar to or different from the authority exercised by other leaders in various Christian, Jewish and Greco-Roman groups? In order to answer such questions we need to engage in a systematic comparison of Ignatius' ideas about the episcopacy with other contemporary notions of leadership. One of the difficulties, however, is that the literary texts that are our primary sources of evidence are essentially theological documents which rarely engage in explicit descriptions and discussions of leadership and authority in terms that facilitate easy comparison. It is possible, however, to discern the nature of leadership and authority prescribed in these texts by recourse to a social-science methodology.

Social-science criticism in New Testament and early Christian studies is intended to complement other methods of critical analysis. In this study, social-science criticism will be used as part of a comparative analysis to highlight the ways in which Ignatius' treatment of the subject of leadership and authority is both a reflection of and a response to the socio-historical context in which he lived. Such a method presupposes that Ignatius' writings do not merely replicate the reality he experienced, but actively seek to reshape, reconfigure and alter that reality in specific ways.¹

One of the important features of the social-science method is the explicit use of models as interpretative tools to assist in the organization, analysis, comparison and explanation of the historical evidence. A model is a mental construct, a generalized and simplified representation of some real

¹ On the premises of the social-science method see John H. Elliot, *What is Social-Scientific Criticism?* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1993), 7-8, 49-51; Philip F. Esler, *The First Christians in their Social Worlds: Social-Scientific Approaches to New Testament Interpretation*, (London, UK: Routledge, 1994), 2-18.

world object, or of some aspect of social behaviour.² The concept of “fruit,” for example, may be regarded as a very rudimentary model. “Fruit” is an abstract representation of certain real world objects, such as apples, pears, peaches, and plums, and expresses the notion that these distinct items may be grouped together on the basis of shared characteristics.³ Social scientists use models as speculative instruments in order to organize, profile and interpret the complex social worlds of human beings.⁴ A very common social science model is the “ideal type,” a category of analysis which is designed to catalogue certain aspects of reality. An ideal type is simply a label with a series of coherent characteristics listed under it, which can be compared and contrasted with some object or aspect of social life.⁵ Social scientists also use metaphorical and analogical models, such as the “role model” or the idea that political activity is like a game, to describe and make sense of human behaviour.⁶ Analytical models seek to explain or predict the existence of some social phenomenon in relation to other phenomena.⁷ This study will rely on ideal type and analogical models that facilitate classification and comparison of historical data.

The selection of models to be used should be determined by the type of social phenomena under investigation.⁸ In this instance the subject of analysis is episcopal leadership, a social arrangement involving obedience and submission, thus, necessitating the use of a model that describes patterns of social relationships in which power and authority over others are exercised. Weber's typology of legitimate authority is a modern sociological construct that identifies, classifies and describes the bases of compliance with authority. It will serve as an *etic* model, representing the perspective and interests of the modern interpreter, and will be used as a heuristic device to translate

² Anthony H. Galt and Larry J. Smith, Models and the Study of Social Change, (Cambridge, MA: Schenkman Publishing Company, Inc., 1976), 27; Bruce J. Malina, The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology, (Revised Edition; Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993) 19.

³ Malina, New Testament World, 18.

⁴ Elliot, 41.

⁵ Galt and Smith, 59.

⁶ Ibid, 70-78.

⁷ Ibid, 92ff.

⁸ Elliot, 40-5.

Ignatius' discourse about obedience and submission into categories that facilitate analysis and comparison with other texts.⁹

Ignatius writes about episcopal leadership, however, in a specific social and cultural setting, the early 2nd century Greco-Roman world. The degree to which his thinking on the subject is shaped by and seeks to reconfigure patterns of social relationships in his environment can only be discerned by recourse to *emic* models. An *emic* model describes some aspect of the social universe as it is perceived by a particular culture; it represents *their* understanding of how the world works and not that of the interpreter. An *emic* model may be conscious or unconscious, operating as an implicit set of principles that govern behaviour.¹⁰ The patron-broker-client model derives from historical studies of Greco-Roman society supplemented by information from modern social-science investigations. It describes the primary means of interaction between persons of different status and power in early Mediterranean societies, and the means whereby patriarchal authority was extended beyond the household into other social relationships. To a certain extent it functions in Ignatius' writing as an unconscious or implicit model of how the world works. He never explicitly refers to bishops as patrons, rather he informs us of the expectation that bishops will act as guardians for widows (*Pol.* 4.1), a customary function of patrons. Likewise, he never explicitly calls bishops brokers, yet he expects them to function as intermediaries between a heavenly father who bestows gifts and favours on his earthly followers. It is not my contention that bishops actually were patrons and brokers, though in some instances they may have been, but that Ignatius expected them to function like patrons and brokers in relation to their congregations. The patron-broker-client model of social relations provides a useful analogy that enables us to measure the degree of "fit" between early Christian forms of social organization and the larger cultural environment in which these emerged.

The use of models and of a social-science methodology does *not* result in a more empirical or objective interpretation of the early Christian evidence.¹¹ The modern interpreter's values, concerns

⁹ Galt and Smith, 45-53; Elliot, 37-40.

¹⁰ Galt and Smith, 45-53.

¹¹ Mary Ann Tolbert, "Social, Sociological and Anthropological Methods" in Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (ed), Searching the Scriptures: A Feminist Interpretation, (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1993), 255-71, here 268; as opposed to the view of Bruce J. Malina, "The Social Sciences and Biblical Interpretation," in Norman K. Gottwald (ed), The Bible and Liberation, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1983), 11-25, see especially 12, 21.

and presuppositions are all operative in the choice of models. What the social-science method does, ideally, is provide a built-in mechanism for criticism and correction enabling both interpreter and reviewers to judge whether or not the models chosen are appropriate and adequate to the task at hand. The result is a disciplined process of socio-historical reconstruction in which the interpreter's subjectivity, as represented by the models selected, interacts in a critically responsible manner with the data under consideration.¹² The models are used interactively with the historical data in an "abductive" process in which the interpreter moves from evidence to model in a back-and-forth movement of suggestion checking.¹³ What this means with respect to episcopal leadership in the letters of Ignatius may be described as follows. His repeated exhortations for obedience and submission to bishops suggest that episcopal leadership involves a social relationship in which power and authority are exercised. This insight leads to the selection of models which describe (1) a general typology of legitimate authority and (2) specific patterns of authority relations in the Greco-Roman world. These models will be used heuristically as interpretive tools to analyze and compare the various perspectives on leadership and authority which were emerging in Syrian Christianity at the beginning of the 2nd century. Before engaging on this task, however, it is mandatory to familiarize ourselves with the tools, the models, to be used.

2.1 Power, Authority and Charisma

Power is a property of social relations, i.e. power is exercised by persons in relationships that are simultaneously reciprocal and asymmetrical. It is evidenced in the "push and resistance," "challenge and response, thrust and parry" that constitute so many interactions between human beings. Power derives from access to and control over power resources, by which we mean those phenomena that have a culturally-determined value for a particular group or society. Persons who have power are able to affect, determine and/or change the actions and decisions of others.¹⁴ In the

¹² Esler, 12-13; Howard Clark Kee, Knowing the Truth: A Sociological Approach to New Testament Interpretation, (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1989), pp.18, 39; Malina, "The Social Sciences and Biblical Interpretation," 20.

¹³ Elliot, 48.

¹⁴ This definition synthesizes discussions of power found in Joseph S. Himes, Conflict and Conflict Management, (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1980), 77-80; Jill Dubisch, Gender and Power in Rural Greece, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 16; Elizabeth Janeway, Powers of the Weak, (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf,

Greco-Roman world power usually derived from some combination of ownership of land, the possession of material wealth, together with honour or social prestige deriving from lineage. Power was also based on, and augmented by, dominating others through acts of patronage or one-upmanship in the social game of challenge and response.¹⁵

Power, i.e. the ability to affect, determine or change the actions and decisions of other people, may be expressed in different ways. Force or violence refers to physical and/or coercive expressions of power.¹⁶ Manifestations of this form of power in the ancient world range from the socially sanctioned application of force in the disciplining of children¹⁷ to the society wide violence inflicted on those subjugated by Rome's imperial armies (e.g. the Jewish War of 66-70 CE). Influence is a more informal and personal expression of power which aims at redirecting or affecting the power of others.¹⁸ Brokers in the Greco-Roman world usually exercised influence in relation to their patrons, seeking to redirect the patron's power in favour of the broker's clients. The more successful that a broker was in wielding influence with his or her superiors, the more powerful he or she became in relation to his or her clients.

Authority refers to culturally legitimated power; it is the socially recognized and approved right of some persons to affect or determine the decisions and actions of others. Authority is power that is acknowledged and validated by those who are subject to it, and rests upon the consent of the

1980), 3ff; James MacGregor Burns, "Power and Politics - An Overview," in Donald W. Harward (ed), Power: Its Nature, Its Uses and Its Limits, (Cambridge, MA: Schenkman Publishing, 1982) 55-67; David V. J. Bell, Power, Influence and Authority: An Essay in Political Linguistics and Power in Social Life, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1975), 26; Peter M. Blau, Exchange and Power in Social Life, (New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons Ltd., 1967), 115-142.

¹⁵ Bruce J. Malina and Jerome H. Neyrey, "Honour and Shame in Luke-Acts: Pivotal Values of the Mediterranean World," in Jerome H. Neyrey (ed), The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991) 25-65, especially 25-28, 33; Garnsey and Saller, p.118; John Dominic Crossan, The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Jewish Mediterranean Peasant, (San Francisco, CA: Harper, 1991), 10-16; various articles in J.G. Peristiany (ed), Honour and Shame: The Values of Mediterranean Society, (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1974).

¹⁶ Himes, 79; John R. Silver, "The Conceptual Structure of Power - A Review," in Harward, Power: Its Nature, Its Uses and Its Limits, (Cambridge, MA: Schenkman Publishing, 1982), 189-207.

¹⁷ For a discussion of Mediterranean childrearing practices see John J. Pilch, "'Beat His Ribs While He is Young' (Sir 30:12) - A Window on the Mediterranean World," BTB 23/3 (1993) 101-14.

¹⁸ Himes, 79; Dubisch, 16; Bell, 25-9.

ruled.¹⁹ Weber postulates that authority derives its legitimacy from one of three possible grounds or bases: (1) rational/legal, (2) traditional, and (3) charismatic. Rational/legal authority is based on a recognition of the legality of rules, and of the right to exercise power of those who hold office by virtue of such rules. Obedience is owed to the legally established impersonal order.²⁰ Rational-legal authority is invested in the office rather than the person, and refers to an impersonal right to exercise power within the context and limits of occupying an office. The individual's legitimate exercise of power is occupational, and is ideally acquired on the basis of competence and skill. Rational-legal authority may also be described as acquired impersonal authority.²¹

This type of authority in its pure form was practically non-existent in the Greco-Roman world. The authority of Greco-Roman "officials" was usually a combination of impersonal rational-legal and traditional personal authority. Election or appointment to a particular civic or religious office was restricted to persons of specific gender, family background or social status. Official assignments were often made arbitrarily by superiors regardless of the candidate's particular skills or competence. Caiaphas' authority in Judea, for instance, derived from his position as high priest, an office he acquired by virtue of his membership in a particular circle of priestly families. Likewise Pontius Pilate exercised legal authority as the prefect of Judea, an office acquired as a consequence of his family's status within the ranks of Roman aristocracy and their connections with the imperial court.²²

Traditional authority rests on an acknowledgement of the continuing legitimacy of "immemorial traditions,"²³ i.e. the validity of "that which has always been."²⁴ Obedience is based on

¹⁹ This definition synthesizes discussions of authority found in Dubisch, 16; Himes, 77; Silver, 197-8; Janeway, 73, 163; Blau, 129-30, 200.

²⁰ Max Weber, Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology, edited by Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1978) Volume 1, 215-26.

²¹ Bruce J. Malina, "Jesus as Charismatic Leader?" BTB 14/2 (1984) 55-62, here 67; Bruce J. Malina, Christian Origins and Cultural Anthropology: Practical Models for Biblical Interpretation, (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1986), 116-8.

²² For discussion of bureaucracy in the Roman Empire, and the criteria for appointment to imperial postings see Richard P. Saller, Personal Patronage under the Early Empire, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 41-118.

²³ Weber, 215.

²⁴ *Ibid*, 36.

customary obligations and is owed to the person of the traditionally sanctioned and limited leader.²⁵ Traditional authority is an ascribed personal right to exercise power based on factors beyond the individual's control such as birth order, lineage, age, gender or social status. These personal characteristics are culturally interpreted and traditionally approved as qualifying a person to determine and affect the actions and decisions of others.²⁶ Thus in the Greco-Roman world it was customary for older persons to exercise power over younger adults and children, for men to have authority over women, and for freeborn persons to dominate slaves.²⁷ Men born into the upper ranks of society expected to be obeyed by those of lower status. Sons customarily inherited the authority roles of their fathers.²⁸ In all these instances authority is regarded as the right to power of persons legitimated by custom and tradition.

Charismatic authority, according to Weber, is grounded in the recognition of the exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual and the normative order revealed or ordained by him or her. Obedience is shown to the person of the charismatically qualified leader and arises from personal belief and trust in his or her charisma.²⁹ Weber's concept of charismatic authority is the most contentious aspect of his typology, eliciting debates over its meaning, scope and usefulness.³⁰ Some scholars argue that the concept of charisma appears to be historically limited, most

²⁵ Ibid, 216, 226-41.

²⁶ Malina, "Jesus as Charismatic Leader?" 57; Malina, Christian Origins, 116-8.

²⁷ This represents the order of the "household" as explicated by Aristotle. It is also found in Philo and Josephus, as well as in a number of NT documents most notably Col 3:18-4:1; Eph 5:22-6:9; 1Tim 2:8-15, 6:1-2; Tit 2:1-10 and 1 Pet 2:18-3:7. For discussion see Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins, (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1984), 251-70; Meeks, 20-4; Abraham J. Malherbe, Social Aspects of Early Christianity, (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1983) 52-3.

²⁸ For discussion of the hierarchical organization of Greco-Roman society see Garnsey and Saller, 107-25; Crossan, 43-71; Ramsey MacMullen, Roman Social Relations - 50 B.C. to A.D.284, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1976), 88-118.

²⁹ Weber, 215-6.

³⁰ Ann Ruth Willner, The Spellbinders: Charismatic Political Leadership, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984), 8-17.

useful in discussions of ancient civilizations.³¹ Recently it has been suggested by Malina that Weber's charismatic leader is too firmly rooted in 19th century Germanic and/or northern European cultural traditions to be of use in understanding early Christianity or any other Mediterranean movement. He asserts that Weber's charismatic leader is "a great man of authoritarian bent who is dedicated exclusively to radical change on the basis of his own personal virtuosity."³² Malina, thus, implies that the concept of charismatic leadership is too ethnocentric and anachronistic to be a useful tool of analysis for early Christianity.³³ As a more suitable model he introduces the idea of "reputational authority." Unfortunately Malina's ideal reputational leader is patterned after the heroic leadership of George Washington, an 18th century Anglo-American political leader!³⁴

The main problem with Malina's (and other) critiques of Weber is a one-sided focus on the personality traits of the charismatic leader.³⁵ This is a mistake easily made resulting, in part, from ambiguity in Weber's own writings. He defines charisma as:

a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is considered extraordinary and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities. These are such as are not accessible to the ordinary person, but are regarded as of divine origin or as exemplary, and on the basis of them the individual concerned is treated as a "leader"....What is alone important is how the individual is actually regarded by those subject to charismatic authority, by his "followers" or "disciples"....It is recognition on the part of those subject to authority which is decisive for the validity of charisma.³⁶

³¹ Joseph Bensman and Michael Givant, "Charisma and Modernity: The Use and Abuse of a Concept," Social Research 42 (1975) 570-614, 600; For responses see Willner, 12; Alan Bryman, Charisma and Leadership in Organizations, (London, UK: Sage Publications, 1992) 31-2.

³² Malina, "Jesus as Charismatic Leader?" 56.

³³ Ibid, 56; a similar position is taken by Elliot, 97, who asserts that the charismatic authority model presupposes an individualistic conception of personality in contrast to the dyadic personality structure and reputational authority of antiquity.

³⁴ Malina's citations ("Jesus as Charismatic Leader," 57) indicate the notion of the ideal reputational leader owes much to Barry Schwartz, "George Washington and the Whig Conception of Heroic Leadership," ASR 48/1 (1983) 18-33.

³⁵ See for example, Dorothy Emmett, Function, Purpose and Powers: Some Concepts in the Study of Individuals and Societies, (London, UK: Macmillan, 1958/1972), 233; Charles Lindholm, Charisma, (Oxford, UK/ Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 7.

³⁶ Weber, 241-2.

This is precisely where Weber's discussion of charismatic authority is regarded as troublesome, resulting in accusations that he vacillates between a psychological and sociological definition of charismatic leadership.³⁷ Is charisma an intrinsic personal characteristic or is it extrinsic, something imputed to the person? Both according to Weber, who regards charisma as some personal quality which evokes an attribution of extraordinariness. The point is that a person may have all sorts of exemplary and/or exceptional qualities, but these alone will not make him or her a charismatic leader. Only when some group recognizes those traits as extraordinary, consents to be ruled by that person, and legitimates his or her authority on the basis of those exceptional qualities does charismatic authority exist. Individual persons are the bearers of charisma but always and only within a social context which recognizes and affirms charisma as a valid justification for the exercise of power.³⁸

Authority is power that is authorized, validated and consented to by those who are subject to it; in other words, authority is socially constructed or formed.³⁹ The social construction of authority is probably most obvious in the case of rational-legal authority where an individual person exercises power on the basis of incumbency in an office, but it is equally true of traditional and charismatic authority. Tradition is not a personality trait, rather it refers to common cultural usages that legitimate the exercise of power by persons possessing particular traits. Likewise, charisma does not signify a specific set of psychological characteristics, but rather an attribution or imputation that a group makes in order to authorize the exercise of power by a particular person. Just as customs and traditions, rules and laws are collective rather than individual products, so too is charisma.⁴⁰ Such an

³⁷ Bengt Holmberg, Paul and Power: The Structure of Authority in the Primitive Church as Reflected in the Pauline Epistles, (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1978), 140.

³⁸ Thomas W. Overholt, "Thoughts on the Use of 'Charisma' in Old Testament Studies," in W. Boyd Barrick and John R. Spencer (eds), In the Shelter of Elyon: Essays on Ancient Palestinian Life and Literature in Honor of G. W. Ahlström, (JSOT Supplement Series 31; Sheffield, UK: JSOT Press, 1984) 287-303, especially 296-7.

³⁹ Richard Sennett, Authority, (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1981), 20-1; On charisma as socially constructed see Bryman, 164; and Anthony J. Blasi, Making Charisma: The Social Construction of Paul's Public Image, (New Brunswick, NY: Transaction, 1991), 5.

⁴⁰ For charisma as conferred or attributed see Bryman, 36-7, 41, 102, 114, 167; For charisma as a "collective product" see Kojiro Miyahara, "Charisma: From Weber to Contemporary Sociology," Sociological Inquiry 53:1 (1983) 368-88, especially 372-3 where Miyahara pulls together the three "constants" in Weber's writings on charisma: (1) any charismatic phenomenon involves the recognition of extraordinariness, be it of persons, objects or social institutions, (2) to the extent that charisma is an imputed quality, it is a product of its imputers, (3) behind any charisma exists a collectivity of people. Therefore, he argues that charisma should be treated as a collective rather than in individual

approach does not represent a departure from Weber's original conception of charismatic authority, rather it highlights an essential element in his definition of charismatic leadership. What counts in establishing charismatic authority is not so much "what the leader is but what the people see the leader as."⁴¹

Weber took over the term *charisma* from early Christian usage where it came to signify a "gift of grace."⁴² Consequently, it is sometimes mistakenly believed that the original meaning of the term is only religious, and that it is applicable only to religious contexts,⁴³ even though Weber himself applied the notion of charismatic authority to military leaders,⁴⁴ grandiose robber capitalists,⁴⁵ and the founders of political parties.⁴⁶ Similarly it is sometimes thought that charisma must refer always to extraordinary qualities that are believed to be of divine origin.⁴⁷ It is true that in some groups, as in early Christianity, giftedness was (and still is) associated with a belief in supernatural beings, but this is not a necessary element of the concept of charisma as is clear from Weber's own definition. The early Christian usage of this term is in fact a particular cultural interpretation of the Greek word *χάρις* which refers to a gift or favour bestowed on one person by another.⁴⁸ In order to function heuristically

product. I think Miyahara is quite right up to this point. The rest of his argument (that charisma is a collective illusion, a concrete expression of alienation which is neither necessary nor desirable) moves in a psychologizing direction and is much less convincing.

⁴¹ Willner, 14.

⁴² Weber, 216, note 1.

⁴³ Bensman and Givant, 600, 610, are particularly pessimistic about the utility of the concept in the analysis of modern political and social movements. Schweitzer, 32-33, seems to accept the idea of charisma's religious origins, but argues that this should not limit its use. Similar arguments may be found in Bryman, 30-1 and Willner, 12-3.

⁴⁴ Weber, 241, 243.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 1118.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 1130.

⁴⁷ Bryan R. Wilson, The Noble Savages: The Primitive Origins of Charisma and Its Contemporary Survival, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1975), vii, 7. It is the notion that charisma derives from supernatural sources that Miyahara, 381f, finds particularly objectionable and leads to his psychologizing interpretation.

⁴⁸ BAGD, 878-9; TDNT, IX: 372-5; Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, (Oxford, UK: Clarendon, 1968) 1978-9; Bruce J. Malina, "Patron and Client: The Analogy behind Synoptic Theology," Foundations and Facets Forum 4:1 (1988) 2-32, page 5 note 7.

as a sociological model the concept of charisma cannot be limited to one particular cultural expression.

In this work, then, charisma will be defined simply as giftedness, a variable whose nature, content and sources are culturally specific. The individual bearer of charisma is a person who is perceived by a particular group as being gifted. What this means specifically will vary since groups and societies differ in their definitions of what constitutes giftedness. The person who is acknowledged by one group in one setting at one time as a gifted leader may not be so regarded by another group in another setting and in another time.⁴⁹ Such a definition of charisma enhances the utility of the concept of charisma, allowing for cultural variation and strengthening its logical consistency with the other two forms of authority. If customs and traditions, rules and laws are culturally variable, then in order for charisma to function as basis for legitimate authority it must also be culturally variable, defined by the group which makes the attribution.

Charismatic authority occurs, then, when a social group consents to a particular person's exercise of power because its members regard that individual as especially gifted. The charismatic leader gains and retains his or her authority, according to Weber:

solely by proving his powers in practice. He must work miracles....He must perform heroic deeds...Most of all his divine mission must prove itself by *bringing well-being* to his faithful followers; if they do not fare well, he obviously is not the god-sent master.⁵⁰

Implicit in this emphasis on the doing of deeds is the notion that the attribution of charisma rests on personal achievement on behalf of others or in culturally-valued activity. Indeed, Weber, makes this notion explicit when he describes the transition from pure charisma to hereditary charisma as involving the replacement of "qualification by virtue of individual achievement...by qualification by birth."⁵¹ This connection between achievement and charisma is noted by a number of writers;⁵² its implications, however, have yet to be clearly stated: charismatic authority is *achieved personal*

⁴⁹ Willner, 15, 63; Bryman, 56; Lindholm, 69; Bensman & Givant, 573, Holmberg, 143-4.

⁵⁰ Weber, 1114, cf. 240.

⁵¹ Ibid, 253-4.

⁵² Bensman and Givant, 578-80; Schweitzer, 34; Willner, 34, 61; Emmett, 216-8; Bryman, 52; Lindholm, 159.

authority.⁵³ Charismatic authority, thus, refers to an achieved personal right to exercise power over others. In the absence of or apart from traditional or rational-legal qualifications, a person may be granted authority by a social group because he or she is regarded as being specially gifted with the "capacity to make things happen" for the benefit of the group.⁵⁴

Conceptualizing charismatic authority as achieved personal authority in the absence of, or apart from, traditional and rational-legal qualifications for the exercise of power, clarifies two issues. By seeing charismatic authority as deriving from personal achievement, the process of attribution becomes less emotional. The granting of authority based on charisma is not a "surrender which arises from distress or enthusiasm," as Weber suggests,⁵⁵ but a recognition that customs and traditions, rules and laws do not exhaust the sources of knowledge and power in a society. The attribution of charisma acknowledges the giftedness of individuals as an alternative method of knowing and doing,⁵⁶ and assesses their ability to deliver the goods. It is as an alternative to dominant cultural operating procedures that charismatic authority can be a force for social changes of various kinds, ranging from radical and revolutionary departures from past ways to the reaffirmation of traditional ways that are in danger of disappearing.⁵⁷

By regarding charismatic authority as achieved personal authority, it also becomes clear why "charisma is not by nature a continuous institution."⁵⁸ Personal achievement simply is not transferrable; hence, Weber asserts that a group which is lead by a charismatic leader will tend to routinize its leadership structure over time in the direction of traditional or rational-legal forms of

⁵³ Emmett, 188-9, comes closest to this assertion when she argues that saints and holy men (examples of charismatic figures) occupy an "achieved," rather than "ascribed," role or status on the basis of their special qualities.

⁵⁴ Bryman, 52-3; See also Thomas W. Overholt, Channels of Prophecy: The Social Dynamics of Prophetic Activity, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989) 71-2, where he argues that the prophet's authority is based on "perceived effectiveness."

⁵⁵ Weber, 1115.

⁵⁶ Raymond Trevor Bradley, Charisma and Social Structure. A Study of Love and Power. Wholeness and Transformation, (New York, NY: Paragon House, 1987) 3; Holmberg, 145-6, especially note 44.

⁵⁷ Bryman, 36-7, 64; Holmberg, 142. On this point Weber is particularly inconsistent, sometimes describing charisma as a "specifically revolutionary force" (244, 1117), at other times acknowledging that charismatic leaders have not always been revolutionary (1117).

⁵⁸ Weber, 1113.

authority or some combination of both.⁵⁹ The routinization of charismatic authority, Weber argues, arises from the desires of the charismatic leader, his disciples (i.e. "administrative staff"), and his subjects for the continuation of the group as a permanent community or organization beyond the life span of the original leader.⁶⁰ Routinization occurs, or begins, in the process of securing a successor to the charismatic leader, and may proceed along one of two broad avenues.

A group may continue to regard charisma as a desirable personal quality in leaders, but may find the identification of the right charismatic successor problematic. To ensure the continuing presence of gifted leaders, such communities turn to selection processes which are designed to identify appropriate candidates. Weber suggests four possible means of securing a charismatic successor: (1) The followers of a charismatic leader may undertake a search for a new gifted leader whose identity will be determined by certain ascribed personal qualities over which he has no control, but which are thought to identify him as the bearer of charisma. This represents a movement toward traditional authority.⁶¹ (2) A new charismatic leader may be identified on the basis of revelation manifested in oracles, lots, divine judgments or other such techniques designed to indicate divine preferment. The new leader's legitimacy will depend less on personal achievement than on the validity of the technique of selection, presaging the beginnings of legalization.⁶² (3) The original charismatic leader may designate a successor who is then acknowledged by the community. The legitimacy of the new leader's charisma rests on the authority of his predecessor, indicating a movement toward a legitimacy deriving from an authoritative "source."⁶³ (4) The original leader's charismatically qualified administrative staff⁶⁴ might appropriate the right to designate a successor, relying on the community to affirm their choice. Although regarded as truly endowed with charisma, the new leader's legitimacy will derive not so much from personal achievement as it does from the correctness of the formal

⁵⁹ Weber, 246-8.

⁶⁰ Weber, 1121, 246-9.

⁶¹ Ibid, 246-7.

⁶² Ibid, 247.

⁶³ Ibid, 247, 1124-5.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 243, 249 for Weber's discussion of the charismatic leader's basis of recruitment.

process by which the position of leadership is acquired.⁶⁵

The other option is to depersonalize charisma, transforming it into a quality that is either transferable, personally acquirable, or attached to a particular office.⁶⁶ Weber suggests three possible routes that become available in this way for securing a succession of leaders. (1) Charisma may become a quality that is transmitted by heredity through those who have blood ties with the original charismatic leader. Charisma becomes an ascribed personal attribute independent of individual achievement and is limited to persons of a particular lineage. This sort of routinized charisma, asserts Weber, has been the basis of the development of aristocratic power and traditional authority. Hereditary charisma, however, serves only to identify a pool of potential leadership candidates in the charismatic community and must, therefore, be supplemented with the notion of primogeniture or one of the other methods of selection noted above.⁶⁷ (2) Charisma may be transferred through artificial, magical or ritual means, or may even be created in a new person through such processes. Weber sees here the roots of a charisma of office which is acquired by a person through such rituals as anointing, consecration, the laying on of hands, or coronation which mark the taking up of a specific office such as priest or king.⁶⁸ Charisma thus becomes an impersonal quality residing in particular social institutions regardless of the giftedness of their incumbents. (3) Weber also argues that, as an impersonal quality, charisma can be acquired through specialized training. Charismatic education is often treated as secret knowledge limited to a small circle of professional associates, priestly fraternities or aristocratic clubs.⁶⁹

The most obvious charismatic authority figures in the Greco-Roman world were those persons variously described as miracle workers, magicians, exorcists, faith healers, holy men, seers, and prophets. What is common to all of them is that they were individuals who were perceived to have the capacity to make divine knowledge and/or power available to the group directly through personal

⁶⁵ Ibid, 247, 1125-7.

⁶⁶ Ibid, 1135.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 248, 1136-9.

⁶⁸ Ibid, 248-9, 1139-41.

⁶⁹ Ibid, 1143-6.

action.⁷⁰ Many of these would have been the routinized charismatics whose success was dependent on their knowledge, training and skill in various techniques of observing and interpreting omens, signs, dreams and the like. Others were more purely charismatic, relying on natural propensities for trance, ecstasy, vision,⁷¹ and/or prayer.⁷² The skills and gifts of these persons were generally considered to be evidence that these persons were the favoured intimates of supernatural beings.⁷³ As a result these persons offered alternative sources of access to divine favours alongside or in place of the official system of temple and priest. Such individuals attracted popular attention and following primarily by virtue of personal achievement or by what might be called a "reputation of power."⁷⁴ Achieved personal (i.e. charismatic) authority was also exercised by certain brokers or middlemen in the ancient world examples of which will be included in the discussion of patronage which follows, but before turning to that subject I will briefly summarize the main points of this discussion on power, authority and charisma.

Power refers to the ability of a person or group to affect, determine or change the actions and decisions of others. The most common sources of this capacity in the Greco-Roman world were ownership of land, material wealth, high social status, honour, and proximity to powerful persons. Authority refers to the socially acknowledged and approved exercise of power. Three types of authority may be distinguished: (1) traditional or ascribed personal authority sanctioned by custom and tradition; (2) the rational-legal or acquired impersonal authority of office-holders set out in rules and laws; and (3) charismatic or achieved personal authority justified by the attribution of charisma or giftedness to an exemplary or exceptional individual. Customs and traditions, rules and laws tend to be fairly stable and permanent phenomena, while individual achievement is less secure and is

⁷⁰ Crossan, 137-8.

⁷¹ David E. Aune, Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1983), 23.

⁷² Eg. figures like Honi the Circle-Maker and Hanina ben Dosa in Galilee - see Crossan, 142-8; and Sean Freyne, "The Charismatic" in John J. Collins and George W. E. Nickelsburg (eds), Ideal Figures in Ancient Judaism: Profiles and Paradigms, (SBL: Septuagint and Cognate Studies 12; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1980) 223-58.

⁷³ Stephen G. Wilson, Related Strangers: Jews and Christians 70-170 C.E., (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1995), 66.

⁷⁴ Peter Brown, Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity, (London, UK: Faber & Faber, 1982), 138, 162, describes the power of Syrian holy men as based on an achieved status deriving from a manipulation of a "reputation of power."

limited by a charismatic leader's lifespan. In order to achieve permanency and continuity charismatic authority, therefore, tends to become routinized and transformed into traditional or legal authority or some combination of both. Communities which value charismatic leadership may attempt to identify the right charismatic successor by (1) searching for the person with the right traits, (2) recourse to techniques of revelation, (3) designation by the original leader, and (4) designation by the original leader's administrative staff. Alternatively, communities which value charismatic leadership may depersonalize charisma transforming it into a quality which may be transferred through blood lines, by ritual means on accession to office, or which may be acquired through education.

Traditional authority figures dominated the Greco-Roman social world at all levels from the household to the imperial government. Custom validated the exercise of power by freeborn, mature males in almost all areas of social life; and it ranked people hierarchically, ascribing wider domains of authority to those with higher status. Ascribed personal characteristics sanctioned by tradition were the primary criteria for the exercise of impersonal authority acquired through the holding of public office. Although a rational-legal system did exist, it was inextricably bound up in the dominant traditional structure of authority. Charismatic figures existed at the margins of society and in the gaps between different ranks in the hierarchy, providing alternative means of access to power. Although frequently considered useful and even necessary, charismatics also were often regarded with suspicion and hostility particularly by those of upper status and/or by those who occupied positions of traditional and/or legal authority. Granting the right to exercise power to individuals on the basis of personal achievement was potentially risky and dangerous to other authority figures.

Considerable space has been devoted to the discussion of charisma and its routinization because of the importance of this concept to the study of early Christian leadership. Jesus could be considered a charismatic leader, exercising authority over his followers by virtue of his personal achievements in making available to them divine power and knowledge. Matthew's ideal community leader, as epitomized by Peter, is a routinized charismatic scribe, trained for his task and chosen by the master on the basis of revelation. The *Didache's* resident prophet is also an institutionalized charismatic official validated through a series of tests applied by those responsible for implementing the community's rules. The Johannine pastor, represented by a Peter who can boast of no personal charismatic achievements, is chosen on the basis of revelation and validated by the testimony of the

charismatic Beloved Disciple. The *Gospel of Thomas* idealizes a group of socially radical charismatics who share and propagate "secret sayings" of Jesus to the initiated. Ignatius of Antioch is a charismatic figure who uses his achieved status as a martyr-elect to exhort his readers to recognize bishops as routinized charismatic leaders, established by the Holy Spirit and bearers of a charisma of office.

2.2 Patron-Broker-Client Relations in the Greco-Roman World

One of the issues that this study intends to address is the question of the relationship of episcopal leadership to the social setting of early Christian groups in Greco-Roman households. Maier argues that hierarchical social arrangements arising from this social setting are reflected in and reinforced by Ignatius' conception of episcopal leadership, without specifying precisely what those social arrangements were. Similarly Maier suggests that Polycarp was a house-church patron who played a central role in the leadership of the Christian community in Smyrna, without explaining the relationship between house and house-church and the role of patrons.⁷⁵ This study intends to build on and expand Maier's work by highlighting the institution of patronage as the means whereby patriarchal authority was extended beyond the household into economic, political and religious relationships. So pervasive was patronage in the Greco-Roman world that it functioned as a social system ordering and structuring social relations. In the writings of Ignatius, as well as most other early Christian texts, patronage functions as an unconscious *emic* model shaping the writer's understanding of relations between church leaders and followers, and between the heavenly and earthly realms.

The Greco-Roman household was not only a social unit, it also functioned as a religious and economic unit. Whether located in rural Palestine or cosmopolitan Antioch the typical household was patriarchally ruled, and organized around relationships of subordination and dependency. Women were subordinate to and dependent on men (fathers, husbands, next-of-kin), sons and daughters were dominated by their fathers, slaves were the "speaking tools"⁷⁶ of their masters. The patriarch not only ruled the members of his household, he also functioned as its priest in the domestic sacrificial cult.

⁷⁵ See above, 12-13.

⁷⁶ Garney and Saller, 116.

In the public realm the patriarch embodied the household representing it in its dealings with outsiders. It was his task to maintain and enhance the family's social standing and material wealth.⁷⁷ The institution of patronage was an important avenue for accomplishing this task by providing access to the resources of more powerful households and by facilitating the extension of patriarchal authority over manumitted slaves, poor relatives, neighbours in want, needy tenants, immigrants in need of protection and others.⁷⁸

Patronage refers to both a social relationship and a social system. A patronage relationship is essentially reciprocal, personal and asymmetrical. It involves a mutual exchange of goods and services between two parties of unequal status. As a result different types of resources are exchanged, usually in a "package deal." A patronage relationship is a personal, informal, and in principle voluntary arrangement, rather than a legal or contractual association. Such relations, however, carry a strong sense of moral obligation which contributes to their often binding and long-range nature.⁷⁹ A patronage system is identified as a complex and hierarchically organized chain or network of individual patronage relationships. In the societies of the Greco-Roman world, where such a patronage system was operative, it functioned as one of the prime mechanisms for the allocation of scarce resources. It was a structure of power, as well as a system for the reproduction of power and

⁷⁷ For more detailed discussions of Greco-Roman households see Gamsey and Saller, 126-46; Maier, 15-28; Meeks, 20-4; Fiorenza, 251-70; L. William Countryman, Dirt, Greed and Sex: Sexual Ethics in the New Testament and their Implications for Today, (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 149-56; Lilian Portefaix, Sisters Rejoice: Paul's Letter to the Philippians and Luke-Acts as Received by First Century Philippian Women, (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell International, 1988), 10-57.

⁷⁸ Alison Burford, Craftsmen in Greek and Roman Society, (London, UK: Thames and Hudson Ltd, 1972), 37-50, 136-141; John Stambaugh and David Balch, The Social World of the First Christians, (London, UK: SPCK, 1986), 63-4; Bruce J. Malina, The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology, (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 99-103.

⁷⁹ This definition of patronage synthesizes the work of Richard P. Saller, Personal Patronage under the Early Empire, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 1; Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, "Introduction," in Andrew Wallace-Hadrill (ed), Patronage in Ancient Society, (London, UK: Routledge, 1990) 1-48, here 3; Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, "Patronage in Roman Society: From Republic to Empire," in Wallace-Hadrill, Patronage in Ancient Society, 63-87, here 66; Richard P. Saller, "Patronage and Friendship in Early Imperial Rome: Drawing the Distinctions," in Wallace-Hadrill, Patronage in Ancient Society, 49-62, here 49; S.N. Eisenstadt and L. Roniger, Patrons, Clients and Friends: Interpersonal Relations and the Structure of Trust in Society, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 48; John K. Chow, Patronage and Power: A Study of Social Networks in Corinth, (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 31-2.

for the legitimization of the social order.⁸⁰

At the heart of the Greco-Roman patronage system was the social relationship between the patron and/or broker and the client. The term "patron" derives from *pater*, the Latin and Greek word for father, and points to the replication of patriarchal authority in economic, political and religious relations of dependency and subordination.⁸¹ The patron was the superior party in the relationship who, as the title suggests, played a role analogous to that of the father in the patriarchal household. Patrons were persons who had direct control over "first order resources," goods and services, which were occasionally or nearly always in short supply. These included arable land, financial assistance, jobs, promotions, protection or other necessities which the patron made available to others as a "favour" or benefaction.⁸² This capacity to give what others needed or wanted was a source of power, prestige and honour in the Greco-Roman world.⁸³ High social status, including political or military rank together with the possession of land and material wealth enabled the head of a household to grant favours which in turn increased his honour and power in the community. Consequently, patrons tended to be members of the upper echelons of society.⁸⁴

The favours of patrons were sought by clients who did not have guaranteed access to those resources which were in short supply, either permanently or due to some natural or economic emergency. In exchange for goods and services received, the client was expected to give public praise

⁸⁰ Terry Johnson and Christopher Dandeker, "Patronage: Relation and System," in Wallace-Hadrill, Patronage in Ancient Society, 219-40, here 220-6; Wallace-Hadrill, "Patronage in Roman Society," 71-2.

⁸¹ Andrew Drummond, "Early Roman *Clientes*," in Wallace-Hadrill, Patronage in Ancient Society, 89-115, here 102; John J. Pilch and Bruce J. Malina, Biblical Social Values and Their Meaning: A Handbook, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1993), 133-7.

⁸² Jeremy Boissevain, Friends of Friends: Networks, Manipulators and Coalitions, (Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell, 1974), 147; Robert Paine, "A Theory of Patronage and Brokerage," in Robert Paine (ed), Patrons and Brokers in the East Arctic, (Institute of Social and Economic Research, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1971) 8-21; Pilch and Malina, 133-7; Chow, 31.

⁸³ T. F. Carney, The Economics of Antiquity: Controls, Gifts and Trade, (Lawrence, KA: Coronado Press, 1987), 153; Saller, Personal Patronage, 126; Garnsey and Saller, 149.

⁸⁴ Carney, 125; While the vast majority of patrons in the ancient world were the male heads of upper status households, patronage was the one area of public life in which wealthy women were active. Women's patronage, however, did not lead to great political roles for women but served to increase the visibility of the men in their families. See Mary R. Lefkowitz, "Influential Women," in Averil Cameron and Amélie Kuhrt (eds), Images of Women in Antiquity, (London, UK: Croom Helm, 1983), 49-64; Riet Van Bremen, "Women and Wealth," 223-42 in the same volume.

and honour, political support, information, gifts (i.e. what we might call bribes), or other goods and services as determined by the patron.⁸⁵ In the Greco-Roman world the term "client" carried connotations of social inferiority, hence patrons tended to restrict its application to their more humble dependents, preferring to call their clients of higher status "friends." This courtesy label did not really obscure the nature of the relationship since even "friends" were classed as superior and inferior.⁸⁶ Regardless of the titles used to describe these dependent persons, they were expected to relate to the patron as grateful children to a generous father.⁸⁷ As a correlative, patrons counted their clients and friends alongside their other dependents as part of their households.⁸⁸

Although a large number of clients was a visible sign of a person's power to grant favours,⁸⁹ Greco-Roman patrons "did not enter into relationships with their social inferiors indiscriminately."⁹⁰ Preferred clients appear to have been persons with whom a patron had some prior relationship. Kin, especially by marriage, and friends or neighbours from the same village, municipality or geographical region were the most frequent recipients of a patron's favours, followed by friends and acquaintances acquired at school or during military service.⁹¹ A favour might be extended to a person with whom the patron had no previous relations, provided the prospective client was "a friend of a friend."⁹² Such a person would be accepted as a client on the basis of a personal, often written, commendation from a mutual acquaintance who testified that the client was a friend and protégé. Since a person's character was believed to be reflected in his or her friends, such a commendation was regarded as a testimonial to the new client's character. Its efficacy in the eyes of the patron derived from and was

⁸⁵ Pilch and Malina, 133-7; Paine, 15-7; Eisenstadt and Roniger, 213-4.

⁸⁶ Saller, Personal Patronage, 10-1; Saller, "Patronage and Friendship," 52, 57.

⁸⁷ Pilch and Malina, 134.

⁸⁸ Saller, "Patronage and Friendship," 10; Maier, 15.

⁸⁹ Wallace-Hadrill, "Patronage in Roman Society," 82.

⁹⁰ Garnsey and Saller, 156.

⁹¹ Saller, Personal Patronage, 135-7, 182-4.

⁹² Ibid, 153-4.

dependent on the credibility of the "friend" making the commendation.⁹³

An important person in many patronage relationships, therefore, was the person who played the role of broker acting as a middleman, mediator or intermediary between the prospective patron and client. Brokers were persons who had access to and control over "second order resources," i.e. strategic contacts with those who controlled scarce goods and services. The broker knew how to get in touch with and/or influence those persons who were able to grant favours. In relation to the patron, the broker functioned as a client asking for favours not for him or herself, but for another person. In relation to the client, the broker acted as a patron granting the favour of his assistance and influence with those who were his own patrons. Patron, broker and client were, thus, social roles which could be embraced alternately or in combination by the same person.⁹⁴ The capacity to act as a broker derived from physical and/or emotional proximity to sources of patronage. Clients frequently sought out as brokers members of a patron's immediate family (his wife and children), his personal friends, and those employees who worked in close proximity to him. Their access to and ability to exercise sometimes considerable personal influence with a patron placed them in strategic positions which could be exploited. By acting as brokers, persons who otherwise lacked status and authority in society such as women, slaves and ex-slaves could and did acquire and exercise power, a situation which was deplored by social superiors.⁹⁵

Patronage, both as a social relationship and as a social system, was a predominant feature of the Greco-Roman world.⁹⁶ Senatorial and equestrian appointments in the Roman empire were normally secured through the direct "friendship" (i.e. patronage) of the emperor, or through the "commendation" (i.e. brokerage) of the emperor's friends and family.⁹⁷ Roman governors and officials provided channels of patronage and brokerage for municipal and provincial aristocrats seeking citizenship, various status honours and offices, as well as other administrative decisions under imperial

⁹³ Ibid, 108-9, 152-3.

⁹⁴ Boissevain, 147; Paine, 8,9, 21; Crossan, 59-60.

⁹⁵ Saller, *Personal Patronage*, 64-6.

⁹⁶ Johnson and Dandeker, 227, 235; Crossan, 59-60; Eisenstadt and Roniger, 181-2; Carney, 66.

⁹⁷ Saller, *Personal Patronage*, 42-5, 64; Garnsey and Saller, 153.

jurisdiction.⁹⁸ Wealthy urban residents granted favours to their home towns by financing public building projects, community festivals and famine relief in exchange for municipal offices and titles.⁹⁹ Well-to-do urbanites sponsored and supported trade guilds, religious societies and social clubs as acts of patronage.¹⁰⁰ In rural areas wealthy landowners, landlords, civilian and military officials, as well as local "strong men" provided channels of access to goods and services needed by peasants.¹⁰¹ Freed slaves were legally obliged to continue in relation to their former masters as clients.¹⁰²

As the capital of the Roman province of Syria, Antioch was well integrated into this system of patronage. It served as the headquarters for the legate and procurator, both of whom were appointees of the emperor. Residents of the eastern regions seeking the influence of these Roman officials "found it valuable to be seen there and to be identified with the life of the city."¹⁰³ Perhaps the best known of these influence seekers was Herod the Great who supplied paving for Antioch's main thoroughfare, a roadway two Roman miles in length and thirty-one feet wide, in order to honour the emperor Augustus whose favours he was anxious to secure.¹⁰⁴ Tiberius was later to build roofed colonades lining each side of this street, each thirty-two feet wide and adorned with statues and other works of art. In gratitude for this, and other public benefactions, the citizens of Antioch erected a bronze statue of Tiberius in a plaza along the famous thoroughfare.¹⁰⁵ Not only was the city a recipient of imperial patronage, it is highly probable that patron-broker-client relations were an

⁹⁸ Saller, Personal Patronage, 75, 150-69; Garnsey and Saller, 151-2; Eisenstadt and Roniger, 60.

⁹⁹ Chow, 63.

¹⁰⁰ Garnsey and Saller, 156-7; Chow, 66; Maier, 19-20.

¹⁰¹ Peter Garnsey and Greg Woolf, "Patronage of the Rural Poor in the Roman World," in Wallace-Hadrill, Patronage in Ancient Society, 153-70, especially 162-4; Keith Hopwood, "Bandits, Elites and Rural Order," in Wallace-Hadrill, Patronage in Ancient Society, 171-87, especially 181-4; Carney, 103; Pilch and Malina, 135.

¹⁰² Crossan, 43; Chow, 70; Eisenstadt and Roniger, 52; Saller, Personal Patronage, 9; Saller, "Patronage and Friendship," 50. Because of its legal nature Saller distinguishes the *patronus-libertus* relationship from other patronage relations; on this point see also, Wallace-Hadrill, "Patronage in Roman Society," 76.

¹⁰³ Carl H. Kraeling, "The Jewish Community at Antioch," IBL 51 (1932) 130-60, here 132.

¹⁰⁴ Downey, A History of Antioch, 173-4.

¹⁰⁵ Glanville Downey, Ancient Antioch, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963) 83-4.

important factor in the lives of its citizens. Patronage relationships were certainly not limited to the upper echelons of Antiochene society, but linked shopkeepers to city councillors, peasants to urban dwelling aristocrats, freedmen and women to slaveowners, and so forth. Unfortunately, the best first hand evidence of personal patronage in Antioch is quite late, contained in the writings of the 4th century rhetorician Libanius. His activities as a patron and a broker, together with his opinions on patronage, indicate that patronage was an old and established part of Antiochene life which was threatened in his time by what he regards as the illegitimate patronage of military commanders.¹⁰⁶ It seems reasonable to assume that patronage was an aspect of life in the city of Antioch with which Ignatius and other Christians would have been familiar.

A close nexus existed between patronage and religion in the Greco-Roman world arising out of the diffusion of religion into every other sphere of social life.¹⁰⁷ Not only were specifically religious offices instruments of patronage, but relations between humans and deities replicated the patron-broker-client model of relationships between persons of differing status. The peoples of the Greco-Roman world inhabited a hierarchically structured universe populated by both human and nonhuman (divine and demonic) beings. A system of vertical stratification placed the ordinary person far below the level of the human and nonhuman rulers of his or her world. With respect to both earthly and heavenly resources, individuals and households faced the same difficulty: how to gain access to the resources controlled by a tiny but disproportionately powerful elite.¹⁰⁸ The "religious problematic was one of mediation, the transportation, as it were, of goods and services"¹⁰⁹ between the human and divine realms. What was needed were mediators who could communicate between the two worlds,

¹⁰⁶ Libanius, Oration 47: *περὶ τῶν προστασιῶν* (LCL: *Libanius Selected Works* II, 1977). For discussion see J. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz, *Antioch: City and Imperial Administration in the Later Roman Empire*, (Oxford, UK: Clarendon, 1972) 1-10, 192-208; and Wayne A. Meeks and Robert L. Wilken, *Jews and Christians in Antioch in the First Four Centuries of the Common Era*, (SBL Sources for Biblical Study Number 13; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1978).

¹⁰⁷ John North, "Diviners and Divination at Rome," in Beard/North, *Pagan Priests*, 51-71, here 52; Robert Garlarnd, "Priests and Power in Classical Athens," in Beard/North, *Pagan Priests*, 75-91, here 75; Bruce J. Malina, "Mediterranean Sacrifice: Dimensions of Domestic and Political Religion," *BTB* 26/1 (1996) 26-44, here 28-9.

¹⁰⁸ See Garnsey and Saller, 112-25, on the hierarchical organization of Roman society; Crossan, 45 on the social divisions typical of agrarian societies; Malina, *New Testament World*, 90-112 on social stratification and limited good.

¹⁰⁹ Jack Lightstone, "Christian Anti-Judaism in its Judaic Mirror: The Judaic Context of Early Christianity Revisited," in Stephen G. Wilson (ed), *Anti-Judaism in Early Christianity. Volume 2: Separation and Polemic*, (Studies in Christianity and Judaism 2; Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1986) 103-32, here 111-2.

and who were capable of attracting to earth the necessary blessings of gods and goddesses. Prosperity, good fortune and the like were conceptualized as favours granted by the deities in exchange for human gratitude and praise,¹¹⁰ and obtained through the mediation of various religious persons. The gods and goddesses of the Greco-Roman world were conceived of as divine patrons whose favours were mediated by religious officials and specialists to their human clients.

The customary and official brokers between humans and deities were for the most part the same persons who dominated public and domestic life. Religious authority was thus connected with and located in political and household authority, a situation epitomized by the combination of the roles of emperor and *pontifex maximus* in one person from the time of Augustus onward. As Beard puts it so eloquently, "the utterances of the emperor constituted 'religious policy.'"¹¹¹ A similar conclusion might be drawn concerning the authority of the patriarch whose functions included acting as the priest in domestic rituals ensuring the continuing favour and protection of ancestral spirits and deities.¹¹² The patriarch confirmed and finalized the membership and status of children, brides and slaves in the household through rituals and sacrifices,¹¹³ thus giving domestic decisions and arrangements a religious quality.

In civic and state cults, priests (and to a lesser extent priestesses) and diviners provided channels of communication between human and divine beings.¹¹⁴ Jewish priesthoods were hereditary,¹¹⁵ as were some Greek and Roman religious positions.¹¹⁶ The majority of cultic offices were awarded to those who possessed the resources to provide at their own expense religious

¹¹⁰ Saller, *Personal Patronage*, 23.

¹¹¹ Mary Beard, "Priesthood in the Roman Republic," in Beard/North, *Pagan Priests*, 19-48, here 48.

¹¹² Portefaix, 43; Chow, 70.

¹¹³ Stanley K. Stowers, "Greeks Who Sacrifice and Those Who Do Not: Toward an Anthropology of Greek Religion," in L. Michael White and O. Larry Yarbrough (eds), *The Social World of the First Christians: Essays in Honor of Wayne A. Meeks*, (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1995), 293-335, here 314-6.

¹¹⁴ Mary Beard & John North, "Introduction," in Beard/North, *Pagan Priests*, 1-14, here 6-7; North, 52; Garland, 82-90.

¹¹⁵ Richard Gordon, "Religion in the Roman Empire: The Civic Compromise and Its Limits," in Beard/North, *Pagan Priests*, 235-55, especially 240-5.

¹¹⁶ Richard Gordon, "The Veil of Power: Emperors, Sacrificers and Benefactors," in Beard/North, *Pagan Priests*, 201-231, here 220-1.

festivals, banquets and games, to finance the building, furnishing and restoration of temples, to found orphanages, and to distribute money and goods to the general population.¹¹⁷ These were most frequently the heads of wealthy, aristocratic households for whom religious office was an important means of expanding their networks of patronage. Their generosity resulted in the setting up of inscriptions and statues in their honour, and in the accumulation of "symbolic capital, the most durable form of wealth in the form of obligation, gratitude, prestige, personal loyalty."¹¹⁸ The same is true of quasi-public religious offices, such as priesthoods and other leadership positions in various religious, trade or social clubs.¹¹⁹

Divination occurred in a number of different contexts and was practised by a variety of persons. Some diviners functioned within the precincts of a sacred place,¹²⁰ like the famous oracle at Delphi. Others performed their rituals as part of normal political, military or religious activities; in these contexts nobles frequently occupied the "dignified senior places," while lower class skilled specialists did the actual sacrificing or reading of the relevant signs.¹²¹ Diviners also practised their arts in private settings at the request of individual persons, sometimes as retainers attached to the households of "great men" whose positions of power they served to legitimate.¹²² Practitioners of "technical divination" relied on knowledge, training and skill in observing and interpreting signs, sacrifices, dreams, omens and the like. These skills were often the restricted specialities of designated groups (e.g. the sacerdotal colleges of Rome) or of particular families.¹²³ "Natural divination" was

¹¹⁷ Gordon, "The Veil of Power," 225-30; Ross Shepard Kraemer, Her Share of the Blessings: Women's Religions among Pagans, Jews and Christians in the Greco-Roman World, (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1992), 85, similar principles seems to be at work in Diaspora synagogues (see p.119); van Bremen, 225.

¹¹⁸ Richard Gordon, "From Republic to Principate: Priesthood, Religion and Ideology," in Beard/North, Pagan Priests, 179-97, here 194; also Gordon, "The Veil of Power," 221-5.

¹¹⁹ Gordon, "The Veil of Power," 208; Maier, 19-21; L. William Countryman, "Patrons and Officers in Club and Church," in Paul J. Achtemeier (ed), SBL 1977 Seminar Papers, (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1977), 135-43; Karen Jo Torjesen, When Women were Priests: Women's Leadership in the Early Church and the Scandal of their Subordination in the Rise of Christianity, (San Francisco, CA: Harper, 1993), 32.

¹²⁰ Aune, Prophecy in Early Christianity, 23.

¹²¹ North, 52-3; Garland, 83.

¹²² North, 69-70; Aune, Prophecy in Early Christianity, 41.

¹²³ North, 66-7.

the result of direct inspiration through trance, ecstasy or vision, and included the phenomenon of oracular divination or prophecy.¹²⁴ Divination in all its forms together with such activities as miracle working, exorcism and faith healing were not only commonplace but sources of prestige, importance and wealth for the practitioners.¹²⁵

The brokering of favours from the deities was an important power resource which the ruling elites attempted to dominate and control. On the one hand, it was argued that religious rites, including consultations with diviners, should only be carried out in the private domestic sphere with the permission of the master and householder. Communication with the deities was too dangerous to be left to the discretion of underlings. On the other hand, lower class diviners were frequently regarded with disapproval, suspicion, and hostility. Their activities were seen as a potential threat to the established order, often leading to charges of witchcraft and sorcery, intolerance and persecution.¹²⁶

Patronage, in the Greco-Roman world, was both a social relationship and a social system which grew out of the extension of patriarchal authority beyond the household into economic, political and religious relations, and which served to structure interactions between persons of different social strata. Patron-broker-client relations enabled ordinary people to gain access to goods and services controlled by more powerful humans, and to the spiritual and religious resources of the divine realm. The pervasiveness of the patronage system must be taken seriously by modern readers of texts that originated in Greco-Roman societies. For Ignatius and other early Christian writers, patronage was assumed; it was the way things were done in the world. Ignatius labels God as "Father," portraying him and Jesus as the givers of gifts and favours to their loyal clients. He expects bishops to act as patrons in relation to the members of their churches, and as brokers in the relationship between God and humans. The question raised by Maier is whether the episcopal office was acquired through acts of patronage: did men like Polycarp become bishops in exchange for providing meeting-places and other resources needed by Christian groups? As we shall see, Ignatius' letters are silent on this specific issue. He is not interested in the worldly status, rank or attainments

¹²⁴ Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity*, 23.

¹²⁵ Garland, 85.

¹²⁶ North, 58-9; Gordon, "Religion in the Roman Empire, 252-5; Wilson, *Related Strangers*, 28, 185, 271.

of episcopal candidates, but seeks to convince his readers that bishops are sent by the Lord and established by the Holy Spirit to act as God's representatives and brokers in the community.

2.3 Charisma and Patronage

One last issue needs to be addressed before bringing this discussion of method and models to an end. In this study charisma is an *etic* category, defined as an attribution of giftedness to a specific individual by a social group as a justification for that person's right to exercise power within the group. Charisma is the basis of achieved personal or charismatic authority that becomes routinized and transformed as the group seeks security and continuity in leadership. These concepts are among the categories which will be used as heuristic devices to assist in the description and comparison of forms of leadership found in Syria in the early 2nd century.

Charisma, however, is also an *emic* category belonging to the social world in which Ignatius and the other early Christian writers lived. The word χάρισμα is related to the more common Greek noun χάρις and the cognate verb χαρίζομαι. Both have a range of meanings. Χάρις, for instance, can refer to physical grace and beauty, favour or goodwill towards a person, or gratitude and obligation for a favour received, while χαρίζομαι means to show someone a favour or kindness, oblige, or gratify.¹²⁷ In other words, χάρις and χαρίζομαι can be used as part of the vocabulary of patronage. Χαρίζομαι is what a patron does; he or she gives something to someone else when he or she is not legally or contractually bound to do so. Χάρις is what the patron gives and what the client receives, a gift, a favour, a benefaction, assistance, for which the client is morally indebted and is expected to demonstrate gratitude.¹²⁸

What relationship, if any, is there between these *etic* and *emic* conceptions of charisma? The biggest difference between the two concepts is that charisma as the basis of achieved personal authority refers to exemplary, exceptional or extraordinary personal gifts, while the Greco-Roman

¹²⁷ BAGD, 877-8; Liddell-Scott, 1978-9; TDNT, IX:372-5; Daniel C. Arichea, Jr., "Translating 'Grace' (*Charis*) in the New Testament," *Bib.Tr.*, 29:2 (1978) 201-6.

¹²⁸ See David A. deSilva, "Exchanging Favor for Wrath: Apostasy in Hebrews and Patron-Client Relationships," *JBL* 115/1 (1996) 91-116, especially 100-1; also Malina, "Patron and Client," 5 note 7, where he argues that the language of grace belongs to the vocabulary of patronage, but defines the terms somewhat differently.

concept simply refers to gifts and favours in general. What this means is that there is no straightforward correlation between the use of words like χάρις or χάρισμα in early Christian texts and the concept of charismatic authority. Many, many people would have been the recipients and bearers of gifts and favours from both human and divine patrons in the ancient world, but few ever achieved positions of power and authority because of these gifts. Having said that, however, it is equally important to note that in the Greco-Roman world upward social mobility, was possible only through the goodwill and favour (χάρις) of a powerful patron.¹²⁹ What this means is that if and when it occurred, achieved personal authority would have been culturally interpreted as evidence of gifts or favours *by someone*, either a more powerful human person or a non-human being such as a deity, spirit or demon.

The relationship of patronage and charisma (or grace) is particularly evident in the case of freedmen (ex-slaves) who lacked the necessary ascribed qualifications traditionally associated with the exercise of power in the Greco-Roman world, and who were legally barred from holding office.¹³⁰ Yet as clients of elite patrons some freedmen were able to achieve positions of considerable power and authority, by virtue of which they were able to attract a sometimes significant following of personal clients for whom they brokered favours. The freedman broker's ability to make things happen for the benefit of his clients would have been interpreted as deriving from the goodwill and favour (χάρις) of his former master and patron. The ex-slave's influence with his patron would have arisen from his personal achievements, in making things happen for the master's benefit. The power and authority of the freedman broker was exceptional, and was based on personal achievements which benefited both his clients and his patron. It was interpreted *emically* as grounded in χάρις, the favour and goodwill of the former master; and it might be interpreted *etically* as deriving from charisma or the attribution of giftedness.

The relationship between the modern analytical concept of charisma and Greco-Roman ideas of χάρις is more prominent in the figures of diviners, prophets, seers, magicians, and miracle workers who populated the ancient world. All of these characters acted as brokers between human and divine

¹²⁹ Burford, 137-41; Stambaugh and Balch, 114.

¹³⁰ Saller, Personal Patronage, 64-6; Meeks, 21-2; Stambaugh and Balch, 115.

(or sometimes demonic) beings. Not all of them were charismatics in the *etic* sense of the word. Some diviners and prophets held official positions in religious and political institutions acquired on the basis of ascribed personal qualifications (e.g. Roman *augures*). Some acquired their skills through training handed down in families or in restricted groups. Others - and these are the ones we are interested in - attracted popular as well as official attention and prestige primarily by virtue of personal achievement. Their consistent success in producing miraculous healings and exorcisms, inducing rain by prayer, recognizing signs of approaching danger, or whatever, resulted in a growing "reputation of power." The ability of these persons to mediate divine assistance and help was regarded as evidence that they were the favourites and intimates of deities. Nowhere is this more evident than in the early Christian insistence that Jesus, a Galilean carpenter, achieved fame as a healer and teacher of wisdom because he was God's "only beloved son," and not just any old favourite servant or slave.

What I am trying to suggest is that there is indeed a link between charismatic authority and the institution of patronage in the Greco-Roman world. Charismatic authority figures in the ancient world were most likely to act as *brokers*. Men and women, traditionally and legally excluded from authority roles were able to use brokerage as a means of achieving personal power and authority. Brokers mediated communication and interaction between persons and groups occupying different social strata. They appeared at the margins of centres of power, they served as conduits between the haves and the have-nots, they crossed social boundaries. Brokers whose power was dependent almost solely on personal achievement were regarded with a great deal of ambivalence and on occasion with outright hostility. That men of noble birth and high rank had to plead for favours from ex-slaves was felt to be a highly undesirable reversal of the traditionally sanctioned power structure. That a tradesman of dubious lineage whose only claim to renown was his personal achievement in healing and teaching wisdom to ignorant peasants should be hailed as a divinely appointed leader was intolerable. Characters like the freedman slave, like Jesus and numerous other prophets and miracle workers, might best be described as *charismatic brokers*.

A *charismatic broker* may be defined as a person who occupies a position of authority over a particular group of clients because he or she has achieved a personal reputation for power by mediating favours from a superior person, human or divine. The charismatic broker's authority is

based on a perception of giftedness (charisma) arising from personal achievement, and is culturally interpreted as evidence of χάρις, the favour and goodwill, of his or her patron. This concept will be important for understanding the social location and authority of Ignatius himself, and of episcopal leadership as he understands it. Due to God's grace (χάρις) Ignatius is a martyr-elect, marked for permanent removal from this world and poised on the threshold of the world to come. This is an achieved liminal status which enables him to act as a charismatic broker providing his Christian readers with information and insights from the divine realm. Included in the knowledge that he imparts is an understanding of episcopal office as *routinized charismatic brokerage* - bishops are established by the Holy Spirit to act as agents of God's power and grace (χάρις) in the worshipping community.

2.4 Summary

This study of episcopal leadership in the letters of Ignatius of Antioch will use a social-science method to shed light on the nature of his conception of episcopal authority and to compare and contrast it with other forms of leadership in his cultural environment. Two models have been chosen to function as interpretative tools to aid in this task. Weber's typology of legitimate authority is an *etic* model which will assist in the identification, description and classification of different forms of leadership and authority represented in the Ignatian correspondence and other Syrian Christian documents to be investigated. The patron-broker-client model is an *emic* model describing the primary means of interaction between persons of differing status and power in the Greco-Roman world, and will be used to assess the extent to which Ignatius and other early Christian writers both reflected and tried to alter the social reality which they experienced. Neither of these models has any explanatory value; they will function solely as heuristic devices to facilitate the disciplined and consistent description and comparison of historical evidence.¹³¹

Weber's typology of authority posits that the exercise of power in social groups is considered legitimate when it is based on (1) tradition or ascribed personal characteristics (e.g. gender, age, lineage, social status), (2) laws and rules which establish the acquired impersonal authority of officeholders, and/or (3) charisma or the attribution of giftedness to a person because of his or her

¹³¹ Galt and Smith, 55-69.

personal achievements. These are "ideal types" which are rarely if ever found historically in their "pure" forms,¹³² but which generally occur in various combinations emphasizing one or other source of legitimacy. Thus in the Greco-Roman world traditional authority is culturally dominant, serving as the primary criterion for the holding of office and the exercise of legal-rational authority. Weber suggests that over time charisma will become routinized and transformed into other types of authority as charismatic groups seek more stable and permanent forms of leadership. Routinization may take the form of identifying an appropriately qualified charismatic successor through a search, revelation, or designation by the original leader or his administrative staff. Routinization might also take the form of depersonalizing charisma and transforming it into a quality transferred by heredity, or acquired by ritual means or by education. These latter concepts will be particularly helpful in understanding the emergence of various forms of church leadership in early 2nd century Syria.

Patronage was a social relationship which grew out of the extension of patriarchal authority beyond the household into the realms of economics, politics and religion. As a social system, patronage structured interactions between persons of different social status. The patron was the superior member of the relationship, granting access to goods and services under his or her control as favours to clients in exchange for public praise and/or other goods as determined by the patron. A broker was a person whose proximity to a patron enabled him or her to strategically arrange and manipulate contacts between prospective clients and their patron. Most contacts between humans and deities occurred through the mediation or brokerage of religious officials and specialists. Religious authority was traditionally and officially connected with and located in political and household leaders. Cultic offices were either inherited or acquired through acts of patronage. Divination, prophecy, miracle working and the like were activities which allowed for the emergence of gifted individuals whose personal achievements in these fields enabled them to achieve prominence and power in the Greco-Roman world.

On the basis of these two models, Ignatius will be classified as *charismatic broker*, a person who enjoys authority over his readers because he has achieved the personal status of a martyr-elect and is thus able to mediate heavenly resources to them. Ignatius' authority is based on the perception that he is an exceptional and gifted person, hence charismatic, whose personal achievements are

¹³² Weber, 216.

culturally interpreted as evidence of God's favour or χάρις. The episcopal office for which Ignatius argues so energetically in each of his letters is best understood as involving a *routinized charismatic brokerage* in which bishops act as mediators of God's grace and power by virtue of having been selected by the Holy Spirit for office.

3.0 Leadership and Authority in Early Syrian Christian Communities

Ignatius' ardent advocacy on behalf of bishops indicates that the episcopacy was not yet a well established institution at the beginning of the 2nd century. His statements are probably more prescriptive than they are descriptive, offering arguments that are intended to strengthen a nascent form of leadership. Consequently the chronological authenticity of Ignatius' writings on this subject does not depend so much on the presence and powers of bishops in the churches he addresses, but on the plausibility of episcopal leadership emerging in Syria where his ideas on the topic were formed. Any attempt to reconstruct the circumstances of the Syrian churches, however, cannot rely solely on the Ignatian correspondence which is addressed to Asia Minor and never explicitly describes the situation in Antioch. Instead it is necessary to examine other Syrian documents in order to develop a description of the leadership models which were prevalent in that region and with which Ignatius' conception of episcopal leadership may be compared and contrasted.

Such a comparative analysis requires that we not only locate Ignatius' writings in a specific geographic area, but that we also situate them within a particular time frame. Since the Syrian bishop's letters contain no references to dates,¹ locating them in time must be done on the basis of external evidence. The earliest witness to Ignatius is Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna (69-155 CE), who refers to Ignatius three times in his epistle to the church at Philippi in Macedonia (*Phil.* 13.2). The date of Polycarp's letter, however, can only be determined by reference to Ignatius, and so is of no assistance in dating the Syrian bishop's correspondence.² After Polycarp, the main witnesses to Ignatius are Irenaeus (ca. 130-200 CE), Origen (ca. 185-245 CE) and Eusebius (ca. 260-340 CE).³ Of these early Christian writers, only Eusebius suggests a specific date for the letters, by placing Ignatius' martyrdom in the tenth year of Trajan's reign, i.e. 107 or 108.⁴ A local Syrian tradition

¹ The letter to Rome is dated by Ignatius to "the calends of September," that is August 24 (*Rom.* 10.2), unfortunately no indication of a year is given.

² William R. Schoedel, "Polycarp," in R. M. Grant (ed), *The Apostolic Fathers*, Volume 5, (Camden, NJ: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1969), 4.

³ Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 1; Harrison, *Polycarp's Two Epistles*, 209.

⁴ Although Eusebius' dates (*Hist.eccl.* 3.36) are not precise they are reasonably reliable. For example he also records that Pliny condemned and executed a number of Christians in Bithynia in the same time frame as Ignatius' martyrdom. From other sources we know that Pliny was governor of Bithynia between 110-113 CE. See Harrison, 21-2.

recorded by the 6th century writer Malalas associates Ignatius' arrest and condemnation with the earthquake which struck Antioch on December 13, 115.⁵ In the absence of any other evidence, it appears that Ignatius' letters should be dated to the last decade of Trajan's reign which lasted from 98-117 CE.

In selecting documents which might shed light on questions relating to the origins and distinctiveness of Ignatius' views on episcopal leadership, three criteria should apply. (1) The documents should originate in, or be associated with, Syria. (2) These writings should be datable to a few decades on either side of Ignatius' martyrdom, say 80-140 CE. Such a range is broad enough to allow for some development in church leadership roles, enabling us to see where Ignatius might fit. (3) The documents should have something to say, preferably explicitly, about leadership in the Syrian churches, or at the very least point reasonably clearly to leadership issues. Most discussions of Ignatius in terms of his Syrian context focus on Matthew and the *Didache*,⁶ and that is where my exploration will begin. A more comprehensive picture will emerge, however, by extending this comparative survey to include the letters and Gospel of John, and the *Gospel of Thomas*.

3.1 Scribal Leadership and Authority in Matthew

The Gospel of Matthew is commonly dated to the last decades of the 1st century, about 80-90 CE.⁷ It appears to have emerged from a Jewish Christian community which had recently broken away from the larger Jewish community, and was engaged in a process of defining itself over against its parent.⁸ Matthew is written in Greek, is interested in the conversion of non-Jews (Matt. 28:19), and

⁵ Malalas, *Chronicle* 277.9-10; See Downey, *A History of Antioch*, 292-4.

⁶ See works by Trevett and Streeter; also Raymond E. Brown and John P. Meier, *Antioch and Rome: New Testament Cradles of Catholic Christianity*, (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1983).

⁷ Streeter, 98; Eduard Schweizer, *The Good News according to Matthew*, (transl. David E. Green; Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1975), 16; John P. Meier, *The Vision of Matthew: Christ, Church and Morality in the First Gospel*, (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1979), 13; Brown and Meier, 16; J. Andrew Overman, *Matthew's Gospel and Formative Judaism: The Social World of the Matthean Community*, (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1990), 149; David L. Balch, "Introduction," in Balch, *Social History of the Matthean Community*, xvii-xxiii, here xvii; Crossan, 430.

⁸ Wilson, *Related Strangers*, 55; Overman, 141-7; Anthony J. Saldarini, "The Gospel of Matthew and Jewish-Christian Conflict," in Balch, *Social History of the Matthean Community*, 38-61.

appears to reflect a relatively prosperous urban⁹ community which was subject to persecution from both Jews and pagans (Matt. 10:17-18). This combination of features points to a Hellenized urban setting such as Antioch in Syria, or perhaps some other commercial city in the region north of Galilee.¹⁰ The earliest quotations and allusions to traditions and sayings recorded by Matthew are found in the letters of Ignatius, further suggesting a Syrian provenance for this material.¹¹

Matthew's gospel does not contain an explicit discussion of community leadership such as is found in the letters of Ignatius, but purports to be a book about the life and doings of Jesus (Matt. 1:1). Yet it is widely recognized that Matthew's account, like that of the other gospel writers, is shaped by and reflects the needs and concerns of the author and his audience. Matthew relates events in the life of Jesus which he believes are particularly useful to the members of the community for which he writes. Matthew's distinctive traits and special emphases provide insights into the social situation of the writer and his audience. Thus, Matthew tells the story not only of Jesus, but of the community of followers that emerged after Jesus' death.¹² A number of passages in Matthew have been identified as pointing to leadership issues in the Matthean community. These include the warning against false prophets (7:15-23), the commissioning of the twelve disciples (10:1-42), the woes against the scribes and Pharisees (23:1-35), and the granting of the authority to bind and loose to the disciples (18:15-18) and to Peter (16:13-20).

Our examination of leadership and authority in Matthew will begin with the problem of prophets. The Matthean community is warned to beware of "false prophets," who come to the community in sheep's clothing but are really wolves (7:15). They are outsiders seeking entry on the

⁹ Relative prosperity is suggested by Mt. 5:3 (in comparison with Lk. 6:20) and Mt. 25:35-40, where the evangelist assumes that his readers have the ability to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, etc. Mt. 5:10-12; 10: 5-6, 17-18; 24:9-14 all suggest an urban ministry.

¹⁰ Schweizer, 16; Meier, 14; Brown and Meier, 16; Balch, xvii; Jack Dean Kingsbury, "Conclusion: Analysis of a Conversation," in Balch, Social History of the Matthean Community, 259-69, here 264-5; Anthony J. Saldarini, "Delegitimation of Leaders in Matthew 23," CBO 54 (1992) 659-80, here 664.

¹¹ Streeter, 60; Meier, 13-4; Crossan, 430; Edouard Massaux, The Influence of the Gospel of Saint Matthew on Christian Literature before Saint Irenaeus. Book 1: The First Ecclesiastical Writers, (transl. Norman J. Belval and Suzanne Hecht; edited by Arthur J. Bellinzoni; Louvain: Peeters/Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1990), 118.

¹² Wilson, Related Strangers, 36; Anthony J. Saldarini, Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees in Palestinian Society: A Sociological Approach, (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1988), 144; Clayton N. Jefford, The Sayings of Jesus in the Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, (VCSup 11, 1989), 118.

basis of their prophecies, exorcisms and miracles which are worked in the name of Jesus (7:22).¹³ They seem to be engaged in mission work similar to that of the disciples in chapter 10: proclaiming the good news, healing the sick, raising the dead, and casting out demons (10:7-8). Such activities even when performed in the name of Jesus are, for the gospel writer, not sufficient proof of authenticity. These false prophets are identifiable "by their fruits" (7:16), their failure to do the will of Jesus' Father in heaven (7:21), and their deeds of lawlessness (7:23). Matthew argues that prophets must be judged by their fulfilment of the law as interpreted by Jesus and taught in the Matthean community.¹⁴ This counsel has the effect of casting doubt on the sincerity and integrity of itinerant prophets,¹⁵ and undermining their capacity to act as legitimate authority figures.

As outsiders, these prophets have no customary or official positions within the Matthean community. They are charismatic figures who expect and, perhaps in some quarters, receive a welcome on the basis of their reputation and ability to broker divine power.¹⁶ Matthew, however, warns his readers that prophesy, miracles and exorcisms on their own are not conclusive evidence that a person is a true prophet. Leadership and authority are not to be validated solely by personal achievements and giftedness in being able to mediate God's favours. These activities must be matched by behaviour that conforms to the norms of the community which are taught as Torah-according-to-Jesus. Leadership and authority are thus ultimately legitimated by an emerging set of customs and rules which the gospel writer seeks to articulate. Charismatic authority is recognized, but is regarded with deep ambivalence by Matthew who attempts to restrict the number of legitimate prophets and to subordinate them to a higher authority within the community which has the power to judge their behaviour. Although the evangelist does not specify who these judges are, one might surmise that

¹³ Francis Wright Beare, The Gospel according to Matthew: Translation, Introduction and Commentary, (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1982), 195; Robert H. Gundry, Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1982), 128; Some scholars mistakenly see two groups in this passage, prophets and charismatic miracle workers. See for example, Brown and Meier, 58; David Hill, "False Prophets and Charismatics: Structure and Interpretation in Matthew 7,15-23," Bib 57 (1976) 327-48.

¹⁴ Overman, 117-9.

¹⁵ Aune, Prophecy in Early Christianity, 223-4; Robert H. Smith, "Matthew's Message for Insiders: Charisma and Commandment in a First Century Community," Int., 46:3 (1992) 229-39.

¹⁶ For a description of typical Greco-Roman charismatic figures, see page 33 above.

they are the Matthean community's scribal leaders.

Not only is Matthew leery of visiting prophets, in his own community there seems to be a shortage of persons willing to engage in prophetic ministries. Overman has shown how the gospel writer's arrangement of the sending of the twelve disciples in chapter 10 points to the situation of the Matthean community. Overman notes that Matthew introduces this account with a plea from Jesus concerning the need for more "labourers" willing to minister to the people in the cities and towns (9:35-38). What follows in chapter 10 are a description of and a set of instructions about the mission that awaits these workers.¹⁷ Like the original twelve, these labourers will engage in a mission which involves proclamation, healing, exorcism and raising the dead (10:7-8). They are to wander from village to town carrying no provisions with them, giving their services without expectation of payment aside from food (10:9-11). The workers are told how to deal with inevitable persecution from Jewish community leaders and Roman officials (10:17-19), as well as conflict with members of their own families (10:21, 35-37). These itinerant envoys of Jesus are referred to as "prophets," "righteous ones," and "little ones" (10:40-42). These "missionaries," as Overman calls them, are to be welcomed and assisted "*in the name of a disciple*" (10:42), suggesting that "the disciples or their successors" in authority in Matthew's community are sending out persons on missions in imitation of Jesus' original sending of the twelve.¹⁸ There appears to be a greater demand for such prophets than there are individuals willing and able to undertake such ministries. Overman argues, moreover, that the commissioning of such charismatic missionaries is no longer the central focus of the Matthean community.¹⁹

In Matthew's presentation then, prophets are associated with wandering ministries involving prophecy, exorcism, healing and other miraculous deeds. On the one hand, these charismatic figures are sent by Jesus (23:34), and as his envoys and messengers they are to be welcomed and assisted (10:40). On the other hand, prophets do not appear to be viable community leaders in the eyes of the

¹⁷ Overman, 120.

¹⁸ Ibid, 121; See also Jefford, The Sayings of Jesus, 120-22, who argues that Matthew is trying to "harness the prophetic witness with a more readily controlled tradition of authority, i.e. the memory of the work and of the teaching of the apostles."

¹⁹ Overman, 121.

gospel writer. Prophetic authority is undermined by calling into question the integrity of itinerant charismatics seeking entry into the community. The evangelist's view seems to be that a prophet's claim to legitimacy depends not on personal achievement and giftedness as a broker of divine power, but on adherence to Matthean norms and customs of behaviour. In this way itinerant prophets are subordinated to the authority of local community leaders who are the articulators and arbiters of Torah-according-to-Jesus. There appear to be few home grown prophets, and those that do arise from within the community are sent out "in the name of a disciple." They are commissioned by, and therefore subordinate to, the "disciples" or their representatives in the contemporary community. These prophets do not remain in the community to exercise their gifts, but go elsewhere. Matthew thus leaves little room for prophets to achieve leadership positions within the community. Achieved personal, or charismatic, authority is regarded as potential threat which must be restricted and controlled by customs and rules, and by those who establish and maintain them.

Chapter 23 of Matthew's gospel opens with Jesus issuing what appears to be a contradictory instruction concerning scribes and Pharisees. The crowds and disciples are exhorted to "do whatever they teach you and follow it; but do not do as they do" (23:2). This is followed by a citation of objectionable practices in which these Jewish leaders indulge. They impose burdens on others, draw attention to themselves by wearing conspicuous symbols of piety, claim seats of honour at banquets and in the synagogues, and like to be greeted with titles of respect (23:4-7). In contrast to these practices, Jesus insists that his disciples are to avoid and reject certain titles (23:8-12). The passage culminates with Jesus pronouncing seven woes against the scribes and Pharisees, indicting them for acts of hypocrisy, blindness, greed, self-indulgence, lawlessness and murder (23:13-33).

Accounts of hostile encounters between Jesus and Jewish leaders are numerous in Matthew's gospel and, no doubt, reflect incidents from the life of Jesus. The unprecedented level of animosity displayed in this instance, however, suggests that scribes and Pharisees are a topic of vital concern for the gospel writer. As part of the story of the Matthean community, this incident may be read as an effort to delegitimize the Jewish leaders who are dominant in the author's social environment. Matthew acknowledges that the scribes and Pharisees are the officially recognized interpreters of Torah in the Jewish community,²⁰ but condemns the way they conduct themselves. Their

²⁰ Saldarini, Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees, 165.

preoccupation with what would be considered quite normal public displays of their authority and prestige²¹ disqualifies them, in Matthew's eyes, as legitimate community leaders.²²

This strident critique of Jewish leadership is addressed to, and intended for the benefit of Matthew's Jewish Christian audience, in particular those who are themselves claiming or aspiring to positions of authority. The scribes and Pharisees are held up to the Matthean community as negative examples of community leadership. Their behaviour serves to define precisely what Christian leaders should *not* do,²³ in particular they are not to claim titles of honour as the text insists:

But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all brothers and sisters. And call no one your father on earth, for you have one Father, the one in heaven. Nor are you to be called master, for you have one master, the Christ (23:8-10).

"Rabbi" is a specifically Jewish term meaning literally "my great one," which came to refer in the post-70 era to certain teachers of Torah. The designation "father" (*abba* in Aramaic; *πατήρ* in Greek) was widely used in the Greco-Roman world to address older men, teachers, and to designate patrons of individuals and groups. "Master" (*καθηγητής*) derives from a Greek milieu and was used commonly of founders and heads of philosophical schools who related to their students and followers as patrons.²⁴ All three titles signify respect and deference, and could be used to address persons of higher rank to whom one was dependent as a client. The gospel writer's rejection of these titles is directed at persons in the Matthean community who are claiming, or at least aspiring to, such titles of prominence and prestige.²⁵

Rabbis, fathers and masters symbolize the traditional rulers of a patriarchal society organized

²¹ Saldarini, "The Delegitimation of Leaders," 671; Garnsey and Saller, 121.

²² Overman, 141-7; Saldarini, "Delegitimation of Leaders," 662-9; Benedict T. Viviano, "Social World and Community Leadership: The Case of Matthew 23.1-12, 34," *JSNT* 39 (1990) 3-21, here 9-11; Wilson, *Related Strangers*, 51.

²³ Saldarini, "Delegitimation of Leaders," 669; Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees*, 165; Viviano, 16.

²⁴ Saldarini, "Delegitimation of Leaders," 670; Viviano, 12-4; Dennis C. Duling, "The Matthean Brotherhood in Marginal Scribal Leadership," in Philip F. Esler (ed), *Modelling Early Christianity: Social-Scientific Studies of the New Testament in its Context*, (London, UK: Routledge, 1995) 159-82, here 165-6.

²⁵ Overman, 142, 122-4; Viviano, 16; Brown and Meier, 56; Antoinette Clark Wire, "Gender Roles in a Scribal Community," in Balch, *Social History of the Matthean Community*, 87-121, here 114.

into complex networks of patronage relationships. Matthew rejects this dominant cultural model of social organization, thus betraying a sectarian stance in relation to the society around him.²⁶ In the Christian community patronage, subordination and dependency are not to characterize human relationships. Joining Matthew's community involves leaving one's earthly father and the patriarchal family (4:22; 8:21-2; 10:37; 19:29), and entering a society in which there are no rabbis, fathers, masters, rulers, tyrants or other great ones to lord it over people (20:25-28). Even the giving of alms by human benefactors is to be done in secret and not with an eye to winning public acclaim and honour (6:2-4). No human being is to be addressed as "father" since God alone retains the status of patriarch and patron (28:8-9), a role given particular emphasis in this gospel.²⁷ It is the heavenly patron who will provide the basic necessities of life such as food, drink and clothing (6:25-34), as well as those special favours of participation in God's reign, ownership of the earth, comfort and justice, access to the divine presence, and a great reward in heaven (5:3-11). Community members are all brothers and sisters who are all children, i.e. clients, of the divine patron and of his broker, the master and teacher Jesus (23:8-9). Matthew envisions a reordering of social relations in which patron-client relations continue to define divine-human interactions, but not interactions within the human community.

What Matthew is objecting to in chapter 23 is the appearance in his community of leadership titles and styles, prevalent in the dominant culture, that threaten his ideal vision of the church as a household or clientele recognizing only one divine patriarch and patron (God), and one broker, (Jesus). In spite of his egalitarian social vision Matthew recognizes the need for leadership and authority in the Christian community. This leadership is provided by those whom Jesus sends, prophets, sages and scribes (23:34). Matthew is, however, deeply ambivalent about prophetic leaders who claim achieved personal or charismatic authority, preferring instead to support the leadership of scribes in the Christian community.²⁸

²⁶ Overman, 142.

²⁷ Matthew refers to God as *πατήρ* 45 times in comparison to Mark (5x) and Luke-Acts (20x); see Malina, "Patron and Client," 9-11; Michael H. Crosby, *House of Disciples: Church, Economics and Justice in Matthew*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), 107-9.

²⁸ Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees*, 172; Duling, 172-9.

In Matthew's Jewish parent community, scribes are a literate group educated in Jewish law and customs (Torah) who serve the governing class in a number of roles. Scribes are found acting as "advisors, high officials, bureaucrats, judges, teachers and low level functionaries."²⁹ Matthew recognizes the Jewish scribes as authoritative teachers of Torah, urging his readers to do whatever they teach (23:2), but not to follow their leadership styles and practices. The gospel writer knows of scribes who acknowledge Jesus as a teacher and seek to be his disciples (8:19). The scribe who has accepted Jesus is described as one who has been "trained for the kingdom of heaven" (13:52). Such a person is "like the master of a household" who possesses a treasure that contains "what is new and what is old" (13:52). What the Christian scribe has to offer God's household is interpretation and application of the old laws and customs in light of new understandings provided by Jesus. An authoritative articulation and expression of the new community's way of life is the treasure provided by the ideal Christian scribe. Given that this is precisely what Matthew does, this passage may point to the social location of the gospel writer.³⁰

The centrality of the scribal teaching role in Matthew's community is prefigured in his gospel by Jesus. As Overman asserts:

Jesus is portrayed as an authoritative and effective teacher in Matthew more than any other Gospel. This is evidenced in the Sermon on the Mount, in chap.18, as well as in the debates over the law and its proper interpretation....Matthew develops extensively the portrait of Jesus as authoritative teacher, and it is this feature of Jesus' ministry that the Matthean disciples inherit and perpetuate.³¹

The scribal activity of the Matthean community thus originates with Jesus himself who is, for the gospel writer, the authoritative teacher and interpreter of Torah. Throughout the gospel the disciples receive extended instruction from Jesus, they understand him and his message about God's reign (e.g. 13:51; 15:16). In his final instructions Jesus sends the disciples out into the world not to heal or exorcise, but to train and teach all nations to obey his commandments (28:19-20). The disciples have

²⁹ Saldarini, Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees, 115; Duling, 176.

³⁰ Overman, 116-7; Saldarini, Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees, 159-60; Duling, 173-5; Brown and Meier, 56; Wire, 99.

³¹ Overman, 127-8.

become first and foremost teachers of Torah-according-to-Jesus,³² and may well represent the scribal leaders of Matthew's community.³³

The scribal authority of the disciples and their successors in the community is to a certain extent collegial, as is made clear in 18:15-20. In this passage Jesus instructs the disciples how to handle a situation in which an individual member of the community is offended by the actions of a "brother." The offended person is advised to speak with the sinner in private (18:15). If this fails to resolve the matter, a second attempt is to be made in the presence of one or two others (18:16). As a final resort, the offended individual can bring the issue to the ἐκκλησία, the assembled community,³⁴ which in turn addresses the sinner on the matter (18:17). Jesus then says,

Truly I tell you (ὁμῖν), whatever you bind (δῆσητε) on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose (λύσητε) on earth will be loosed in heaven (18:18).

The instructions conclude with the assurance that if two of the disciples agree about anything it will be ratified by the Father in heaven because Jesus is present wherever two or three gather in his name (18:19-20).

Here the disciples are granted a collective power to "bind" and to "loose." These Jewish terms refer to a teaching function, and specifically to making interpretative judgments and pronouncements about what is required or forbidden by Torah.³⁵ In the context of disputes between individual members of the community, and in the interest of reconciling members, the assembled disciples are empowered to make an authoritative declaration which is to guide the actions of individual community members toward the offender. These instructions institutionalize a legal process of conflict resolution in which the assembly of disciples functions as a final court of appeal.³⁶ The

³² Overman, 116-7, 124-36, see especially 128, 133; Wire, 106.

³³ Duling, 175; Wilson, *Related Strangers*, 52.

³⁴ I agree with Duling, 164, that ἐκκλησία translated as "church" is overloaded with later ecclesiastical content; however, his choice of "brotherhood" is hardly an adequate translation of ἐκκλησία which means assembly, gathering, meeting, or congregation, see BAGD, 240-1.

³⁵ R. T. France, *Matthew: Evangelist and Teacher*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Academic Books, 1989), 247; Meier, 113-4; Schweizer, 339, 343.

³⁶ France, 248-9; Duling, 167-9, 172.

question is whether the disciples in this passage function as representatives of the entire Christian community or of the community's scribal leaders? Is the power to bind and loose given to the "church" or to the successors of the disciples in the church? Although the tendency is to interpret the passage as referring to the "church" or to the community as a whole,³⁷ my suspicion is that a scribal author is not likely to ascribe specifically scribal functions and authority to the community at large.

Although the text is somewhat ambiguous, it can be interpreted to support the notion that binding and loosing are the function of the disciples and their scribal successors in the Matthean community, and not the function of the "church." Nowhere in the passage is Jesus presented as addressing some entity called the ἐκκλησία; the entire passage consists of instructions to the disciples (18:1). Only the "twelve" are called disciples in Matthew's gospel, remaining throughout a distinct group that does not include all the followers of Jesus.³⁸ It is the agreement of two disciples on earth which will be ratified by the Father in heaven because Jesus himself is present and guides the decision wherever two or three disciples are gathered in his name (18:19-20). If the ἐκκλησία consists of any two or three people gathered in Jesus' name, a visit to the sinner by the complainant with one or two others (18:16) could constitute an assembly with binding powers. This, however, is clearly not the case as is indicated by the instructions in verse 17. The point seems to be that a decision, which could result in a community member being treated as a "Gentile and a tax collector" (18:17), should be made by a least two disciples in the context of a gathering or assembly (ἐκκλησία) of the entire community. The right to make authoritative decisions that are intended to lead to reconciliation between individuals, but which might effect community membership, is given not to the ἐκκλησία, but to the disciples, a specific group among the followers of Jesus. Throughout the gospel these disciples are depicted as engaged in scribal activity, receiving instruction and being commissioned to teach Jesus' commandments to others. They epitomize Matthew's preferred community leaders, educated and literate scribes with the power to "bind" and to "loose."

Matthew's presentation of these scribal disciples is noted for the special attention that is given

³⁷ Eg. France, 249; Overman, 131; Brown and Meier, 68-71; von Campenhausen, 126-8; Donald Senior, What are They Saying about Matthew?, (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1983), 74.

³⁸ Wire, 103, 106; Michael J. Wilkins, The Concept of Disciple in Matthew's Gospel as Reflected in the Use of the Term Μαθητής, (NovTSup 59; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1988) 133, 167, 171.

to one particular disciple. Peter is the first to follow Jesus (4:18) and the first of Jesus' apostles (10:2). In 15:15 Peter asks Jesus to explain his teaching about impurity "to us." His query instigates further instruction that is addressed to ὑμῖν, ie. to the disciples. When Peter asks how many times he should forgive a "brother" (18:21), Jesus' answer is again addressed to ὑμῖν, to all the disciples (18:22). Peter acts in these instances as a mouthpiece for the group of disciples, who are depicted as persons who have inquired into and received special instruction from Jesus on particular points of custom and law.³⁹ Peter speaks for all of the disciples when he seeks clarification concerning the benefits they are to receive in exchange for following Jesus (19:27-30), and in insisting that he will never deny his master even if he has to die for him (26:35). At Gethsemane, Jesus addresses his remarks to the group of disciples through Peter, saying, "So, could you (ισχύσατε) not stay awake with me one hour" (26:40). Not only does Matthew portray Peter as the spokesman and representative of the disciples, on occasion Peter also speaks for Jesus. In 17:24 Peter is approached by tax collectors inquiring whether Jesus pays the temple tax. His affirmative answer is confirmed by Jesus as soon as Peter enters the house, who then instructs Peter to pay the tax on behalf of both of them (17:25-27).

Peter is the leader of the disciples, acting as their spokesman and representative in relation to Jesus, and as Jesus' own deputy in dealings with outsiders. He is presented as a scribe trained by the master himself, and is actually invested by Jesus with scribal authority. In response to Peter's confession that Jesus is the Messiah, the son of the living God (16:16), Jesus replies with those famous words:

Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my ἐκκλησία, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven (16:17-19).

By giving him the "keys of the kingdom," Jesus designates Peter as his steward in the Matthean community.⁴⁰ The keys symbolize Peter's delegated authority to regulate the affairs of God's household on behalf of and in the absence of its master. In order to do this Peter is granted the scribal

³⁹ Overman, 137.

⁴⁰ France, 247; Overman, 139, suggests the "gatekeeper" of heaven; Wilkins, 194-5, has both meanings.

power to "bind" and to "loose," to interpret and apply Jesus' teachings and commandments. His instructions and decisions will be binding on the community in this age, and will be ratified in heaven in the age to come.⁴¹ In this way Peter is designated the "chief scribe" of Matthew's community.⁴²

Peter's leadership and authority are grounded in three different bases: (1) he is educated by Jesus himself in the customs and norms that are to govern the community, and (2) he is designated the leader of the community by Jesus because (3) he is the recipient of a revelation from God concerning Jesus' true identity. The emphasis on instruction and training indicates that Peter's leadership is bound up with the office or occupation of scribe and is acquired, in part, on the basis of skill and competency. Peter's authority is not purely rational-legal,⁴³ however, as it also contains significant elements of charisma. Peter is gifted with special insight and understanding that are interpreted not as the natural outcome of his education, but as a revelation and a sign of his access to divine favour. Although Peter is seen as having charisma,⁴⁴ he is not a purely charismatic leader exercising achieved personal authority. He is a divinely inspired scribe whose authority is legitimated finally by the fact that he is designated steward of the kingdom by Jesus himself, the original charismatic leader. Peter, therefore, combines in one leadership role routinized charisma⁴⁵ with acquired competence and personal charisma.

Peter epitomizes the gospel writer's ideal community leader, and represents Matthew's solution to the problem of securing an orderly transfer of authority from one generation to the next.⁴⁶ Peter is the model of the educated scribal leader whose divinely inspired interpretation of Jesus'

⁴¹ France, 247; Meier, 113-4; Schweizer, 339, 343.

⁴² Brown and Meier, 67, call Peter the "chief rabbi of the universal church." This designation is problematic given Matthew's explicit rejection of the title "rabbi." His translation of ἐκκλησίᾳ as universal church is perhaps overloading Matthew's usage with later Christian ecclesiology.

⁴³ Rational-legal authority is described on page 24 above.

⁴⁴ Overman, 139-40, regards this revelation as evidence of routinized rather than personal charisma. His interpretation doesn't quite fit Weber's model (Weber, 247) in which oracles, lots, divine judgments etc. are consulted in the selection process, eg. Saul (1 Sam 9:15-17; 10:17-27). Peter is chosen by Jesus not because God reveals to Jesus that Peter is the one, but because Peter shows evidence of personal charisma.

⁴⁵ See pages 31-2, above, for a discussion of routinized charisma.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 139-40.

teachings is the "rock" or foundation of the Matthean community, guaranteeing its safety and salvation in the face of destructive forces that threaten it (18:16).⁴⁷ This scribal official speaks for the community in its dealings with outsiders, taking care not to give offense (17:27), and together with his colleagues works to resolve disputes in the community (18:15-20). This chief scribe also functions as the spokesman and representative of a group of learning and learned interpreters of the community's sacred teachings. This scribal group works collegially in the resolution of conflicts between community members, and provides a pool of leadership candidates. The leader of this group is chosen by his predecessor,⁴⁸ on the basis of demonstrated skills and personal charisma.

Matthew's ideal scribal leader is to a large degree patterned after Jewish models, most closely paralleling the scribe idealized in the 2nd century B.C.E. document known as the *Wisdom of Ben Sira* or *Ecclesiasticus*. Ben Sira portrays the scribe not only as a high official, advisor to the governing class, and an international ambassador, but predominantly as an expert in the law, the prophets and the writings of the Hebrew scriptures (Sirach 38:24-39:11). Ben Sira's ideal scribe is a person of learning, whose counsel and knowledge are directed by the Lord (Sirach 39:7). Like Peter in Matthew's gospel, this Jewish scribe combines personal charisma with acquired competence in the role of expounding the community's sacred teachings and wisdom.⁴⁹ Matthew does not, however, adopt the Jewish scribal model uncritically. While placing a very high value on the role of inspired scribal activity, the gospel writer rejects the use of honorific titles such as father, rabbi, or master for Christian scribes (23:8-9), along with the patron-client relationships of dependency and subordination which such titles signify. Scribal leaders who seek to accrue honour and prestige at the expense of community members are condemned (23:4-33). The Matthean community is to be guided by scribes who lead in a spirit of humility and service (23:11-12; 20:26-27).

The Gospel of Matthew reflects the situation of a community that has moved away from the charismatic leadership of prophets and is moving toward a scribal leadership that combines elements of acquired occupational or official authority with personal and routinized charismatic authority. The

⁴⁷ Ibid, 137-8.

⁴⁸ Everett Ferguson, "Origen and the Election of Bishops," *CH*, 43 (1984) 26-33, provides evidence that in some Christian communities church leaders continued to select and ordain their successors even into the 3rd and 4th centuries.

⁴⁹ Duling, 178-9; Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees*, 254-5.

earlier apostolic commission to engage in itinerant ministries of prophecy, healing and exorcism is overshadowed by Jesus' final commandment to "disciple" and teach all nations. Although prophets are still active in the Matthean environment the gospel writer undermines their potential authority by arguing that personal achievements and gifts in brokering divine power and knowledge are insufficient criteria for authoritative leadership. Visiting prophets are treated with suspicion, and are subordinated to the judgments of local scribal leaders as to their conformity with community norms and customs. A few home grown prophets are commissioned by these same leaders and sent out to practice their gifts elsewhere.

The disciples represent the leaders of Matthew's community, a group of literate and educated scribes, skilled in the interpretation of the Hebrew scriptures and the teachings of Jesus which form the basis of the community's customs and laws. This group of scribes acts collegially in making binding decisions in the context of resolving conflicts between community members. One of their number functions as their spokesman and serves as the community's representative in its dealings with outsiders. This "chief scribe," epitomized by Peter, plays the role of Jesus' steward and is invested with the power to make authoritative pronouncements concerning the interpretation and application of Jesus' commandments and teachings. Like Peter, this ideal community leader is chosen on the basis of special insight or revelation deriving from God which complements his acquired skills and competence as a scribe. Matthean scribal authority derives from this combination of personal charisma and occupational or official factors, and is ultimately validated by the act of designation. In Peter's case he was chosen by Jesus, the original charismatic leader; scribal leaders after Peter being chosen by their predecessors. Matthew attempts in this way to solve the problem of the stability and continuity of community leadership.

The relationship between Matthew and Ignatius is complicated. On the basis of some twelve or fourteen passages in the Ignatian letters it appears that the Syrian bishop was acquainted either with Matthew's gospel in its present form, or with Matthean traditions which continued to circulate independently of the gospel.⁵⁰ Aside from these literary parallels, however, we shall see that Ignatius

⁵⁰ Committee of the Oxford Society of Historical Theology (eds), The New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers, (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1905), 76-9; Massaux, 85-96; Schoedel, Ignatius of Antioch, 9; Meier, "Matthew and Ignatius," 179-86; William R. Schoedel, "Ignatius and the Reception of the Gospel in Antioch," in Balch, Social History of the Matthean Community, 129-77.

and Matthew share very little. The Syrian bishop is a vehement opponent of anything that can even remotely be labelled judaizing (*Mag.* 8.1-10.3; *Phld.* 5.2-6.1).⁵¹ He shows only a modicum of knowledge and concern for the Hebrew scriptures,⁵² and seeks to correct those who are preoccupied with these scriptures as sources of God's secrets (*Phld.* 8.2-9.2). Ignatius appears to have little interest in, and is even leery of, the sort of scribal activity which is central to Matthew's community. Scribal competence does not appear to be relevant to the exercise of episcopal leadership for Ignatius. The closest parallel to Matthean scribal leadership in the Syrian bishop's letters might be found in the role of the elders who are consistently associated with the apostles and their commandments, but the connection is not particularly strong. Ignatius does mention Peter twice (*Rom.* 4.3; *Smyr.* 3.2), but in neither instance is Peter presented as a role model for bishops. Although Ignatius may have been familiar with and had contacts with Matthean Christianity it does not appear to have contributed much to his thinking about church leadership.⁵³

⁵¹ See discussion in Paul J. Donahue, "Jewish Christianity in the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch," *VC* 32 (1978) 81-93.

⁵² Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 9, notes only three quotations from the Hebrew Bible; *The NT in the Apostolic Fathers*, 63-4, lists six. See also discussions in H. Riesenfeld, "Reflections on the Style and the Theology of St. Ignatius of Antioch," in F. L. Cross (ed) *Studia Patristica*, Volume IV (Akademie-Verlag-Berlin, 1961) 312-22, especially 312-3; Robert M. Grant, "Scripture and Tradition in Ignatius of Antioch," in Robert M. Grant (ed), *After the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), 37-51.

⁵³ Christine Trevett, *A Study of Ignatius of Antioch in Syria and Asia*, (Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity, 29; Lewiston, NY/Queenston, ON: Edwin Mellon, 1992) 22.

3.2 The Leadership and Authority of Charismatic and Traditional Officials in the *Didache*

Didache is the common title used to refer to the *Teaching of the (Twelve) Apostles*,¹ subtitled *The Lord's Teaching through the Twelve Apostles to the Gentiles*.² The text is a "rudimentary manual of church order,"³ consisting of ethical instructions for new members (1.1-6.2), liturgical regulations concerning the eucharist, baptism, fasting and praying (6.3-11.2), directions for dealing with various visitors and for appointing congregational officials (11.3-15.4), and a closing apocalyptic appeal. The *Didache* is addressed to converts from paganism who are encouraged to abandon their previous way of life (5.1-2) and to become as Torah-observant as possible (6.2-3). At the same time readers are encouraged to adopt practices that will clearly distinguish them from their Jewish neighbours (8.1-3). Such instructions suggest that the *Didache* emerges from an originally Torah-observant Jewish Christian group that includes a number of Gentile house churches in its orbit. The result is a mixed community comprised of both Jews and Gentiles that is engaged in a process of defining itself in relation to the Jewish and Greco-Roman environment in which it is situated.⁴

Although a minority of scholars identify Egypt as its place of origin, the general tendency is to locate the *Didache* in Syria, as the text displays numerous contacts with the Matthean tradition

¹ Jean-Paul Audet, *La Didaché: Instructions des Apôtres*, (Paris: Gabalda, 1958) 92-102, indicates that the word twelve may be a later insertion. See also J. Rendell Harris, *The Teaching of the Apostles (ΔΙΔΑΧΗ ΤΩΝ ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΩΝ: Newly Edited with Facsimile Text and a Commentary*, (London, UK: C.J. Clay & Sons/Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University, 1887) 97.

² The Greek text used throughout may be found in Kirsopp Lake, *The Apostolic Fathers with an English Translation*, Volume 1 (London, UK: William Heinemann Ltd/Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1945) 305-33. Translations are my own; for alternative translations see Lake, and Aelred Cody, "The *Didache* An English Translation," in Clayton N. Jefford, *The Didache in Context: Essays on Its Text, History and Transmission*, (NovTSup. 77; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995) 3-14; Aaron Milavec, "The Pastoral Genius of the *Didache*: An Analytical Translation and Commentary," in Jacob Neusner, Ernest S. Frerichs and A. J. Levine (eds), *Religious Writings and Religious Systems: Systemic Analysis of Holy Books in Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Greco-Roman Religions, Ancient Israel, and Judaism*, Volume 2: Christianity, (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1989) 89-125.

³ Tugwell, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 1; for a critique of this view see Audet, 436-9.

⁴ Scholars tend to emphasize the community's concern to define itself over against Judaism, see for example: Tugwell, 1; Jonathan A. Draper, "Christian Self-Definition against the 'Hypocrites' in *Didache* 8," *SBL 1992 Seminar Papers*, (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1992) 362-78; J. A. Draper, "Torah and Troublesome Apostles in the *Didache* Community," *NovT* 33,4 (1991) 347-72, here 367.

and forms the basis of later (3rd and 4th century) Syrian church orders.⁵ It is sometimes suggested that the *Didache* reflects conditions in some isolated rural community.⁶ Such marginal roots are contradicted both by the text itself and by the document's prominence in the early Christian world. The *Didache* addresses a community of Gentile converts (6.1-3) which is able to absorb prophets and teachers who are expected to subsist on its "first fruits," as well as ordinary Christians with and without trades (12.1-13.7). These circumstances point to an urban rather than rural environment,⁷ as does the early and widespread influence of the *Didache*. Manuscripts or fragments of this text have been found not only in Syria and Egypt, but also in Ethiopia and Asia Minor. It was used as primary text by a wide variety of early Christian authors, and in some circles was considered "scripture."⁸ In view of its influence, it seems more likely that the *Didache* originated in some well known Syrian Christian centre, possibly Antioch itself.⁹

Dates for the *Didache* range broadly from 50 to 165 CE. The factors mentioned most frequently when locating this text in time are: (1) its relationship with other early Christian texts, especially Matthew, and (2) the leadership roles espoused in the text. Those who regard the *Didache* as dependent on Matthew argue that it cannot have been written earlier than 90 and perhaps not until the middle of the 2nd century.¹⁰ A growing trend, however, is to regard both Matthew and the

⁵ Jefford, *The Sayings of Jesus*, 4-16; Tugwell, 1; Audet, 206-10; Draper, "Christian Self-Definition," 362-78; Brown and Meier, 81-4; Streeter, 98, 141-4; Arthur Vööbus, *Liturgical Traditions in the Didache*, (Stockholm, Etse, 1968), 14; Philip Schaff, *The Oldest Church Manual called the Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, (Edinburgh, UK: T & T Clark, 1885), 119-25.

⁶ Tugwell, 1; Brown & Meier, 84; Streeter, 145; Eric G. Jay, "From Presbyter-Bishops to Bishops and Presbyters - Christian Ministry in the Second Century: A Survey," *SC* 1 (1981) 125-72, especially 127.

⁷ Jonathan A. Draper, "Social Ambiguity and the Production of Texts: Prophets, Teachers, Bishops and Deacons and the Development of the Jesus Tradition in the Community of the *Didache*," in Jefford, *The Didache in Context* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995) 284-312, here 309-10; Audet, 208.

⁸ Clement Alex., *Strom.* 7.75; see Draper, "Torah and Troublesome Apostles," 347; Schaff, p.121; Canon Spence, *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles - Διδαχὴ τῶν δώδεκα Ἀποστόλων - A Translation with Notes: and Excursus (I to IX) Illustrative of the "Teaching" and the Greek Text*, (London, UK: James Nisbet & Co, 1885) 80.

⁹ Draper, "Torah and Troublesome Apostles," 355; Draper, "Christian Self-Definition," 362; Audet, 208-10.

¹⁰ Eg. Jay, 128; Brown and Meier, 82; Massaux, p.6; F. E. Vokes, *The Riddle of the Didache: Fact or Fiction, Heresy or Catholicism?*, (London, UK: SPCK/ New York, NY: Macmillan, 1938), 9-19.

Didache as drawing upon common oral traditions, in particular "Q."¹¹ This view, together with the positing of two or more redactional layers in the text, has given rise to the position that the earliest sections of the *Didache* may have been written sometime between 50 and 80 CE.¹² Adding weight to an early dating are the instructions concerning the appropriate activities of, and responses to apostles (11.3-6), prophets (10.7, 11.3, 7-12, 13.1-7, 15.1-20), teachers (11.1-2, 13.2, 15.1-2), bishops and deacons (15.1-2). It has been argued that such a system, in which prophets and teachers function alongside bishop and deacons, is only to be found in Montanism, a late 2nd century Christian movement.¹³ The predominant view, however, is that the *Didache* reflects a transitional situation in which an "older system of dependence on prophets and teachers is breaking down, but the bishops and deacons have not yet quite taken their place."¹⁴ The general feeling seems to be that this development could not have taken place any later than 90 or 100 CE.¹⁵

In the *Didache*, then, we have a late 1st century document emerging from Syria which reflects the interests of a Christian community in the process of defining itself over against the wider Jewish and Hellenistic societies from which its members are drawn. The author envisions an audience of Torah-observant Christians whose lifestyles distinguish them from their Jewish and pagan neighbours. This community is expected to provide hospitality for itinerant apostles, prophets and teachers. In addition, the *Didache* makes provisions for resident prophets and teachers, as well as bishops and deacons. This is the only document in our survey, aside from the letters of Ignatius, which explicitly uses these last two titles. Before anything can be said about their significance in relation to Ignatius, however, it is necessary to examine the leadership roles and authority types envisioned by the *Didache*. We will take them on in the order in which they appear in the text:

¹¹ See Jefford's survey of scholarly trends in *The Sayings of Jesus*, 10-6; Draper, "Torah and Troublesome Apostles," 354; Draper, "Christian Self-Definition," 363; Audet, 197-8.

¹² Audet, 199; Jefford, *The Sayings of Jesus*, 145; Aaron Milavec, "Distinguishing True and False Prophets: The Protective Wisdom of the *Didache*," *JECs*, 2:2 (1994) 117-36, here 118; N.B. This work will focus on the text in its present form, the form in which it circulated and had its most influence.

¹³ Vokes, 142, 152-65.

¹⁴ Streeter, 149; See also Jay, 127; Tugwell, 1; Jefford, *The Sayings of Jesus*, 127.

¹⁵ Streeter, 141-4; Brown and Meier, 84; Jefford, *The Sayings of Jesus*, 145.

teachers, apostles, prophets, bishops and deacons.

Teachers, like apostles and prophets, are persons who come to the community from the outside, and are probably itinerant ministers.¹⁶ The Didachist instructs his readers to receive only those teachers who teach "all these things aforesaid," and not to listen to any teacher who presents a different διδασχῇ (11.1-2). Itinerant Christians who claim to be teachers are, therefore, to be examined concerning the content of their teaching. If it does not accord with "the Lord's teaching" the teacher is to be ignored. We find a similar situation in the Johannine epistles where the teaching of itinerant "brothers" is to be tested for conformity to the διδασχῇ τοῦ χριστοῦ (2 John 9; cf. 3 John 5-8). In both cases teachers who deviate from the standards of the community's central teachings are to be denied a hearing. According to the *Didache*, teachers who are deemed capable of increasing "righteousness and knowledge of Lord" are to be received as the Lord (11.2). A "true" teacher may even settle permanently in the community as a paid "worker," earning a living by teaching (13.2).¹⁷ Teachers occupy a place of honour in the community together with the prophets, alongside whom they function in contrast to bishops and deacons (15.1-2).

The *Didache's* linking of teachers and prophets has led Draper to argue that teachers share in the charismatic ministry of the prophets. He asserts that "the teachers who instructed the novices were regarded as mediators of the presence of the Lord in a special way."¹⁸ Draper supports this claim by appealing to *Didache* 4.1-2 which reads:

My child, be mindful day and night of the one who speaks to you the word of God. You shall honour him as the Lord, for where the Lord's nature is spoken of, there is the Lord. Seek out daily the faces of the holy ones in order to find support in their words.

As a person who speaks the "word of God" and talks about the nature of the Lord, a teacher might well be seen as mediating the Lord's presence and therefore deserving of the status of a "holy one." This does not, however, necessarily mean that the teacher is a charismatic leader, exercising

¹⁶ Stephen J. Patterson, "Didache 11-13: The Legacy of Radical Itinerancy in Early Christianity," in Jefford, *The Didache in Context*, 313-29, here 316; Contra Draper, "Social Ambiguity," 301; Audet, 442.

¹⁷ Audet, 442, regards this as the first appearance of the teachers in the text.

¹⁸ Draper, "Social Ambiguity," 301; Audet, 456, states simply that the teachers share with the prophets the ministry of the word.

authority on the basis of exceptional gifts and outstanding personal achievements. In the Greco-Roman world some brokers between deities and humans were charismatics; most were not. Many priests and diviners were traditional authority figures, holding religious offices because of their gender, age, lineage and/or social status. Others acquired their positions as a result of training in specialized knowledge and in techniques of divination.¹⁹ If the teachers of the *Didache* are regarded as mediators of the Lord's presence, what is the basis of their right to do so?

Teaching in the *Didache* is an occupation assumed by persons whose qualifications and suitability for the job are tested (11.1-2) against an accumulated body of customs and norms contained in the text itself and in the "gospel" to which it refers (eg. 8.2, 11.3, 15.3-4). This implies that successful candidates will have acquired sufficient knowledge of, and competence in articulating the Lord's teaching to be able to share it with others. These factors indicate that teaching, in the *Didache*, is beginning to take on the contours of a rational-legal office that confers acquired impersonal authority on its occupant. The teacher functions as a mediator of the Lord's presence by virtue of an occupation or office acquired through knowledge and training. The teacher does not broker divine knowledge and power in any direct or immediate sense, but passes on the remembered and codified teachings of and about the Lord (11.1; cf. 6.1). If there is any charisma involved, it is only in a routinized or depersonalized form that is attached to this "word of God" and which rubs off on whoever is authorized to speak it. It may be possible to see here the beginnings of a charisma of office enjoyed by teachers and others who take on this task of speaking the divine word.²⁰

Apostles are mentioned both in the document's title and in the text itself. These figures play a strange and ambiguous role in the *Didache*. The apostles function as the authorities legitimating the author's instructions, yet they are prevented by those same instructions from exercising any real leadership in the communities addressed. It seems that two different sets of apostles are in view.²¹ The title refers to a group of apostles, sometimes identified as "the twelve apostles,"²² who are

¹⁹ See pages 41-44, above, for discussion of religious authority in the Greco-Roman world.

²⁰ The ideal type of rational-legal authority is described above, 24. For routinized charisma, see pages 31-2.

²¹ *Contra* Audet, 446-7, who regards the apostles of 11.3-6 as the same one in the title; neither are the twelve.

²² Draper, "Social Ambiguity," 294; Audet, 19-25; Harris, 97.

presumably members of Jesus' inner circle of followers. These apostles are regarded by the author as responsible for the establishment of the community and its way of life.²³ They are founding figures of the past whose teaching and authority are invoked in order to legitimate the ethical, ritual and institutional practices prescribed by the author of the *Didache*. A second set of apostles appears in the text itself as one category of itinerant Christian.²⁴ In accordance with the δόγμα, or commandment, of the gospel, when these apostles come, they are to be "received as the Lord" (11.3-4). When they go forth they are to be provided with bread enough to see them to their next lodging (11.6). The *Didache* warns its readers that any apostle who stays three days or who asks for money is a "false prophet" (11.5, 6). The extremely short duration of their visits would have the effect of greatly reducing, if not completely eliminating, any possible leadership or authority this second set of itinerants might have within the community.²⁵

It is traditionally suggested that these wandering apostles are missionaries sent forth to evangelize pagans and to organize congregations.²⁶ This seems doubtful, since the text gives instructions for the reception of apostles in established Christian communities. The extremely short duration of their stay would greatly hinder any serious evangelizing of neighbouring pagans. Recently, Jonathan Draper has suggested that these apostles are emissaries of the Jerusalem church, carrying letters and messages to congregations scattered throughout the Greco-Roman world. Draper argues that the *Didache's* instructions concerning these emissaries reflect the struggle between the Jewish-Christian community and the Pauline mission, and are intended to prevent the activities of "freelance" apostles such as Paul. Such ambassadorial apostles would have vanished, Draper insists,

²³ I am assuming that the title is authentic, and not a later addition to the text. The plausibility of a Christian in the final decades of the 1st century talking about teachings given to the Gentiles by the apostles is supported by the occurrence, in other texts, of these very phrases - e.g. διδασκίαν τῶν ἀποστόλων (Acts 2:42); διδασκίαν τοῦ κυρίου (Acts 13:12); and διδασκίαν τοῦ χριστοῦ (2 John 9).

²⁴ For the view that the apostles of 11.3-6 are not "the twelve" see Milavec, "Distinguishing True and False Prophets," 126; Tugwell, 3; Streeter, 146-7; Schaff, 67; Eduard Schweizer, *Church Order in the New Testament* (London, UK: SCM, 1961) 143; James Heron, *The Church of the Sub-Apostolic Age: Its Life, Worship and Organization in the Light of "The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles,"* (London, UK: Hodder & Stoughton, 1888) 195-6.

²⁵ Draper, "Social Ambiguity, 294-5; Spence, 127-9.

²⁶ Heron, 196-7; Schaff, 67; Milavec, "The Pastoral Genius," 114.

after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE.²⁷ Draper's suggestion that the apostles of the *Didache* are emissaries carrying messages from one community to another has merit. After all the ordinary meaning of ἀπόστολος in Greek is ambassador, delegate or messenger.²⁸ Although not all Christian messengers were called apostles, the sending of ambassadors from one congregation to another was not limited to the Jerusalem church. Ignatius urges the churches of Asia Minor to send envoys to Antioch (*Phld.* 10.1; *Smyr.* 11.2; *Pol.* 7.1), and relies on messengers who should be, but are not always received as is fitting for servants of the Lord (*Phld.* 11.1 vs *Smyr.* 10.1). The Johannine Elder complains that Diotrephes, a Christian community leader refuses to receive the bearers of his letters (3 John 9),²⁹ and seeks to rectify the situation by invoking Jesus' commandment that his followers love one another (2 John 4-6). A similar situation might have prompted the writer of the *Didache* to insist that every Christian emissary must be received as the Lord according to the δόγμα of the gospel, while placing restrictions on the hospitality shown in order to limit the potential for abuse.

The one objection that might be made to this notion that the apostles of *Didache* 11.3-6 are emissaries carrying letters and messages between various Christian communities is the implication that they are prophets. The apostles are introduced together with prophets (11.3), and those who stay more than two days or who ask for money are "false prophets" (11.5,6). The possibility that these apostles are prophets is problematic since the *Didache* gives quite irreconcilable instructions concerning these two groups. Apostles, for instance, may stay only two days with a community (11.5), while prophets may settle permanently, taking up specific liturgical and leadership roles (13.1-7, 10.7). The general tendency among scholars is to resolve these contradictions by postulating various redactional theories,³⁰ or by regarding "false prophet" as a general term for charlatan.³¹ A

²⁷ Draper, "Social Ambiguity," 294-5; Draper, "Torah and Troublesome Apostles," 356-72; This view is opposed by Patterson, "*Didache* 11-13," 315-6.

²⁸ BAGD, 99.

²⁹ Diotrephes also refuses to receive some "brothers" who have gone out for the sake of the name refusing to accept anything from the "gentiles" (3 John 7, 10). These brothers are probably itinerant teachers or prophets rather than apostles.

³⁰ Eg. Draper, "Torah and Troublesome Apostles," 350-4; Patterson, "*Didache* 11-13," 313-29.

³¹ Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity*, 225, note 210 (which is found on page 412).

more convincing solution is offered by Aaron Milavec who argues on grammatical grounds that *περὶ δὲ τῶν ἀποστόλων καὶ προφητῶν* may be legitimately rendered as "concerning the apostles *who are also prophets*." Milavec contends that there is nothing unusual about a single person functioning as both apostle and prophet. In Matthew 10 the twelve are both apostles and prophets. Barnabas and Paul, two resident prophets and teachers of the church at Antioch, received an apostolic mission (Acts 13:1-14:28). Milavec suggests that the *Didache* provides a similar example of prophets who are assigned, for a period of time, apostolic duties.³²

The apostles of the *Didache* may, therefore, be regarded as Christian prophets who are temporarily engaged as emissaries and envoys of the churches. These prophet-apostles are by definition persons in transit, not unlike the messengers and envoys of the Johannine and Ignatian correspondence. The *Didache* instructs its readers to provide hospitality without question to any such person presenting him or herself as engaged in a specific mission on behalf a particular church. This hospitality, is however, strictly limited to food and lodging for two days, and provisions for the next leg of the journey. These instructions reflect a situation in which Christian communities may have occasionally fallen victim to charlatans masquerading as apostles. Some church leaders, like Diotrophes (3 John 9-10), have responded by simply refusing hospitality to all outsiders. The *Didache* regards such a solution as contradicting the *δόγμα* of the gospel, while seeking to limit the potential damage caused by fraudulent apostolic claims. Christian communities cannot refuse to shelter and feed travelling apostles, but they are not required to provide anything beyond the very basic necessities. These prophet-apostles are outsiders on the way to somewhere else, who are given no opportunity to exercise leadership or authority in the communities addressed by the *Didache*. They are not the same apostles whose authority is invoked to legitimate the Didachist's teaching. Although they may be prophets they are distinguished by their apostolic missions from those prophets who "speak in spirit" (11.7).

Prophets are first mentioned in the *Didache* in connection with the conduct of the eucharist. The author sets out the specific prayers to be said at the beginning and end of the meal, introducing them with the phrase, "give thanks this way" (9.1, 10.1). The instructions concerning the eucharist conclude with the injunction "but allow the prophets to give thanks as much as they like" (10.7). The

³² Milavec, "Distinguishing True and False Prophets," 125-6.

simplest implication of these directions is that the prophets are not limited to the prayer format laid out in the text, but may offer an unlimited number of spontaneous prayers. What the text does not tell us is when in the course of the eucharist these prophetic prayers are to occur. Were they limited to the conclusion of the event?³³ Could a prophet offer spontaneous prayers throughout the eucharistic meal? More importantly, could the prophets replace the prayers set out in the text with their own extemporaneous ones?³⁴ Although it is not possible to fill in all these details, it is clear that prophets are persons who have a special role to play in the eucharistic liturgy.

This reference to the prophets and their role in the eucharist concludes the instructions concerning liturgical activities. These are followed by the directions concerning teachers (11.1-2) and apostles who are also prophets (11.3-6), which we have already examined. The author then turns to the subject of prophets who "speak in spirit" (11.7). Precisely what this speech consists of is not specified, the author assuming that it is a well known phenomenon to his readers. It is probably not limited to glossolalia since it is expected to result in quite comprehensible orders, teaching and requests (11.9-12).³⁵ Whatever the content or style of such prophetic speech, it is not to be tested or examined; to do so is to commit the sin which will not be forgiven (11.7). Although no assessment of the prophet's speech is to be made, the author warns:

Not everyone who speaks in spirit is a prophet, but only if he has the Lord's way of life. So the false prophet and the prophet will be known by their way of life (11.8).

It is possible, therefore, to test and evaluate a prophet's conduct, if not his or her pronouncements. Specifically a true prophet displays the Lord's way of life or behaviour.

There follow four examples of prophetic behaviour which may be assessed. A prophet "in spirit" may give an order for a table, ie. a meal, but he may not eat of it. If he does he proves himself to be a "false prophet" (11.9). There is some uncertainty concerning the meal referred to in this injunction. Does it refer to just an ordinary meal or might it be a reference to visiting prophets

³³ Milavec, "Distinguishing True and False Prophets," 121.

³⁴ Draper, "Social Ambiguity," 298.

³⁵ Draper, "Social Ambiguity," 296; Milavec, "Distinguishing True and False Prophets," 129.

convening eucharistic meals?³⁶ Since the author is quite clear elsewhere when he is referring to the eucharist, it seems most likely that here he is discussing an ordinary meal.³⁷ This would make sense in light of the instruction in 11.12 not to listen to a prophet who asks, while in spirit, for "money or something" to be given to him. It is acceptable, however, for a prophet to request "money or something" for others who are in need (11.12). The Didachist thus makes it clear that true prophets, even when speaking "in spirit," may legitimately request things for others, but not for themselves. These instructions serve to reinforce the rules of hospitality set out in 11.3-6. True prophets do not use their prophetic gifts for self-enrichment or to exceed the limits of normal hospitality offered to itinerant Christians.

A false prophet may also be identified by the fact that although he teaches the truth he "does not do what he teaches" (11.10). No doubt, "truth" is to be measured against the authoritative standard set out in the *Didache*.³⁸ True prophets will not only affirm and augment its ethical, practical and liturgical guidelines, but will also practice what they preach. The true prophet, therefore, would be expected to avoid food offered to idols (6.3), to fast on Wednesday and Friday (8.1), and to recite the Lord's prayer three times daily (8.2-3). A true prophet would not practice astrology (3.4), tell lies (3.5), use obscene language (3.3), stay up late at night for evil purposes (5.2), or any other of the many activities listed as contrary to "the way of life" in the *Didache*. Careful observation of a visiting prophet's habits and conduct would quickly determine whether he or she was true or false.

A prophet who has been examined and found to be true might do things which he does not teach others to do, such as enacting "the earthly mystery of the church" (11.1). Exactly what is meant by this phrase is not spelled out in the text, nor does it have any close parallel in any other writings of the period. Traditionally scholars have interpreted this phrase as a euphemism for spiritual marriage between a prophet and prophetess. Others have considered it a reference to the celibate

³⁶ Milavec, "Distinguishing True and False Prophets," 130-1; Milavec, "The Pastoral Genius," 116; Audet, 450.

³⁷ Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity*, 225, note 211 (found on page 412) provides evidence from the Greek magical papyri that revelatory magic was on occasion used to provide food and banquets for the practitioner.

³⁸ Milavec, "Distinguishing True and False Prophets," 129.

lifestyle of the prophet who sacrificed home and family for vocation.³⁹ Neither of these interpretations is supported by the text itself. Whatever these mysterious acts may be they are justified by the author the *Didache* "because the prophets of old did exactly the same" (11.11). A quick glance at the Hebrew Bible reveals that Isaiah walked naked and barefoot for three years (Isa 20:1-6), Jeremiah wore a yoke around his neck (Jer 27:1ff), Ezekiel lay before a model of Jerusalem alternating from his left to right side according to a divinely laid out agenda (Ezek 4:1-8), and Hosea married a prostitute (Hos 1:4-9). The "earthly mystery of the church" might refer then to any bizarre or potentially scandalous behaviour necessitated by the prophetic vocation. The prophet is not to be judged or condemned for these, but neither should others be encouraged to imitate the prophet's strange activities.⁴⁰

The Didachist instructs his readers to welcome and materially support "every true prophet" who wishes to settle permanently in their communities (13.1). These are prophets who are not engaged in apostolic missions (11.3-6) and whose conduct has been tested and proven according to the instructions given in 11.7-12. In the churches addressed by the *Didache* these resident prophets are to have the status of high priests (13.3), acting as their chief mediators with God. As high priests, they are to be the recipients of the "first-fruits," a portion of everything produced or owned by community members (13.1-7). If a community does not have such a resident prophet these first-fruits are to be given to the poor (13.4). The prophet-high priests are described as engaged in performing religious and ritual services (λειτουργοῦσι...τὴν λειτουργίαν), such as offering prayers during eucharist (10.7) for the community alongside teachers, bishops and deacons (15.1-2).

Prophets, thus, turn out to be the most significant leaders and authority figures in the *Didache*. Not only do they get more "press" than any other group mentioned in the text,⁴¹ the instructions concerning their status are quite explicit. The source of their power appears to be their "speaking in spirit," their personal capacity to directly mediate spiritual or divine information to their human audiences. "Speaking in spirit" appears to be an exceptional and possibly rare ability,

³⁹ Milavec, "Distinguishing True and False Prophets," 132-4; Draper, "Social Ambiguity, 397, n.6.

⁴⁰ Audet, 451-3, suggests that the activities of the Seer of the Apocalypse, or Agabus in Acts 12:10-11 may be illustrative.

⁴¹ Prophets are mentioned 15 times, apostles 3 times, prophets twice, bishops and deacons once.

characteristic of prophets who are themselves in short supply (cf. 13.4). I would suggest, therefore, that we regard these prophets as *charismatic brokers* who because of their personal gifts (i.e. charisma) are able to act as mediators between God and humans.⁴² Although these charismatic gifts are highly valued, and are the basis for attaining prominence and status in the communities addressed by the *Didache*, they are also regarded with deep ambivalence. As the Didachist warns, "not everyone who speaks in spirit is a prophet" (11.8). Charismatic gifts alone are not the decisive characteristics of a true prophet, and should not lead to an immediate grant of authority. Only those charismatics whose spirit-inspired speech is not self-serving and whose conduct matches the "truth" they teach are really prophets to be listened to and heeded. In order to be an authority figure in the communities addressed by the *Didache* a prophet must have charismatic gifts *and* demonstrate by his behaviour that he has the Lord's way of life.

The Didachist's attitude may be compared with that found in 1 John and in Matthew's Gospel. The Johannine writer warns his readers not to trust every spirit but to test them to determine whether they are truly from God. Only those spirits which confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh are legitimate (1 John 4:1-3). In a situation where a group of charismatic rivals may be attempting to authenticate their peculiar christology by prophetic utterances, the Johannine author encourages his readers to examine the content of such speech in order to determine the nature of its source. The Didachist explicitly forbids such an evaluation, preferring the Matthean option of assessing the prophet's conduct and way of life (Matt. 7:15-23). Both Matthew and the *Didache* seek to undermine the potential authority of prophets by subordinating them to the judgments of local community leaders who are encouraged to see charismatic gifts as insufficient criteria for leadership. Matthew's ideal church leader is not the prophet, but the divinely inspired scribe educated and skilled in the interpretation of Hebrew scripture and Jesus' teachings. In marked contrast, the *Didache* provides a mechanism whereby "certified," i.e. tested and approved, prophets can assume positions of permanent leadership in Christian communities.⁴³

⁴² Charismatic authority is described above, 29-30; the notion of a charismatic broker is discussed on pages 45-50.

⁴³ Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity*, 225-6.

The figure of the resident prophet/high priest represents a very interesting and unusual⁴⁴ attempt to institutionalize charismatic authority. To qualify for this position a person must: (1) have personal charisma in the form of the gift of "speaking in spirit," and (2) demonstrate conformity to community norms and standards of conduct. In this instance, the *Didache* functions as a set of rules which specify how a prophet may be tested and approved. The text explicitly affirms the right of prophets certified according to its regulations to act as leaders exercising authority within the community. The role of prophet/ high priest thus resembles an office acquired on the basis of rational principles specified in a set of rules. Those rules however, include the requirement of personal charisma, the gift of "speaking in spirit." What ultimately legitimates the prophet/high priest's authority, however, is the rational-legal process of certification.⁴⁵

The Didachist's process of certifying prophets does not conform exactly to any of Weber's suggested methods for routinizing charismatic authority. It does somewhat resemble the idea of designation by the charismatically qualified administrative staff of the original leader, except that the *Didache* has no "charismatically qualified" administrative staff. The text does not explicitly identify who in the community is responsible for testing and approving prophets, but as we shall see, the most likely candidates are "elders" or the heads of the leading households. The resident prophet is a charismatic leader selected according to rational rules by traditional community leaders. We may have here an example of what Peter Berger calls a "charismatic office." This is a concept Berger developed in response to new understandings of the social location of Israelite prophecy, one of the building blocks of Weber's theory. Relying on studies demonstrating that the Israelite prophets were not isolated individuals on the margins of society, Berger argues that these prophets exercised their personal charisma in terms of traditionally defined cultic offices.⁴⁶ The role of prophet/high priest in the *Didache* might also be described as a charismatic office whose terms of reference specify the

⁴⁴ Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity*, 226, asserts that "nowhere else in early Christian literature do we find a reference to the process of certifying Christian prophets.

⁴⁵ Rational-legal authority is described on page 24.

⁴⁶ Peter Berger, "Charisma and Religious Innovation: The Social Location of Israelite Prophecy," *ASR* 25 (1963) 940-50, especially 948-50.

necessity of personal charisma as a condition of incumbency.⁴⁷

In spite of the high honour and material support given to resident prophets in the *Didache* they "appear curiously irrelevant for the ongoing life" of the communities.⁴⁸ Not every church has a prophet, and in these situations life goes on, with the first-fruits being given to the poor (13.4). Church leadership can just as easily be provided by bishops and deacons who, the Didachist states, "also perform for you the services of the prophets and teachers" (15.1). Those chosen or elected to these offices should be "worthy of the Lord, gentle men, not lovers of money, truthful and approved" (15.1). The writer warns his audience not to despise these figures "for they are your honoured ones with the prophets and teachers" (15.2). This last instruction suggests that in the communities addressed by the Didachist there were some who did not think much of these appointed officials, preferring instead the leadership of prophets and teachers.

There is some debate about how best to interpret these directions. At one extreme we find the opinion that these verses are a scribal insertion made to "update" the *Didache*, bringing it into conformity with a church organization emerging at the end of the 1st century.⁴⁹ It is more commonly asserted that these instructions reflect and respond to the gradual decline and disappearance of the charismatic ministry.⁵⁰ Conversely, it has been argued that it is the charismatic prophets who are intruding into an existing structure of resident bishops and deacons that has fallen into disrepute.⁵¹ None of these suggestions does full justice to the complexity of the text and the situation it seeks to regulate. A number of questions need to be answered, such as: who are the most likely candidates for the roles of bishops and deacons? Who is responsible for implementing the instructions set out in the *Didache*? How are these persons related to bishops, deacons, prophets and teachers? In

⁴⁷ The difference between Berger's "charismatic office" and Weber's "charisma of office" might be summed up as follows: (1) a charismatic office is an office whose incumbent must have personal charisma or unusual gifts such as prophecy, ie. the person is an office-holder because he or she has charisma; versus (2) the charisma of office in which depersonalized charisma is acquired by a person when they assume office, ie. the person has charisma because he or she is an office-holder.

⁴⁸ Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity*, 209.

⁴⁹ Milavec, "The Pastoral Genius," 119.

⁵⁰ Streeter, 149-50; Tugwell, 1-2; Jay, 127.

⁵¹ Draper, "Social Ambiguity," 291.

answering these questions a clearer understanding of the situation of the *Didache* will emerge.

In order to answer the first questions concerning the most likely candidates for the roles of bishops and deacons, we need to clarify who in the community is responsible for implementing the instructions set out in the *Didache*. Who is it that chooses or elects bishops and deacons? The first six chapters which deal with ethical instructions use the singular σὺ, suggesting that these guidelines are addressed to the individual new member.⁵² These new members are envisioned as having children and slaves (4.9-10), in other words they appear to be householders. Chapters 7 through 16 of the *Didache*, which set out the regulations for liturgical activities and for dealing with people coming into the community, are written almost entirely using the plural ὑμεῖς.⁵³ It is sometimes suggested, therefore, that it is the entire community which is addressed and which is made responsible for implementing the instructions concerning fasting (8.1), prayer (8.2-3), the eucharist (9.1-10.7), receiving those who come (11.1ff), and so forth. All members of the community, no doubt, might be expected to fast and to recite the Lord's prayer. Is it reasonable, however, to envision the entire community "receiving" visitors and deciding who is a true or false prophet? Is this how things worked in the ancient world with its hierarchical and authoritarian structure?

The offering of prayers in the context of family rituals and ceremonial meals was usually done by the male head of the household. Through the institution of patronage the householder's authority was extended beyond the nuclear family to encompass the families of ex-slaves, poor relatives, neighbours in want, needy tenants, immigrants and others. To all these people the patron acted as a "father," and as a priest in any religious ritual involving the whole group. In private religious societies, patrons acted as priests to groups composed mainly of their clients and business associates.⁵⁴ We can imagine a similar sort of situation in the Christian context. Eucharistic gatherings would have been hosted by members with homes large enough to accommodate church

⁵² There are only three exceptions: (1) 1.3 contains the instruction to bless, pray and fast for those who curse and persecute "you" (plural), ie. the community; (2) 4.8 asserts that "you (plural) are partners" referring to "you" and "your brother" in the preceding phrase; and (3) 4.11 where slaves are addressed as a group.

⁵³ There are two exceptions: (1) the instructions on how to baptize in 7.2-4, and (2) the setting aside of first-fruits in 13.3, 5-7.

⁵⁴ Bradley H. McLean, "The Agrippinilla Inscription: Religious Associations and Early Church Formation," in Bradley H. McLean (ed), *Origins and Method: Towards a New Understanding of Judaism and Christianity. Essays in Honour of John C. Hurd*, (JSNTSup. 86; Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993) 239-70.

gatherings, and who could provide the necessities of the eucharistic meal. The most likely candidate for offering the blessing and thanksgiving prayers (9.1-10.6) would be the host of the eucharistic gathering who was the head of a leading household and a community patron. The testing of strangers was normally done by leaders or established community members willing and able to act as patrons and protectors to outsiders. Those who took on this task would, of necessity, have to be people possessing homes large enough to accommodate guests, and having sufficient resources to provide for them. In other words, it would be the heads of leading households and community patrons who would be in the best position to scrutinize the behaviour of itinerant teachers, apostles and prophets.

What all this suggests is that the *Didache* is addressed to the heads of leading households within the churches, and that they are the persons who are responsible for implementing its instructions. It is the interests of householders that are reflected in and protected by its guidelines.⁵⁵ In other words the Didachist assumes that authority in the churches is in the hands of traditional Greco-Roman community leaders - mature, upper status, and usually male heads of households.⁵⁶ In many Jewish and Hellenistic communities these traditional leaders were called "elders." Although the Didachist does not use that title, those responsible for carrying out his instructions in the churches seem to be similar figures.⁵⁷ These leading householders are directed to choose or elect ἐπίσκοποι⁵⁸ and διάκονοι who will perform the services of the prophets and teachers (15.1).

Επίσκοπος, the Greek word we translate as bishop, means literally a watcher, protector, guardian or overseer, and was used as a title for officials in temples and in private religious associations, as well as for municipal officers and members of governing committees.⁵⁹ The διάκονος or deacon was a servant, especially one who served at table, and in the context of religious

⁵⁵ Patterson, "*Didache* 11-13," 324.

⁵⁶ See discussion of traditional leadership in the Greco-Roman world on pages 24-5, 41-45.

⁵⁷ Jefford, *The Sayings of Jesus*, 123-7, argues by a different route that the *Didache* is addressed to the "elders" of the churches.

⁵⁸ A number of commentators regard the ἐπίσκοποι to be the equivalent of "elders" in other churches. See for example, Heron, 207-226; Schaff, 73-4; Spence, 150-2.

⁵⁹ BAGD, 299; Edwin Hatch, *The Organization of the Early Christian Churches*, (London, UK: Rivingtons, 1882), 37-9, especially notes 26 and 27.

festivals was responsible for the distribution of meat from the sacrifices. The Didachist suggests that these titles be given to those who are chosen to act as leaders and functionaries in Christian rituals, and to carry out any other services that might be performed by prophets and teachers. The qualification that these Christian bishops and deacons should be ἀφιλαργύρος, ie. persons who are not greedy and lovers of money, suggests that the ideal candidates are community patrons.⁶⁰ These would be those heads of families willing to share their resources with the community in exchange for positions of honour alongside prophets and teachers. If the bishops and deacons were chosen from among leading householders willing to act as community patrons, this might explain why no instructions are given by the Didachist concerning material support for these leaders.

The effect of the instruction to appoint bishops and deacons is to legitimate the power of householders and patrons in the churches. Their control over resources, such as places to meet and eucharistic supplies, would have been a source of power right from the very beginnings of the Christian movement. The right of a householder or patron who hosted a eucharistic gathering in his home to lead the prayers and direct the assembly was part of a householder's traditionally ascribed authority in the Greco-Roman world. The householders chosen to be ἐπίσκοποι and διάκονοι acquire the impersonal authority of religious officers in the Christian congregations. Traditional community leaders now become Christian officials, very much like the vast majority of religious officials in the Greco-Roman world who were simultaneously household, political and religious leaders. The bishops and deacons of the *Didache* combine traditionally ascribed personal authority with the acquired impersonal authority of the office-holder.⁶¹ The Didachist validates this move by presenting it as "the teaching of the apostles."

Before closing this discussion of leadership and authority in the *Didache*, I would like to return briefly to the instructions in 4.1-2 which direct the individual convert to honour "as the Lord" the holy ones who speak the "word of God" because they mediate the Lord's presence. Let us consider who among the community leaders might qualify as speakers of the divine word. The most obvious candidates are of course the spirit-inspired prophets who mediate directly the divine word

⁶⁰ Draper, "Social Ambiguity," 292-3.

⁶¹ As do most officials in the Greco-Roman world, see above page 24.

to the community. As charismatic brokers the prophets hold a place of special prominence and status as the official high priests of the churches. One would expect them to be honoured "as the Lord." Draper, however, has argued that these instructions are about teachers who participate in the charismatic ministry of the prophets. Yet we have seen that the leadership position of teachers derives primarily from acquired knowledge and competence, not personal charisma. If these verses apply to teachers, they have the effect of conferring on them an impersonal charisma of office associated with their occupation of transmitting the words of and about the Lord. I would like to suggest that to the extent bishops and deacons assumed this teaching role, these instructions might also apply to them. The *Didachist* never says this explicitly, being content to urge his readers to honour bishops and deacons together with prophets and teachers. In doing so, the way is paved for church officials, as speakers of God's word, to also be honoured as the Lord. Indeed Ignatius does explicitly assert this very thing, but gives it a peculiar twist by insisting that even when silent the bishop is to be regarded as the Lord himself (*Eph.* 6.1).

The *Didache* seems to be addressed to the heads of leading households in Christian congregations. Although the text does not explicitly identify these persons as such, in many Jewish and Hellenistic communities such leading householders were known as "elders." The *Didachist* institutionalizes the traditional status and authority of such householders by making them responsible for implementing his instructions, including the evaluation of itinerant ministers and the selection of congregational officials. By legitimating the election of bishops and deacons from their own ranks, the *Didache* further institutionalizes the status and authority of householders, not only as traditional community leaders, but as church officers. To the extent that bishops and deacons function as speakers of the "word of God," they are "holy ones" enjoying a depersonalized charisma of office. The bishops and deacons of the *Didache* seem to be very much like other religious officials in the Greco-Roman world who were simultaneously household, political and religious leaders, and whose offices were related to their capacity to act as patrons. In the *Didache's* arrangement of leading householders choosing bishops and deacons to act as community officials we might see in a rudimentary form something analogous to the system of bishop, elders and deacons articulated by Ignatius. Although our Syrian bishop never suggests that the elders are responsible for choosing

bishops, such a system of succession was prevalent in a number of Christian communities.⁶²

The Didachist strengthens and solidifies the leadership and authority of leading householders in churches that exist in an environment where their major competitors are itinerant teachers, apostles, and prophets. Teachers are to be evaluated on the basis of the content of their teaching. Those whose teaching conforms to and/or augments the "teaching of the apostles" are to be received as the Lord, and may if they wish settle permanently in the community. As community leaders their authority is primarily occupational or official deriving from their knowledge and competence as teachers. To the extent that their teaching involves speaking the "word of God" they too enjoy a charisma of office. Apostles appear to be persons (possibly prophets) in transit, acting as emissaries on behalf of Christian churches. They are to be lodged and fed for no more than two days, and then sent on their way with sufficient provisions to reach their next destination. These apostles are thereby specifically excluded from competition for leadership and authority in the churches.

Prophets who "speak in spirit" are the most significant category of itinerants, offering the communities addressed by the *Didache* candidates for the role of high priests. Their extraordinary ability to directly mediate spiritual or divine information marks these prophets out as *charismatic brokers*. The capacity to deliver the word of God "live" is crucial to the prophet's prominence and status, yet charismatic gifts alone do not authenticate his or her claim to leadership and authority. The Didachist urges that prophets be subjected to a rigorous assessment, not of their spirit-inspired speech, but of their personal conduct. Genuine prophets use their prophetic gifts selflessly in the service of others, practice what they teach, and do not teach others to imitate the "mysteries" demanded by their prophetic vocations. This process of testing and certifying prophets provides a mechanism whereby these charismatic brokers can be permanently integrated into the life of the churches as high priests. The role of resident prophet-high priest most closely resembles a "charismatic office" in which rational rules of selection include the requirement of particular personal gifts or charisma on the part of the candidate. The Didachist's "pastoral genius" is perhaps best epitomized by this attempt to institutionalize the role of prophets thereby harnessing the power of their charisma in the interests of local community life.

The generally accepted view of the *Didache*, as noted above, is that it represents a

⁶² See Ferguson, 30-1.

transitional situation in which one form of leadership, often described as charismatic, is in the process of being replaced by another, official or non-charismatic form of leadership.⁶³ This is not quite true. The charismatic authority of prophets is recognized and institutionalized in the office of high priest, while the traditional authority of householders is given institutional form in the offices of bishops and deacons. The authority of *charismatic brokers* is subordinated to the interests of traditional community leaders. This is significant for two reasons. (1) It indicates that charismatic ministries did not vanish altogether with the emergence of church offices. Nowhere is this more evident than in Syria and the Christian East where the "holy man" continued to play an important role in community life alongside church officials for many centuries.⁶⁴ (2) It shows us that personal charisma and church office are not mutually exclusive, and may even be institutionalized in something like the charismatic office of a prophet-high priest.

⁶³ eg. Draper, "Social Ambiguity," 302, prophets and teachers = charismatics opposed to bishops and deacons = non-charismatics. Milavec, "Distinguishing True and False Prophets," 135, regards the *Didache* taking a stand for householders while resisting charismatic wanderers. Patterson, "*Didache* 11-13," 314, 327 sees the text replacing or neutralizing itinerant radicals.

⁶⁴ Peter Brown, *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity*, (London, UK: Faber & Faber, 1982) 80-101, 153-65, provides a good look at the importance of the "holy man" in Syria from the 4th-6th centuries. Although Brown argues that the "holy man" was a new phenomenon, I believe that in the resident prophets of the *Didache* we see an early forerunner of these important characters.

3.3 Charismatic and Pastoral Leadership and Authority in the Johannine Writings

The inclusion of the Johannine literature in this survey might be considered somewhat of a questionable move. These documents have been traditionally associated with the city of Ephesus in Asia Minor. However, over the last generation, a growing scholarly trend has been to regard the Johannine writings as less Hellenistic and more Semitic and oriental in style and orientation, and thus more likely to be Syrian in origin.¹ In spite of the Fourth Gospel's overt hostility to "the Jews," it is a document deeply rooted in Judaism,² growing out of a rich tradition of Hebrew scriptural exegesis and interpretation. The Greek text is peppered with Aramaisms, Hebrew place names, and Jewish terminology, suggesting that it was composed on the "periphery of Aramaic speaking Jewry."³ The major ideas and symbols of Johannine theology display affinities with the thought of Qumran and, to a lesser extent, with Samaritan traditions.⁴ The Gospel seems to emerge from an environment where Christians are harassed and persecuted by a dominant Jewish community with the collusion of the Roman government or its representatives.⁵ These features of the Johannine Gospel have led scholars to posit an origin in an area close to Palestine, such as Syria.

A number of other factors point more directly to Syria. The Gospel (e.g. John 6) seems to

¹ James M. Robinson, "The Johannine Trajectory," in James M. Robinson and Helmut Koester (eds), Trajectories through Early Christianity, (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1971) 232-68, here 233-4.

² C. K. Barrett, The Gospel of John and Judaism, (The Franz Delitzsch Lectures, 1967; London, UK: SPCK, 1975) 61; This notion is not undisputed, see for example, Udo Schnelle, Antidocetic Christology in the Gospel of John: An Investigation of the Place of the Fourth Gospel in the Johannine School, (transl. Linda M. Maloney; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1992) 25-36.

³ John Ashton, Understanding the Fourth Gospel, (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1991) 197; Barrett, 69-70; Also Judith M. Lieu, "What was from the Beginning: Scripture and Tradition in the Johannine Epistles," NTS 39 (1993) 458-77.

⁴ Barrett, 70; Ashton, 111, 124, 128-9, 151; Raymond E. Brown, The Gospel according to John (i-xii): Introduction, Translation and Notes, (The Anchor Bible, Volume 29; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966) xliii, lii-lxiv; Wayne A. Meeks, "Am I a Jew? Johannine Christianity and Judaism," in J. Neusner (ed), Christianity, Judaism and Other Greco-Roman Cults, Vol. 1, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975) 163-86, here 169-73; Rudolf Schnackenburg, The Gospel according to John, Volume One: Introduction and Commentary on Chapters 1-4, (New York, NY: Seabury Press, 1985) 39-40; John Painter, The Quest for the Messiah: The History, Literature and Theology of the Johannine Community, (Edinburgh, UK: T & T Clark, 1991) 26-40.

⁵ Ashton, 198.

depend on liturgical themes otherwise recorded only in the *Didache*.⁶ Johannine language and theology appear in the letters of Ignatius, most prominently in his christological and eucharistic formulas.⁷ Both Ignatius and John appear to be engaged in controversy with docetic Christians.⁸ Close links between these two early Christian authors are attested in the writings of the Latin-speaking church fathers.⁹ As well, John's Gospel shows affinities with the *Odes of Solomon*, a Syrian collection of hymns used in later gnostic circles.¹⁰ Textual parallels have been noted between 1 John and the Gospel of Matthew. The earliest "orthodox" commentary on the Fourth gospel is found in the writings of Theophilus of Antioch, circa 180 CE.¹¹ One 4th century tradition even goes so far as to assert that John was written in Antioch.¹²

The weight of this evidence is such that a number of scholars have accepted the Johannine materials as Syrian documents.¹³ Others have opted for a compromise that postulates an originally Palestinian community moving after the Jewish War (66-70 CE) first to Syria where its special

⁶ Vööbus, 155.

⁷ L. W. Barnard, "The Background of St. Ignatius of Antioch," *VC* 17 (1963) 193-206, here 204; Raymond E. Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple: The Life, Loves and Hates of an Individual Church in New Testament Times*, (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1979) 155-58; Clayton N. Jefford, "Did Ignatius of Antioch Know the *Didache*?" in Jefford, *The Didache in Context*, 330-51, here 337; Schnelle, 63.

⁸ Schnelle, 63-8; D. Moody Smith, *Johannine Christianity: Essays on Its Setting, Sources and Theology*, (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1984) 27; Raymond E. Brown, *The Epistles of John: Translated with Introduction, Notes and Commentary*, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1982) 57-9.

⁹ Brown, *The Gospel of John*, ciii; Schnackenburg, 85.

¹⁰ Schnackenburg, 150; Barnard, 267; C.K. Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text*, (London, UK: SPCK, 1955) 111; John A. T. Robinson, *The Priority of John*, (London, UK: SCM Press, 1985) 47-8.

¹¹ Barrett, *Gospel of St. John*, 110; Brown, *Community of the Beloved Disciple*, 149.

¹² Schnackenburg, 85.

¹³ Ashton, 197-8; Kenneth Grayston, *The Johannine Epistles*, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1984) 29; Ernst Käsemann, *The Testament of Jesus: A Study of the Gospel of John in the Light of Chapter 17*, (London, UK: SCM, 1968) 36; Oscar Cullmann, *The Johannine Circle: Its Place in Judaism, among the Disciples of Jesus and in Early Christianity - A Study in the Origin of the Gospel of John*, (London, UK: SCM, 1976) 38; C.P. Hammond Bammel, "Ignatian Problems," *Journal of Theological Studies* 33:1 (1982) 62-97, here 80; Corwin, 69-70.

traditions were formulated, and then finally to Ephesus where its literature was published.¹⁴ Another proposal credits Ignatius with introducing Johannine materials into Asia Minor through Polycarp of Smyrna.¹⁵ A Syrian origin for the Fourth Gospel might explain why Ignatius' letter to Ephesus mentions only Paul and not John the apostle who was supposed to have been active in that city a few years earlier.¹⁶ It might also provide an explanation for the absence of Johannine references (except 1 John) in the writings of Polycarp.¹⁷ To treat the Johannine writings as evidence for Syrian Christianity, then, is not an unprecedented or capricious move.

The Johannine texts are generally dated between 90 and 120 CE with the trend being to favour an earlier rather than later dating.¹⁸ Any attempt to reconstruct the history of the Johannine community, and the possible development of leadership roles, must address the question of the relationship between the four primary documents. Traditionally it has been assumed that their present order in the New Testament faithfully represents the order in which they were written.¹⁹ This view has not gone unchallenged; indeed, just about every imaginable alternative has been put forward.²⁰ Analyses of the literary nature and relationships, as well as the social situation of the Johannine epistles suggest that they make the most sense when read in reverse,²¹ with the Gospel being read

¹⁴ Schnackenburg, 162; Robinson, The Priority of John, 47-8; Birger Olsson, "The History of the Johannine Movement," in Lars Hartman and Birger Olsson (eds), Aspects on the Johannine Literature: Papers presented at a conference of Scandinavian New Testament exegetes at Uppsala, June 16-19, 1986, (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1987) 27-43, here 30-3, 38; R. H. Lightfoot, St. John's Gospel: A Commentary, (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1956) 6.

¹⁵ Grayston, 28-9.

¹⁶ Rius-Camps, 144.

¹⁷ Hammond Bammell, 90, 94.

¹⁸ Barrett, The Gospel of St. John, 108; Brown, Gospel according to John, lxxx-lxxxvi; Brown, Epistles of John, 101; Painter, 63; Robinson, "The Johannine Trajectory," 232-3.

¹⁹ E.g. Brown, Epistles of John, 31-5.

²⁰ See review in John Christopher Thomas, "The Order of the Composition of the Johannine Epistles," NovT 37:1 (1995) 68-75, especially 68-70.

²¹ Thomas, 68-75; R. M. Price, "The *Sitz-im-Leben* of Third John: A New Reconstruction," EvQ 61:2 (1989) 109-19.

as a theological response to the situation evident in the epistles.²² In 3 John powerful local leaders are able to refuse hospitality to emissaries and to itinerant ministers. 2 John urges continued interaction between local churches while warning against false teachers. In 1 John these false teachers are revealed as the charismatic rivals of a group of Johannine prophets and teachers. The Gospel seeks to resolve charismatic competition by subordinating spirit-inspired leaders to the tradition of Jesus' remembered words, and by affirming the authority of pastors over that of the charismatics with whom they share leadership and authority.

3.3.1. *The Elder's Letters (3 and 2 John)*

While both 3 and 2 John are typical Hellenistic letters, the latter is the "more consciously constructed" of the two and is written with more formality and authority.²³ Both letters appear to be written by the same person who identifies himself simply as "The Elder" (3 John 1; 2 John 1),²⁴ and deal with the same issue, the reception of visitors into Christian communities.

In 3 John The Elder writes to Gaius (v. 1) commending him for his actions toward certain "brothers" who were "strangers" to him (v. 5). Gaius had demonstrated his "love" by sending on these brothers in a worthy fashion (v. 6-7). These actions are contrasted with those of Diotrephes who does not receive either the brothers or The Elder and his emissaries (v. 9-10). The Elder hopes that Gaius will not imitate Diotrephes, but will continue to show good will by receiving Demetrius (v. 11-12). The issue as stated is the reception of certain persons as visitors or guests into Christian communities, three of which are represented in the text. The Elder speaks on behalf of an ἐκκλησία

²² Grayston, 14; Schnelle, 52-70; A number of scholars who continue to regard the gospel as earlier than the epistles recognize that the parts of it address the crisis attested in 1 Jn; see for example Brown, *Epistles of John*, 73; Painter, 44, 55; Ashton, 165; Fernando F. Segovia, "John 15:18-16:4a - A First Addition to the Original Farewell Discourse?" *CBO* 45:2 (1983) 210-30, here 216; Judith Lieu, *The Second and Third Epistles of John*, (Edinburgh, UK: T & T Clark, 1986) 209-10.

²³ Lieu, 37-9, 51; Grayston, 6; Bruce J. Malina, "The Received View and What It Cannot Do: III John and Hospitality," in John H. Elliot (ed), *Social-Scientific Criticism of the New Testament and Its Social World*, Semeia 35 (1986) 171-89, here 177; Abraham Malherbe, "The Inhospitability of Diotrephes," in Jacob Jervell and Wayne A. Meeks (eds), *God's Christ and His People: Studies in Honour of Nils Alstrup Dahl*, (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1977) 222-32, here 227.

²⁴ Schnelle, 47-8; Brown, *Epistles of John*, 15-6; Grayston, 6; Stephen J. Patterson, *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus*, (Sonoma, CA: Polebridge Press, 1993), 194, argues that the designation is a fiction intended to give the impression that the Elder has changed his mind concerning the itinerants.

of friends (v. 6, 15), Gaius represents another group of friends (v. 15), while Diotrephes is associated with another ἐκκλησία (v. 9).²⁵ Two sorts of persons are seeking hospitality among these groups: (1) "brothers" who have gone out "for the sake of the name, accepting no support from the gentiles" (v. 5), and (2) messengers bearing written letters and news from other Christian groups (v. 9). The latter would be envoys charged with specific missions, like the "apostles" in *Didache* 11.3-6. The "brothers" appear to be itinerant ministers of some sort,²⁶ perhaps similar to the prophets and teachers of the *Didache* or the apostle/prophets of Matthew 10 who are sent out to proclaim the gospel, heal the sick and exorcise demons. In the Johannine context such people cannot be assured of receiving hospitality. Gaius has welcomed the "brothers" in the past, but Diotrephes refuses to receive any outsiders, even fellow believers.

Nothing in the text indicates that either Gaius or Diotrephes is the holder of any church office or other position of "official" leadership in their respective churches.²⁷ Yet, as potential hosts, both are able to exercise power in relation to their congregations as well as in relation to the wandering ministers and emissaries. Gaius and Diotrephes have access to and control over food, shelter, supplies and other forms of assistance vital to these potential visitors. The granting or denying of hospitality also has the effect of facilitating or obstructing the itinerant's or messenger's access to an audience. The ability to confer or withhold hospitality also results in control over the host's Christian community who make up the potential audience for a "brother" or emissary. In this way Gaius and Diotrephes can effectively limit their respective communities' openness to new or different Christian teachings.

In the case of Diotrephes, not only does he refuse to receive both messengers and wandering ministers, he expels from the church anyone who does give them hospitality (v. 9-10). He even goes so far as to "spread false charges against us" (v. 10). In the Elder's opinion Diotrephes simply "loves to be first" (v. 9), lording it over others and flexing his muscles, metaphorically, in a display of his

²⁵ Brown, *Epistles of John*, 731; Malherbe, 226; Olsson, 37; Lieu, 114; Maier, 150. For the view that there are only two groups see Grayston, 160; Rudolf Bultmann, *The Johannine Epistles: A Commentary on the Johannine Epistles* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1973), 95.

²⁶ Bultmann, 98; Grayston, 160; Lieu, p. 103ff; Olsson, 37-8; according to Brown, *Epistles of John*, 705, the itinerants include persons closely related to The Elder.

²⁷ See Brown, *Epistles of John*, 732-7, for discussion of theories about Diotrephes as a "bishop."

power. Within the ἐκκλησία with which he is associated, Diotrephes is clearly able to function as a person of considerable authority. His capacity to function as a host or patron to visitors indicates that he is probably the head of an important, if not the leading, household in his community. As such he would also be able to act as a patron to the church, supplying much needed resources such as a meeting place, food, wine, etc. In the absence of any other evidence, it is most likely that Diotrephes' authority arises from the extension of his patriarchal authority as head of his household over the members of his community through patronage.²⁸ He might, therefore, be regarded as occupying a traditional authority role based on ascribed personal characteristics such as gender and social status.²⁹

From the Elder's perspective, Diotrephes' actions are unmerited, but not illegitimate. If or when he comes in person, the Elder will draw attention to Diotrephes' deeds (v. 10). The tentativeness of this response underscores the Elder's recognition that he can do very little about this state of affairs. He cannot order Diotrephes to change his ways nor can he bring any punitive measures to bear against him.³⁰ The picture which emerges is of small autonomous congregations in which power and authority are exercised by householders acting as hosts and patrons of the church. It is possible to regard the Elder as one such householder or patron trying to influence other householders to show hospitality to the "brothers" and to his emissaries (his clients/brokers). There are signs, however, that he is claiming to be more than just another patron of the church. He identifies himself simply as ὁ πρεσβύτερος, the Elder. A growing consensus rejects the likelihood that his self-designation reflects an official position within an ecclesiastical authority structure.³¹ It is more likely that "The Elder" is a title signifying the author's age and/or seniority within the group.³² The writer's status as a senior member of the community underlies his claims to authority. One element of the Elder's authority, then, derives from an ascribed personal attribute (age) that was

²⁸ Maier, 179, comes to a similar conclusion re: the basis of Diotrephes' power as arising from his household authority, but leaves out the important element of patronage.

²⁹ Traditional authority is described above on pages 24-5.

³⁰ Brown, *Epistles of John*, 746; Lieu, *2 and 3 John*, 114; Judith M. Lieu, *The Theology of the Johannine Epistles*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1991) 94.

³¹ Bultmann, 95; Brown, *Epistles of John*, 651, 737; Lieu, *2 and 3 John*, 52-4, 158.

³² Grayston, 152; Schnelle, 48.

traditionally associated with status and authority in the Greco-Roman world.³³

The writer's unusual self-appellation is not the sole indicator of his authority. The Elder intimately links himself with "truth," a core Johannine value³⁴ which is manifested in the actions of persons and which is itself personified. The Elder not only loves and walks in "truth" (3 John 1,4; 2 John 1), but is a co-worker with "truth" (3 John 8) which testifies concerning Demetrius (3 John 12). This "truth abides in us and will be with us forever" (2 John 2), together with "grace, mercy and peace" given by God the Father and Jesus Christ to "us," i.e. to the Elder and to those for whom he speaks. To the extent that personified "truth" is envisioned as an aspect of the sacred or divine realm, the Elder can be regarded as making a charismatic claim not only for himself but for the group he represents. He and the members of this group are the possessors of heavenly gifts. Implicit in his greeting to the elect lady and her children is a further claim to mediate God's gifts.³⁵ The Elder thus seems to present himself as a *charismatic broker* who also enjoys a special status and prominence due to age or seniority.

A third aspect of the Elder's authority is demonstrated in his instruction to the "elect lady" that they love one another in accordance with the commandment which they have both had from "the beginning" (2 John 5). Mutual love between the Elder and his group, on the one hand, and the lady and her children, on the other, is necessitated and demanded by a "commandment" which is part of their shared heritage. This request for mutual love presupposes the situation of 3 John, where itinerant ministers and emissaries of the churches are arbitrarily denied hospitality in some communities. In that letter, Gaius' hospitality and assistance to the "brothers" is described as "love" (3 John 5-6). Here in 2 John, the Elder's demand for mutual love is a call for unbroken fellowship and continued hospitality between the two groups. This is followed by a warning against deceivers who do not confess that "Jesus Christ has come in the flesh" (2 John 7). These persons who "go beyond" the διδασχὴ τοῦ χριστοῦ (2 John 9) are not to be received or even greeted by the lady and her children (2 John 10). In these instructions the Elder reveals himself to be a "bearer of tradition,"

³³ See page 25 above.

³⁴ Lieu, 2 and 3 John, 109.

³⁵ Ibid, 51.

one who preserves, articulates and transmits those teachings which the community has held from its inception, and which ought to serve as norms for its life and conduct.

The Elder's leadership and authority seem to be related to three factors: (1) his age or seniority, (2) his possession and mediation of truth and other divine gifts, and (3) his ability to explicate community guidelines. The Elder appeals to ascribed personal authority and to personal charisma in order to legitimate his role of interpreting and applying the "commandments" contained presumably in the διδασχὴ τοῦ χριστοῦ. He resembles Matthew's ideal community leader epitomized by Peter, the senior disciple whose training and access to divine insight lead to his appointment as chief scribe. Like Matthew's Peter, the Elder is a senior member of, and spokesman for, a group whose interests include the articulation of a body of customs and teachings to guide the Christian community. Unlike his Matthean counterpart, the Elder seems to claim for himself the gifts and the role of a charismatic broker. In this respect he is like the true prophets of the *Didache* who not only mediate divine knowledge to their audiences while speaking "in spirit," but also teach the "truth" as measured against the "Lord's teaching" (*Did.* 11.7,10).

One other aspect of the Elder's authority is noteworthy: he relates to his readers as a patriarchal figure. Gaius is included in the category of "my children" (3 John 3-4), indicating a paternal, or perhaps patronal relationship such as is found between teacher and disciple.³⁶ 2 John is addressed to the "elect lady and her children" (2 John 1), and concludes with greetings from "your elect sister and her children" (2 John 13). These references are generally understood to be metaphors for two Christian congregations.³⁷ If this is the case, then, implicit in the Elder's language is an assertion of patriarchal and patronal authority. Just as the male represented the household in its public dealings with other households, the Elder speaks for one "lady and her children" in her dealings with another. Just as a patron or broker granted favours in exchange for honour and service from his clients, the Elder mediates God's gifts in exchange for mutual love (i.e. hospitality) and complicity in keeping out those who deviate from Johannine teachings. Just as fathers and patrons

³⁶ Grayston, 160; Lieu, *2 and 3 John*, 102.

³⁷ Lieu, *2 and 3 John*, 42; Brown, *Epistles of John*, 652-3; Grayston, 151-2; Bultmann, 108; Gail R. O'Day, "1, 2 and 3 John," in Carol A. Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe (eds), *The Women's Bible Commentary*. (London, UK: SPCK/Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992) 374-5.

functioned as priests in their households and in private religious associations, so the Elder functions as an intermediary and broker of God's gifts to the churches. The Elder is, then, a senior charismatic figure who envisions his relationship with his readers as that of a father or patron relating to members of his household or clientele.

The Elder's letters reflect a situation in which powerful householders acting as church patrons can, and do, refuse hospitality to wandering ministers and messengers from other congregations. The Elder's response to this situation is two-pronged. (1) He argues that mutual love between Christian groups is mandated by a commandment that they have had since the beginning. What this means is that hospitality must be shown to the emissaries of sister churches. (2) The Elder warns his readers that not all visitors deserve a reception. Itinerant ministers are to be tested, anyone whose teaching deviates from Christ's teaching is to be refused hospitality. The intention of these instructions is quite similar to those of the *Didache* which insists that hospitality be shown to "apostles," i.e. official emissaries of the churches, and which specifies the proper ways of evaluating itinerant teachers and prophets. The Elder's warning about deceivers who go beyond the teaching of Christ and who refuse to confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh, points to the circumstances of 1 John.

3.3.2 1 John

Strictly speaking, 1 John is not an epistle. Not only is it not cast in the form of a letter, it does not appear to conform precisely with any other literary genre. It is a written communication from an anonymous writer to an unidentified audience, which seeks to interpret or define certain aspects of a shared tradition. The need for such clarification is associated with and evoked by a schism within the Johannine movement.³⁸

Urban von Wahlde has reconstructed the conflict reflected in 1 John by means of a classification and analysis of the various statements the author makes about and against his opponents. He finds thirteen statements that consist of claims made by each regarding their status as Christians; ten of these are shared, while three are made only by the writer and his group. Another seven assertions are statements of beliefs about Jesus which are held by the author but not by his opponents. A final six statements set out ethical stances which distinguish the author from his

³⁸ Lieu, *Theology of the Johannine Epistles*, 3, 16; Grayston, 4, 37-8; Brown, *Epistles of John*, 87.

adversaries.³⁹ Von Wahlde demonstrates that the writer of 1 John tests his opponents' claims to status against the criteria of "correct belief" about Jesus and "correct love" or ethics. Christology and ethics are used as "tests" in relation to claims of special status.⁴⁰ Von Wahlde concludes that these are the "two major observable issues" of a theological crisis revolving around concern for the "content" of the Johannine traditions and concern for the proper conduct of Johannine Christians.⁴¹

Von Wahlde's presupposition of a "theological crisis"⁴² blinds him to the social implications of his own work. The most striking feature of von Wahlde's classification of statements is that the largest category consists of claims to special status. These get twice as much space as christological or ethical statements. Indeed, claims to status get as much space as christology and ethics combined. This suggests that the one issue which occupies the author more than any other is the question of special status. As von Wahlde himself states, the christological and ethical statements function primarily as "tests" to determine which claims to status are valid and authentic. This suggests that we are dealing here, not with a theological crisis, but with a social conflict that has theological overtones and implications. The conflict is not so much over *what* is the correct content of the Johannine tradition, as it is about *who* are its authentic representatives and interpreters. The author of 1 John and his opponents are rivals for positions of authority within the Johannine movement. In 1 John the writer is first and foremost concerned to refute his opponents' claims to special status, to convince his readers that his rivals are liars, deceivers and antichrists.

As von Wahlde's analysis shows, both the Johannine writer and his opponents claim to be persons who have communion with the Father, know God, abide in God, walk in the light, are anointed by the Spirit, possess the Spirit, are begotten by God, have passed from death to life, belong

³⁹ Urban C. von Wahlde, The Johannine Commandments: 1 John and the Struggle for the Johannine Tradition, (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1990) 108-14.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 210-14.

⁴¹ Ibid, 261-2.

⁴² Ibid, 105.

to the truth and love God.⁴³ This is the language of religious experience,⁴⁴ pointing to the source of the assertions of status. Both the author and his opponents are claiming to be directly and immediately linked with the divine realm. Both groups regard themselves as being particularly favoured and gifted by God, or as we might say, both groups make charismatic claims. What emerges is a picture of a community in which two groups appear to be claiming the same charismatic status, along with the authority deriving from that status.

An importance difference between these rivals is reflected in the three claims to status which seem to be unique to the author and his group. They claim to have communion with God's Son Jesus Christ (1:3), to possess the Son along with the Father (2:23; 5:11-13), and to abide in the Son and the Father (2:24, 28). For the writer of 1 John Jesus appears to be a divine being alongside God/Father and Spirit. This does not appear to be the case with the author's opponents who make no such assertions.⁴⁵ As an analysis of the christological statements shows, the opponents deny that "Jesus is the Christ," (2:22) and that he is the Son of God (2:23-24). Nor do they confess that "Jesus Christ has come in the flesh" (4:2). While it is beyond the scope of the present work to examine the precise nature of the rivals' christological beliefs,⁴⁶ one thing does seem clear, not only is the status of the earthly and historical Jesus in dispute,⁴⁷ it is clearly related to the issue of authority in the church.

The Johannine writer's inclusion of Jesus in the realm of divine beings has important consequences, particularly since it is the Jesus "come in flesh" whom he elevates. The human Jesus

⁴³ Ibid, 110.

⁴⁴ Lieu, Theology of the Johannine Epistles, 31ff.

⁴⁵ Von Wahlde, 109-10.

⁴⁶ This subject is treated in depth by von Wahlde, and in the following works: Grayston, 14-27; Brown, Community of the Beloved Disciple, 93-162; Brown, Epistles of John, 46-72; Lieu, Theology of the Johannine Epistles, 13-15; John Painter, "The 'Opponents' in 1 John," NTS 32 (1986) 48-71; Judith M. Lieu, "Authority to Become Children of God," NovT 22,3 (1981) 210-28; Rodney A. Whitacre, Johannine Polemic: The Role of Tradition and Theology, (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982) 121-52; Raymond E. Brown, "The relationship to the Fourth Gospel shared by the author of 1 John and his opponents," in Ernest Best and R. McL. Wilson (eds), Text and Interpretation: Studies in the New Testament presented to Matthew Black, (London, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1979) 57-68; John Bogart, Orthodox and Heretical Perfectionism in the Johannine Community as Evident in the First Epistle of John, (SBLDS 33; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1977).

⁴⁷ von Wahlde, 111.

along with his words and deeds becomes an additional source and ground of legitimacy. The author of 1 John derives his authority not only from his communion with divine beings, but also from his status as a physical witness to the teaching and commandments of Jesus as they have been proclaimed from the inception of the Johannine community. He proclaims what he has heard, seen, looked at and touched from the beginning (1:1). His message is rooted in the words and deeds of Jesus who has come in the flesh. The writer's authority derives not only from personal charisma, but from his role as one who can vouch for and transmit the teachings of Jesus as they have been preserved within the Johannine community.⁴⁸

The Johannine teachings of and about Jesus become, for the writer of 1 John, a means for legitimating and controlling charismatic figures. Claims to know God and to abide in him are validated by obedience and fidelity to the commandment and word which they have heard "from the beginning" (2:3-8, 24), namely to love one another (3:11-17) and to have faith in the name of Jesus (3:23). Spirit possession alone is not a sign of a true prophet (4:1). Only those who confess that "Jesus Christ has come in the flesh" truly possess God's Spirit (4:2). Only those who believe that "Jesus is the Christ" are truly born of God (5:1). The writer's stance is very similar to that found in Matthew and the *Didache* which also contain warnings that personal charisma alone is not sufficient to warrant a grant of authority. While Matthew leaves little room for purely charismatic leadership, the *Didache* continues to value the charismatic leadership of prophets but insists on testing their behaviour. In a situation of charismatic competition, the Johannine writer insists that the content of the spirit-inspired message must also be tested for conformity to a particular christological confession. In this way the authority of charismatics is subordinated to the emerging Johannine "tradition," which functions to legitimate the author while delegitimizing his rivals.

The writer of 1 John is not, however, alone in his leadership. He identifies himself with a group distinct from his audience (1:1-2). He writes as the representative and spokesman for this charismatic group whose function it is to witness (1:2), to proclaim (1:2,3,5) and to write (1:4) what was from the beginning. These persons do not appear, or at least do not explicitly claim, to be holders of offices within the Johannine congregations. Rather their authority is linked to their

⁴⁸ Bultmann, 11, Brown, *Epistles of John*, 181-2; Grayston, 37-8; Jerome H. Neyrey, *An Ideology of Revolt: John's Christology in Social-Science Perspective*, (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1988) 168.

functions as communicators of revealed experience and remembered teaching. In this respect they are not unlike the prophets and teachers of the *Didache* who function together in contrast to the householders assuming official positions in those communities as bishops and deacons. The Johannine author appears to be part of a group of charismatic "tradition"-bearers, combining the roles of spirit-inspired prophet, teacher and scribe. The purpose of their communication is to enable their audience to have communion with "us," who in turn have communion with the Father and the Son (1:3). In this way the writer claims for himself, and the group he represents, an intermediary position between his audience and the divine realm. They are charismatic brokers, mediating communion with divine beings. Ignatius shares this Johannine view of church leaders, asserting that participation in God is the result of a "running together" with the bishop (*Eph.* 4.1-2).⁴⁹

What seems to be distinctive in the Johannine approach to leadership and authority is the way charisma and the nascent "tradition" dialectically reinforce each other. The Elder's instructions to the "elect lady" in 2 John are prefaced by his claim to belong to a group possessing personified, and probably deified, "truth." His status as the senior member of this gifted and charismatic group legitimates his directions to the "lady" concerning the supremacy of the love commandment and of the christological teaching of Jesus Christ come in flesh. The author of 1 John uses these two aspects of the emerging tradition to legitimate his claim to be one who truly possesses the spirit and has communion with divine beings. Charisma and "tradition" reinforce each other, and together are the basis of the author's claim to be an authentic representative of and spokesman for Johannine Christianity. This peculiar relationship between charisma and "tradition" grows out of and addresses the problem of charismatic rivalry, which is not ultimately resolved until the last chapter of the 4th Gospel. In this respect the Johannine literature differs from both Matthew and the *Didache* where charismatic authority is in competition with other forms of leadership. While the ideal Matthean scribe should be a recipient of revelation (Matt. 16:17-19), the primary emphasis is on training and education which result in acquired impersonal (rational-legal) authority. The Didachist seeks to harness the charismatic power of prophets in the interests of householders, invoking the authority of the historical apostles of Jesus in order to legitimate the establishment of both charismatic and

⁴⁹ A similar notion may be reflected in *Did.* 4.1, where the Lord's presence is found in the discourse of the holy ones who speak the word of God, but it is not so boldly asserted as it is in 1 John and in Ignatius.

traditional offices. In Ignatius we will find that charisma is in a dialectical relationship, not with tradition, but with office.

3.3.3 *The Gospel of John*

Charismatic rivalry for leadership and authority is also reflected in the Gospel of John, as has been demonstrated by D. Bruce Woll's analysis of the first farewell discourse (John 13:31-14:26).⁵⁰ Woll asserts that the fourth evangelist depicts Jesus as "the charismatic figure *par excellence*," an outsider independent of all normal channels of authority, claiming an unheard of concentration of power based on direct unmediated access to God, and demanding new obligations and loyalties.⁵¹ Woll regards this charismatic Jesus as a projection of the Johannine community's self-understanding as an "actively charismatic" group with a "charismatic tradition of origin."⁵² The direct access to the divine realm claimed by Johannine leaders eventually resulted in "charismatic competition" which threatened even the rank and authority of Jesus.⁵³ Woll's analysis of the first farewell discourse shows that two primary issues are in question: the disciples' access to heaven (13:31-14:11), and the conditions of their agency on earth (14:12-26).⁵⁴

Woll points out how in the first part of the discourse (13:31-14:11) the evangelist makes it quite clear that Jesus goes first to heaven because he is *from* there; he belongs there. The ascent of the disciples, on the other hand, depends upon Jesus' prior return and preparation of a place for them in heaven. Jesus' place in heaven is original, while that of the disciples is secondary, derived from and dependent upon Jesus.⁵⁵ This point is made emphatically in 14:4-11 where Jesus declares that

⁵⁰ For other treatments of the farewell discourses see Fernando F. Segovia, "The Structure, *Tendenz*, and *Sitz im Leben* of John 13:31-14:31," *JBL* 104/3 (1985) 471-93; John Painter, "The Farewell Discourses and the History of Johannine Christianity," *NTS* 27 (1981) 525-43.

⁵¹ D. Bruce Woll, *Johannine Christianity in Conflict: Authority, Rank and Succession in the First Farewell Discourse*, (SBLDS: Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981), 114-27.

⁵² *Ibid*, 119-21, 127.

⁵³ *Ibid*, 32.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 33.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 38.

he is the exclusive agent of access to God. Woll argues that this passage reflects a conflict within the Johannine community about the status and authority of its prophetic leaders. The gospel writer understands these figures to be subordinate to Jesus, while others see them as equal to Jesus.⁵⁶ In the second half of the discourse (14:12-26), the disciples are presented as successors to the powers and place of Jesus on earth. As Woll asserts, they are portrayed as charismatic figures whose authority derives from the indwelling Paraclete, or spirit of truth.⁵⁷ The evangelist, however, identifies the spirit with the past figure of Jesus, thus turning spirit possession into evidence for the subordination and dependence of the disciples upon Jesus. This is reinforced by the gospel writer's insistence that the Paraclete's primary function is to "recall" the words of Jesus. Woll argues that in this way the evangelist seeks to effectively limit the scope of charismatic prophecy by subordinating it to the Jesus of history, while legitimating his own interpretation of Jesus' words by implying that it is the product of the Paraclete's recollecting agency.⁵⁸

As Woll interprets it, the message of the first farewell discourse is that the authority of the disciples is *not* charismatic, in the sense of *direct access* to the ultimate source of power and authority, rather it is a *mediated* authority. Woll argues that this message reflects a situation in which claims to direct, independent access to divine authority are out of control from the perspective of the evangelist who is himself a prophet, speaking in the Spirit, and seeking to provide a correct and safe interpretation of the community's tradition.⁵⁹ Woll's thesis is persuasive, needing refinement only with respect to the role and authority of the disciples. I would suggest that the disciples might be best understood as *brokers* in a hierarchy⁶⁰ of intermediary figures. Jesus is the only legitimate broker

⁵⁶ Ibid, 66.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 89-91.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 96-105.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 127-8.

⁶⁰ It is sometimes argued that the 4th gospel has a nonhierarchical, or even antihierarchical, ecclesiology. To a large extent this is an argument from silence, or it relies on the image of the vine and branches in 15:1-11. This passage functions, however, as an illustration of the argument in 13:31-14:26, emphasizing the subordination of the charismatic disciples to Jesus. See discussion in Segovia, 216; Brown, *Gospel according to John*, cv; Raymond E. Brown, *The Churches the Apostles Left Behind*, (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1984) 87; Gail R. O'Day, "John" in Newsom and Ringe, *Women's Bible Commentary*, 293-304.

for the Father (14:6), while the Paraclete mediates access to Jesus in heaven (14:16-17), thereby enabling the disciples to function as Jesus' brokers on earth. The disciples are *charismatic* brokers to the extent that spirit-possession is considered a rare and exceptional personal gift or achievement. What legitimates the spirit-filled disciples, however, is not the gift of the spirit *per se*, but the recollection and understanding of the words of Jesus.

These disciples bear a remarkable resemblance to the groups represented by the Johannine writers. Each one, the evangelist, the author of 1 John, and the Elder, acts as the spokesman for a group functioning as communicators of both revealed and remembered information from and about Jesus (John 21:24; 1 John 1:1-4; 2 John 1-2). Like the Johannine disciples, these groups serve as brokers between their earthly audiences and the divine Father and Son. In each situation we see charismatic claims reinforcing and reinforced by "tradition." This is not to imply that the Johannine leaders are traditional authority figures, exercising power on the basis of ascribed personal qualities such as gender, age, lineage or social status. The Elder's authority might, in part, be associated with age or seniority in relation to the group he represents, but for the most part we do not know enough about them to assess the importance of such characteristics. The Johannine leaders appear to be spirit-endowed prophets,⁶¹ teachers and/or scribes engaged in the creation and articulation of a body of teaching and thought which they refer to as the words or commandments of Jesus, and which I have been calling "tradition" for lack of a better term. This Johannine "tradition" emerges from the Paraclete-inspired activity of its leaders, reinforcing and validating their claims to be the authentic representatives of and spokesmen for the Johannine Christian movement.

Further insights into the leadership and authority structures of the Johannine community are provided by the evangelist's depiction of Peter and the Beloved Disciple, a subject thoroughly explored by Kevin Quast.⁶² These two characters are best understood, according to Quast, within the context of a crisis of authority arising from the death of the Beloved Disciple, competing appeals to

⁶¹ Ashton, 172, 181-9, 420-5.

⁶² See also discussions in Brown, *Community of the Beloved Disciple*, 31-4, 161-2; Brown, *Churches the Apostles Left Behind*, 91-3; Neyrey, *Ideology of Revolt*, 164-6; Jerome H. Neyrey, "The Footwashing in John 13:6-11: Transformation Ritual or Ceremony?" in L. Michael White and O. Larry Yarbrough (eds), *The Social World of the First Christians: Essays in Honor of Wayne A. Meeks*, (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1995) 198-213.

pneumatic authority (1 John), and problems relating to the exercise of personal authority (3 John).⁶³ Quast notes that where Peter appears independently of the Beloved Disciple (John 1-12), he "is not highlighted in any significant ways as 'first' or pre-eminent."⁶⁴ He is not the first disciple to follow Jesus, nor does he make the first messianic confession. Peter is, nevertheless, singled out for "special treatment" as the only person given a new name by Jesus (John 1:35-42),⁶⁵ and he does emerge as a spokesman for the "twelve" (John 6:60-71) who remain faithful to the words of Jesus when many other disciples fall away. Quast regards Peter and the twelve as symbolic representatives of a group of "apostolic" Christians distinct from the Johannine community.⁶⁶

Where Peter appears in the company of the Beloved Disciple (John 13-21), Quast argues that they represent two "different and supplementary roles used in harmony."⁶⁷ At the last supper (John 13:1-38) the Beloved Disciple is portrayed as enjoying a direct, intimate relationship with Jesus which parallels Jesus' own relationship with the Father. Peter is depicted as the eager but ignorant spokesman for the twelve, who must appeal to the Beloved Disciple to relay his question to Jesus. Quast emphasizes that in this instance the Beloved Disciple *followed* Peter's lead and acted *under* his directions.⁶⁸ It is the Beloved Disciple who facilitates Peter's entry into the high priest's courtyard following Jesus' arrest (John 18:15-18). He continues to follow Jesus to the place of crucifixion, in contrast to Peter who disappears once he has denied Jesus.⁶⁹ The Beloved Disciple provides a historical testimony to the final words and deeds of Jesus, who confers on him the status of a "brother" by placing in his hands the welfare of his mother (John 19:25-27).⁷⁰ At the scene of the

⁶³ Kevin Quast, Peter and the Beloved Disciple: Figures for a Community in Crisis, (JSNTSup. 32; Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989) 15-16, 156.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 35.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 35-41.

⁶⁶ Ibid, 41-53.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 69.

⁶⁸ Ibid, 55-70.

⁶⁹ Ibid, 80-9.

⁷⁰ Ibid, 92-7.

empty tomb (John 20:1-10), Quast notes that the Beloved Disciple arrives first but waits for Peter to enter before going in himself. Peter serves as an uncomprehending witness to the conditions of the empty tomb, while the Beloved Disciple concludes that Jesus is risen.⁷¹

Quast points out that it is only during the final Galilean post-resurrection appearance of Jesus that Peter's status is enhanced in relation to that of the Beloved Disciple.⁷² In this post-resurrection context Peter continues in his role as the leader of the twelve, initiating their fishing, i.e. missionary, expedition (John 21:3). The Beloved Disciple continues to display his unparalleled insight and discernment, by recognizing the risen Lord. He shares his information with Peter who immediately acts on it (John 21:7). It is Peter, however, who is responsible for the success and unity of the church's mission, symbolized by the catch of 153 fish in an unbroken net (John 21:11). Peter is tested by the risen Lord, commissioned to take on the pastoral role of feeding and tending Jesus' sheep, and is called to follow Jesus to a martyr's death (John 21:15-19). Finally the Beloved Disciple is depicted as following both Jesus and Peter (John 21:20), and is described as a truthful witness to these events (John 21:24), including Peter's commissioning as the shepherd of the church.⁷³

Quast regards Peter and the Beloved Disciple as representing two distinct Christian communities, and two different forms of leadership. The Beloved Disciple stands for the Johannine community in which the Spirit is the "guiding authority,"⁷⁴ while Peter typifies an "apostolic" Christianity grounded in an historical witness to the empirical events of Jesus' life.⁷⁵ Quast argues that the evangelist responded to the crisis of authority following the Beloved Disciple's death, by urging his community to join with the apostolic community, or at the very least to adopt its structure of leadership and authority as epitomized by Peter.⁷⁶ Although Quast makes a good case, the nature

⁷¹ Ibid, 110-24.

⁷² Ibid, 159; John 21 is often seen as an addition to the original gospel, eg. Brown, Community of the Beloved Disciple, 161. This is countered by "Paul S. Minear," The Original Function of John 21," JBL 102/1 (1983) 85-98.

⁷³ Ibid, 125-56.

⁷⁴ Ibid, 14.

⁷⁵ Ibid, 166.

⁷⁶ Ibid, 167-70.

of the leadership provided by these two characters requires further examination.

The Beloved Disciple serves as a broker providing access to Jesus, and possessing unparalleled insights and knowledge which he shares with others. His ability to function as Jesus' favourite broker is the consequence of an intimate relationship with Jesus which parallels Jesus' own relationship with God.⁷⁷ These features suggest that the Beloved Disciple may be identified as a *charismatic broker*. As the alleged witness behind the Fourth Gospel (21:24), the Beloved Disciple is the ideal Paraclete-empowered disciple, recalling and interpreting the words of both the historical Jesus and the risen Lord. Another often overlooked aspect of the Beloved Disciple's authority is his status as Jesus' personally appointed successor and "adopted brother." By virtue of this designation by Jesus, the Beloved Disciple can also be described as a routinized charismatic leader.⁷⁸ Jesus' selection of the Beloved Disciple might also have served as a paradigm for establishing a succession of charismatic leaders in the Johannine community each chosen by his or her predecessor. This, however, does not seem to have been the case. The Beloved Disciple's death appears to have been unexpected (John 21:23), and may have been one of the catalysts behind the crisis of authority which is reflected in our texts. The evangelist resolves this conflict in the Gospel by having the Beloved Disciple affirm the leadership of Peter who is a very different sort of leader.

Peter in the Fourth Gospel is not particularly intimate with Jesus, nor does he have any special insight or discernment to offer. He is clearly not regarded as a gifted, or charismatic figure. Peter remains faithful to the words of the Johannine Jesus when others do not, and displays an eager if uncomprehending devotion to his Lord. He is not noted for his learning, skill or competence. The combination of education and revelation which are the basis of his elevation to the status of "chief scribe" in the Matthean community are nowhere to be found in the Johannine gospel. Peter does act as the spokesman for a particular group of disciples, and serves as a physical witness to most of the historical events of Jesus' life. He acknowledges the status and authority of the Beloved Disciple by both seeking his assistance and acting upon his insights. Peter acquires the role of "shepherd" over the Johannine community in a post-resurrection context as a result of his profession of love for Jesus,

⁷⁷ Neyrey, "The Footwashing in John 13:6-11," 208.

⁷⁸ See page 31, above, on the routinization of charisma.

which entails keeping his commandments and words,⁷⁹ and his willingness to follow Jesus to a martyr's death.

Peter might be described as a routinized charismatic leader because of his designation by Jesus to a position analogous to the Beloved Disciple. There is, however, an important difference. The Beloved Disciple is chosen by Jesus prior to his death, just as in Matthew's gospel it is the earthly Jesus who confers on Peter the leadership of the church. The Johannine Peter is designated "shepherd" not by this Jesus, but by the risen Lord, who is present in the community as the Paraclete or Spirit; furthermore, the authenticity of his election is confirmed by the charismatic Beloved Disciple himself (John 21:24). Why is this distinction significant? Because it suggests that among Johannine Christians the selection of pastoral leaders might have been understood as the work of the Holy Spirit, and hints at some sort of spirit-inspired process of selection. Indeed, the apostle John is credited in church tradition with appointing to episcopal office those who were indicated by the Spirit.⁸⁰ Even more importantly for this study, the Johannine election of Peter may provide the model for Ignatius' insistence that bishops and other church officers are appointed according to the will of Jesus Christ and established by the Holy Spirit (*Phld. Inscr.*). In his letters, Ignatius takes on a role like that of the Beloved Disciple, using his personal charisma to affirm that bishops are divinely appointed representatives of God and Christ in the local churches.

The Johannine Peter may be described as a routinized charismatic leader who is chosen through some sort of spirit-inspired visionary experience that is authenticated by a recognized charismatic broker (the Beloved Disciple). His authority within the community is legitimated by this revelatory process of selection.⁸¹ Peter in the Fourth Gospel has neither personal charisma nor acquired training. His most significant characteristic appears to be his loyalty to Jesus and his words, and his willingness to follow Jesus to a martyr's death. Here again is another point of contact with Ignatius, whose conception of his own episcopacy certainly reflects both of these elements.

⁷⁹ Fernando Segovia, "The Love and Hatred of Jesus and Johannine Sectarianism," *CBO* 43/2 (1981) 258-72, p. 263.

⁸⁰ Clement of Alexandria, *Quis Dives* 42; also A. J. Mason, "Conception of the Church in Early Times," in Everett Ferguson (ed), *Church, Ministry and Organization in the Early Church Era*. (Studies in Early Christianity Volume 13; New York, NY/London, UK: Garland Publishing, 1993) 1-57.

⁸¹ See Weber on routinizing charisma, page 31 above.

3.3.4 Summary

To conclude this discussion, I would like to suggest the following development of leadership roles in the Johannine community. The community was lead first by charismatic prophets and/or teachers, such as the Beloved Disciple. The death of this first generation of leaders resulted in charismatic competition, schism (1 John), and a breakdown of fellowship as local householders closed their doors to the Johannine charismatics (3 John). All of the Johannine writers appear to be associated with these charismatics, and all seek to reinforce their own positions over against their rivals by appealing to a body of teaching which they claim has been part of the community since its beginning. The articulation and codification of this "tradition" is intended to resolve the conflict over authority in which these writers are embroiled. Each of the Johannine authors seeks to provide a standard against which rival charismatic claims can be tested: the διδασχία τοῦ χριστοῦ (2 John 9), various christological and ethical tests (1 John), and the definition of the Paraclete's work as the recollection and interpretation of the words of Jesus (John 14:26). The evangelist provides an additional solution: the appointment of "shepherds" designated by the risen Lord/Paraclete to be responsible for maintaining the integrity and unity of the community, as well as its fidelity to the preserved teachings of and about the Johannine Jesus. The relationship of Peter and the Beloved Disciple suggests that the gospel writer envisioned charismatic and pastoral leaders working together, in a manner similar to that of the *Didache* where prophets and teachers minister alongside bishops and deacons. On the other hand, John 21 concludes with Peter wondering what is to become of the Beloved Disciple, perhaps foreshadowing the fate of the Johannine charismatics whose legacy is preserved primarily in the pages of the gospel itself.

It is possible to see in these developments a finely nuanced process of routinization of charisma. The extraordinary personal charisma of Jesus is only slightly muted in his appointed successor the Beloved Disciple. Their combined achievements and gifts become institutionalized as the words of Jesus recalled and interpreted by the Beloved Disciple. The Johannine writers all claim a charisma that is dialectically related to this "tradition." Their charisma creates and articulates the tradition which legitimates their charisma. They are becoming routinized charismatics by virtue of their positions as transmitters of the Johannine tradition. Peter is a routinized charismatic leader, appointed by the risen Jesus/Paraclete, having no personal charisma but noted for his fidelity to the

words of the Johannine Jesus (John 6:68). Whatever charisma the Johannine pastor has will likely be a consequence of office, associated perhaps with the task of speaking the word of the Lord, a notion which is explicit in the *Didache* (4.1-2), but interestingly not expressed by Ignatius.

3.4 The Leadership and Authority of Socially Radical Wanderers in the *Gospel of Thomas*

The *Gospel of Thomas* is one of the best known documents to emerge from the Nag Hammadi "library" recovered in 1945 from the sands of Egypt. This 4th century manuscript is a Coptic translation from an earlier Greek text, only fragments of which have been preserved (ca. 200 CE). The *Gospel of Thomas* was known and quoted by a number of church fathers, most notably Hippolytus (170-239 CE) who associated it with deviant and unacceptable teaching.¹ Unlike the canonical gospels, *Thomas* contains no narrative; it does not tell the story of Jesus' life and deeds but simply records "the secret sayings that the living Jesus spoke" (*Gos. Thom. Incipit.*). The *Gospel of Thomas'* literary form as a sayings collection together with its appeal to the personal, rather than apostolic, authority of early Christian leaders points to an early period in the church's history. The initial gathering of these sayings may have taken place in Palestine perhaps as early as the 50s, with the final compilation occurring in eastern Syria in the last decades of the 1st century.²

Although the *Gospel of Thomas* has much in common with the New Testament writings it emerges from an autonomous stream of tradition, providing an independent witness to the diversity and complexity of the early Christian movement.³ It is frequently identified as a "gnostic" document,

¹ John S. Kloppenborg, Marvin W. Meyer, Stephen J. Patterson, Michael G. Steinhauser, *Q Thomas Reader*, (Sonoma, CA: Polebridge Press, 1990) 78,85; Marvin W. Meyer, *The Secret Teachings of Jesus: Four Gnostic Gospels translated with an introduction and notes*, (New York, NY: Random House, 1984) xv-xxii; Willis Barnstone (ed), *The Other Bible: Jewish Pseudepigrapha, Christian Apocrypha, Gnostic Scriptures, Kabbalah, Dead Sea Scrolls*, (San Francisco, CA: Harper, 1984) 299; Tobias Churton, *The Gnostics*, (London, UK: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1987) 18-20; H. E. W. Turner and Hugh Montefiore, *Thomas and the Evangelists*, (Studies in Biblical Theology 35; London, UK: SCM Press, 1962) 11-15.

² Kloppenborg *et al*, 88-93; Stephen J. Patterson, *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus*, (Sonoma, CA: Polebridge Press, 1993), 113-20; Stevan L. Davies, *The Gospel of Thomas and Christian Wisdom*, (New York, NY: Seabury Press, 1983) 3, 16-21; Stevan Davies, "The Christology and Protology of the *Gospel of Thomas*," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 111/4 (1992) 663-82, here 663. For alternative views see Turner and Montefiore, 12-3; Bertil Gärtner, *The Theology of the Gospel according to Thomas*, (transl. Eric J. Sharpe; New York, NY: Harper, 1961) 271; R. McL. Wilson, *Studies in the Gospel of Thomas*, (London, UK: A. R. Mowbray, 1960) 7-8.

³ Kloppenborg *et al*, 85; Patterson, *Gospel of Thomas*, 121.

yet its gnosticism is neither pronounced nor fully developed.⁴ Careful assessment shows that *Thomas* is deeply rooted in Jewish wisdom traditions. It bears a close affinity to other early Christian sayings texts such as "Q," the parables collection in Mark 4, the core of the epistle of James, and the first six chapters of the *Didache*.⁵ *Thomas* contains language, concepts, and points of view which are also found in John's gospel. Both focus on the hearing and keeping of Jesus' word as the key to salvation in the present. John and *Thomas* also share a common conception of Jesus as the redeemer descended from and reascending to heaven who during his sojourn on earth enjoys a special relationship with God. *Thomas* contains no explicit quotations from John and none of the lengthy discourses which characterize the 4th gospel. It may, however, point to the sort of sayings that served as the point of departure for the theological reflection which resulted in the Johannine discourses.⁶ It has even been suggested that the *Gospel of Thomas* may come "from the same community that, in a later decade, produced the Gospel of John."⁷

Stephen Patterson has recently produced a social-historical description of Thomas Christianity on the basis of an analysis of the "legal sayings" found in this gospel. These sayings which identify and evaluate concrete behaviour and attitudes, Patterson argues, point to the actual practices expected of those who first read and heard the *Gospel of Thomas*.⁸ Patterson begins by noting that *Thomas* directly links a person's prospects for salvation to his or her relationship and response to the world. In order to "find the kingdom" one must "fast from the world" (*Gos. Thom.* 27.1). Although the Thomas Christian is superior to the world (*Gos. Thom.* 111), nevertheless he or she must be "on guard against the world" (*Gos. Thom.* 21). *Thomas* manifests what Patterson calls an "anticosmic ideology" which sees the world as a threat against which Christians must constantly defend

⁴ Kloppenborg *et al*, 99; Wilson, *Studies in Gos. Thom.*, 25; Davies, *Gospel of Thomas and Christian Wisdom*, 23-33, argues that *Thomas* is not gnostic at all.

⁵ Kloppenborg *et al*, 93, 99; Davies, *Gospel of Thomas and Christian Wisdom*, 23-7, 60-1; Davies, "Christology and Protology," 679-82, draws links with Hellenistic Jewish writers as Philo and Aristobulus.

⁶ Kloppenborg *et al*, 106-9; Davies, *Gospel of Thomas and Christian Wisdom*, 106-16.

⁷ Davies, "Christology and Protology," 682.

⁸ See Patterson, *Gospel of Thomas*, 121-6, for a description of his form-critical method.

themselves.⁹ Consequently, the gospel urges its audience to be, or to become "passers-by" (*Gos. Thom.* 42), a phrase which Patterson interprets as meaning "become itinerants."¹⁰ These wanderers are instructed to walk about the countryside, healing the sick and eating whatever is served to them (*Gos. Thom.* 14.4).¹¹ As further examples of *Thomas'* anticosmic stance, Patterson highlights those sayings which direct the listener to replace his or her original family ties with bonds based upon a common code of conduct,¹² to divest oneself of all one's assets,¹³ and to spurn conventional economic activities.¹⁴ *Thomas* also rejects the traditional religious disciplines of fasting, prayer and alms giving, as well as dietary and other purity regulations. Even the venerable traditions of the prophets are depicted as part of a dead past.¹⁵

Patterson notes that there is very little material in the *Gospel of Thomas* that provides for any sort of community structure or organization. What the Thomas Christians value most highly is not community but the state of being alone (*Gos. Thom.* 49, 16, 75, 30),¹⁶ a radical lifestyle that is open to men, and to women who "become male" (*Gos. Thom.* 114). These female itinerants, Patterson suggests, may have been expected to crop their hair, wear male clothing, and to diminish or eliminate their bodily characteristics and functions through severe emaciation.¹⁷ When the disciples do ask Jesus who will be their leader, they are instructed that, "No matter where you are, you are to go to James the Just for whose sake heaven and earth came into being" (*Gos. Thom.* 12). Here too is confirmation

⁹ Ibid, 126-8; for an alternative view, see Davies, "Christology and Protology," 664-74, who argues that *Thomas* presents a "dualism of perspectives" (p.673) in which a contrast is made not between this world and another, but "this world as apprehended properly with this world not apprehended properly" (p.671).

¹⁰ Ibid, 128-31.

¹¹ Ibid, 131-2, 137.

¹² Ibid, 134-5.

¹³ Ibid, 137-8.

¹⁴ Ibid, 140-6.

¹⁵ Ibid, 147-8.

¹⁶ Ibid, 152-3.

¹⁷ Ibid, 153-5.

that the Thomas Christians are a dispersed movement of wanderers who must "go" somewhere else for direction. While this saying provides for a central figure of authority, as Patterson indicates, the manner and extent of that authority are not specified.¹⁸

The *Gospel of Thomas*, thus, emerges from and reflects the concerns of a scattered and loosely structured movement of socially radical itinerants who look first to James for leadership. In the Greco-Roman world where leadership and authority derived primarily from ascribed personal characteristics such as gender, age, lineage or status,¹⁹ James might appear to be the "natural," i.e. customary and traditional, choice to succeed Jesus. He is the eldest "blood relative" of Jesus, sharing with him a common lineage.²⁰ *Thomas*, however, calls for the rejection of original family bonds. James' kinship ties with Jesus, therefore, would probably not have been the determinative factor for his prominence among the Thomas Christians. Indeed, *Thomas* makes no mention of James' relationship with Jesus, highlighting instead his status as the "just" or "righteous" one who epitomizes a proper attitude and relationship with God. The statement that "heaven and earth came into being" for the sake of James is a rather astonishing declaration, pointing to a perception of James as a person singularly favoured by God. Although this is precious little evidence on which to base an assessment, it might be possible to characterize James as a charismatic figure who was regarded as favoured or gifted because of his exceptional achievement and reputation for "righteousness," whatever the specifics of that might have entailed.

James is not, however, the only leadership figure in the *Gospel of Thomas*. In Saying 13, Jesus asks his disciples to compare him to someone and to describe whom he is like. Simon Peter replies that Jesus is like a "righteous angel" or a "righteous messenger," while Matthew identifies him as a "wise philosopher" or a "wise lover of wisdom." Thomas tells his "master" that he is incapable of saying whom Jesus is like. That this is the correct answer is indicated by Jesus response. He tells Thomas:

¹⁸ Ibid, 151.

¹⁹ Above, pages 24-5.

²⁰ See Johannes Weiss, *Earliest Christianity: A History of the Period A.D. 30-150*, Volume II, (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1957) 715-9, who argues for a dynastic succession in the Jerusalem church.

I am not your master. Because you have drunk, you have become intoxicated from the bubbling spring which I have measured out (*Gos. Thom.* 13.5).

Jesus then withdraws with Thomas and privately tells him three things, which Thomas later refuses to share with Peter and Matthew. Thomas asserts that if he were to repeat what Jesus said they will stone him, and in the process they themselves will be destroyed. This passage suggests a controversy or debate about leadership and authority involving three issues: (1) the comparative status and authority of Peter, Matthew and Thomas, (2) the basis of Thomas' superiority, and (3) the nature of the information he is given by Jesus.

Saying 13 is clearly a polemical text which seems to offer an alternative version of the incident at Caesarea Philippi.²¹ In Matthew's account (16:13-20) when Jesus asks his disciples to declare who they think he is, Peter responds with his famous confession that results in his elevation to the status of chief scribe of Christ's ἐκκλησία. Here it is Thomas who answers correctly and who is consequently chosen by Jesus for a special role, in pointed contrast to both Peter and Matthew. The nature of the question and answer suggest that *Thomas* is attacking not only the status and prominence of these historical figures among Christians, but also their conceptions of Jesus. Certainly the association of Matthew with a view of Jesus as a "wise lover of wisdom" hits pretty close to home. The gospel attributed to Matthew does, indeed, depict Jesus as a learned and wise teacher, idealizes Peter as the paradigmatic trained and inspired scribal leader, and displays a marked suspicion and hostility toward wandering charismatics. Matthew himself appears to have been a member of a scribal circle. *Thomas'* attitude toward Peter and Matthew indicates that there was rivalry between Thomas Christians and others who appealed to Peter and/or Matthew to legitimate their authority and their understanding of Jesus and his message.²²

The *Gospel of Thomas* contains other indications of controversy over leadership and authority. Saying 3 contains a polemic against "those who lead you," and who insist that the kingdom is to be found in the sky or in the sea. In Saying 50 the Thomas Christians are counselled on how to respond to the questions asked by an unspecified "they," who are probably intended to be Christian

²¹ Turner and Montefiore, 84-5.

²² Patterson, *Gospel of Thomas*, 207, argues that *Thomas* is also attacking the gospels that stand in the Petrine (Mark) and Matthean (Matthew) traditions.

"leaders who appeal to the tradition of the disciples."²³ What this tradition of the disciples contains may be indicated in the three sayings that follow. In these "disciples" question Jesus about eschatological expectations (*Gos. Thom.* 51), the relevance of the Israelite prophets (*Gos. Thom.* 52), and the benefits of circumcision (*Gos. Thom.* 53). In each of these instances, Jesus' critical response indicates that these "disciples" lack a correct understanding of these matters. Indeed, throughout the *Gospel of Thomas*, the disciples are presented as examples of people who misunderstand Jesus. If Davies' interpretation of Saying 21 is correct, then the compiler is putting forward the view that the "disciples are to be regarded as thieves" of Jesus' message:

substituting for it false conceptions of Jesus (saying 13) and misleading anticipation of a kingdom to arrive in the future (sayings 18, 113), a kingdom supposedly located now in the heavens or across the sea (saying 3).²⁴

Finally, the criticism of the Pharisees and scribes who "have taken the keys of Knowledge and hidden them" (*Gos. Thom.* 39) could be applied easily enough to church leaders who seek to validate their authority by appealing to the traditions of historical disciples like Peter and Matthew.²⁵ All this adds up to a picture of conflict and rivalry in which the compilers of the *Gospel of Thomas* assert that these figures cannot offer Christians what Thomas and his followers can.

What distinguishes Thomas from Peter and Matthew in Saying 13 is that Thomas does not offer any particular description of Jesus, indeed Thomas claims that he is incapable of doing so, and not surprisingly the gospel attributed to him has little interest in christology.²⁶ Jesus affirms Thomas' position and declares that he is not his master (*Gos. Thom.* 13.5). Thomas is not subordinate to, and may in fact be equivalent to Jesus, apparently because he has "drunk" and "become intoxicated." These last two terms may serve as metaphors for some sort of ecstatic or visionary experience. As a result of this condition Thomas is given access to things which are hidden from the other disciples. This phenomenon of "intoxicated" access to divine knowledge resembles what in the ancient world

²³ Davies, "Christology and Protology," 670.

²⁴ Ibid, 678.

²⁵ Turner and Montefiore, 85.

²⁶ Davies, "Christology and Protology," 674, *Thomas* is concerned about Jesus' message about the kingdom of God and not Jesus' message about Jesus in marked contrast to John's gospel for example.

was understood as "natural divination," arising from the direct possession or inspiration of the diviner by the deity,²⁷ and appears to be the equivalent of spirit possession as experienced in other Christian circles.²⁸ Through this experience the Thomas Christian receives hidden information which he or she then passes on, just as Thomas himself records for posterity the secret sayings revealed to him.

In the *Gospel of Thomas*, the character of Thomas epitomizes the ideal authority figure, an "intoxicated," i.e. Jesus-possessed, mediator of divine secrets. Thomas represents the socially radical wandering *charismatic broker* whose personal endowments and/or achievements enable him or her to mediate divine power and knowledge through healing and the teaching of esoteric wisdom.²⁹ We have seen similar figures in all of the texts examined in this historical survey of early Syrian Christian movements. In Matthew itinerant charismatics are marginal figures, regarded with suspicion and hostility because of their conduct, and are denied any meaningful arena of leadership and authority in the Matthean community. While the *Didache* does allow wandering charismatics to assume official positions within its circle of churches, their conduct is first subjected to a rigorous examination. Given the *Didache's* explicit instructions concerning fasting, prayers, and eating, it seems unlikely that a Thomas Christian who refuses to fast or pray, and has no scruples about what he or she eats, would pass muster. Even if a Thomas Christian's peculiar habits could be passed off as one of those "worldly mysteries of the church," he or she would be unable to teach these things to others (*Did.* 11.11) which is surely what the Thomas Christian expects to do. Although Thomas Christians were probably not the only charismatic wanderers in Matthew's or the *Didache's* environment, they would certainly be included with those whom these Christian writers were trying to keep out of their churches.

One aspect of the Thomas Christians suggests that they may have been the forerunners of, if not the actual, charismatic rivals of the Johannine writers. Thomas' "intoxication" means that Jesus

²⁷ Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity*, 23, in contrast to "technical divination" which depends upon acquired knowledge, training and skill in interpreting signs, sacrifices, dreams, omens, and the like.

²⁸ Davies, "Christology and Protology," 675, asserts on the basis of a parallel concept in John 7:37b-39a, that the motif of drinking from Jesus refers to the reception of the Holy Spirit and that Thomas receives both Spirit and words of wisdom from Jesus.

²⁹ Above, pages 45-50.

is no longer his master (*Gos. Thom.* 13.5). These charismatics are not subordinate to Jesus, but in fact claim to enjoy both parity and identity with Jesus. This is made explicit in Saying 108 where Jesus says,

He who will drink from my mouth will become like me. I myself shall become he, and the things that are hidden will be revealed to him.

The Thomas Christian is, like Jesus, an agent of revelation,³⁰ and even more importantly is equivalent to or identified with Jesus.³¹ Even the name of the gospel's hero, Thomas, points to this sense of identity, once we realize that he is Jesus' "twin" not because of birth,³² but because he is possessed by Jesus. It is just this sort of parity with Jesus on the part of spirit-possessed disciples that the Johannine evangelist seeks to counter in the first farewell discourse (John 13:31-14:26).³³ Similarly, the charismatic rivals of the writer of 1 John refuse to acknowledge Jesus' uniqueness, apparently claiming for themselves the same status they attribute to Jesus.³⁴ Unfortunately, it is beyond the scope of the present work to do more than suggest a possible relationship between the charismatic rivals of the Johannine writers and the Thomas Christians, thereby pointing to a potentially fruitful avenue of future research.³⁵

It is quite likely, therefore, that in the *Gospel of Thomas* we meet the very sort of charismatic wanderers whose authority and influence a number of early Christian writers were seeking, for different reasons, to control and/or eliminate. The references to itinerant charismatics as "ravenous wolves" (Matt. 7:15), "liars" (1 John 2:4, 22), "antichrists" (1 John 2:18, 22), and "children of the devil" (1 John 3:10) point to the level of animosity they aroused. The hostility, and even potential violence of the situation is addressed explicitly in Saying 13. Thomas refuses to share what Jesus has

³⁰ Patterson, *Gospel of Thomas*, 169-70.

³¹ Davies, "Christology and Protology," 675-6.

³² See Kloppenborg *et al.*, 90-1, on various theories about the identity of Thomas as Jesus' twin brother.

³³ See discussion of Woll's thesis, 104-6 above.

³⁴ von Wahlde, 145ff; Grayston, 18-26; Painter, "'Opponents' in 1 John," 66-7; Painter, *Quest for the Messiah*, 396-8.

³⁵ A cursory comparison of von Wahlde's portrait of the adversaries (pp. 138-98) with Davies portrait of the Thomas Christians in "Christology and Protology," is particularly suggestive.

revealed to him because Peter and Matthew would respond by stoning him, and in doing so would be destroyed themselves (*Gos. Thom.* 13.6-8). *Thomas*, thus acknowledges that its message may be offensive, perhaps even blasphemous,³⁶ in the ears of other Christians, even rousing them to violent actions. Yet, it is claimed that the power of these words is such that any attempt to punish or harm the speaker will turn out to be self-destructive.

The text reflects a context in which the decision to grant or deny hospitality to charismatic wanderers is made by local church patrons and officials on the basis of testing and examining the itinerant's conformity to social customs (eg. *Matt.* 7:15-21; *Did.* 11.1-12) and/or to specific Christian teachings (2 *John* 7-10). In such a situation Thomas Christians are advised to keep their mouths shut in order to protect themselves from the hostility and potential violence of their would-be hosts. Thomas' refusal to share his special knowledge is not just a strategy of self-defense; however, it is also intended to protect the uncomprehending disciples. The words which are revealed to him are not only scandalous and/or blasphemous, they are immensely powerful, causing the self-destruction of anyone who seeks to harm Thomas. In the interests of securing the safety of both the Thomas Christian and his or her potential audience, that special knowledge must be kept secret. They are "mysteries" that Jesus reveals only to those who are worthy (*Gos. Thom.* 62; cf *Gos. Thom.* 93). Those who guard and mediate the interpretation of the secret sayings of Jesus hold the key to life and death (*Gos. Thom.* 1). This secrecy also functions to undergird the authority of the Thomas Christians, and to enhance the appeal of their message by implying that the teachings of local church leaders were in some way deficient.³⁷

In Saying 13, Thomas is held up as possessing a superior claim to status and authority, along with a more authentic conception of Jesus and his message. He epitomizes the ideal Thomas Christian, a charismatic broker who becomes like Jesus incarnating the "light which is above them all" (*Gos. Thom.* 77), and revealing how persons may find within themselves this illuminating light (*Gos. Thom.* 24).³⁸ Thomas is contrasted with Peter and Matthew who are shut out and relegated to

³⁶ Gärtner, 120; Davies, "Christology and Protology," 676.

³⁷ Patterson, *Gospel of Thomas*, 207.

³⁸ Davies, "Christology and Protology, 679.

the sidelines.³⁹ These characters, together with the disciples in sayings 50-53, may represent Christian community leaders who appeal to the disciples to legitimate their positions and their right to exercise authority in the churches. From *Thomas'* perspective their conceptions of Jesus are inadequate,⁴⁰ based on the misunderstandings of characters who are at best marginal in relation to Jesus, and at worst thieves (*Gos. Thom.* 21) who have deliberately hidden the keys of knowledge (*Gos. Thom.* 39).

The *Gospel of Thomas* speaks from the perspective of a group of socially radical wanderers whose activities included healing and imparting "secret sayings" of Jesus. Having rejected customary family and gender roles, Thomas Christians claim no authority on the basis of ascribed personal characteristics such as age, gender, lineage, or status. Their rejection of conventional economic activities and their commitment to a life of itinerancy precludes the acquisition of an impersonal authority deriving from the holding of an office. The Thomas Christian's claim to prominence and authority is his or her ecstatic identification with Jesus. This personal endowment enables him or her to act as a charismatic broker of divine knowledge. A veil of secrecy and mystery, of power and danger is drawn around the words of the Thomas Christian thus enhancing his or her authority in a situation where charismatic wanderers must compete with other Christian leaders.

Did Ignatius know or have any contacts with Thomas Christians? Schoedel identifies three passages in the Syrian bishop's letters which have parallels in the *Gospel of Thomas*.⁴¹ They do not constitute conclusive evidence of contact, much less literary dependency, as other sources are also possible.⁴² Ignatius' instructions to the Christians of Ephesus, however, may give us a clue as to how he might have responded to such people had he known them. The Syrian bishop concludes his exhortations concerning obedience to congregational leaders by commending the good order of the Ephesian church. Their bishop, Onesimus, assures him that no αἰρεσις dwells among them, and they do not even listen to anyone who does not speak about Jesus Christ in truth (*Eph.* 6.2). These

³⁹ Ibid, 116; Kloppenborg *et al*, 89-90.

⁴⁰ Davies, "Christology and Protology," 675, and note 21.

⁴¹ *Eph.* 5.2//*Gos. Thom.* 30 (cf. Matt. 18:19-20); *Rom.* 6.2//*Gos. Thom.* 24; *Smyr.* 4.2//*Gos. Thom.* 82; One could also add *Pol.* 2.2//*Gos. Thom.* 39 (cf. Matt. 10:16).

⁴² Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 55-6, note 11; 183, note 12; 231.

commendations pave the way for Ignatius to turn to another topic, warning his readers of persons who deceitfully "carry here and there the name," doing things which are unworthy of God (*Eph.* 7.1). It seems that these persons are themselves Christians and move about from place to place,⁴³ they are wanderers. Ignatius singles out their deeds, without elaborating what they might be, as being particularly objectionable and implies that they do not speak about Jesus Christ in truth, again without giving any specifics. The Syrian bishop urges his readers to turn away or shun these persons who are like incurably mad dogs that bite without warning (*Eph.* 7.1).

In the next sentence, Ignatius describes Jesus Christ as "both fleshly and spiritual, born and unborn, God in humanity, true life in death, both from Mary and from God, first subject to suffering and then not subject to suffering" (*Eph.* 7.2). This obviously represents what he considers to be an accurate statement about the person of Jesus. Although such a statement may point to those areas in which he thinks the teaching of the wanderers is deficient, none of them tell us what the itinerants actually believed of Christ nor do they indicate in what respects their teaching differed from that of Ignatius. At most his remarks might suggest that he suspects them of docetic views.⁴⁴

Ignatius notes that the Ephesian Christians have not been deceived by these people because they are "entirely of God," living in a godly way without any strife becoming fixed among them (*Eph.* 8.1). This praise is followed by the assertion:

Fleshly people cannot do spiritual things, nor yet spiritual people fleshly things; just as faith cannot do things of faithlessness, nor yet faithlessness the things of faith. But even that which you do according to the flesh is a spiritual thing, for you do all things in Jesus Christ (*Eph.* 8.2).

This statement begins with what appears to be a Pauline distinction between fleshly and spiritual people (e.g. 1 Cor. 2:14-15), but concludes with what has been described as "an almost conscious correction of the Pauline antithesis."⁴⁵ The context of these remarks, appearing as they do in the midst of warnings about wanderers, suggests that they may be intended to correct views about these

⁴³ Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 59; Grant, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 38, identifies them as heretics who wander about.

⁴⁴ Many scholars see in these statements a definite anti-docetic thrust. See Lightfoot, 48; Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 61, 87; Trevett, *Ignatius and His Opponents*, 251, 258.

⁴⁵ Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 64.

very persons. The implication seems to be that the wanderers claim to be, or may be regarded by some, as πνευματικοί, spiritual people, a view which Ignatius rejects.⁴⁶

Ignatius writes in 9.1 that he has learned of some persons "with evil teaching," who were present and active in the city of Ephesus, but who have moved on. He praises the Ephesian Christians for not allowing these persons to "sow" among them, having stopped their ears so that they would not receive their evil teachings. These itinerant teachers are probably the same charismatic wanderers referred to in the previous passages.⁴⁷ Another possible reference to these itinerants may be found in 16.1-2 where Ignatius warns his readers not to be lead astray by the evil teaching of those who destroy houses or families.⁴⁸ Such teachers are, in Ignatius' opinion, ῥυπαροί, unclean, defiled, or perhaps sordidly avaricious. The renunciation of family and household bonds is a characteristic not only of Syrian Christian wanderers as we have seen in Matthew and the *Gospel of Thomas*, it also appears to be advocated by Pauline itinerants in Asia Minor well into the 2nd century, as is evident from the Pastoral Epistles (2 Tim. 3:6-7) and the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*.⁴⁹

Ignatius' comments, then, indicate that wandering charismatics are active in the vicinity of Ephesus. His language clearly conveys his animosity towards these persons. He accuses them of greed and/or impurity, and implies that they say things about Jesus which are untrue. The content of their christological position is not, however, recoverable from Ignatius' remarks. He may suspect them of docetic views, but does not explicitly say so probably because he did not know what their actual beliefs were. Ignatius commends his readers for not listening to these wanderers, and encourages them to avoid them altogether. The Ephesians' proper response to the itinerants is, he

⁴⁶ Trevett, *Ignatius and His Opponents*, 252, sees here a direct attack on docetics who claim to be particularly spiritual people. Corwin, 55, suggests that the wandering teachers may have been advocating a spiritualized understanding of Christ.

⁴⁷ Lightfoot, 52.

⁴⁸ Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 79, suggests that because the warning is based on the Pauline text that "evil-doers (among whom adulterers figure prominently) 'will not inherit the kingdom of God' (1 Cor. 6:9)," the corruption of homes must refer to adultery. Paul's list of evil-doers, however, contains a lot more than just adulterers. In addition, Ignatius refers to "evil teaching" that corrupts (*Eph.* 16.2). It seems more likely that this teaching would involve setting aside family, marriage, etc.

⁴⁹ For a detailed discussion see Dennis Ronald MacDonald, *The Legend and the Apostle. The Battle for Paul in Story and Canon*, (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1983); Kraemer, *Her Share of the Blessings*, 150-6.

consequence of the orderliness and lack of internal strife which he has been assured is characteristic of their community. Without implying any connections between the itinerant teachers active in Asia Minor and the Thomas Christians of Syria, it is possible to suggest that Ignatius' response to the former is a fair indicator of how he would have regarded the latter. It is not likely that the Syrian bishop would have been welcoming of, or sympathetic to, the ideals of the Thomas Christians.

3.5 Summary of Leadership and Authority in Early Syrian Christian Communities

The aim of this section has been to develop a description of the leadership models which were characteristic of Syrian Christianity at the end of the 1st and the beginning of the 2nd centuries. To do this we examined four sets of documents that originate in, or are associated with Syria, and which can be dated between the years 80-140 CE. These writings include the Gospel of Matthew, the *Didache*, the Epistles and Gospel of John, and the *Gospel of Thomas*. Leadership issues in each of these texts were examined in light of an *etic* model, i.e. Weber's typology of authority, to determine the kinds of leaders recommended and types of authority they represented. Each text was also evaluated in terms of an *emic* model, i.e. patronage, in order to assess the way in which Greco-Roman cultural values and practices were reflected in and/or responded to by these early Christian writers.

Matthew appears to represent a Hellenized urban, Jewish-Christian church of the late 1st century (ca. 80-90) which is in the process of defining itself over against its Jewish parent community. The leaders of Matthew's community appear to be literate and educated scribes, skilled in the interpretation of the Hebrew scriptures and Jesus' teachings which together form the basis of the community's customs and rules. These scribes act collegially in the resolution of disputes between church members. One of their number functions as their spokesman and representative. This "chief scribe," epitomized by Peter is invested with the power to interpret and apply Jesus' teachings, and is chosen on the basis of special insight from God, which complements his acquired scribal skills. His authority derives from this combination of personal charisma and occupational competence, and is ultimately validated by the act of designation by the previous leader. Matthew appears to be arguing for a routinized charismatic leadership of divinely inspired scribes. Although Matthew's ideal scribal leader is to a large degree patterned after Jewish models, his rejection of the use of honorific titles

such as father, rabbi, or master (23:8-9), implies a rejection of the patron-client relationships of dependency which such titles signify. The Matthean community is to be guided by an egalitarian ethos in which all members are equally children of one divine father and patron, and students of one teacher and master, Jesus. While patriarchal and patron relations between community members are rejected, they continue to define the relationship of God and humans.

The Matthean scribes are not, however, without competitors. The gospel writer knows of prophets who engage in itinerant ministries of prophesy, exorcism, healing and miracle working. Although they are sent by Jesus (23:34), prophets are treated with ambivalence and suspicion. Their potential authority is undermined by calling into question their integrity, and by insisting that their legitimacy depends not on their personal achievements and gifts, but on their adherence to Matthean norms and customs. Prophets are thus subordinated to the authority of local scribal leaders. The gospel writer envisions prophets being commissioned and sent out "in the name of a disciple" (10:42), i.e. by local community leaders. There appears to be little room for prophets to assume leadership positions within the Matthean community. Achieved personal, or charismatic authority is regarded as a potential threat which must be restricted and controlled by norms and customs, and by those who establish and maintain them. This vision of an itinerant charismatic mission is overshadowed and eclipsed by the gospel's final instruction to disciple and teach all nations. Scribal activities, rather than prophetic ones, are the focus of the Matthean community's future ministry and mission in the world.

The *Didache* is a rudimentary church order drawn up in the final decade of the 1st century for a mixed Jewish-Gentile circle of churches whose members are to be distinct from their Jewish and pagan neighbours. The Didachist invokes the authority of the "apostles," who are regarded as the historical founders of the community and its way of life, in order to legitimate the instructions set out in the text. These are addressed to the heads of leading households in Christian congregations, who are the equivalent of "elders" in many Jewish and Hellenistic communities. The traditional status and authority of such householders is institutionalized by making them responsible for implementing the instructions of the Didachist, including the evaluation of itinerant ministers and the selection of congregational officials. Bishops and deacons appear to be selected from the ranks of householders, making them very much like other religious officials in the Greco-Roman world whose offices are related to their capacity to act as patrons, and who are simultaneously household, civil and religious

authorities. The bishops and deacons of the *Didache* thus combine elements of ascribed personal, or traditional authority with the acquired impersonal authority of holding office.

The *Didache* strengthens the leadership and authority of householders who face competition from itinerant apostles, teachers, and prophets. Apostles appear to be persons in transit, acting as emissaries on behalf of Christian communities. By placing limitations on the hospitality shown to these apostles, the Didachist effectively eliminates them as rivals for authority. Teachers whose teaching conforms to and augments the *Teaching of the Apostles* may settle permanently in the community. As community leaders their authority is primarily occupational or official deriving from their knowledge and competence as teachers. The Didachist urges his readers to subject prophets who speak "in spirit" to a rigorous assessment of their personal conduct. Their extraordinary capacity to directly mediate spiritual or divine information marks these prophets out as *charismatic brokers*. According to the Didachist's instructions, the personal charisma, i.e. gifts or achievements, of the prophet must be augmented by the right conduct and behaviour. Genuine prophets are recognizable as those who use their prophetic gifts selflessly in the service of others, practice what they preach, and who do not teach others to imitate the "mysteries" demanded by their vocations. This process of testing and certifying prophets provides a mechanism whereby these charismatic brokers can be permanently integrated into the life of communities as high priests. The role of resident prophet/high priest most closely resembles a "charismatic office" in which rational rules of selection include the requirement of particular personal gifts or charisma on the part of the candidate.

The Didachist's "pastoral genius" is perhaps best epitomized by this attempt to institutionalize both traditional and charismatic types of authority. The traditional authority of householders and patrons is strengthened by their appointment to the offices of bishops and deacons, while the charismatic authority of prophets is given an institutional form in the role of resident prophet/high priest. Charismatic authority does not disappear, rather an attempt is made to control the power of charisma and harness it in the interests of local community life. Although this is often described as a transitional stage in the development of church order and structure, the reality is that this compromise did not vanish at the end of the 1st century. In the resident prophets of the *Didache* we may see the forerunner of the "holy man" who played an important role alongside church officials for many centuries in the Christian east.

for many centuries in the Christian east.

The Johannine Epistles and Gospel are closely associated with Syrian Christian traditions, emerging from a group with Palestinian and Syrian roots part of which may have migrated to Asia Minor. These documents were produced in the last decade of the 1st century or the first decade of the 2nd. Each of the Johannine writers, the Elder, the author of 1 John and the evangelist, acts as the spokesman for a group functioning as communicators of remembered and revealed information from and about Jesus (2 John 1-2; 1 John 1:1-4; John 21:24). Like the Johannine disciples these groups serve as brokers between their earthly audiences and the divine Father and Son. In each document charismatic claims reinforce and are reinforced by "tradition." Although the Elder's authority may in part arise from his age or seniority, for the most part the Johannine writers appear to be spirit-endowed prophets, teachers and/or scribes engaged in the creation and articulation of that body of teaching and thought which they refer to as the words or commandments of Jesus. They function as charismatic brokers in relation to their audiences.

These charismatic tradition makers find themselves in conflict on a number of fronts. The Elder's letters (3 and 2 John) reflect a situation in which powerful householders acting as patrons can, and do, refuse hospitality to wandering ministers and to emissaries from other congregations. The Elder responds by arguing that mutual "love," i.e. hospitality, is mandated by the commandment that these communities have had from their inception. At the same time he warns his readers to test all visitors and to refuse hospitality to anyone whose teaching deviates from the διδαχή τοῦ χριστοῦ. In a situation of charismatic competition, the author of 1 John seeks to persuade his readers that he speaks for the true and authentic representatives and interpreters of the Johannine tradition. Spirit possession alone is not a sign of a true prophet, but must be accompanied by the specific christological affirmation that Jesus is the Christ and that he has come in the flesh. The evangelist seeks to resolve the problem of charismatic rivalry by recalling in the first farewell discourse the words of Jesus that define the Paraclete's activity as the recollection and interpretation of Jesus' words.

The nature of leadership and authority in the Johannine community is epitomized in the gospel by the characters of the Beloved Disciple and Peter. The Beloved Disciple might be best characterized as a *charismatic broker* providing access to Jesus, and sharing with others his

exceptional insights and knowledge. His intimate relationship with Jesus parallels Jesus' own relationship with God. As the alleged witness behind the Fourth Gospel, the Beloved Disciple is the ideal Paraclete-empowered disciple, recalling and interpreting the words of Jesus. He is also Jesus' hand-picked successor and "adopted brother." Peter in the Fourth Gospel is in many ways the very opposite of the Beloved Disciple. He is not particularly intimate with Jesus nor does he have any special insights to offer. Peter acts as the spokesman for a particular group of disciples, and serves as an historical witness. He acknowledges the status of the Beloved Disciple by both seeking his assistance and acting upon his insights. Peter acquires the role of "shepherd," which necessitates loving Jesus, keeping his words and following him to a martyr's death, by the action of the Risen Lord who is present in the community as the Paraclete. Although Peter possesses no personal charisma, he may be described as a routinized charismatic leader selected through a visionary experience that is affirmed and legitimated by the charismatic Beloved Disciple.

The interaction of Peter and the Beloved Disciple in the Johannine gospel presents an interesting parallel, as well as a contrast, to the situation reflected in the *Didache*. The Beloved Disciple epitomizes the Johannine Paraclete-possessed prophet, the counterpart of the *Didache's* prophet speaking "in spirit." Peter represents the Johannine "pastoral" leader and is roughly equivalent to the householders who assume the offices of bishop and deacon in the *Didache*. Both texts seem to envision prophetic figures working alongside and together with non-charismatic leaders, and point to some tension between the two types of leadership. The Didachist must remind his readers not to despise bishops and deacons (*Did.* 15.2), suggesting that his readers may have preferred the leadership of prophets. John's story ends with the Beloved Disciple trailing along after Peter who asks what is to become of this charismatic character, suggesting that in the eyes of Johannine pastoral leaders the prophets were becoming redundant figures. The major difference between the two situations has to do with how the ideal leader is selected. In the Johannine context, Peter, a leader lacking personal charisma is selected on the basis of a visionary experience which is affirmed by the charismatic Beloved Disciple. Here the prophet legitimates the Risen Christ's choice for the pastoral office. The Didachist urges exactly the opposite. Prophets are to be examined and certified by non-charismatic community elders. In the *Didache* charisma is validated by a test administered by traditional leaders, while in the Johannine context the personal charisma of the

prophet establishes and legitimates the leadership of pastors.

The *Gospel of Thomas* appears to be a late 1st century Syrian collection of Jesus' sayings that emerges from a socially radical movement of itinerants who wander about healing and teaching about Jesus. They put aside normal family ties, material possessions and economic pursuits, as well as conventional religious practices such as fasting, prayer, almsgiving, and purity concerns. The Thomas Christians are called to explicitly reject the cultural institutions and assumptions of the Greco-Roman world. Although the *Gospel of Thomas* shows little interest in community structure or organization, it does provide for some leadership. James the Just is held up as a singularly favoured person to whom they may turn for leadership. The ideal wanderer, however, is epitomized by the character of Thomas, whose admission that he is unable to say who Jesus is becomes the basis of his special role. Thomas is the equal of Jesus, having "drunk" from Jesus and become "intoxicated" or possessed by Jesus' spirit. In this state Thomas is the recipient of hidden divine knowledge. The *Gospel of Thomas'* ideal leader is, therefore, a socially radical wandering *charismatic broker* whose personal spiritual endowments and/or achievements enable him or her to mediate divine power and knowledge through healing and the teaching of esoteric wisdom.

It is quite likely that the *Gospel of Thomas* provides us with a self-portrait of charismatic wanderers very much like those whose authority and influence the writers of Matthew, the *Didache*, and the Johannine texts are trying to control and/or eliminate. *Thomas* reflects rivalry with other Christian leaders, especially those who appeal to the authority of disciples like Peter and Matthew. These characters are presented as marginal figures and "thieves" who consistently misunderstand and misrepresent Jesus in order to hide the keys of knowledge. In a context of competition which includes hostility and violence, a veil of secrecy with suggestions of power and danger is attached to the teachings of the Thomas Christians, which serves to protect them and to enhance their appeal.

In late 1st and early 2nd century Syrian Christianity, then, we see a number of different kinds of leaders, representing different types of authority. Matthew provides us with a portrait of a learned and inspired scribe who combines acquired skill and competence with personal and routinized forms of charisma. The *Didache* provides for the charismatic office of prophet/high priest together with a routinized charismatic teaching office. Alongside these the *Didache* provides for traditional officers called bishops and deacons recruited from the community's leading householders. The Johannine

texts idealize and articulate the work of Paraclete-possessed prophets and tradition-makers who provide for pastoral leaders. These pastors may be considered routinized charismatics by virtue of a visionary or revelatory method of selection. The *Gospel of Thomas* asserts the superiority of socially radical charismatic wanderers who are possessed by and equal to Jesus.

All of these texts reflect and respond to the Greco-Roman institution of patronage in some way. The *Gospel of Thomas* is the most negative, explicitly rejecting and criticizing the family relations and economic activities in which patronage was embedded. Even Jesus denies that he is the master of his favoured follower, Thomas. Although the Johannine gospel is generally regarded as reflecting a radically egalitarian church structure, the text does in fact seek to impose a strict hierarchy of patron-broker-client relations. God is referred to as "Father" in the 4th gospel more than in any other,¹ Jesus is the only agent of access to him, while the Beloved Disciple functions as Jesus' favoured broker. Each of the Johannine writers is presented as the spokesman for a group which mediates access to God and Jesus. Matthew likewise conceives of the relationship between God, Jesus and the community in terms of patron-broker-client relations, but argues that within the community itself there are to be no fathers, teachers or masters. Although the Matthean church is to consist only of siblings who are all equally God's children, the instruction not to assume honorary titles suggests that this is an ideal imperfectly realized in practice. The *Didache* seems to be addressed to householders who in the normal course of their affairs would be actively engaged in patronage networks. The text seeks to strengthen their household authority by presenting them as "types of God" to their slaves (*Did.* 4.11), and to institutionalize the leadership and authority of householders and church patrons in the official roles of bishops and deacons.

These are the leadership models which were prevalent in the environment in which Ignatius of Antioch emerged as a church leader. Although there are indications that Ignatius knew, or had some contact with the traditions and teachings contained in all of these texts, he never refers explicitly to any of them. What Ignatius thought of these texts and the leadership models that they contain can only be inferred from comments and views expressed in the context of giving advice to

¹ God is described as "father" by Matthew 45 times (70.3% of all references to God), Mark 5 times (27.7% of all references to God), Luke 17 times (30.4% of all references to God) and in John 123 times (89.8% of all references to God).

churches in Asia Minor. I would like to suggest the following possible connections. In Ignatius' attempts to correct the views of the so-called "judaizers" of Philadelphia we might catch a glimpse of how he might have reacted to a group of Matthean scribes engrossed in the interpretation of Torah-according-to-Jesus. The Syrian bishop's vilification of people who "carry about the name" in his letter to Ephesus might similarly point to how he would have responded when confronted by wandering charismatics like the Thomas Christians or the Johannine schismatics. Ignatius' personal assumption of the role of a charismatic broker and prophet suggests that he may not have been opposed to the "true" prophets of the *Didache*, or to the Johannine charismatic tradition makers. His use of the prophetic role to legitimate the authority of bishops seems to imitate the Beloved Disciple's legitimation of Peter's pastoral role. Ignatius' conception of himself as a "shepherd" who willingly lays down his life, and of bishops in general as shepherds protecting their flocks from ravenous wolves sounds rather Johannine. Might Ignatius' threefold church order of bishop, elders and deacons represent some curious amalgamation of Johannine ideas with the sort of structure that is beginning to emerge in the *Didache*? It is in the Syrian bishop's letters that we must now seek an answer.

4.0 Leadership and Authority in the Letters of Ignatius

Questions about leadership and authority in the Ignatian correspondence revolve around two different, but related points: (1) the nature of the Syrian bishop's own authority, and (2) the nature and origins of the leadership and authority which he advocates. With respect to Ignatius' own authority, a number of scholars have described him as a prophetic figure exercising charismatic authority. This position will be reviewed and expanded to show how the Syrian bishop's charisma is related not only to his prophetic and visionary abilities, but also to his status as martyr-elect. Of particular importance for understanding Ignatius' authority is his apparently peculiar habit of "self-effacement," which is believed to arise from a sense of personal unworthiness or some other psychological disposition. It is my intention to show that the Syrian bishop's supposedly self-effacing statements are better understood as a culturally approved form of self-praise that points indirectly to Ignatius' personal claims to prominence and authority, all of which revolve around his status as a martyr-elect.

Each of Ignatius' letters, with the exception of the one to Rome, includes exhortations to obey local congregational leaders, some of whom are named and labelled as bishops, elders and deacons. Ignatius' arguments on behalf of bishops will be analyzed using both the *etic* and *emic* models set out in this paper. Ignatius' conception of the episcopal role replicates the patronage system which pervaded the Greco-Roman social world. He conceives of bishops functioning as brokers mediating God's and Christ's gifts and favours to the churches, within which episcopal leaders act as patrons in relation to believers. Ignatius is silent on the question of whether bishops were actually house-church patrons, being primarily concerned to legitimate the episcopal office. Weber's typology of authority will enable us to identify episcopal leaders as routinized charismatic officials who are to be obeyed because (1) they occupy the role or office of God's representative in the local church, and (2) they are chosen by the Holy Spirit for this position. The closest parallel is the Johannine pastor as epitomized by Peter in the 4th gospel. Bishops in the letters of Ignatius lead together with elders and deacons who seem to resemble the leaders of the communities addressed by the *Didache*.

4.1 The Personal Authority of Ignatius

The best evidence that Ignatius is regarded by his peers as an authority figure, with the right to direct and determine their actions and behaviour, are the efforts they make to meet with him and to carry out his requests. Messengers appear to have preceded Ignatius through Asia Minor alerting local Christians to his arrival in Smyrna (*Eph.* 1.2). The churches of Ephesus, Magnesia and Tralles send representatives to meet with him there. The Ephesians and Smyrnaeans cover the expenses of a deacon to accompany the Syrian bishop as far as Troas (*Eph.* 2.1). Messengers bearing news of events in Antioch follow Ignatius from Syria, finally catching up with him in Troas (*Phld.* 11.1; *Smyr.* 10.1). Other emissaries seem to have been sent to Rome directly from Syria to inform the Christians there of the bishop's impending arrival (*Rom.* 10.2), while another carries a letter written by Ignatius at Smyrna to Rome (*Rom.* 10.1). The Syrian bishop asks all the communities with which he has been in contact to send letters and/or personal envoys to Antioch to celebrate the establishment of "peace" in that church (*Phld.* 10; *Smyr.* 11.2-3; *Pol.* 8.1). These requests seem to have been carried out shortly after his departure from Philippi, along with the preservation and circulation of Ignatius' letters themselves (*Pol. Phil.* 13.1). All this activity points not only to a planned strategy to publicize Ignatius' concerns,¹ but also to his status and authority in the eyes of his supporters in Antioch and in Asia Minor.² But why does Ignatius merit all this attention?

The most obvious answer might be that Ignatius is a bishop from Antioch, the capital of the Roman province of Syria, and one of the leading cosmopolitan centres of the Roman empire.³ He is an important person from an important place. Yet it is often noted that he never calls upon his authority as a bishop when he exhorts and instructs his readers.⁴ Indeed, only in his letter to Rome does Ignatius explicitly describe himself as the bishop and shepherd of the church in Syria (*Rom.* 2.2, 9.1), elsewhere he refers to himself as the least and most unworthy member of the Syrian Christian

¹ Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 12.

² Maier, 158.

³ Meeks and Wilken, 1; Downey, *A History of Antioch*, 164.

⁴ Campenhausen, 103-4; Maier, 157f; Robert F. Stoops, Jr., "If I Suffer...Epistolary Authority in Ignatius of Antioch," *HTR* 80:2 (1987) 161-78, here 164.

community.⁵ In spite of Ignatius' reticence on this point, his visitors and his readers could not have been unmindful of his status as the leader of a church located in Antioch. The honours bestowed on him by his visitors are undoubtedly due, at least in part, to this aspect of Ignatius' person. The Syrian bishop does not need to make much of it, as his visitors and readers are hardly likely to forget.

There may be other reasons why Ignatius rarely invokes his "official" position in the church to support his assertions, requests and commands. His letters indicate that some Christians in Asia Minor do not think much of bishops, paying little or no attention to them.⁶ Among such Christians appeals to episcopal authority are hardly likely to be very effective. Those who do look to bishops for leadership might regard Ignatius as essentially the equivalent of an Onesimus (*Eph.* 1.3, 6.2), Damas (*Mag.* 2.1), Polycarp (*Pol.* Inscr.), and the like, who appear to be local leaders exercising authority and influence over the household-based groups that make up the church in a particular city.⁷ From their perspective, Ignatius' episcopal authority would be likewise limited to the context of the church in Antioch, and at the most might extend into the countryside immediately surrounding that city. He is a bishop only in relation to his own local Christian community, and cannot play *that* role in relation to the churches of Asia Minor. Although Ignatius' status as a bishop may get him a hearing in these communities, he needs more than this to be regarded as anything other than an interesting stranger passing through. And indeed the evidence strongly suggests that Ignatius not only claims other sorts of authority, but is actually regarded by his contemporaries as more than an episcopal leader from Syria. This bishop is also a prophet and a martyr-elect, both roles associated with achieved personal, or charismatic authority.

Streeter, Trevett and Maier all identify Ignatius as a prophet,⁸ primarily on the basis of the passage in *Philadelphians* 7.1-2 where the bishop describes how the Spirit made him cry out with the "voice of God." It was the Holy Spirit, and not Ignatius, who proclaimed, "Do nothing without the bishop." Although some Philadelphian Christians rejected this prophecy as staged, arising from

⁵ *Eph.* 21.2; *Mag.* 14.1; *Tral.* 13.1; *Smyr.* 11.1.

⁶ *Mag.* 4.1; See also *Eph.* 5.2-6.1; *Tral.* 2.2; *Phld.* 3.2, 7.1ff; *Smyr.* 8.1-9.1; *Pol.* 6.1.

⁷ Kenneth D. Mackenzie, *The Case for Episcopacy*, (London, UK: SPCK, 1929), 39.

⁸ Streeter, 152; Trevett, "Prophecy and Anti-episcopal Activity," 5; Maier, 162; Campenhausen, 104-6, admits that Ignatius feels himself to be a man of spirit, with a gift of prophecy, but oddly insists that Ignatius is no prophet.

advance information supplied to the Syrian bishop, it does in fact appear to conform to the expectations of prophetic speech as practiced in the ancient world.⁹ This is not the only evidence of Ignatius' prophetic activity. He promises to write more to the Ephesians about the divine plan if the Lord reveals anything to him (*Eph.* 20.1-2); his explication of the significance of the star that shone at Jesus' birth (*Eph.* 19.2-3) may be an example of the sort of thing he has in mind.¹⁰ The Syrian bishop asserts that he knows "heavenly things" which the Trallian Christians are not mature enough to receive (*Tral.* 4.1-5.2). He assures the Roman church that they can obey his written instructions concerning his martyrdom because there is "living and speaking water" in him, i.e. a prophetic spirit,¹¹ calling him to come to the Father (*Rom.* 7.2). Maier regards these passages as providing an "evident expression of charismatic authority."¹² We can, however, go further and assert that not only are Ignatius' prophecies, revelations, and knowledge of heavenly things signs of exceptional personal gifts or achievements, they also mark him out as a *charismatic broker*, a person particularly favoured by God and therefore able to act an intermediary between God and the Christian communities.

Closely connected with Ignatius' prophetic role is his status as a martyr-elect. His determination to die is authenticated by the Spirit, the "living and speaking water" which calls him (*Rom.* 7.2). That the status of prisoner condemned to death should be a basis of authority may at first appear somewhat peculiar. When we examine the dynamics of this process, however, we realize that as a convict in transit Ignatius is a liminal person, a person suspended between two socially defined states.¹³ He has been tried, convicted and labelled a deviant by the process of Roman justice and is on the way to being permanently removed from normal society. In the meantime the Syrian bishop is bound and chained, signs of his liminal status as a person condemned but not yet executed.¹⁴ For

⁹ Trevett, "Prophecy and Anti-Episcopal Activity, 6; Maier, 162; Aune, 290-3.

¹⁰ Maier, 161; Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 87.

¹¹ Maier, 162.

¹² *Ibid.*, 163.

¹³ Bruce J. Malina, "The Social World Implied in the Letters of the Christian Bishop-Martyr (named Ignatius of Antioch)," in Paul J. Achtemeier (ed), *SBL 1978 Seminar Papers*, (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1978) 71-119, p. 77.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 78.

Ignatius and many, if not most, Christians he encounters in transit to Rome, his condemnation and imprisonment are not part of a process of social degradation but of status elevation.¹⁵ His death will not signify the final destruction of the Syrian bishop, rather it will mark his attainment of God (*Eph.* 12.2), his entry into a post-mortem existence in the presence of the divine Father.¹⁶ His execution will complete and perfect his discipleship (*Eph.* 3.1, 1.2); it will affirm and sanctify his career, and confirm that he is a follower of the great apostles (*Eph.* 12.2).¹⁷

Ignatius' liminal status places him not only outside the boundaries of normal society, it places him to a certain extent beyond the boundaries of his Christian subculture as well. In the Christian interpretation of the situation the martyr-designate is no longer wholly of this world, hence its norms and conventions are no longer binding,¹⁸ and may even be scrutinized critically.¹⁹ It is precisely this aspect of the liminal position which is evoked by Ignatius to justify his otherwise presumptuous instructions to communities in which he has no personal status or role. The prisoner for Christ awaiting execution is, moreover, a person poised on the threshold of the heavenly and spiritual realm, and thus is especially open to communications from that invisible world.²⁰ Not only is the Syrian bishop's martyrdom justified by a prophetic call, Ignatius' prophetic abilities are enhanced by his liminal status. Prophet and martyr are mutually reinforcing roles²¹ played by the Syrian bishop.

As a prisoner for Christ, Ignatius exercises an authority which is closest to the charismatic

¹⁵ Ibid, 80.

¹⁶ Corwin, 37.

¹⁷ The expected effects of Ignatius' impending martyrdom are more thoroughly explored in his letters to the Romans, and in my unpublished paper, "Ignatius of Antioch: Deviant and Moral Crusader," 13-18.

¹⁸ Rosemary Rader, Breaking Boundaries: Male/Female Friendship in Early Christian Communities, (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1983) 44-61.

¹⁹ Malina, "The Social World..of the Bishop-Martyr," 80.

²⁰ Ibid, 79; Rader, 53, 57.

²¹ G. W. H. Lampe, "Martyrdom and Inspiration," in William Horbury and Brian McNeil (eds), Suffering and Martyrdom in the New Testament: Studies Presented to G. M. Styler by the Cambridge New Testament Seminar, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1981) 118-35, especially 119, 122-9.

type in that it is personal and achieved.²² The martyr-designate's authority in the Christian community is not traditional; it is not based on ascribed personal attributes such as age, gender, lineage or social status.²³ The Syrian bishop was not born a martyr, nor did he inherit the role. Although Ignatius occupies the office of bishop, he does not occupy a similar office of martyr; and hence, as a prisoner for Christ cannot be said to exercise acquired impersonal, or rational-legal authority.²⁴ The definitely dubious distinction of arrest, trial and conviction by the Roman justice system is interpreted by the Christian community as signalling an exceptional degree of personal loyalty to Christ.²⁵ In the liminal stage between condemnation and execution the Syrian bishop enjoys a special relationship with God which enhances his ability to function as a vehicle of spiritual and heavenly knowledge. These are the two factors which Ignatius and others (e.g. Pol. *Phil.* 1.1, 9.1) point to when they call attention to his status as a martyr-designate, and which form the basis of the authority he claims and which is granted to him. The martyr-elect, like the prophet, is a *charismatic broker* mediating between God and humanity on the basis of exceptional personal achievement.²⁶

One of the most interesting aspects of Ignatius' personal authority is its relationship to the phenomenon that scholars refer to as his "self-effacement," an example of which is contained in *Ephesians* 3.1.²⁷

I do not command you as if I am someone. For even if I am a prisoner in the name, I have not yet been completed in Jesus Christ. For now I have the beginning of discipleship and I speak to you as my fellow learners. For I need to be anointed by you with faith...

Remarks like these presuppose that the Syrian bishop's status as a prisoner for Christ is a source of

²² Maier, 161, seems to imply that the role of martyr-elect is a source of charismatic authority, but on pages 168-9 appears to see this role as analogous to an office which confers routinized charisma.

²³ Above, 24-5.

²⁴ Ibid, 24.

²⁵ Rader, 44.

²⁶ Above, 45-50.

²⁷ My translations are dependent on the Greek text of the Ignatian letters contained in Kirsopp Lake, *The Apostolic Fathers with an English Translation*, Volume I (London, UK: William Heinemann, Ltd/ Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1945) 166-277.

prestige and authority, but are commonly interpreted as signs of a "self-conscious refusal to base his authority on his own personal importance."²⁸ Ignatius' reluctance to claim his due is thought to reflect "in part" the conventional Greco-Roman attitude that disapproves of people who claim an importance that they do not have.²⁹ This and other statements where Ignatius refers to himself as a "lowly offering" (*Eph.* 8.1, 18.1, 21.1) and as the "least" of the Antiochene Christians (*Eph.* 21.1) are believed to be more than just examples of polite self-deprecation. They are thought to point to the Syrian bishop's sense of personal unworthiness,³⁰ an apparently perplexing aspect of Ignatius' self-presentation which has been noted and puzzled over by most modern scholars.

Presupposing a modern psychological view of the human person, scholars have sought to explain Ignatius' self-effacement as arising from his inner feelings and tensions. Hence for Streeter the Syrian bishop's comments mask a neurotic will to power.³¹ Corwin suggests that they point to Ignatius' sense of failure, his inability to heal the breach between different factions in the church at Antioch.³² Swartley³³ and Schoedel³⁴ propose a similar solution asserting that Ignatius' expressions of unworthiness arise from his sense of personal responsibility for the lack of concord and unity in Antioch. Maier notes that in these passages Ignatius may be employing rhetoric, so that "what appear to the modern reader as expressions of existential *angst*, neurosis...may have been intended for a quite different effect."³⁵ Unfortunately Maier does not follow up on his own suggestion, but argues that the Syrian bishop, like Paul before him, tries to separate his person which is unworthy, from his role and status which are the basis of his authority. Maier sees here a symptom of the tensions created by the routinization of charisma. He argues that for Ignatius, like Paul, charisma has come to reside in the

²⁸ Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 48-9.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 48.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 13-4.

³¹ Streeter, 168-71.

³² Corwin, 26-8.

³³ Willard M. Swartley, "The *Imitatio Christi* in the Ignatian Letters," *VC* 27 (1973) 81-103, especially 91-3.

³⁴ Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 13.

³⁵ Maier, 157.

role rather than the person.³⁶ I am not sure that Weber's theory of routinization of charisma was meant to be used in this way as a causal explanation for what appears to be a psychological, or as seems more likely, a rhetorical tendency.

The major problem with all of these scholarly views is that they assume that Ignatius is an introspective guilt-ridden individual articulating his inmost thoughts and feelings. It is much more likely, however, that our early 2nd century Syrian bishop is a dyadic, group oriented personality not much given to introspection and worrying about inner motivations.³⁷ Ignatius' apparently self-effacing comments are probably socially motivated and oriented, reflecting the interplay of two socio-cultural factors. (1) The Syrian bishop is an outsider, without personal status or role in the churches of Asia Minor, who presumes to address and advise these communities on very specific issues relating to their internal affairs. (2) Ignatius and his readers inhabit a social world governed by a strict code of honour in which any claim to enter the social space of another individual or group is interpreted as a challenge to their personal and collective honour. A challenge precipitates a situation in which each of the participants stands to win or lose, to be publicly honoured or shamed. Humiliation calls for revenge, paving the way for a cycle of hostility and violence. In honour-shame cultures, persons expend a great deal of effort avoiding and preventing the categorization of actions and events in the ultimate terms of honour and shame. People deliberately blur the definitions of any given situation through the use of indirect speech, equivocating, lying and concealing information. These are all culturally approved defensive strategies which create ambiguity and allow persons to interact without compromising their honour.³⁸ Ignatius' self-effacing statements are perhaps best regarded as such a

³⁶ Maier, 168-70.

³⁷ Malina, New Testament World, 65-73; Bruce J. Malina and Jerome H. Neyrey, "First Century Personality," in Neyrey (ed), The Social World of Luke-Acts, (1991) 67-96; Krister Stendahl, "The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West," HTR 56 (1963) 199-215; Georges Duby and Philippe Braunsstein, "The Emergence of the Individual," in Georges Duby (ed), A History of Private Life II. Revelations of the Medieval World, (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1988) 507-630.

³⁸ Michael Gilsenan, "Lying, Honor and Contradiction," in Bruce Kapferer (ed), Transaction and Meaning: Directions in the Anthropology of Exchange and Symbolic Behavior, (Philadelphia, PA: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1976) 191-219; Charles D. Piot, "Secrecy, Ambiguity and the Everyday in Kabre Culture," in American Anthropologist 95 (1993) 353-70; Juliet du Boulay, "Lies, Mockery and Family Integrity," in J.G. Peristiany, Mediterranean Family Structures, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 389-406; Jerome H. Neyrey, "Equivocation," in Pilch and Malina, Biblical Social Values, (1993) 59-63.

defensive strategy, enabling him to be heard as an authoritative speaker without impinging on the honour of the Christian communities and their leaders.

The aptness of such an interpretation of the Syrian bishop's "self-effacement" finds support in a work written by his contemporary, Plutarch (50-150 CE), and entitled *περὶ τοῦ ἐαυτὸν ἐπαινεῖν ἀνεπίφθονως*, "On Praising Oneself Inoffensively."³⁹ Plutarch begins his essay by declaring that talking about one's own importance or ability is universally regarded as offensive and odious.⁴⁰ Self-praise, he says, is shameless, unfair, and an invitation for envy and dishonourable flattery.⁴¹ Plutarch asserts that self-praises aims at gratifying ambition and an unseasonable appetite for fame.⁴² When such a person pits his own deeds and actions against those of others, he acts from envy and spite.⁴³ Yet there are occasions, Plutarch asserts, when a person may legitimately engage in self-praise. A man who is wronged by another, on trial, in danger, or struggling with adversity should boast and demonstrate to all that he is not oppressed by his circumstances, but maintains a lofty and dignified attitude and an aura of invincibility.⁴⁴ A man may also engage in self-praise, according to Plutarch, to put down his enemies, to check the pride of friends and fellow citizens, and/or to raise the confidence of friends and fellow citizens by providing an example of strength in times of fear and dejection.⁴⁵

Plutarch, nevertheless, advises the man compelled by circumstances into boasting to follow certain strategies that will make his self-praise less offensive to others. Plutarch suggests that a man's speech will seem less egotistical if he artistically inserts praise for his audience in remarks about himself. Rather than speaking directly about himself, a man might praise another who shares the same

³⁹ Text cited from *Plutarch's Moralia*, Volume 7 (LCL: 1984), 114-167.

⁴⁰ Plutarch, *Self-Praise* 1,539A (p. 114-5). Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 48, note 1, actually refers to this part of Plutarch's essay, but makes no further comparison of Ignatius' style with the suggestions of his Greco-Roman contemporary.

⁴¹ Plutarch, *Self-Praise* 1,539D (p.116-7).

⁴² Plutarch, *Self-Praise* 3,540A (pp.118-121).

⁴³ Plutarch, *Self-Praise* 3,540B (p.120-1).

⁴⁴ Plutarch, *Self-Praise* 4,540C-5,541C (p.120-7).

⁴⁵ Plutarch, *Self-Praise* 15,544D-16,545D (p.146-53).

pursuits, business and virtues, as Plutarch asserts, "so when one good man commends another he reminds hearers conscious of his merit of himself."⁴⁶ Similarly it is less offensive if a man refuses to take all the credit for his own accomplishments, but ascribes some of the honour to fortune and to the gods.⁴⁷ Plutarch advises the use of moderate language, suggesting that a man be content with claiming only to be a lover of philosophy who has made some progress, rather than titling himself wise.⁴⁸ Self-praise is less glaring, he insists, when it is balanced by references to one's faults and shortcomings, and by making clear that one's status and glory are hard won, the result of toil and danger.⁴⁹ Plutarch warns that a person ought to blush when praised and ought to check those who extol him too highly, never using the praise of others as an excuse to launch out in boasts.⁵⁰ Unguarded and uncontrolled self-praise will always be followed by censure from others, and will result in a bad reputation. Plutarch concludes his essay with the declaration that self-praise is appropriate only when it brings some great advantage to one's audience to to oneself.⁵¹

Here is the evidence needed to develop Maier's suggestion concerning the importance of rhetoric for understanding statements like those found in *Ephesians* 3.1. It is my contention that Ignatius' expressions of self-effacement closely follow the conventions of self-praise described by Plutarch. The Syrian bishop is a man compelled to engage in self-praise. As a man condemned to a gruesome death, he has to boast in order to show that he is strong and dignified in the face of danger and adversity. Ignatius does so, taking great care all the while not to offend the sensibilities of his Greco-Roman readers, or to challenge their honour. So skilfully does the Syrian bishop engage in the rhetoric of self-praise that most modern interpreters, poorly informed about the values and customs of social life in the ancient world, have mistaken his remarks for something else altogether.

Let us return to the example quoted above from *Ephesians* 3.1. Ignatius begins by

⁴⁶ Plutarch, *Self-Praise* 10,542D (p.134-5).

⁴⁷ Plutarch, *Self-Praise* 11,542E (p.134-7).

⁴⁸ Plutarch, *Self-Praise* 12,543E-F (p.140-3).

⁴⁹ Plutarch, *Self-Praise* 13,543F-14,544D (p.142-7).

⁵⁰ Plutarch, *Self-Praise* 21,547B (p.162-3).

⁵¹ Plutarch, *Self-Praise* 22,547F (p.166-7).

proclaiming that he is no one special, and in the next breath indicates precisely why his readers might indeed regard him as "someone:" he is a prisoner for Christ. He insists, however, that he has yet to be completed, his discipleship has only just begun. The Syrian bishop's language parallels precisely Plutarch's advice not to claim to be wise, but to admit to being a lover of philosophy who has made some progress. In a move of which Plutarch would surely have approved, Ignatius slips in a few words of praise for his audience by calling them his fellow-learners who have the ability to anoint him with faith, admonition, endurance and patience (*Eph.* 3.1). As a nobody the Syrian bishop cannot presume to command such a virtuous and praiseworthy group of Christians, yet "love" does not permit him to remain silent (3.2). So he embarks on a series of "exhortations" (3.2), personal requests which may well have been regarded as obligatory,⁵² concerning the advantages of obedience to their bishop (4.1-6.1) and avoiding wandering charismatics (6.2-9.1). The significance of *Ephesians* 3.1 is not only that it is a wonderful example of the Greco-Roman rhetoric of self-praise, it also functions as an opener for a clear instance of culturally approved equivocation, of saying one thing and doing another. "I cannot command you....I exhort you." Even more importantly, however, it points to the reason why Ignatius' readers should acknowledge him as a person of authority and commit themselves to following the instructions which he gives. The Syrian bishop's claim to authority is his status as a prisoner condemned to die by fighting with wild animals in the Roman arena because of his commitment to "the name" (1.1, 3.1).

The importance of this source of prestige and authority is highlighted in Ignatius' reminder that he shares this role with the apostle Paul. The Syrian bishop asserts,

I know who I am and to whom I write: I am condemned, you have been shown mercy; I am in danger, you have been strengthened. You are a highway for those slain for God, fellow-initiates of Paul, who was sanctified, who has been affirmed, worthy of blessing, in whose footsteps may I be found when I attain God, who in every letter remembers you in Christ Jesus (*Eph.* 12.1-2).

Three of the strategies suggested by Plutarch appear in this passage: praise for one's audience, focusing on one's own faults, and indirect self-praise by comparison with a well-known hero. Ignatius begins by artistically playing up the virtues of his readers by highlighting his own shortcomings. This antithesis is followed by effusive praise for a man whom the Syrian bishop believes is revered by the

⁵² Stoops, 169.

Ephesian church, and an expression of his desire to be seen as a follower of Paul. The passage closes with praise for his readers by reminding them how much the great apostle esteemed them.

The point of the entire passage is to draw a comparison between Ignatius and Paul. This passage is not an expression of Ignatius' sense of unworthiness, but is a culturally approved method of self-praise pointing to the Syrian bishop's claim to have the right to address and instruct the Ephesian church. Just as Paul was in the past a prisoner and in danger, so is the Syrian bishop in the present. Just as the apostle was "slain for God," sanctified, affirmed, and blessed, so Ignatius will be when he is martyred. Just as Paul wrote letters praising his fellow Christians, so does the Syrian bishop. What Ignatius highlights is the apostle's status as a martyr and his role as a giver of written instructions to the churches.⁵³ It is these two aspects of the apostle's career which Ignatius consciously seeks to emulate, aspiring in this way to have a similar degree of influence on the development of the churches. The Pauline example serves to legitimate Ignatius' project of using his own martyrdom as a channel for advancing particular issues of relevance to the churches.⁵⁴

Ignatius is less discreet in his letter to the church at Tralles which begins with the bold assertion that he is greeting the Christians of that city in "apostolic manner" (*Tral. inscr.*). This may have been the first or second letter written by the Syrian bishop⁵⁵ on his journey; hence this greeting may indicate a certain degree of experimentation on his part.⁵⁶ Be that as it may, the explicit assertion of engaging in apostolic discourse is a pretty audacious claim, implying that he wishes to be perceived as a follower or imitator of the apostles. The Syrian bishop's "apostolic" greeting is followed by a series of exhortations and instructions concerning the necessity of obedience to church leaders (*Tral. 2.1-3.2*). He concludes this section of the letter by informing his readers that he could write more vehemently about this topic but restrains himself out of love for them. Ignatius asserts,

⁵³ Stoops, 167-9, 177; For detailed discussions of Ignatius' conception of Paul see Martinus de Boer, "Why Paul?" in W. S. Babcock (ed), Paul and Legacies of Paul, (Dallas, TX: Southern Methodist University Press, 1990) 45-54; Andreas Lindemann, "Paul in the Writings of the Apostolic Fathers," in Babcock, Paul and Legacies of Paul, 25-44; Andreas Lindemann, Paulus in Altesten Christentum, (Tubingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1979).

⁵⁴ This is the hypothesis of my unpublished paper, "Ignatius of Antioch: Deviant and Moral Crusader," (University of Ottawa, 1993).

⁵⁵ Schoedel, Ignatius of Antioch, 132.

⁵⁶ Stoops, 161-78.

moreover, that he is a condemned man who is not able or worthy to give orders as if he were an apostle (*Tral.* 3.3). The Syrian bishop is engaged here in the culturally approved and necessary activity of equivocation and self-contradiction. "I greet you like an apostle, give you instructions about how to run your church, but I'm not really an apostle, just a condemned man." Where is the truth? What is Ignatius really claiming to be? The Syrian bishop is deliberately muddying the trail, creating ambiguity in order to assure his readers that he is not claiming anything for himself which does not rightly belong to him. Yet apostles, like Paul, were condemned men who gave written commands to the churches. If Ignatius, a prisoner for Christ writes letters in which he leaves important directions for church life, what does that make him?

Ignatius uses a very similar strategy in *Romans* 4.3 where he writes:

Not like Peter and Paul do I command you. They are apostles, I am a convict.
They are free, but until now I am a slave. But if I suffer I shall become a
freedman of Jesus Christ and I shall be raised up free in him.

The Syrian bishop skilfully uses antithesis in order to claim authority without appearing to do so. In keeping with the conventions of self-praise, Ignatius overtly says nothing at all about his own importance, highlighting instead his lowliness as a convict and a man in chains, a slave. All the praise is given to Peter and Paul, men whom the Syrian bishop seems to think are particularly revered by the church in Rome (cf. *1 Clem.* 5.3-7). It is the same strategy that he employs in *Ephesians* 12.1-2, highlighting his own shortcomings while praising men whom he regards as having the same characters and careers as himself. The antithesis serves not to emphasize Ignatius' inner sense of unworthiness, but to connect the Syrian bishop with the heroes of the Roman church. We might interpret Ignatius' comments to mean something like "Peter and Paul are apostles and free, now I am neither, but martyrdom will make me free and then I will be...." The Syrian bishop never comes out and explicitly says that he will be an apostle, or the equivalent of an apostle, but consider what he does say: "I have been given mercy to be *someone* if I attain God" (*Rom.* 9.2, italics mine); "I shall be a *word of God*" (*Rom.* 2.1, emphasis mine).

Ignatius' accomplished use of the Greco-Roman rhetoric of self-praise masks an audacious claim that his status as a condemned man does give him the right to address and command his readers like the apostles of old. What is significant for the Syrian bishop about these historical figures is that they are martyrs, letter writers (*Eph.* 12.2) and givers of teachings that are binding on the churches

(*Mag.* 13.1). Paul's career, in particular, serves as an apostolic paradigm in which martyrdom and letter writing are joined together.⁵⁷ The Syrian bishop addresses the churches of Asia Minor as a man following in the footsteps of the apostles. By living out the apostolic paradigm Ignatius expects to achieve a sort of equivalency between himself and the apostles. It is precisely because he is a convict, on the road to martyrdom, that he can imply a parity between himself and the apostles. In the liminal state of being condemned but not yet executed, of being poised on the threshold of the heavenly realm, Ignatius can and does greet and command the churches like an apostle. The Syrian bishop is a person born, raised and educated in the Greco-Roman world, and so he presents his claims in the conventions and manners of that culture.

Only in *Ephesians*, *Trallians* and *Romans* does Ignatius use the rhetoric of self-praise to claim parity with the apostles on the basis of his status as a martyr-elect. In all the other letters his claims to prominence and authority are related to his status as a prisoner for Christ. Both the importance and the ambiguity of his situation are evident in his closing remarks to the Smyrnaean church:

My spirit and my chains are a ransom for you, which you did not despise nor feel ashamed of.... Your prayer went out to the church in Antioch in Syria, from where I have come in chains radiant with divine splendour, I greet everyone, not being worthy to be from there since I am the least of them; but by the divine will I was considered worthy not because of the witness of my conscience but because of God's grace which I pray may be given to me until the end (or completely, τελείαν, *Smyr.* 10.2-11.1).

Ignatius' commendation of the Smyrnaean Christians for not despising or being ashamed of his chains suggests that all Christians he met may not have responded this way. In Philadelphia, some people did not accept his prophetic utterances as authentic. Might these persons have seen the Syrian bishop not as a liminal character close to God, but simply as a convicted prisoner, a criminal?⁵⁸ Ignatius' praise for the Smyrnaean Christians concludes with a remark about the effectiveness of their prayer on behalf of the church in Antioch in Syria, and prepares the way for another rhetorical display of equivocating self-praise. His description of himself as the least of the Antiochene Christians points

⁵⁷ Stoops, 169.

⁵⁸ P. J. Donahue, "Jewish Christianity in Ignatius' Letters," *VC* 32 (1978) 81-93, here 89.

to his status as the bishop of Antioch in an antithetical way, and may be a rhetorical way of downplaying his office in order to play up his status as a martyr-elect. In keeping with Greco-Roman practices of self-praise as set out in Plutarch's essay, the Syrian bishop highlights his prestige as a prisoner for Christ but he modestly attributes the credit for this achievement to God rather than to himself. The rhetoric has a dual function here. On the one hand, it demonstrates Ignatius' own personal virtue and piety; on the other, it points to the basis of the martyr-elect's prestige and authority. The extraordinary devotion and loyalty of the person willing to die for Christ rather than recant is understood a sign of God's grace and empowerment (cf. Polycarp, *Phil.* 1.1).

In his letter to the church at Philadelphia, the Syrian bishop explicitly connects his liminal status to his ability to act as a vehicle for God. Ignatius assures his readers that he is overflowing with love for them, and that he is watching over them with the greatest joy, guarding them from harm (*Phld.* 5.1). He concludes these assurances with the assertion, "indeed not I but Jesus Christ for whom I am a prisoner" (*Phld.* 5.1). In other words it is actually Jesus Christ, operating through the captive Syrian bishop, who is meddling in their affairs in order to allegedly safeguard them. This is a fairly clear statement of Ignatius' understanding that as a convicted prisoner he is a conduit for divine power and knowledge. Here, too, the Syrian bishop maintains the proper rhetorical form, moderating his claim by asserting that he is not yet perfect, and praising his audience by telling them that it is their prayers which will make him perfect when he is martyred (*Phld.* 5.1).

In *Philadelphians* 7.1-2, Ignatius describes and defends his own actions at a meeting with members of the church in that city. What is at issue is a prophetic speech which some members of his audience reject as staged. By asserting that he spoke with "a loud voice, the voice of God," the Syrian bishop reminds his audience that his utterances conformed to the standards of prophetic or inspired speech. He then calls as his witness the one "for whom I am a prisoner" to verify that he had no prior knowledge of the situation and that it was really the Spirit who was speaking through him. The rhetoric of indirect self-praise and equivocation is entirely absent in this passage where Ignatius is openly defending himself against what he sees as false charges. Two things are worth noting here: (1) this is the Syrian bishop's most explicit claim to be a vehicle of divinely inspired information, and (2) this assertion is immediately connected with his status as a prisoner. Indeed the latter functions as a sort of guarantee for the authenticity of his message. This passage provides one of the clearest

indicators that for Ignatius the roles of prophet and martyr-elect are mutually reinforcing, and that they are the primary basis of the authority he claims in addressing Christians in Asia Minor. His message, "give heed to the bishop....do nothing apart from the bishop," would certainly need to be legitimated by a higher authority than the personal advice of some fellow claiming to be a bishop, a role which is not universally held in high esteem.

In the letter to the church at Tralles Ignatius uses the rhetoric of self-praise to check the prideful aspirations of his readers and to set them an example. At the same time he points to the power and authority which are his as a prisoner for Christ. The passage goes as follows:

I think much (or have many thoughts) in God, but I measure myself so that I do not perish in boasting. For now I ought to be more afraid and not pay attention to those who puff me up. Indeed those who speak thus to me whip me. To be sure, I long for the suffering but I do not know if I am worthy. For while the zeal for martyrdom is not shown to many, it presses me hard. Therefore, I have need of humility by which the ruler of this age is destroyed. Surely I am not unable to write to you of heavenly things? No, but I am afraid I would harm you who are infants. And so indulge me, lest you choke because you are unable to grasp it. For even I, it is not because I am a prisoner and can understand the heavenly things, both the ranks of angels and the structures of the rulers, both seen and unseen, it is not because of this that I am a disciple even now. For we need much in order that we may not lack God (*Tral.* 4.1-5.2).

Ignatius' remarks seem to presuppose a situation where the Trallian Christians, through their bishop, have asked the captive bishop to share with them whatever special knowledge or insight he might have into heavenly things. Such an expectation seems to be connected with Ignatius' liminal status as a prisoner for Christ. The Syrian bishop refuses their request for two reasons: (1) there is danger in boasting and being puffed up about such things which he wishes to avoid personally, and (2) his readers are too immature to receive such knowledge.

Ignatius asserts that an unmeasured display of spiritual knowledge is like boasting, an activity which can destroy a person. Just as claims to status in the human community are regarded as challenges to be countered and, if possible, invalidated by others, assertions of spiritual insight and discernment are likely to result in similar responses from those who inhabit the spiritual realm. Boasting about such matters draws unwanted, and potentially dangerous, attentions from beings like

the evil "ruler of this age."⁵⁹ The Syrian bishop, finding that he has many thoughts in God, must therefore be afraid, always conscious of his vulnerability. People who try to puff him up are doing him no favours, indeed their words bite and sting like a whip. A similar situation applies with respect to his status as a prisoner for Christ. Ignatius possesses an extraordinary zeal and a longing for martyrdom, but this is not something to be puffed up about. Humility is what will bring victory over the spiritual forces arrayed against him. Ignatius is here presenting himself as not only an exceptionally gifted person, but as one who is acutely conscious of the dangers of letting his achievements go to his head, and who refuses to be puffed up about them by others. Their praise, moreover, cannot draw him into an unmeasured and boasting display of his spiritual knowledge.

In this situation, a display of the Syrian bishop's knowledge of heavenly things would be harmful not only to himself, but even more so to the Trallian Christians themselves. In comparison to Ignatius they are too immature to comprehend the sort of information to which he has access. They would be like infants offered adult food. This is a clear putdown, intended to put his readers in their place. As Ignatius makes clear a few passages later, the Trallians have a tendency to be "puffed up" themselves, and are unwittingly vulnerable to the danger of being taken in by the teachings of an alien faction, thereby falling into the devil's snares (*Tral.* 6.1-8.1). The Syrian bishop's opinion seems to be that his readers are overly fascinated and preoccupied with "heavenly things," displaying an inordinate pride in such accomplishments.⁶⁰ He engages in self-praise, focusing on his status as prisoner for Christ and his access to divine knowledge in order to check their unwarranted self-pride and eager fascination for heavenly things. His intention is to present himself to them as an example and model of proper conduct. He is one who has much to boast about but does not, reminding his readers that even he is not yet a disciple, for true discipleship requires more than being a prisoner to Christ and understanding the ranks and structure of angels and rulers in the visible and invisible realms. This is self-praise that highlights the virtue and benefit of humility in order to inspire correct attitudes and behaviour in the readers. It also indicates unequivocally that Ignatius' status as martyr-elect and broker of divine knowledge are the basis of his prestige and authority, both in his own mind

⁵⁹ John J. Pilch, "Secrecy in the Mediterranean World: An Anthropological Perspective," *BTB* 24/4 (1994) 151-8, 152.

⁶⁰ Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 146-7.

and in the eyes of his audiences.

In this discussion I have sought to show that Maier's passing remark about Ignatius' statements of unworthiness having more to do with his rhetoric than his personality⁶¹ is quite correct. The Greco-Roman world operated according to a strict code of honour in which claims to prestige and authority could easily lead to conflict and violence. Plutarch's essay on self-praise provides us with first-hand information about the conditions and strategies which a late 1st or early 2nd century speaker or writer might use to highlight his importance and abilities without giving offense. Ignatius looks like a graduate of the same school who has skilfully mastered the conventions and rhetoric of self-praise. The Syrian bishop consistently draws attention to his status as a prisoner for Christ, a role to which he has been called by the Spirit and which reinforces his claims to be a vehicle of communication for the Spirit. Ignatius most frequently engages in indirect self-praise to suggest a parity with the great apostles based on the common experience of martyrdom, in order to justify his "apostolic manner" of giving instructions to the churches on issues of leadership and the false teaching. When defending himself against what he believes are false charges the Syrian bishop refuses to equivocate, explicitly authenticating his prophetic speech by appeal to his status as a martyr-elect. In order to correct the attitudes of his readers Ignatius presents himself as a role model, a person with a true claim to prestige who is not puffed up, but who cultivates humility and modesty.

We began this examination of Ignatius' personal authority by noting that a number of people went to a great deal of effort and expense to ensure that he received as wide a hearing as possible as journey his journey from Syria through Asia Minor to Rome. This indicates that Ignatius was a person of some prestige and authority. His status as a bishop from Antioch, one of the largest and most important cities in the Roman Empire, was undoubtedly one of the factors involved in the attention that was paid to him. Ignatius refers directly to his episcopal office only in the letter to Rome (*Rom.* 2.2, 9.1). Otherwise he alludes to it only obliquely by calling himself the least of the Antiochene Christians, and never legitimates his instructions by appealing to his episcopal authority. Ignatius downplays his status as a bishop probably because it is a role that is played within the context of the local church. In the eyes of his readers the Syrian bishop was the equal of men like Polycarp, Damas and others whose episcopal authority was not always well regarded.

⁶¹ Maier, 157.

Ignatius consistently plays up his status as a martyr-elect, either directly⁶² or indirectly through the conventions of self-praise.⁶³ His position as a prisoner for Christ appears to have been regarded by many, if not most, Christians he met as a source of prestige (e.g. *Pol. Phil.* 1.1, 3.1. 9.1). The Syrian bishop also implies through his use of the rhetoric of self-praise a sort of parity with the apostles. It is not that he holds an office equal to that of the apostle, but rather that he shares with the apostles, especially Paul, the distinction of martyrdom. By following in Paul's footsteps Ignatius hopes to achieve a kind of apostolic equivalency, to be recognized as a "word of God" (*Rom.* 2.1) on the issues of church leadership and false teaching. The Syrian bishop's status as a prisoner for Christ legitimates his "apostolic" pretensions as well as reinforcing and authenticating his prophetic activity. Ignatius' authority is an achieved, personal or charismatic authority deriving from his liminality. The Roman justice system has placed the Syrian bishop outside the boundaries of normal society, and to some extent also beyond the boundaries of the Christian community. He is marked out for extinction from the Roman perspective, but from the Christian view point Ignatius is poised on the threshold of heaven. His critical assessment of the churches' problems and the solutions he proposes are given and received (in some quarters at least) as coming from a person close to God. It is only as such a liminal and charismatic figure that the Syrian bishop can legitimate his intrusion into the affairs of communities in which he has no traditional or official role and status.

⁶² E.g. *Eph.* 1.1; *Mag.* 1.2, 12.1; *Tral.* 4.1-5.2; *Phld.* 5.1; *Smyr.* 4.2, 5.2; *Pol.* 2.3, 6.1.

⁶³ E.g. *Eph.* 3.1, 12.1-2; *Tral.* 3.3; *Rom.* 4.3; *Smyr.* 10.2-11.1.

4.2 Episcopal Leadership and Authority in Ignatius' Letters

In Greek the word ἐπίσκοπος is used to denote a "watcher," "protector," or "patron." The activity of an ἐπίσκοπος consists of graciously watching over and caring for the person or thing to be protected. The term can be applied to the gods, who are identified in various Greek sources as ἐπίσκοποι witnessing and watching over treaties between city states, protecting marketplaces, cities and/or countryside, ensuring that graves are not violated, and in general scrutinizing the activities of humans. When applied to humans the word ἐπίσκοπος generally denotes an official status and function involving supervision and oversight. In the 4th and 5th centuries B.C.E. Athenian ἐπίσκοποι, chosen by lot, were sent as governors to maintain public order in cities subject to the Attic League. During the Roman era ἐπίσκοπος was a title given to a variety of officials responsible for state and/or civic functions. In the time of Claudius, for instance, the officer in charge of the Ephesian mint was called an ἐπίσκοπος. Plutarch describes the Roman pontifex as the ἐπίσκοπος of the Vestal Virgins. In Syria ἐπίσκοποι were appointed to supervise building projects. The title was also given to the officers of private associations and clubs who acted in supervisory capacities.¹

The earliest Christian usage of the term ἐπίσκοπος seems to be Paul's letter to the Philippians which is addressed to the ἐπίσκοποι and διάκονοι of that church, i.e. its leaders (Phil. 1:1). Luke ascribes to the original twelve apostles the exercise of ἐπισκοπή, oversight or supervision of some sort within the church (Acts 1:20), and has Paul describe the elders of the Ephesian church as ἐπίσκοποι shepherding the church of God (Acts 20:17, 28). Instructions concerning the appointment of elders who are called ἐπίσκοποι appear in the pseudo-Pauline Pastoral Epistles (Titus 1:5-9; 1 Tim. 5:17-19; 3:1-7). The writer of 1 Peter urges the elders of the churches to shepherd God's flock, watching over them or exercising supervision (ἐπισκοποῦντες) willingly and eagerly, and not for sordid gain (1 Pet. 5:2). The same author refers to God or Christ as the shepherd and ἐπίσκοπος of Christians (1 Pet. 2:25). Similarly 1 Clement describes the elders of the church as its ἐπίσκοποι (42), who exercise ἐπισκοπή in the context of the liturgy (44). The *Didache* (15.1-2) instructs its readers to elect for themselves ἐπίσκοποι. The most probable candidates for these offices, as well

¹ Liddell and Scott, 657; TDNT, II: 608-14; Everett Ferguson, "Bishop," in Everett Ferguson (ed), *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, (New York, NY/London, UK: Garland Publishing Inc. 1990) 150-2.

as the most likely recipients of these instructions, seem to be leading church members who are the equivalent of elders even if they are not explicitly labelled as such. In these early Christian writings ἐπίσκοπος, and its cognates, are used to describe Christ or God, the activity of the twelve apostles, and of "elders" who exercise leadership functions in the church.²

In the letters of Ignatius ἐπίσκοπος is a title given to God and to a single church leader in each community who is distinguished from the elders and deacons. An examination of the various aspects of episcopal leadership and authority described by Ignatius will show that he conceives of bishops functioning in patriarchal or patronal roles in relation to church members, and as representatives and protectors of their congregations in relation to outsiders. Within their communities, Ignatius imagines bishops acting as God's brokers and stewards representing the heavenly Father and acting in his place. When pushed to defend the episcopal authority Ignatius argues that bishops are appointed by the Holy Spirit according to Christ's will. An Ignatian bishop might be best described as a routinized charismatic leader whose incumbency in the episcopal office is the result of a process of divination intended to discern the divine will. Although personal charisma appears to be desirable, it is not a prerequisite for episcopal office. The bishop's charisma is primarily of the routinized sort deriving from selection for and incumbency in the office.

4.2.1 Bishops as Patrons of their Congregations

In order to support his argument that the primary candidates for church leadership were well-to-do members of the Christian community, Maier seeks to establish the social location of Polycarp, the only bishop named by Ignatius about whom we have any additional information. To do this Maier turns to the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, a letter from the Smyrnaean church to Christians at Philomelium describing their bishop's arrest and execution. According to this text, Polycarp initially sought to evade the Roman authorities by hiding out at two farms outside the city, but was eventually betrayed by slaves of his own household. Correlating this information with a reference in the *Life of Polycarp* to the bishop spending time in the suburbs or environs of Smyrna, Maier suggests that the farms where he hid were probably Polycarp's own properties. To this information Maier adds

² See discussions in Raymond E. Brown, "*Episkopē* and *Episkopos*: The New Testament Evidence," *JS* 41 (1980) 322-38; Jay, 125-72; Joly, 75-9.

Ignatius' instruction to his fellow bishop not to be haughty to slaves (*Pol.* 4.3), asserting, "we may cautiously conclude from the evidence we have that Polycarp was well-to-do."³ Maier's reconstruction of Polycarp's situation compares the Smyrnaean bishop to Diotrephes in 3 John, whom he regards as an affluent householder who acted as a host for church gatherings. Maier argues that the power base of both Polycarp and Diotrephes was their position as leading householders. This enabled Diotrephes to exclude members from the church, and accounts for Ignatius' exhortation that Polycarp make the meetings of the church more numerous (*Pol.* 4.2).⁴

Maier essentially seeks to establish Polycarp as a house-church patron whose power and authority in the church are a consequence of his social position. What Maier does not do is explicate how Polycarp's social location is linked to his status as a bishop. Was Polycarp a bishop *because* he was a house-church patron? We could probably come to such a conclusion if Polycarp was selected for the role of bishop based on the instructions given in the *Didache* or in 1 Timothy. The writer of 1 Timothy quite explicitly insists that a bishop must be a man who manages his own household well (1 Tim. 3:4). The *Didache* appears to address householders who act as patrons by offering hospitality to wandering ministers and hosting eucharistic meals. These persons are instructed to select from among themselves men of honour to serve as bishops (*Did.* 15.1-2). The difficulty is that we do not know if such instructions were operative in the Christian community at Smyrna. In addition, writings like the *Didache* and the Pastoral Epistles are, to a certain extent, prescriptive rather than descriptive.⁵ The Didachist seeks to subordinate charismatic leaders to traditional community leaders (ie. householders), while 1 Timothy is particularly concerned about limiting the potential for

³ Maier, 155-6.

⁴ Ibid, 156.

⁵ L. Wm. Countryman, "Patrons and Officers in Club and Church," in Paul J. Achtemeier, *SBL 1977 Seminar Papers*, (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1977) 135-43, sees the pastorals as supporting the aims of the rich to gain ministerial offices which were originally closed to them. He sees patronage and ministerial office as two distinctive "foci of power" at tension with each other. Ministers and later bishops claimed an authority which derived from "outside" the congregation on the base of charismatic qualifications, authorization by founding apostles, etc., while the authority of patrons related to their control of wealth and material goods. The reality was probably more complex and varied than either Countryman or Maier propose.

women's leadership in the church.⁶ The point is that while these documents advocate the selection of male householders and patrons to leadership roles, the reality may actually have been somewhat different.

Finally in seeking to make his case, Maier ignores the view expressed in the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* that the Smyrnaean bishop was a prophetic speaker and teacher (5.2, 12.3, 16.2). Might these elements of Polycarp's person have had something to do with his status as bishop? Might these elements have been more important, equally important, or less important than Polycarp's social location as a house church patron in determining his eligibility for episcopal office? Maier does not consider the possibility that Polycarp's status, as well as that of the other bishops, might have had something to do with charisma, even though he does regard charisma as the basis of Ignatius' own personal authority.

Ignatius, unfortunately, will not help us solve the riddle of the relationship between house church patronage and official leadership in the church. He never refers to the social location of any of the bishops he encounters, aside from the challenge posed by Damas of Magnesia's youthfulness. The Syrian bishop's silence on this issue does not, of course, preclude the possibility that some, or even all, of these bishops might be householders and patrons of the church. It tells us only that Ignatius is not interested in the social positions of the men who hold episcopal office in the churches of Asia Minor. What he does say indicates that his primary concern is to encourage Christians to regard their bishops as legitimate authority figures. For Ignatius, the authority of Polycarp and the other bishops derives not from their being house church patrons, if indeed they actually are such, but from other factors such as personal piety, commendation by the church's divine patron, and establishment by the Holy Spirit. All of these will be examined and discussed below. What I would like to highlight here is that while Ignatius is not interested in whether or not a bishop is a householder and patron, he does expect bishops to act as patriarchal and patronal figures in relation to the members of their congregations. He also draws on a number of commonplace images used to

⁶ For discussions of women and leadership in the Pastoral Epistles, see Joanna Dewey, "1 Timothy," "2 Timothy," "Titus," in Newsom and Ringe, *Women's Bible Commentary*, 353-61; MacDonald, *The Legend and the Apostle*; Bonnie Bowman Thurston, *The Widows: A Women's Ministry in the Early Church*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989); Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins*, (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1984) 286-94.

describe civic leadership in the Greco-Roman world. Nowhere is this more evident than in the instructions which he gives Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna.

Ignatius urges Polycarp to do justice to his τόπος, his position or office, in the church at Smyrna with reference to both the fleshly and spiritual realms (*Pol.* 1.2). This statement is the clearest indication that Ignatius thinks of bishops as occupying a formal position or office. In relation to those whom he leads Polycarp is to concentrate on congregational unity by bearing with and enduring all people, by speaking to each person on the basis of a divine unity of conviction, and by bearing their illnesses (*Pol.* 1.2-3). With respect to God, Polycarp is to devote himself to constant prayer, ask God for greater insight, and keep watch with a sleepless spirit (*Pol.* 1.3).⁷ These instructions show that Ignatius envisions the bishop as being in continuous dialogue with two realms, the earthly and the heavenly, and point to the bishop's intermediary role between the two.

Polycarp is warned by Ignatius that there is no χάρις, no grace or no thanks, in loving good disciples, rather his task is to subdue the troublesome ones with gentleness (*Pol.* 2.1), language reminiscent of the ethic of "gentle violence" expected of the Greco-Roman male.⁸ In this respect Polycarp is counselled to use a variety of methods like a physician applying the appropriate "salves" and cold compresses as the symptoms warrant (*Pol.* 2.1). Ignatius tells his fellow bishop that he is called to attain God, just as a ship's navigator requires winds and a storm-tossed sailor needs a harbour (*Pol.* 2.3). A bishop is somewhat like a physician and a ship's navigator. These comparisons build upon commonplaces in Hellenistic rhetoric which depict political leaders as healing their citizens of behaviour that leads to disunity and piloting them through disturbances and disasters.⁹ Ignatius thus models the church to some extent on the Greco-Roman city with the bishop playing the role of leading statesman.

Other notions which the Syrian bishop takes over and modifies from the political arena

⁷ See Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 259-63.

⁸ Peter Brown, *The Body and Society. Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity*, (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1988) 11.

⁹ Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 264, note 17, points out parallels in the writings of Plutarch and of Philo; Grant, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 130, notes parallels with Plutarch and Quintilian.

include the concept of ὁμολοία,¹⁰ concord, as the ideal relationship between citizens and between cities; the advisory council of elders¹¹ found in many Greco-Roman cities,¹² and the language of inter-civic diplomacy, of sending "embassies" (*Phld.* 10.1) to other churches. Each of these models from the general cultural environment, however, is christianized by Ignatius. While ὁμολοία describes the unity of the congregation in solidarity with its leaders (*Eph.* 4.1), it takes on an eschatological dimension in its capacity to sweep away Satan's power (*Eph.* 13.1). The council of elders is legitimated as the present representatives of the apostles, and the embassies requested by Ignatius are tied with the establishment of peace in the church at Antioch (*Phld.* 10.1), following the mysterious circumstances which lead to the Syrian bishop's removal from that city in chains.

Ignatius also describes Polycarp's leadership as "attaining God" (*Pol.* 2.3) a term he uses consistently with reference to the outcome of his own impending martyrdom. Indeed this is the only instance in which the Syrian bishop uses the strengthened phrase τὸ θεοῦ ἐπιτυχεῖν in relation to any person other than himself.¹³ Polycarp's leadership of the church in Smyrna is, or should be, directed toward the same goal as Ignatius' martyrdom. Both are efforts to maintain the unity of the church (*Pol.* 1.2; *Mag.* 1.2), and both involve suffering. The cause of Polycarp's suffering is addressed in Ignatius' exhortation not to be struck down or terrified by those who seem to be trustworthy yet teach an alien doctrine (*Pol.* 3.1). In the face of such people Polycarp is to "stand firm as an anvil when it is struck," knowing that the great athlete is the one who although battered yet wins (*Pol.* 3.1; cf. 1.3). Ignatius thus compares the problem of dealing with false teaching emanating from supposedly reputable Christians to a violent contest in which the bishop will emerge a bloodied victor, much as he himself will emerge the winner by fighting with beasts in the Roman arena.

When the Syrian bishop turns to more practical everyday matters of congregational life,

¹⁰ A term used 8 times by Ignatius: *Eph.* 4.1-2, 13.1; *Mag.* 6.1, 15; *Tral.* 12.2; *Phld.* inscr., 11.2.

¹¹ *Mag.* 6.1; *Tral.* 3.1; *Phld.* 5.1.

¹² Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 112; Malina, "The Social World...of the Christian Bishop-Martyr," 88; Gordon, "The Veil of Power," 228-9 indicates that elders were a feature of municipal administration even into the 3rd century in the cities of Asia Minor.

¹³ Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 254, when Ignatius speaks of Christians in general attaining God he uses the simple verb τυγχάνειν, e.g. *Eph.* 10.1; *Mag.* 1.3; *Smyr.* 9.2.

patriarchal and patronal images predominate. Ignatius reminds Polycarp that he has a special responsibility to act as the guardian or protector of widows, ensuring that these women are not neglected (*Pol.* 4.1). These widows may be, and certainly include, women whose husbands have died leaving them without economic support or in reduced financial circumstances.¹⁴ Such women appear to have been the recipients of Christian benevolence from the earliest days of the church (cf. Acts 6:1-7). Widows, however, is also a title given to a special category of women who appear in rosters of congregational officials from the end of the 1st through to the 4th centuries. These texts indicate that widows are supported financially by the churches and are entrusted with ministries involving intercessory prayer, charitable and pastoral visiting, as well as teaching women and children.¹⁵ That such an order existed in the churches known to Ignatius is fairly certain from his greeting in *Smyrnaeans* 12.1, to "the virgins who are called widows."¹⁶ Polycarp's guardianship of the "widows" would include both the social category of widows, i.e. women whose husbands have died leaving them without financial means, and the order of widows which included never married and marriageable women. In relation to such women, then, the bishop is expected to take on a patronal role providing protection and security.

In relation to slaves the Syrian bishop urges Polycarp to take a paternalistic attitude; a bishop should not treat male and female slaves with arrogance or disdain, but neither should he encourage them to become puffed up and to put on airs (*Pol.* 4.3). Slaves are to be urged to serve God's glory, thereby acquiring a higher freedom from God (*Pol.* 4.3). The congregation's common funds are not to be used to manumit slaves, Ignatius insists, for fear that slaves yearning for freedom may turn out to be slaves of desire or lust (*Pol.* 4.3). He may be concerned that manumitted slaves will end up pursuing "low" or morally reprehensible trades, such as prostitution.¹⁷ Ignatius follows this up with

¹⁴ Thurston, 9.

¹⁵ Thurston, 36-54, lists the following writings and authors as of significance in this respect: 1 Tim. 5:3-16; Polycarp, *Phil.* 4.3; Clement of Alexandria, Origen, *Didascalia Apostolorum*, Apostolic Constitutions.

¹⁶ Ignatius apparently sees nothing wrong with never married or young marriageable women being included in the order of widows, a practice which is opposed in 1 Tim. 3, and which outraged Tertullian at the end of the 2nd century (See Thurston, 81).

¹⁷ Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 270-1.

a warning to "flee intrigues or evil arts (κακοτεχνίας) or rather to preach sermons about them" (*Phld.* 6.2). Although scholars have speculated on the meaning of κακοτεχνίας in this passage, associating it either with magic¹⁸ or with "trades that minister to pleasure,"¹⁹ Ignatius uses the same term when he exhorts the Philadelphians not to listen to uncircumcised Christians who expound Judaism (*Phld.* 6.1-2), labelling this activity as a ruse of the Devil. This same sort of thinking may be involved in these instructions to Polycarp: a slave's desire for freedom may in reality be a devilish intrigue to ensnare the unwary in an even worse fate. Against such deceptive desires the bishop is to preach.

Ignatius goes on, telling Polycarp to encourage women to be content with their mates, and men to love their spouses as the Lord loves his church (*Pol.* 5.1). Christian men and women are to arrange their unions with the bishop's approval so that their marriage may be made "according to the Lord, and not according to lust" (*Pol.* 5.2). Those who are able to remain chaste "to honour the Lord's flesh," may do so, but without boasting. Anyone who boasts about his or her chastity is ruined; if the situation is known by anyone aside from the bishop he or she is corrupted or spoiled (*Pol.* 5.2). These instructions indicate that while Ignatius sees chastity as a legitimate means of honouring the Lord, it is to be a private matter known only to the person involved and the bishop. How this might be accomplished in practice is something of a mystery, given the conditions of life in Greco-Roman cities,²⁰ and the acknowledged presence in the church of "virgins called widows." One thing that is certain is that Ignatius did not regard chastity as the basis of special status or honour within the church. In taking this stance it is possible that the Syrian bishop is reacting to people like the Thomas Christians who do make such claims.

Ignatius' letter to Polycarp, a fellow bishop, highlights some of the more practical aspects of episcopal leadership. His instructions make it clear that a bishop is the holder of an office or formal position which he must justify and which involves interacting with both human and divine beings. Ignatius conceives of the bishop playing a role not unlike that of a civic leader who acts as a

¹⁸ BAGD, 398.

¹⁹ Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 271; Grant, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 133.

²⁰ Margaret Y. Mac Donald, "The Ideal of the Christian Couple: Ign. *Pol.* 5.1-2 Looking Back to Paul," *NTS* 40 (1994) 105-25, here 114.

physician soothing sore spots and a navigator piloting a ship through calms and storms. As God's athlete, a bishop must stand firm in the face of false teachers, being prepared to take whatever punishment comes his way in order to win the prize of eternal life. A bishop is to act as the protector of the widows. To slaves he is to be a paternal figure urging them to remain in their proper stations. Like the head of a household the bishop is to arrange marriages for church members that will bring honour to the family. With respect to the chaste he is the guardian of their purity. All of these might be described as episcopal functions which Polycarp is expected to undertake as part of the office he holds. To act as patron in terms of providing direction, protection and guardianship to members of the congregation is definitely part of the office which Polycarp must justify.

In the Greco-Roman world families, extended households and other groups looked to the patriarchs and patrons heading them to protect their collective honour and integrity.²¹ A common image for this aspect of leadership was that of the shepherd watching over and guarding his sheep.²² The Johannine Jesus asserts that he is the good shepherd who willingly lays down his life to protect his sheep from the wolf (John 10:11-18), and after his death and resurrection confers upon Peter this pastoral role (John 21:15-19). Although Ignatius never produces anything that looks like a quote from, or a paraphrase of this Johannine passage, imagery very much like it seems to loom large in his thinking. The Syrian bishop describes himself only once as a shepherd (*Rom.* 9.1), and that is in his letter to the Roman church where he declares that he dies willingly for God in imitation of Christ (*Rom.* 4.1, 7.2, 6.3).

Romans 9.1 is relevant not only as evidence of possible Johannine influence, it points to an important aspect of Ignatius' conception of episcopal leadership which is paralleled in other streams of Christian tradition. What the Syrian bishop actually says is:

Remember in your prayers the church in Syria which has God as her shepherd instead of me. Jesus Christ alone will watch over (or supervise, ἐπισκοπήσει) her, and your love.

Ignatius conceives of himself as the shepherd of the Syrian church whose functions are captured in

²¹ Malina, *New Testament World*, 45ff.

²² See Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 197, note 4 for a listing of Hellenistic writers who use this image; Ferguson, *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, 151.

the verb ἐπισκοπεῶ, watching over, caring for, supervising the Christian community. In his absence this role will be filled by Jesus Christ who is God (cf. *Rom. inscr.*), supplemented by the love and prayers of the church in Rome. The roles of the human and divine shepherds appear to be interchangeable, and replicate each other. This is precisely how the Johannine pastoral model works, Peter's ministry of caring for the sheep is to be patterned on that of Jesus, the good shepherd. Although we do not find in the Johannine texts an explicit connection between pastoral and episcopal forms of leadership, the image of the good shepherd may imply such a connection. The good shepherd discourse seems to recall the condemnation of Israel's shepherds in Ezekiel 34:1-34. There shepherds represent the kings of ancient Israel. If the Johannine good shepherd retains this political aspect, then the Johannine leader modelled on this image may well be seen as a somewhat vice-regal or episcopal figure.

An explicit connection between pastoral and episcopal leadership is made, in language very similar to that used by Ignatius, in 1 Peter where Jesus or God is described as both shepherd and ἐπίσκοπος (1 Pet. 2:25), and where the elders are instructed to shepherd the church, watching over it (ἐπισκοποῦντες) as God would have them do (1 Pet. 5:2). Similarly in Acts 20:28 the elders of the church are described as ἐπίσκοποι shepherding God's church.²³ Ignatius differs from these early Christian writers in applying this language not to elders but to a single leader who is set apart from the elders, and who alone bears the title of ἐπίσκοπος and shepherd. The Syrian bishop's pastoral and episcopal roles are taken over in his absence by Christ alone, and not the elders of the church. Regardless of whatever role the elders might have actually played in the practical day-to-day leadership of the community in the absence of their bishop, Ignatius makes a conceptual distinction between the two. For him, the bishop's leadership is not interchangeable with that of the elders.

Ignatius connects episcopal and pastoral roles with community protection in *Phld.* 2.1-3.2:

So, children of the light of truth, flee division and evil teaching. Where the shepherd is, follow there as sheep. For many pretentious wolves, by evil pleasure capture God's runners.... Avoid evil plants which Jesus Christ does not cultivate because they are not plantings of the Father.... For as many as are of God and of Jesus Christ these are with the bishop...

²³ Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 189, notes these last two parallels without examining their implications for Ignatius' conception of episcopal leadership.

The passage is addressed to church members who are urged to look upon their bishop as providing the best security against the dangers of division and evil teaching. The bishop is likened to a shepherd guarding his flock against the attacks of wolves (2.2), and protecting it from the effects of evil plants (3.1). Wolves and evil plants are, in turn, metaphors for false prophets or teachers (cf. *Eph.* 10.3; *Tral.* 6.1) who create division in the community by propagating their erroneous views.²⁴ The bishop's ministry, thus, includes protecting and guarding the church which is placed in his care. Although the language and terminology seem to be drawn from a variety of early Christian streams,²⁵ the image which the composite evokes is that of the Johannine good shepherd.

Although Ignatius does not use the image of the shepherd in his letter to the Trallian church he does assert that commitment to and solidarity with the bishop is the surest protection against false teaching. The Trallian Christians are urged to avoid associating with any "foreign plant which is αἵρεσις, a faction or sect, and does not offer "Christian food" but serves Christ mingled with a "deadly drug" (*Tral.* 6.1-2). This warning is followed by advice on how to guard against such people (*Tral.* 7.1-2), a plea to take up gentleness and not bear grudges (*Tral.* 8.1-2), and a condemnation of some ἄθεοι who propagate a docetic christology (*Tral.* 9.1-11.2). These "godless persons" are described as "evil offshoots which bear death-dealing fruit" and are not "the Father's planting" (*Tral.* 11.1). These docetics are, almost without doubt, the faction referred to in 6.1. They may have constituted a separate group with some contacts with the church overseen by Polybius, or they may have been fringe members of his congregation. Both scenarios could account for Ignatius' statement that even the ἄθεοι, that is the docetics,²⁶ respect this exemplary bishop (*Tral.* 3.2).

Whatever their relationship with Polybius and the community he leads, the Syrian bishop

²⁴ Wolves is used as an epithet for (a) false prophets in Matt. 7:15, (b) those who distort the teaching of the apostles in Acts 20:29, and (c) those who divide and scatter the church in John 10:11-18. For a discussion of the use of "evil plants" see Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 69-70.

²⁵ Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 197, notes that "children of the light of truth" looks like a combination of Pauline and Johannine phrases (*Eph.* 5:8; 1 Thes. 5:5; Luke 16:8; John 1:9; 12:36; 1 John 2:8). Wolves and plants are discussed in the previous note.

²⁶ Grant, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 73; Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 142, allows for the possibility that the ἄθεοι might be pagans on the basis of the usage of *Eph.* 2:12; *Mart. Pol.* 3.2, 9.2. This is unlikely in the context of *Trallians*; Trevett, *Ignatius and His Opponents*, 247, argues that the use of ἄθεοι indicates that the docetics are not actually docetics, an equally unlikely identification.

regards the presence of the docetics as a threat to the Trallian church and seeks to protect that community from any further contact and influence. Ignatius tells his readers that they will be able to guard against such people in two ways. First of all, he tells them, they must not be "puffed up" (*Tral.* 7.1), an allusion to their preoccupation with and inordinate pride in the knowledge of heavenly things.²⁷ The Syrian bishop, thus, draws a causal link between this attitude and being vulnerable to docetic teaching. By tempering their fascination for revelations of esoteric knowledge, the Trallians are less likely to fall prey to the docetic Christians operating in their environment. This alone will not protect them; they also need to be inseparable from their God Jesus Christ, the bishop and the edicts of the apostles (*Tral.* 7.1).²⁸ Only those who are "within the altar" and do everything with the bishop, council of elders and the deacons are clean and pure in conscience (*Tral.* 7.2). In Greco-Roman religions the altar symbolized the principal point of mediation between the earthly and heavenly realms.²⁹ Ignatius uses the term as a metaphor for the gathering over which the bishop presides together with the elders and deacons.³⁰ This is the only place, he implies, where heavenly goods are made available to Christians. If the docetics are apt to do things apart from the bishop and/or to prefer the leadership of charismatic visionaries Ignatius' instructions would have the effect of greatly limiting contacts with such groups.

Solidarity with the bishop (and other church leaders) is presented here as part of a strategy for guarding against the influence of a docetic faction which is described as an "offshoot," presumably, of the Christian movement. Once again Ignatius conceives of the bishop's role as that of a protector or guardian against false teaching.³¹ Curiously he does not seem to allow for the possibility that a bishop might actually be the advocate of docetic teaching. Is the Syrian bishop

²⁷ See discussion above, 148-9.

²⁸ These edicts or commands of the apostles will be discussed below in section 4.2.3, pages 197-200.

²⁹ Richard Gordon, "The Veil of Power: emperors, sacrificers and benefactors" in Beard/North, *Pagan Priests*, 201-31, here 202.

³⁰ Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 55; Ware, 3-4.

³¹ This is frequently mentioned as one of Ignatius' primary motives for advocating episcopal leadership. See for example, Jay, 140; Streeter, 165; W. Telfer, *The Office of a Bishop*, (London, UK: Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd, 1962) 69-70, 144; Cyril C. Richardson, "The Church in Ignatius of Antioch," *JR* 17 (1937) 428-43, here 436.

hopelessly naive³² or is he emerging from a context in which there are explicit connections between christology and ecclesiology?³³ In Syria, it seems that there may have been a direct link between the two. The *Gospel of Thomas* emerges from a movement of charismatic wanderers who place a high value on revelation and secrecy in opposition to church leaders who model themselves on the historic apostles. Although their gospel contains no explicit docetic christology, it certainly is not interested in the death and resurrection of Jesus.³⁴ Johannine christology and ecclesiology appear to have reached their final forms in a situation of intense charismatic rivalry in which one group may have been asserting a docetic understanding of Jesus. Pastoral leadership is advocated by the Johannine evangelist to ensure the community's adherence to the words and teachings of the Jesus-come-in-flesh, and is placed in the hands of those who solemnly professed to love Jesus, i.e. to keep and guard his commandments and his words (John 21:15-19). Ignatius' assumption that solidarity with the bishop is the best defense against docetism seems to indicate such a Johannine understanding of the role of Christian shepherds.

Protection and security are services which in the Greco-Roman world were usually provided by patrons, who frequently turned out to be the clients of, and brokers for, other more powerful patrons.³⁵ In relation to the Christian community the bishop acts as a human patron defending his clients against threats to their integrity. Ignatius' sense that the bishop's pastoral and episcopal functions take the place of and can be replaced by those of Christ suggests that he sees the bishop as Christ's representative and broker, a role which he does develop further and which we will examine below. The point which I wish to make here is that for Ignatius episcopal leadership contains elements of patron-broker-client relations which are inherent and understood rather than explicitly expressed. The bishop as shepherd relates to the church in a patronal fashion as a guardian

³² Corwin, 197, on Ignatius' ignoring or denying the possibility that a bishop might err.

³³ Elaine H. Pagels, "The Demiurge and His Archons" - A Gnostic View of the Bishop and Presbyters," *HTR* 69 (1976) 301-24, argues for an inseparable unity of theology and ecclesiology not only in Ignatius but the other early church fathers in opposition to gnostic trends.

³⁴ Another avenue of exploration on this question might be found in the *Apocalypse of Peter* (NHC VII,3) which combines an explicitly docetic christology with opposition to bishops and deacons, and idealizes Peter as a recipient of revelation.

³⁵ See above, page 39.

and protector of its social or communal integrity and of the authenticity of its teachings. This same range of functions is explicated in Ignatius' letter to Polycarp, but there the dominant images are that of physician and navigator engaged in maintaining congregational unity, and athlete engaged in a bloody contest against false teachers.

Patriarchs, patrons and other group leaders in the Greco-Roman world also acted as the official representatives of their families, clienteles, and associations in relation to other households and groups.³⁶ It is no surprise, therefore, to find bishops acting in the same capacity on behalf of their congregations. Ignatius begins his letter to the Christians of Ephesus by commending their Christian character which is made evident to him in the persons of their bishop and other delegates.³⁷ He writes that he receives their whole congregation in Onesimus their bishop (*Eph.* 1.3). He receives the deacon Crocus as "an exemplar" of their love, and sees the entire congregation in its bishop and his attendants (*Eph.* 2.1). Similar statements appear in *Magnesians* and *Trallians*. Ignatius indicates that he sees the entire Magnesian community in the person of Damas, their bishop and those who accompany him to Smyrna (*Mag.* 2.1). Likewise in the person of bishop Polybius, he sees all of the Trallian church and receives its good will (*Tral.* 1.1-2). From these comments it seems that Ignatius regards the bishops as representatives of their congregations, in some sense embodying and exemplifying their characters.

Much has been made of these comments in some quarters. Trevett uses the presence and/or absence of such statements as a yardstick for determining the presence of anti-episcopal activity in the churches of Asia Minor. Since Ignatius sees the entire congregations of Ephesus, Magnesia and Tralles in their bishops she concludes that loyalty to the bishop is not an issue in these communities. The absence of similar statements in the letters to Philadelphia and Smyrna is due, Trevett suggests, to the presence of anti-episcopal activity in these churches.³⁸ What Trevett seems to have missed is that Ignatius actually stayed in Philadelphia and Smyrna where he had the opportunity of meeting

³⁶ Malina, *New Testament World*, 45ff.

³⁷ The delegates who accompanied Onesimus (and Damas) should, perhaps, be regarded as something like a retinue. People of high honour and status were expected to be attended by retainers, clients, bodyguards, etc. See Wallace-Hadrill, "Patronage in Roman Society," 82; MacMullen, *Roman Social Relations*, 110.

³⁸ Trevett, *Ignatius and His Opponents*, 288.

congregational members face-to-face. In these cities he did not have to rely on seeing them in and through their delegated representatives. The presence or absence of such statements, then, tell us nothing about internal relations within the churches. They do point, however, to the role of bishops (and others) in representing their congregations in their dealings with outsiders, and to the tendency to judge the character of a group on the basis of its representatives, a point I shall return to below.

Brent takes a different tack, describing the Syrian bishop's comments as "mystical musings on the essence of the personality of the cleric with whom he has his prison conversation."³⁹ From these, Brent alleges that Ignatius develops a mystical vision of the corporate personality of the respective churches. This is the basis on which Brent concludes that clerics function as "sacral representatives" of their communities.⁴⁰ A somewhat similar view might be found in Schoedel's assertion that Ignatius sees the characteristics of these churches in their representatives in a spiritual manner.⁴¹ Schoedel, however, regards this as building on the notion in Hellenistic letter writing that correspondents "see" one another through their words.⁴² While Schoedel is probably correct in looking to social customs for the roots of the Syrian bishop's comments, his appeal to epistolary conventions does not quite fit the situation. Ignatius sees the Ephesian, Magnesians and Trallian congregations not in letters which they have sent to him, but in the persons of their bishops and other delegates.

Ignatius' remarks about "seeing" particular Christian groups in the persons of their leaders is less mystical or spiritual than it is culturally normative social thinking. The peoples of the Greco-Roman world were, for the most part, much more "dyadic" or group oriented and group embedded than 20th century North Americans. As dyadic personalities they tended to identify themselves in terms of the group to which they were related: family, clan, nation, or fictive kin group. The corollary of this is that they also tended to identify others in relation to the group(s) to which they belonged,

³⁹ Brent, "Ignatius and Ecclesiastical Order," 20.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 21; See also Brent, Cultural Episcopacy, 86-7.

⁴¹ Schoedel, Ignatius of Antioch, 47.

⁴² Ibid, 43.

that is they made sense of others by thinking "socially" in terms of stereotypes.⁴³ Examples of this sort of thinking include the notions that "to get to know one member of the group is to know the whole group,"⁴⁴ and that a person's character is reflected in his or her friends.⁴⁵ A Hellenistic Syrian writer like Ignatius, then, is quite likely to judge the character of the church in Ephesus or Tralles or wherever on the basis of what he perceives to be the qualities displayed by their representatives. He would assume that their personalities accurately reflect the corporate character of the groups from which they emerge. The Syrian bishop probably regards Onesimus, Damas, Polybius and his other visitors as simply (stereo)typical members of the churches which they represent publicly.⁴⁶

Given the Greco-Roman tendency to judge a group by its public representatives, one might expect that one of the requirements for holding episcopal office would be the possession of a good public image. We do find such concerns in the *Didache* and 1 Timothy where episcopal candidates are required to be men of honour and honesty (*Did.* 15.1-2), "above reproach" and "well thought of by outsiders" (1 Tim. 3:2,7). In contrast Ignatius never explicitly asserts that a good reputation is a necessary criterion for bishops. Although he is concerned that Christians in general maintain a positive public image in relation to their pagan neighbours (*Tral.* 8.2; *Eph.* 10.1-3) this is not a special episcopal responsibility. The closest he comes to even hinting at such a thing is his observation that Polybius' gentleness elicits respect even from the ἄθεοι, the godless ones (*Tral.* 3.2), most likely docetic Christians (*Tral.* 10). This remark points to the visibility of the bishop in relation to other groups in the local environment and the desirability of a good reputation, without making it a requirement for office.

Ignatius' comments about seeing the churches of Ephesus, Magnesia and Tralles in their

⁴³ Malina and Neyrey, "First Century Personality," 72-7; Malina, *New Testament World*, 67-70; Malina, "Social World...of the Christian Bishop-Martyr," 112-5, discusses this sort of thinking with respect to how Ignatius deals with deviants in the community, but does not touch on the question of seeing the congregation in its representatives.

⁴⁴ Malina, *The New Testament World*, 70.

⁴⁵ Saller, *Personal Patronage*, 109, this notion underlies the institution of the *commendatio*, the personal recommendation upon which patronage depended

⁴⁶ A view somewhere between Brent and myself is the Orthodox Christian understanding of Kallistos Ware, "Patterns of Episcopacy in the Early Church and Today: An Orthodox View," in Peter Moore (ed), *Bishops: But What Kind? Reflections on Episcopacy*, (London, UK: SPCK, 1982) 1-10, especially 5.

bishops and other delegates do not tell us anything about internal relations within these communities as Trevett suggests, nor are they "mystical musings" as argued by Brent. The Syrian bishop's remarks reflect a dyadic tendency to think "socially" of persons as representing and embodying the characteristics of the groups to which they belong. That Ignatius' visitors include persons who are, or who could be called bishops indicates that one of the functions of these church leaders is to represent their congregations in dealing with outsiders, whether pagans or Christians. Polybius, the bishop of the church at Tralles, appears to be particularly visible in relating to other groups in his area, even earning their respect. The responsibility of maintaining a good public image, however, is not limited to bishops but something which Ignatius felt should be a concern for all members of the community.

Ignatius draws upon a number of common place Greco-Roman images in his descriptions of episcopal leadership. He conceives of the bishop as occupying a τόπος, a formal position or office, in which the incumbent is expected to play the role of physician (*Pol.* 2.1), navigator (*Pol.* 2.3), athlete (*Pol.* 2.3, 3.1), and shepherd (*Rom.* 9.1, *Phld.* 2.1). These images are drawn from the realm of civic leadership, and involve the patronal function of protecting and defending communal integrity in the face of both internal conflicts and external threats. Although Ignatius never explicitly calls episcopal leaders fathers, householders or patrons, his instructions to Polycarp indicate that he expects a bishop to function as a patriarchal or patronal figure in relation to church members. Widows, slaves, marriageable men and women, and chaste members of the community all fall under the direction and guardianship of the bishop. Just as a father and patron represents his family and clientele in its dealings with outsiders, so too the bishop represents the church in its dealings with outsiders including interactions with members of other Christian communities (*Eph.* 1.3-2.1; *Mag.* 2.1, 6.1; *Tral.* 1.1, 3.2). Ignatius presents these patronal activities as functions of the episcopal office, rather than as prerequisites for the position of bishop.

4.2.2 *Bishops as Brokers and Mediators between their Congregations and God*

Inseparable from the episcopal functions of acting as patron and protector of the local congregation and its members, is the role of broker or mediator. In fact patron, broker and even client are roles which can be embraced alternately or in combination by the same person.¹ The patron of a group may actually be the client and broker of a more powerful patron. That bishops act as intermediaries between their communities and God has already been hinted at in Ignatius' opening remarks to Polycarp indicating that his fellow bishop holds a formal position or office which involves interacting with both the fleshly and spiritual realms (*Pol.* 1.2-3). Similarly Ignatius' assertion that in his absence the Antiochene church has only Jesus Christ/God as its shepherd, "bishops" (ἐπισκοπήσει) it, suggests that in some way human and divine episcopacy is interchangeable, with one replicating the other. It is to these aspects of episcopal leadership that we now turn, focusing on the bishop's roles as broker of heavenly goods and earthly representative of the divine patron(s) as Ignatius explicates them in his letters to Ephesus, Magnesia and Tralles.

The Syrian bishop's first topic of concern in *Ephesians* is the need to be "joined in one obedience, subject to the bishop and the council of elders" (*Eph.* 2.2). Ignatius seeks to persuade his readers to acknowledge the authority of church leaders, and to affirm the right of these persons to exercise power over them. Obedience and submission are acts of commitment to those who are recognized as having power, in this case the bishop and the elders, confirming and validating their authority.² Such commitment is the appropriate way to honour and glorify Christ, according to Ignatius, and has the added consequence of making the Ephesian Christians holy in every respect (*Eph.* 2.2). Obedience to church leaders, as Ignatius understands it, demonstrates one's piety, one's proper attitude toward the divine authorities. His readers can be assured of acting in harmony with the γνώμη, the mind, purpose or intention of God, when they are in harmony with the γνώμη of the bishop who is in the γνώμη of Jesus Christ, who in turn is the γνώμη of God (*Eph.* 3.2-4.1). What Ignatius spells out here is a hierarchy of divine and human mediators. God's mind is made known

¹ A wonderful example of this is contained in Luke 7:1-10 where the Jewish elders (local community patrons) become the clients of the Roman centurion who finances the building of their synagogue; then when their patron is in need of a healer these same elders act as brokers in gaining the favour of Jesus.

² Overholt, *Channels of Prophecy*, 71-2.

through Jesus Christ, the divine mediator, whose purpose includes and is articulated by his human brokers, the bishops who have been appointed (by whom we are not told) "in every quarter."³ Solidarity with the bishop is a symptom or proof of unity with the divine authorities whose purposes he represents and expresses.⁴

Using musical imagery Ignatius spells out the benefits of being in harmony with the bishop. He begins by urging the Ephesian Christians to follow the example of their council of elders who are "attuned to the bishop like strings to a cithara." Through such concord and harmonious love Jesus Christ is made present or, as the Syrian bishop puts it, "is sung" in the midst of their congregation (*Eph.* 4.1). He assures his readers that when they "sing with one voice through Jesus Christ" the Father hears and recognizes them, and in this "blameless unity" they participate in God (*Eph.* 4.2). Again the hierarchy of mediation is stressed. In order to participate in, to be recognized and to be heard by the divine patron church members must approach him through Christ by joining their voices with that of the bishop. Access to the heavenly patron and his favours is available through a very specific chain of mediators. Participation in the corporate rituals led by the bishop is the only proper means of approaching Jesus who ensures access to God, as Ignatius makes even clearer in the next passage.

The Syrian bishop warns his readers, "Let no one deceive himself; if anyone is not within the altar he lacks the bread of God" (*Eph.* 5.2). In Greco-Roman religions the altar symbolized the principal point of mediation between the earthly and heavenly realms. Ignatius uses the term figuratively to symbolize the venue in which the "bread of God" is made available to humans, that is, in the eucharistic gathering of the church over which the bishop presides.⁵ He refers to the "bread of God" again in his final remarks to the Ephesian Christians, urging them to come together as individuals united in one faith, obedient to the bishop and council of elders, "breaking one bread,

³ This last statement is usually taken to be somewhat of an exaggeration, as moniscopacy was hardly a universal phenomenon at the beginning of the 2nd century, see Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 49.

⁴ Brent, "Historical and Eschatological Mysticism," 313, observes that there is no final distinction for Ignatius between unity constituted by submission to the threefold order and unity with God.

⁵ Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 55.

which is the medicine of immortality, the antidote preventing death" (*Eph.* 20.2).⁶ Thus the "bread of God" turns out to be potent stuff which is obtainable only at the bishop's table. It represents a first-order resource which the divine patron alone controls and dispenses through the mediation of Christ and his earthly broker the bishop.

In the same context, Ignatius insists that the prayers said by the "bishop and the whole church" are much more powerful than those that are said by "one or two" (*Eph.* 5.2).⁷ The eucharistic gathering is an occasion not only for receiving goods from the heavenly Father but of making one's petitions known to him. In the Greco-Roman world requests put to a powerful patron were much more likely to succeed when they came from and/or were supported by the commendations of those closest to the patron, members of his immediate family, friends and employees.⁸ This reality is reflected in Ignatius' assertions that the corporate prayers of the church led by the bishop are more effective than the prayers of individuals. He is quite explicit on this account: the Father hears and recognizes those who approach him in unity with the bishop, his steward (*Eph.* 6.1), appealing to him through Jesus Christ, his son (*Eph.* 4.2). Privileged access to the divine patron and those resources which he controls are the benefits of being "within the altar," of taking part in the gathering around the bishop's table.⁹

While the individual Christian participating in the eucharistic gathering receives personal benefits, this collective action led by the bishop has cosmic consequences. Its importance is indicated

⁶ Ignatius combines Johannine, Didachistic and Hellenistic terminology to describe the eucharist. "Bread of God" is used as a synonym for the "bread of life" in John 6:33. There too, the one who eats this bread will not die, but will live forever (John 6:50-51). The same notion occurs in *Did.* 4.8 where the eucharist is described as immortal food (Jefford, "Did Ignatius..Know the Didache?" 345). "Medicine of immortality" is also the name of a legendary drug referred to in Hellenistic medical and religious literature. See Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 97; David Edward Aune, *The Cultic Setting of Realized Eschatology in Early Christianity*, (NovTSup. 28; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1972), 147 note 4.

⁷ Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 55, asserts that Ignatius is here appealing to a tradition reflected in Matt. 18:19-20, but which has come to the Syrian bishop independently of Matthew (see note 11). Matthew refers to the efficacy of the prayer of two together, and the presence of Jesus wherever two or three are gathered in his name. Ignatius' "prayer of one or two" is closer to *Gos. Thom.* 30 which speaks of Jesus being present with two or one. This may be one of the rare points of contact between Ignatius and the *Gospel of Thomas* and points to the Syrian bishop's opposition to Christians of that stripe.

⁸ See discussions above, pp.39-40, and in Saller, *Personal Patronage*.

⁹ Aune, *Cultic Setting of Realized Eschatology*, 165, who contends that for Ignatius, salvation is exclusively mediated through the cultic community.

several paragraphs later where Ignatius returns to the issue, urging his readers to come together more frequently for "giving thanks" (εὐχαριστίαν) and glorifying God. The Syrian bishop asserts that when they do so in the harmony of faith the "powers of Satan are swept away, and his destructiveness is brought to an end" (*Eph.* 13.1). Their peace abolishes warfare in both the heavenly and earthly realms (*Eph.* 13.2). Similar notions are present in Ignatius' explanation of the meaning of the incarnation in *Ephesians* 19.2-3. There he asserts that the revelation of God in human form heralds the "newness of eternal life" and the destruction of the old dominion which is characterized by death, evil, bondage and magic. Ignatius seems to conceive of the eucharistic gathering as a collective means of tapping into this power that became active in the world at the time of Christ's incarnation, and of carrying forward the eschatological program that was set in motion at that time.¹⁰ The church and its members are in this way empowered and protected against the forces of evil. God's patronage thus includes not only access to heavenly goods like an antidote to death, but also active protection from and action against Satan and his forces of destruction.

What Ignatius is describing here in his elaborate style is a system of mediation in which the bishop plays the role of broker or mediator between the heavenly and earthly realms. It is the bishop who presides at the "altar," that point in time and space where communication between this and the other world takes place. God is represented as the Father, the divine patron, who hears and recognizes those who approach him through the agency of Jesus Christ, the divine mediator, with one voice in unity with the bishop, their human broker (*Eph.* 4.1-2).¹¹ The bishop's intermediary status is a position of power deriving from control over second-order resources, i.e. access to the divine broker and patron, and the heavenly goods which they control.¹² Obedience to the bishop and participation in the eucharistic gathering over which he presides is the only means, Ignatius insists, of being heard and recognized by the Father, of receiving the "bread of God," and securing protection against Satan and his destructive powers. Ignatius' exhortations to obey and submit to the bishop are attempts to persuade his readers to acknowledge and affirm the position of the bishop in this

¹⁰ Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 74; Aune, *Cultic Setting of Realized Eschatology*, 142.

¹¹ Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 49, where he sums up Ignatius' argument as follows: "the bishop is to be obeyed because he is to Christ as Christ is to the Father."

¹² See page 39 above, on the role of brokers.

hierarchy of mediation, thereby confirming the bishop's right to exercise power in and over the church. The Syrian bishop legitimates episcopal authority by grounding it in the mind of the Father as expressed in and through Jesus Christ. Consequently obedience to God requires that church members not "oppose the bishop" who represents and expresses Christ's intentions for the church (*Eph.* 4.1-2, 5.3).

Ignatius' concludes his instructions on the subject of obedience to and solidarity with the bishop by asserting:

And the more anyone sees the bishop keeping silent, the more that person should respect him. For everyone whom the householder sends to manage his household we must receive in the same way as him who sent him. So it is clear that one must look upon the bishop as the Lord himself (*Eph.* 6.1).

Numerous conjectures have been made concerning bishops who keep silent. It has been suggested that this silence points negatively to a retiring nature, a lack of eloquence, an inability to pray and preach extemporaneously, or to an inadequacy in countering false teachers on the part of the Ephesian bishop, Onesimus.¹³ Ignatius gives no explicit explanation of what the bishop's silence signifies.

Later in *Ephesians* the Syrian bishop does return to the topic of silence, arguing that true Christians are identifiable by their deeds and not by what they profess (*Eph.* 14.2). Ignatius illustrates this point by asserting that "it is better to be silent and to be than while speaking not to be" (*Eph.* 15.1), implying that deeds done in silence are more telling than speech which is not validated by actions. In a similar vein he contends that teaching is good if the speaker acts (*Eph.* 15.1), i.e. does what he says. Ignatius then sets up as a model for his readers Jesus, the one teacher who "spoke and it came to be," and who in silence did what was worthy of the Father (*Eph.* 15.1). Just as Jesus is known by his effective speech and silent deeds both of which proclaim his dignity, those who would

¹³ Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 56; Corwin, 123, suggests that the bishop's silence is a natural reserve or inarticulateness. Christine Trevett, "Apocalypse, Ignatius, Montanism: Seeking the Seeds," *VC* 43 (1989) 313-38, p.320 asserts that the bishop's silence signals a failure to deliver the word of God expect of those sent in the Lord's name. Campenhausen, 101, posits that the bishop's silence is indicative of little stress being placed on the bishop's duty to teach. Herman J. Vogt, "Ignatius von Antiochen über den Bischof und seine Gemeinde," *Theologische Quartalschrift* 157 (1977) 15-27, p.22, suggests that episcopal silence is directed toward the heretics. Peter Meinhold, "Schweigende Bischöfe: Die Gegensätze in den Kleinasiatischen Gemeinden Nach den Ignatianen," in *Festgabe Joseph Lortz II: Glaube und Geschichte*, (Baden-Baden: Bruno Grimm, 1958) 469-71, p.477-81 associates the bishop's silence with a lack of charismatic gifts; a view rejected by Vogt.

be "perfect" perceive both the words and silence of Jesus and behave accordingly (*Eph.* 15.2). The point of all this seems to be that Ignatius wishes his readers to judge a person not on the basis of speech alone but on the basis of speech in relation to deeds. These instructions are quite general and might be used to judge anyone, including the silent bishop as well as the rival teachers who are mentioned in *Ephesians* 6.2-9.1 and 16.1-2.¹⁴

Unfortunately none of this sheds much light on what exactly the bishop's silence pertains to. Whatever it may entail, this silence is something which Ignatius feels must be defended probably because some saw in it a reason to disregard and/or oppose the bishop. Ignatius argues that the bishop's silence should result in more, rather than less, respect; indeed, the bishop should be looked upon as the Lord himself. Ignatius justifies this position by alluding to and combining two sayings of Jesus. The first which refers to a householder sending servants or slaves to oversee his affairs (Matt. 21:33-42; *Gos. Thom.* 65-66) evokes the social reality of absentee ownership in the Greco-Roman world where country estates, and even urban properties and businesses were managed by stewards or other agents of the owners. A steward was the official representative and agent of his master exercising the specific authority which was delegated to him, and for which he was held accountable.¹⁵ Such a position frequently enabled a steward to act as a broker for those seeking the patronage of his master.¹⁶ Ignatius seems to be implying that a Christian congregation is in a similar situation. Bishops are like stewards managing a household in the absence of its master. The bishop is the Lord's official representative and agent whose position enables him to function as a broker controlling access to the divine patron and his favours.

The second saying about receiving those whom Jesus sends as if they were Jesus himself

¹⁴ Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 56, 77-8, regards this passage as referring to the bishop, reading in it a contrast between Onesimus who is like Jesus in his silence and the false teachers in 9.1 and 16.1-2 who are noted for their empty talk. Henry Chadwick, "The Silence of Bishops in Ignatius," *HTR* 43 (1950) 169-72, contends that the bishop's silence should be seen as reflecting God's silence is not supported by the text of *Ephesians*. A similar reference in *Phld.* 1.1 will be dealt with in context.

¹⁵ Luke 12:42-48; Matt. 24:45-51.

¹⁶ The so-called parable of the "dishonest steward" in Luke 16:1-13 provides a good illustration of patron-broker-client interactions, and of how the broker might personally benefit from his activities.

seems to have been originally applied to wandering ministers of various sorts.¹⁷ In Matthew 10:40 it is prophets and healers who are to be received as Jesus himself, while the *Didache* (11.1-4) enjoins its readers to receive certain teachers and all apostle-prophets as the Lord. The *Didache* (4.1) also instructs its audience to honour the person who speaks the word of God "as the Lord."¹⁸ The reason given for this is that the Lord is present wherever his name is spoken of (*Did.* 4.1). This represents an important move on the part of the Didachist. In the communities which he addresses the person who speaks God's word is not always an itinerant minister, but may be a resident prophet or teacher, or perhaps even a bishop or deacon. While the prophet is a charismatic broker directly mediating the divine word to the community, the teacher, bishop or deacon need not be, and probably are not charismatic brokers. Their speaking of God's word derives from their occupations and offices of preserving and transmitting the remembered teachings of and about Jesus. If the Didachist's instruction to honour everyone who speaks the word of God as the Lord were applied to these persons, it would have the effect of conferring on them an impersonal or routinized charisma of office. The Didachist, thus, uses the traditional saying to establish a base for an office or ministry of the *word* which bestows on its holder a charisma of office, or in his terms the status of a "holy one."

Ignatius does something quite different.¹⁹ He uses the saying about receiving those whom Jesus sends as if they were Jesus himself to argue that even a silent bishop must be regarded as the Lord himself. What the Syrian bishop seems to be contending is that episcopal prestige and authority has nothing to do with skill, competency or capacity for speaking God's or anyone else's words. Indeed speaking the word of God is never mentioned at all. Ignatius insists that a bishop's silence does not detract from, but rather enhances episcopal prestige and authority. Speech after all must be judged in relation to a person's deeds, especially those that are done in silence. If speech is irrelevant for determining whether a person should respect and obey a bishop, what is the basis of episcopal

¹⁷ Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 56-7.

¹⁸ Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 57, contends that while this sharpens the theme of receiving someone "as the Lord" it does not change its meaning. My own position is that it does make a significant difference.

¹⁹ Jefford, "Did Ignatius..Know the Didache?" 344-5, asserts that both the Didachist and Ignatius share a common perspective with respect to the way in which leaders within the local Christian community reflect the authority of the Lord. Ignatius, however, never connects episcopal authority with speaking the "word of God."

authority? Ignatius insists that obedience is required because the bishop is the Lord's steward sent by him to manage God's household on earth.²⁰ It is the status and role of steward which is the basis not only of the bishop's capacity to act as broker for God and Christ, but which is also the basis of his right to exercise authority and to be obeyed. In other words, Ignatius conceives of bishops as occupying a status and role which confers authority in and of itself, regardless of the individual's personal skills or accomplishments. This is impersonal (rational-legal) authority acquired through incumbency in an office or a formally recognized position or occupation.²¹

In this passage, Ignatius takes a saying which originally legitimated the rights of a particular group of Christians and uses it to validate the authority of an entirely different category of church member. The one who is sent by Jesus, and so must be received and regarded as the Lord himself is no longer the wandering charismatic healer or prophet, but the local resident bishop. Ignatius presents the bishop as occupying a formal or official position in the church which is analogous to that of a steward in a household. Although he does not give any explicit description of how a person acquires the office of bishop, the analogy between bishops and stewards might provide a clue. Household stewards were not elected officials, but the appointees of their masters. Ignatius asserts that bishops are persons sent to manage God's household (*Eph.* 6.1), and that they are appointed in the γνώμη of Christ (*Eph.* 3.2). This suggests that he thought of bishops as Christ's appointees. Unfortunately his letter to Ephesus does not take us beyond this conclusion. It does not spell out how such a process might have worked. Further clues are presented in *Philadelphians*, but before turning to the question of how bishops are made we need to examine further their role as Christ's representatives in the local congregation.

In his opening remarks to the Magnesians Ignatius singles out for praise the deacon, Zotion, who "submits to the bishop as to the grace of God" (*Mag.* 2.1). Zotion exemplifies, in Ignatius' view, the ideal way of relating to a bishop. He is a servant recognizing his subordinate position, and affirming the authority of his superiors. Zotion's submission to the bishop is described

²⁰ Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 57, notes that Ignatius applies the traditional saying to a stable figure, but that the factor of stability alone does not necessarily imply a new form of legitimation. Schoedel here seems to be thinking theologically and not socially. What is legitimated is something quite new.

²¹ See page 24, above, on rational-legal authority.

as equivalent to submitting to God's grace or favour, pointing perhaps to the bishop's role as mediator of God's gifts to the community. The Magnesian elders are also held up as models of correct behaviour toward their bishop, Damas, who turns out to be a young man, a somewhat anomalous situation in a culture where age was often a prerequisite for respect and authority, as well as holding office.²² That this is a potentially problematic situation is clear from the way Ignatius speaks to it directly:

And it is fitting for you not to take advantage of your bishop's age but, to show him all respect, with reference to the power of God the Father, just as I know also that your holy elders have not taken advantage of his seemingly youthful appearance but, being wise in God, they deal with him (or associate with him on friendly terms),²³ rather not with him, but with the Father of Jesus Christ, the bishop of all (*Mag.* 3.1).

Ignatius urges his readers to acknowledge and affirm Damas as a legitimate authority figure in spite of the potential obstacle of his youthfulness.²⁴ What is significant about Damas is not his age, Ignatius argues, but his role in the community as it relates to the power of God. Those who are "wise in God" recognize that in dealing with Damas, their youthful bishop, they are in some way confronting the episcopacy of God.

Ignatius expects his readers to submit to the bishop as to God's grace, to respect the bishop with reference to the Father's power, and to recognize the bishop as reflecting the Father's episcopacy. These three elements are all interrelated and replicate the allocation of goods in a patronage system. A patron's power, derives in part, from control over and distribution of various material and immaterial resources as favours or gifts to those in need or want. Similarly the heavenly Father's power is demonstrated and expressed in grace, in the gifts and favours which he is able and

²² Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 109; Malina, "The Social World...of the Christian Bishop-Martyr," 111; see also discussion of traditional authority on page 25 above.

²³ BAGD, 775; I have opted for a very literal rendering of συγχράομαι here. Schoedel's "yield" (*Ignatius of Antioch*, 108) implies a level of subordination which may not be present in the original Greek, and which may be inconsistent with Ignatius' general tendency not to subordinate the elders to the bishop. On this last point see Ernst Dassman, "Hausgemeinde und Bischofsamt," *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 11 (1984) 82-97, here 91.

²⁴ Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 109, suggests that the episcopacy was beginning to be placed on a different footing from that of the presbyterate: the criterion of age had lost its significance. I suspect that from Ignatius' perspective, age may never have been a criterion for episcopal candidates.

willing to bestow on his human clients. Divine favour and gifts represent first-order resources which God watches over, or supervises.²⁵ For Ignatius the human bishop acts as a mediator or broker, controlling and supervising access to the divine patron. The bishop becomes the vehicle through which God's favour and gifts, the evidence of divine power and episcopacy, are manifested in the human community.²⁶ This mediatory role is the basis of episcopal authority and not the bishop's ascribed personal attributes.

Ignatius encourages his Magnesian audience to recognize and affirm Damas as a legitimate authority figure because of his episcopal role and function as mediating God's grace, power and oversight in the congregation. Although the language and terminology are different, the Syrian bishop is making the same point here that he makes in *Ephesians* where he argues that Onesimus is to be obeyed in spite of his silence because he is the Lord's steward. In both situations Ignatius' arguments suggest that the bishop's right to be respected and obeyed is grounded in the episcopal office.²⁷ The bishop exercises a form of acquired impersonal authority by virtue of occupying an intermediary position between the church and its divine patron. The bishop is in some sense invested with the grace, power and episcopacy of God which he mediates to the community. Consequently, Ignatius asserts that it is right for those who honour God to obey the bishop without hypocrisy (*Mag.* 3.2.). The acknowledgement and affirmation of the bishop's authority must be more than lip-service, or it amounts to a deception not so much of "this bishop who is visible," but of the one who is unseen (*Mag.* 3.2). The human bishop, Ignatius thus contends, should be obeyed and honoured as the representative and agent of the divine patron and bishop of the church.

The Syrian bishop concludes this initial exhortation by urging his readers in Magnesia not only to call themselves Christians but also to be Christians (*Mag.* 4.1). In particular he warns them not to be like those who call or name a bishop but do everything without him (*Mag.* 4.1). Such people, Ignatius asserts, do not "meet validly according to the commandment" (*Mag.* 4.1). We find

²⁵ See discussion on patrons, pages 37-8 above.

²⁶ Campenhausen, 105, suggests that the human bishop is to actualize to the congregation the governance of God, the bishop of all.

²⁷ Eduard Schweizer, *Church Order in the New Testament*, (transl. Frank Clark; London, UK: SCM Press, 1961) 153, argues that Ignatius sees the bishop as an official person, but assumes that the bishop's primary function is to preach, a notion that is not supported by Ignatius' own comments.

here a rare appeal by Ignatius to a "commandment" (ἐντολή) in order to support his contention that Christians should not meet or do anything apart from their bishop.²⁸ This is followed by a warning to those who might be tempted to follow the bad example of those who only name bishops. The admonition begins by asserting that "two things are set before us together, death and life" (*Mag.* 5.1). This phrase is particularly reminiscent of the statement, "there are two ways, one of life, the other of death" (*Did.* 1.1),²⁹ with which the Didachist introduces the ethical norms and practices that are to guide the Christian communities in his orbit. Ignatius links the "two things" with the image of two coinages³⁰ one bearing the imprint of God and the other the imprint of the world. This double metaphor is invoked to imply that death is the outcome of hypocrisy and deceit toward the bishop, while obedience leads to life.³¹ In an interesting parallel, the way of life set out by the Didachist also includes an instruction not to disregard or hold in contempt the bishops and deacons who are selected to perform the liturgies of the prophets and teachers (*Did.* 15.1-2). Might Ignatius have something like this in mind when he refers to the "commandment?" There are a number of passages in his letters which suggest that the Syrian bishop may have been familiar with teachings like those contained in the *Didache*.³² The more important question, however, is whether his readers in Magnesia would have been familiar with these teachings. Would Ignatius' vague remark about the "commandment"³³ have evoked in the minds of the Magnesian Christians the instructions of the Didachist? There is a very slim possibility that it might have done so, given the widespread popularity of the *Didache*, but there is no way to be sure.

²⁸ This and other appeals to commandments will be examined in depth in the next section on the grounds of episcopal leadership.

²⁹ Jefford, "Did Ignatius..know the Didache?" 343.

³⁰ Jefford, "Did Ignatius..Know the Didache?" 344, sees Mt 20:19 as the source of this image. Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 110, locates it in Hellenistic sources, particularly Plutarch.

³¹ Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 110.

³² Jefford, "Did Ignatius..Know the *Didache*?" 351, suggests that Ignatius either knew some early form of the *Didache* which is now lost to us, or he was familiar with materials and traditions which eventually were compiled by the Didachist.

³³ Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 110, suggests that Ignatius uses "commandment" in a Johannine fashion to refer not to any specific teaching, but to Christian revelation in general. This issue will be discussed in more depth below.

Ignatius immediately returns to the topic of episcopal authority. He begins by reminding the Magnesians Christians:

Since, then, in the persons already mentioned I have seen your whole community in faith and have loved it, I exhort you: do everything in God's harmony with the bishop presiding in the place (εἰς τόπον) of God and the elders in the place (εἰς τόπον)³⁴ of the council of apostles and the deacons, most sweet to me, who have been entrusted with the ministry of Jesus Christ (*Mag.* 6.1).

This passage points to the representative function of church leaders in relation to the two realms with which they interact. With respect to outsiders such as Ignatius, the bishop together with his attendants represents the congregation, embodying and exemplifying its character. The Magnesian delegation comes in for much praise from the Syrian bishop for the exemplary way in which the two elders, Bassus and Apollonius, and the deacon, Zotion, relate to their youthful bishop (*Mag.* 2.1, 3.1). Indeed, Ignatius holds up these church leaders together with their bishop as an "example and teaching of imperishability" (*Mag.* 6.2). Their relationship, i.e. the submission of Zotion and the friendly support given by the elders to the bishop, serves as a model to be emulated by the Magnesian congregation. Within the community, Ignatius believes that these exemplary leaders should be regarded as representatives of and stand-ins for heavenly and historical persons. The bishop leads in the place of God, as the divine patron's representative mediating the Father's grace, power and oversight; the elders and deacons represent historical personages, the apostles and Jesus.³⁵

Similar descriptions of the bishop and other church leaders are found in *Trallians* as well. Ignatius writes that through his interaction with Polybius, their bishop, he has discovered that the Trallian Christians are "imitators of God" (*Tral.* 1.2). He also describes the Christians of Ephesus as "imitators of God" because they hastened to visit him in his imprisonment (*Eph.* 1.1-2). While this

³⁴ Brent, "Ignatius and the *Didascalia*," 138 quotes a text which apparently has εἰς τύπον rather than εἰς τόπον. This variant plays a very significant role in his interpretation of Ignatius's concept of episcopal leadership.

³⁵ Brent, *Cultural Episcopacy*, 64-88 presents a detailed theological discussion of this idea of bishops as representatives of both their congregations and of the heavenly church. See also Ware, 1-9, for an Orthodox Christian view that is rather similar to Brent's. My discussion differs from these in trying to root this idea of representation in social and cultural categories rather than in theological ones.

may in part be the sense in which the Syrian bishop uses this term with respect to the Trallians,³⁶ he connects it more specifically with their attitude toward their bishop, writing:

For when you submit to the bishop as to Jesus Christ, you reveal to me that you are not living according to human standards but according to Jesus Christ (*Tral.* 2.1).

Imitating God appears to be synonymous with the notion of "not living according to human standards, but according to Jesus Christ," and involves following the example and teaching of Jesus.³⁷ The Trallian Christians demonstrate that they are doing this, according to the Syrian bishop, when they recognize and affirm their bishop's authority. This community does what Ignatius urges the Ephesians to do: recognize their bishop as one who has been sent by the Lord and who must therefore be regarded as "the Lord himself" (*Eph.* 6.1).³⁸

This is followed by injunctions to obey the council of elders as apostles of Jesus Christ (*Tral.* 2.2), and to respect the deacons as Jesus Christ (*Tral.* 3.1).³⁹ One implication of this latter comparison is that the deacons end up on the same level as the bishop (*Tral.* 2.1). Ignatius, therefore, quickly adds that the bishop is to be respected as a *τύπος* of the Father (*Tral.* 3.2). Although this is the only time that Ignatius explicitly uses this term in this way with reference to the bishop,⁴⁰ much has been made of it; indeed, it has often determined the interpretation of other passages in which Ignatius compares the bishop and God. Richardson, for instance, suggests that Ignatius thinks of church officers in "somewhat Platonic terms, as the types or representatives of a heavenly hierarchy."⁴¹ Corwin, for her part, asserts that Ignatius' typological language indicates that for the Syrian bishop there is a real continuity between the visible leaders and their invisible counterparts,

³⁶ Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 139.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 139.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 140, is not clear what makes the link between obedience to the bishop and living according to Jesus so obvious to Ignatius and thinks it must have something to do with Christ's passion. A more straightforward answer is provided in *Eph.* 6.1 where recognizing the bishop as the Lord is the result of knowing, understanding and applying Jesus' sayings to the present situation.

³⁹ Elders and deacons will be discussed in detail in section 4.2.4, beginning on page 210.

⁴⁰ See note 28, above.

⁴¹ Cyril C. Richardson, "The Church in Ignatius of Antioch," *JR* 17 (1937) 428-43, here 436; Chadwick, 169-72.

and suggests a move in the direction of a Platonic or Philonic view of the world.⁴² This notion has been recently picked up, developed and modified⁴³ by Brent who argues that Ignatius' τύπος should be understood in the sense of "representation," "image," or "model." He insists that for the Syrian bishop, church leaders "reflect eternal, transcendent and super-historical realities which they incarnate in the life of the church on earth." In his scheme, the bishop as τύπος is the incarnation of God.⁴⁴

Not only do such interpretations overemphasize the importance of a little-used term in Ignatius' writings, they exaggerate the importance and influence of Platonic thought in the early Christian era,⁴⁵ and do not take into account the multiplicity of possible meanings and translations of the word τύπος.⁴⁶ In *Magnesiensians* 6.2 this word is used to describe the bishop and other leaders together as a model or example of the solidarity which leads to eternal life. An even more instructive parallel can be found in *Didache* 4.11 where slaves are told to submit with fear and respect to their masters ὡς τύπῳ θεοῦ, as types or representatives of God. The description of the master as a type of God, although unusual, may reflect no more than the social reality of his almost unlimited, "godlike" power over the slave,⁴⁷ as well as his intermediary role between his dependents and the gods in the domestic rituals of the household. The Didachist's intention here is to enhance the authority of masters, and not to suggest that slave owners are earthly incarnations of God.⁴⁸

In a similar way the Syrian bishop's primary interest is to enhance episcopal authority and

⁴² Corwin, 196-7. See also Pagels, 306; Campenhausen, 98-9; Ekkart Sauser, "Tritt der Bischof an die Stelle Christi?" in Victor Fliedner (ed), *Festschrift Franz Loidl*, (Vienna: Hollinek, 1970) 325-39, reviews a number of German scholars who take a similar view. Sauser himself argues that Ignatius sees bishops as dependent on and subordinate to Christ.

⁴³ Brent, *Cultural Episcopacy*, 71-3, adds a salvation historical component, which he first set out in "History and Eschatological Mysticism in Ignatius of Antioch."

⁴⁴ Brent, *Cultural Episcopacy*, 69; Brent, "Relations between Ignatius and the *Didaschalia*," 134-43.

⁴⁵ See the discussion in Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, (New Haven, CT/London, UK: Yale University Press, 1995) 3-15.

⁴⁶ See for example, Liddell and Scott, 1835; BAGD, 829-30; TDNT, VIII: 246-59.

⁴⁷ Garnsey and Saller, 116.

⁴⁸ Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 141-2; Maier, 184-95; Jefford, "Did Ignatius..Know the *Didache*?" 345-6.

not to create some sort of comparative typology between heaven and earth.⁴⁹ Ignatius' description of the bishop as a τύπος of the Father (*Tral.* 3.1) seems to reflect familiarity with teachings like those contained in the *Didache*, especially when it is seen in conjunction with his conception of the episcopal office as the management of God's household (*Eph.* 5.2). For him, the bishop is God's representative and agent, or "steward," in the church. The bishop is the one who controls and determines the community's access to God's presence, gifts, and protection. The legitimate gathering of the local congregation is determined by the appearance of the bishop in that place (*Smyr.* 8.2). His presence, or approval, validates all community rites and ceremonies such as baptisms, love-feasts and eucharists (*Smyr.* 8.1-2). His functions include not only overseeing and directing these collective activities, but also supervising and guiding the personal and private affairs of church members (*Pol.* 4.1-5.2). The domain of power and authority which Ignatius ascribes to bishops is in some respects just as extensive, and in others more extensive than that of the slave owning householder who, in some Syrian quarters at least, is regarded as a τύπος of God. In urging his audience to respect the bishop as a τύπος of God, Ignatius is asking them to acknowledge and affirm the bishop as a person with broad and sweeping, almost "godlike" powers in and over their community.

For Ignatius, the bishop is a τύπος, an image or copy of the Father, not in some ontological Platonic sense, but in terms of episcopal function. The bishop watches over, protects, cares for and supervises the church and its members just as God or Christ would, because he is the steward of the Lord's household acting on behalf of and in place of the absent master (*Eph.* 6.1; *Mag.* 6.1). As the heavenly Father's official agent the bishop is invested with the grace, power and episcopacy of the one he represents (*Mag.* 2.1-3.1), and models his leadership on that of the divine ἐπίσκοπος and shepherd (*Rom.* 9.1). This is the way Ignatius would like his readers to regard the bishops who lead them, acknowledging the "godlike" powers with which they are invested in their roles as stewards and agents of God. If his instructions to Polycarp are any indication, Ignatius does not encourage bishops to regard themselves in quite the same way. Polycarp's leadership of the Smyrnaean community is described as a means of "attaining God" parallel to the martyr's route taken by the Syrian bishop (*Pol.* 2.3). The task of keeping the church united in the face of deviant teachings and schismatic tendencies is, as Ignatius tells his fellow bishop, a brutal contest in which he will be

⁴⁹ Maier, 184, takes a similar position.

battered (*Pol.* 3.1). From the perspective of those holding episcopal office, the job would no doubt be much easier if everyone in the church were to look upon the bishop as a τύπος of God.

Perhaps the best way to sum up this section of our discussion of bishops as brokers and mediators between their congregations and God is by recourse to an analogy suggested by Ignatius himself, that of absentee ownership. The local congregation is somewhat similar to a rural estate owned by a member of the urban elite. The bishop is like a steward put in charge of such an estate, Christ may be compared to the owner's chief steward located in the city, while God is like the owner away on business in another part of the empire. All communications and interactions flow through this hierarchical network. Orders from owner/God are relayed through chief steward/Christ to steward/bishop who passes them on to rural tenants and workers (*Eph.* 3.2-4.1). Requests and petitions from the rural folk must pass through the steward/bishop to chief steward/Christ before they are recognized and heard by the owner/God (*Eph.* 4.1-2). Access to the owner's resources is acquired through the same means (*Eph.* 5.2). The bishop is a person to be respected because he is the owner's and/or chief steward's official representative and agent, regardless of his silence (*Eph.* 6.1), or his immaturity (*Mag.* 3.1). As steward, the bishop is the vehicle through which the owner's/God's power, oversight and favour are exercised on the estate (*Mag.* 2.1-3.1). The steward/bishop acts on behalf of and in place of the absent owner/God (*Mag.* 6.1), and hence can be presented to the inhabitants of the estate as a τύπος, a copy or image of the owner/God. Should the steward/bishop leave the estate, the chief steward/Christ will no doubt have to come from the city to assume his duties and appoint a new steward on behalf of the owner/God (*Rom.* 9.1).

Conceptualizing the local congregation and its bishop in these terms enables us to see how the patron-broker-client system of social organization acts as an unconscious *emic* model structuring Ignatius' thought. With respect to the local congregation the bishop is expected to act as its patron, directing and guarding its individual members, protecting and defending the collectivity against threats to its integrity, and representing the church in its dealings with others. The local congregation and its bishop are, however, the clients of a more powerful patron, Christ, who in turn is the client of the most powerful patron of all, God. As the contact points between the local congregation and God, bishop and Christ act as brokers controlling and mediating access to the resources and favours of the ultimate patron.

In *etic* terms, Ignatius seems to conceive of the bishop as the holder of an office which invests him with the authority of the one whom he represents and whose appointee he is. Episcopal authority derives from the position of the bishop as God's steward and agent in the congregation. Ignatius argues that this formal or official status is what ought to determine how church members relate to bishops, and not things like age or competence in speech. Age is an ascribed personal attribute which was often a basis for exercising traditional authority, and for holding office in the Greco-Roman world. Ignatius' defence of Damas, the youthful bishop of Magnesia, indicates that he did not think of the episcopacy as an office reserved only for those who exercised traditional authority in his culture, i.e. older, experienced men. Competence in speech, on the other hand, is an acquired skill that was regarded as an indication of education and a desirable skill in those who aspired to positions of leadership. It is interesting that Ignatius seems to consider it relatively unimportant. His defence of episcopal silence suggests that he did not think of the bishop's office as being limited only to those who are articulate (and well-educated). Other unspecified criteria are obviously more significant. What these are will be examined below.

Before turning to that task one other observation can be made. Ignatius' defense of episcopal silence places him closer to the Johannine and Thomasine streams of Syrian Christianity than to the traditions of Matthew and the *Didache*. Matthew is primarily interested in the teaching function of educated scribal leaders, a largely oral activity as it is depicted in the gospel, while the *Didache* elevates to special status anyone who "speaks the word of God" (*Did.* 4.1). Although John's Beloved Disciple certainly appears to be an articulate character, Peter, epitomizing the pastor who takes over the leadership of the Johannine community after the demise of its charismatic hero, is not. What seems to count in that context is Peter's declaration of devotion to Jesus (John 21:15-19). It is only in the *Gospel of Thomas*, however, that an inability to say anything is actually regarded as a sign of special status. Thomas' declaration that he is unable to say who Jesus is like, is interpreted as an indicator of possession by Jesus (*Gos. Thom.* 13). The following examination of Ignatius' comments about the distinguishing characteristics of the bishops he meets and the basis of their authority will show that he appears to be moving in a Johannine rather than Thomasine orbit.

4.2.3 Bishops as Routinized Charismatic Leaders and Authority Figures

Ignatius' defense of Damas' youth and Onesimus' silence suggests that the attributes traditionally associated with office holding in the Greco-Roman world, such as social status, age, or education demonstrated in rhetoric and oratory, were not the things that he was particularly concerned about. For the Syrian bishop, Damas' youthfulness is irrelevant, entirely overshadowed by his office of mediating God's grace, power and episcopacy in the church at Magnesia (*Mag.* 3.1). He argues that Onesimus' silence is not a negative attribute, a lack of eloquence or whatever some Ephesian Christians think it points to, but rather a potential sign and source of power masking deeds that should speak louder than words (*Eph.* 6.1, 15.1-2). In the end, however, what matters the most is that Onesimus is the Lord's steward, representing and expressing the divine γνώμη or purpose of Christ and God in the church (*Eph.* 6.1, 3.2). What Ignatius is primarily interested in is trying to convince his readers that these persons should be respected and obeyed *because they are bishops*, i.e. occupants of formal positions or offices in the church which supersede other personal attributes conventionally associated with the exercise of authority in his culture. But how did such persons become bishops? What sort of process enables a person like Damas or Onesimus to acquire this office? To answer this question we need to turn to Ignatius' letter to the church at Philadelphia.

Philadelphia is one of the two cities in which Ignatius spent some time, and was able to meet and speak with local Christians about the situation of the church in Antioch (*Phld.* 10.1). He also broached the subjects of church leadership and congregational unity. There appears to have been some debate and disagreement to which Ignatius responded with prophetic utterances that were rejected by some of the Philadelphian audience (*Phld.* 7.1-8.2). Not content to let the matter rest at that, Ignatius wrote this letter in which he seeks to reinforce his message and to defend his actions while he was among them. Obedience to church leaders is the very first issue addressed by the Syrian bishop; indeed, it is a matter of such concern that the Syrian bishop tackles it in the opening lines of the letter, greeting them with the following:

Ignatius, also called Theophorus, to the church of God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ which is in Philadelphia in Asia...which I greet in the blood of Jesus Christ which is joy, eternal and constant, *especially if they are at one with the bishop and with the elders and deacons who are with him, who have been appointed in the purpose of Jesus Christ, whom according to his own will he has established in strength by his Holy Spirit* (*Phld.* inscr.; emphasis mine).

This is really a peculiar way to greet a church. Nowhere else does Ignatius refer to congregational problems in the opening sentences of his letters. It indicates that the Syrian bishop perceives the Philadelphian community not to be "at one" with its leaders, and that in his estimate it is a fairly serious problem.¹ It is no surprise then that obedience to church leaders emerges as a dominant theme throughout the letter and is connected with the other issue Ignatius raises, the problem of an allegedly judaizing interpretation of scripture.

Ignatius' greeting also points to the reason why the Philadelphian Christians should be "at one" with their leaders: the threefold ministry of bishop, elders and deacons has been established by the Holy Spirit in accordance with Christ's will. This is the clearest statement in Ignatius' letters concerning the origins and basis of this tripartite form of leadership and authority. While Ignatius never tells us anything about the precise mechanism whereby elders and deacons are appointed, he does indicate how at least one bishop acquired his office. Ignatius asserts that the unnamed bishop of Philadelphia "acquired his ministry to the community not of himself, nor through human beings, nor yet with reference to empty conceit, but in the love of God the Father and of the Lord Jesus Christ" (*Phld.* 1.1). What is emphasized here is the absence of human agency, and the partiality of the church's divine patrons.² The most likely means of ascertaining the deity's preference would include recourse to prophetic oracles, revelation, the drawing of lots, some sort of miraculous occurrence, or some other form of divination.³

The use of various forms of prophetic or revelatory mechanisms in the selection of church leaders is well attested in a number of early Christian texts. Acts records that Judas' replacement in the Jerusalem church was chosen by lot (Acts 1:21-26), and asserts that the elders of the Ephesian church were made bishops of the church by the Holy Spirit (Acts 20:28). The author of the Pastoral

¹ Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 195; Jerry L. Sumney, "'Those Who Ignorantly Deny Him': The Opponents of Ignatius of Antioch," *J ECS*, 1/4 (1993) 345-65, here 356.

² Ignatius' choice of words echoes Gal. 1:1 where Paul describes himself as an apostle, not from human beings nor through humans, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father. Paul's commission was conferred on him in a revelatory experience. It is this aspect of the episcopal office which makes it analogous perhaps to that of the apostle. See Grant, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 99; Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 196.

³ Bammell, 90; L. Wm. Countryman, "Christian Equality and the Early Catholic Episcopate," *ATR* 63, (1981) 115-38, especially 133; Jay, 141, asserts that bishops were probably elected by presbyters but provides no supporting evidence.

Epistles associates Timothy's leadership with a charisma arising from prophecy and the laying on of hands by the elders (1 Tim. 4:14; 1:18). Clement of Alexandria depicts John going about Asia Minor appointing to episcopal office, by lot, one person out of those indicated by the Spirit.⁴ The use of such procedures among the Christians of Asia Minor might well explain how a person reticent and/or deficient in speaking such as Onesimus in Ephesus could be appointed bishop or how a young man like Damas came to be bishop of the church in Magnesia.

The association of leadership with revelation is not restricted to texts from Asia Minor, but is also found in early Syrian Christian writings. In the gospel of Matthew (16:17-19), Peter is given the keys of authority not only because he has been trained by the master himself but because he is the recipient of a revelation concerning the true identity of Jesus. The leadership of Thomas, in the gospel of the same name, is a consequence of an ecstatic experience in which the hero is "intoxicated," i.e. possessed by Jesus (*Gos. Thom.* 13). For the Johannine community Peter's pastoral leadership derives from the actions of the resurrected Jesus who is present in the post-resurrection community as the Paraclete-Spirit (John 21: 15-19; cf. 14: 15-18). The authenticity of Peter's revelatory experience is affirmed by the Beloved Disciple, the paradigmatic Johannine charismatic leader who under the influence of the Paraclete recalls the words and deeds of Jesus (John 21:24; 14:25-26).⁵

The selection of leaders through revelation, by means of prophetic oracles, the drawing of lots, and other procedures designed to indicate divine preferment is one of the avenues through which charisma may be routinized. As noted by Weber, such techniques may be used by a group that continues, after the death of the original charismatic leader, to regard charisma as a desirable personal quality in its leaders but finds the identification of the right charismatic successor problematic. The new leader's legitimacy will depend less on personal gifts and achievement than

⁴ Clement Alex., *Quis Dives* 42; see discussions in Bammel, 91; and A. J. Mason, "Conception of the Church in Early Times," in Everett Ferguson (ed), *Church, Ministry and Organization in the Early Church Era*, Studies in Early Christianity Volume XIII, (New York, NY/London, UK: Garland Publishing, 1993) 1-57.

⁵ The ideal of divine action and judgement as determining episcopal election and appointment is attested in later writings as well, eg. Origen's *Homily in Numbers* 13.4, prefers that the choice of bishop be made by a spiritual man to whom God's will has been revealed in answer to prayer; Eusebius, *Hist.eccl.* 6.29, recounts how a child's cry and a dove settling on the head of a church member were interpreted as omens and indicators of the divine will. For discussion see, Ferguson, "Origen and the Election of Bishops," 26-33.

on the validity of the technique of selection. Weber regards selection through divining the will of the deity as the beginning of legalization.⁶ In Ignatius' assertions that bishops are established by the Holy Spirit and that the Philadelphian bishop's ministry is the result of divine love we can discern a movement toward the routinization of charisma. Ignatius consistently urges his readers to acknowledge and affirm men like Onesimus, Damas and the bishop of Philadelphia as legitimate authority figures because they occupy the status of, and function as, God's representatives. Bishops might, therefore, be said to exercise a form of acquired impersonal authority deriving from incumbency in an office. The episcopal office is not acquired, however, on the basis of acquired skills and competence (e.g. modern "office") nor on the basis of traditionally ascribed personal attributes (e.g. most Greco-Roman offices). Episcopal officers are the appointees of the deity, presumably through some revelatory process which is believed to indicate the divine choice. It is this method of selection which validates a bishop's right to expect compliance, according to Ignatius, and suggests that we are dealing here with a form of routinized charismatic authority.⁷

Ignatius' letter to the Philadelphians, then, begins with an unequivocal assertion that the threefold structure of church leadership is established by the Holy Spirit, and that the bishop of Philadelphia, in particular, is a divinely preferred leader. Ignatius follows this up with praise for this unnamed bishop:

by whose gentleness I was amazed, who though silent is able to do more than those who talk emptiness. For he is attuned to the commandments as a lyre to its strings. Therefore my soul blesses his attitude (γνώμη) toward God, recognizing that it is virtuous and perfect, his immobility and his freedom from passion in all the gentleness of the living God (*Phld.* 1.1-2).

All of these attributes identified by Ignatius are related in some way to this bishop's personal relationship with God and Christ. His attachment to the commandments indicates an attitude toward God which is virtuous and perfect. His mental disposition and his obedience to God's commandments are signs of this bishop's personal piety, his respect for and submission to the heavenly persons in charge of his life. Even those aspects of his personality which might be seen as

⁶ See discussion above, p.31; Weber, 247.

⁷ Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 196, asserts that episcopal authority in Ignatius' letters is essentially charismatic; see also Sauser, 325.

detrimental are interpreted by Ignatius positively as reflecting the one who chose this bishop. He accomplishes more in silence than those who engage in empty talk, Ignatius asserts, implying perhaps that in this respect he imitates the powerfully effective silence of the Lord who sent him (cf. *Eph.* 6.1, 15.1-2). His immobility and lack of passion reflect the gentleness of the living God.⁸

To interpret Ignatius' exalted praise for this silent and unmoving bishop, however, as arising from a conception of bishops as earthly representations or incarnations of a divine prototype is unwarranted.⁹ In the Greco-Roman world it was believed that a man's character was reflected in the protégés and friends he commended for positions of status and honour.¹⁰ A person recommended by a patron noted for his honesty was assumed to be honest as well. Bearing in mind these conventions, Ignatius' praise for the Philadelphian bishop makes most sense as a personal testimony verifying that this bishop enjoys divine patronage. Ignatius begins by asserting that the bishop of Philadelphia owes his episcopal ministry to the ἀγάπη, the love, friendship and/or partiality, of God the Father and Jesus Christ. He has been commended for his office by no one less than the divine patron and his spokesman. The implication of this is that if the bishop of Philadelphia is worthy of God's patronage, then it behooves the members of his church to recognize and affirm his authority. Having met this bishop Ignatius is in a position to confirm that he is a pious person whose demeanour and character accurately reflect his relationship and attachment to his divine patron(s). The Syrian bishop thus implies that the appointment of this unnamed person to episcopal office has not been a mistake. His silence and passivity are not reasons to disregard him, but point to why the Philadelphian Christians should fear him even more (cf. *Eph.* 6.1): he is a person close to and favoured by God. Ignatius' testimony on behalf of the Philadelphian bishop rests on his own charismatic authority as a liminal person poised on the threshold of the divine realm. In this respect the Syrian bishop acts much like the charismatic Beloved Disciple of the Johannine gospel who affirms the appointment of Peter by the risen Christ/Paraclete to the office of shepherd over the community (John 21:15-19, 24).

⁸ Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 196.

⁹ This is the approach taken by Chadwick, 169-72; Richardson, 436; Corwin, 196-7; Brent, *Cultural Episcopacy*, 69; Brent, "Relations between Ignatius and the *Didascalia*," 134-43; Brent, "History and Eschatological Mysticism," 311-16.

¹⁰ Saller, *Personal Patronage*, 103-9.

An examination of Ignatius' remarks to Polycarp of Smyrna reveals a similar correlation between episcopal office and a bishop's personal relationship with God. The Syrian bishop begins his letter to Polycarp with a brief salutation in which he greets his counterpart as "the bishop of the Smyrnaean church, who is 'bishops' (ἐπισκοπημένῳ) all the more by God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (*Pol. inscr.*).¹¹ This word play serves to highlight Polycarp's intermediary role in the structural hierarchy which the Syrian bishop envisions. On the one hand, he is the overseer and caretaker of the church in Smyrna; on the other he is himself supervised and watched over by God and Christ. An affirmation of Polycarp's leadership would demonstrate a willingness to be guided by the authorities who govern him; in respecting and obeying this human bishop the Smyrnaean Christians honour and submit to God, the "bishop of all" (*Mag. 3.1; Eph. 5.3, 3.2-4.1*). Ignatius' greeting points to Polycarp's role as God's official steward and broker in the church, but it does not stop there. The Smyrnaean bishop is commended by Ignatius as one who is personally guided and cared for by God and Christ.¹² Polycarp's episcopal role of acting as a father and patron to the church and its members, replicates the heavenly Father's patronage of the Smyrnaean bishop. The implication seems to be that Polycarp's episcopacy is related to the perception that he is a person who is supervised and watched over by the divine patron in a special way. The question is: does Polycarp enjoy God's patronage because he is a bishop, or is he a bishop because he is recognized as a person who is "bishops" by God?

It seems to me quite reasonable that those who emerged as leaders in the early church were individuals recognized as exemplary in terms of their personal piety and devotion to God and Christ. This intimation is reinforced by Ignatius' following remarks in which he welcomes or recognizes his fellow bishop's γνώμη, mind, purpose or attitude,¹³ in God which is "established as on an immovable rock" (*Pol. 1.1*). The image of standing or being built upon a rock is found in both Greek

¹¹ I have chosen to use "bishop" here as a verb in order to highlight the play on words contained in Ignatius' greeting: Πολυκάρπῳ ἐπισκόπῳ ἐκκλησίας Σμυρναίων, μᾶλλον ἐπισκοπημένῳ ὑπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. This might also be rendered as "Polycarp caretaker (or overseer) of the Smyrnaean church who is cared for (overseen) all the more by God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

¹² Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 257.

¹³ Grant, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 129.

and early Christian writings¹⁴ where it evokes a sense of firmness and reliability. Ignatius has beheld the Smyrnaean bishop's "blameless face" (*Pol.* 1.1), and on the basis of their personal interactions he perceives that Polycarp's mental orientation is firmly grounded in God. The Smyrnaean bishop's attitude toward his divine patron is notable for its fidelity and constancy, and is a sign of his respect for and submission to the governance of the divine ἐπισκοπῆς. Like the unnamed bishop of Philadelphia, Polycarp is commended for his personal piety which is indicated by a γνώμη that is grounded in and oriented toward God, suggesting that for Ignatius this may be an important attribute in a church leader. His point of view seems to be that the Holy Spirit establishes as bishops persons who have a particular attitude toward God. Such a presupposition would make sense of Ignatius' insistence that harmony with the γνώμη of God as expressed in Christ is best achieved by "running together" with the γνώμη of the bishop (*Eph.* 3.2-4.1).

From praise, the Syrian bishop turns to encouraging Polycarp, "in the grace with which you are clothed to press on in your course and to exhort everyone in order that they may be saved." (*Pol.* 1.2). What precisely is this grace with which the bishop is clothed and which enables him to urge and call all people to salvation? Χάρις is a word with many meanings. It can refer to physical grace and beauty, favour or goodwill towards a person, or gratitude and obligation for a favour received.¹⁵ Χάρις is also a source of empowerment enabling humans to attract or persuade others.¹⁶ Ignatius uses the word to denote that sphere of divine favour in which Christians participate (eg. *Eph.* 20.2; *Mag.* inscr., *Rom.* inscr.), as well as the pattern of life bestowed on the church by God (*Smyr.* 6.2; *Mag.* 8.1). It is also the power that inspired the prophets of old (*Mag.* 8.2), moves schismatics to repent (*Phld.* 8.1), and redeems those who insult God's servants (*Phld.* 11.1). Here, χάρις clothes Polycarp, equipping and enabling him to carry out his ministry. It is both power and favour, the consequence of being "bishops" by the Father and by Christ. It includes Polycarp's appointment to the episcopal office, the sign of God's favour, which he must "justify with all diligence" (*Pol.* 1.2) by making unity within the church his primary concern. As bishop he is empowered, "clothed with

¹⁴ Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, notes parallels with Homer *Od.* 17.463, where Odysseus is said to have "stood like a rock;" Matt. 7:24-26 where one who does Jesus' words is likened to a man whose house is built on rock.

¹⁵ BAGD, 877-8; Liddell-Scott, 1978-9; TDNT, IX: 372-5.

¹⁶ J. Nolland, "Grace as Power," *NovT*, 28 (1986) 26-31.

grace," to do so. Consequently he should ask that unseen things may be revealed to him so that he may lack nothing and be rich in every χάρισματος or gift (*Pol.* 2.2). The bishop's task of maintaining unity in the church and congregational solidarity with God will require all of his own talents as well as access to special information from the heavenly realm. Polycarp's role and status as bishop is both a sign of God's grace or favour which enables him to carry out his ministry by granting him access to knowledge not generally available.

Ignatius' notion of Polycarp being "clothed with grace" is suggestive of Weber's concept of charisma of office. As charisma is routinized it can be depersonalized and transformed into a quality that is transferable through artificial, magical or ritual means. In this way charisma may become an impersonal quality residing in a particular social institution or role regardless of the giftedness of its incumbent.¹⁷ Ignatius urges his readers to obey men like Onesimus, Damas and Polybius *because they are bishops*. Their episcopal office is what gives them the right to command and to be obeyed, regardless of other personal attributes or accomplishments. The Syrian bishop's remarks to Polycarp indicate that the office of bishop confers not only authority but exceptional access to and control over access to divine favour and knowledge (revelations)¹⁸ and other spiritual goods (*Eph* 5.2-3). To the extent that these powers are acquired along with the role of bishop, they constitute a charisma of office, and are indicative of a growing routinization of charisma.¹⁹

Two common points emerge from this analysis of Ignatius' comments about the bishop of Philadelphia and to Polycarp. (1) Both of these bishops are commended for their personal devotion and piety. The Philadelphian bishop is noted for his attachment to the commandments which is interpreted as a sign of a virtuous and perfect attitude toward God. Polycarp is singled out for possessing a mind grounded in God as if on an immovable rock. His constancy and fidelity are signs of his respect and submission to the divine ἐπισκοπος. (2) Both of these church leaders are said to enjoy God's patronage. The bishop of Philadelphia acquired his ministry, not through any human

¹⁷ See above, p.32.

¹⁸ Brent, "History and Eschatological Mysticism," 327.

¹⁹ Weber's theory helps clarify Campenhausen's intuition (pages 104-5) that for Ignatius episcopal office was somehow spiritual, combining official and "pneumatic" elements. Routinization of charisma describes the mutual relationship of office and charisma which Campenhausen seeks to explore (pages 1-3).

agency, but through divine favour and partiality. His silence, immobility and lack of passion are reflections of God's gentleness and indicators of God's guidance. This is the primary reason the members of his congregation should follow and obey him. The Smyrnaean bishop is watched over and guided by God and Christ. Divine favour clothes the bishop of Smyrna empowering him to carry out the tasks necessitated by his episcopal office.

I would like to suggest that for Ignatius these two factors, divine favour and personal piety, are at the basis of episcopal authority and that they are mutually reinforcing. A bishop chosen by lot, revelation, prophetic oracle or some other form of divination would be seen as a person favoured by God. That Ignatius thinks of bishops as persons particularly favoured by and close to God is demonstrated by his insistence on reinterpreting the potentially negative attributes of such bishops as positive reflections of characteristics possessed by the divine patron. The γνώμη of these bishops also indicates that they are commendable and exemplary subjects of God and Christ, a further reason for the favour which has been shown to them in their election to episcopal office. To the extent that exceptional piety might be regarded as a personal achievement, Polycarp and his unnamed Philadelphian counterpart could be said to possess some charisma. What finally legitimates their charisma, however, is not personal gifts, but the achievement of being chosen by Christ and established by the Holy Spirit in the office of bishop. These bishops enjoy a routinized charisma deriving from the process by which they are selected and from the offices which they hold as God's stewards and agents in the church. To the extent that their stewardship involves mediating interaction between the earthly and heavenly realms, bishops can be said to be routinized charismatic brokers.

As noted by Weber, the selection of leaders by means of revelatory procedures may signal the beginning of a process of routinization and legalization.²⁰ One might expect such a process to be accompanied by the development of rules and laws validating the exercise of authority by office holders. The instructions concerning the certification of prophets in the *Didache* (11.7-12, 13.1-7) can be regarded as an example of the emergence of such rules. An examination of Ignatius' writings, however, shows little evidence of specific rules or directives associated with and supportive of episcopal leadership and authority. He does occasionally refer to "commandments" (ἐντολαίς), but in a very general way. The Ephesian Christians are "adorned with the commandments of Jesus

²⁰ See p.191, note 7.

Christ" (*Eph.* 9.2), while those in Rome are "united in flesh and spirit to every commandment of his" (*Rom.* inscr.). The bishop of Philadelphia is "attuned to the commandments like a lyre to its strings" (*Phld.* 1.2). Ignatius urges the Smyrnaeans to respect the deacons "as the commandment of God" (*Smyr.* 8.1), and the Trallians to submit to the bishop "as to the commandment" (*Tral.* 13.2). Only once does Ignatius' use of ἐντολή look like it might be an appeal to some specific commandment that supports church leadership. In *Magnesians* 4.1 he asserts that Christians who call or name a bishop but do everything apart from him do not "meet validly according to the commandment" (*Mag.* 4.1). Unfortunately the Syrian bishop does not specify the content of this commandment, leaving us to wonder to what he is referring.

Streeter would have us look to *1 Clement*,²¹ a document written from Rome to the church at Corinth (ca. 90 CE), and notable for legitimating church order through analogies with military discipline and Jewish cultic offices, and for grounding the authority of church leaders in a concept of "apostolic succession." He notes that in Syria from the 1st to 6th centuries, regulations on church order were uniformly ascribed to Clement, regarded as the apostle Peter's Roman mouthpiece. The reason for this, Streeter argues, is that *1 Clement* was "one of the chief weapons" used by Ignatius in establishing ecclesiastical order in Syria.²² He supports this contention by pointing to Ignatius' commendation of the Roman church for having "taught others" (*Rom.* 3.1). According to Streeter, it is precisely because of the Roman teaching on church leadership that the Syrian bishop's letter to Rome is silent on this subject. Ignatius has no need to instruct these Christians on the subject of episcopal leadership since they are the source of his own views.²³ Streeter's allegation that *1 Clement* is a source for Ignatius' thoughts on the episcopacy fails to convince for two reasons: (1) it relies heavily on arguments from silence, and (2) it fails to take into account the fundamental differences between the views of the two authors. In legitimating and protecting the rights of church leaders, Clement appeals to two authorities: scripture and tradition. The leadership structures of the Christian community are, according to Clement prefigured in the Hebrew scriptures by the high priest, priests

²¹ Streeter does not make this argument with specific reference to *Mag.* 4.1, but posits *1 Clement* as the bridge from the *Didache* to Ignatius.

²² Streeter, 154-5.

²³ *Ibid.*, 158.

and levites of the first covenant (*1 Clem.* 40-41).²⁴ The first bishops or elders²⁵ were appointed by the apostles who made provisions for an orderly succession of leaders in the church (*1 Clem.* 42, 44). These are authorities to which Ignatius never appeals, even in those moments when they would have been most useful to him. It is unlikely, therefore, that Ignatius even knew *1 Clement*, let alone that he accorded it some sort of authoritative status.²⁶

The text of *Magnesians* does suggest another possibility, not in the specific reference to the commandment itself but in the next sentence, where Ignatius tells his readers that "two things are set before us together, death and life" (*Mag.* 5.1). This phrase is particularly reminiscent of the statement, "there are two ways, one of life, the other of death" (*Did.* 1.1),²⁷ with which the Didachist introduces the ethical norms and practices that are to guide the Christian communities in his orbit. The way of life set out by the Didachist also includes an instruction not to disregard or hold in contempt the bishops and deacons who are selected to perform the liturgies of the prophets and teachers (*Did.* 15.1-2). Might Ignatius have something like this in mind when he refers to "the commandment?" Unfortunately the evidence is inconclusive. He does regard the apostles as the givers of commandments for the churches (*Tral.* 3.3; *Rom.* 4.3) and explicitly urges his readers to adhere to the δόγματα and διάταγματα of the apostles (*Mag.* 13.1; *Tral.* 7.1). The Syrian bishop never provides any specific examples of these regulations and ordinances that he recommends to his readers. The closest he gets is *Magnesians* 4.1-5.2 from which we can conclude only that he was familiar with a tradition similar to the "two ways" teaching contained in the *Didache*. It does not allow us to positively and conclusively identify the "commandment" to which he refers.

A more promising resolution to the mystery of "the commandment" is proposed by Schoedel, who asserts that Ignatius is probably not referring to any definite pronouncement at all. An

²⁴ Streeter, 156; Maier, 103; Pagels, 304-5; see Jay, 130-1 for an opposing interpretation.

²⁵ Ἐπίσκοποι and πρεσβύτεροι appear to be interchangeable terms in Clement (Jay, 129, 133).

²⁶ Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 10; Trevett, *Ignatius and His Opponents*, 406-12, critiques Streeter's thesis concluding that it is unlikely that Ignatius knew and used *1 Clement*, a position she seems to abandon in "Ignatius 'To the Romans' and *1 Clement* LIV-LVI," *VC* 43 (1989) 35-52, especially 44-52.

²⁷ Jefford, "Did Ignatius..know the Didache?" 343.

examination of the Syrian bishop's use of ἐντολή,²⁸ leads Schoedel to conclude that "commandment" should be seen as a broad term which refers not to any specific ethical injunction but to Christian revelation in general. Schoedel notes that in this respect Ignatius is very much like the Johannine writers who also refer to commandments without specifying their content, and for whom obedience to the commandments is expressed in terms of unity with the church. In this passage Schoedel thinks that the Syrian bishop is referring to the general principles of love and unity which he believes should govern Christian life. Those who meet apart from their bishop do so in violation of these principles,²⁹ rather than any particular injunctions about bishops. This is an important conclusion which differentiates Ignatius from other early Christian writers on the subject of church leadership. *1 Clement* appeals to scripture and traditions going back to the historical apostles to validate his instructions concerning church leadership. The Didachist also relies on the authority of the apostles to legitimate his instruction to select bishops and deacons, as does the writer of the Pastoral Epistles (specifically the authority of Paul). If Ignatius' "commandments" are without content, or at least without specific reference to leadership, on what does he imagine episcopal authority finally to rest?

To answer this question we must return once more to the Syrian bishop's letter to the church at Philadelphia. From the information Ignatius provides it appears that this is a community divided: not all are "at one" with its leaders (*Phld.* inscr., 3.1). He labels some of its members "schismatics" whose disagreement with, or disregard for, their bishop appears to have resulted in separate meetings and in the celebration of multiple eucharists (*Phld.* 3.1-4.1).³⁰ In response to this situation Ignatius seeks to strengthen the authority of the Philadelphian church leaders, especially that of their bishop. He does so by asserting that the tripartite form of church leadership is established by the Holy Spirit

²⁸ See *Eph.* 9.2; *Tral.* 13.2; *Rom.* inscr., *Phld.* 1.2; *Smyr.* 8.1.

²⁹ Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 110, 68.

³⁰ A number of factors suggest that this "division" did not involve a radical or irreparable split in the community. Those who doubted the authenticity of Ignatius' prophetic speech were most likely those who did not wish to pay heed to church officials (*Phld.* 7.2). Not only were these schismatics present when the Syrian bishop met with the congregation, but they came close to deceiving him. Later when thanking the Philadelphians for receiving his friends Philo and Rheus Agathopous, Ignatius mentions that some "dishonoured" them (*Phld.* 11.1). No doubt these were the same individuals who gave the bishop a hard time when he was there. He apparently regarded the views and actions of the schismatics with more concern and alarm than the Philadelphians themselves. The schismatics may have held separate meetings, but they were clearly regarded as members of the church.

in accordance with Christ's will and purpose (*Phld.* inscr.), and that their bishop in particular acquired his ministry through divine preferment and not through the efforts of humans (*Phld.* 1.1), pointing to a revelatory selection process. Ignatius personally testifies that this bishop's demeanour appropriately reflects that of his divine patrons (*Phld.* 1.2). Commitment to God and to Christ, consequently, requires the acknowledgement of this bishop as the community's legitimate "shepherd" (*Phld.* 2.1). The remainder of the letter is given over to a defense of Ignatius' position and actions while in Philadelphia, and seems to revolve around the issue of legitimate authority and obedience to the bishop.³¹

A brief assertion of Ignatius' personal status as a liminal vehicle for God (*Phld.* 5.1) introduces a discussion of persons who are, or who should be considered, authorities in the Christian community. The Syrian bishop asserts that he personally takes refuge in the gospel, which he associates with the flesh of Christ, and in the apostles whom he links with the council of elders (*Phld.* 5.1). Ignatius is probably not referring here to specific written documents, either gospels or letters of the apostles, but to orally transmitted materials.³² The gospel seems to refer to accounts of Jesus' "flesh," i.e. his physical life, ministry, death and resurrection. The apostles are those historical figures responsible for preserving and passing on this gospel, a task taken over in the present by the elders of the churches. For the Syrian bishop, then, the primary Christian authorities are the earthly Jesus, the apostles, and their successors in the church.

Ignatius then asserts that "we also love the prophets because they too made their proclamation with the gospel in view and hoped in him and waited for him" (*Phld.* 5.2). The prophets referred to here are most likely the prophets of the Hebrew Bible whom the Syrian bishop seems to regard primarily as proclaiming a message rather than as authors of sacred books.³³ Ignatius' statement is apologetic and points to the interests of the Philadelphian Christians and/or his opponents in that

³¹ Sumney, 355, 359, argues that the main subject of debate is authority, but that loyalty to the bishop is not an issue. Obedience and submission to the bishop are issues, however, that recur throughout the letters and cannot be divorced from the general question of legitimate authority in the community.

³² Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 9-10, 201.

³³ Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 201; Sumney, 358.

church.³⁴ They apparently regard the Hebrew prophets and their message as authoritative for themselves and their church. Ignatius agrees, the prophets are indeed "holy ones worthy of love and admiration, attested by Christ and numbered together in the gospel" (*Phld.* 5.2), but only to the extent that they anticipate the gospel.³⁵ The Hebrew prophets are thus subordinate to the specifically Christian authority of the gospel. While it may be acceptable to esteem the Hebrew prophets of the past, Ignatius makes it clear that anyone in the present interpreting or expounding Judaism is not to be given a hearing. He warns them that "it is better to hear Christianity from a circumcised man than Judaism from one who is uncircumcised" (*Phld.* 6.1). While Jewish witnesses to Christ, such as the Hebrew prophets, the apostles or perhaps even Christian Jews may be heard, gentiles who expound Judaism are engaging in the "evil arts and plots of the ruler of this age" (*Phld.* 6.2).³⁶

This warning against expounding Judaism is immediately followed by a description of that incident which led Ignatius to engage in prophetic speech. He reminds his readers that some of them tried to deceive him, but the Spirit was not deceived and prompted him to cry out with the "voice of God," exhorting the Philadelphians to "give heed to the bishop and to the council of elders and to the deacons," and to "do nothing apart from the bishop" (*Phld.* 7.1-2). This action of Ignatius' points to a significant feature of his understanding of authority in the church. He considered Spirit-inspired speech as authoritative, and thought that his listeners should too.³⁷ The authorities on which the Syrian bishop bases the legitimacy of his own views must, then, include the present activity of the Spirit as well as the gospel and the teachings of the apostles as handed down by the elders. Ignatius perceives the Spirit to be engaged in the establishment and legitimation of church offices, and

³⁴ Lightfoot, 262.

³⁵ Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 201-2; Trevett, *Ignatius and His Opponents*, 164.

³⁶ For discussion of the identity and nature of this expounding of Judaism see Lightfoot, 264; Corwin, 58, 63; C.K. Barrett, "Jews and Judaizers in the Epistles of Ignatius," in Robert Hamerton-Kelly and Robin Scroggs (eds), *Jews, Greeks and Christians: Religious Cultures in Late Antiquity. Essays in Honour of William David Davies*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976) 220-44; P. J. Donahue, "Jewish Christianity in Ignatius' Letters," *VC* 32 (1978) 81-93; Sherman E. Johnson, "Asia Minor and Early Christianity" in Jacob Neusner (ed), *Christianity, Judaism and Other Greco-Roman Cults*, Part 2, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975) 77-145; William R. Schoedel, "Theological Norms and Social Perspectives in Ignatius of Antioch," in E. P. Sanders (ed), *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition*, Volume 1, (London, UK: SCM Press, 1980) 30-56; Trevett, *Ignatius and His Opponents*, 278; Paul R. Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1991) 28-9; Wilson, *Related Strangers*, 164-5.

³⁷ Trevett, "Prophecy and Anti-Episcopal Activity," 5-6.

regards his own efforts in this area as deriving from divine inspiration.

Everything in this passage suggests that the primary problem in Philadelphia was one of church governance and legitimate authority.³⁸ Ignatius' prophetic speech is quite explicit in this respect, intended to reinforce the authority of the threefold ministry, especially that of the bishop. Some members of his audience rejected this advice, contending that it was based on prior information about the division in the community (*Phld.* 7.2). This division is most likely that of the schismatics who disregard the bishop and other officers, holding separate meetings and eucharistic celebrations (*Phld.* 3.1-4.1). This is confirmed by the conditions Ignatius sets out for forgiveness, a return to God's unity as it is expressed in the bishop's council and the gatherings over which he presides (*Phld.* 8.1). The context of Ignatius' appeal to the Spirit-inspired speech and the source of the division in the Philadelphian church may be found in Ignatius' account of a debate in which he participated while in that community.

The Syrian bishop urges his readers to do nothing from contentiousness or selfish ambition (*Phld.* 8.2). An example of what he means is contained in the following paragraph, and provides a hint of the sort of activity which in Ignatius' eyes amounted to "expounding Judaism":

As I heard some saying that, "If I do not find it in the archives, I do not believe (it to be) in the gospel." And when I said to them, "it is written," they answered me, "it lies before us." But for me the archives are Jesus Christ. The sacred archives are his cross and death and his resurrection and faith through him...(*Phld.* 8.2).

The "archives," "public records" or "original documents" (ἀρχεῖα) referred to are probably the Hebrew scriptures.³⁹ These members of the Philadelphian church seem to be looking to the Hebrew Bible as an authoritative standard for Christian beliefs and practices. Ignatius sought to assure his audience that the matter under debate was in fact addressed in these archives, but when challenged

³⁸ Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 205; Trevett, *Ignatius and His Opponents*, 237; Trevett, "Apocalypse, Ignatius, Montanism," 318; *contra* Sumney, 354.

³⁹ Lightfoot, 272; Corwin, 58; Robert M. Grant, "Scripture and Tradition in Ignatius of Antioch," in R. M. Grant (ed), *After the New Testament*, (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1967) 37-51, here 38; Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 207-8; Trevett, *Ignatius and His Opponents*, 267, 458; Trevett, "Apocalypse, Ignatius, Montanism," 325; Sumney, 355.

to provide scriptural proof the bishop appears to have been unprepared or unable to do so.⁴⁰ In his letter he appeals instead to Jesus Christ and the events of his life, asserting that these are the foundational authorities for the church. But how did he respond at the time, when he was confronted by these Philadelphian Christians? Might this challenge have elicited the prophetic speech which precedes this example of what his opponents were saying?

We do not know for certain that this debate was over church leadership, but given Ignatius' massive preoccupation with that subject in this letter it seems likely. These remarks about the futility of finding scriptural proofs are not only preceded by exhortations to recognize the authority of the bishop, they are followed by further discussion of legitimate community authorities. Ignatius states that "the priests are also good," but the high priest, Jesus Christ is better. He alone is entrusted with the "secrets of God" because he is the "door of the Father." The patriarchs of Israel, the prophets of the Hebrew scriptures, the apostles and the church all enter into God's unity through this "door" alone (*Phld.* 9.1). The comment that the "priests are also good" is a concessive statement which functions in much the same way as the apologetic assertion, "we also love the prophets" (*Phld.* 5.2). Both are indicative of the opponents' interests and both pave the way for the bishop to relativize his adversaries' claims.⁴¹ In each case he subordinates their heroes of faith, the patriarchs, prophets and priests, to Christ.

The interest of these Philadelphian Christians in the Hebrew Scriptures and especially in prophets and priests may indicate contacts with certain strands of Hellenistic Jewish thought.⁴² The reference to the scriptures as archives or public records is paralleled in the writings of Philo and Josephus. Schoedel finds Josephus' *Contra Apionem* to be particularly illuminating. Josephus defines the "public records" as consisting of the 22 books written by the prophets (who include Moses) under divine guidance. In the present the Jewish priests function as the custodians of these records, and

⁴⁰ Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 209; Trevett, *Ignatius and His Opponents*, 166, 280.

⁴¹ Lightfoot, 262, 274; Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 209; *contra* Sumney, 359.

⁴² Trevett, "Apocalypse, Ignatius, Montanism," 322-5, sees here Christians like those addressed by Revelation, who make great use of scripture and value prophecy. Ignatius' letters, however, do not suggest that his opponents were very enthusiastic supporters of prophecy, especially since Ignatius seems to use prophecy to counter their appeal to scripture.

serve as spiritual guides to uncovering their hidden meanings.⁴³ In Asia Minor Jewish priests were regarded as teachers of wisdom well into the 4th century.⁴⁴ The Philadelphian schismatics may have regarded themselves as, or preferred the leadership of, priests skilled in interpreting the "secrets of God" (*Phld.* 9.1) contained in the Hebrew scriptures which they regarded as the community's foundation documents. Their disregard for the bishop may be related to their high regard for the Hebrew scriptures in one of two ways. (1) The schismatics might have found it difficult to acknowledge as a legitimate authority figure a person who was not at least as knowledgeable and skilled in the interpretation of scripture as they were themselves. (2) They might also have objected to being governed by a person whose office did not enjoy a solid scriptural foundation.

Ignatius allows that priests and scriptures are of value, but subordinates these authorities to the gospel of the physical Jesus, the teachings of the apostles as handed down by the elders (*Phld.* 5.1), and most significantly the present activity of the Holy Spirit. Indeed it is to the latter that the Syrian bishop appeals when hard pressed to carry the argument for episcopal authority. The tripartite system of bishop assisted by a council of elders and by deacons derives its legitimacy from its establishment by the Holy Spirit according to the will of Christ (*Phld.* inscr.). The authority of individual bishops, like the one in Philadelphia, is validated by their having acquired their offices and ministries through God's love or favour (*Phld.* 1.1-2), presumably by a process of selection intended to indicate the divine preference. In a context where the threefold ministry and episcopal leadership are insecure, Ignatius appeals neither to scripture nor to apostolic commandments, but presents himself as a Spirit-filled prophet speaking with the "voice of God" to affirm the authority of church leaders (*Phld.* 7.1-2). This appeal to the Spirit as ultimately and definitively legitimating the tripartite system in general, and episcopal authority in particular, is highly illustrative, pointing to the origins of this office in the Syrian environment from which Ignatius emerges. It suggests that he comes from a Christian community or circle in which this form of leadership was introduced by

⁴³ William R. Schoedel, "Ignatius and the Archives," *HTR* 71 (1978) 97-106.

⁴⁴ Trebilco, 29, 50.

prophets speaking in the Spirit in the name of Jesus.⁴⁵ From Ignatius' lack of appeal to commandments or tradition we might infer that this is a rather recent development.

The Fourth Gospel provides an account of just such a situation. In John's final chapter, Peter acquires the role and status of shepherd over the community in a post-resurrection encounter with Jesus (John 21:15-19). There it is the risen Lord, present in the Johannine community as the Paraclete or Spirit, who singles Peter out for his pastoral role, in contrast to the Beloved Disciple who is designated as the Lord's brother and successor by the earthly Jesus just before his death (John 19:25-27). This suggests that among Johannine Christians the establishment of the pastoral office might have been understood as the work of the Holy Spirit in the early church in response to problems arising from the death of its first generation of leaders, and hints at some sort of spirit-inspired process of selection. The Johannine Peter emerges as a routinized charismatic leader who is chosen through a process of revelation, in this case some sort of Paraclete-inspired visionary experience that is authenticated by the Beloved Disciple, a recognized charismatic broker. Peter's authority within the community is validated by this process of selection. Here we find the closest parallel to Ignatius' defense of the bishop of Philadelphia, whose right to be followed and obeyed derives from having acquired a ministry through the love and partiality of God and Christ. In relation to his Philadelphian counterpart Ignatius plays a role remarkably like that of the Beloved Disciple, presenting himself as a charismatic and prophetic figure testifying to the authenticity and appropriateness of this bishop's episcopal ministry. The Johannine model provides a parallel for the role of bishops, but not for the tripartite system. For this we must look elsewhere.

From Ignatius' responses to his opponents in Philadelphia it may be possible to infer how he might respond to similar concerns in his native Antioch. The Syrian bishop accuses his Philadelphian opponents of expounding Judaism, an activity which seems to involve a preoccupation with interpreting the Hebrew scriptures, especially the prophetic writings. They appear to have a preference for the leadership of priests trained in uncovering the "secrets of God" contained in these "archives" (*Phld.* 8.2-9.2). In Syria the group which seems to share similar concerns is the

⁴⁵ Richardson, "The Church in Ignatius of Antioch," 436 suggests that the threefold order may have come about due to direct revelation. Mason, 30, argues on the basis of this and other evidence (e.g. Pastorals and Clement of Alexandria) that the development of the Christian hierarchy was in great measure due to exhortations of Christian prophets speaking in the Spirit.

community which produced Matthew's gospel. The Matthean church appears to be led by literate and educated scribes, skilled in the interpretation of the Hebrew scriptures, and suspicious of those making prophetic or charismatic claims. It seems likely that Ignatius was acquainted with Matthean Christianity, or at least teachings that have been preserved for us by that community. Yet it does not appear to have contributed much to his thinking about church leadership; indeed, the Syrian bishop is not the least interested in the sort of scribal activity that is central to the Matthean tradition. Ignatius himself demonstrates only a modicum of knowledge and concern for the Hebrew scriptures and, as is evident from his letter to the Philadelphians, is critical of Christians who are preoccupied with these texts. One wonders if he would have considered the Matthean scribes to be expounders of Judaism as well.

Ignatius regards the apostles as the givers of commandments, regulations and decisions that are authoritative for the church, and in one instance (*Mag.* 4.1) alludes to a commandment that seems to evoke a teaching of the apostles that may resemble *Didache* 15.1-2. Yet this text does not seem to have exercised great influence on his ideas about episcopal leadership. Although Streeter argues that the resident prophet-high priest of the *Didache* may be regarded as the forerunner of Ignatius and his understanding of episcopal leadership, the comparison fails on a number of points. It is true that Ignatius presents himself as a spirit-filled prophetic character (e.g. *Phld.* 7.1-2), yet he always connects this activity with his liminal status as a prisoner for Christ and not his role as bishop of Antioch. He never intimates that his prophetic activity is either a consequence of, or more importantly a prerequisite for, leadership in that church. If the *Didache* was the rule book for Ignatius' church and if he was its resident prophet-high priest who for some reason decided to assume the title of bishop, he would have had to have been a prophet certified according to its instructions. None of this, however, can be demonstrated.

Neither does the resident prophet-high priest of the *Didache* bear much resemblance to Ignatius' conception of episcopal leaders. The resident prophet-high priest is to be obeyed because he has been certified as an authentic speaker "in spirit" by the leading householders of the Christian community. The bishop, according to Ignatius, is to be obeyed because he has been chosen for this office by God and Christ and is "clothed in grace." He conceives of Polycarp's access to revelations as resulting from incumbency in his office, rather than as a requirement for selection to it. The

Ignatian bishop is a routinized charismatic official while the resident prophet-high priest of the *Didache* is the holder of a charismatic office.⁴⁶ The results are similar when we compare Ignatius' single bishop with the multiple bishops of the *Didache*. The latter appear to be leading householders in the Christian community who are chosen or elected to their offices because they are "gentle men, not lovers of money, truthful and approved" (*Did.* 15.1). These bishops are to be respected because they are the community's honourable men (*Did.* 15.2), although they might enjoy a certain charisma of office arising from their role of speaking God's word (*Did.* 4.1-2). Ignatius shows no interest in the social status of the bishop, nor his ability to speaking God's or anyone else's word. A bishop is to be obeyed even if silent (*Eph.* 6.1; *Phld.* 1.1) simply because he is God's personally appointed steward and representative in the church.

Episcopal leaders as they are presented in Ignatius' letters bear little resemblance to the inspired scribe of the Matthean community, the resident prophet-high priest or bishops of the *Didache*, and none at all with the socially radical wandering charismatics of the *Gospel of Thomas*. The last chapter of John's Gospel contains the closest parallel to Ignatius' insistence that bishops acquire their ministries through the preferment of God and Christ. The shepherd of the Johannine community is appointed by the risen Lord who is present in the post-resurrection situation as the Paraclete/Holy Spirit. The appropriateness of this new institution is validated by the Beloved Disciple, the ideal Paraclete-inspired Johannine charismatic. Ignatius appears to be playing a similar role, legitimating episcopal leadership on the basis of the charismatic authority arising from his liminal status as a prisoner for Christ. This similarity in thought suggests that the Syrian bishop and his thoughts on the episcopacy originated in a milieu that may have been very similar to, if not actually Johannine.

⁴⁶ See discussion pp. 81-2. The difference between the two may be stated as follows: the resident prophet-high priest is an *office-holder* because he has *personal charisma* (unusual gifts/achievements such as speaking in spirit), while the bishop is perceived to *have charisma* because he is an *office-holder*.

4.2.4 Bishops as Part of the Threefold Order of Leadership and Authority

So far we have been dealing with what Ignatius has to say about bishops. The reality, however, is that he rarely speaks of bishops in isolation from other church leaders.¹ It is true that the Syrian bishop seems to emphasize the importance of the single ἐπίσκοπος. The bishop is God's and Christ's steward and representative in the local church exercising the power, grace and oversight of these divine patrons. In this capacity, the bishop acts as a broker mediating interactions between God and Christ and their human clients. In relation to the local community the bishop acts as a patriarchal and patronal figure offering protection and guidance to both the collectivity and to its individual members. In spite of the centrality of the episcopal office, Ignatius envisions the bishop leading the congregation together with a council of elders and a group of deacons. In most instances where the Syrian bishop seeks to strengthen episcopal authority he includes these other church leaders in his exhortations. It is to the elders and deacons that we will now turn our attention in order to understand their roles in relation to that of the bishop. Before examining what Ignatius has to say about elders and deacons, it is necessary to begin with a brief review of the role and place of elders and deacons in Greco-Roman societies.

Elder translates the Greek word πρεσβύτερος which denotes a person, usually a man, of great age and venerability. In the Greco-Roman world "elders" appear in numerous contexts as representatives of important families responsible for governing village and community life. In Israel and in Egypt, village elders were responsible for local administrative and judicial functions.² One finds committees or councils of πρεσβύτεροι in charge of trade guilds and associations, as well as colleges of priests.³ Elders and seniors are included among the honoured members and leaders of

¹ Campenhausen, 102.

² Exod. 18:13-17; 24:1-11; Num. 11:16-30; Judg. 21:16-24; 1 Sam. 8:1-9; Luke 7:1-10; see TDNT, VI:653 for Egyptian references.

³ TDNT, VI:653, where it is also noted that the elders in one priestly college ranged in age from 30-45 years old, suggesting that not all persons titled πρεσβύτεροι were "old men." Given life expectancies in the Greco-Roman world, for a person to have reached 30 or more years may well have been considered mature, if not venerable. Peter Brown, *The Body and Society*, 6, suggests that in the 2nd century average life expectancy was less than 25 years. Only 4 out of every 100 males, and fewer females, lived beyond 50 years of age.

municipalities and of civic institutions in the Greek world.⁴ The leadership of Jewish synagogues commonly included a council of elders whose duties involved the collection of monies, administration of worship services, and communal decision making. Economic and financial status seem to have been closely related to synagogue leadership, so that in many instances elders were patrons and benefactors of their congregations.⁵ Elders would have been the customary traditional authority figures in many communities, deriving their right to be obeyed from ascribed personal attributes such as gender, age and social status. Elders who were also civic officials or officers of private associations would have exercised the impersonal (rational-legal) authority of an office which was acquired primarily on the basis of ascribed personal attributes (traditional authority) along with the ability to act as a community patron.⁶

It is quite likely that early Christian groups simply continued to use the organizational structures and titles that were dominant in their cultural environment. Elders appear in leading roles in a number of communities. In the absence of other evidence one might assume that like their pagan and Jewish counterparts, Christian elders were mature household heads of some status in the community. Elders appear as leaders in the Jerusalem church, first alongside the apostles (Acts 15:2) and then later alongside James the brother of Jesus (Acts 21:18). The church at Ephesus is depicted as being led by elders during the lifetime of the apostle Paul (Acts 20:17, 28-29). Although "elders" are never mentioned in the authentic Pauline letters, the Pastoral epistles give instructions allegedly from the great apostle concerning the appointment of elders in every town (Titus 1:5), and the payment of elders who labour in preaching and teaching (1 Tim. 5:17). The Lucan and deutero-Pauline elders appear to have episcopal and pastoral functions (Acts 20:28-29; Titus 1:5-7), as do those in the eastern provinces⁷ addressed by the writer of 1 Peter who claims to be an elder of the

⁴ Gordon, "The Veil of Power," 228-9 includes a list of monetary gifts paid out by a wealthy patron and official of Sillyon in Pamphlia. In that list elders (*geraios*) are listed second after members of the city council as recipients of largesse.

⁵ Kraemer, Her Share of the Blessings, 119; Stambaugh and Balch, 49; Bo Reicke, The Epistles of James, Peter and Jude: Introduction, Translation and Notes, (Anchor Bible 37; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964), 58.

⁶ See pages 24-5, above, on these types of authority.

⁷ 1 Pet. 1:1 indicates that the letter is intended to be circulated among the churches of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia.

church in Rome (1 Pet. 5:1-5, 13). The Syrian churches addressed by the epistle of James are presumed to be led by "elders" (James 5:14). The writer of 2 and 3 John, possibly of Syrian provenance, styles himself "The Elder" (2 John 1, 3 John 1), a personal epithet indicating seniority within the Johannine circle. Although the author of the *Didache* never mentions "elders," it has been argued that the recipients of his instructions were most likely leading Christian householders who would have been the functional equivalents of elders. They appear to have been responsible for teaching new members of the community, overseeing communal rites and ceremonies, scrutinizing visitors, and appointing or electing church officers. Ignatius as we shall see certainly expects, and indeed insists, that every congregation must have a council of elders who rule together with the bishop and are assisted by the deacons.

Deacon is a transliteration of the Greek word *διάκονος* which in secular usage could designate one who waits at table, or a servant.⁸ Figuratively it could be used to describe a statesman as a *διάκονος τὴν πολεῶς*, or a wise man as a servant of God.⁹ Josephus calls himself a *διάκονος θεοῦ* on account of his prophecy concerning Vespasian's elevation to the imperial throne.¹⁰ The title *διάκονος* occurs in inscriptions detailing the activities of members of religious groups and associations. In these instances *διάκονοι* are mentioned alongside priests and priestesses, and often in relation to cooks. It appears that they were involved in the serving of food from the sacrifices, and participated in various cultic activities.¹¹ Priests and priestesses in Greco-Roman cults were frequently members of the elite who had inherited their offices, were co-opted into them, or acquired them through acts of benevolence and patronage. These high status persons presided over ritual performances, assisted by skilled specialists and functionaries drawn from the lower classes.¹² In religious associations then *διάκονοι* were most likely to be lower class persons who acquired specific official duties through training and/or appointment.

⁸ BAGD, 184; Liddell and Scott, 398; TDNT, II:82

⁹ TDNT, II:82-3.

¹⁰ Ibid, 91.

¹¹ Ibid, 92; Liddell-Scott, 398.

¹² North, "Diviners and Divination at Rome," 53.

Διάκονος appears in the New Testament writings, where it takes on the same spectrum of meanings as is found in the pagan world. In the gospels it refers to servants at a banquet responsible for serving wine (John 2:5, 9), persons who serve or minister to others (Matt. 20:26; 23:11; Mark 9:35, 10:43), as well as those who are servants of Christ (John 12:26). Paul describes himself and others as δῆκονοι of God, Christ or some other higher power.¹³ In two instances he seems to use the word as a title for church leaders, identifying Phoebe as a δῆκονος of the church at Cenchraea (Rom. 16:1-2), and addressing his letter to the church at Philippi to the saints in that community together with their ἐπίσκοποι and δῆκονοι (Phil. 1:1). The Pauline author of Ephesians and Colossians calls himself a δῆκονος of the gospel (Eph. 3:6-7; Col. 1:23), and sends greetings from his co-worker Tychicus, a δῆκονος in the Lord (Eph. 6:21; Col. 4:7, cf. 1:7 of Epaphras). The writer of the Pastoral Epistles provides instructions concerning the sort of persons who should be appointed or selected to serve as δῆκονοι in the church (1Tim. 3:8-13). Ignatius uses δῆκονοι as a title referring to a specific group of persons involved in the leadership of local congregations together with the bishop and council of elders.

Turning, then, to the letters of Ignatius we can begin by noting that he seems to think of the bishop and elders as a leadership unit. The Ephesian Christians, for instance, are urged to honour Jesus Christ by being "joined in one obedience, subject to the bishop *and the council of elders*" (Eph. 2.2, emphasis mine), and to "obey the bishop *and council of elders* with an undistracted purpose" (Eph. 20.2, emphasis mine). In these sentences Ignatius exhorts his readers to acknowledge not only the authority of the bishop, but to also affirm the right of the council of elders to exercise power over them. Obedience and submission to bishop and elders are acts of commitment, confirming and validating their authority. Such commitment is the appropriate way to honour and glorify Christ, in Ignatius' opinion, and has the added consequence of making church members holy in every respect (Eph. 2.2). Obedience is owed to bishop and elders together, suggesting that Ignatius envisions them acting as a unit. The same elders whom the Ephesians are to obey are held up by the Syrian bishop as exemplifying the correct way to relate to their bishop Onesimus. Ignatius describes the Ephesian πρεσβυτέριον as being "attuned to the bishop like the strings of a cithara" (Eph. 4.1). Again the

¹³ Paul and others are θεοῦ δῆκονοι (2Cor. 6:3-4), and should be δῆκονοι χριστοῦ (2Cor. 11:23). Christ is a servant of the circumcised (Rom. 15:8), but is definitely not a servant of sin (Gal. 2:17).

image is that of a cohesive unit (at least ideally), a collegial leadership team headed by the bishop. The unified and harmonious, or alternatively divisive and fractious, operations of this group will inevitably set the tone for the rest of the congregation.

A similar picture is presented in Ignatius' letter to the church at Magnesia where he praises both deacon and elders for the way they relate to their bishop. The deacon Zotion is commended because "he submits to the bishop as to the grace of God *and to the council of elders as to the law of Jesus Christ*" (*Mag.* 2.1. emphasis mine). As in Ephesians the bishop and council of elders form a leadership unit, the deacons as exemplified by Zotion are subordinate to this group.¹⁴ Zotion's behaviour is exemplary in that he recognizes his subordinate position among the leaders of the community, and affirms the authority of his superiors. Ignatius compares Zotion's submission to the bishop with submitting to God's grace or favour, pointing to the bishop's role as mediator of the deity's gifts to the community. Subjection to the council of elders is likened to subjecting oneself to the "law of Jesus Christ," suggesting a somewhat legislative role for the πρεσβυτέριον with respect to the commandments and teachings of Jesus.¹⁵

The Magnesian elders, for their part, are commended for not taking advantage of their bishop's apparent youthfulness, but associating with him on friendly terms, recognizing that they are really dealing with the personal appointee of the heavenly Father and bishop of all (*Mag.* 3.1). The Magnesian Christians are urged to follow the example of their elders by not taking advantage of Damas' immaturity, but to show him all the respect that is due to one who wields the power of God (*Mag.* 3.1). As in Ephesians, one gets the impression of bishop and elders forming a leadership unit whose conduct has potentially significant ramifications not only for congregational unity, but also for the effectiveness of episcopal rule. One of the ways in which Ignatius seems to expect the elders to lead the congregation is by supporting the bishop, even when he is a young man to whom they, as senior members of the community, might not normally defer. The lack of such support would, no doubt, seriously undercut Damas' ability to function as a bishop overseeing every aspect of communal life as well as the personal affairs of its members such as arranging marriages, looking

¹⁴ Jay, 139.

¹⁵ Contra Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 107, who argues that these comparisons probably do not tell us much, if anything, about the responsibilities attached to the offices of bishop and elder.

after widows, supervising the celibate and the like (*Pol.* 4.1-5.2). Fortunately for Damas, the elders and deacons of his community behave appropriately, so much so that Ignatius is willing to hold them up as an "example and teaching of imperishability" (*Mag.* 6.2).

In the same letter the Syrian bishop urges his readers to do everything in harmony "with the bishop presiding in the place of God and the elders in the place of the council of apostles and the deacons...who have been entrusted with the ministry of Jesus Christ" (*Mag.* 6.1). This passage points to the representative function of church leaders within the local congregation. While the bishop represents divine persons, acting as their steward and agent in the church, the elders and deacons are connected with historical persons and activities. Ignatius asserts that the elders lead in place of the council of apostles who are depicted as persons through whom the Lord acted in the past (*Mag.* 7.1). Their instructions together with the teachings of the Lord form the *δόγματα* which Ignatius regards as normative for the church (*Mag.* 13.1). The elders are thus connected with the founding persons of the Christian movement, and represent continued recognition of and commitment to the teaching of these historic persons.¹⁶ As the community's more senior leading members, the elders stand closest to the founders and may be responsible for the preservation and transmission of their teachings.¹⁷

The deacons for their part are engaged in carrying forward and continuing into the present a ministry rooted in the past earthly life of Jesus, though specifically what this involves Ignatius does not say. The Syrian bishop's references to the deacons Burrhus and Zotion as "slaves" (*Eph.* 2.1; *Mag.* 2) might point to their social status as lower class members of the Christian community, as well as their subordination to the bishop and elders of their congregations. Like the office of elder, that of deacon is legitimated by its connections, real or imagined, with the past.¹⁸ Interestingly Ignatius does not connect the role of bishop with historical figures and/or activities, implying a

¹⁶ For the view that the apostles are primary historical figures for Ignatius see Maier, 184-5, Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 112-3, Stoops, 168. Some scholars prefer to regard the apostles as heavenly characters, most notably Chadwick, 169-72 who regards the earthly ministry as reflecting a heavenly hierarchy; so too Pagels, 306-7. Allen Brent, "History and Eschatological Mysticism" 316, and "Ignatius and the *Didascalia*" 138, opts for a synthesis of the two views with the elders standing in some sort of mystical continuity with the historical apostles, reincarnating their historical sending in the present.

¹⁷ Jay, 138-9.

¹⁸ Maier, 185, correctly asserts that Ignatius' intention is to legitimate these leaders and to strengthen their authority by connecting them to awe-inspiring historical figures.

different source of legitimacy and authority, and perhaps even a different origin, at least in the Syrian circles from which he emerges.

A similar set of comparisons is made in *Trallians*. Ignatius urges his readers to do nothing without their bishop and to obey the council of elders as the apostles of Jesus Christ (*Tral.* 2.2). As in *Magnesians*, he connects the elders with the founding members of the Christian movement. They are τύποι, representatives, of God's council and the band of apostles (*Tral.* 3.1). When Ignatius turns his attention to the deacons, he speaks of their duties rather than of the respect which is owed to them. The Syrian bishop writes:

it is also necessary for those who are ministers (τοὺς διακόνους) of the mysteries of Jesus Christ to try to please everyone in every way. For they are not ministers (διάκονοι) of food and drink, but servants (ὑπηρέται) of God's church. Therefore it is necessary for them to guard against accusations as against fire (*Tral.* 2.3).

These remarks suggest that deacons may have been associated with the eucharist, common meals, and/or charity, all of which involved the distribution of food and drink in contexts ranging from sacred ritual (mysteries) to more mundane community situations. Ignatius' comments suggest that in carrying out their duties deacons may have been open to charges of favouritism, of showing partiality towards some community members at the expense of others.¹⁹ While differential treatment based usually on social status and rank was common in the Greco-Roman world,²⁰ it seems to have been discouraged in early Christian circles.²¹

The distribution of food and drink could give the deacons a source of power enabling them to control the actions of some fellow church members. Favouritism may have been one way of demonstrating that power. It is the wrong way, according to Ignatius who encourages the deacons to regard themselves as more than just distributors of food and drink. He reminds them that they are ministers of Christ's mysteries and servants of the church, and must behave accordingly which means pleasing everyone, thereby avoiding charges which may be potentially divisive and destructive in

¹⁹ Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 141.

²⁰ MacMullen, *Roman Social Relations*, 75-7, 88-120; Saller, *Personal Patronage*, 11-2; Garnsey and Saller, 149.

²¹ See for example 1 Cor. 11:17-34; 12:12-26; Acts 6:1-6.

terms of the unity and solidarity that Ignatius so prizes. The corollary of the deacons pleasing everyone is that everyone is to respect the deacons as Jesus Christ (*Tral.* 3.1). Here Ignatius connects the deacons directly with Jesus, and not just the task of carrying out Jesus' ongoing ministry in the church, as he does in *Magnesians* 6.1.

The Syrian bishop concludes his instructions concerning leadership in *Trallians* by asserting that without a bishop, council of elders and deacons "nothing is called ἐκκλησία" (*Tral.* 3.1). It is the gathering of the people with their bishop, council of elders, and deacons which constitutes the "altar," the point of mediation between heaven and earth, in which purity is found (*Tral.* 7.2). In Ignatius' opinion, only those Christian groups or gatherings that are led by this tripartite order should be recognized as legitimate congregations or assemblies. The implication is that some Christians meet in the absence of such leaders and/or have formed groups with alternative leadership arrangements. Ignatius would not consider such gatherings or groups to be ἐκκλησία and claims to be convinced that the Trallian Christians share his views (*Tral.* 3.2). These emphatic statements coupled with indicators that the Trallian Christians have contacts with a "faction" that in Ignatius' opinion is not one of the Father's "plantings" (*Tral.* 6.1-8.2) suggest that he may be trying to persuade them to adopt this view.

The same sort of comparisons and injunctions appear in Ignatius' letter to the church at Smyrna, whose members are urged to follow their bishop as Jesus Christ followed the Father, to follow the council of elders as the apostles, and to respect the deacons as the commandment of God (*Smyr.* 8.1). The Syrian bishop once again seeks to strengthen the authority of church leaders by comparing and connecting them with divine and historical religious persons. Commitment to the bishop's governance is to be patterned after Jesus' perfect obedience to the Father with the congregation taking on the role of Jesus while the bishop stands in for God. Although worded differently the point is the same that Ignatius makes in *Magnesians* (2.1-3.2, 6.1) and in *Trallians* (3.2): the bishop is God's representative in the church. While the elders are consistently likened to the apostles whom they represent in the church (*Mag.* 6.1; *Tral.* 2.2, 3.1; *Phld.* 5.1),²² the deacons

²² Only in *Mag.* 2.1, are the elders connected with anything other than the apostles. Here Zotion is said to submit to the council of elders as to the law of Jesus Christ. Ignatius, however, does connect the apostles with issuing commandments and regulations (*Tral.* 3.3, 7.1; *Rom.* 4.3; *Mag.* 13.1).

are here connected with an unspecified "commandment of God." Elsewhere Ignatius associates the deacons with the ministry of Jesus (*Mag.* 6.1) and with Jesus Christ himself (*Tral.* 3.1.).

In his greeting to the church at Philadelphia, Ignatius insists that the bishop, elders and deacons who are with him have been appointed according to the will and purpose of Jesus Christ and established by the Holy Spirit (*Phld.* inscr.). This is the clearest statement in the Syrian bishop's letters concerning the origins and basis of this tripartite form of church leadership. The threefold ministry that together governs the church has been established by the Holy Spirit. When pressed hard to defend this leadership structure, Ignatius appeals neither to scripture nor apostolic commands, but cries out with the Spirit-inspired "voice of God" to give heed to bishop, elders and deacons (*Phld.* 7.1-2). It is the Spirit who ultimately legitimates the tripartite system of leadership, and Ignatius is the vehicle through whom the Spirit speaks to establish, secure and strengthen its creation. So central to the Syrian bishop's mission in life is this leadership structure that he can tell the church at Smyrna, "I am a ransom given for those submitting to the bishop, elders and deacons" (*Pol.* 6.1). This is the cause for which he dies, willingly giving up his life to give life to a particular church order.

The martyr-elect's legacy is not the invention or description of moniscopacy,²³ but the articulation of the threefold structure of church leadership. The Ignatian system of bishop, elders and deacons appears to be a synthesis of leadership patterns that were emerging in various Syrian Christians circles at the end of the 1st century. Ignatius' defense of the bishop of Philadelphia suggests that the single ἐπίσκοπος acquired his office through a procedure intended to discern God's choice. Such a process of selection might have involved the drawing of lots, prophetic oracles, revelations and the like. It was this sign of divine favour which legitimates the bishop's right to be obeyed, and not his maturity or his speech. Revelations and/or Spirit-possession are used to legitimate the authority of the Matthean scribal leader, the socially radical charismatic of the Thomas Christians, and the pastoral leader of the Johannine community. Ignatius' lack of interest in the sort of scribal activity which is central to the Matthean community, and his criticism and correction of Christians who are preoccupied with searching the scriptural archives (*Phld.* 8.2), suggests that he did not model his concept of episcopal leadership on Matthew's Peter. Similarly his

²³ *Contra* Brent, "Ignatius and Ecclesiastical Order," 19.

cautions about ascetic practices (*Pol.* 5.2), and his vilification of itinerant preachers or teachers (*Eph.* 7.1-9.1) seem to preclude the notion that he might be adopting the sort of leadership favoured in the *Gospel of Thomas*. The closest parallel to Ignatius' notion of episcopal leadership and authority seems to be Peter's elevation to the pastoral office in the Johannine gospel despite his lack of understanding and insight (John 21:15-18). It is the risen Lord, present in the community as the Paraclete who singles Peter out in a visionary experience that is validated by the Beloved Disciple (John 21:24).

If Ignatius picked up some of his central ideas about the role and status of bishops in Johannine circles, where do the elders and deacons come from? Unfortunately the Syrian bishop provides no information about how these offices are acquired, and very little about the personal attributes of those who occupy them. The elders of Magnesia are older than their bishop, Damas (*Mag.* 3.1) suggesting they are the sort of individuals one would expect to find labelled "elders," i.e. mature and experienced persons. Like their Jewish and pagan counterparts, they are probably the heads of leading households and patrons of the Christian community. The deacons, Burrhus and Zotion are referred to as "slaves," pointing perhaps to their lower social status as well as their subordinate roles in the church's hierarchy of leadership. Their primary function involves the distribution of food and drink in ritual and other communal contexts. These Christian deacons seem to be quite similar to the *διάκονοι* one finds involved in the pagan religious associations of the time. But where in the Syrian Christian environment do we find parallels or models?

Neither Matthew nor the *Gospel of Thomas* shows any interest in or provides information about Christian elders and deacons. The Johannine community seems to know only the singular Elder who wrote the two letters which bear his epithet. This character appears to be a senior charismatic tradition-maker engaged in the articulation of a body of customs and teachings, somewhat like Matthew's Peter but claiming more explicitly to possess and mediate divine gifts.²⁴ *Διάκονοι* appear in John's gospel serving the wine at the marriage feast in Cana (John 2:5, 9). The Johannine Jesus promises that the Father will honour those who serve and follow him, asserting that wherever he is, his *διάκονος* will be too (John 12:26). This is pretty scant material out of which to build a system of church leadership. The *Didache*, however, does contain instructions to appoint or

²⁴ See above, pages 97-8.

elect bishops and deacons to carry out the ministries of prophets and teachers. Those appointed to these offices are to be mild-tempered, honest, not greedy, as well as *δεδοκιμασμένους*: approved, tested or examined (*Did.* 15.1-2). This last instruction indicates that some sort of test was involved, but a test of what we are not told. Did these men have to prove themselves capable of performing the services of the prophets and teachers, such as speaking the word of God? Or did they only have to prove that they had good characters and were capable of managing their household affairs (cf. 1 Tim. 3:1-13, 5:1-2, 17-22; Tit. 1:5-9)? Or was the test intended to indicate divine approval? None of these options is either ruled out or confirmed. Nor are we told how the incumbents for these roles were selected from the pool of eligible members.

There seem to be two ways in which links can be drawn between Ignatius and the *Didache*. The traditional approach is to argue that the bishops of the *Didache* are actually elders or their equivalent, and that the two titles are interchangeable.²⁵ Certainly in many early Christian communities this seems to have been the case.²⁶ It could be argued that those whom the *Didache* labels bishops, Ignatius calls elders. He restricts the title of bishop to the one person who comes to fill the place of the resident prophet. This is the sort of transition suggested by Streeter who posits an Antiochene church led by a resident prophet together with bishops and deacons. In a single generation under the leadership of an ambitious man of administrative ability like Ignatius, he asserts, this structure would solidify into a threefold ministry of bishop, presbyters and deacons with the bishop replacing the resident prophet.²⁷ In Streeter's scheme *1 Clement* provides the bridge between the two systems. In the *Didache* the resident prophet is identified as high priest, in *1 Clement* it is the bishop who acts as high priest, with the roles of priest and levite being filled by presbyter and deacon.²⁸ Unfortunately the connections between Ignatius and *1 Clement* are so scant, and the differences in their points of view so great that Streeter's thesis must be set aside.

An alternative way of linking Ignatius and *Didache* becomes available when we realize that

²⁵ Schaff, 73; Spence, 151-2.

²⁶ Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Pet. 1:2; Tit. 1:5-7.

²⁷ Streeter, 152.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 157.

although the author of the latter document appears to be advocating a two-tiered hierarchy of bishops and deacons to replace prophets and teachers, the text itself provides evidence of a three-tiered system of leadership. I have suggested that the *Didache* may be addressed to leading householders and house-church patrons, persons who in other communities were referred to as elders. Similarly, Jefford argues that the recipients of these apostolic instructions were persons in authority in Christian congregations, responsible for teaching the young and newly recruited, overseeing communal rituals, scrutinizing visitors, and choosing community officials. Jefford asserts that since these were the tasks which belonged to elders in the early church, the recipients of the *Didache* must have been elders.²⁹ If Jefford is correct, the churches addressed would have been led first by these householders/elders alongside the prophets and teachers they certified and permitted to remain in the community. Gradually a move was made to replace the prophets and teachers with bishops and deacons chosen from the local membership by the elders. When this move was made these churches would have been led by elders, bishops and deacons. This structure is legitimated by presenting it as the *teaching of the apostles* to be implemented by the elders. I would suggest that this is where we might locate the roots of Ignatius' thinking on elders, a group whom he consistently associates with the apostles. The bishops of the *Didache* are intended to replace or carry out the functions of the resident prophets-high priests and/or teachers who seem to be in short supply. It is not impossible to imagine the Johannine Paraclete-selected shepherd as an equally, or perhaps an even more, acceptable replacement for scarce prophets. Ignatius' choice of bishop as a title for this figure may be reflective of a merger of Johannine and Didachist Christian streams in the circle to which he belonged. His conception of deacons as lower status liturgical and community functionaries does not appear contradictory to the instructions of the *Didache*, given how little is actually said about their duties in that document. The tripartite system of bishop, elders and deacons advocated by Ignatius might well have emerged from the adoption of the *Didache's* apostolic tradition by a Johannine community prior to the publication of the 4th gospel. This would also explain Ignatius' allusions to traditions that appear in the *Didache*, the importance of the apostles and their commandments which in a Johannine way are always left unspecified, the curiously Johannine ring of many of the Syrian bishop's phrases, and the absence of quotations from John's gospel.

²⁹ Jefford, *Sayings of Jesus*, 127.

4.3 Summary of Leadership and Authority in the Letters of Ignatius

The purpose of this part of my study has been to describe in both *etic* and *emic* terms the forms of leadership and authority that we find expressed in the letters of Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, written *ca.* 110 CE. We began by examining the authority which Ignatius claimed for himself, that is, why he thought his readers should follow his instructions. This was followed by an exploration of what the martyr-elect had to say about the leadership and authority of bishops. Episcopal leadership was analyzed first in terms of how it reflected the *emic* model of patronage, focusing on the bishop's role as patron in relation to the congregation and its members, and as broker in the relationship between the local church and its divine patron. An *etic* analysis followed which highlighted the routinized charismatic aspects of episcopal authority as conceived by Ignatius. Finally the leadership and authority of bishops was placed within the context of the threefold structure of leadership advocated by the Syrian bishop. Points of contact with the Syrian Christian models of leadership described in the previous section have been suggested wherever appropriate.

That Ignatius was regarded by his peers as an authority figure is indicated by the efforts made to meet with him and to carry out his requests. Messengers preceded his arrival in Asia Minor and Rome. Church leaders travelled to Smyrna to meet with him, and carried back letters to their congregations. Churches sent delegations and letters of congratulations to Antioch at Ignatius' request. Polycarp preserved, copied and distributed the Syrian bishop's letters. All this activity demonstrates that Ignatius was considered to be a person of some consequence. No doubt his status as a bishop from Antioch ensured that he was seen as an important person from an important place, yet he himself downplayed his episcopal authority. He could do so, in part, because his readers were hardly likely to forget who he was. More importantly, however, Ignatius would have been aware that episcopal authority was exercised in the context of the local congregation. His office would have made him the peer of the bishops of Asia Minor with whom he interacted, and not their superior with the right to expect their obedience. Ignatius' letters, moreover, indicate that some Christians in Asia Minor did not think much of bishops. Among such Christians appeals to episcopal authority would not have been very effective. It is no surprise then to find that Ignatius prefers to appeal to his personal authority as a prophet and a martyr-elect.

A number of scholars have identified several passages in Ignatius' letters as evidence of

prophetic activity on the Syrian bishop's part (*Phld.* 7.1-2; *Eph.* 19.2-3, 20.1-2; *Tral.* 4.1-5.2; *Rom.* 7.1). Ignatius' prophecies, revelations and knowledge of heavenly things can be seen as expressions of exceptional personal gifts or achievements that mark him out as a person enjoying privileged access to the divine realm, and therefore able to act as an intermediary between God and the Christian communities. These abilities indicate that Ignatius' personal authority was of the charismatic type, and mark him out as a *charismatic broker*, a role that is closely connected with his status as a prisoner for Christ. His social location is liminal, caught between two social conditions or states. Ignatius has been condemned by the Roman justice system, put in chains and under guard, signs that he has been placed outside the boundaries of normal society. He is in transit, travelling to his place of execution, an event that will permanently and irrevocably remove him from human society. In this state the Syrian bishop is to a certain extent beyond the boundaries of his Christian subculture as well. He sees himself and is regarded by other Christians as being poised on the threshold of the heavenly and spiritual realm, and is thus particularly open to communications from that invisible world. Not only is Ignatius' impending martyrdom justified by a prophetic call (*Rom.* 7.2), his prophetic abilities are enhanced by his liminal status. Prophet and martyr are mutually reinforcing roles played by the Syrian bishop. The martyr-elect, like the prophet, is a *charismatic broker* mediating between God and humanity on the basis of exceptional personal achievement, specifically his extraordinary personal loyalty to Christ.

One of the most interesting aspects of Ignatius' personal authority is its relationship with what scholars refer to as his "self-effacement." Most assessments of this phenomenon assume that the Syrian bishop is an introspective guilt-ridden individual articulating his inmost feelings and tensions. Ignatius, however, is more likely to have been a dyadic, group oriented personality, whose self-effacing comments are socially motivated and oriented. They reflect the Syrian bishop's social location as an outsider, without personal status or role in the churches which he addresses, and his concern not to violate the strict code of honour which governed the societies of the Greco-Roman world. Ignatius' self-effacing statements are part of a defensive strategy, enabling him to be heard as an authoritative speaker without impinging on the honour of the Christian communities and their leaders who are his audience. The aptness of such an interpretation is supported by Plutarch's essay on the topic of how to praise oneself without causing envy. In this work Plutarch sets out the

conditions under which a person may legitimately engage in self-praise, and the various strategies used by Greco-Roman speakers to make their boasting less offensive. These include balancing self-praise with praise for one's audience, indirectly praising oneself by commending a well-known person who shares the same career and virtues, giving credit for one's success to the gods, making modest claims about one's accomplishments, balancing these with references to one's faults, and emphasizing the difficulties and dangers one has faced. A comparison of Ignatius' self-effacing statements and Plutarch's instructions shows that the Syrian bishop has mastered the conventions and rhetoric of self-praise.

When speaking of himself Ignatius is appropriately modest, liberally laces his comments with praise for his audience, and gives credit to God for his achievements (e.g. *Eph.* 3.1, *Smyr.* 10.2-11.1). He artistically plays up the virtues of his readers by highlighting his own shortcomings which always have to do with the hardships of his role as a martyr-elect (*Eph.* 12.1-2). Ignatius indirectly claims for himself parity with the great apostles, especially Paul, on the basis of the common experience of martyrdom (*Eph.* 12.1-2; *Rom.* 4.3). When he makes explicitly "apostolic" claims (*Tral.* inscr.), they are contradicted by professions of unworthiness which focus on his status as a prisoner for Christ (*Tral.* 3.3), and which serve to create ambiguity about his claims to status. When defending himself against what he believes are false charges the Syrian bishop refuses to equivocate, explicitly presenting himself as a vehicle of divine communication, a situation directly linked with his liminal status (*Phld.* 5.1, 7.1-2). When he feels it necessary to correct the attitudes of his readers, Ignatius presents himself as a role model, a person with a true claim to prestige because he is a martyr-elect, but who refuses to be puffed up about it preferring instead to cultivate humility and modesty (*Tral.* 4.1-5.2). Ignatius consistently plays up his status as a prisoner for Christ, either directly or indirectly through the conventions of self-praise. It is only as a liminal and charismatic figure that the Syrian bishop can justify his intrusion into the affairs of communities in which he has no traditional or official role and status.

In his work on the social setting of the early Christian ministry, Harry Maier has sought to demonstrate that the bishops Ignatius met in Asia Minor were house-church patrons, by highlighting Polycarp's social location as a property owner and head of an affluent household. Ignatius, however, does not relate episcopal authority to house church patronage, arguing instead the bishops should be

obeyed because they are established by the Holy Spirit, and are commended and guided by the church's divine patron. Although Ignatius is not interested in whether or not a bishop is a householder and a patron of the church, he does expect bishops to act as patriarchal and patronal figures in relation to their congregations. His instructions to Polycarp show that he thinks of the bishop as possessing an office that requires him to interact with both earthly and heavenly beings (*Pol.* 1.2-3). Ignatius uses commonplace rhetorical images of the physician, the navigator, and the battered but victorious athlete (*Pol.* 2.1-3, 3.1, 1.3) to describe episcopal functions within the community. When he turns to the practical everyday matters of congregational life, patriarchal and patronal images predominate. Ignatius expects bishops to act as the guardians of widows (*Pol.* 4.1), ensure that slaves maintain their proper places in the community (*Pol.* 4.3-5.1), approve marriages between church members, and preserve the privacy of celibate arrangements (*Pol.* 5.2).

Ignatius draws on the common Greco-Roman image of the shepherd watching over and guarding his sheep to express that aspect of episcopal leadership which involves protecting the collective honour and integrity of the churches. For Ignatius both human bishops and divine persons, i.e. God and/or Christ, act as Christian shepherds. Ignatius describes himself as the shepherd of the church in Syria, a role which in his absence falls to Christ (*Rom.* 9.1). The roles of the human and divine shepherds appear to be interchangeable and to replicate each other. Ignatius argues that bishops provide the best security against the dangers of division and false teaching (*Phld.* 2.1-3.2; *Tral.* 7.1). Although this may seem naive, it probably arises out of a Syrian context not unlike that of the Johannine circle in which pastoral leadership is advocated in a situation of charismatic rivalry with christological overtones. Not only does Ignatius expect bishops to protect congregational integrity in the face of both internal conflicts and external threats, his remarks also indicate he views them as (stereo)typical members of the churches which they represent publicly (*Eph.* 1.3, 2.1; *Mag.* 2.1; *Tral.* 1.1-2) .

Inseparable from the episcopal functions of acting as patron and protector of the local congregation and its members, is the role of broker or mediator. Ignatius' opening remarks to Polycarp indicate that his fellow bishop holds a formal position or office which involves interacting with both the fleshly and spiritual realms (*Pol.* 1.2-3). This interaction occurs through a hierarchy of divine and human mediators. The Syrian bishop presents God as the divine patron whose mind

is made known through Jesus Christ, the divine mediator, whose intentions are articulated by bishops, the human brokers (*Eph.* 3.2-4.1). The bishop's intermediary status is a position of power deriving from control over second-order resources, i.e. access to the divine broker and patron, and the heavenly goods (first-order resources) they control. Obedience to the bishop and participation in the eucharistic gathering he leads is the only means, Ignatius insists, of being heard and recognized by the Father (*Eph.* 4.1-2, 5.2), participating in his patronage (*Eph.* 4.2), receiving the "bread of God" which prevents death (*Eph.* 5.2), and securing protection against the destructive powers of Satan (*Eph.* 13.1-2). Through the eucharistic gathering of the church Christians tap into the power that was activated at the time of Christ's incarnation, and carry forward the eschatological program of sweeping away Satan's destructive powers (*Eph.* 13.1-2). Ignatius' exhortations to obey and submit to the bishop are attempts to persuade his readers to affirm the position of the bishop in this hierarchy of mediation.

Episcopal "silence" is, in the Syrian bishop's opinion no reason to disregard a bishop. Episcopal authority has nothing to do with a bishop's capacity, skill or competence for speaking God's or anyone else's words. Obedience is required because the bishop is the Lord's steward sent by him to manage God's household on earth (*Eph.* 6.1), that is, because the bishop occupies an office which confers authority in and of itself, regardless of the incumbent's personal accomplishments. Even a youthful bishop should be obeyed without hypocrisy because, in spite of his age, he is the holder of an office invested with the grace, power and episcopacy of God (*Mag.* 2.1, 3.1). The bishop leads the local congregation in the place of God (*Mag.* 6.1), and should be respected as a τύπος, a representative, of the heavenly Father (*Tral.* 3.2). Seen through the lens of the *emic* model of patronage, the human bishop is like the steward put in charge of a rural estate owned by a member of the urban elite (God). While the owner (God) is away on business in another part of the empire, he appoints a chief steward (Christ) in the city of his residence. All communications between the rural peasants (church members) and the owner (God) pass through the steward (bishop) and chief steward (Christ). The steward (bishop) is the vehicle through which the owner's (God's) power, oversight and favour are exercised on the rural estate. He acts in behalf of and in place of the absent owner (God). As the owner's (God's) appointed representative and agent he may be described as a τύπος, an image or copy of his master (God). In *etic* terms, the Ignatian bishop appears to be the

holder of an office which invests the incumbent with acquired impersonal (rational-legal) authority regardless of acquired skills and competence and ascribed personal attributes such as age.

Ignatius' position, therefore, seems to be that bishops should be obeyed *because they are bishops*. In his defense of the bishop of Philadelphia, Ignatius asserts that this bishop acquired his episcopal ministry not through any human agency, but through the love, friendship and partiality of God and Christ (*Phld.* 1.1). Having met this bishop in person Ignatius affirms that he is a pious person, attuned to God's commandments, whose demeanour and character accurately reflect his relationship and attachment to his divine patron(s). Even his silence and passivity are awesome reflections of divine attributes (*Phld.* 1.1-2). Ignatius' remarks seem to suggest that bishops acquired their offices through some procedure believed to indicate divine preferment, such as the drawing of lots, prophetic oracles, revelations, seemingly miraculous occurrences, and the like. Those chosen through such procedures should be seen as persons worthy of respect and obedience. They are persons "bishops by God" (*Pol.* inscr.), whose minds are so firmly grounded in God, that the heavenly Father "clothes" them with χάρις (*Pol.* inscr. 1-2). This χάρις is both power and favour, including appointment to the episcopal office and access to the revelation of unseen things (*Pol.* 2.2) necessary to guard the church placed in the bishop's care.

In *Magnesians* 4.1, Ignatius insists that those Christians who name a bishop but do everything apart from him, are not meeting "validly according to the commandment." This is the only instance where the Syrian bishop appears to legitimate episcopal authority by appeal to a commandment, even though he does not specify its content. The closest parallel might be found in the *Didache's* instruction not to despise bishops and deacons (*Did.* 15.1-2). The connection is not secure, however, resting only on the possibility that the "two things" leading to life and death (*Mag.* 5.1) might be an allusion to the "two ways" of the *Didache* (1.1). It is more likely that Ignatius uses "commandment" in a Johannine way to suggest the principals of love and unity which should govern congregational life. When really pushed to defend episcopal authority, however, Ignatius argues that bishops, as part of the threefold leadership structure, are appointed to the will of Christ and established by the Holy Spirit (*Phld.* inscr.; *Eph.* 3.2). When pushed to find scriptural support for his arguments Ignatius is unable to do so (*Phld.* 8.2) and resorts to prophetic speech, insisting that it is the Spirit who proclaims the need for obedience to bishops and other church leaders (*Phld.* 7.1-2).

This appeal to the Spirit as ultimately and definitively legitimating episcopal authority along with the tripartite system of church governance is highly illustrative, pointing to the origins of this office in the Syrian environment from which Ignatius emerges. It suggests that he comes from a Christian community in which this form of leadership was fairly recently introduced by prophets speaking in the Spirit in the name of Jesus.

Our examination of episcopal leadership and authority in the letters of Ignatius concludes with an examination of the role of the bishop in relation to the elders and deacons. Together these officers make up the threefold ministry which our Syrian bishop is the first to clearly and unequivocally advocate as distinctive of those Christian groups who wish to be known as ἐκκλησία (*Tral.* 3.1). He seems to conceive of bishop and elders forming a cohesive unit (at least ideally), a collegial leadership team (*Eph.* 2.2, 20.2; *Mag.* 2.1), whose harmonious relations will set the tone for the rest of the congregation (*Eph.* 4.1; *Mag.* 3.1). Ignatius' defense of Damas of Magnesia indicates that one of the ways in which the elders lead is by supporting the bishop (*Mag.* 3.1). The elders of Magnesia are older than their bishop, suggesting that they are the sort of persons traditionally labelled "elders" in the Greco-Roman world, i.e. mature and experienced heads of households and patrons of the church. Ignatius consistently likens the elders to the apostles (*Mag.* 6.1; *Tral.* 2.2, 3.1; *Smyr.* 8.1; *Phld.* 5.1), the founding persons of the Christian movement, implying perhaps that they are responsible for preserving and transmitting the teachings of these historic figures. Deacons appear to be subordinate to bishop and elders (*Mag.* 2.1), and may have been lower status members of the community as were διάκονοι in pagan religious associations (*Eph.* 2.1; *Mag.* 2.1). The deacons are entrusted with the ministry of Christ (*Mag.* 6.1), and are described being responsible for Christ's mysteries and for distributing food and drink without favouritism (*Tral.* 2.3). Ignatius legitimates the tripartite system of bishop ruling together with a council of elders and assisted by deacons, as being established by the Holy Spirit (*Phld.* inscr., 7.1-2). He is the vehicle through whom the Spirit speaks to secure and strengthen this novel form of church order, willingly give up his life as a ransom for those who submit to bishop, elders and deacons (*Pol.* 6.1).

Throughout the discussion of episcopal leadership and authority in the letters of Ignatius points of contact with Syrian Christian leadership models have been noted. Rather than summarizing them here, it is my intention to take them up more thoroughly in my conclusions which follow.

5.0 Conclusions: Ignatius and Episcopal Leadership in Context

The goal of this dissertation has been to engage in a comprehensive and systematic examination of Ignatius' writings on the subject of episcopal leadership. Working on the premise that the episcopacy is both an historical and a social phenomenon in the early church this study has attempted to combine both historical and social-science methods of investigation. These include the comparative analyses of documents from roughly the same time and space, and the use of social-science models as heuristic tools to assist in the organization, analysis, and comparison of the historical evidence. These methods have been used to show that the roots of Ignatius' particular conception of the role of bishops are to be located in specifically Christian models of leadership which were beginning to emerge at the end of the 1st and beginning of the 2nd century in Syria, and in the general pattern of patron-broker-client relations that enabled people of different status to function in a Greco-Roman city like Antioch. A third goal has been to understand the significance of charisma as the basis of Ignatius' own personal authority, its role in the development and legitimation of episcopal leadership, and its transformation in this process. Each of these three points will be recapitulated and summarized in this final chapter which will conclude with suggestions for future avenues of research.

5.1 Ignatius and Episcopal Leadership in its Syrian Christian Context

One of the recurring questions in Ignatian studies concerns the historical plausibility of Ignatius' conception of episcopal authority in the first decades of the 2nd century. His passionate advocacy on behalf of bishops is a sign that episcopal authority was not yet a well established institution, suggesting that his statements may be more prescriptive than descriptive. They are arguments intended to strengthen a nascent form of leadership. Consequently, the chronological authenticity of Ignatius' writings on this subject depends less on evidence for the presence and powers of bishops in the churches of Asia Minor which he addresses, than on the plausibility of episcopal leadership emerging in Syria, where his ideas on the topic were formed. With respect to the issue of historical authenticity, this essay has asked how Ignatius' concept of the episcopacy fits into early 2nd century Christianity as it was developing in Syria. Answering this question required an examination of the leadership models advocated in a set of early Syrian Christian writings that

includes Matthew, the *Gospel of Thomas*, the *Didache*, and the Johannine literature.

Matthew (ca. 80-90 CE), reflects the situation of a community with Jewish Christian roots that has moved away from the charismatic leadership of prophets and is moving toward a leadership of educated scribes. Jesus' final commandment to disciple and teach all nations (Matt. 28:19-20) eclipses the earlier commission to engage in itinerant ministries of prophecy, healing and exorcism (Matt. 9:35-10:42). Although prophets are still active in the Matthean environment, they are treated with suspicion and their authority is undermined by the evangelist's argument that charisma alone is not sufficient criteria for authoritative leadership. Conformity to community norms and customs is the defining standard (Matt. 7:15-23). Although highly critical of Jewish scribes and Pharisees (Matt. 23:2-33), Matthew's ideal community leaders appear to be scribes, skilled in the interpretation and application of the old laws and customs in light of the new understanding provided by Jesus (Matt. 13:52). The evangelist urges these Christian scribes to distinguish themselves from their Jewish counterparts, by refusing to accept honorific titles such as "rabbi," "father," and "master" (Matt. 23:8-9). Peter epitomizes the ideal community leader, the chief scribe who has been trained and chosen by the master himself because he is a recipient of revelation (Matt. 16:16-19). Matthew thus appears to advocate a routinized charismatic leadership of divinely inspired scribes chosen by their predecessors.

Ignatius' responses to his opponents in Philadelphia may be an indicator of how he might respond to a similar group in his native Antioch. The Syrian bishop accuses his Philadelphian adversaries of expounding Judaism, an activity which seems to involve a preoccupation with interpreting the Hebrew scriptures, especially the prophetic writings (*Phld.* 5.2-6.2). They also seem to have had a preference for the leadership of priests trained in uncovering the "secrets of God" contained in these "archives" (*Phld.* 8.2-9.2), and were suspicious of those claiming to be prophets (*Phld.* 7.1-2). Without implying any connections between the Christians of Philadelphia and the community which produced Matthew's gospel, it seems that these two communities share somewhat similar interests. The Matthean church appears to be led by scribes, skilled in the interpretation of the Hebrew scriptures, and suspicious of those making prophetic or charismatic claims. If Ignatius was critical of Christians in Asia Minor who were preoccupied with scriptural exegesis, one suspects that he would have been equally critical of Syrian Christians with similar concerns.

Aside from some twelve or fourteen possible literary parallels, Ignatius and Matthew share very little. While these parallels suggest some contact with Matthean Christianity, it does not appear to have contributed much, if anything, to the Syrian bishop's thinking on church leadership. This is quite evident in *Ephesians* 6.1 where Ignatius combines and paraphrases two sayings of Jesus which have Matthean parallels (Matt. 21:33-42; 10:42) to come up with the statement that "everyone whom the householder sends to manage his household we must receive in the same way as him who sent him." Ignatius uses these sayings to support his argument that silence does not detract from a bishop's authority because he is the Lord's appointed steward, sent by him and therefore to be received as the Lord himself. The words may be Matthean, but the idea which they support is definitely not. While Ignatius does share with Matthew the notion that the human head of the church is chosen on the basis of revelation or some other indicator of divine preference (*Phld.* 1.1-2; Matt. 16:16-19), their notions of the ideal leader are quite different. Ignatius does not appear to have emerged from a community like that which produced Matthew's gospel, nor does the Matthean scribe seem to provide a model for his concept of episcopal leadership.

At the opposite end of the spectrum we find the *Gospel of Thomas* (ca. 80-100 CE) which provides evidence for a movement of "passers-by" (*Gos. Thom.* 42) who walk about the countryside healing the sick in exchange for sustenance (*Gos. Thom.* 14.4). They are called to take up a socially radical lifestyle, leaving behind family, home and economic activity as well as traditional purity regulations and religious practices. The members of this loosely structured movement of wanderers are instructed to look first to James the Just for leadership (*Gos. Thom.* 12). The hero of the gospel, however, is Thomas whose inability to describe who Jesus is like marks him out as one who has drunk and become intoxicated from the bubbling spring which Jesus measures out (*Gos. Thom.* 13). In this state the Thomas Christian becomes like Jesus, is possessed by Jesus, and has access to revelations of hidden things (*Gos. Thom.* 108). Thomas' special status is presented in a polemical context where he is contrasted with Peter and Matthew who are relegated to the sidelines (*Gos. Thom.* 13). These characters, together with the disciples (*Gos. Thom.* 50-53), may represent Christian community leaders who appeal to apostolic traditions to legitimate their positions in the churches. It is quite likely that in the *Gospel of Thomas* we meet the very sort of charismatic wanderers who are treated with suspicion and hostility in Matthew (7:15-23), and the *Didache* (11.1-12). The

Thomas Christians seem to bear some resemblance to the spirit-possessed disciples whom the Johannine evangelist seeks to correct (John 13:31-14:26), and who refuse to acknowledge Jesus' uniqueness (1 John 4:1-6).

The three or four possible parallels between the letters of Ignatius and the *Gospel of Thomas*¹ are not conclusive enough to support an assertion of literary dependency on the Syrian bishop's part. Far more suggestive of Ignatius' responses to charismatic wanderers like the Thomas Christians are his comments about the itinerant ministers who have appeared in Ephesus (*Eph.* 7.1, 9.1). The Syrian bishop's language clearly conveys his animosity towards these persons whom he describes as "incurably mad dogs" (*Eph.* 7.1), whose deeds are motivated by greed, or are in some way unclean (*Eph.* 16.1-2). He implies that they say things about Jesus which are not true, and seems to suspect them of propagating docetic views without explicitly saying so (*Eph.* 7.2, 18.2, 19.1). Ignatius' comments suggest that his suspicions are based not on what he actually knows about these itinerants, but on what may have been the case in the Syrian situation out of which he emerges. He commends the Ephesian Christians for not listening to wanderers who have appeared in their city, and advises them to avoid them altogether (*Eph.* 9.1, 7.1). Ignatius is clearly suspicious of and hostile toward itinerant ministers, making it unlikely that he would have welcomed Thomas Christians in his congregation, let alone viewed these socially radical charismatic wanderers as models for church leadership.

The *Didache* (ca. 90-100 CE) purports to preserve instructions given by the apostles to gentile converts. It appears to be addressed to leading householders and patrons of house-churches, responsible for teaching young and newly recruited members, overseeing ritual and ceremonial practices, scrutinizing visitors and choosing community officials. These persons seem to be, or at least function like, elders. These persons are given instructions on how to deal with three types of wandering ministers. Teachers whose teaching conforms to the standards of the *Didache* (11.1-2) are welcomed and may even settle permanently in the community receiving financial support and honour (*Did.* 13.2, 15.1-2). Apostles, emissaries or envoys of Christian communities, even if they are prophets are to be shown hospitality for no more than two days before being sent on their way

¹ *Eph.* 5.2//*Gos. Thom.* 30 (Matt. 18:19-20); *Rom.* 6.2//*Gos. Thom.* 24; *Smyr.* 4.2//*Gos. Thom.* 82; *Pol.* 2.2//*Gos. Thom.* 39 (Matt. 10:16).

(*Did.* 11.3-6). A legitimate prophet is defined as one "who speaks in spirit," practices what he preaches, asks for food or money for those in need but never for himself, and does not teach others to practice the "cosmic mysteries of the church" (*Did.* 11.7-12). A prophet who passes muster may settle permanently in the community as its high priest, paid out of the "first fruits" of everything produced or owned by its members (*Did.* 13.1-7). Community leaders are also instructed to appoint from among themselves bishops and deacons to serve alongside or in place of the prophets and teachers (*Did.* 15.1-2).

Some contact between Ignatius and the *Didache*, or teachings like those it contains, seems fairly certain. The relationship, however, is complex. The Syrian bishop never cites the *Didache* in a straightforward fashion, but rather reconfigures in a distinctive way those sayings and phrases which they share. An excellent example is the saying about receiving those whom Jesus sends as if they were Jesus himself. The Didachist applies this saying not only to itinerant ministers (*Did.* 11.1-4; cf. Matt. 10:40), but also to those who speak the word of God (*Did.* 4.1), thus paving the way for resident prophets and teachers, bishops and deacons to be honoured as the Lord himself. Ignatius reconfigures the saying, attaching it to another saying about a householder sending servants to oversee his affairs (Matt. 21:33-42; *Gos. Thom.* 65-66), and applies the whole thing to the silent bishop of Ephesus (*Eph.* 6.1). Like the Didachist, Ignatius is concerned that local church officials should be treated with respect. He differs from the Didachist by connecting this respect not with speaking God's or anyone else's words, but with the bishop's official function of serving as the Lord's steward.

A similar sort of parallel seems to exist between the *Didache*'s instruction that slaves regard their master as a *τύπος* of God (*Did.* 4.11) and Ignatius' assertion that the bishop is a *τύπος* of the heavenly Father (*Tral.* 3.1). The Didachist seeks to affirm the almost god-like power of householders over their slaves, while Ignatius ascribes the same sort of powers to bishops in relation to their congregations. The most interesting parallel, however, occurs in *Magnesians* where Ignatius links hypocrisy toward bishops with an eschatological warning that begins with the statement that "two things are set before us together, death and life" (*Mag.* 5.1). This phrase is reminiscent of the Didachist's "there are two ways, one of life, the other of death" (*Did.* 1.1), and suggests that the Syrian bishop was familiar with this, or a similar, tradition. What makes this parallel particularly

intriguing is that Ignatius' admonition about the "two things" that lead to life or death is used to reinforce his assertion that people who do everything apart from the bishop are not meeting "validly according to the commandment" (*Mag.* 4.1). The *Didache* does contain an explicit instruction not to disregard bishops (*Did.* 15.1-2). Might Ignatius have had this in mind when he was writing to the church at Magnesia? Unfortunately the allusion is too tentative to permit a positive identification of the commandment of *Magnesians* 4.1 as that of *Didache* 15.1-2.

More importantly, the threefold ministry advocated by Ignatius seems to be patterned, in part, on that of the *Didache*. The instructions of the Didachist allow for a system in which leading householders select resident prophets and teachers and/or bishops and deacons. While the presence of resident prophets and teachers seems to have been sporadic and perhaps increasingly infrequent, the leading householders, bishops and deacons would have been permanent fixtures in these communities. If, as Jefford suggests, the leading householders addressed by the *Didache* were elders, then we would have here all three parts of the system championed by the Syrian bishop. The Ignatian elders are consistently linked with the apostles (*Mag.* 6.1; *Tral.* 2.2, 3.1; *Smyr.* 8.1; *Phld.* 5.1), and once with the "law of Christ" (*Mag.* 2.1), suggesting that they were responsible for preserving and transmitting the commandments and regulations of these historical figures. Their role seems to be not unlike that of the leading householders, the functional elders in the communities addressed by the *Didache*, who were responsible for implementing its apostolic instructions. If we knew how the bishops of the *Didache* were "approved" (*Did.* 15.1-2), it might be possible to draw a similar comparison of the role of bishops. Insufficient evidence prevents this not only in the case of bishops, but also in that of the deacons. The only point of contact between the Ignatian bishop and the resident prophet of the *Didache* seems to be that both act as high priests. For a model of the bishop as conceived by Ignatius we need to turn to the Johannine stream of early Syrian Christianity.

The three Epistles and the Gospel of John (ca. 90-120 CE) witness to a circle of churches in the midst of a crisis of authority. It seems that the Johannine community was led initially by charismatic prophets and/or teachers, such as the Beloved Disciple. The death of their hero seems to have resulted in charismatic competition (1 John, John 13:31-14:26), schism (1 John 2:19), and the breakdown of fellowship as local householders closed their doors to the Johannine charismatics (3 John, 2 John). All of the Johannine writers seek to validate their own positions over against their

rivals by appeal to a common tradition. The Elder argues that mutual "love," ie. hospitality is mandated by the commandment which the community has had since its inception (2 John 5), while the διδαχή τοῦ χριστοῦ provides a standard against which to test itinerants seeking admission to the churches (2 John 9). The writer of 1 Jn argues that spirit possession alone is not the sign of a true prophet, but must be accompanied by the confession that Jesus is the Christ, and that he has come in the flesh (1 John 4:1-6). The evangelist seeks to resolve the problem of charismatic rivalry by recalling the words of Jesus that define the Paraclete's role as the recollection and interpretation of Jesus' words (John 14:12-26). A final resolution is presented in the last chapter of the gospel where the Risen Lord, present in the community as the Paraclete, chooses Peter to take on the role of the shepherd watching over and nourishing Jesus' sheep (John 21:15-18).

In certain respects Ignatius shows greater affinity with Johannine Christianity than with any of the other traditions that we have examined, even though he does not seem to have had access to the 4th gospel itself. While the most striking similarities are found in his descriptions of the eucharist as the "flesh and blood" of Christ (*Rom.* 7.3; *Smyr.* 12.2; John 6:54-59), and the "bread of God" (*Eph.* 5.2; *Rom.* 7.3; John 6:33) which bestows immortality (*Eph.* 20.2; John 6:54), distinctively Johannine phrases and concepts are scattered throughout Ignatius' letters.² His habit of referring to "commandments" without specifying their contents, for example, finds its closest parallels in the usages of the Johannine writers. Johannine images are occasionally evoked in language picked up from other sources. Christ as the good shepherd willingly laying down his life to defend his sheep (John 10:11-18), or some notion very much like it, seems to have shaped Ignatius' conception of his own episcopal mission. The only time he describes himself as the shepherd of the Syrian church (*Rom.* 9.1), he does so in a context where he declares that he dies willingly in imitation of Jesus his God (*Rom.* 4.1, 7.2, 6.3). The great apostles, Paul and Peter, serve as Ignatius' role models (*Rom.* 4.3, *Eph.* 12.2) because they too were martyrs. The Johannine Peter's pastoral role is the consequence of his profession of love for Jesus which entails not only keeping his words, nourishing his sheep, but also following Jesus to a martyr's death (John 21:15-19). In the Johannine shepherd, epitomized by both Jesus and Peter in the Fourth Gospel, we see the sort of leader Ignatius personally strives to be.

² Jefford, "Did Ignatius...know the *Didache*?" 337; Trevett, *Ignatius and His Opponents*, 154; Trevett, 70; Barnard, 28.

The same model may have prompted him to urge the Philadelphians to follow their shepherd like sheep, and so to avoid the wolves who lie in wait to take them captive (*Phld.* 2.1-3.2).

Ignatius' argument that the threefold ministry is established by the Holy Spirit (*Phld.* inscr.), and that individual bishops acquire their offices directly through the love and partiality of God and Christ (*Phld.* 1.1-2) finds its closest parallel in the story of Peter's elevation to the role of shepherd in the Fourth Gospel. There it is the risen Lord who singles Peter out for his pastoral role (John 21:15-19), suggesting that among Johannine Christians the establishment of the pastoral office may have been understood as the post-resurrection work of Christ who is present in the community as the Paraclete (John 14:12-26). John, the alleged evangelist, is remembered as appointing to episcopal office those indicated by the Spirit. Peter's election is validated by the testimony of the Paraclete-inspired Beloved Disciple, and not by personal charisma, something which the Johannine Peter seems to lack. Similarly, Ignatius believes that establishment by the Holy Spirit overrides any lack of ascribed, acquired, or achieved personal characteristics which might be normally associated with leadership. He himself takes on a role, not unlike that of the Beloved Disciple, when he uses his charismatic authority as a liminal figure poised between heaven and earth to witness to the appropriateness of the Philadelphian bishop's appointment.

Ignatius' seemingly naive assumption that bishops provide the best defense against false teaching (*Tral.* 7.1; *Phld.* 2.1-3.2), suggests that his thinking may have been formed in a context where the episcopal office was adopted as a response to the problems caused by the emergence of divergent views within the Christian community. Again, the closest parallel is provided by the Johannine community where christology and ecclesiology appear to have reached their final forms in a situation of intense charismatic rivalry in which one group seems to have been taking a docetic stance. The shepherd of the Johannine community is one who solemnly vows to love Jesus, i.e. to keep and guard his words which nourish the community (John 21:15-19, cf. 14:15-26). Some of those who opposed the establishment and authority of bishops in the Ignatian context appear to have been docetics who placed little value on the physical suffering of Jesus (*Tral.* 9.1-11.2), and indeed it is these docetics to whom the Syrian bishop is most opposed (*Smyr.* 4.2-6.1).

Ignatius, then, seems to have combined in his own career the roles of the Beloved Disciple and the Johannine Peter. As a bishop and shepherd of Christ's church he is prepared to follow Jesus

to a martyr's death, just as Peter (and Paul) did before him. Like the Beloved Disciple he uses his personal charisma to reinforce and validate the authority of the bishops he meets in Asia Minor, and presents the leadership of bishops-shepherds as the solution to the problems caused by false teaching and internal conflict. Ignatius places the bishop, however, at the head of a tripartite leadership structure which includes a council of elders and a group of deacons. This system seems to resemble that which is advocated in the *Didache*, with the single shepherd chosen by the Holy Spirit replacing the increasingly scarce resident prophet-high priest, and assuming the title of bishop. The tripartite system of bishop, elders and deacons advocated by Ignatius may well represent a Johannine adoption of an apostolic tradition like that of the *Didache*, prior to the publication of the Fourth Gospel. Such a situation would explain Ignatius' allusions to traditions that appear in the *Didache*, the importance of the apostles and their commandments which in a Johannine way are always left unspecified, the curiously Johannine ring of much of the Syrian bishop's language, and the absence of quotations from the Fourth Gospel.

By placing Ignatius within this early Syrian Christian context we can see that his views on episcopal leadership are not anachronistic as has been suggested by Joly and Rius-Camps; nor are they idealistic mystical musings almost entirely disconnected from reality as Brent asserts. Ignatius' views on episcopacy represent the first clear articulation of a leadership model which was beginning to take shape in some Syrian Christian communities. Streeter's attempt to draw a line of development from the *Didache* to Ignatius has turned out to be useful, even though his argument about a link with *1 Clement* seems unlikely. Much closer to both Syria and Ignatius is the Johannine tradition which seems to have shaped important aspects of the Syrian bishop's thought. Ignatius seems to have taken up elements preserved in the *Didache* and in the Johannine writings, and creatively reconfigured them into the tripartite structure of a single bishop leading together with a council of elders, and assisted by deacons. Ignatius' writing on episcopal leadership not only reflects and responds to what was happening in early Syrian Christianity, it also reflects an adaptation of broader Greco-Roman forms of social organization.

5.2 Ignatius, Episcopal Leadership and Patron-Broker-Client Relations

Maier has argued that hierarchical social arrangements arising from the social setting of early Christian groups in Greco-Roman households are reflected in and reinforced by the system of church leadership advocated by Ignatius. This study has built on and extended Maier's work by highlighting the institution of patronage as the means whereby domestic patriarchal authority was extended beyond the household and replicated in economic, political and religious relationships. As a social system, patronage structured interactions between persons of different social status and power. The patron was the superior member of the relationship, granting access to goods and services under his or her control, as favours, to clients in exchange for public praise and/or other goods as determined by the patron. A broker was a person whose proximity to a patron enabled him or her to strategically arrange and manipulate contacts between prospective clients and their patron. Patron, broker and client were social roles that could be embraced alternately or in combination by the same person. Most contacts between humans and deities occurred through the brokerage of religious officials and specialists who were also political and household leaders. Religious offices were either inherited or acquired through acts of patronage. Divination, prophecy, miracle working and the like provided an alternative means to achieving prominence and power for those who lacked the traditional prerequisites of birth, wealth and education. Almost all early Christian writings reflect in some way the patronage system. Some contain a critique of this system of dependency and subordination, others seem to expect that Christians will operate the same way. For Ignatius and other early Christian authors patronage was assumed; it was the way things were done in their world. Thus patron-broker-client relations functioned as an unconscious *emic* model shaping the way they thought about relationships between church leaders and followers, and between the earthly and heavenly realms.

The most extreme rejection of the dominant model of social organization is contained in the *Gospel of Thomas*. Thomas Christians are urged to reject the social institutions in which patronage was embedded: family (*Gos. Thom.* 55, 99, 101), and economics (*Gos. Thom.* 8, 14, 63-65, 76, 95, 100, 107, 109). There is very little material in the text that provides for any sort of community structure or organization, and seems to reflect a movement of socially radical itinerants. Although leaders are designated, what seems to be emphasized is their peculiar relationship with the divine

realm. James is identified as the "righteous" one for whom "heaven and earth came into being" (*Gos. Thom.* 12). The hero of the gospel, Thomas, is an intoxicated agent of revelation who enjoys equality and identity with Jesus (*Gos. Thom.* 13, 24, 77, 108). He is not so much a leader as the epitome of the ideal Thomas Christian who knows no master, not even Jesus (*Gos. Thom.* 13.5). These wandering charismatics exist in an environment where they can expect to be met with hostility and violence (*Gos. Thom.* 13.6-8). A veil of secrecy and mystery is therefore drawn around the words of the Thomas Christian both as a strategy for personal defense and for enhancing his or her authority.

Matthew envisions a reordering of social relations in which patron-broker-client relations continue to define interactions between humans and the deity, but not interactions within the human community. God alone retains the status of patriarch and patron (*Matt.* 28:8-9), who will provide the basic necessities of life such as food, drink and clothing (*Matt.* 6:25-34), as well as the special favours of participation in God's reign, ownership of the earth, comfort, justice, access to the divine presence, and a great reward in heaven (*Matt.* 5:3-11). Community members are all siblings and children, i.e. clients, of the divine patron and of his broker, the master and teacher, Jesus Christ (*Matt.* 28:8-9). Joining Matthew's community involves leaving one's earthly father and the patriarchal family (*Matt.* 4:22; 8:21-2; 10:37; 19:29), and entering a society in which there are no rabbis, fathers, masters, rulers, tyrants or other great ones to lord it over people (*Matt.* 20:25-28). Even the giving of alms by human benefactors is to be done in secret and not with an eye to winning public acclaim and honour (*Matt.* 6:2-4). Matthew objects to the appearance in his community of leadership titles and styles, prevalent in the dominant culture, that threaten his ideal vision of the church as a household or clientele recognizing only one divine patriarch and patron, and one broker, Jesus.

In spite of his egalitarian social vision, Matthew recognizes the need for leadership and authority in the Christian community. This leadership is provided by those whom Jesus sends: prophets, sages and scribes (*Matt.* 23:34). The evangelist is, however, deeply ambivalent about prophetic leaders, preferring instead to support the leadership of scribes in the Christian community. Although Matthew patterns his ideal scribe to a large degree after Jewish models, he does not do so uncritically. While placing a high value on the role of inspired scribal activity, the gospel writer

rejects the use of honorific titles such as father, rabbi, or master for Christian scribes (Matt. 23:8-9), along with the patron-broker-client relations of dependency and subordination which such titles signify. Scribal leaders who seek to accrue honour and prestige at the expense of community members are condemned (Matt. 23:4-33). The Matthean church is to be guided by scribes who lead in a spirit of humility and service (Matt. 23:11-12; 20:26-27). Matthew thus rejects the dominant cultural model of social organization, betraying a sectarian stance in relation to the society around him, but retains a hierarchical model for expressing the relationship between God, Jesus and the community.

Although the Johannine Gospel is generally regarded as reflecting a radically egalitarian church structure, the text does in fact seek to impose a strict hierarchy of patron-broker-client relations. God is referred to as "Father" in the Fourth Gospel more than in any other, Jesus is the only agent of access to him (John 14:5), while the Paraclete mediates access to Jesus in heaven (John 14:16-17), thereby enabling the disciples to function as Jesus' brokers on earth (John 14:12-26). The Beloved Disciple functions as Jesus' favoured broker (John 13:1-38; 19:25-27; 20:1-10; 21:4-7), recalling and interpreting the words of Jesus for the Johannine community (John 21:24). Each of the Johannine writers presents himself as the leader and spokesman for a group that mediates access to God and Jesus (1 John 1:3; 2 John 2; 3 John 8, 12), and appears to a prophet or teacher. The Elder's letters reflect a situation in which powerful householders acting as church patrons can, and do, refuse hospitality to wandering ministers and to emissaries from sister congregations. The Elder himself claims a personal authority arising from his age or seniority, his ability to recall what was from the beginning, and his possession and mediation of divine gifts. On the basis of these claims he relates to his readers as a patriarchal or patronal figure, referring to his audiences as his "children" (3 John 3-4). Even more importantly he depicts the churches as "women and children" (2 John 1, 13) whom he represents in their dealings with each other, and in their interactions with the divine realm. The churches are thus likened to households with a teacher or prophet assuming the role of patriarch and patron. This role is eventually assumed by a non-charismatic shepherd, epitomized by Peter, in the final chapter of the Fourth Gospel.

The *Didache* appears to be addressed to persons in authority who are responsible for teaching the young and newly recruited members, overseeing ritual and ceremonial practices,

scrutinizing visitors and choosing community officials. The most likely candidates for these tasks would have been persons possessing homes large enough to accommodate church gatherings and to provide hospitality to visitors. These would have been leading householders and church patrons, persons who in many pagan and Jewish communities were known as elders. In other words, the Didachist assumes that leadership and authority in the churches are in the hands of traditional Greco-Roman community leaders: mature, upper status, and usually male heads of households. These are the persons responsible for implementing the "teaching of the apostles," and it is their interests which are reflected in and protected by its guidelines. This text affirms their right to lead the prayers and direct the assembly in its rituals and ceremonies, and to certify prophets and other would-be community leaders (*Did.* 7-16). They are urged to select from among themselves bishops and deacons who are not greedy and lovers of money (*Did.* 15.1-2), implying that those chosen would be householders willing to share their resources with the community in exchange for positions of honour and leadership. The leaders of the communities addressed by the *Didache* resemble most closely the vast majority of religious officials in the Greco-Roman world who were simultaneously household and political, as well as religious leaders. The Didachist does not critique the hierarchical structure of the dominant society, but affirms it, even going to so far to as to urge slaves to regard their owners as "types of God" (*Did.* 4.11).

These four documents represent a range of degrees of conformity to dominant cultural structures of social organization. At one end of the spectrum we find the *Gospel of Thomas* with its radical rejection of family and economic activity, and of hierarchical relations even between Jesus and his followers. At the opposite end of the spectrum is the writer of the *Didache*, who not only assumes that mature, upper status householders are in charge of the communities he addresses, but actually affirms their right to provide religious leadership and authority. The religious officers of the *Didache* most closely resemble their Jewish and pagan counterparts who were simultaneously household, political and religious leaders. In between these two extremes, we find Matthew who is critical of relationships of dominance and dependence among members of his community, but affirms them as the appropriate way to relate to God and Jesus, who alone are allowed to retain the titles of father, teacher and master. The Johannine materials represent an even greater assimilation of culturally dominant structures, arguing as they do for a strict hierarchy of access to the divine

realm. Communion with the Johannine writers and the groups they represent enables communion with the Father and with his only son, Jesus. The Paraclete empowers the Johannine prophetic leaders, epitomized by the Beloved Disciple, for their roles as mediators of Jesus' words and commandments. At least one of these characters, the Elder, explicitly relates to his readers as a patriarchal and patronal figure, and is in one instance opposed by a person who appears to be a house-church patron (i.e. Diotrephes).

When we turned to the letters of Ignatius, we began with Maier's observation that at least some of the persons who assumed episcopal office appear to have been relatively well-to-do householders, like Polycarp whose capacity to act as a house-church patron may have been related to his official status in the church at Smyrna. Ignatius, however, does not relate the episcopal office to a person's social status as a householder. If anything, his defense of Damas, Onesimus and the unnamed bishop of Philadelphia indicate that persons who lacked some attributes frequently associated with leadership could, and were, selected for episcopal office. In Ignatius' opinion Damas' lack of maturity does not lessen his authority any more than the silence of Onesimus or his Philadelphian counterpart. Recognizing that these deficiencies were, or could be, the source of potential problems, Ignatius argues that they are either irrelevant or that they are in fact positive attributes. What really counts, however, is that the person is a bishop, having acquired the office through the love and partiality of God and Christ. Ignatius' position with respect to the personal shortcomings of these bishops suggests that he might have taken a similar view with respect to issues of household status and actual patronage of the church. His silence on the subject, however, does not permit us to do more than make this tentative suggestion.

Patron-broker-client relations function in the letters of Ignatius much as they do in the Johannine literature, as an unconscious *emic* model structuring the writer's thought. God's mind is made known through Jesus Christ, the divine mediator, whose purpose includes and is articulated by human bishops established by the Holy Spirit (*Eph.* 3.2-4.1, *Phld.* inscr.-1.2). These bishops act as brokers enabling church members to be recognized and heard by the divine patron (*Eph.* 4.2). Solidarity with the bishop ensures access to the "bread of God," answers to prayer, and protection from the destructive forces of Satan (*Eph.* 5.2, 13.1-2). Ignatius envisions the bishop as the Lord's steward (*Eph.* 6.1) and the heavenly Father's representative (*Tral.* 3.1) exercising the grace, power

and supervisory capacities of God on behalf of, and in place of, the divine patron (*Mag.* 2.1-3.1, 6.1). What this means is that on the level of practical everyday matters of congregational life, the bishop acts as a patriarchal or patronal figure. He is the guardian of widows (*Pol.* 4.1), a paternalistic overseer of slaves (*Pol.* 4.3), and the approver of marriages and other personal arrangements (*Pol.* 5.1). Like any patriarch or patron the bishop is expected to protect the community's integrity from both internal and external threats (*Phld.* 2.1).

It is interesting to note that the systems of church organization that were to prevail in the following centuries among the greatest numbers of Christians, and to have the greatest influence in the rise of Christianity, were those systems which most closely resembled the dominant cultural models of social organization. Patronage, in particular, was to become one of the foundations for the rise of episcopal power and influence in the cities and empire of the 4th century.³ Christianity never completely rejected the social radicalism of groups like the Thomas Christians, preferring instead to confine such tendencies within the walls of convents and monasteries under episcopal control.

5.3 Ignatius, Episcopal Authority and Charisma

The final issue to be addressed in this dissertation is the role and significance of that element that has been described by Trevett, von Campenhausen and Maier as prophetic, pneumatic and/or charismatic. Following the lead of Maier, the typology of authority developed by sociologist Max Weber has been used as an interpretive tool to describe in *etic* terms not only the authority claimed by Ignatius but also the nature of episcopal authority as it appears in his letters. Weber's typology also served as a heuristic device for comparing and contrasting the authority of the Ignatian bishop with that of other model leaders in early Syrian Christianity. Weber identified three types of authority: (1) traditional or ascribed personal authority sanctioned by custom and tradition; (2) the rational-legal or acquired impersonal authority of office-holders set out in rules and/or laws; and (3) charismatic or achieved personal authority justified by the attribution of charisma or giftedness to an exemplary or exceptional individual. Customs and traditions, rules and laws tend to be fairly stable and permanent over time. Individual achievement, however, is less secure and is limited to

³ Peter Brown, *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity: Towards a Christian Empire*, (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), 71-117.

a charismatic leader's lifespan. In order to achieve permanency and continuity charismatic authority, therefore, tends to become routinized and transformed into traditional or legal authority or some combination of both. Communities which value charismatic leadership may attempt to identify the right charismatic successor by searching for the person with the right traits, recourse to techniques of revelation, designation by the previous leader, and designation by the administrative staff. Alternatively, communities which value charismatic leadership may depersonalize charisma, transforming it into a quality that may be transferred through blood lines, by ritual means on accession to office, or that may be acquired through education. Weber's writings on this subject provide us with a model for testing and affirming von Campenhausen's thesis that charisma and office were mutually supportive in the early church, and for spelling out more clearly than he does how they were related to one another.

I have further suggested that there is a link between charismatic authority and the institution of patronage. Charismatic authority figures in the ancient world were most likely to act as brokers, mediating communication and interaction between persons and groups occupying different social strata. Men and women, traditionally and legally excluded from authority roles were able to use brokerage as a means of achieving some personal power and authority. Such a person might be described as a *charismatic broker*, a person who occupies a position of authority over a particular group of clients because he or she has achieved a personal reputation for power by mediating favours from a superior person, human or divine. The charismatic broker's authority is based on a perception of giftedness (charisma) arising from personal achievement, and is culturally interpreted as evidence of the favour and goodwill (χάρις) of his or her patron.

Charismatic brokers appeared in all of the documents under consideration, usually as figures eliciting concern and/or suspicion, even from those writers who claim for themselves elements of charismatic authority. Uncritical endorsement of charismatic brokers is to be found only in the *Gospel of Thomas*. In this text the ideal authority figure is portrayed by Thomas who is unable to say who Jesus is like, but whose special status is due to his having "drunk" and "become intoxicated" from the bubbling spring provided by Jesus (*Gos. Thom.* 13). In this state Thomas is like Jesus, indeed Jesus has become Thomas, who now has access to revelations of hidden things (*Gos. Thom.* 108, 13). This phenomenon of "intoxicated" access to divine knowledge resembles what in the

ancient world was understood as "natural divination," arising from the direct possession or inspiration of the diviner by the deity, and appears to be the equivalent of spirit possession as experienced in other Christian circles. Thomas' claim to prominence and authority is his ecstatic identification with Jesus which enables him to act as a mediator of divine secrets. Thomas represents a socially radical charismatic broker whose personal endowments and/or achievements enable him to build up a reputation for power through the teaching of an esoteric wisdom which is to be shared only with those who are worthy. This type of leadership is held up in the *Gospel of Thomas* as superior to that offered by Matthew's "wise philosopher" or Peter's "righteous messenger" (*Gos. Thom.* 13).

Matthew knows of wandering ministers who prophecy, exorcise and work miracles in the name of Jesus (Matt. 7:22). They are charismatic brokers who are sent by Jesus (Matt. 23:34), and so ought to be welcomed and assisted (Matt. 10:40). The gospel writer, however, seeks to undermine the potential authority of these charismatics by calling into question their integrity. A reputation and an ability to mediate divine power, in the Matthean context, is not conclusive evidence that a person is a true prophet; these must be matched by behaviour that conforms to the laws of the community (Matt. 7:16-23). Charismatic authority is recognized, but is regarded with deep ambivalence by Matthew who seeks to restrict the number of legitimate prophets by subjecting them to the higher authority of community norms. Leadership and authority are to be ultimately legitimated not by personal achievements or gifts, but by an emerging set of customs and rules. This is seen most clearly in Matthew's depiction of Peter, his ideal community leader. Peter's status and authority derive from: (1) the training he has received from Jesus himself in the customs and norms that are to govern the community (eg. Matt. 15:15, 18:21), and (2) his designation as "chief scribe" by Jesus because (3) he is the recipient of a revelation from God (Matt. 16:17-19). Peter's leadership is partly rational-legal, bound up with the office or occupation of scribe which is acquired on the basis of skill and competence. Peter is also gifted with special insight and understanding that is interpreted not as the natural outcome of his education, but as a sign of personal giftedness or charisma. Finally he is personally chosen by Jesus himself, the original charismatic leader. Matthew's ideal leader is thus a routinized charismatic scribe whose acquired impersonal authority is augmented by a dash of personal charisma.

The *Didache's* apostolic instructions are addressed to leading householders in Christian congregations, who appear to be the functional equivalents of the elders found in many pagan and Jewish communities. The traditional status and authority of these householders is institutionalized by making them responsible for implementing the instructions of the Didachist, including the evaluation of itinerant ministers and the selection of congregational officials. Bishops and deacons are to be selected from the ranks of householders, making them very much like other religious officials in the Greco-Roman world whose offices are related to their capacity to act as patrons, and who are simultaneously household, civic and religious authorities. The bishops and deacons of the *Didache*, thus, combine elements of ascribed personal (traditional) authority with the acquired impersonal (rational-legal) authority of holding office. To the extent that their offices require them to speak the "word of God," they would have been regarded as holy ones (*Did.* 4.11). If there is any charisma involved, it is only in a routinized or depersonalized form that is attached to this "word of God," and which rubs off on whoever is authorized to speak it. It may be possible to see here the beginnings of a charisma of office enjoyed by those appointed to the task of speaking the divine word.

The Didachist strengthens the leadership and authority of householders in an environment where they face competition from three types of itinerants. (1) Apostles appear to be persons in transit, acting as emissaries on behalf of the churches. By placing limitations on the hospitality shown to these apostles, the Didachist effectively eliminates them as rivals for authority. (2) Teachers are to be tested with respect to the content of their teaching which must conform with the customs and norms contained in the *Didache* and the "gospel" to which it refers (*Did.* 11.1-3). As community leaders their authority is primarily occupational, or official, deriving from their acquired knowledge and competence as teachers. To the extent that these teachers are speakers of God's word, they would also enjoy a certain charisma of office. (3) Prophets who speak "in spirit" are to be subjected to a rigorous assessment of their personal conduct, but not of the content of their speech (*Did.* 11.7-8). Their extraordinary capacity to directly mediate spiritual or divine information marks these prophets out as charismatic brokers. According to the Didachist, the personal charisma of the prophet must be augmented by the right conduct. Genuine prophets use their gifts selflessly in the service of others, practice what they preach, and do not teach others to imitate the "mysteries"

demanding by their vocations (*Did.* 11.9-12). This process of testing and certifying prophets provides a mechanism whereby these charismatic brokers can be permanently integrated into the life of the churches as high priests. The role of resident prophet-high priest most closely resembles a "charismatic office" in which rational rules of selection include the requirement of particular personal gifts or charisma on the part of the candidate.

The Didachist's creative genius is perhaps best epitomized by this attempt to institutionalize both traditional and charismatic types of authority. The traditional authority of householders and patrons is strengthened by their appointment to the offices of bishop and deacons, while the charismatic authority of prophets is given an institutional form in the role of resident prophet-high priest. Charismatic authority does not disappear, but is controlled and harnessed in the interests of local community life. In the resident prophets of the *Didache* one may see the forerunner of the "holy man" who was to play an important role alongside church officials for many centuries in the Christian east.

The nature of leadership and authority in the Johannine community is perhaps best epitomized in the Fourth Gospel by the characters of the Beloved Disciple and Peter. The Beloved Disciple acts as a charismatic broker, replicating Jesus' own relationship with God. He provides access to Jesus and shares with others his special insights and knowledge. As the alleged witness behind the Fourth Gospel, the Beloved Disciple is the ideal spirit-possessed charismatic, recalling and interpreting Jesus' words. He is also Jesus' hand-picked successor and adopted brother. Peter is contrasted with the Beloved Disciple as one who is not particularly intimate with Jesus and who has no special insights to offer. He acknowledges the status of the Beloved Disciple by both seeking his assistance and acting upon his knowledge. Peter acquires the role of shepherd or pastor, which necessitates loving Jesus by keeping his words and following him to a martyr's death, by the action of the Risen Lord who is present in the post-resurrection community as the Paraclete. Peter possesses no personal charisma, but may be described as a routinized charismatic leader selected through a visionary experience that is affirmed and legitimated by the charismatic Beloved Disciple.

What seems to be distinctive in the Johannine approach to leadership and authority is the way charisma and the nascent "tradition" dialectically reinforce each other. This is best demonstrated in the claims of the Johannine writers. The Elder's status is related to: (1) his age or seniority, (2) his

possession and mediation of truth and other divine gifts, and (3) his role of preserving, articulating and transmitting those teachings which the community has held from its inception and which ought to serve as norms for its life and conduct. In particular he appeals to the love commandment (2 John 5) and the teachings of Jesus-come-in-flesh (2 John 7-9). These two aspects of the emerging tradition are used by the author of 1 John to legitimate his own claims to special status as a possessor of the spirit of truth (1 John 4:2ff) and one who mediates communion with God and Christ (1 John 1:1-2). Charisma and "tradition" reinforce each other, and together are the basis of the author's claim to be an authentic representative of and spokesman for Johannine Christianity. This relationship between charisma and tradition grows out of and addresses the problem of charismatic rivalry which is evident in both 1 John and the Fourth Gospel. The latter purports to be the testimony of the Beloved Disciple (John 21:24), the ideal Paraclete-empowered disciple who recalls the words of Jesus which effectively limit the scope of charismatic activity to the recollection and interpretation of the words of Jesus (John 14:12-26). The personal charisma of the Johannine writers creates and articulates the tradition which legitimates their charismatic claims. In the process, charisma is depersonalized and attached to the words of Jesus which become the ultimate source of legitimacy. The successors of the Johannine writers are no longer charismatic prophets and teachers, but pastors committed to keeping, preserving and transmitting these words.

These four sets of documents present a variety of responses to the phenomenon of charisma as it is manifested in the activity of prophetic figures. The *Gospel of Thomas* appears to give an uncritical endorsement of Jesus-possession. Matthew is perhaps the least friendly to charismatic activity, showing a marked preference for the leadership of trained scribes. The desire for a charismatic element in its leaders has not, however, been entirely lost in the Matthean community as the ideal scribe is one who displays insights that are regarded as coming from God. The *Didache* reinforces the authority of traditional community leaders by affirming their right to examine and certify prophets. For the Didachist, charisma is a potentially valuable asset provided that it can be subordinated and bound to the interests of the local community. In the Johannine context, charisma gives rise to an emerging body of commandments and teaching which in turn is used to assess and legitimate (or delegitimize) the charismatic claims of rival prophets and teachers. The Johannine crisis of authority is finally resolved by entrusting the leadership of the community to pastors

dedicated to keeping the words of the Jesus who came in flesh.

If Ignatius' comments about itinerant ministers in *Ephesians* is any indication, it seems that he would have been suspicious and hostile to the claims of charismatic wanderers like the Thomas Christians (*Eph.* 7.1, 9.1). Yet the Syrian bishop is not an advocate of official authority in opposition to charismatic authority. He claims for himself a personal charisma arising from his status as a prisoner for Christ. This is an achieved status arising from and pointing to his extraordinary personal loyalty to his Lord. As a convict in transit to his place of execution Ignatius occupies a liminal position, outside the boundaries of normal human society and poised on the threshold of the spiritual realm. This location on the margins of the earthly and heavenly spheres enhances the Syrian bishop's access to prophecy, revelation and the knowledge of hidden things (*Phld.* 7.1-2; *Eph.* 19.2-3, 20.1-2; *Tral.* 4.1-5.2; *Rom.* 7.1). The martyr-elect, like the prophet, is a charismatic broker mediating information between God and humanity. It is this liminal charismatic authority which Ignatius relies on to legitimate his exhortations and occasionally "apostolic" instructions (*Eph.* 12.1-2; *Tral.* inscr., 3.3) on the subject of church order.

Ignatius' defense of both the threefold structure of church offices, and of episcopal authority, in his letter to the church at Philadelphia suggests that in the circles from which he emerged this church order originated in the charismatic activities of the prophet and/or the martyr, and that it was fairly recent. Ignatius insists the system of bishop ruling together with elders and deacons has been established by the Holy Spirit according to the will of Christ (*Phld.* inscr.). How would this have been accomplished? The answer is provided by the Syrian bishop himself who, when pressed hard to defend this leadership structure, appeals neither to scripture nor to apostolic teaching, but resorts to prophetic speech to legitimate his claims. It is the "voice of God" speaking through the martyr-elect who insists that bishop, elders and deacons must be obeyed, and that nothing is to be done without the bishop (*Phld.* 7.1-2). Ignatius insists, moreover, that the bishop of Philadelphia has acquired his ministry through the love and partiality of God and Christ, and not through any human agency (*Phld.* 1.1-2). The most likely means of ascertaining divine preferment is through recourse to prophetic oracles, revelation, the drawing of lots, the discernment of a miraculous occurrence, or some other form of divination.

The selection of leaders through such revelatory procedures is, according to Weber, one of

the means whereby charisma may be routinized. The legitimacy of these routinized charismatic leaders depends less on their personal gifts and achievements, than on the validity of the technique of selection. It is not surprising then that Ignatius insists that bishops should be obeyed in spite of their personal shortcomings. Since Onesimus is the Lord's personally appointed steward, his silence should not be regarded as a reason for disrespect (*Eph.* 5.2). What is significant about Damas is not his age, but the fact that as bishop of Magnesia he exercises the grace, power and oversight of the divine Father who is bishop of all (*Mag.* 3.1). Similarly what matters about the unnamed bishop of Philadelphia is that he acquired his ministry through divine love. Even his silence and passivity should be interpreted as signs of his closeness to God (*Phld.* 1.1-2). These church leaders should be obeyed because they are bishops established in their offices by the Holy Spirit. In *etic* terms, we might say that Ignatius is arguing that these bishops enjoy a routinized charisma deriving first of all from the process by which they are selected for their offices. As holders of episcopal office they are also "clothed with grace" (*Pol.* 1.2) and have access to every *χαρίσματος* at God's disposal, including the gift of revelation (*Pol.* 2.2). To the extent that these are a consequence of being a bishop, they constitute a charisma of office, and are indicative of a growing routinization of charisma.

What we seem to have, then, in the letters of Ignatius is a liminal charismatic figure promoting a form of church structure which he claims has been established by the Holy Spirit. The most distinctive aspect of this system seems to be the single bishop chosen by some process believed to reveal divine preferment. Ignatius' heavy reliance on his personal charisma and on arguments asserting that these church offices are the work of the Holy Spirit suggests that we are dealing here with a fairly recent development in the circles from which he emerges. The charismatic activity of spirit-filled Syrian prophets, and of the martyr-elect himself, should therefore be taken seriously as one of the possible sources for Ignatius' ideas about church leadership. His conception of episcopal leadership and authority derives not only from the creative inspiration of the Spirit, but is also deeply embedded in the social and historical context in which he lived. The hierarchical organization of Greco-Roman society and its reliance on patron-broker-client relations to bridge the gaps between persons of different status and power clearly shaped Ignatius' understanding of relationships between divine and human persons, and between bishop and congregation. In response to the problems posed

by divergent teachings and congregational disunity, Ignatius adopted and combined models of church leadership which were beginning to emerge in Syrian Christian circles. His system appears to be a synthesis of elements drawn from Johannine Christianity and from the apostolic traditions of the *Didache*.

5.4 Where to go from here?

Although this study did not focus on the question of the identity of Ignatius' opponents in Antioch, it may nevertheless point to some possible avenues of research. The Matthean scribal model, as well as the socially radical Thomas Christian charismatic, appear to have had little if any influence on Ignatius' conception of episcopal leadership and authority. He appears closer to the models proposed by the Johannine evangelist and the writer of the *Didache*. An assessment of those leadership patterns rejected by Ignatius in conjunction with statements about his opponents might throw some light on the identity of his opponents in Syria. Particularly helpful in this respect would be an examination of a number of documents from Syria that either address or reflect docetic views. In addition to the letters of Ignatius, the Johannine texts, and the *Gospel of Thomas*, one might look to some of the still relatively unknown documents of the Nag Hammadi collection, especially the *Apocalypse of Peter* (NH VII, 3) which combines an explicitly docetic christology with opposition to bishops and deacons. Although tantalizingly suggestive of connections with Ignatius and a number of earlier documents, I decided to leave it out of this study because of its allegedly late date - 3rd century. If it could be demonstrated that it reflects earlier 2nd century developments the *Apocalypse of Peter* might give us a hint of what the bishop's Syrian opponents might have looked like.

Even though this essay is not intended to form part of any ongoing contemporary theological debate on the subject of church leadership, I would like to take the liberty of suggesting how this work might be of relevance outside the academy. The form of leadership that Ignatius advocated for the churches represents a creative response to particular problems faced by the Christian communities of early 2nd century Syria. The threefold order led by a single bishop is deeply rooted not only in specifically Christian models of leadership but in the social structures of Greco-Roman society. That episcopal leadership reflected and conformed to the norms of the dominant culture is, no doubt, part of the reason that it became the predominant form of Christian organization. If this

is true, could it be that the crisis of credibility confronting many Christian groups today has something to do with their insistence on leadership structures that are anachronistic and out of step with the dominant culture? If Ignatius' specific solution to the problems faced by the early church, ie the system of bishop, elders and deacons, is no longer feasible, perhaps the way he reached that solution by creatively synthesizing distinctively Christian elements with aspects of the dominant culture might still be useful.

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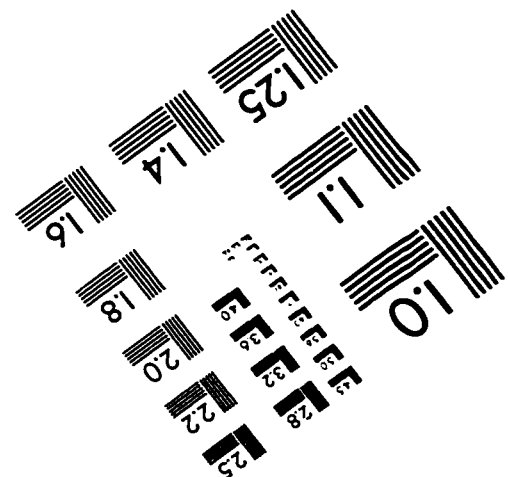
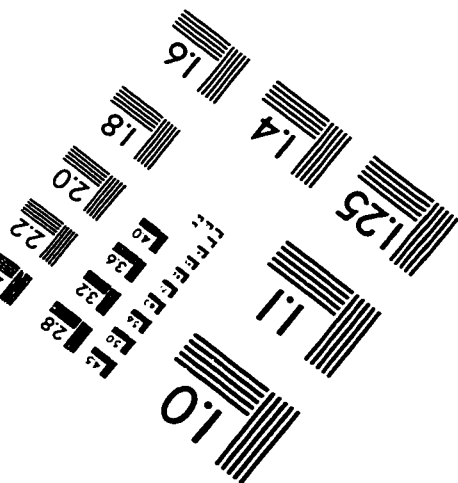
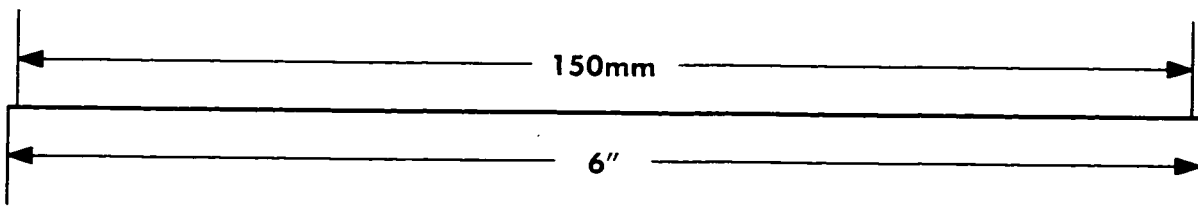
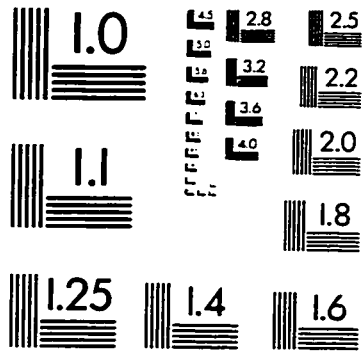
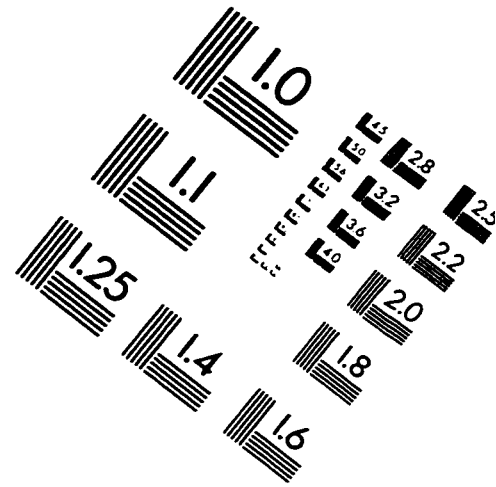
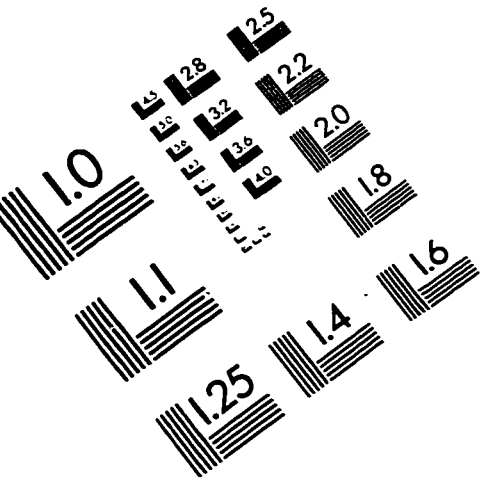
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